**ATILIM UNIVERSITY**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER`S PROGRAMME**

# VOICES OF THE OTHER: COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS AND IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND TAYEB SALIH'S *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

**Master's Thesis**

**Huda Ammar Taha BRATOO**

**Ankara- 2025**

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**Master's Thesis**

**Huda Armar Taha BRATOO**

**Thesis Advisor**

**Asst. Prof. Dr. Gökşen ARAS**

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## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled "Voices of the Other: Colonial Encounters and Identity Transformation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*" and prepared by Huda Ammar Bratoo meets with the committee's approval unanimously/by a majority vote as Master's Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defence conducted on 23/6/2025

Asst. Prof. Dr. Üyesi Berkem SAĞLAM (Chair)

Asst. Prof. Dr. Gökşen ARAS (Advisor)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kuğu TEKİN (Member)

Prof. Dr. Şule Tuzlukaya

Director

## ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules.
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

I hereby also understand that I shall accept any loss of rights against my behalf in cases otherwise.

23-6-2025

Huda Ammar Taha BRATOO

# ÖZ

BRATOO, Huda. Diğerinin Sesleri: Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* ve Tayeb Salih'in *Season of Migration to the North* Eserlerinde Kolonyal Karşılaşmalar ve Kimlik Dönüşümü, Ankara, 2025.

Bu tez, Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* (1958) ve Tayeb Salih'in *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) adlı eserlerinin, sömürgeci mitolojileri nasıl yapıbozuma uğrattığını ve emperyalizmin psikolojik, kültürel ve epistemik miraslarını nasıl sorguladığını incelemektedir. Romanlar, sömürge şiddetiyle parçalanmış toplumlarda direnişin, melezliğin ve kimliğin paradokslarını ortaya koyarak geleneksel karşı-anlatıların ötesine geçer. Edward Said'in Oryantalizm eleştirisi, Homi Bhabha'nın taklit ve ikircikliklik kavramları ile Michel Foucault'nun iktidar-bilgi çerçevesine dayanan karşılaştırmalı bir analizle, bu çalışma her iki eserin de (ben/öteki, gelenek/modernite gibi) sömürgeci ikilikleri altüst ederek yerli öznelliği yeniden inşa ettiğini ve aynı zamanda sömürge sonrası kimliğin çözümsüz gerilimlerini görünür kıldığını savunur.

Achebe, Igbo toplumunun karmaşıklığını sömürge dilini dönüştüren anlatı stratejileriyle merkeze alarak, Afrika'yı "ilkel" leştiren Avrupa-merkezli klişelere meydan okur. Salih ise Joseph Conrad'ın sömürgeci bakışını ters yüz eder; Sudanlı entelektüel Mustafa Sa'eed'in intikam amaçlı taklit eylemlerinin kendi kendini tüketen bir yıkıma evrilişi üzerinden emperyalizmin yıkıcı etkilerini ortaya serer. Metin odaklı bir yaklaşımla, bu tez her iki yazarın kültürel melezliğin ikircikli doğasını nasıl ele aldığını ve direnişin sömürge hiyerarşilerini yeniden üretme riskini nasıl barındırdığını gösterir. Romanlar, nihayetinde, sömürgeciliğin epistemik şiddetiyle biçimlenen bir dünyada kimlik ve özerkliği tanımlama mücadelesinin sürekliliğine işaret ederek, bu mirasın günümüz bilgi, yönetim ve aidiyet sistemlerindeki hayalet varlığıyla yüzleşmeyi zorunlu kılar.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sömürgeci Söylem, Ben/Öteki İkiliği, Oryantalizm, *Things Fall Apart*, *Season of Migration to the North*.

## ABSTRACT

BRATOO, Huda. Voices of the Other: Colonial Encounters and Identity Transformation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, Ankara, 2025.

This thesis examines how Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) dismantle colonial mythologies while interrogating imperialism's psychological, cultural, and epistemic legacies. The novels transcend conventional counter-narratives by exposing the paradoxes of resistance, hybridity, and identity in societies fractured by colonial violence. Through a comparative analysis grounded in postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, Homi Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and ambivalence, and Michel Foucault's power-knowledge framework. The study argues that both works subvert colonial binaries (self/other, tradition/modernity) to reclaim Indigenous agency while illuminating the unresolved tensions of postcolonial subjectivity.

Achebe recentres Igbo society's complexity through narrative strategies that repurpose colonial language, challenging Eurocentric stereotypes of African "primitivism." Salih, conversely, inverts Joseph Conrad's colonial gaze, exposing the corrosive effects of empire through the tragic arc of Mustafa Sa'eed, a Sudanese intellectual whose vengeful mimicry of colonial power unravels into self-destruction. By employing close textual analysis, this thesis reveals how both authors navigate the ambivalence of cultural hybridity, where acts of resistance risk replicating colonial hierarchies. The novels ultimately underscore the enduring struggle to articulate identity and sovereignty in a world shaped by colonialism's epistemic violence, urging a reckoning with its spectral presence in contemporary systems of knowledge, governance, and belonging.



**Keywords**: Colonial Discourse, Self/Other Binary, Orientalism, *Things Fall Apart*, *Season of Migration to the North*.

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# INTRODUCTION

The lasting impact of colonialism is not confined to the redrawing of borders or the collapse of empires but persists in the contested arenas of identity, knowledge, and cultural representation. Postcolonial literature, as a site of resistance and recuperation, interrogates the violence of imperial domination while illuminating the vexed processes of decolonization, a process demanding not only political freedom but also the dismantling of deeply ingrained epistemic hierarchies. At the centre of this theoretical and literary endeavour is an urgent tension: how do cultures that have experienced prior colonization narrate their stories, claim their selves, and assert their agency following structures designed to eradicate them? This thesis takes up this question through examining two postcolonial novels: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966). Both novels are deconstructive of colonial discourse and deal with the fraught dynamics of resistance, hybridity, and belonging.

Achebe's and Salih's fiction, firmly rooted in their respective cultural and historical contexts, engages at length with the subtleties of colonial discourse and its legacy. The novels are all a critical deconstruction of the self/other, civilization/barbarism, and tradition/modernity binaries that underwrite imperial ideologies, as expounded by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). But they continue to add complexity to these theoretical frameworks by introducing Homi Bhabha's theories of mimicry and hybridity and demonstrating how ambivalence generated by these theories destabilizes colonial authority. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* reasserts the Igbo culture's complex character and inherent value, challenging Eurocentric notions of African "primitivism." Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* defamiliarizes Joseph Conrad's colonial gaze by exposing the psychological and cultural fault lines of imperialism in the doomed quest of a Sudanese intellectual to Europe.

This thesis argues that these literary texts do more than offer up simple linear counter-narratives; they perform a dialectical critique of the epistemic violence of colonialism, the negation of Indigenous knowledge, the imposition of Eurocentric models, and the complex agency of the colonized. Achebe and Salih use narrative tactics that reinvestigate colonial form and linguistic norm, from Igbo proverbs to Conradian irony,

as a way of reclaiming cultural autonomy and laying bare the inherent contradictions of imperial ideologies. Their literature, however, also struggles with the lasting consequences of colonialism, including the fragmentation of identity, the erosion of communal solidarity, and the continued effects of power imbalances in so-called "postcolonial" states.

Theoretical frameworks from Said, Bhabha, and Michel Foucault guide this study. Said's analysis of Orientalism shows how colonial discourse simplifies non-European societies into static, inferior others and Bhabha's theory of mimicry demonstrates the subversive potential of partial, destabilizing imitations of colonial norms. Foucault's power-knowledge nexus explains how schools, museums, and missionary societies as institutions utilize knowledge production to naturalize domination. Collectively, these theorists offer a framework for understanding how Achebe and Salih undermine colonial authority while navigating the complexities of resistance, an endeavour that replicates the violence it seeks to transcend.

Chapter One lays out the theoretical paradigms, exploring colonialism's doubling of power and knowledge production. It examines how colonial discourse creates hierarchical binaries to legitimize domination and generates ambivalence through the mimicry of the colonized. Chapter Two examines *Things Fall Apart*, exploring Achebe's recovery of Igbo agency and criticism of colonial disruption through Okonkwo's deadly resistance and Nwoye's conflicted adoption of Christianity. Chapter Three continues into *Season of Migration to the North*, where Salih's eponymous protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, employs sexuality and intelligence as weapons against colonial domination, thereby realizing the suicidal contradictions of hybridity.

These works also acknowledge the lasting scars of colonial domination, the fragmentation of identity, the loss of communal coherence, and the ambivalent status of postcolonial subjectivity caught between inherited trauma and the desire for self-recovery. Thus, this study maintains that Achebe and Salih illuminate the contemporary challenge of asserting identity and sovereignty under circumstances characterized by colonial hegemony. By placing the psychological and cultural cost of imperialism and encouraging confrontation with the persistent legacies of colonialism in knowledge formations,

institutions of governance, and personal identity, emphasizing Indigenous voices and undertaking critical analysis in relation to the boundaries of resistance, these scholarly works prompt us to see decolonization as not a finished task but instead as a process that is continuous and contentious, requiring close attention and moral responsibility to the traces of history.

# CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 Colonialism, Knowledge, and Power

This chapter establishes a theoretical framework for explaining the connection of representation, knowledge, and power in colonial culture in terms of the colonial construction of hierarchical binary oppositions and the complicity of resistance and passive accommodation. It begins initially with the help of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to analyse how Western colonialism constructed non-European societies as unchanging, capricious "others" to provide grounds for subordination. Edward Said demonstrates how a colonial discourse, inscribed in culture, literature, scholarship, and statecraft, systematically obliterated native sovereignty through a multitude of histories in which "civilized" formations ruled over "savage" peoples or portrayed "primitive" societies as inherently inferior. This process, firmly grounded in Michel Foucault's understanding of power-knowledge, explains the extent to which power was wielded by the production of knowledge under colonial times. Schools, cultural institutions, and missionary organizations served as key agencies that operated to enable Eurocentric dominance by placing the colonized in the position of passive objects to be examined, evaluated, controlled, and civilized in order to maintain the facade of superiority.

Building on this perspective, Homi Bhabha argues that colonial authority is inherently unstable. His theories of hybridity and mimicry expand upon Said's concept of binary oppositions by showing how the colonized subject's imitation of the West, being "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364), creates a critical gap that undermines the coherence and strength of colonial power. Colonialism, by its very nature, transformed global knowledge systems, inflicting hierarchies of power, culture, and race onto the fundamental paradigms of contemporary academic disciplines. Although the encounter between European and non-European societies existed before the 15th century, colonialism signified a critical turn toward formulating such contact in terms of exclusive dichotomies: "civilization" and "barbarism" as well as "self" and "other" (Loomba 57). As Mary Louise Pratt describes, travel writing was instrumental in this epistemic revolution as it built Europe as an identity in opposition to a conceptualized "rest of the world" (5). This ideological enterprise was founded upon established myths, like the

medieval European "wild man" trope of a hypersexual and violent outsider living at the margins of society, to institutionalize racialized stereotypes of Africans, Muslims, and other non-Europeans as perpetual threats to moral and social order. Colonialism's power resided not in ignorance, but rather in its capacity to instrumentalize knowledge. Colonial governments systematically recorded Indigenous languages, cultures, and geography and then distorted this knowledge through reductive labels such as "primitive" or "barbaric" to legitimate domination (Pratt 6). In the view of Sander Gilman's analysis, stereotypes are not knowledge gaps but a means to "reduce intricate realities into artificial binaries" (18), entrenching erroneous ideas of difference that cement power.

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the word colonialism from the Latin word "colonia" (a settlement affiliated with a mother state). It defines it as "a settlement in a new country, a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community, connected with their parent state" (Loomba 1). But this definition obscures the violent realities of colonialism by failing to note the native peoples who already inhabited these lands. It defines colonization as a harmless process of "forming a community," thus ignoring such elements as conquest, displacement, and exploitation. Loomba argues that such language "evacuates the word 'colonialism' of any implication of an encounter between peoples, or of conquest and domination" (2). The phrase "new locality" conceals that these territories were neither vacant of inhabitants nor indeed "new" but were occupied by settled communities. Colonialism was more than mere settlement; it was "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Loomba 2). The process saw the colonizers getting intermingled with Indigenous people in "traumatic relationships" characterized by power and resistance dynamics. Though European expansion from the 16th century onwards is often at the centre of the issue, colonialism is by no means a European phenomenon alone; it has been a recurring feature of world history, from the Roman Empire to the Aztec conquests. As Loomba explains, "colonialism in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history" (2). Its nature is domination, whether through territorial annexation, economic exploitation, or cultural effacement. Its aftermath, however, is highly contested. The "postcolonial" suggests both chronological sequence and ideological break, but as

critics have warned, formal independence does not often erase colonialism's deep-seated hierarchies. Neocolonial dependencies continue, and countries such as India, as Mahasweta Devi's work makes evident, tend to duplicate colonial violence in internal caste, class, and tribal exploitation (Loomba 11).

Postcolonial theory, therefore, works in a paradox: colonialism reshaped 85% of the globe, and yet its legacies resist universalizing explanations (Loomba 15). Hybridity theories and "multiplicity of histories" (Alva 245) decentre monolithic explanations, but at the danger of hiding capitalism's global domination. In an effort not to idealize pre-colonial pasts or be the first to utter a "post" colonial present, postcolonial analysis must be anchored in material localized realities, where, Gayatri Spivak warns, the subaltern voice becomes ensnared in webs of power (211–313). This study argues that an understanding of colonialism's epistemic and structural violence necessitates not only deconstructing its binaries but also confronting how its ghosts persist in haunting present knowledge systems, modes of governance, and identity.

### 1.2 Edward Said, Foucault, and the Power-Knowledge Relation

Edward Said's application of Michel Foucault's theory, that knowledge is intrinsically tied to power, forms the theoretical foundation of his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*. As Loomba points out, "knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power" (43), a perspective that underscores how colonial representations were never neutral. Said's *Orientalism* presents a framework in which to examine how the colonial discourse of *Things Fall Apart* and *Season of Migration to the North* supports or contests Orientalist discourse. Achebe and Salih, writing from the perspective of the colonized people, deconstruct the "us versus them" dichotomy by claiming agency for their cultures and by unveiling the psychological and cultural disintegration wrought by imperialism. The concept of the "other" is central to an understanding of cross-cultural contact and the construction of identity, particularly when viewed through the lens of Edward Said's examination of Orientalism. The West, as portrayed by Said, delineates the Orient as the "other" to substantiate its own supremacy by placing itself as "inside, in place, common, belonging, superior," whereas the Orient is perceived as "outside, excluded, aberrant, inferior, subordinate" (Said 13–14). It is a

process of "othering" that transcends individual perceptions; rather, it is ingrained within cultural norms, ideological formations, and the unconscious, influencing the way societies construct their identities and perceive others. The identification of the "other" as exotic, irrational, or inferior, common in Orientalist discourses, serves to legitimize Western hegemony and simultaneously consolidate its own self-projection as rational, moral, and superior. This mechanism is central to my thesis, which examines how power and representation in intercultural communication reproduce hierarchies and construct understandings of identity, thus:

> The other is the source and resource for a better understanding the self. When we recognize others, we set boundaries between them (a group of people living in outer spaces) and us. We tend to construct fiction to grasp or see them; we label them, for example, as "barbarian," just as the ancient Greeks did. This mentality divides the world into regions and gives some cultural characteristics to the people living there. (Furumizo 131)

This observation highlights how deeply ingrained the impulse to "other" is in human history. By turning difference into fiction, labelling others as "barbarians" or outsiders, we create simplified identities that serve to stabilize our own sense of self. These imagined boundaries do more than just divide cultures; they become tools of power, shaping how knowledge is produced and how entire peoples are understood or misunderstood.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) fundamentally reshaped postcolonial studies by exposing how the West's construction of the "Orient" functioned as a tool of imperial power. At its core, Orientalism is a discursive framework that defines the East as Europe's inferior, exoticized "other," a timeless, irrational counterpart to Western rationality and modernity. Said clarifies this idea, writing: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1). For Said, this invention is more than a cultural curiosity free from bias; instead, it is a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said 2). By creating this binary, Western writers, administrators, and intellectuals have made the Orient into a passive object to be studied, controlled, and reformed.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said identifies two fundamental aspects that have governed the relationship between the East and the West since the mid-eighteenth century. The colonial encounter established and maintained a constantly increasing corpus of systematic knowledge about the Orient. This knowledge was guided by fields like ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history, whose final goal was to classify and delineate the East in terms of Western categories. Literature, created by novelists, poets, translators, and travellers, also assisted in constructing the Orient as a place of fascination and study. The second fundamental aspect of this relationship was Europe's position of superiority. Despite gestures that admitted the greatness of Eastern civilizations, such as Balfour's recognition of their "greatness," the basic dynamic was one of inequality. The Western world has long viewed itself as a stronger and more advanced counterpart, while the Eastern world was described as weaker and inferior. This discrepancy extended beyond the political arena and occurred in cultural and religious areas as well, thus supporting a hierarchical worldview that justified imperial control and intellectual superiority over the East.

> The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. (Gramsci qtd in Said 25)

This argument is made by Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, highlighting the necessity of historical awareness and self-awareness in gaining an understanding of one's own identity and location within wider social and historical processes. Gramsci's concept is highly pertinent to postcolonialism because it illustrates how individuals and groups are formed by history, like colonialism, and how the recuperation of agency is sensitive to such influences. Gramsci's theory of historical consciousness complements Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. While Said uncovers how colonial discourse constructs the "Orient" as Europe's subservient "other," Gramsci provides a means of recovering agency through self-awareness and historical consciousness. Said discusses that "Orientalism offers a marvellous instance of the interrelations between society, history, and textuality" (3), thus Orientalism is a case study on how historical and social contexts determine, and are determined by, texts (scholarship, literature, art). For literary scholars, this means analysing how Western representations of the Orient are not neutral but are charged with

power. The Orient as a cultural construct indexes ideology (i.e., the "civilizing mission"), politics (colonial imperialism), and power rationality (imperialism justification).

Said bases his critique upon Michel Foucault's discourse theory, which defines Orientalism as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3), stating that:

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (3)

This discussion was not limited to scholarly writing and instead, it seeped into political, cultural, and moral frameworks, such that Europe could "define its strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said 3). Consequently, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5). Furthermore, Orientalism reinforced "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (Said 7), thereby legitimizing imperialism as a "civilizing mission."

Edward Said emphasizes that the construction of the "Orient" is more than an intellectual or creative endeavour; it is a pathway to material dominance. Orientalist discourse is inextricably linked with Western political, economic, and military hegemony. According to Said, the Orient was not merely "discovered" but "made as Oriental" (6), formed through colonial institutions and practices that replicated Western hegemony. The creation of knowledge of the Orient, via literary works, scholarly studies, or colonial governance, operates to reinforce Western authority and legitimize imperial domination. It is sustained by an interrelated network of institutions, like schools, religious institutions, legal systems, and museums, that propagate Orientalist thought and legitimize colonial power. For example, Said emphasizes that Orientalist scholars such as Silvestre de Sacy and Edward William Lane created authoritative texts that depicted the Orient as static, irrational, and requiring Western intervention, thus establishing a cyclical relationship between knowledge and power.

Foucault's formulation of discourse as "a practice that produces what it purports to describe" (Parker 328) expands on Said's study of Orientalism in that it illustrates that knowledge is not simply received but is actively created by power relations. Foucault contends that "power constructs what we recognize as knowledge" (Parker 328), which implies that our knowledge of such things as gender or history is determined by the constant process of assimilating cultural norms. This concept fits with Said's assertion that Orientalism is not simply an intellectual endeavour but "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3), demonstrating how these sorts of discourses function to create and naturalize a reality in which the Orient is already subservient. Both writers emphasize that the production of knowledge is inextricably linked with power, either in the ongoing reaffirmation of gender norms or the deliberate creation of the "Orient." This is a reiteration of the fact that the terms in which we comprehend the world are creations of power relations and not representations of an independent, pre-existing reality. Foucault discusses the interaction of power and knowledge, asserting:

> We should admit that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (465)

For Foucault, then, knowledge is neither objective nor neutral but rather built to command power over the "other." His formulation of the relationship between knowledge and power might be said to be central to the action of Western colonial discourse, which Boehmer identifies as follows:

> the collection of symbolic practices, including textual codes, conventions, and implied meanings, which Europe deployed in the process of its colonial expansion and… in understanding the bizarre and apparently untranslatable strangeness with which it came into contact. (Boehmer 48)

Michel Foucault's idea of discourse refutes the perception that language is only a means for the production of meaning. On the contrary, he believes that language entails systematic frameworks for understanding the world, which are produced by cultural and historical contexts. Foucault discusses discourse as having a tight connection with ideology and being central to the reproduction or contestation of power relations.

Discourse, for M.H. Abrams, is made up of "a body of anonymous, historical rules" that determine the permissible utterances within certain temporal, spatial, and cultural or linguistic environments (262). Foucault's discourse includes not just what is said or thought but also the unwritten rules governing what is deemed rational or excluded, what is named madness or rebellion, and what is sanctioned as sane or socially acceptable (Loomba 39). In this regard, discourse is the system within which language works and is influenced by human practices, institutions, and actions. It is the field where knowledge is produced, controlled, and disseminated according to societal norms.

Michel Foucault conceded that his position is informed by the prevailing discourses of his time. That is, he saw that we all act as products and agents of the discourses we operate within, such that even his analyses must be influenced to some extent by the very structures he critiqued. His self-awareness here serves to underscore the pervasiveness of discourse in affecting cognition and the challenges of establishing an objective standpoint independent of those influences. Discourse plays a crucial role in the formation of social norms and perceptions, thereby establishing the rhetorical frameworks that govern individual behaviour. In the US, for example, after September 11, general discourse tends to link Muslims with terrorism, a discourse that is reiterated by the media on various platforms. This portrayal has had a profound effect on public sentiment, such that the majority of Americans share the same negative view of Muslims as violent or extremist by nature. These representations do not serve only as mirrors of singular events; rather, they are within a wider discursive mode that situates Islam generally in an oppositional narrative. This is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's contention that discourse establishes the boundaries of what could be said and thought within a given society and thus marks the boundaries of individual and social conduct. The media play an important part here in helping spread and reinforce certain stories that inform public awareness, therefore:

> If discourse, as Foucault thinks, constrains our perceptions and views, can't we say that our knowledge of the world is not necessarily true or objective? In response to such a question, Foucault insists that our knowledge of the world does not necessarily reflect the world as it is, but as it is understood within the frames set by discourse. By implication, therefore, our understanding of the world is absolutely not a pure reflection of reality, but a mere creation of discourse. (El Aidi 1063)

Within Western intellectual traditions, the "Orient" was an independent and self-complete domain with its own national, cultural, and epistemological borders, and a presumed internal rationale. Yet, this unity and identity were not recognized as having been a creation of the autonomous will or self-expression of the Orient. While the Western framework became the dominant authority over Eastern representation and thereby defined the knowledge of the Orient through various mechanisms of knowledge production, like scholarly analysis, literary representation, and political discourse, it made Eastern society appear childlike. By presenting the Orient as passive, stationary, and lacking the possibility of self-representation, Western discourses reduced its complexity to a set of simplified and exterior determinations of categories. So, the identity of the East in Western thinking was not based on its realities but on the Western scholarship and imagination's hegemonic structures, which placed the West as the active, rational determiner of meaning and the East as an object to be determined, analysed, and controlled (Said 880). This dynamic underscores how, as Tekin asserts, "Western cultural imperialism constructed and moulded the world and identity of the non-West" (18).

### 1.3 Bhabha's Interstitial Resistance: Hybridity and Mimicry

While Edward Said's *Orientalism* demonstrates how Western discourse constitutes the East as a fixed, inferior "other" to legitimate imperial dominance, Homi Bhabha's hybridity theory intervenes in this binary by excavating the ambivalence that found colonial encounters. Said's framework demonstrates how Orientalist knowledge formation consolidates hierarchical oppositions between "Orient" and "Occident" that position the West as a rational, authoritative subject and the East as a passive object. Bhabha argues that this binarism is unstable. Colonial power, he argues, does not work through total control but an ambivalent process of repetition and imitation. The colonized subject tries to imitate the colonizer but in vain; it is always "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364), which makes the sharp edges of identity fuzzy. Bhabha is convinced that this ambivalence produces a "third space" of cultural hybridity. Here, clear conceptions of self and other disappear, and power is undermined by the act of mimicry. Whereas Said focuses on how the West controls the representation of the East, Bhabha

uncovers the gaps, inconsistencies, and interconnections that destabilize colonial thought from within. This turns colonial discourse into a space of oppression and resistance:

> Drawing on language and ideas from structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and Foucault, Bhabha asks us to consider the psychological ambivalence, the struggle of opposites and contradictory feelings, in the colonized or formerly colonized world and in colonial and postcolonial discourse. He describes the colonized and colonizing worlds as hybrid, versus Said's sense of one culture thinking about its opposite culture. (Parker 360)

Bhabha argues that mimicry discloses the colonized psychological ambivalence, resistance, and complicity simultaneously. This is also an expression of the anxieties of the colonizer. Bhabha succinctly describes that mimicry is "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364). This iteration of difference erodes the authoritative position of the colonizer as it breaks down the boundaries of cultural and racial differences. These dynamics of the phenomenon are more subversive when mimicry is characterized as "almost the same but not quite" undermining colonial power as it distorts its self-representation and makes mimicry a surreptitious mode of mockery (Parker 364). Bhabha uses Jacques Lacan's theory of camouflage in his work, *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (1983), to indicate the disruptive potential inherent in mimicry. Bhabha suggests that mimicry is not a question of assimilating but rather functions as a form of camouflage:

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare. (Bhabha 360)

Bhabha contends that colonial mimicry works in a realm between imitation and mockery and constitutes an unstable relation between the colonizer and the colonized. The civilizing mission, aimed at reforming and disciplining, is undermined by the ambivalence of its discourse. Mimicry generates a "partial" colonial subject, both incomplete and illusory, that is the embodiment of similarity and difference. This ambivalence does not simply deconstruct the colonial discourse but reformulates it into a state of uncertainty. Colonial authority relies on strategic limitations; however, its very effectiveness is undermined by being infiltrated with inappropriate or excess elements, making mimicry both a sign of resemblance and a potential threat (Bhabha 362).

By bringing together the theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, this research highlights the multifaceted interaction among power, representation, and resistance that informs both colonial and postcolonial discourses. Said's theory of Orientalism reveals the strategies of Western dominance in creating the "Orient" as an inferior and exotic other, thereby marginalizing non-European societies and cultures at the fringes of civilization. From the perspective of imperialism as an ideological project based on the discourse of a "civilizing" mission and cultural superiority, Said explains how Western literature and knowledge systems have legitimized domination, making colonized cultures mere passive recipients of European values. The binary opposition of self/other further consolidates the exclusion of the colonized from cultural and political agency. In contrast, Bhabha complicates this binary by introducing hybridity and mimicry as subversive forces within colonial power relations. His insistence on the reciprocal transformation that underpins colonial encounters, in which assimilation is not only one-way but also encourages ambivalence and subversion, calls into question the fixed hierarchies of Orientalist representations. Said's examination of ideological control and Bhabha's attention to interstitial forms of resistance together offer a dialectical framework for explaining how colonial power is imposed and challenged.

Said's *Orientalism* demonstrates that Western hegemony constructs the East as a static, irrational "other" to legitimate domination. Foucault's power-knowledge axis undergirds this discourse, permeating institutions and cultural representations that render colonized cultures passive objects (Said 3). Achebe and Salih, nevertheless, undermine this passivity. *Things Fall Apart* inverts Orientalist stereotypes by revealing Igbo society's sophistication in its rituals, governance, and moral codes before and after colonial disruption. Similarly, Salih's novel reverses the Oriental gaze through role reversal: the Sudanese protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed is turned into the exoticized "other" in Europe. Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides us with a theory whereby we can examine how colonial power in both novels is maintained through mastery of the world. Achebe undermines Orientalist stereotypes by humanizing Igbo culture, presenting rituals like the egwugwu masquerades not as "savage" spectacles but as expressions of communal justice. By contrast, British missionaries' representation of Igbo religion as "heathenish" is a paradigm of Said's critique of the Western habit of "producing" a subpar image of the

Orient. Salih continues to expand on this idea by reversing the Orientalist gaze: Sudanese protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed becomes the exoticized "other" in Europe, fascinating and eventually causing the undoing of British women who fantasize over him as a "black savage" (Salih 34). This role reversal reveals Orientalism's "civilizing mission" hypocrisy in concurrence with Foucault that power generates knowledge to normalize domination (Parker 328). The novels thus deconstruct Said's "us vs. them" binary by exposing the psychological cost of internalized colonialism, Okonkwo's suicide and Sa'eed's self-destruction symbolize identity disintegration under epistemic violence.

Bhabha's mimicry theory, "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364), opens Said's binary into a subversive dynamic, whereas Mustafa Sa'eed's mimicry of Western intellectualization and sexuality in *Season of Migration to the North* is a site of ambivalence, subverting colonial power through excess and irony. Similarly, Igbo Christian conversion in *Things Fall Apart* is not assimilation but a contested negotiation, producing hybrid practices that defy missionary intentions.

Colonialism is a performance of power supported by scripts of superiority and acts of erasure. Edward Said ripped up the stage, revealing Orientalism's machinery: how the West positioned itself as an enlightened protagonist and the East as a barbaric foil. Foucault, the backstage critic, exposed knowledge as both a prop and weapon, carefully curated by museums, schools, and missions to flatten dynamic societies into static curiosities. But Homi Bhabha, the subversive playwright, rewrote the ending: colonial power, he showed, crumbled under the weight of its contradictions. "Almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364) cracked the facade of European superiority, exposing its weak core. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* are war cries in this conflict. Achebe restores Igbo pride, showing us a world in which justice wears masquerade masks and yams are kings. Salih turns the tables: his Sudanese hero becomes the exotic "monster" of Europe's nightmare, seducing and annihilating the myth of white moral purity.

## CHAPTER 2: *THINGS FALL APART*

### 2.1 Reflecting the Other Side of the Story

This chapter analyses Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a constitutive counter-narrative to colonial historiography, contends that the novel counters Eurocentric narratives of African "barbarism" by refocusing attention on the complexity, dignity, and agency of precolonial Igbo society. The chapter deconstructs, first, Achebe's portrayal of Umuofia, an independently governed Igbo society with democratic institutions, spiritual wealth, and communal values, in an attempt to deconstruct colonial stereotypes of Africa as primitive. The subsequent analysis examines the novel's critique of British imperialism, discussing ways in which missionary and administrative endeavours devalue Indigenous traditions, manifested within the tragic resistance of Okonkwo and the ambivalent embrace of Christianity by his son Nwoye. Lastly, the chapter examines Achebe's experimental narrative strategies, such as Igbo proverbs, oral histories, and hybridized English, to recuperate cultural agency and recontextualize colonial language. Following postcolonial critics like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, the critique positions *Things Fall Apart* as a counter to colonial erasure and a lasting reflection on identity, survival, and the power of narrative to reclaim history.

For most of history, Africa's story was told by colonial European writers, who too often presented the continent with reductive stereotypes. That story changed profoundly in the 1950s, when African nations began to achieve independence and a generation of African writers rose up to take back their narrative. Among these seminal works, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is described as the archetypal contemporary African novel; it dramatically shifts global perceptions about African culture by highlighting Igbo customs, the devastating consequences of colonialism, and the nuances of human dignity. The broad themes and lyrical prose of the novel have cemented its position as a cornerstone of postcolonial writing and an ongoing exploration of identity, change, and endurance, thus:

> By 1935 the African continent, except for Ethiopia and Liberia, had been occupied by European imperial powers, including France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium and Britain. In the case of the Igbo, the British put in place an 'effective' occupational system of colonialism. It was an administrative or dependent colonialism, in which Britain using only a few of its citizens as administrators (District Commissioner) broadened its administrative powers to cover the Igbo. (Odamtten 164)

For many academics and students studying African culture, the emergence of modern African literature is widely recognized to have begun with the release of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Since its publication, Achebe's standing as a foundational figure in African literature has remained unchallenged. He continues to be the most widely read and critically examined African novelist, and his works serve as key frameworks for analysing and critiquing postcolonial experiences, their cultural expressions, and their broader implications. Simon Gikandi, a scholar of Kenyan literature and postcolonial theory, underscores the urgency of reimagining African fiction as a transformative narrative practice that interrogates colonial epistemologies, arguing that:

> We must develop new ways of looking at African fiction as a narrative practice that revises and reverts the colonial discourses in which, to quote V.Y. Mudimbe, African worlds have been established as realities for knowledge; for even in our postcolonial present, Africans themselves read, challenge, rewrite these discourses as a way of explicating and defining their culture, history, and being. (3)

Therefore, fiction provides authors with a medium to express contested visions and imaginings. Reflecting on an African world destabilized by centuries of enslavement and colonial rule, and grappling with its cultural fragmentation, Achebe observes a reality he cannot reconcile with. Thus, he resorts to narrative and storytelling as tools of a critical re-examination of this world, enabling a new vision, as well as space for envisioning other societies. For Achebe, literature is a process of reconstituting people and societies in response to the existential crises experienced by Black communities. According to him, "Literature is one of the ways, I think at least one of the ways available to the writer to organize himself and his society to meet the perils of living" (Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* 78). This reconstructive and imaginative role of art remains at the centre of Achebe's theoretical endeavours on African literature. The historical import of Achebe's endeavour is that he appropriated colonial language, a tool initially employed to impose and replicate colonial ideology, and made it a conduit for new, oppositional narratives. By reworking this language, Achebe forges new expressive modes that counter the traditional viewpoints of colonial discourse, disturbing its assumed stability and proposing alternative narratives that redraw cultural and ideological possibilities (Gikandi 4). In trying to forge new modes of representation of African culture, Achebe and his generation tried to break free from what he referred to as the "prison house of colonialism" (Achebe,

*Morning Yet on Creation Day* 45). In their search for a reinvented African self, which is central to Achebe's enterprise, these writers examined the colonial enterprise carefully, its ideologies, its histories, and its dehumanizing representations of Africans. Achebe's critical examination is that because he feels that "colonization was the most important event in our history from all kinds of angles […] most of the problems we see in our politics derive from the moment when we lost our initiative to other people, to colonizers" (Achebe, *TFA* 45). Through re-reading colonial works, Achebe seeks to envision a post-colonial future, asserting that an experience of colonialism, facilitated through both literary criticism and critical thinking, "will help us to map out our plans for the future" (Achebe, *TFA* 45). Gikandi states that:

> There is certainly a sense in which Achebe's novels are concerned with the elaboration of a new knowledge on Africa, a knowledge which takes a dual path: first, it is reconstructed from latent meanings recovered from what colonialism had repressed and from the historical conditions colonialism itself has created; but this knowledge is also something newly raised up, an addition to the reality from which it begins. (5)

In his Paris Review interview, *The Art of Fiction*, Chinua Achebe reflects on his objective of creating literature grounded in African consciousness. To achieve this, he first needed to dismantle the authority of colonial texts, the very canonical texts he was exposed to while studying English literature at Nigeria's inaugural university, modelled on British universities. He passively accepted these narratives at first, remembering how colonial adventure literature had conditioned his child's mind to identify with the "good white man" in opposition to dehumanized "savages." But as he progressed in school, a significant change took place. Novels such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, even though they are highly acclaimed in literary circles, made him confront his deformed image in colonialist terms:

> I realized that I was one of those savages jumping up and down on the beach. Once that kind of Enlightenment comes to you, you realize that someone has to write a different story. And since I was in any case inclined that way, why not me? (166)

The colonial discourse was based on two erroneous assumptions that Achebe tried to undermine: firstly, the assumption of a common ideological terrain linking colonizer and colonized, implying an unproblematic cultural unity under colonial rule; and secondly, the assumption that the colonized people would align themselves naturally with the

colonizer's point of view, thereby blind to their oppression in colonialist texts. Achebe's writing overturns these assumptions by revealing the violent disruption of Indigenous structures caused by colonialism and refusing passive accommodation. By asserting Indigenous perspectives, his work resists colonial discourse and affirms cultural autonomy. As Gikandi notes, Achebe evokes "the authority of Igbo culture and its aesthetic codes" precisely to reclaim what colonialism has suppressed and to legitimize alternative narrative strategies (9). The narrative attempts to place Africa front and centre, bringing to the fore its cultural and historical record, with a mind to address and redress past misrepresentations or biased history. In his seminal critical analysis of Orientalism wrought by colonial discourse, Edward Said contends that narrative is an indispensable means of dislodging the essentialist and static connoisseurship that he refers to as "vision" (Said 45). Said maintains that colonial discourses form representations of colonized people as static groups in a predetermined temporal and spatial context, thereby denying them any capacity to forge their self-driven historical transformation. In Achebe's terms, "It is the storyteller, in fact, who makes us what we are, who creates history. The storyteller creates the memory that the survivors must have; otherwise, their surviving would have no meaning" (Gikandi 10). A central part of Achebe's task of reclaiming the cultural dignity of Africa and confronting the counterforces to such a task is not to map the ontological structure of African reality, but to question the depiction of Africa as it had been constructed in European colonial discourse. Moreover, the process of inserting African identity back into the histories continues to be handicapped by Western linguistic systems, institutional structures, and intellectual frames, which are gifts of the colonizers.

*Things Fall Apart* is an important counter-narrative to colonial historiography, challenging the Eurocentric presumption that Africa in a state of savagery before European contact. Heit discusses that the application of the term "Euro" in "Eurocentrism," a political construct gaining momentum in the 1980s, is very similar to concepts that have been linked with the "West" or the "First World" (Heit 726). Eurocentrism defines a European perspective that confirms and legitimates the presumed superiority of European civilization. Through his unflinching portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society, Achebe challenges the dehumanizing colonial rhetoric that framed European imperialism as a benevolent mission to "civilize savages." He meticulously constructs a world defined by

its civil order, a society governed by tradition, political pragmatism, spiritual depth, and communal integrity. Set in the Igbo hinterland east of the Niger River at the dawn of the twentieth century. The book offers a nuanced portrait of Igbo culture, shaped by the author's distinctive heritage and life experiences. Despite Achebe's adoption of Christianity, he maintained connections to his ancestral heritage, which enabled him to portray both Indigenous and colonial perspectives, the book contends with the Eurocentric views of colonizers, who strove to impose their ideologies and structures in the name of "civilizing" African societies, while overlooking their complex cultural fabric. This colonial mentality, based on racial prejudice, is laid bare. Achebe's novel is not just a testament to Igbo survival but also a corrective to colonial distortions of African societies.

The novel is set in a fictional village in Nigeria, on the eve of the arrival of white missionaries. The novel explores the anxieties of the villagers about the impending disruption of their traditional political, social, and cultural structures. Researchers highlight that Achebe intended to reveal the richness of pre-colonial African life and to legitimize the dignity of Indigenous traditions. The story traces how missionary intrusion destabilizes Igbo society, displacing religious worship, social order, traditions, and economic systems. Achebe is critical of the role of missionaries in undermining and destroying indigenous culture. The novel also points out the undermining of the social fabric caused by colonial intervention. As a response to stereotypes, Achebe integrates Igbo myths, proverbs, and communal beliefs, showing readers an insider's view of the richness and humanness of the society. In this way, the work subverts reductionist colonial narratives while affirming Igbo culture. The first part of the novel purposefully immerses readers in the rhythms of Umuofia, a village with social fabrics that demonstrate unity, justice, and cultural richness. In this, Achebe shows that the Igbo world functions neither as a primitive emptiness but as a sophisticated civilization with its administration, ethics, and systems of belief. However, this carefully preserved balance begins to collapse with the invasion of British colonial forces, represented by missionaries, merchants, and officials, who bring in alien values and institutions. Achebe's examination is aimed at exposing how European colonialism, instead of "enlightening" Africa, upsets and weakens societies by replacing communal customs with corrosive individualism. The title

of the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, comes from W. B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming", a metaphor of cultural and historical disintegration:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
>
> The falcon doesn't listen to the falconer;
>
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
>
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, (Yeats 1921)

The lines capture the novel's central theme: the disintegration of Igbo traditional society in the face of colonial pressure. By invoking Yeats's apocalyptic imagination, Achebe highlights the fundamental historical break that colonialism introduces into African societies. The allusion underscores the point that the events in Umuofia are not merely a local disruption but are a greater, more anarchic reordering of global hierarchies, wherein the old centre cannot resist the discordant pressures wrought by colonial change. The poem, therefore, is both a structural and symbolic model for interpreting the novel's critique of imperialism.

By contrasting the richness of precolonial Umuofian society with its ultimate collapse, Achebe not only recuperates the dignity of African pasts but also exposes the hypocrisy of colonial "civilization" (Robert M. Wren 38), thus:

> Through the lenses of the village of Umuofia, Achebe offers elaborate descriptions of pre-colonial Igboland. Umuofia is presented with its socially constructed understanding of a cosmos: encompassing an integrated and co-dependent world of material (living things including human beings); ethereal beings such as Ani, the earth goddess; and animate/inanimate objects such as the shrine of agandinwayi, the legendary one-legged old woman. (Odamtten 163)

Achebe's inclusion of these cultural elements serves as both a means of cultural preservation and a form of political critique. By foregrounding these Indigenous cosmologies, Achebe resists the colonial discourse that dismissed African belief systems as irrational, superstitious, or inferior. Instead, he offers readers a worldview in which morality, justice, and community are regulated through a shared metaphysical framework. The society of Umuofia is not chaotic or lawless but operates with a coherent logic grounded in ancestral wisdom, ritual, and ethical balance. Achebe's narrative, therefore, does not merely describe culture; it affirms its legitimacy.

*Things Fall Apart* chronicles the life of Okonkwo, a passionately ambitious Igbo leader in precolonial Umuofia, whose fixation on masculinity and fear of being like his "lazy and improvident" father, Unoka, propel his actions (Achebe, *TFA* 4). Okonkwo's unshakeable adherence to cultural traditions is tested when he participates in the ritualistic killing of Ikemefuna, a young man for whom he had grown fond, fearing that "show affection was a sign of weakness" (Achebe, *TFA* 57). His accidental murder of a fellow clansman at a funeral forces him into exile, and during his seven-year absence, British colonizers and missionaries arrive, disrupting the social hierarchy of Umuofia. The colonial powers derisively regard Igbo culture as "barbaric," pushing Christianity and an alien legal code, as where the District Commissioner declares that their "peaceful administration" enforces "justice" under the "dominion of our queen" (Achebe, *TFA* 184). In a transformed Umuofia, Okonkwo finds his people divided; many, including his son Nwoye, become Christian, but others, like his friend Obierika, lament that "our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger" (Achebe, *TFA* 165). After Okonkwo kills a colonial emissary in a rebellious act, his people will not follow him, and he descends into despair and suicide. Obierika mourns Okonkwo's death, holding the colonizers responsible: "You drove him to kill himself, and now he will be buried like a dog" (Achebe, *TFA* 197). Achebe critiques the destructive cultural imposition of colonialism through the tragic trajectory of Okonkwo and the disintegration of Igbo society yet simultaneously presents an unsparing account of the sophistication of pre-colonial Africa, honouring its traditions and revealing its faults, including strict gender roles and cruel justice. The novel concludes with the District Commissioner's callous plan to reduce Okonkwo's story to a "reasonable paragraph" in his racist book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* (Achebe, *TFA* 197), symbolizing the suppression of Indigenous stories by colonial discourse.

Achebe penned *Things Fall Apart* to create a more nuanced, more realistic portrait of his homeland and Igbo culture than the narrow, dehumanizing ones in Joseph Conrad and other European writers. The book is focused on Igbo custom, and Achebe employs a vividly expressive writing style to bring readers into the cadences of pre-colonial African existence, relying on his own cultural background. Umuofia, the chief village of the novel, is introduced as a self-sufficient Igbo society untainted by European colonization at the

beginning of the novel. Its governance is led by male elders and ancestral spirits, functioning within a merit-based and communal system in which power derives from personal strength or oratorical skill. However, British colonizers, unable to comprehend the democratic and decentralized genius of Igbo political organization, imposed rigid colonial hierarchies in its place (Ohadike 255). Achebe establishes the interdependence of the individual and the community in Igbo culture from the beginning of the novel. The wrestling match between Okonkwo and Amalinze the Cat, for instance, is portrayed as a communal event: "The drums beat, and the flutes sang, and the spectators held their breath" (Achebe, *TFA* 3). The scenario shows how Okonkwo's individual success resonates throughout the village, as the community's expectations help shape his identity in large measures. As the critic Emmanuel Obiechina explains, the novel demonstrates the "intimate relationship between the individual and the community" (40), setting Okonkwo's life within the context of communal existence in Umuofia. With these observations, Achebe refutes colonialist assumptions, introducing readers not to a simple individual's story but to a richly detailed account of a healthy, self-sufficient culture.

In the pre-colonial Igbo societies, worship of gods and spirits was part of community life. The societies, as depicted in the novel, were very pluralistic and had their centres structured around gods of the ancestors and mystical forces to which Achebe refers symbolically (Guthrie 32). In Umuofian society, there existed earth and sky gods, in addition to human oracles who were intermediaries between the world of men and spirits. Scholars such as Ohadike observe that Igbo cosmology also made space for reincarnation beliefs and spirit possession. Within this system, gods regulated the earth's fertility, productive land was distributed based on the size of a man's family, and neighbours worked together on shared projects such as building compounds, houses, fences, and barns.

Agriculture, in the form of yam cultivation, was at the core of both subsistence and prestige, as echoed throughout the novel. On the other hand, land cursed by deities was left by villagers, although those places subsequently turned into spaces inhabited by European colonizers in *Things Fall Apart*. A man's farming success directly affected his status in the tribe; inability to succeed on one's land barred him from rising to command, reflecting the impenetrable link between economic productivity, divine approval, and social standing in Igbo society. In Umuofia, a farming society, a man's existence and

survival are tied to his agrarian success, most specifically his yam farming. Achebe emphasizes the priority of the yam in economic and cultural significance throughout the novel, and he depicts it as the "king of crops" that "demanded hard work and care from cockcrow till the chickens went to roost" (Achebe, *TFA* 21). The villagers' invocations to sky and earth gods focus particularly on obtaining fertile harvests, and a successful yam harvest is also publicly rejoiceful with feasting. The yam is also used metaphorically for life and being integrated into society, as in the case of Ikemefuna's integration into Okonkwo's family: he "grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season and was full of the sap of life" (Achebe, *TFA* 32). Farm failure, nevertheless, has a stigma that runs extremely deep. Unoka, Okonkwo's father, is reproached for not being able to grow yams and passed away in shame as "a man who was too lazy and foolish to grow a good crop" (Guthrie 33). Okonkwo's success, however, is a testament to the Igbo meritocratic ethos, in which "a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (Achebe, *TFA* 7). Umuofia holds faith in discipline, work, and merit-based strength, ideals that cement social status once attained so that work, not birth, determines legacy.

In Igbo culture, individuals are supposed to subordinate personal interests to a communal good, showing cooperation, deference to the wisdom of elders, and compliance with societal rules. This obligation, however, frequently occasions inner turmoil, as in the case of Okonkwo's difficulty in reconciling his strict compliance with tradition and his natural opposition to whatever he regards as encroaching. A striking illustration is when the Priestess of Agbala comes to claim his daughter Ezinma for a ritual blessing. As much as Okonkwo is devoted to adhering to cultural norms, he considers the night visit by the Priestess to his household an intrusion. His objections, though, are sharply rebuked by the Priestess, asserting the paramountcy of divine authority: "Does a man speak when a god speaks?" (Achebe *TFA*, 96). Though Ezinma is returned unharmed the following day, Okonkwo's anxiety over this meeting, stemming from his dedication to societal expectations as well as his instinctual need to protect his child, illuminates the inherent tension between communal obligations and personal desire. The incident stands to highlight the greater theme of opposing allegiances that characterize his tragic conflict within his social landscape.

Achebe's portrait of Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart* resists sentimentalizing Africa, instead presenting it with stark veracity. Okonkwo's brutal domination of his household springs not from innate cruelty but from an inner turmoil that is profound. His existence is dominated by a compulsive dread of weakness and failure, one triggered by the shame he felt in his youth over his father Unoka's perceived or actual frailties:

> Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. (Achebe, *TFA* 12)

Moreover, in the Umuofia society, gender roles dictate family success and structure. Women are assigned domestic duties, being wives, cooks, and caretakers. Although largely denied mainstream education and public conversation, they remain socially independent to a degree, speaking freely with their peers in society. Despite this, certain women attain high rank as priestesses or oracles, roles founded upon the belief that women are more spiritually sensitive (Ohadike 241). Such women commit themselves to sacred duties, acting as mediators of the divine will. Men, however, wield authority as providers and heads of households, typically settling down with several wives alongside a favoured wife, as with Okonkwo, while demanding obedience, nourishment, and domestic services. The children are socialized at an early age into gendered roles: girls assist in domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning, while boys are trained for war and yam cultivation since society is concerned with having well-differentiated but complementary roles to enable familial and communal stability. Readers should thus engage with gender dynamics readings in *Things Fall Apart* with tact, according to David Carroll:

> It would be quite wrong, however, to give the impression that the tribal society of *Things Fall Apart* is formidably monolithic. This is far from Achebe's intention. He is anxious to display the flexibility of the social structure, for only by understanding this can we understand the life and death of the central character, Okonkwo. What at first sight appear to be rigid conventions invariably turn out to be the ritual framework within which debate, and questioning can be carried on. (389)

Carroll points out a key aspect of Igbo society. Umuofia people value settled authority and merit; their culture, however, exists on the intellectual independence and moral deliberation of its people. Achebe's story illustrates the interconnectedness of the roles of male and female, along with emphasizing the importance of both the young and

the old. Igbo social organization allows space for a variety of roles and functions, bound together by the common responsibility to advance communal welfare.

The narrative of *Things Fall Apart* takes a drastic turn with the arrival of European colonialism, which constitutes a confrontation between Igbo culture and imperial power. Having meticulously delineated pre-colonial life in Umuofia, Achebe opposes its cultural wholeness to the invasive arrival of British missionaries and administrators. The contact begins through missionaries intruding into Igboland, emblematic of the broader historical struggle between precolonial autonomy and postcolonial subjugation. The British aim was to subvert the Igbo decentralized systems of governance, introducing hierarchical structures under the guise of "civilizing" chaotic societies. While some communities had faced minimal colonial incursion, others, as represented by Umuofia, had undergone severe destabilization. Achebe captures this upheaval through figures such as Mr. Brown, the pragmatic missionary, and his interpreters, embodiments of the cultural mediation and coercive forces typical of colonial encounters. This event marks the novel's condemnation of imperialism as it is not a political conquest but rather an erasure of complex social and spiritual systems. European missionaries enter Mbanta with Igbo translators from distant places, whose foreign tongues estrange Mbanta villagers. The missionaries promptly request land upon which they will construct a church. In a deliberate act, the villagers bestow upon them the "Evil Forest," a tainted plot set aside for forbidden people and things. While the missionaries construct their church without interference, the Mbantans look forward to divine vengeance. But when nothing ill happens to the settlers, "the first day passed and the second and third and fourth, and none of them died… [revealing] the white man's fetish had unbelievable power" (Achebe, *TFA* 86). This defies the spiritual expectations of the Igbo and creates doubt among the people, questioning the validity of their traditions and the potency of colonial beliefs. The Igbo anticipate divine punishment for the European colonizers who settle on land that is cursed; however, the unrelenting advancement of colonialism tests their belief. Umuofia is initially wary of the British, with detachment, and suffers from division about the value of colonial rule and education. The book ends incomplete, with the village divided by crisis following Okonkwo's suicide, a refusal to be subjected to British rule:

> Seeing his duty as a writer in a new nation as showing his people the dignity that they lost during the colonial period, he sets out to illustrate that before the European colonial powers entered Africa, the Igbos "had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity" (1973, 8). Achebe, however, cannot achieve his goal merely by representing difference; rather he must depict an Igbo society which moderns can see as having dignity. (Rhoads 61)

Most notable is the aspect of his presentation of the Igbo as a people with a comprehensive portrayal of universal values still esteemed in the contemporary world: democratic systems of governance, receptivity to cultural pluralism, equality of masculine and feminine roles, flexibility in the face of change or adversity, egalitarian means of sharing resources, pragmatic codes of morality, promotion of industriousness, unbiased systems of justice, and rich poetic traditions. Achebe's belief that life in Igbo villages represents a desirable ideal is emphasized in an interview with Raoul Granqvist in 1988. He highlights the necessity of ideals by drawing upon traditional village life that is built upon egalitarian principles and states:

> This is what the Igbo people chose, the small village entity that was completely self-governing.... The reason why they chose it [this system] was because they wanted to be in control of their lives. So if the community says that we will have a meeting in the marketplace tomorrow, everybody should go there or could go there. And everybody could speak (Achebe, *TFA* 43)

Since Achebe is writing in a context in which colonialist writings already predisposed people's perceptions of Africa, he must reverse those misperceptions to reclaim dignity for his people. Earlier writings, like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, characterize Africans as "primitives" either as a primitive form of European (Conrad 35-36) or as symbols of the repressed primitive urges of mankind (Conrad 49). Similarly, European colonial records, as represented in the simplistic account of the fictional district commissioner in *Things Fall Apar*t, depict African life from an objective, Eurocentric perspective (Achebe, *TFA* 191). Achebe deconstructs these flawed European perspectives critically, laying bare their fallacies: "Perhaps the most important mistake of the British is their belief that all civilization progresses, as theirs has, from the tribal stage through monarchy to parliamentary government" (Rhoads 63). Missionaries, upon their initial arrival at Mbanta, anticipate finding a king in the village (Achebe, *TFA* 138). Without traditional structures of leadership to work with, the British fashioned their hierarchical system, which ran from the English queen to district commissioners down to the local

court messengers. However, such messengers are external agents without connection to Mbanta's traditional system of government (Achebe, *TFA* 160). Because those emissaries, who are from distant regions of Nigeria, owe no loyalty to the people over whom they rule, the British system encourages bribery and corruption as opposed to true development. In contrast, however, the Igbo people use a democratic kind of government. For major choices, the ndichie (elders) have assemblies within which the whole society of Umuofia takes part (Achebe, *TFA* 13). Power is vested in the clan collectively, and its decisions are those of the collective will of its members. Moreover, aligning with democratic principles, individuals are evaluated based on personal merit "according to their worth" rather than their family lineage, as would be characteristic of an aristocratic or oligarchic form of organization. In the narrative:

> Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young, but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so, although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders. (Achebe, *TFA* 8)

The Igbo people exhibit far greater cultural tolerance than the Europeans, who dismiss them as uncivilized. In this sense, the Igbo are, in certain respects, morally superior to their colonizers. To illustrate, Uchendu explains that "what one culture deems virtuous, another may view as abhorrent" (Achebe, *TFA* 129). Contrarily, European missionaries consider Igbo traditions wrong and their gods as false: "You should not think of Him as a person," said Mr. Brown "it is because you do so that you imagine He must need helpers. And the worst thing about it is that you give all the worship to the false gods you have created." (Achebe, *TFA* 180). The Igbo, nevertheless, recognize the right of other people to worship their ancestral gods, even though they may be different from their own (Achebe, *TFA* 175). Although European history is full of religious violence, Crusades, holy wars, and persecution, the Igbo prohibit the killing of clan members, even over religion, because it is a serious sin. Unlike Europeans, who wage wars in the name of gods, the Igbo do not war over their gods but see heresy as a personal matter between an individual and his god (Achebe, *TFA* 148). The missionaries unfairly criticize the Igbo religion as being regressive. Wars, while brutal, were deliberate and morally justifiable.

For example, nearby clans shunned violence with Umuofia due to its fearsome reputation, and revenge for the murder of a woman was "just" (Achebe, *TFA* 15). The Igbo religious structure, like Christianity, has an organized framework of belief: both religions worship a supreme deity (Chukwu) or God, both utilize earthly mediators (idols or Christ), and both stress moral conduct. Both religions promote humility Igbo eschew bothering Chukwu directly if possible (Achebe, *TFA* 165) and consider divine anger to depend on disobedience (Achebe, *TFA* 165). Achebe contends that Igbo religion is not second-rate to Christianity and that present-day political upheaval in Africa results from colonial disruption, not cultural defects. By destroying the old forms, Europeans established destabilization, laying bare modern government as a tainted inheritance of colonialism and not advancement.

Igbo society is built on balancing masculine and feminine principles. Masculine is strength and warriorhood, and feminine is tenderness and shelter during times of crisis. Uncle Uchendu illustrates this duality using the proverb "Mother is Supreme":

> It's 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. Your mother is there to protect you (Achebe, *TFA* 124)

The goddess of the earth also symbolizes this balance, tempering male dominance. Though not perfect, the Igbo system attempts to dampen male abuse of power. A telling example is the adage "it is not bravery to fight a woman," which crops up several times in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, *TFA* 88). While words like agbala (woman) are used pejoratively to mock sensitivity, at the same time, the cultural construct glorifies men like Ndulue, who treated his wife as an equal. Ndulue and his wife were "of one mind" and he consulted her on everything (Achebe, *TFA* 66). Achebe illustrates the recurrence of such moments of equality propagated in songs, detailing the tribe's appreciation of such a spirit of harmony.

Further, in Okonkwo's village, the drums signify a critical turning point presaging a conflict of cultures. Achebe employs these drums symbolically, crafting lush sound imagery that underscores their cultural meaning. They represent the pervasive presence of native African customs, their echoes extending outward over the landscape. To

Westerners unfamiliar with their meaning, they present drums as a sign of a primitive threat, inspiring fears of "savage" rituals emanating from the African bush. Achebe emphasizes this misunderstanding on the part of the colonizers, who link the drums with an "evil forest" (Achebe, *TFA* 88), a source of fear. To the Igbo, the evil forest was a holy burial ground reserved for people who perished as a victim of an incurable sickness such as leprosy or smallpox, and as a final resting place for prized spiritual objects. Every community had an "evil forest" in which people who died from lethal diseases, along with the highly valued spiritual objects associated with deceased healers, were interred. This particular location was believed to contain harmful spiritual energies, representations of the "powers of darkness" as they are understood in Igbo society (Achebe, *TFA* 140). "Powers of darkness" is a phrase with complex meanings for both Africans and Europeans. For the Igbo, it refers to a graveyard imbued with spiritual meaning, but Europeans envision it as a figurative abyss of savagery and evil, recalling the ominous unknown of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe emphasizes the importance of Europeans understanding that their fears are based on cultural misunderstandings, which are in direct opposition to the long-established customs of the indigenous people.

Okonkwo and his son Nwoye represent opposing notions of strength in *Things Fall Apart*. Nwoye is a "sad-faced youth" (Achebe, *TFA* 10) and does not live up to Okonkwo's lofty standards of masculinity. Okonkwo, who honours physical work and violence, teases Nwoye about his gentle nature and preference for his mother's stories instead of the "masculine" tales about violence (Achebe, *TFA* 33). The tension between them increases with the arrival of Ikemefuna, a young boy they take in as a hostage. Nwoye feels a strong bond with Ikemefuna through stories and friendships he recalls "very vividly till the end of his life" (Achebe, *TFA* 22). That bonding is permanently severed when Okonkwo participates in the ritual sacrifice of Ikemefuna as a means of demonstrating devotion to traditional practices. The incident traumatizes Nwoye, as something "had given way inside him" (Achebe, *TFA* 38). His despondency is compounded as he struggles to reconcile his father's violence with his need for sympathy. While Okonkwo is empowered by austere tradition and violence, Nwoye is distressed by such values. Nwoye's disillusionment eventually brings him to the European missionaries, whose doctrines of compassion and community are in stark contrast to those of his father. His trajectory

highlights the novel's tension between change and tradition. Nwoye's honour derives not from physical strength but from his quiet strength to abandon brutality and adopt a gentler understanding of power.

The impact of European culture profoundly impacts Nwoye. While the people living in Umuofia are resistant to accepting the foreign missionaries, Nwoye defies traditional norms and forms an independent outlook. Unlike his contemporaries, he views the arrival of the Europeans as a blessing. This is due to his desire for profound connections, which he lacks because of the dictatorial rule of Okonkwo. Nwoye first meets the missionaries in Mbanta. As he hears them preach the "love of God" and the "Holy Spirit," which they translate into Igbo, he and Okonkwo react quite differently. Okonkwo considers the missionary illogical, "[shrugging] his shoulders and [going] away to tap his afternoon palm wine" (Achebe, *TFA* 85). Nwoye is, however, profoundly touched by what they have to say. The missionaries' focus on compassion and spiritual communion appeals to his inner longing for connection, a harsh contrast to the rigid, violence-based worldview of his father. Nwoye's attraction to the missionaries' teachings demonstrates his rejection of Okonkwo's ideals. As Umuofia argues over the strangers, Nwoye silently accepts their offer of belonging, discovering dignity in a faith that esteems empathy over brute strength. Achebe characterizes Nwoye's reaction to the Christian faith with searing precision:

> It was the poetry of the new religion something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymns poured into his parched soul. (Achebe, *TFA* 85)

For Nwoye, the missionaries' religion offers the familial warmth he has never had but always desired from Okonkwo. Nwoye, having been brought up under the brutality of his father, needed to be loved and accepted, values that were absent in the hyper-masculine, inflexible philosophy of Okonkwo. The new religion, on the other hand, embraces him for who he is, without demanding aggression or strength. This belonging draws Nwoye to the missionaries' side. When Okonkwo hears about Nwoye's conversion to Christianity, he brutally beats him. Nwoye silently accepts the beating, then leaves his family to join the missionaries. Declaring his desire to attend the "white man's school," he threatens to return in the future and convert his siblings, stating that he is "happy to leave his father"

(Achebe, *TFA* 88). This decision marks a powerful cultural break; in renouncing his father's compound, a sacred space for unmarried sons, Nwoye chooses the compound of the missionaries, symbolizing his rejection of tradition.

Achebe portrays Nwoye as a symbolic example of Africans who consciously embraced European values. In her study, scholar Diana Akers Rhoads observes that the early Igbo converts to Christianity were usually outcasts who were isolated from traditional clan life. For instance, the first woman convert in Mbanta is a mother whose four sets of twins, which Igbo cultural values had declared as abominations, were abandoned (Rhoads 69). Similarly, the osu (outcasts), shunned by society, embrace Christianity after witnessing it welcoming those regarded as "unclean" by Igbo customs. Nwoye's growth is faithful to this pattern. Similar to the osu or mothers of twins, he is estranged by his father's violent devotion to custom. His conversion is symptomatic of a broader cultural movement: those marginalized or oppressed by Igbo customs ultimately turn to the missionaries' offer of acceptance. Achebe uses Nwoye's story to decry both the violence of colonial invasion and the evils of precolonial Igbo society that compelled vulnerable members like Nwoye to look for options. His embrace of Christianity is not surrender but an act of rebellion against a system that denied him dignity, a point Rhoads drives home in her study of cultural change (Guthrie 41).

Achebe depicts a stark line of division between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo represents the traditional Igbo concepts of strength and dignity, which are manifested through his success as a wrestler, farmer, and renowned leader of Umuofia. His narrative starts with his legendary triumph over Amalinze, which presents him as a man of "strength and dignity" (Achebe 3). For Okonkwo, this fight is metaphorical: his entire existence is a constant struggle for power, driven by a fear of becoming his father, Unoka, who died in disgrace as a debtor (Achebe, *TFA* 13). Okonkwo's pride lies in denying Unoka's heritage; he builds wealth and status through sheer determination, never wishing to appear "weak" or emotional. As Achebe explains, "Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it is the emotion of anger. Showing affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worthy of showing was strength" (Achebe, *TFA* 18). The narrator notices that Okonkwo "threw himself into [work] like one possessed" (Achebe, *TFA* 13), illustrating how fear, not confidence, motivates him. His stringent adherence to traditional

values helps to alienate him from others around him, such as Nwoye, who rejects his father's violence. Despite Okonkwo's dependence on physical strength and dominance as measures of worth, his inability to evolve or empathize foretells his eventual downfall (Guthrie 43). The covert foreshadowing of Okonkwo's ultimate downfall is represented by his cruel treatment of others, illustrated through his public humiliation of Osugo, a clansman who has no titles. During the meeting to plan a feast, which is explained as being a traditional and non-contentious occasion, Okonkwo interrupts Osugo's opinion by saying, "This meeting is for men" thereby insultingly reducing him to the status of a woman (Achebe, *TFA* 17). This unjustifiably harsh attitude brings forth Okonkwo's fixation with power and his lack of tolerance for individuals whom he considers weak or submissive. The solidarity of the villagers in Osugo's favour, "Everybody […] took sides with Osugo "(Achebe, *TFA* 24), underscores Okonkwo's growing isolation since his strict adherence to hyper-masculinity alienates him from his people (Guthrie 44). The incident demonstrates Okonkwo's fatal flaw: his tendency to show strength at the expense of sympathy. In attacking Osugo over a trivial matter, Okonkwo places personal pride above communal harmony, thus undermining the respect he claims to value so much. This act signifies his inability to deal with change, which ultimately seals his tragic destiny. Okonkwo contributes to his isolation by exercising cruel dominance over his household members. When Ikemefuna comes, a boy taken in as a hostage to be put to death as an atonement, Okonkwo discovers himself developing an affection for him despite concealing it (Achebe, *TFA* 18). Nonetheless, when the clan demands Ikemefuna's sacrifice, Okonkwo joins in killing the boy to demonstrate his devotion to tradition and to avoid looking weak. The act breaks his connection with Nwoye, who is traumatized by violence.

Okonkwo embodies the archetypal character of a man caught between tradition and colonial dislocation. As a representation of cultural dissonance in *Things Fall Apart*, he symbolizes the general Igbo and African challenge to balance the disintegration of pride, identity, and heritage under colonialism. His unwillingness to change as a result of tradition translates to being a sympathetic but tragic character for readers to see in similar cultural degradation (Guthrie 46). Nwoye's departure devastates Okonkwo, and he interprets it as betrayal and cowardice. He grapples with shame, wondering how his

"flaming fire" of manliness could produce a son who is "effeminate" and weak like his father Unoka. Okonkwo's refusal that there is similarity between them, "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash" (Achebe 88-89), is a testament to his fear of leading the same failed life as his father Unoka. Nwoye's refusal of Igbo traditions weakens Okonkwo's feeling of superiority, revealing his weakness.

Okonkwo was at first indifferent to the effects of colonialism but has since viewed it as a physical threat to his authority. Determined to reclaim his honour, he returns to Umuofia, vowing to "regain the seven wasted years" of his exile (Achebe, *TFA* 97). His resolve is reminiscent of his earlier struggle to overcome Unoka's shame, but he now faces a changed society in which colonial rule overshadows customary tradition. Okonkwo's tragic downfall illustrates the futility of clinging to disintegrating ideals while the world around us is remodelled. When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia from exile, he finds a colonial-remodelled village. There is a church where none had been before, British-appointed officials preside over novel laws, and some of the clansmen have embraced European ideals, with those who clung to Igbo customs regarded as "uncivilized" (Guthrie 47). Respected elders are jailed for questioning colonial rule, while others succumb to indifference. Okonkwo, baffled by his society's inaction, asks: "Why have they lost the power to fight?" (Achebe, *TFA* 99). He cannot comprehend how a society that had once been built on values of honour and strength has allowed the colonizers to undermine its traditions. Patrick C. Nnoromele, an Igbo scholar, interprets Okonkwo's opposition to colonialism as a sign of strength and not weakness. He contends that:

> the Igbo clan (of which I am a member) is a group of African people with a complex, vigorous, and self-sufficient way of life... Okonkwo refused to endorse the [British] appeal. He recognized that accepting the invitation is done at the expense of the things that comprised his identity and defined his values. (147)

In the final chapter of *Things Fall Apart*, the tragic fate of Okonkwo reaches its climax. Defeated by Umuofia's inability to wage war against colonial powers, Okonkwo drops his weapon and goes back to his compound. Overwhelmed by the disintegration of his world, he hangs himself from a tree, a glaring testament to his irreconcilable conflict between change and tradition. Achebe positions Okonkwo's suicide as neither resignation, but the last remaining act of agency for a man who cannot adapt to colonialism or accept the complacency of his people. In *Things Fall Apart*, Umuofia, Nwoye, and Okonkwo each

undergo change and displacement through different lenses of strength and dignity, reflecting broader African reactions to colonialism.

Umuofia is resistant at first but eventually accepts colonial rule, Nwoye actively embraces the missionaries' message, and Okonkwo violently resists foreign intrusion. These responses, indifference, acceptance, and resistance, illustrate the variety of choices for colonized peoples. Achebe does not present Umuofia as weak but torn apart by internal conflicts and external pressures. The ultimate acquiescence to colonial governance emphasizes the detrimental effects of indifference, as the inability of the village to consolidate its efforts permits European structures to prevail. Nwoye's conversion represents a beacon of hope for disenfranchised individuals in search of acceptance, whereas Okonkwo's tragic defiance underscores the ineffectiveness of holding onto diminishing customs. Collectively, their narratives demonstrate how colonial authority flourishes amidst societal disunity, enabling European dominance to alter the course of Nigeria, albeit for a limited duration. Achebe, like Okonkwo, faces a pivotal choice within the matrix of postcolonial identity, but their paths diverge sharply.

Whereas Okonkwo yields to despair, opting for suicide in protest of a changing world, Achebe turns to activism through writing. He denies passivity, instead writing in English, the language of colonialism, to reclaim African stories and confront global readerships. This choice invites criticism, with some considering it a betrayal of African authenticity (Guthrie 55). But Achebe knowingly surrenders linguistic heritage to give voice to Igbo narratives for a wider constituency because English can "carry the weight of [African] experience" and promote unity and reform. Achebe's decision demonstrates a pragmatic attitude towards language: he appropriates colonial instruments to subvert colonial myths. In composing *Things Fall Apart* in English, he rises above Okonkwo's deadly inflexibility, exploiting the colonizer's tongue to condemn colonialism and exalt Igbo fortitude. His writing then becomes a bridge, uncovering universal truths about cultural collision, dignity, and loss. As opposed to Okonkwo, who dies clinging to a vanishing past, Achebe opts for life, a life of storytelling neither idealizing precolonial Africa nor yielding to Eurocentric dominance. His legacy is this balance: employing language as both a weapon and an olive branch, demanding progress without eradicating heritage.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs regionally specific terminologies to describe the life of his characters and the environment in which the story is set. The book contains Igbo proverbs, which Achebe translates into English with care so that the reader unfamiliar with the Igbo language may be able to understand them. As Alimi argues, the application of proverbs is dual: it maintains the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Igbo and establishes its innate significance to Achebe and the Igbo. In making such a conscious stylistic decision, Achebe not only pays homage to the traditions of his people but also to the timeless validity of their wisdom and vision of the world:

> A proverb is defined as a "condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people" ("Proverb," *Advanced English Dictionary and Thesaurus*). According to Akporobaro, a proverb is a brief common statement that is usually adopted by cultures to teach its people about the principles of right and wrong using as few words as possible. He goes further to describe it as a means by which ideas can be vividly expressed and illustrated. (Alimi 124)

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's narrative concentrates on incorporating and clarifying intricate Igbo proverbs and myths, elements that European eyes have ignored or misunderstood. The novel employs the device of selecting characters who intersperse messages in the form of proverbs when speaking to each other, resonating with the cultural significance of proverbs. Proverbs are regarded as pools of wisdom and markers of respect in Igbo culture, and they are instrumental in substantive communication. Achebe uses these proverbs in his characters' dialogue to show just how important they are in conveying values about right and wrong and society. He also contrasts the rich Igbo oral tradition with the colonial view that classifies African cultures as simple. This device shows the richness of Igbo culture and denounces outside misunderstandings. A clear illustration of this is found early in the novel, when Okoye visits Unoka to discuss an unpaid debt. Rather than directly raising the matter, the two men first observe customary etiquette: they share a kola nut, offer libations, and pay respects to the ancestors. Only after these rituals does Okoye cautiously raise the subject, using a proverb to introduce the topic delicately. He says, "Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them" (Achebe, *TFA* 8). This indirect way of talking through proverbs allows for politeness and courtesy in discussing matters, which otherwise tend to generate tension between people. The episode illustrates how diplomacy

and harmony in the community are cherished by the Igbo community. It uses proverbs not merely as decorative words, but also as conflict-resolving measures and social relation-maintaining measures.

Bhabha's theory of hybridity, or the blending of different cultures in colonial times, is central to Achebe's narrative strategy. With English and drawing on Igbo proverbs, myths, and sayings, Achebe develops a "third space" beyond strict colonial polarities (Igbo and European, tradition and modernity). Achebe retells Igbo stories in English, which manifests Bhabha's theory of mimicry as "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364). The way the novel is structured is employed to criticize colonialism, undermining the colonizer's power by revealing the contradictions in their "civilizing mission."

Homi Bhabha talks about cultural ambivalence through mimicry, which means that colonized societies copy the institutions, languages, and cultural practices of their colonizers, even when there is an unequal power relationship. This idea helps us understand how Chinua Achebe tells his story in *Things Fall Apart* after colonial times. Just like Bhabha's idea, Achebe's choice to write in English, the language of the colonizers, is a careful act of mimicry that challenges colonial power. Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* to encourage his fellow Nigerians to embrace the educational systems brought by missionaries, using them as tools to improve their lives and shape their future. He wanted to give modern African literature the recognition it deserved while helping readers see the true depth and value of African culture.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is an act of reclamation of great magnitude, deconstructing colonialist discourses by realigning the Igbo people's voice, traditions, and humanity. By offering an unapologetic portrait of pre-colonial Igbo society, the novel challenges the Eurocentric account of Africa as a "savage" void requiring the civilizing mission. Achebe painstakingly constructs a world of complexity and dignity, marked by democratic values, religious wealth, and communal interdependence. The coming of colonialism, viewed from the perspective of missionary fervour and administrative necessity, disrupts this balance, revealing the inconsistency in imperialist ideology and the brutality of cultural erasure. Through the interweaving of Igbo proverbs, myths, and rituals within the narrative, Achebe not only keeps his cultural heritage alive but also

establishes its intellectual and moral soundness, thereby undermining the reductionist colonial narratives that denied African societies their historical agency. The novel's tragic hero, Okonkwo, represents the clash between change and tradition. His inflexible dedication to hyper-masculine principles and opposition to colonial rule ended with his death, which symbolizes the impossibility of holding on to a fixed past.

Conversely, the acceptance of Christianity by Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, illustrates the complex decisions encountered by colonized populations: his conversion represents not only a repudiation of his father's violence but also highlights the attractive nature of alternative communities for individuals sidelined by conventional standards. These contrasting trajectories, characterized by Okonkwo's assertive suicide and Nwoye's cautious embrace of a new faith, emphasize the disruptive impact of colonialism, which disintegrates social structures and compels individuals into untenable dichotomies. Achebe resists reductionist conclusions, presenting these reactions on a broader spectrum of survival and resilience.

## CHAPTER 3: *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

### 3.1 A Journey to the Heart of Light

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* represents an exemplary work within the realm of postcolonial literature, offering a profound critique of the psychological, cultural, and existential disruptions engendered by European imperialism. In Mustafa Sa'eed's shattered life, a Sudanese intellectual who employs his Western education and homosexual orientation as tools of revenge against the colonial urban world, Salih inverts the Eurocentric perceptions manifest in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In doing so, he repositions the colonial experience to illuminate the silenced histories of the colonized populace. The novel examines the paradoxes of resistance within a situation defined by imperial violence. Sa'eed's acts of violence against white women as expressions of anti-colonial resistance end up mirroring the dehumanizing rationale of his oppressors, drawing him into a self-sustaining dynamic of violent mimicry. By mapping Sa'eed's life onto key events in imperial history, Salih demonstrates how colonial occupation effaces identity, turning the colonized individual into a spectral hybrid, forever caught between cultures. Applying Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry alongside Edward Said's critique of Orientalist discourse, this literary work describes the intricacy of Orientalist binaries, excavating the adverse heritage of colonialism as a force that warps desire, corrodes a sense of belonging, and transforms intimacy into a battleground of power conflicts. *Season of Migration to the North* compels readers to confront the unresolved tensions of postcolonial identity, in which liberation is still entangled with the hierarchies it seeks to dismantle, so that decolonization is less a triumphant rupture than an unresolved, typically tragic, negotiation of self.

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* was his debut as a transgressive and fearless writer. Rather than following the structure of a conventional novel, the work presents a richly layered narrative told through multiple voices and perspectives. The story weaves together themes of colonialism, racism, cultural displacement, and existential alienation, offering a powerful commentary on the enduring inequalities between the Global North and South. In exploring the long-term effects of colonialism on colonizer and colonized alike, Salih transcends simplistic binary models and explores the densely

layered psychic and ethical intricacies of postcolonial modernity. Through a masterful intertwining of historical process with individual human destinies, the novel threads its way through the aftermath of British imperialism in Sudan and the troubled cross-connections between religion, politics, and desire. Complimented for its vivid description and deep philosophical themes, the novel itself is a paradigmatic example of postcolonial fiction, challenging Orientalist stereotypes to examine the intricacies of the lives of those people who move through the interstices of distinct cultures.

Sudan is a local context where cultural and ethnic northern Arab African and southern Black African identities converge. Though this union of multicultural and religious affiliations has often been linked with violence, British settlers who came through the Nile in the 1890s considered the south a unified and monolithic entity. Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is a novel set in a village along the Nile River during the post-independence era after the British left, looking at the issues involved in splitting life into binary frameworks of Black or white, South or North (Davidson 385). The novel, which was originally published in 1966 and later translated into English in 1969, outlines life in a Sudanese village after colonization. Based on his own life in post-colonial Africa and also in London, Salih offers a critical analysis of such concerns as the conflict between Eastern and Western cultures, a tension long embedded in the colonial situation. The novel also explores themes of love, the relationship between illusion and reality, and the psychological distress exhibited in the inner lives of the characters. Moreover, *Season of Migration to the North* was censored in Sudan due to its explicit sexual imagery, which has been deemed against Islamic teachings. However, this prohibition contributed to its global standing, as audiences began to draw parallels between the characteristics of the protagonist and the author's personal experiences, thereby igniting conversations surrounding the intersections of autobiography and fiction. The novel's critique of colonialism and its investigation into issues of identity resonated universally, leading to its swift recognition as a seminal work within post-colonial literature.

Salih's writing is strongly embedded in his native land, Sudan, and reflects the complexities of local life. His work is guided by first-hand experience of cultural practice, and the interplay of interpersonal relationships and societal intricacies. In his fiction, Salih explores themes like the undrawn line between reality and fantasy, the extreme cultural

disparities that mark Sudan and England, and the conflict-torn effects of foreign influences on native communities. His work also underscores the existential crises of those who must navigate contesting cultural identities as they seek to harmonize their native culture with outside pressures in pursuing a coherent sense of belonging (Hodja 30). The concept of civilization hinges on the stark historical fault line between the West and the East, a binary opposition that has made a profound impact on human history, particularly in and since the colonial era. Culture, as foundational to such fault lines and a main index of difference, remains at the core of an understanding of tensions between such imagined categories.

Edward Said links Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in an attempt to highlight its literary significance. Drawing on his scholarly expertise, as is evident in his 1966 work regarding Conrad, Said deliberately positioned himself in support of Albert Guerard's laudatory comments about Conrad's work while also paying tribute to Salih's literary work. By situating Guerard's verdict on *Heart of Darkness* as a "masterpiece" within the tradition of English literary canon, Said was at the same time considering *Season of Migration to the North* to be a novel of the same stature in contemporary Arabic literature. Such a contrast was not limited to literary merit but had an inherent political implication. Said sought to fill the gaps of postcolonial critique by comparing Salih's critique of colonialism through the eyes of a Sudanese character with Conrad's exploration of the moral issues associated with imperialism (Hassan 4). Consequently, Said developed the concept that Salih's writing substitutes Conrad's colonial perspective with a postcolonial "counter-narrative" questioning the hierarchies of Western literary critiques. By situating *Season of Migration to the North* as an extension and a response to Conrad's legacy, Said underscored its role in devastating Orientalist stereotypes while also reshaping the terrain of global literary discourse. This interpretive link certified Salih's achievement within Western scholarship and underscored its revolutionary reinterpretation of power relations, identity formations, and cultural transactions in the post-colonial state. Edward Said contends that Tayeb Salih's narrative radically reorients the narrative direction established by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, interpreting the latter through an Arab African perspective. In contrast to Conrad's narrative, which chronicles the journey of a European protagonist southward into the Republic of Congo and records colonialist fears, expectations, and moral

questions into the mythologized “Dark Continent,” Salih’s narrative postpones this quest. It traces the northward journey to London, the imperial centre of a Sudanese protagonist and discloses the complex dynamic of desire and hatred entertained by the colonized subject for the colonizer. Said focuses on how Salih’s novel reverses the narrative authority from colonizer to colonized, relocating the colonial encounter from European moral bookkeeping to a depiction of the colonized conflicted engagement with imperial power. By reinterpreting Conrad’s model, Salih is able to unearth the psychological and cultural rifts inherent in colonialism as understood from the viewpoint of the historically oppressed. This turns a Eurocentric denunciation of imperialism into a postcolonial condemnation of its lasting consequences.

Both novels explore the destructive dynamics of conquest from opposing perspectives. In *Heart of Darkness*, it is the European conqueror Kurtz who ravages Africa in the name of a “civilizing mission” and embodies the violence and hypocrisy of colonialism. In *Season of Migration to the North*, it is the Sudanese intellectual, Mustafa Sa’eed, who wages a vengeful counter-conquest, seducing and psychologically destroying European women as a twisted anti-colonial resistance. Moreover, both stories have a “secret sharer” or a double that struggles with moral ambiguity. In Conrad’s novel, Marlow is drawn to as much as he is repelled by Kurtz’s nihilistic presence, an experience that parallels that of the unnamed narrator in Salih’s novel, who is drawn to but also nauseated by Mustafa Sa’eed’s destructive appeal. These doubles echo the psychological stress between complicity and criticism, unveiling how people work through the ethical vacuums opened up by imperialism and its legacy (Hassan 5).

As Al-Saidi observes, *Season of Migration to the North* depicts “a clash of civilizations” and highlights “the brutal effects of a superficial Orientalism” (35), popularized by Edward Said. This resonates throughout the novel, which confronts the Orientalist stereotypes that portray the East as inherently barbaric or uncivilized. Salih’s work critically engages with the enduring legacy of colonialism, investigating how historical oppression shapes contemporary identities and societal structures. Far from offering a reductionist account of the colonized world, the novel examines the psychological and cultural repercussions of imperialism in the life of Mustafa Sa’eed. His journey to foreign lands, characterized by conquest, alienation, and dysfunctional

relationships, is paradigmatic of a disjunctured search for self-definition in the postcolonial scenario. The novel moves beyond the traditional binaries of East and West and investigates the vexed dynamics of power, identity, and cultural displacement. By exploring the respective distortions of colonized and colonizer, Salih subtly explores how colonialism disrupts individual and collective consciousness, illustrating the fluidity of fixed cultural hierarchies. The novel then reverses Edward Said's orientalist dualisms by inverting the colonial gaze by rendering Mustafa Sa'eed as the exoticized "other," the hypersexualized black savage of European fantasy. His interactions with British women satirize orientalist tropes of the East as sensual and irrational. For example, Jean Moris' remark: "You're ugly" (Salih 29), essentializes him as a racialized subject, echoing Said's explanation of Western discourses depicting the East as "outside, excluded, aberrant" (Said 13). However, Salih inverts this encounter: Sa'eed employs his exoticization as a strategy, seducing and psychologically undoing European women who make an object of him, thereby laying bare the contradictions within the "civilizing mission" and the moral superiority of Europe.

In line with Foucault's view of the power-knowledge nexus, where schools and universities as institutions of education generate knowledge that legitimizes and normalizes imperial rule, colonial education is a major weapon for subordination, Sa'eed states:

> That was the time when we first had schools. I remember now that people were not keen about them and so the government would send its officials to scour the villages and tribal communities, while the people would hide their sons, they thought of schools as being a great evil that had come to them with the armies of occupation. (Salih 23)

Mustafa Sa'eed exemplifies this dynamic; he begins his education at a missionary school, completes his secondary studies in Cairo, and then goes on to study economics in London. His remarkable academic achievement and knowledge of European intellectual currents, confirmed by his allusions to Shakespeare and Milton, give him great respect and help him to enter colonial hierarchies. This expertise in colonial knowledge costs him personally by separating him from Sudanese identity and leaving him spiritually rootless. Though he is well-known as an economist, Sa'eed's life in the imperial centre is marked by loneliness and psychological turmoil. Disillusioned, he returns to Sudan in an attempt

to find a sense of belonging among the people of Wad Hamid. However, his stay is short-lived; during a disastrous flood, he disappears and is presumed to have taken his own life. Before he goes missing, he informs the narrator of the burden of his wife, Hosna, and his two sons, thus highlighting the tragic consequences of a life torn between two worlds. Sa'eed's death sparks speculation about his purported vengeful relationships with women of European ancestry and his secret life in London. As an executor, the narrator discovers a secret room containing European relics that manifest Sa'eed's double life, torn between his Sudanese heritage and colonial intrusion. This cultural divide, emblematic of his efforts to unite contradictory worlds, proves to be the cause of his tragic downfall. The story has a profound impact on the narrator, a figure for the experience of exile, generating questions about the historical aftermath of imperialism and hybrid identity's problematic nature.

Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* challenges colonial structures by dismantling historical, geographical, and spatial binaries, reformulating them as tools of imperial ideology. While the narrative initially appears to legitimize typical archetypes through contrast between the lush, "green" English landscape and the desolate, "sand-covered" Sudanese deserts, Salih subverts these archetypes in an attempt to refute the colonial logic that equates geographical characteristics with cultural and moral superiority. Salih's interpretation of spatiality as a socially constructed category determined by colonial power deconstructs the East-West axis, one of the most significant aspects of imperial discourse that depicts the "fertile" West as natural and progressive and the "barren" East as degenerating (Salih 38). By redefining the imagery of empire, Salih reverses the colonial discourse, as illustrated through the assertion: "Salih borrows the familiar, the literary, archetypal imagery of North and South, in order to reenvision the fraught relations between the West and East" (Velez 191). The novel reshapes the "dome of the rock" and the "rim of the world" (Velez 191), which are metaphors traditionally used in relation to dominant cultural hierarchies, to fit within postcolonial discourses of nationhood and identity. The spatial metaphors are presented as locations of resistance, challenging the narratives supporting Western cultural hegemony. Thus, the Sudanese deserts are not represented as empty spaces of primitiveness but as landscapes charged with history and existential meaning. Meanwhile, England's green areas lose their utopian

"civilizing" function, betraying the moral deterioration under imperialist ideology of progress.

The novel explores the intersecting stories of two protagonists, Mustafa Sa'eed and an unnamed narrator, whose identities are profoundly shaped by their experiences of migration to London. The unnamed narrator returns to his Sudanese village of Wad Hamid after a seven-year sojourn in Europe, where he studied poetry. His homecoming is marked by a desperate yearning to reconnect with his roots, as reflected in his sentimental attachment to village life: "I felt not like a storm-swept feather, but like that palm tree, a being with a background, with roots" (Salih 12). Initially structured linearly, the narrative fractures when the narrator encounters Mustafa Sa'eed, an enigmatic figure who settled in the village five years earlier, married Hosna Bint Mahmoud, and has an enigmatic past. This meeting bifurcates the story into two strands: one follows the narrator's reintegration into the social fabric of his homeland, while the other, revealed through flashbacks, delves into Sa'eed's tumultuous history in London. Sa'eed's refined demeanour and contradictory character, described as "a strange combination of strength and weakness" (Salih 15), arouse the narrator's curiosity. Sa'eed astonishes the narrator on a night of drinking by reciting English poetry about the First World War: "Those women of Flanders / Await the lost…" (Salih 19), with an amazing accent revealing his concealed affinity with Western civilization. Sa'eed dismisses the incident when questioned as meaningless utterances of intoxication; however, he then shows proof, a Sudanese birth certificate for 1898 and a British passport, suggesting a complicated transnational identity:

> The profession was given as 'Student'. The date of issue of the passport was 1916 in Cairo and it had been renewed in London in 1926. There was also another passport, a British one, issued in London in 1929. Turning over the pages, I found it was much stamped: French, German, Chinese and Danish. All this whetted my imagination in an extraordinary manner. I could not go on turning over the pages of the passport. (Salih 21)

Duality, founded upon colonial mimicry, exists in all of Sa'eed's interactions: the narrator's afternoon visit from Sa'eed is a critical analysis of colonial mimicry. The over-formal courtesy and apologies for "disturbing" the narrator are in sharp contrast with the communal informality of Sudanese village life, where visits are unannounced and spontaneous. His performative politeness, awkward speech, and mannerisms are an internalized Englishness, a borrowed cultural code that renders him an outsider among his

people. The narrator's observation that villagers "don't trouble to apologize" (Salih 8) emphasizes the artificiality of Sa'eed's conduct, presenting it as a borrowed script from colonial manners. Sa'eed has become a mimic of the colonizer, adopting European norms of civility which render him both familiar and strange, a living contradiction of colonial ambivalence as stated by Homi Bhabha. In this regard, Sa'eed's mimicry goes beyond superficial politeness, functioning rather as a manifestation of his deeply internalized colonial conditioning. Through his insistence on upholding rigorous British norms of acceptable conduct, he creates a remove from the natural cadences of Sudanese life, an otherworldly character who fulfils Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry as "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364). His ultimate promise to narrate, "I shall say things to you I've said to no one before" (Salih 21), situates him both as a disruptive force and a victim of colonial power structures, his identity fluidly suspended between these opposing cultural worlds.

More recent critical discussions of Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* have focused more and more on the novel's exploration of cultural hybridity and the destabilizing impact of colonial mimicry. Referring to Homi Bhabha's theorization of the "hybrid," critics like Patricia Greesey and G.A.R. Hamilton present Mustafa Sa'eed as a character who is characterized by the contradictions of colonial encounters. The authors contend that Sa'eed's exposure to Western tradition and mimicry of European norms, superficially emblematic of the colonizer's supposed "civilizing mission," ironically empower him to resist imperial authority. Sa'eed exposes the fragility of colonialism's purported cultural superiority by mirroring colonial discourse back to the colonizers in distorted and unnerving shapes. But this hybridity is achieved at a price: Sa'eed, caught between cultures, is disconnected from his Sudanese self but continues to be forever barred from complete integration into European society. His mimicry, according to Bhabha, is never an imitation but a "variation" that "unavoidably" fractures colonial hierarchies (Greesey & Hamilton 55). This condition of liminality emphasizes the novel's critique of the false promises of colonialism. Because the colonized subject is obliged to adopt the cultural practices of the colonizer, his inevitable deviations from these imposed norms reveal the inherent instability of the imperial project. Salih's presentation of Sa'eed then problematizes the conception of resistance, illustrating that even attempts at imitation

aimed at "contaminating" colonial discourse can entrap the hybrid subject in a fragmented and alienated existence.

Salih's deliberate juxtaposition of the life of Mustafa Sa'eed with seminal events in the history of European imperialism emphasizes the interconnected relationships between the East and the West. Sa'eed was born in 1898, the same year that the Battle of Omdurman, a brutal British triumph led by General Kitchener, formalized colonial rule over Sudan (Hassan 92). Later, in 1922, when the League of Nations legitimized British and French mandates over former Ottoman provinces, Sa'eed began his retaliatory sexual war against British women, framing his personal rebellion as an analogue of anti-colonial resistance. By locating Sa'eed's biography through imperial landmarks, Salih explores how geopolitical control organizes individual and collective identity under colonialism. In Sa'eed's ruinous affairs with European women, relationships suffused with racialized power relations, Salih reveals the dilemma of resisting colonial hierarchies, even acts of resistance might perpetuate the same racial classifications they attempt to overthrow. According to Tran, these types of narratives make readers face the question of whether "colonial categorizations of race can ever be challenged" (3), emphasizing the long-lasting psychological and cultural wounds of empire. In an interview with El Tayeb Salih, the author raises this question by stating:

> I use [the pronoun 'I' in *Season of Migration to the North*] firstly because I want to give what I write the concentration of the poem and the technique of a poem through concentrating on the feelings of the person. I also want to define the point of view for the world. This technique is necessary if the writer wants to go into the mind of every major character, the mind of each of his characters. (quoted in Al-Saidi 37)

Salih's narrative technique delves deeply into the internal landscapes of his characters, allowing readers to feel the weight of colonial trauma from within. An illustrative example of this can be seen in Sa'eed's fabricated tales of Africa, where he reflects on his portrayal of the continent to an English woman: "I related to her fabricated stories about deserts of golden sands and jungles where non-existent animals called out to one another. I told her that the streets of my country teemed with elephants and lions and that during siesta time crocodiles crawled through it." (Salih 33). This passage not only exposes Sa'eed's complex psychological state but also highlights Salih's method of exploring the subjective reality of colonial subjects.

Salih reflects Sa'eed's aggressive sexual conquests in *Season of Migration to the North* as an act of representation for the colonial violence Europe perpetrated on them. The author describes Sa'eed's behaviour as stemming from a need to "inflict on Europe the degradation which it had imposed upon his people" and his actions are seen as an effort to "rape Europe symbolically" (Al-Saidi 35). This metaphor invites attention to Sa'eed's subversive reversal of the power dynamics of colonialism, employing his physical presence and identity to reflect the dehumanizing instrumentalization of colonized people. Salih's critique situates Sa'eed not just as a damaged human being, but as a means to contemplate the circular and damaging reciprocity of colonial subordination.

The figurative threat to Europe's imperial dominance is also qualified by the novel's exhaustive exploration of Sa'eed's life story. The narrative shifts into a contemplative account of his life, emphasizing a deep exploration of questions of identity, the consequences of colonial repression, and the corrosive effects of cultural alienation. Sa'eed unfolds his path from a childhood without a fatherly presence in Khartoum to his development as a brilliant scholar trapped in the contradictions of British colonialism. Okonkwo's story acts as both a psychological exploration of inner turmoil and a powerful condemnation of colonialism. It shows how the clash between African traditions and the forced adoption of European ideals tears apart a person's sense of identity, laying bare the human cost of cultural dislocation. Sa'eed's account begins where he grew up emotionally barren during childhood with the face of the mother likened to "the surface of the sea […] a thick mask" (Salih 23). Her emotional distance generates his initial feeling of alienation, and he becomes a creature "like something rounded, made of rubber" (Salih 23), both resilient and unmoored. His brilliant intellect, "a sharp knife, cutting with cold effectiveness" (Salih 24), is a two-edged sword: it drives his progress through colonial schools but also alienates him from empathy and connection. The novel delineates his journey from Cairo to London, where he exploits his versatile identity. The journey of Mustafa Sa'eed from Cairo to London and then to a village on the Nile symbolizes the vast alienation that undermines his self-image. His initial movement to Cairo to attain secondary education sets the tone for a cycle of perpetual movement and a rootless life. The act of departure for the first time is symbolic of the back-and-forth swing between the Eastern and Western cultures in his life. Every location becomes a temporary "mountain"

(Salih 35), a temporary refuge to which he climbs only to leave it. His wanderings in Cairo foreshadow an obstinate quest for a sense of place, which drives him to London, a "greater mountain," where he confesses: "My sole concern was to reach London" (Salih 27). These cultural and physical dislocations function to underscore his fractured identity, suspended between opposed worlds with no fixed anchorage in either, so that he continues in a state of endless drift. Mustafa Sa'eed's compulsive wandering, which propels him from Sudan to Cairo, London, and beyond, renders home a receding dream. His initial displacement for education separates him from Sudanese roots, accelerating a profound estrangement that culminates in rootlessness. Later, the narrator reveals Sa'eed's turbulent experience in England, highlighted by his obsessive fixation and ultimate killing of Jean Morris, resulting in a seven-year imprisonment, which solidifies his position as a perpetual outsider. Even upon release, his ongoing wanderings to Denmark, France, and India deny him stability, depriving him of "no chance to build what he could not have as a child" (Canlı 5). This ceaseless movement, posed as flight and entrapment, is the hallmark of his existential dislocation: he cannot establish family ties or a sense of belonging, doomed to wander. His life trajectory terminates vaguely in a Nile village, whether by accident or suicide is left unspecified, representing the ultimate dissolution of his shattered self. The narrator's assertion, "whether it was by chance or whether the curtain was lowered of his own free will no one can say for certain" (Salih 52), summarizes the tragic futility of his quest for stability in a reality forged in colonial disruption and cultural dislocation.

This futility is echoed in Sa'eed's own words, as he likens his violent encounters to warfare: "My bedroom became a theatre of war; my bed a patch of hell" (Salih 30). In Fanon's words, violence is a tool to rescue the migrant from his despair and to give him a sense of superiority (Fanon 93). *Season of Migration to the North* exposes the vicious cycle of colonial violence, where oppression begets rebellion, only to trap both sides in a spiral of destruction. The novel reveals how European imperialism's brutality infects the colonized, breeding a mirrored rage. Mustafa Sa'eed embodies this paradox: his seduction and murder of a white woman in London mimic Europe's exploitative logic, weaponizing Fanon's claim that colonialism "will only yield when confronted with greater violence" (Salih 60). Yet, his retaliation is not liberation but a grotesque parody of colonial power, reducing him to a monstrous echo of his oppressors. His eventual disappearance into the

Nile symbolizes the futility of this path, a man consumed by the violence he sought to master.

"Yes, gentlemen, I have come to you as conqueror within your very house, as a drop of the poison which you have injected into the veins of history" (Salih 98); Sa'eed emerges as a "conqueror" and "poison" in the colonizers' figurative "house" (Europe), using sexuality as a tool of retribution against colonialism. Sa'eed's seduction and conquest of European women, symbolic substitutes for the colonial forces dominating his homeland, serve as a fraught inversion of historical power hierarchies. By enacting mimetic violence, he assumes the role of aggressor within the colonizer's territory. This is a form of a need to reclaim independence and dignity lost to colonialism, thus reasserting his masculinity as resistance. Ann Hammond, Mustafa Sa'eed's first victim, symbolizes his violent relationship with white women:

> When I first met her, she was less than twenty and was studying Oriental languages at Oxford. She was lively with a gay intelligent face and eyes that sparkled with curiosity. When she saw me, she saw a dark twilight like a false dawn. Unlike me, she yearned for tropical climes, cruel suns, purple horizons. In her eyes I was a symbol of all her hankerings. I am South that yearns for the North and the ice. (Salih 29)

A scholar of Oriental languages, Hammond is drawn to Sa'eed's carefully crafted exoticism; his London bedroom, a calculated mix of Eastern decor and European furnishings, serves as a lure for her desire for the "Orient." This created cultural hybridity is Sa'eed's ulterior motive: to conquer the white race by using their idealized stereotypes of the East against them. Luring Hammond with the promise of a symbolic marriage of "North and South," he plays on her idealism, only to manipulate her emotionally. Her ultimate suicide at age twenty with a note damning: "Mr. Sa'eed, may God damn you" (Salih 29) lays bare the emptiness of the cruelty behind his performative bridging of worlds. Hammond's suicide stems from the shattering of her romantic illusion and the profound emotional manipulation she endures. Her death serves as a witness to the vengefulness of his project, in which intimacy is perverted into a site of colonial revenge.

Sheila Greenwood becomes the next in a succession of white women ensnared by Sa'eed's constructed exoticism, "A waitress in a Soho restaurant, a simple girl with a sweet smile and a sweet way of speaking" (Salih 31). Like Ann Hammond, she is attracted

by the same constructed mystique, an environment suffused with the "smell of burning sandalwood and incense" (Salih 30). Sheila, a working-class girl who is a waitress in the suburbs of Hull, is depicted as being innocent and vulnerable. Sa'eed exploits her with deliberate charm and financial inducements, preying on her innocence until she loses her virginity, which implants "the germs of self-destruction within her" (Salih 30). His state of mind, which is likened to a "sharp knife" (Salih 27), begets another tragedy: Sheila kills herself without leaving a written farewell. The narrator observes with detachment how she came into his room "a chaste virgin" and departed as an emptied vessel filled with despair (Salih 30), a reflection of Ann's doomed fate. Her subdued ending serves to underscore Sa'eed's dual role as an architect and a victim of a cycle of vengeance, where intimacy is constructed as a site for colonial vengeance. Mustafa Sa'eed, the self-styled "conqueror," reverses colonial violence by weaponizing sexuality against white women in a lost battle in which, according to scholar Neimneh, "sexuality fails to foster genuine affection between races, and violence remains the result" (24). Jean Morris is the most defiant and evasive of his victims:

> I continued in pursuit of her for three years. My caravans were thirsty, and the mirage shimmered before me in the wilderness of longing. "You're a savage bull that does not weary of the chase," she said to me one day. "I am tired of your pursuing me and of my running before you. Marry me." (Salih 100)

Sa'eed's obsessive pursuit of Jean spans three years, driven by a determination to dominate her, a mission he frames as inevitable, declaring: "The arrow's target had been fixed, and it was inevitable the tragedy would take place" (Salih 29). Their relationship, however, defies his earlier conquests: Jean resists, attacks him physically, and refuses to submit, transforming their marriage into a microcosm of the East-West power struggle. Unlike his other victims, Jean denies Sa'eed sexual possession, confronting him with rejection and undoing his sense of mastery. She mocks his capacity for violence, diminishing his threats to nullity, and he is left with "ignominy, loneliness, and loss" (Salih 103). The name of Sa'eed, embedded in intricate designs of revenge violence, marks the postcolonial paradoxes of the novel as he suffers a terrible reversal of dominance: "Having been a hunter, I had become the quarry. I was in a torment; and, in a way I could not understand, I derived pleasure from my suffering" (Salih 101). The toxic dynamic between the protagonists ultimately results in her murder, a move which

undermines the divide between erotic control and colonial vengeance, exposing both as fatal fantasies, “I was the pirate sailor and Jean Morris the shore of destruction” (Salih 104). In doing so, Salih is condemning the cycle of violence, placing Sa’eed’s tragedy as a cautionary tale against the distortion of decolonization into mere imitation of imperial violence:

> Here are my ships, my darling, sailing towards the shores of destruction. I leant over and kissed her. I put the blade-edge between her breasts, and she twined her legs round my back: Slowly I pressed down. Slowly. She opened her eyes. What ecstasy there was in those eyes! She seemed more beautiful than anything in the whole world. “Darling," she said painfully. “I thought you would never do this. I almost gave up hope of you" [……] “Come with me. Come with me. Don’t let me go alone.” “I love you,” she said to me, and I believed her. “I love you,” I said to her, and I spoke the truth. (Salih 106)

Sa’eed’s tormented existence reaches its nadir with Jean Morris’s murder, an act he refuses to defend in court, seeing no purpose left to justify his survival. His self-imposed exile extends through seven years of imprisonment, a purgatory that bleeds into rootless wandering until he washes up in a remote Sudanese village. Yet even here, in the land of his origins, he remains fractured, a man caught between worlds, unable to reconcile his hybridized self. The village, far from offering redemption, becomes a mirror reflecting his irreparable fragmentation: he cannot shed the scars of colonial violence nor reclaim an “authentic” identity untainted by his violent past. His final disappearance into the Nile seals his tragedy as a figure eternally exiled, both from the colonizer’s world and the homeland he can no longer inhabit.

Sa’eed’s relationships with European women, marked by manipulation, violence, and mutual destruction, are inextricable from the novel’s critique of Orientalist fantasies. Thus**,** the narrative offers a critique of European representation of the “other” through the character of Mustafa Sa’eed, who is Sudanese and referred to as the “black Englishman” (Salih 44). Though he is a highly successful economist, he is objectified and exoticized by the British women he meets. They mythologize his identity and attribute to him stereotypical views of the Orient as a land of uncontrolled nature, “primitive” societies, and mysterious appeal. To them, he is not a multidimensional character but a dehumanized, romanticized figure of the “exotic South.” This is illustrated by Ann Hammond, who perceives Sa’eed through a colonial mindset. Her interest does not stem from his

intellectual promise or human qualities but from what he embodies, a portal to her imagined Orient defined by "tropical climes, cruel suns, [and] purple horizons" (Salih 27). Her conduct toward him is voyeuristic in nature, as if he is a specimen to be watched and not a human being. Through this, the novel demonstrates how colonial discourse reduces marginalized identities to flat, dehumanizing stereotypes, giving preference to European fantasies rather than the lived experiences of the "other." Isabella Seymour's invitation: "Ravish me, you African demon. Burn me in the fire of your temple, you black god. Let me twist and turn in your wild and impassioned rites" (Salih 88), has the effect of reducing him to a sexual object defined by racial stereotypes. Her language repeats colonial clichés of Black men as threatening and exotic, representing a "jungle" sexuality that is both feared and desired by white society. These exchanges show how colonial stereotypes can appear even in intellectual and intimate settings. Sa'eed's humanity and intellect are negated; he is turned into a blank screen for British projections of racial and cultural superiority. Salih unpacks this logic of dehumanization, exposing the ways that Orientalist fiction, the "illiterate savage" and the "hyper-sexualized primitive," normalize domination by discounting the humanity of the colonized. The narrative aligns itself with theorists such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, who assert that these caricatures function not merely as prejudice but as power instruments, propping up the fantasy of Western "civilization" against artificially created "barbarism" among the colonized. Tayeb Salih employs Mustafa Sa'eed's relationships with white women as a mirror to the rampant racism and colonial attitudes that pervade Western society. Although Sa'eed is portrayed as the first Sudanese man to wed an English woman (Jean Morris), his past relationships, most notably with Sheila Greenwood, comment on the social barriers and biases against interracial marriage. Sheila candidly admits the racial hatred that lies latent within her own family. She says to Sa'eed: "My mother would go mad and my father would kill me if they knew I was in love with a black man" (Salih 91). This frank declaration is used to highlight the severe stigma of interracial marriage in a society still bound by colonial-era racial hierarchies. Sheila's nervousness regarding what her parents would say demonstrates how systemic racism dehumanizes non-white individuals, positing their identities as contradictory to white social norms.

Systemic racism is also critiqued in the novel through Sa'eed's trial. In spite of their diverse occupations, the jurors possess implicit racial bias. Sa'eed reveals their hypocrisy as he says that although they have the image of being objective, they would not accept him as a tenant or a son-in-law because they would not wish to have their racial and social hierarchy upset. Such hypocrisy is echoed by Frantz Fanon's criticism of the psychological violence of colonialism, whereby the colonized exist with dehumanizing stereotypes. The conclusion of the jury, constituted not by justice but by deep-seated prejudice, exemplifies postcolonial Europe's reinforcement of structural racism, denying racialized migrants both agency and dignity. Salih thereby exposes the enduring legacy of imperialist systems within postcolonial societies, where migration emerges as a racialized terrain of power contestation. Despite Sa'eed's encounter with London's intelligentsia, he is trapped in colonial discourse depicting him as a "primitive" other. The novel depicts how racism in the guise of civility works to reinforce inequality and erodes the right of non-Western people to be multifaceted human beings. Moreover, the trial of Mustafa Sa'eed crystallizes the novel's interrogation of colonial mythmaking and fractured identity. Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen, his defence lawyer and former Oxford mentor, absolves him by attributing the women's deaths to a nebulous "germ of a deadly disease that assailed them a thousand years ago" (Salih 30). Foster-Keen employs metaphorical language to place Sa'eed's actions as an outcome of colonial and historical circumstances instead of individual culpability, exonerating him by blaming the tragedies on some undefined, ancient "disease" (presumably representing colonialism, cultural conflict, or imperial violence). Over thirty years, Sa'eed remains blind to England's evolving beauty, beset by hedonism and emotional violence, his life emblematic of the suppressed "infection" of moral and existential collapse echoing the unhealed scars of post-WWI Europe (Salih 3), "My bedroom was a spring-well of sorrow, the germ of a fatal disease. The infection had stricken these women a thousand years ago, but I had stirred up the latent depths of the disease until it had got out of control and had killed" (Salih 31). Sa'eed admits to having juggled five concurrent relationships under assumed personas, Hassan, Charles, Amin, Mustafa, and Richard, between 1922 and 1923 (Salih 31).

Sa'eed's intense sense of isolation is illustrated through the stark contrast between the warm atmosphere of Leicester Square characterized by theatres that "resounded with romantic melodies and jubilant choruses" (Salih 30) and his internal emptiness, as his heart "remained dissonant" with such warmth, as a sign of his emotional desolation. Leicester Square, dubbed London's theatreland, is a composite of pleasure, romance, and social concord, all of which radiate from the "singing of love and gaiety" (Salih 31) that fills its atmosphere. However, Sa'eed's metaphorical dissonance, his heart's discordant resistance to such radiance, highlights his inner incapacity to partake in these expressions of human connection. His emotional vacuum implies a soul devoid of true feeling, leaving him a mere spectator instead of an active participant in life's warmth. This dissonance highlights his existential alienation: though surrounded by cultural and romantic ideals, he is trapped in a recursive cycle of performative relationships and intellectual pretension, unable to form meaningful connections with others or with himself. Sa'eed's confession, veering between emotional detachment and fleeting remorse, betrays the psychological ravages of colonialism, where identity becomes a space of both mimicry and resistance.

In Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, Mustafa Sa'eed's constructed spaces, his London apartment and the secret room in Sudan, are double mirrors of the corrosive duality of colonial identity. The London apartment is a distorted copy of colonial spectacle, a reflection of imperial exhibitions like the Crystal Palace, which commodified and Orientalized colonized cultures:

> the sandalwood and incense; the ostrich feathers and ivory and ebony figurines; the paintings and drawings of forests of palm trees along the shores of the Nile, boats with sails like doves' wings, suns setting over the mountains of the Red Sea, camel caravans wending their way along sand dunes on the borders of the Yemen, baobab trees in Kordofan, naked girls from the tribes of the Zandi, the Nuer and the Shuluk, fields of banana and coffee on the Equator, old temples in the district of Nubia; Arabic books with decorated covers written in ornate Kufic script; Persian carpets, pink curtains, large mirrors. (Salih 95)

Adorned with maps and bathed in the spectral glow of coloured lights, Mustafa Sa'eed's bedroom becomes a stage of performative identity, where colonial fetishization collides with acts of self-annihilation. Though the artifacts of ostrich feathers, ebony figurines, and Kufic-script manuscripts are deliberately sourced from Northeast Africa, their haphazard arrangement mimics the Orientalist logic of imperial museums, reducing diverse cultures

to a homogenized African spectacle. Sa'eed's admission that the space is a "den of lethal lies" underscores his complicity in perpetuating colonial myths; the décor, with its "sandalwood and incense" and "coloured lights," (Salih 95), is designed to evoke a fabricated heat and light that conforms to European fantasies of exoticism. Yet this simulacrum, though crafted for his English lovers, also reflects his fractured sense of belonging. Having rejected Sudan's brown earth and failed to assimilate into England's "grey green" (Salih 26) landscapes, he inhabits a liminal space where both "Africa" and "England" are hollow constructs. The irony lies in his dual deception: the apartment is as much a lie to himself as to his audience. Decades later, his construction of a monument in Wad Hamid, another artificial symbol, reveals the cyclical futility of his quest for identity, echoing colonialism's legacy of cultural dislocation. Salih thus critiques the impossibility of authentic selfhood in a postcolonial world where identity is mediated by imperialist frameworks, rendering even rebellion a form of mimicry.

Sa'eed leaves the narrator the key to his private room in Sudan, where "He used to spend a lot of time at night in" (Salih 65). The chamber embodies the unresolved tension between his Sudanese identity and colonial European influences. While his public life in Wad Hamid, marked by marriage to Hosna and fatherhood, appears rooted in tradition, the secret room reveals a deeper identity torn between Sudanese heritage and European influences. The space, described as a composition of two different cultures, juxtaposes Sudanese artifacts with remnants of his European past:

> The smell must remain imprisoned here: the smell of bricks and wood and burning incense and sandalwood…the whole floor of the room was covered with Persian rugs…A fireplace — imagine it! A real English fireplace with all the bits and pieces, above it a brass cowl and in front of it a quadrangular area tiled in green marble, with the mantelpiece of blue marble; on either side of the fireplace were two Victorian chairs covered in a figured silk material, while between them stood a round table with books and notebooks on it. (Salih 90)

The secret room serves as a haunting metaphor for Mustafa Sa'eed's fractured identity and the destructive legacy of colonialism. Filled with relics of Western intellectualism, including books by Keynes, Woolf, and Kipling, as well as his own books like *The Rape of Africa*, *The Economics of Colonialism*, and *Colonialism and Monopoly*, the room holds both his passionate engagement with and critical examination of colonial discourses and, simultaneously, betrays his complicity in reproducing their forms. The absence of Arabic

texts and the provision of English texts only demonstrate a disconnection from Sudanese cultural heritage, substituted with an assiduously constructed European epistemology that produces a performative creation of his own identity. The Victorian fireplace, the gilt frame of the portrait of Sheila Greenwood, and Sa'eed's photographs in various European settings (rowing on the Serpentine, for instance, and serving as a Magus in a Nativity play) all serve to document his imitation of colonial authority, even as he self-decorates for romantic admirers like Sheila, who fetishizes his black skin and red tongue as markers of both magic and transgression (Salih 92). Her suicide, together with Hosna's murder-suicide in Sudan, constitutes the collateral damage of his internalized violence, and women become victims of his unresolved duality. The disorder of the room, the Persian rugs, cushions, and books "like tombstones," is a mirror of his liminal state, a "mausoleum" of colonial booty and self-mythologizing. The narrator's tendency to set the room ablaze: "I shall set it on fire" (Salih 90), is an expression of desire to purge the harmful legacy of colonialism; yet his hesitation: "I shall see and hear, then burn" (Salih 90), acknowledges the futility of eradicating its presence. The fire, being both a destructive element and a beacon of knowledge, symbolizes Sa'eed's life: a vicious cycle of vengeance and self-destruction. Salih is critical of postcolonial subjectivity's entrapment within colonial discourse, such that even resistance is mimicry and hybridity, and this, as represented by the room's mad concept, degenerates into a prison of contradictions. The room is then a testament to the impossibility of reconciliation in a world where identity continues to be fractured by the violence of empire, and all that it leaves behind are ashes and unresolved questions.

Salih's critique lies in the cyclical futility of mimicry, whether as the native performer in London or the assimilated intellectual in Sudan, Sa'eed remains ensnared in colonial narratives. The rooms, with their curated chaos, symbolize the postcolonial subject's entrapment, a prison where rebellion becomes complicity, and hybridity collapses into contradiction. By leaving the narrator the key to this "treasure chamber" (Salih 91), Sa'eed is leaving behind not just his heritage but the impossibility of its resolution. The room's ashes, as the novel itself, afford no catharsis, but instead the smouldering reality that colonial violence endures long after empires fall.

With the character of Sa'eed's Sudanese widow, Hosna Bint Mahmoud, Salih exposes how patriarchy and colonialism intertwine to reproduce women's oppression. Despite what appears to be superficial change induced by colonialism, modern technology, education for women, and Westernized manners, the village retains patriarchal values that make women objects of men's control. Mahjoub's remark that "the world hasn't changed as much as you think" (Salih 100), highlights the hollowness of colonial civilization, which modernized on the surface but continued to preserve systemic gender oppression. Hosna's experience amply demonstrates this stasis. Once Sa'eed disappears, she is forced to marry Wad Rayyes, an old man notorious for his abuse of women. Her uprising: "If they make me marry, I'll kill him and kill myself" (Salih 96), asserts agency in a society that devalues women's independence. Yet her suicide illuminates the violence of patriarchal imposition. Even other women, complicit in the enforcement of such norms, demonize her opposition, showing how misogyny reproduces itself out of its own victims. Salih juxtaposes colonial modernity and entrenched tradition to denounce both. Though schools and pumps presage change, they exist alongside the commodification of women such as Hosna. Though her education, a symbol of progress, cannot save her from being exchanged as a wife or punished for resistance, her death is a condemnation of a society prioritizing male control over women's lives and a colonial enterprise that reconfigured infrastructure but not endemic injustice. Through Hosna, Salih emphasizes the silent struggles of women trapped between superficial modernity and unyielding tradition, calling for recognition of the entwined histories of patriarchal and colonial oppression.

The narrative's circular design, which begins with the narrator's triumphant return to Sudan and ends with his spectral vanishing into the Nile's twilight currents, encapsulates colonialism's inescapable paradox, a journey that starts with the myth of rootedness and concludes with the revelation that identity, like water, cannot be contained, only endlessly displaced. Mona Takieddine- Amyuni, in her reading of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, contends that the true protagonist of the novel is not the tormented anti-colonial figure, Mustafa Sa'eed, symbolizing a transitional period of resistance, but rather the unnamed narrator. She argues that the narrator represents a dialectical development through three stages of cultural conflict: the crossroads of Eastern and Western worldviews, the binary opposition of Black and White identities, and the

opposing worldviews of Islam and Christianity (3). The hybrid identity of the unnamed narrator, developed through his education in England and Sudanese heritage, serves as a fulcrum of postcolonial tension. Since he is doing a Ph.D. in English poetry, his return to Sudan is a conflicted duality: he pits the isolating chill of London, where "the fishes die of a cold" (Salih 3), against a first sense of belonging to his native land, proclaiming, "I felt not like a storm-swept feather but like that palm tree, being with background, with roots, with a purpose" (Salih 4). The palm tree, as a symbol of cultural rootedness, is opposed to Mustafa Sa'eed's lemon tree, symbol of hybridity that bears "two different types of fruits" (Idir 4), as a mirror of the narrator's division between European reason and Sudanese tradition. But this apparent stability begins to break down as the narrator grapples with the tension between Western education and Wad Hamid's patriarchal norms. Events like Hosna's forced wedding and resulting murder-suicide indicate his participation in widespread oppression; while he condemns the village's traditions, his passivity makes him complicit as a partner to their violence. His existential confusion takes shape in the vision of Mahjoub dividing a palm sapling, a metaphor for the narrator's split belonging: like the plant torn from the earth, he is "left to the sun to dry" (Salih 107), torn between allegiance to his origins and estrangement from their realities. Scholars like Al-Shraah contend that his inability to use his knowledge to put an end to oppressive customs is an expression of a larger postcolonial dilemma, in which "Western knowledge becomes a tool of inertia rather than liberation" (Al-Shraah 153). The narrator's failure to translate his Western education into meaningful action against patriarchal oppression underscores the deeper paradox of postcolonial intellectual engagement: while armed with knowledge, the narrator finds himself immobilized by the very system he seeks to resist.

The novel's conclusion deepens this tension through the narrator's symbolic immersion into the Nile, a liminal space that echoes Sa'eed's disappearance yet resists definitive closure. As he wades into the river, "half-drowned and hearing only the sounds of the water pumps" (Salih 38), the Nile becomes a site of reckoning, embodying both the lifeblood of Sudanese identity and the destructive currents of colonial legacy. This scene encapsulates the narrator's "perpetual dislocation" (Salih 4), suspended between North and South, belonging and exile. Unlike Sa'eed, whose death in the Nile signifies annihilation, the narrator's survival suggests a precarious agency, a refusal to fully

succumb to the river's pull, even as he acknowledges his entrapment within its tides. Salih's cyclical narrative structure, beginning and ending with the Nile, underscores the inescapability of colonial trauma, yet hints at the possibility of bearing witness to its contradictions. The narrator's final act, neither retreat nor advance, mirrors Sudan's postcolonial condition: a nation grappling with the weight of its hybridity, where progress and tradition collide in unresolved dialogue. Through this ambivalence, Salih critiques the myth of a singular identity, instead framing identity as a fluid, contested negotiation, a journey without destination, much like the Nile's endless flow.

The narrator's near-drowning culminates in an existential awakening. His realization that he has lived "without any volition" (Salih 108) critiques passive complicity in colonial and patriarchal systems, echoing Frantz Fanon's assertion that decolonization demands active agency. By choosing life, "I shall live by force and cunning" (Salih 108), he rejects Sa'eed's nihilism, embracing survival as resistance. Yet his scream for help: "Help! Help!" (Salih 108) signals a fractured agency, acknowledging the impossibility of solitary redemption in a world shaped by collective trauma. This ambivalence reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, where the postcolonial subject occupies a "third space" of negotiation, neither fully assimilated nor authentically native.

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Salih dismantles the domineering narratives of English imperialism. As Innes contends, the novel's characters "crack the repressive structures that emphasize the advantaged standpoint of the colonizers and deny representation to the colonized Other" (86–92). At its core, the work interrogates the experiences and identities of Sudanese individuals, the "others," navigating and confronting English cultural frameworks, exposing tensions between the colonial power and marginalized voices (Al-Saidi 35).

Tayeb Salih's importance as a writer lies in his seminal novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, which is celebrated as one of the earliest non-Western novels that addresses the agony of exile, colonial occupation, and the split identity of the native outsider moving through both the European diaspora and a post-independence homeland (Al-Saidi 35). Salih tries to rescue Sudanese history from colonial distortions, rewriting it in terms of African and Arab Sudanese voices rather than imposed ones of the colonizers. Makdisi

confirms that the novel is “an example of writing back to the colonial power that once ruled Sudan” (535). Furthermore, Salih’s exploration of cultural hybridity, a hallmark of postcolonial discourse, transforms this theme into a form of resistance. Patricia Greesey finds that in Salih’s writing, hybridity is not merely “a negative nuisance upon the colonized” but rather reconfigured as “an instrument of counter-colonialism, reversing the discursive practices of the colonizer” (192). By inverting colonial binaries, Salih undermines imperial authority while foregrounding the intricacies of postcolonial identity. The European woman’s body is thus symbolically equated with Western sovereignty, and sexual conquests by colonized African men are framed as an exercise in the assertion of power and resistance to colonial rule. To Tayeb Salih, these interracial relationships are inescapably and irretrievably linked to colonial history because African men like Sa’eed use sexuality to reclaim self-respect and question racial hierarchies. Yet, this tactic is rife with contradiction. In his subordination of European women, Sa’eed reproduces the oppressive tactics typical of colonialism, rendering intimacy a tool of violence and reinforcing cycles of dehumanization. Mustafa Sa’eed’s intimacies with European women are conscious actions of resistance against colonial rule, calculated to disrupt racialized and culturalized hierarchies fabricated by imperial hegemony. Many critics view these relationships as acts of defiance, interpreting Sa’eed’s use of sexuality as a tool of vengeance against the dehumanizing forces of colonialism. As an example, Homad contends that Saeed makes the European woman “pay for the humiliation her countrymen have caused to the people they colonize” (quoted in Al-Saidi 38), providing an explanation of his actions as a metaphorical inversion of colonial power. Despite the fact that racialized stereotypes and colonial discourses influence the interactions between European women representing the civilizing mission and Saeed representing the hypersexualized “Oriental Other,” the narrative itself problematizes a monolithic, reductionist interpretation of his motives. It is unclear whether Sa’eed’s desire for these women is entirely a racialized revenge or if it constitutes a more nuanced interaction between desire, self-hatred, and existential alienation. Although the elements of colonial subversion and retribution are unmistakably evident, they may not entirely account for Sa’eed’s psychological disintegration or the disheartening ineffectiveness of his endeavours (Al-Saidi 38). His interpersonal connections, characterized by reciprocal objectification, may similarly

signify his ingrained colonial pathologies, a complexity that hinders efforts to interpret his behaviour solely as acts of political defiance.

## CONCLUSION

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* stand as monumental acts of literary decolonization, dismantling the epistemic violence of imperialism while illuminating the unresolved tensions of postcolonial subjectivity. Through their subversion of colonial binaries, self/other, tradition/modernity, civilization/barbarism, the novels transcend mere counter-narratives to expose the paradoxes of resistance, hybridity, and identity in societies fractured by colonialism's corrosive legacy. Rooted in the theoretical frameworks of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, this study demonstrates how both authors reclaim Indigenous agency while interrogating the psychological and cultural costs of the empire.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* destabilizes colonial discourse by re-entering Igbo society's complexity, challenging Eurocentric stereotypes of African "primitivism." Achebe reclaims a cultural world fractured by missionary and administrative violence, subverting the colonial tongue through Igbo proverbs, oral traditions, and communal ethics to assert Indigenous sovereignty. Okonkwo's tragic resistance and Nwoye's embrace of Christianity epitomize the destabilizing effects of colonial disruption: the former's rigid adherence to tradition collapses under the weight of cultural erasure, while the latter's conversion reflects the fraught allure of hybridity. Achebe's novel, as Said's *Orientalism* reveals, dismantles the colonial "inventory" of knowledge by asserting Igbo sovereignty over its own history, exposing the hypocrisy of a "civilizing mission" that masks exploitation. Achebe denounces colonial arrogance and cultural erasure in the District Commissioner's plan to document Igbo history. The Commissioner, determined to write a "history" of the people, chooses to "cut out details" (Achebe, *TFA* 68) of Igbo culture, reducing its complexity to fit colonial histories. He whittles Okonkwo's life down to a paragraph, describing him as "the man who killed the Messenger and hanged himself" (Achebe, *TFA* 68) without even recalling his name. This indicates that the colonizers did not honour Indigenous stories and identities. The proposed title of the book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, unveils the dehumanizing rationale of colonialism. The use of "primitive" to describe the Igbo assumes European cultural superiority and frames colonization as a civilizing mission. The term "pacification"

glosses over the violence of conquest, whereas the Commissioner's aspiration to Europeanize the Igbo demonstrates the erasure of their cultural identity. In dismissing Okonkwo's heritage and simplifying Igbo society, Achebe reveals how colonialism sought to efface Indigenous histories and substitute ones that legitimized conquest.

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* inverts Conrad's colonial gaze, positioning the Sudanese intellectual Mustafa Sa'eed as both predator and prey in the heart of the empire. Sa'eed's mimicry of European intellect and sexuality, a performative "conquest" of white women, exposes the ambivalence at the core of Bhabha's theory: his "almost the same, but not quite" (Parker 364) identity destabilizes colonial hierarchies even as it entraps him in cycles of self-destruction. The novel's spatial metaphors, the Nile's fluidity against London's rigid structures, deconstruct colonial binaries, reframing the "civilized" North as a site of moral decay and the "primitive" South as a locus of unresolved trauma. Sa'eed's secret room, cluttered with European relics and his own subversive books, symbolizes the irreconcilable hybridity of the postcolonial subject, whose identity is fractured by the very power structures he seeks to dismantle.

Both novels ultimately reject stereotypical narratives, instead foregrounding the enduring struggle to articulate sovereignty in a world shaped by colonialism's epistemic violence. Achebe and Salih refuse to romanticize precolonial pasts or postcolonial futures, instead illuminating the cyclical trauma of cultural dislocation. The District Commissioner's reductive ethnography in *Things Fall Apart* and Sa'eed's spectral presence in the Nile in *Season of Migration* epitomize the incomplete project of decolonization: Indigenous stories remain marginalized, and liberation is haunted by the ghosts of the empire. Yet these works also insist on the transformative power of narrative. By appropriating colonial language and form, Achebe's Igbo-infused English, Salih's Conradian irony, they reclaim agency, transforming the tools of oppression into instruments of resistance.

Moreover, Foucault's notion of power as diffuse and institutionalized is evident in both novels. In *Things Fall Apart*, the missionary Mr. Brown's establishment of schools and hospitals exemplifies the "soft power" of colonialism, which subverts Indigenous communities through education and religion. Nwoye's attraction to Christianity, a faith

promising "love and gaiety" (Achebe, *TFA* 147), absent in his father's rigid world, highlights the seductive appeal of colonial epistemologies. Yet this assimilation comes at a cost: Nwoye's rejection of Igbo traditions fractures familial bonds, illustrating Bhabha's argument that mimicry destabilizes both colonizer and colonized. Similarly, Sa'eed's academic success in England, a triumph of colonial education, alienates him from his Sudanese roots, rendering him a "stranger" in his village (Salih 23). His trajectory reflects Foucault's assertion that power produces knowledge, which in turn legitimizes domination.

The encounter between colonizer and colonized, so powerfully dramatized in postcolonial literature, is not simply an affair of historical record; it is a continual struggle over meaning, identity, and existence. As this work has demonstrated, the theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha represent two intertwined but different frameworks for conceptualizing how colonial power works and is resisted. Said's *Orientalism* reveals the ideological frameworks employed by the West to construct and dominate the East, but Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry complicate it by showing that the colonial encounter is not a straightforward linear process of domination and obeisance but also a space of ambivalence, contradiction, and subversion. Collectively, these thinkers offer a framework within which Chinua Achebe's and Tayeb Salih's novels can be read not only as representations of national identity or cultural renaissance but as nuanced examinations of colonial discourse and its long-term consequences. In addition, by bringing together Said's critique of Orientalist discourse with Bhabha's exploration of ambivalence and mimicry, we can better appreciate the layered textures of colonial and postcolonial experience. Colonial power does not act only from without; instead, it reshapes the interior spaces of both colonizer and colonized. The psychic fragmentation that we witness in figures such as Okonkwo and Mustafa Sa'eed is not an aberration, but a symptom of the wider epistemic violence wrought by imperialism. And in this fragmentation, however, are also the possibilities of rearticulation and reinvention. Postcolonial literature, in the work of Achebe and Salih, becomes a space in which the colonized subject recovers voice, reasserts agency, and renegotiates the terms of cultural belonging.

The enduring legacy of imperialism still influences current realities, as the impact of colonial violence resonates across geopolitical, cultural, and psychological spheres;

these writers' and thinkers' work is thus ever more pertinent. Orientalist misconceptions still influence worldviews, whilst hybridity is a fraught and tricky condition for many postcolonial subjects to navigate in terms of issues of identity, belonging, and power. Yet amidst these ongoing tensions lies the potential for new solidarities, new narratives, and new forms of resistance. Postcolonial literature, alongside critical theory, is not merely an archive of past injustice but a blueprint for envisioning a more just and equal future. In this, the literary works of Achebe and Salih, if interpreted through the theoretical frameworks established by Said and Bhabha, have a critical concern not only with the legacy of colonial pasts but also with the living, ongoing project of decolonization. This project calls for both a critical examination and a courageous, creative reimagining of cultural, political, and epistemological possibilities.

Although both *Things Fall Apart* and *Season of Migration to the North* deconstruct colonial mythologies and lay bare the psychological violence of empire, their protagonists, Okonkwo and Mustafa Sa'eed, represent tragically opposite yet ultimately intersecting trajectories of resistance and breakdown. Okonkwo, planted stubbornly in Umuofian soil, illustrates the disastrous expense of inflexible tradition in the encounter with colonial erasure. His identity, built entirely within the pre-colonial Igbo structures of masculinity and communal respect, collapses when confronted with the corrosive effects of missionary Christianity and administrative rule; his suicide is the last gesture of resistance to a reality where his ideals of strength and dignity are no longer relevant. Sa'eed, on the other hand, is the very embodiment of the radical hybridity used as a weapon. He masterminds the language, intellect, and even the exoticizing desires of the colonizer, turning them into tools for a revengeful counter-conquest in the very heart of London. His seduction and destruction of European women are a deliberate, grotesque parody of imperial dominance, seeking to infect the colonizer. Yet this strategy is just as lethal. Trapped in a permanent state of in-betweenness, belonging fully to neither Sudan nor England, existing as "almost the same, but not quite". Sa'eed's performative act of resistance ultimately gets the worst of him, culminating in murder, incarceration, exile, and dissolution in the Nile. Okonkwo dies as a result of his inability to adapt; Sa'eed's metamorphosis, on the other hand, is a weapon that turns against him. Thus, both protagonists are tragic figures of the impossibility of upholding a single and independent

identity in the midst of epistemological and structural devastation wrought by colonialism. Their contradictory approaches, Okonkwo's staunch clinging and Sa'eed's retaliatory accommodation, conclude in equivalent acts of self-destruction, highlighting the novels' unified, catastrophic realization: colonialism's inheritance is a world where the conflict for identity, in terms of adherence or subversion, is frequently a trajectory to deep, unavoidable loss.

Ultimately, *Things Fall Apart* and *Season of Migration to the North* are not merely deconstructions of empire but explorations of the ambivalent, hybrid spaces that emerge in its wake, offering not just critiques of colonial power but blueprints for survival. They remind us that if we are to dismantle the epistemic violence of colonialism, first we must be courageous enough to listen to the unresolved resonance of our own broken pasts. Only then can we embark on the slow, collective process of repair, not as conquerors or imitators but as narrative weavers who shape new worlds from fragments of the old.

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