

**REPRESENTATION OF THE COLONIZERS IN THE  
LITERATURE OF THE COLONIZED WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO *THINGS FALL APART* AND *A GRAIN OF WHEAT***

TO 8029



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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD**

2011



~~Accession No TH8029.~~

M. Shil  
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1. postcolonialism in literature
2. African literature - 20th century

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MS in English  
To**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE  
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD**

**2011**

This work is dedicated to the greatest of the men,  
Nelson Mandela, whose non violent resistance  
to oppression and steadfastness against exploitative forces  
are but a beacon light for the strayed nations.

## ABSTRACT

The present dissertation presents a study of representation or counter discourse in postcolonialism with special reference to *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat* by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O respectively. The main argument of the dissertation is that unlike their claims, verbal or written, both Achebe and Ngugi have carried out the representation of the colonizers in their literary discourses. The term representation, its differing connotations, facets and multi pronged interpretations have been explored and the above texts have been analyzed and interpreted in the light of all these aspects. *Things Fall Apart* had been written, as Achebe Claimed, to re-trace, reconstruct and re-establish the history of the Igbos, while *A Grain of Wheat* was written to construct the resistance narrative of the Kenyans. The former is about the advent of colonialism and the later documents the concluding part of the colonial expeditions in Africa.

My primary focus, in this dissertation, is on all those discursive practices which the colonized adopted to write back to the West. So, as Said pointed out in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, that West's history of East is, in fact, the history of representation. But when ~~East~~ carried out the representative practices it benefited from all the same practices used by the West. So, if West considered East as degenerate, effeminate, irrational, illogical, compact minded and to name but a few epithets, the East also used the same for the West in its efforts to regain its own identity and blur the identity of the West.

## CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

I, Yasir Arafat

Son of Muhammad Mehfooz

Registration No: 69-FLL/MphilEg/F07

Candidate of Master of Philosophy (English) at the International Islamic University, Islamabad do hereby declare that the thesis Representation of the Colonizers in the Literature of the Colonized with special reference to *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat* submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree in the Department of English (FLL) is my original work and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest regard to Almighty Whose blessings are countless and Whom I owe everything. Praises are due to the Prophet (PBUH), Who fought against the exploitation and turned a class-ridden society into a class less society in the most challenging circumstances.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Munawar Iqbal Gondal for his patient guidance and encouraging remarks that made it possible to improve and complete this work.

My very kind teacher, Dr. Safeer Awan who helped me finalise this topic and guided me throughout.

I also owe a lot to my father and mother for their unconditional support in all the thick and thin. I am also indebted to Babar Bhai, Asia Bhabi, and my younger sisters for putting up with my busy schedules and encouraging me always.

Thanks to my dearest friend Tahir Malik who taught me to resist against injustice and be resolute against all the odds.

Prof.Sajjad Haider Malik has always been a source of great inspiration for me especially in the academic world.

My dear friend Syed Furrukh Zad has been of great help whose guidance in the completion of my present work has been very precious.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background and Problem

Representation, in the field of postcolonial studies, has been an important issue from the point of view of the colonizers because it would provide them with justifications to dominate the colonized, establish their colonies and accomplish their so called civilizing mission. The research carried out so far, in this respect, focuses mainly on the texts and narratives produced by the colonizers who established the identity of the colonized in their writings while stressing their inferiority, degeneration, irrationality, illogicality and to name but a few related epithets. The colonized have always been portrayed as a dumb and deaf creature not capable of establishing their own identity. They have, rather, always been stripped of their own culture, civilization, customs and traditions and the colonizers have not only been occupying the geographical territories but also endeavored for ideological domination of the colonized. The purpose of such kind of representations and the related “white patriarchal myths was to justify the conquest, occupation and destruction of non - western societies” (Ching: 1996; 34). It was so because Europe was beginning the serious task of discovering on her non – European ‘Others’ in imaginative and scientific literature. While it is important to unfold such hegemonic designs of the colonizers, which Edward Said has already done in his book *Orientalism*, it is also interesting to note what kind of *Representation* the colonized have given to their colonial masters in their own texts and narratives. A careful study of the texts produced by the colonized reveals that their representation of the colonizers is also based on

certain prejudices, biases, reduced images, preconceived notions and stereotypes to define the west or their colonial masters.

The term *representation* embodies a range of meanings and interpretations. Etymologically, 'representation' can be understood as a presentation drawn up not by depicting the object as it is but by re-presenting it or constructing it in a new form and / or environment. However, this re-presentation or re-construction is a complex process which also involves the culture and values of the group which represents *others*. In fact representation is a process or medium through which meaning, identities, associations and values are culturally or socially constructed.

The term *Representation* has also been defined as, "the degree to which a given group's identity is defined" (Harrison: 2003; 12) In the processes of representation, in fact, a group's identity is constructed, not as it actually is but, as it is perceived, understood and comprehended by the authority which constructs it. It is either the members of the dominated group or of 'minority groups who are almost liable to be *read* as representative, that is, liable to stereotyping' and who find themselves unable to act as individuals to the extent that their every action may be taken as typical of the type to which they find themselves assigned. Moreover in their efforts to construct such groups the 'colonized is not usually characterized in an individual manner; he can expect only to be submerged in collective anonymity "*They* are such and such . . . . . *They* are all the same" (Harrison: 2003; 100). In another definition Linda Hutcheon defines representation as follows.

Like every great word, 'representation/s' is a stew. A scrambled menu, it serves up several meanings at once. For a representation can be an image – visual, verbal, or aural . . . .A

representation can also be a narrative, a sequence of images and ideas . . . Or, a representation can be a product of ideology, that vast scheme for showing forth the world and justifying its dealings.

(Hutcheon: 1989; 23)

In the above definition the characteristics and schematics of representation are unfolded and it seems true in the context of postcolonialism that the colonizers not only produced images and ideas but they also created narratives carrying forward the dominant ideologies in order to civilize the 'uncivilized'. They laid the foundations of their so called sacred mission with the help of these images and narratives and constructed or reconstructed the identities of the colonized to justify their claims over them. There is no denying the fact that the western philosophy of conquering the other parts of the globe was based on certain claims of superiority over the colonized. Because they considered themselves as best so according to them the resources of the world also belonged to them so that they could utilize the resources in the best way. The justifications given by the colonists are multifold including civilizational uplift, economic productivity, social change and religious enlightenment. The plethora of these and such other terms may sound very unique and catchy and is widely supported, justly or unjustly, by many men of letters. In this regard Stephan Howe says,

The most important result of colonization is to increase world productivity. It is at the same time great social force for progress. The earth belongs to humanity. It belongs to those who know best how to develop it, increase its wealth, and in the process augment it, beautify it and elevate humanity. Colonization is the propagation of the highest form of civilization yet conceived and realized the perpetuation of the most talented race, the progressive organization of humanity.

(Howe: 2002; 77)

However, the mechanics of defining and giving identity to others involve very complex processes namely caricaturing and representational

depictions of the colonized. In Postcolonial discourse the issue of representation is usually associated with the west because it were the western texts – social sciences, anthropologies, histories, fiction, scientific literature and travelogues etc that captured the non – European subject within European frameworks. And “within the complex relations of colonialism these representations were re projected to the colonized – through formal education or general colonialist cultural relations- as authoritative pictures of themselves”(Ashcroft: 1995; 35). The west, through its discursive practices, always undermined the Orient and propounded the theories of Otherness, Racism, Difference and Caricaturing as far as the colonized were concerned. It not only provided them with a set of categorical beliefs or propositions about members of the target community but would also “furnish the basis for the development and maintenance of solidarity among the prejudiced” (Ehrlich: 2009; 45). The idea that this issue of representation is west – oriented is reinforced by Karl Marx’s famous saying that “they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented” (Said: 1978; 53). Karl Marx’s above verdict truly encompasses all the prejudices and biases which expedited the process of differences and resultantly the representative modes were employed to create bleak pictures of the Orient. It, on the other hand, focuses on the impotency and incapability of the colonized even to chalk out the elements of their own culture and society. The representational forms cannot be divorced from the culture and society that produces them; therefore, the people who *represent* the *others* are in fact promoting their own values and repudiating the values and culture of *others*. This ultimately results into the collision of the ideologies and the colonizer maximizes the benefit by

forcefully implementing the ideologies it strives to propagate, thus creating an opportunity to assert its presence and nullify that of the *others*.

However, in my present research I have taken up this issue from the perspective of the *colonized*. So, it may be termed as counter-discourse, *representation in reverse* or *counter representation* because it aims to investigate the phenomenon of representation from the contrary perspective. It is contrary in the sense that here the focus of my study are the texts of the 'Orient'; of the conquered and the colonized. My main argument addresses the issue of 'representation' not of the colonized but of the colonizers. This kind of representation takes place in the literature of the colonized which, of course, also looks at the colonizer through its own culture and values. I have tried to de-construct the myths of the colonized which interpret the colonizers and draw images of them. I have also endeavored to analyze how the colonists and their grand and meta - narratives are perceived by the colonized. I have looked at their portrayal, delineation and presentation from the point of view of the colonized. It is answering back to the west / colonizers/ whites what 'orient' takes them for and how it portrays and looks at them, their culture, their civilization, their narratives and their imperialistic designs. It is the reaction of the orient which rejects and excoriates such hegemonic designs and strategies adopted by the west. In fact *representation* has also been one of the dominant strategies of the Orient through which it has not only resisted the imperialistic designs of the west but has also tried to re - construct its own identity. So whatever modes were adopted by the west to define the east or Orient, the Orient also employs and relies on the same. Quite interestingly they share the objectives of portraying each other in caricature forms in their

respective narratives. Each one of them tries to prove itself superior and finds faults with the other. Furthermore, in order to authenticate their perceptions the Westerners dwelt upon the so called empirical, rational and evolutionary principles whereas the Africans drew inspiration from their tribal values, their glorious past (as they perceive it) and their existing structures. But, in the end, both of them are seen falling short of neutral depiction of each other, because of societal and ideological differences.

I have selected *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat* written by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o respectively. Both the texts are produced by the African postcolonial writers and offer immense examples of *representation* done by the colonized. It becomes evident only when we probe into these texts.

In the above mentioned texts the natives not only perceive the colonizers as inferior but they also try to present them as dehumanized figures who have conquered their lands, displaced them, are ruthlessly enlightening them and fulfilling white man's burden in the name of civilization. And eventually all this results into distortion and destruction of the natives' tribal values. The very title *Things Fall Apart* which is taken from W.B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" (Achebe: 1978; 64-65) reflects the debacle that has taken place after the intrusion and arrival of the British. The denial of the natives' history, identity, culture and consequently the execution of Western model of governance and existence resulted in disruption and upheavals which changed the hue of the native originality. In this novel, Chinua Achebe opens a casement on Umuofia, revealing to us the compelling tragedy of Okonkwo who embodies the ideals of independence, self respect and honour. It is

mainly through the eyes of this legendary character that the colonizers are perceived. It is because of the breaking up of all the existing structures and their substitution by the foreign or alien structures that makes the *Things Fall Apart*.

*A Grain of Wheat* shows Ngugi's struggle for cultural nationalism and his embracing of Fanonist Marxism. In the title of the novel he refers to the biblical theme of self-sacrifice, a part of the new birth. The allegorical story of one man's mistaken heroism and a search for the betrayer of a Mau Mau leader is set in a village, which has been destroyed in the war. The author's family was involved in the Mau Mau uprising. His elder brother had joined the movement, his stepmother was killed, and his mother was arrested and tortured. This novel depicts the resistance to the colonization of Kenya and the repercussions that follow. It also focuses on the eventual process of decolonization which takes place as a result of consistent and unflinching struggle of the colonized. In this novel too, the colonizers have endeavored to deny history and culture to the colonized and impose their own structures on them thus establishing themselves as the harbingers of change and betterment for the Kenyans who cannot better themselves but are dependent on the *whites*.

Although the purpose of this research is not to compare or contrast the texts but to analyze them, yet it can be conveniently said that if in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe manifests his dissatisfaction with the socio-political and religious structures of the west, Ngugi exhibits the same resentment in *A Grain of Wheat*. As an example it can be said that Christian God has no match for Achebe's "Chi" (Achebe: 1978; 09) and White man's "faith was a

mad dog” (Achebe: 1978; 25). Similarly, Ngugi chooses the narrative structure of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (postcolonial re - writing) and not of *Jane Eyre* (a colonial text) when he writes *A Grain of Wheat*. Both of them asserted that the white’s English is quite impotent and cannot bear their burden therefore they appropriated English to enable it to speak for them (the colonized). So, at the outset, it is apparent that both of them look at the whites and their culture as inferior and not all encompassing. Their *representation* of the whites is therefore also affected and they create and produce stereotypical discourse to define the colonizers.

I have based my argument on Edward Said’ thesis in *Orientalism* in which he propounded the argument that *representation* of the *Orient* in European literary texts, travelogues, scientific literature, anthropology, history, philosophy, cultural studies and other writings contributed to the creation of differences and binary oppositions of self- other, orient – occident, , civilized – uncivilized, etc. He holds that this dichotomy was central to the expansion of European hegemony over other lands as well as creation of European cultures. It eventually resulted into binary opposition by which the east was portrayed as ‘uncivilized, ignorant, irrational, illogical, degenerate, and primitive’ while the west was sketched as “civilized, educated, rational, logical, cultured and modern” (Ashcroft: 1999; 13). These were, in fact, the self- confirming parameters in which the various Orientalist disciplines circulated. Said’s thesis point was based on the perusal of the western texts related to the above mentioned fields of study. It must also be borne in mind that although Said is perhaps the single most important but surely not the first and only writer who initiated the field of Orientalism.



Before him there were many intellectuals like, “Hodgson, Daniel, Tibawi, Alatas, and Djait” (Sardar: 2002; 12) etc who had made a significant contribution to the field of Orientalism. However, according to Sardar, Said added at least three new dimensions to the already existing research in this field. Talking about these dimensions he holds that Said,

added a new dimension of literary Criticism to the standard scholarly and historical analysis, he was able to bring the different strands of critique under a single interdisciplinary framework which transformed disciplinary critiques of Orientalism into multidisciplinary cultural analysis and Said’s *representation* of Orientalism as the grandest of all narratives, an all encompassing discourse that both represented and contained the Orient, that is key to the success of Orientalism.  
(Sardar: 2002; 67)

It is with the last point, mainly, the issue of *Representation* (which Said calls grandest of all narratives) that the present research is concerned with, although, the perspective is quite opposite as stated earlier.

Although Said’s thesis on Orientalism served as a ground breaking discourse on the subject, yet many critics of Orientalism have propounded their arguments to defend the western academia. For example, “Dennis Porter, John Mackenzie and Aijaz Ahmed” (McLeod: 2007; 48) hold the contrary views. They repudiate Said for his ‘over generalized, broad and sweeping statements’ regarding Orientalists and Orientalism. They hold that Said’s history of Orientalism “is in itself essentially ahistorical” (McLeod: 2007; 47) and Said ignores resistance not only by the colonized in particular but also by the west in general. All the dissenting voices have been given no credit by Said at all and according to his critics Said carries out a sweeping analysis. Mackenzie goes to the extent of saying that western intelligentsia approached the orient with perfectly honorable intentions and utmost reverence for other people in order to value their cultures and learn from them. He opines that

“not every body looked down upon the orient so crudely” (Ibid). However, one area that Said ignores and his critics and other theorists point out emphatically is the *representation* made by those who have been subject to colonialism. Because what Said sees is the representation of Europe to itself and the representation of the others to Europe, “not as accounts of different peoples and societies, but a projection of fears and desires masquerading as scientific/ objective knowledges” (Ashcroft: 1995; 99). Ahmed also criticizes Said of “homogenizing the west” (Loomba: 98; 78) in dealing with the issue of representation in Orientalism. In this respect, it can be said now that colonial discourse studies today are not restricted to delineating the working of power – they have also tried to locate and theorise oppositions, restrictions and revolts on the part of the colonized.

The Western texts have always relied on the stereotypes which involve a reduction of the images and ideas to a simple and manageable form and are based on lack of real and authentic knowledge. It is done in order to create the difference between the *self* and the *other*. This stereotyping is based on different oppositions, for example, race, gender, religion and socio-political structures. It is more like projecting others in the form of a *reduced image* to bring about the dehumanizing aspect of other people, cultures and civilizations. These reduced images of the *others* or the colonized become their identity and they are, as a result, labeled according to this new imposed identity. In this respect Joseph Conrad’s novel, *Heart of Darkness* is excoriated by Chinua Achebe who takes it as a reduced image of Africa and “it is used by the west to define and establish its own superiority as a civilized culture against the darkness of primitive Africa” (Ashcroft: 2000 ; 49). In this

regard, Achebe unleashed his criticism of Conrad repeatedly and this was, in fact, the sole inspiration for him to re-write the history of Africans not as he deemed it fit but with a neutralized perspective. But the kind of stereotyping in *Heart of Darkness* is challenged by Frantz Fanon who denies the “racist stereotyping at the heart of colonial practice” (Ashcroft: 1989; 149) and asserts the need to recognize the “economic and political realities which underlay these assertions of racial difference and which were the material base for the common psychological and cultural feature of colonized people” (Ashcroft: 1989; 23).

Both Achebe and Ngugi reveal that European’s ideas of Africa are mistaken therefore the British superimpose their hierarchical and governance system thinking that all civilization evolves and progresses through primitive monarchy to parliamentary system of government as they were trying the same on the African soil. It was, rather, very strange for them to find no western modeled governmental and administrative structures in Africa. After having found such gaps they located opportunity for themselves to play their part effectively both in the political as well as the religious arena. In this regard they had extensively used the umbrella of Christianity to maximize their projects and to gain the legitimacy and divine approval for their expansion of colonial expedition. On the other hand it can be clearly seen that the Africans were not the savage brutes who would devour everything like cannibals rather they were, at times, more tolerant of others than the whites themselves. According to Rhodes, the “Igbos reveal themselves more tolerant of the other cultures than the Europeans who merely see the Igbo’s gods as not true at all” (Brymain: 2001; 98). Hence there is the clash of ideologies as

pointed by Rhodes above. In this clash of ideologies, even, it is commonly held that Achebe and Ngugi avoided stereotyping of the whites and they have not dwelt upon the West's mechanics of stereotyping. It is a general assumption that both the above writers, in their creative writings, have been away from stereotypical discourse. But the analysis of the texts yields different results that have been shown in the later chapters.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, quite contrary to their claims, carry out the representation in *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat* respectively

### **1.4 Research Questions**

During the course of my research I have focused on the following questions.

- How are *representation* and *politics of representation* defined and understood in the postcolonial context?
- How is (mis)representation carried out in *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat*?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The objectives of my research are to find out and investigate the practices, methods, approaches and techniques through which Achebe and Ngugi carry out representation of the colonizers in their literary discourses.

## 1.6 Research Rationale

Even after my careful perusal of the available material, I have come across a very few books and articles on the issue that I have taken for research. After the point of view of the Orientalists which is proven by Edward Said etc, it is appropriate that the West's portrayal and depiction, in the literature of the Orient, may also be made the object of research. This is, in fact, the very reason that inspired me to undertake this research. Usually, the natives' point of view is ignored due to their marginalization, so, it would be quite interesting to see how the natives look at their masters. I also want to see how the cannibals and brutes who are represented as such in the colonizers' literature view the "emissary of light and the torch bearers of civilization" (Conrad: 1977; 24) in their literature. Moreover, I also want to see whether their so called primitivity is replaced by the enlightenment project which the whites felt as a burden to civilize them. My prime reason for taking up the above mentioned texts is that African Literature is a field of modern postcolonial literature. *Things Fall Apart* represents the advent of British Colonization on African soil and marks the beginning of colonization in Africa whereas *A Grain of Wheat* records the dying days of British Empire in Kenya and represents the independence from the colonizers. So, it encapsulates the historical struggle that was undertaken by the Africans between these two periods; of arrival and that of departure. Moreover, these texts are included in the syllabus of different institutions in Pakistan so my research would be beneficial for the local readers and students alike.

## 1.6 Research Methodology

One of the main difficulties with qualitative research is that because of its reliance on prose it rapidly generates a large cumbersome database. Miles has described qualitative data as “attractive nuance” (Bertens: 2001; 132) because of its richness and attractiveness and the difficulty of finding analytical path through that richness.

As far as my present research is concerned it clearly falls in the domain of Postcolonial paradigm. If seen at a wider scale, Postcolonial theory and criticism emphasize the tension between the metropolis and the (former) colonies. In this regard it is pertinent to quote Hans Bertens who says that Postcolonial theory and criticism,

Focuses on the cultural displacements – and its consequences for personal identities – that inevitably followed the colonial conquest and rule and it does so from a non European perspective. Postcolonialism theory and criticism radically questions the expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the ‘Western’ world. It studies the process and the effects of cultural displacement and the ways in which the displaced have culturally defended themselves.

(Barry: 2002’ 78)

And there is no doubt that the *defense mechanism* or the *resistance movement* of the African Colonized also adopted *Representation* as one of the strategies to defend themselves and caricature the Other’s culture. Therefore we can say that the issue of *representation* has its grounds in the theoretical framework of Postcolonialism. It is in this regard that the Postcolonial critics and theorists “examine the representation of other cultures in literature” (Barry: 2002; 199). by rejecting the Eurocentric universalism. Moreover they also pay heed to the

issues of cultural differences, polarity, and cultural polyvalence, that is, the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture. It also provided me with the binoculars to focus on and investigate the phenomenon of *representation* in the above mentioned texts. As Peter Berry opines in his book *Beginning Theory*, “the first step towards a postcolonial perspective is to reclaim one’s own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued” (Bertens: 2001; 45). A deep look at these lines shows that the colonialist ideology manufactures many methodologies to devalue and erode the past of the colonized, out of which one is to *represent* them as they may not be. Similarly in the resistance literature one of the methods used by the colonized is to pay back the colonizers in their own coins. This is how *counter representation* takes place which I have discussed with reference to *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Moreover, these texts have been produced with the desire for ‘cultural self determination or cultural independence’ (Wilfred: 2005; 69) which is studied, analyzed and interpreted in the light of the principles of postcolonialism.

As mentioned earlier, my main domain of research is postcolonialism but I have also benefited from another approach which is called Close - Textual Analysis or Close Reading. It is the most important skill needed for any form of literary studies. It means paying especially close attention to the written pages. In Close Textual Analysis the facts and details about the text are analyzed and observed. The focus may be only on *selected* features of the text as a whole or on a particular passage as the aim may be. The second step is explaining the observations. What it concerns itself is basically talking

about inductive reasoning: moving from the observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. The technique as practiced today was pioneered (at least in English) by I.A. Richards and his student William Empson, later developed further by the New Critics of the mid-twentieth century. It is now a pivotal method of modern criticism. Moreover, I have also carried out the analysis of the quotations from the primary source. Although, postcolonialism has many offshoots but I have focused on the issue of representation therefore my theoretical approach is postcolonial criticism.

The primary sources are the literary works *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat*. *Things Fall Apart* is a gigantic work published in 1958 and translated into more than sixty languages. A number of research articles have been carried out on this novel, such as *The Metamorphosis of Piety in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart"*, by Clayton G. Mackenzie, *Excavating the New Republic: Post-Colonial Subjectivity in Achebe's Things Fall Apart* by Christopher Wise and *Theoretical construction and Constructive Theorizing on the Execution of Ikemefuna N Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A study in Critical Dualism* by Emeke Nwabueze. Similarly, *A Grain of Wheat* was published in 1967 and has been translated into more than thirty languages. There are many articles published on this novel too, for example, Harrow Kenneth's *Ngugi Thiong'O Wa, "A Grain of Wheat": Season of Irony* and Rao, Venkat. D's "A Conversation with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o etc.

My secondary sources are Edward Said's *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *Postcolonial studies-The Key*



Concepts and Ania Loomba's Colonialism/Postcolonialism and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Moreover, I have also benefited from many research journals written by many Postcolonial scholars world wide.

### 1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is about the people and the countries which are almost alien to our society and literature. Being the inhabitants of the 'Heart of Darkness' (*as Conrad termed them*) and the most deserted and neglected part of the globe they have not been properly introduced to our literature. I think my effort to take up the issue of 'representation' will give an insight to the readers and scholars of postcolonialism. This dimension will benefit the readers and scholars to comprehend the phenomenon of Postcolonialism in a new way which henceforth has been the subject of Orientalists only. I want to develop counter-counter discourse to unveil and explore the true intentions of the colonizers as they are perceived by the colonized. Through this effort I want to take up the responsibility to introduce the colonial experience of the Africans to our intellectuals/readers and the students of Postcolonial field. As an inhabitant of the former British colony and the student of Postcolonial discourse I want to see how the colonial experience of the Africans is similar or different from our experience and how have the Africans looked and perceived their colonial masters especially in their literature with particular reference to *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat*.

## **1.8 Division of the chapters**

Following is the tentative division of the chapters for this research.

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

In introduction I have attempted to introduce the topic, discuss and analyze some relevant definitions, bring forth the significance of the topic, chalk out research methodology, and review the relevant literature.

### **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

In this chapter I have discussed the strategies and politics involved in representing others. In this regard the relevant theorists and critics of post-colonialism have been discussed. Moreover, the critical work that has already been done on the same texts with the same outlook has also been analyzed and linked to the topic.

### **Chapter Three: Representation of the colonizers in *Things Fall Apart***

In this chapter I have tried to carry out the textual analysis of the above text and have shown evidences of representation by Achebe.

### **Chapter Four: Representation of the colonizers in *A Grain of Wheat***

In this chapter the textual analysis of the above novel has been done with reference to representation.

### **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

Finally I have concluded my argument in the light of the discussion and I have presented a comparative analysis of the subject texts.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

In his ground breaking work *Orientalism*, Edward Said asserts that in the imperial history of the world Occident and Orient are constructed as “monolithic entities” (Ashcroft: 1999: 80) by which he means that East and West have been portrayed as two diametrically opposed entities. These two constructions are vividly worked upon by the historians, philosophers, anthropologists, archeologists and literary writers and their prime concern seems to have been to broaden the divisions between the two and take them further apart. In their documentation of history the westerners have always overlooked, undermined, caricatured, distorted, (mis) represented and stereotyped the other half of the globe namely the east. Although some occidentalists like Aijaz Ahmed, Denis Porter, Robert Young and Bernard Lewis have mounted one of the most vitriolic attacks on Said by calling his work as “ an ahistorical and an inconsistent narrative” (Ashcroft: 1999: 72) yet the fact remains proven that the Said’s attacks on West’s stereotyping of the Orient are widely recognized. Because Said has not based his analysis on any prejudices or preconceived biases rather he has dwelt upon the western texts and philosophy to carry out impartial and logical conclusions.

If we trace back the history of Orientalism it appears that Said was neither the first nor the only one to deal with this issue though his treatment of it on such a massive scale and across the disciplines gave Orientalism a new meaning and shape. Ziauddin Sardar in *Concepts in the Social Sciences; Orientalism* explains this phenomenon by saying that, “Said borrowed and built upon the earlier studies of Tibawi, Alatas, Abdel – Malek, Djait and

others such as Abdullah Laroui, Talal Asad, K.M.Panikkar and Ramila Thapar; but he did not acknowledge any of them” (Sardar: 2002; 69)

There is no doubt that Sardars’ objection has some traces of objectivity but the history of Orientalism clearly shows that none other but only Said established the thesis so comprehensively. Moreover, as pointed out later, Said’s analysis is based on a holistic view of Orientalism and he has shed light on all of its major aspects namely, social, political, cultural and most important of all epistemological.

In addition Sardar also opines that as far as the “domination of the west over the non – west is concerned” (Ibid: 69) Marshal Hodgson had already pointed it out in a dazzling series of essays between 1940 and 1960. Thus the west presents the history of the east as a story of despotism and cultural stagnation but its own history as a story of rationality, success and freedom. What was Said’s success was that he constructs Orientalism as a relatively unified discourse covering the entire course of history from earliest recorded epoch to contemporary times. So it becomes evident that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a constructed phenomenon that is consistently hatched by generations of theorists, intellectuals, writers, artists, commentators, politicians and the policy makers of the west. Furthermore, said holds that Orientalism is,

A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction . . . but also of a whole series of interests which . . . it not only creates but maintains. It *is* rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is manifestly different world.

(Said: 1978; 169)

According to Said's definition Orientalism tries to estimate both how west invented the fiction and narrative of the Orient and the Orientals and how their control and subjugation was achieved by this instrument of representation for the process of colonization.

Said defines Orientalism by saying that, "Orientalism is principally a way of defining and locating Europe's Others" (Ashcroft: 1999; 245). So, in this sense Orientalism is not perceived what it actually is but it is what Europe is not. The story becomes clearer when Said permeates into this phenomenon further and succeeds in tracing the dichotmic relationship between the two. In this sense, Europe was always portrayed as, "superior, symmetrical, rational, civilized, advanced, good, beautiful, centre" (Ashcroft: 1995; 145), while East had always had some negative epithets for its description, for example, "inferior, disorderly, irrational, uncivilized, backward, bad, ugly, margin" (Ibid). Edward Said discusses Orientalism as the "corporate institution" (Ashcroft: 2000; 215), for dealing with the Orient, dealing with it by making statements about it, describing it, teaching it, taming it and ruling over it . Said, in fact, strives to demystify the process of constructing "the other" (Noel: 1997; 111), by employing a Foucauldian conception of the power/knowledge nexus and the politics of representation, by which those having power over others had the *right* to define and give identity to them as well. Therefore, it was always the jargon and paradigm of the powerful that was used to look at and perceive others and the subjugated people, since they had got neither knowledge nor power and had no voice of their own. Said unveiled the mystery by focusing on the facts that helped Europe to manage

and control East during the post – enlightenment period. Noel B.Salazar is of the view that,

The linear and uninterrupted construction of the Orient as “Other” over many centuries became the basis and rationale for colonial oppression and served to strengthen the identity of western culture. Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world.

(Noel: 1997; 172)

In the tug of war between “us” and “them” the western academia, implicitly and explicitly, maneuvered even the *facts* to prove their superiority over the East. They held it very firmly that what they knew was the fact and what others knew and had was merely a farce. British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour’s defense of the occupation of Egypt in the early twentieth century is a mind boggling statement when he says that, “we know the civilization of Egypt better than we know any other country” (Ashcroft: 1999; 123). By saying this he, through the Foucauldian theory, tries to justify their occupation of Egypt implying that since they know the civilization of Egypt more than the others do, therefore, the right to govern it belongs to them only. That throws light on the hegemonic designs and colonial possessions of the west and their manipulation of knowledge and politics as well. In this and many other examples, Said’s concern is to lay bare the so called philanthropic desires of the West because the West had been promoting its own values in the name of civilizing the barbarian tribes of Asia and Africa and educating them about the Universal Values. Said further explores the relationship between culture and imperialistic designs of Europe and finds out innumerable instances of stereotyping and representation done by the West regarding the East in its numerous discourses. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said thus writes,

What are striking in these discourses are the rhetorical figures one keeps encountering in their descriptions of 'the mysterious east', as well as the stereotypes about the African mind, the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when 'they' misbehaved or became rebellious, because 'they' mainly understood force or violence best; 'they' were not like 'us', and for that reason deserve to be ruled.

(Said: 1994; 12)

In fact what Said asserts here is that the coming of white man was triggered by the expansive and hegemonic designs of Europe and the only motive behind their so called conquest of East was to govern, rule and heap up and accumulate their treasures of gold, ivory and wealth. But all of this needed some kind of justification in order to counter and suppress resistance both at home and abroad and for that purpose the whole of the above mentioned western academia came to rescue the imperialistic possessions in the name of, as Said mentions, civilization. It also led the European thinkers and philosophers to propound the theories by which they could prove the non – Europeans as inferior and half – humans. This was done with the aid of history, literature, social sciences, natural sciences, logic, philosophy and above all religion to create a need for the underdeveloped countries and civilizations to look for the *messiahs* or *liberators* who could pull them out and carry them to civilizational zenith.

The main tool that the Europeans used for ruling and civilizing the Orient was, no doubt, stereotyping, which as defined by Michael Pickering is "an exaggerated belief associated with a category whose function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (Pickering: 2001; 10). Pickering is also of the view that such "images and notions are usually held to be simplistic, rigid and erroneous, based on discriminatory values and

damaging to people's social and personal identities" (Ibid). Ehrlich. J.Howard shares somewhat same definition of stereotyping and is of the view that

Stereotyping refers generally to a set of categorical beliefs or propositions about members of real or putative groups. The holders of such beliefs are frequently constructed to be rigid in their adherences, and the beliefs themselves are often constructed as emotionally colored, fallacious or exaggerated.

(Ehrlich: 2009; 171)

Homi.K.Bhabha defines Stereotyping as something that "fixes individuals or groups in one place, denying their own sense of identity and presuming to understand them on the basis of prior knowledge, usually knowledge that is at best defective. This problem is of course present in colonial discourse" (Huddart: 2006; 35)

Homi.K.Bhaba, while speaking further on the same subject, asserts that although colonialism has been a relationship based on politics and economy, but for its legitimacy and justification, it has largely depended on cultural structures and domains. One explanation has been the supposed inferiority of the colonized people. He says that, "through racist jokes, cinematic images, and other forms of representation, the colonizer circulates stereotypes about the laziness or stupidity of the colonized population" (Huddart: 2006; 38).

This resulted in the binary opposition which has already been referred to above. Said also gives reason for West's endeavour to settle the accounts not only in the battlefield but also in narratives. He underlines the importance of West's theorizing in the following words.

The main battle in Imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.

(Said: 1994; 13)



Said's point is quite pertinent that there are a number of features which occur again and again in texts about colonized countries and that these cannot be attributed simply to the beliefs of an individual author, rather they are held on a large scale and are structured by discursive frameworks. Sara Mills in her book, *Discourse*, opines that the Western scholars had portrayed Orient as, "a repository of western knowledge, rather than as a society and culture functioning on its own terms" (Mills: 1997; 107). So, eventually, east remained east and west remained west and twin could never meet in any capacity.

As far as the issue of *Representation/ Stereotyping* is concerned, the colonized countries were described in a denigrating way producing them as a negative image, an *Other*, in order to launch a positive and civilized image of British society/West. Sara Mills further says that "these representations were structured largely according to certain discursive formats which developed over time, but which accrued truth – value to themselves through usage and familiarity" (Ibid) In fact each text which was written about the Orient reinforced particular stereotypical images and ways of thinking. As said argues,

Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself {sic} vis-à-vis the Orient, translated into his text; this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kind of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which adds up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient and finally representing it or speaking in its behalf.

(Said: 1978; 102)

These categorizations were not far from far-reaching effects because they adversely affected the rights and lives of the native inhabitants, denying human status to certain people and using some people as slaves/laborers and still others being wildly haunted and brutally killed like animals.

Said's analysis is not only confined to the propagandist texts produced during the colonial period, rather, he also dwells upon the texts which were produced in the name of learning and scholarship. So, as a result, ethnography, history, travel writings and many more fields yielded themselves to Europe's services and, on accounts of them, certain sweeping generalizations were made about particular cultures and societies: "the inscrutable Chinese, the untrustworthy Arab, the docile Hindu and so on" (Mills: 1997; 107).

The colonized culture was also differentiated from the colonizers' culture through representation on a different time scale to the colonizers as Sara Mills has noted,

colonizers set the colonized country and its inhabitants in the distant past tense, relegating them to a period which has been superseded by the colonizers, and hence denying them 'coevalness', and through the use of terms such as 'backward', 'primitive', 'feudal', 'developing country', and 'pre-industrial' to describe colonized countries, the colonized country is set within a past period of British historical development or western progress and is therefore not permitted to exist on its own terms; it exists only in an underdeveloped parody of British civilization, a state which Homi Bhaba has described as being one of 'mimicry'.

(Ibid;111)

As observed earlier, *stereotyping/representation* forms the core of Orientalism as a discourse and, with occidental versions, mythical representations of the orient began as a place of immense darkness where exoticism and barbarism are inevitably and inextricably fused together. Along with a general irrationalism and backwardness, the stereotypical regime which emerged, in literary and pictorial representations, as Pickering notes it, "included corrupt and irrational despotism, fanatic religiosity, exotic mysticism, teeming markets and dreamy harems, sexually predatory and insatiable men, and sensual, decadent and devious women"(Pickering: 2001;10). Even if West ever tried to portray East as positive, slight though the

moments are, the element of exaggeration could never be removed from it. Pickering further notes it by saying that, "when exotic mysticism is transmuted into the benign transcendental spirituality of Eastern wisdom, even then, they tend to exaggerate East/West differences as absolute and unchanging" (Pickering: 2001; 148). Africa and the Africans, to be specific, were largely constructed by the Westerners not depicting what Africa is but defining and presenting Africans and Africa as they knew and how they already thought about them. In their discourse and sense, Africa was a chaos filled by the presence of European discourse about it.

These and some other similar stereotypes about Orient had been jotted down by Said in order to expose the so called enlightened view of the West. So, if the "West was considered the place of historical progress and scientific development, then the Orient was deemed remote from the influence of historical change" (McLeod: 2007; 17). Therefore, a westerner walking to Oriental lands was not just moving in space from one geographical location to the other; rather, he was also traveling back in time to an ancient and earlier world because of the Orient being exotic, uncivilized, impoverished, and under developed. In addition, Orient was also considered oddly different from the Occident as unusual, fantastic and bizarre.

The gender also played its part in describing Oriental male as sexually wild and promiscuous and female as immoral, unchaste, and immodest, generalizing their observations and presenting these observations as scientific, philosophical or at their best divine truths. As pointed out by Macleod, Oriental male and female do not correspond to the western gender standards because women are considered as passive, chaste and loyal while men are

supposed to be active, brave and strong and such characteristics are hardly present in Orientals. Macleod also notes that, in Orientalism, East as a whole is “feminized, deemed passive, submissive, exotic, luxurious, sexually mysterious and tempting; while the west becomes masculine- that is, active, dominant, heroic, rational, self-controlled and ascetic” (McLeod: 2007; 45). The story further unfolds when Orientalism fostered the notion that Oriental peoples needed to be educated, civilized and elevated to the standard moral ladders set by the west. So, West’s colonial expedition was not only justified by these assertions but was supported and given sustenance for prolonging it. Moreover, apart from science, the whites sought the help from *Bible* and tried to legitimize stereotyping. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon quotes Sir Alan Burns saying,

It is laid down in the Bible that the separation of the white and black races will be continued in heaven as on earth, and those blacks who are admitted into the kingdom of Heaven will find themselves separately lodged in certain of those many mansions of Our father that are mentioned in the New Testament. We are the chosen people – look at the colour of our skins. The others are black or yellow: That is because of their sins.

(Fanon: 1986; 30)

So, as is evident from the above excerpt from *Bible* that the colours of the people are ascribed to the sins and not to different geographical, climatic, congenital and genetic differences. The only motive behind such propounded theories seems to be to undermine the Orient and dominate the Orientals even if it needs to be justified through *Bible*.

Fanon, many years before Said, had concluded his indictment of colonialism by saying that it was Europe that is “literally the creation of the third world in the sense that it is the material wealth and labour from the colonies that has fuelled the opulence of Europe”( McLeod: 2007; 56)

Despite its enormous influence, critics have launched a volatile attack on Said's Orientalism on certain grounds. One objection is that he takes binary opposition as a "static feature of Western discourses from classical Greece to present day" (Fanon: 1963: 76-81). Thus he encapsulates the historical nuances into an unchangeable East versus West divide which seems a permanent of oriental history. But history reveals that the attitudes of the west have not remained the same but have greatly fluctuated towards East over the period of time. So this generalization of division is a farce. McLeod also notes that Said makes generalizations about an epoch of representations over a very long period of history and credits them with insufficient sources to prove them tangible and true. He is of the view that, "Said posits the unified character of Western discourse on the Orient over some two millennia, a unity derived from a common and continuing experience of fascination with and threat from the East, of its irreducible otherness" (Loomba: 1998; 87)

Homi.K.Bhabha also notes that, there is "always in Said a suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the colonizer, which is a historical and theoretical simplification" (Huddart: 2006; 40). Moreover, it is also held that Said's history of Orientalism does not take account of the historicity for reaching out the conclusions because it is essentially ahistorical. It is also objected that Said's exclusive concentration has been on Western canonical texts. It is also held that Said only looked at one side of the picture and he never mentions the self - representation of the colonized. He seems to have utterly rejected the resistance made by the colonized. According to this view Orientalism never moves from one direction to another: from active West to passive East. Aijaz Ahmed states that, "Said never thinks about how

Western representations might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonized countries” (McLeod: 2007; 32). According to Said, “every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist and almost totally ethnocentric” (Said: 1978; 165). If we analyze the above statement, it certainly seems to be a sweeping statement in its totality because it ignores all those dissenting voices that opposed colonial enterprise and voiced against the resulting horrors and terrors unleashed on the colonized. In addition, it is also said that Said virtually ignores the gender differences. By this it is meant that he overlooks women’s writing in Orientalism and he seems to have held that it is the men who, in the main, have made Orientalist representation. In addition to all this, there is one more element that the western women had quite an enigmatic position as far as the colonial and gender discourse is concerned. The western women seemed to have been empowered by colonialism but disempowered because of the inferior position they had held in relation to colonial men. In this regard, “the intersection of colonial and patriarchal discourses often place western women in a contradictory position” (McLeod: 2007; 178). Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that Said’s thesis has no practical significance and that his arguments are weak anyhow because their academic and theoretical impact is unprecedented in the field of Orientalism. So, the central premise of Orientalism should not be underestimated, nor should it be ignored that Said was the prime mover in the discourse of Orientalism.

Homi.K.Bhaba, though difficult to be comprehended because of his slurred language and mystification and obfuscation, is an important postcolonial critic who tries to carry out a psychological interpretation under the influence of Sigmund Freud and the poststructuralist Jacques Lacan. Bhabha held that “the objective of colonial discourse is to construct the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha: 1994; 70 ). Hence, the ways of the colonized people are represented in different derogatory ways and all this representation goes on as a result of stereotypes. However, according to Bhabha, the colonized people who are considered as the *Others* of the colonizers are brought forth inside the western discourse and domesticated. In this way their radical Otherness is abolished and more and more knowledge about them is constructed to know them well. So, in Bhabha’s words, “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an “other” and yet entirely “knowable and visible” (Ibid). Nevertheless, Bhabha also maintains that though the distance between the colonizer and the colonized is reduced yet colonizers must never admit that other people are not really very different because this would obliterate the justification of colonial expedition. Moreover, Bhabha points out that “the discourse of colonialism is stepped with terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy” (McLeod: 2007; 98).

The colonial representations, Bhabha points out, are split between contrary positions. On the one hand the colonized are portrayed as domesticated, harmless and knowable and on the other hand they are seen as harmful, mysterious and wild. Consequently, all this results into ambivalence

which complicates the whole process of colonial discourse. Moreover, the repetitive use of stereotypes is very helpful to reduce the colonized subject in the discourse of colonialism. Thus, Bhabha's colonial discourse is marked with ambivalence and anxious repetition of stereotypical discourse. Consequently, in trying to construct the colonized both as *similar* to and the *other* of the colonizers, it fails in doing either. Yet another idea annexed with the above theoretical tenets is that of *mimicry* by which Bhabha means that the mimic men or the colonized figures menace the colonizers because they threaten to disclose the ambivalence of the discourse of colonialism which the use of stereotypes anxiously tries to conceal. So the dictum that *almost the same and not the quite* is, according to Bhabha, a source of anti-colonial thinking and they challenge the representations which attempt to define and fix them.

If we sum up the whole discussion it appears that Orientalism is not a new concept at all nor are the mechanics of representation and stereotyping unfamiliar. Man, throughout history, has been trying to undermine, define, subjugate and rule over others and in this regard his conquests had been justified with the help of religion, racial supremacy or the theories of enlightenment etc. The dictum that the world belongs to the best minds and they are to exploit its resources has been a very enchanting slogan for the conquerors of the world to give rationale to their expeditions. Moreover, stereotyping is not confined only to the colonizers or the conquerors; rather, the subjugated or the colonized have also been caricaturing and labeling their masters to prove their occupations as unjustified. It is, primarily, the former



version that Said discussed in *Orientalism* and the later view point is the subject of the current research.

### Chapter 3

#### Representation of the Colonizers in *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* had been written in order to contest Joseph Conrad's Stereotypical representations of Africans in *Heart of Darkness*. It was on this premise that Achebe considered Conrad as "a thoroughgoing racist who has contributed to the general repetition of such racism, referring to the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster" (Huddart: 2006; 51). Achebe also writes about stereotyping in terms of more general anxiety of the West and he considers Conrad not an initiator but as a great contributor to the stereotypical discourse originally generated by the west. He says,

Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in this book. It was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination and Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his mind to bear on it. For reasons which can certainly use close psychological inquiry the west seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization and to have need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa.

(Huddart: 2006; 52)

In this excerpt, Achebe refers to collective Western consciousness and holds it responsible for producing dehumanizing and caricatured figures of the colonized. In the binary between West/East, West tries to doubly assure its assumed identity by comparing itself with the East and it surely authenticates its own identity. But this battle of identities complicates and mars the image of the Africans particularly in *Heart of Darkness*, because it is full of some brutal stereotypical descriptions. For example, at one moment, Marlow, the narrator says that, "they were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom" (Conrad: 1977; 77).

Although in *Heart of Darkness* many other imperial projects of West are criticised, the novella works at, as Edward Said suggests, “restoring Africa to European hegemony by historicizing and narrating its strangeness” (Huddart: 2006; 52). In this process, Conrad has, in Said’s views, endeavored to work and operate in the manners of an imperialist and in the novel the white man supposedly finds himself or tries to locate his own position and identity, or his steadily deteriorating self, in the voyage up-river. The novel seems to have denied humanity to Africans and removes all content from them.

Bill Ashcroft in *Post-Colonial Transformation* holds that,

The colonist’s view of Africans as a dehumanized otherness, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage seems to have been designed to provoke the African writer into a reversal of the imperial binary, to reinstall the ‘good’ African culture in opposition to the ‘evil’ colonizer.

(Ashcroft: 2002; 34)

It is quite an established fact that *Things Falls Apart* rejects Marlow’s stereotyping by endorsing the complexity, humanity and even ambivalent nature of African culture. Moreover, it can be termed as a “resistance literature” (Amin: 2004;162), because it draws attention to the cultural imperialism of the white men and portrays how a community falls apart because of the collision that occurs when Christian English Missionaries arrive among the Igbo of Nigeria. The tribal society in *Things Fall Apart* is presented as society governed by centuries-old socio-political, ethical laws defining evil and virtue, right and wrong and good and evil. In this regard Amina Amin says that “its not been one night of savagery from which the European, acting on God’s behalf delivered his people, as it has been made out to be”(Ibid).

A glimpse at the subject novel reveals what is commonly held that “Achebe does not produce stereotypical discourse in *Things Fall Apart*” (Johnson: 2010; 100), but a detailed analysis shows the things quite otherwise. Even before the advent of the white missionaries and the colonial administrators, the Umofians who have thus far been shown very proud of their own culture and identity, consider Whites as nothing more than mere lepers. This is evident in the following dialogue from *Things Falls Apart*.

It is like the story of white men, who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk, said Obierika. He held up a piece of chalk, which every man kept in his Obi and with which his guests drew lines on the floor before they eat kola nuts. ‘And these white men, they say, have no toes’.

And have you never seen them? Asked Machi.

‘Have you?’ asked Obierika.

‘One of them passes here frequently,’ said Machi.

‘His name is Amadi.’

Those who knew Amadi laughed. He was a leper and the polite name for leprosy was ‘the white skin’.

(Achebe: 1978; 64-65)

In the above dialogue the imagery runs threefold; the description of the whites in terms of their comparison with ‘the piece of chalk’, their portrayal as ‘toeless’ and their imaging as ‘lepers’ all show that the black Africans/the natives had not only very low opinion of the whites but they also perceived them as others, exotic, aliens and even sub-humans who were not like them but were different and inferior to them. For them, to be white is to be abnormal and diseased. Their laughter in chorus also reveals that this attitude toward the whites would not vary according to the individuals but was in the collective consciousness of the blacks; therefore, the reaction of the whole group towards the whites was alike. The collective consciousness referred above has already been established by Achebe in the first part of the book where the “Igbo customs, beliefs, myths, legends, rites and proverb etc are

used both explicitly and implicitly to show how they shape the life and consciousness of the people” (Amin: 2004; 166). These lines occur even before the first physical encounter of the blacks with the whites and it seems to be based on mere perceptions but it was so strong that they would look down upon the whites and present and promote their reduced image altogether.

Similarly, when Uchendu narrates the account of the whites’ arrival to Umuofia, he tells Okonkwo that, “during the last planting season a white man had appeared in their clan”.

An Albino”, suggested Okonkwo.

“He was not an albino. He was quite different. . . .And he was riding an iron horse. The first people who saw him ran away, but he stood beckoning to them. In the end the fearless ones went near him and even touched him.

(Achebe: 1978; 120)

In the above extract, the white man is a nameless figure who is bereft and deprived of any real name or identity. This nameless figure who was killed even before Achebe could give him any name of his own shows marginalization and othering on the part of the narrator. In fact it echoes “The Overland Mail” by Kipling when speaking from the prominent position of the colonizers, “the runner in Overland Mail is not given any name of his own, save that of the important baggage he delivers” (McLeod: 2007; 61).

Then Okonkwo’s immediate reply is also telling when he labels the white man as an “Albino” which according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary means, “a person or an animal born with no colouring in the skin or hair, which are white, or in the eyes, which are pink” (Hornby: 1997; 27). So, it becomes quite evident that the would-be- colonized blacks look down upon the whites and define them contemptuously. The imagery of the Albinos

recurs in the narration of Uchendu and in his next mentioning he equates Albinos with the *abominables* when he says that, “the world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others, as we have albinos among us” (Achebe: 1978; 122). The white man becomes a stereotypical figure who, even in the first encounter with the whites, not only loses his identity but his life as well, giving the Africans an idea to establish their binary between *Us* and *Them*. Because, in the continuation of his description, Uchendu says that the white man was ‘quite different’ which inevitably means that he was not like *them* so he needed to be defined and labeled. Moreover, the ‘bicycle’ of the white man is described as, *an iron horse*, which not only reveals that they gave a *strange* look to the whites altogether and would name them according to their own mental frameworks.

After a pause Uchendu continues that the natives were so afraid that they went to their ultimate authority, the Oracle to seek advice and the Oracle stereotypically labeled whites as *Locusts*, which means *destroying insects*. So the natives, from a lay man to the high-sounding priests considered the whites as, sub-humans, different, others, and not as human beings but as *locusts and abominables*.

When it comes of the white man’s language, Obierika says that, “he seemed to speak through his nose” ((Achebe: 1978; 120) ) So, overall, the white man is not only stereotyped, demeaned and belittled but his figure, style and language, all are severely mocked at. Above all, none of the interlocutors shows any kind of compassion for the murder of the white man, rather they all behave quite indifferently when they are reported the whole incident. It is also indicative of the fact that they show apathy because they don’t realize and feel

that the victim was *like* them. On the other hand when one of the African girls was killed by the neighboring tribe, the whole Umuofia gathered together to ask Mbaino to, “choose between war on the one hand, and on the other the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation” (Achebe: 1978; 08). Moreover, when the boy was killed, on the orders of the Oracle, “Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days” (Achebe: 1978; 55). In addition, when an accidental murder was committed by Okonkwo in the fair during the holy days, he was banished to his motherland for seven years as punishment. All these evidences further substantiate and authenticate the opinion that for the natives, the whites were not humans but less than humans and they were not like them but were others. This gulf is further deepened when Uchendu clearly marks off whites as distinct and somewhat low. He says, “and then one morning three white men led by a band of ordinary men like us came to the clan” (Achebe: 1978; 121). The binary, which has already been established earlier in the novel, as pointed out, gives the Africans the realization that nothing is common between them and the whites. Moreover, these whites are also nameless and devoid of any evident identity. The other epithets being used by the natives are derogatory and connote negativity, such as, “a great evil”, “invisible”, and “green men” (Achebe: 1978; 120-122), etc and nowhere in the text so far they are defined, described are referred to as human beings. So, Achebe, no doubt, could not help indulging in representing and labeling them through caricatures and stereotypes.

The marginalization and the identity crisis of the whites continue in the narrative. The new faith, which gradually replaces the old canons for distinction in the clan, operated secretly but quite powerfully. The perception

of the blacks worsened in defining and identifying the whites. For example, now even their religion is being targeted and it is termed as, “the strange faith” (Achebe: 1978; 124), and the converts are called “*efulefu*”, which means worthless and empty men, “excrement of the clan”, and the new faith was called “the mad dog” (Achebe: 1978; 122). The onslaught of Achebe, the narrator and the natives smashes the icons of the whites’ pride and distinction and presents their reduced images which are but dwarfish. The whites are not normal beings, they are *strange* and the people who are accompanying them are under their influence now, and are no more than the wasted stuff of the clan. In short Achebe seems to be following the dictum that, “in animal kingdom the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined” (Brown: 2009; 115-117). The arrival of the missionaries in Mbanta had considerably stirred the natives. Their strangeness is much emphasized by Achebe through the reaction of the natives inclusive of the children and women as well. When the people heard of their arrival, “every man and woman came out to see the white man. Stories about these strange men had grown since one of them had been killed in Abame and his iron horse tied to the sacred silk – cotton tree. And so every body came to see the white man” (Achebe: 1978; 125). Again, the narrator seems to establish the identity of the *white man*, not as human beings but as somewhat different by stressing their alienation and difference from the natives, hence marginalizing them. After a while, when the white man starts speaking with the help of the interpreter, many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used the language strangely. The same happened in *Heart of Darkness* when the language of the Africans was called a form of babbling: “A violent babble of uncouth sounds



burst out on the either side of the planks” (Okafor: 2009; 99). But here it is stereotyped as strange and different from the language of the Africans and perhaps its strangeness makes it nothing more than yelling and howling. The white man makes a long and alluring speech but the people hardly pay any attention to him except when he repudiated their gods by addressing them as false and wicked. But when they understood what the white man said, they did not infuriate and paid not even an iota of attention to them, instead, they “broke into derisive laughter. These men must be mad, they said to themselves”, (Achebe: 1978; 126) and considering them worthless and insane the blacks overlooked them and started excoriating them. So, the cultural, racial and religious differences between them make their judgments of each other highly biased and prejudiced, ultimately leading them to wrestle with each other to gain or retain identity and power. Now, when the missionary mentions Jesus Christ as son of God Okonkwo intervenes for the first time and shows his bafflement at the idea of God and a son, so he says,

You told us with your own mouth that there was only one God.  
Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then. The crowd  
agreed.  
I did not say He had a wife, said the interpreter, somewhat lamely.  
'Your buttocks said he had a son,' said the joker. 'So he must have  
a wife and all of them must have buttocks'.  
The missionary ignored him and went to talk about the Holy  
Trinity. At the end of it Okonkwo was convinced that the man was  
mad”.

(Achebe: 1978; 127)

The whole situation reveals that the “Manichean code of binary oppositions such as white/black, civilization /savagery and rationality/sensuality” (Amin: 2004; 161), etc are reversed and Achebe wants to prove them otherwise. The Blacks seem to be more rational and civilized in this context than the whites. When the whites fail to convince the natives logically, they employ certain discursive strategies and one of them is to

appeal them sensually through poetry and music. Talking about Nwoye, Okonkwo's first son Achebe says, "It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow", (Achebe: 1978; 128) which attracted him. Moreover, the savagery of the colonizers symbolizes the malevolent force that destroys existing African culture and civilization. Consequently, when the people of Mbanta "kill a white man, the district commissioner razes the entire town to the ground and in the process slaughters men, women and children" (Okafor: 2009; 26-27). The Europeans in *Things Fall Apart*, "kill far more in the name of religion than the Igbos: the British, for example, wipe out the whole village of Abame in retaliation for the killing of one white man" (Ibid; 23). So, it becomes evident that the white/black dichotomy, which was propounded and promoted by the whites, was reversed altogether. Thus, unlike the African society in *Heart of Darkness*, where it is portrayed as having developed no culture, "the African society in *Things Falls Apart* has an admirable civilization" (Okafor: 2009; 23). The teachings and preaching of the whites do not attract the intelligentsia of the clan but *callow* mind of Nwoye and his like minded people whose pleasure is not in the spiritual message of Christianity but in sensuality. The absolutism of the whites, thus, is questioned here by Achebe.

The sojourn of the whites and their real test for survival in the Evil forest is a fine example of their marginalization by Achebe. The Evil forest was a place where the diseased like lepers and victims of small pox were buried. In addition, "it was also the dumping ground for the potent fetishes of great medicine men when they died. An 'evil forest' was, therefore, alive with

sinister forces and powers of darkness” (Achebe: 1978; 129), due to which people would not dare to dwell there at all. It was a damned place and none but the condemned would become the part of its soil. The colonized alienated themselves so much from the whites that they never allowed them to live among them but left them to choose a place in the evil forest to build their church. This physical marginalization exhibits the designs of the natives who considered whites as nothing more than the diseased and evil forces who, owing to their difference from the natives, must live in that exotic place. Since they are not like them, they must not live among them. Consequently, they would desire the same end for the whites as would be imaginable in the evil forest, as the name itself suggests. To their surprise, the whites accepted the offer that “nobody in his right senses would accept” (Achebe: 1978; 129), thus implying that the whites were insane, mad and not in their senses. They are further stereotyped when the natives call them as “crazy men” (Ibid), when they start building their church and the next morning when they see the whites alive they are convinced that, “the white man’s fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that, he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to the evil spirits” (Ibid). In this way, the natives are equating the whites with the evil powers by considering them wholly evil or evil incarnate; otherwise their survival in that forest would be impossible. In the meantime, one more important development takes place, when a native woman named Nneka flees and joins the whites’ camp. Since, she is an evil woman who was loathsome for her family and husband who “were not unduly perturbed when they found she had fled to join the Christians. It was a good riddance” (Ibid). Similarly, Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo, also joins the missionaries because he receives

harsh treatment from his father and was beaten up severely by him. Therefore, he leaves his home and goes to Umuofia and never returns home. What is important to note is that the converts were not impressed by the so-called high-sounding slogans of the missionaries nor with the streak of humanism, rather they were the disgruntled elements who wanted some other shelter. So strong rooted was the hatred and strangeness for the whites that once, when Okonkwo's cousin Amikwu, saw Nwoye among the Christians, "he was greatly surprised, and when he got home he went straight to Okonkwo's hut and told him what he had seen. The women began to talk excitedly, but Okonkwo sat unmoved" (Ibid). And it was because of this very reason that Okonkwo took him to task when he came home. In his utter fury, he gripped him by the neck and asked him about his visit to the whites in such an enraged way that he started stammering because of anger. Okonkwo even threatened to kill him and hit him two or three savage blows. All this reveals that the whites were taken to be the abominable creatures who were not to be familiarized with. Okonkwo's anger leapt like roaring flames that night and he had a strong urge to take up a machete and wipe out the whole clan of the whites. He called them "vile and miscreant gang" (Ibid), and he cried on his fate to have such a son whom he called "despicable, degenerate and effeminate" (Ibid), who was not worth fighting for. He terms his son's action of embracing the whites' religion as a crime and "a form of subservience to foreign cultural values" (David: 2009; 10). He opines that to abandon the gods of one's father and "go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run

through him at the terrible prospects, like the prospect of annihilation” (Achebe: 1978; 129). So, the above lines clearly suggest that the act of Nwoye was mind boggling for Okonkwo and he was very upset at the very thought of seeing the future predicaments resulting out of it. His enormity against the whites is so strong that it leaves him with no option but to wipe the whites off the face of the earth. He comes to the conclusion that living fire begets cold, impotent ash and so his son is also an impotent who goes with the degenerate whites.

That the hatred and desire for the extinction of the whites is deep rooted in the hearts of the natives is evident when the whites are termed as “*efulefu*” (Achebe: 1978; 135), who decided to live in the Evil Forest and it was deemed a fit place for them. The word *efulefu* means undesirable people who are detested for one reason or the other.

By this time the local tribal structures and the judicial system was gradually but consistently being replaced by the colonizers who had already established the court and the governmental offices in Umuofia but the people in Mbanta considered these stories as fictitious and fairy tales not to be believed in. The natives of Mbanta still consider Mr.Kiaga as mad and his church which they consider as worthless is known as little church in order to further belittle its value. Similarly, Okonkwo thinks and firmly holds this opinion that “until the abominable gang was chased out of the village with whips there would be no peace” (Achebe: 1978; 138-139).

Okonkwo is not ready to buy the idea held by Okeke that they should not be resilient at all, rather he holds it strongly that these whites who have been daily pouring filth over them should be kicked off and made to run away

and they succeed in socially boycotting the whites and the new converts whom they call locusts. Achebe here seems to be implying that the indigenous institutions had already been frozen by the British, while at the same time they had started robbing the colonized of every opportunity and freedom for progress and self development. He holds the opinion that “the westerners took the foundations of the indigenous people’s societies and ways of living and left them with nothing” (Larson: 2009; 11). What the whites aimed at was to assign everything negative to the natives and everything positive to themselves, thus creating the gulf deeper and wider. That is the reason why not only Okonkwo but also ordinary people like Umunna have developed negative perceptions about the whites and give them no space. He addresses Okonkwo and warns him of the danger resulting out of the white’s missionaries. He says that “an abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter’s dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan” (Achebe: 1978; 146). In this regard what Achebe proves is that during the so called process of civilizing them, “the cultural ecology of the Ibo people was destroyed” (Riddell: 2009; 03), and the natives were left hopeless. So after the Europeans arrive, the whole of the African system starts crumbling. A missionary riding a bike or an iron horse is followed successively by a church, a school, trade, military power, and administrative fiat. The society of the Umofians is shown destroying and “African culture fell apart” (Ibid). The writer shows the depth of indifference of the natives towards the colonizers and to him that they are mainly responsible for the cultural dislocation, loss of the natives’ identity and

the destruction of their heritage. In fact, what Achebe objects is the forcing of European culture on an unwilling Nigerian clan, but during this process he cannot help representing the colonizers by giving them different labels. He even goes to the extent of never accepting that Christianity has been fully recognized, even by the converts because all of them have their own ulterior motives to embrace Christianity. Perhaps, he “misses few opportunities to satirize the colonial presence” (Clayton: 2009; 136), in the novel and not only that he also satirizes their followers just mentioned above. The tragedy of his son’s conversion, as Achebe calls it, deeply upset Okonkwo and ultimately he disowned his own son. He tells his other sons that Nwoye is no more their brother because of his abomination of embracing the new faith. Achebe’s resentment of the new religion and faith is also evident when he says that, “the church had come and led many astray, not only the low – born but sometimes a worthy man had joined it” (Achebe: 1978; 149). The political, judicial and governmental systems of the whites are highly criticized by Achebe when he repudiates the court system and calls the District Commissioner as an ignorant judge. The hatred of the natives is manifested in the following comment of Achebe where he says that, “the court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high – handed. They were called *Kotma* and because of their ash-colored shots they earned the additional name of Ashy-Buttocks” (Ibid). So, for the natives there were enough reasons to show their hatred towards the whites and one of the main reasons was that they were foreigners. So, the element of othering gives them substantial grounds for their hatred and resentment against the whites and it continues throughout the book. The humiliation and maltreatment of the so

called *rebels* of the white man's laws were given very harsh treatment and were beaten up by the Kotma, in order to tame them. These episodes of tyranny and oppression also reveal Achebe's concern for justice which is denied to the natives altogether. The prisoners, who receive such inhuman treatment, according to Achebe, keep singing the following lines:

*"Kotma of the ash buttocks  
He is fit to be slave  
The white man has no sense  
He is fit to be a slave"*

(Ibid)

It is ironical that the white man in the eyes of the native is ignorant, foolish and high-handed; therefore apt to become a slave. Achebe also highlights the corruption that has ushered in and has been introduced by the white man's system. Now, the white men and their Kotmas can be bought and bribed, and the justice may be done inadequately but there is no voice to stop such happenings. Moreover, the whites have set a terrible example before the natives by wiping out Abame, and destroying it completely. Therefore, the people are so terribly afraid that they don't protest against the oppression in order to avoid such terrible revival of fate. The labeling by the natives continues and when Okonkwo asks Obierika, whether the white man understands their customs about land? To which Obierika replies that how can the white man understand our customs when even he does not speak our tongue? But the white man is reported quoting that they consider the customs of the natives as bad. The white man is proved as cunning and shrewd who adopts whatever means it deems fit to fulfill its vested interests. The white man "came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brother, and our



clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (Ibid).

Achebe has shown the whites as great racists who believe in the superiority of everything that is white. For example, a white missionary named Mr. Smith “saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a battle field in which the children of light were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness” (Ibid). In this way, he exhibits his racism and hatred against the blacks and drives them out of even the circle of humanity. The black color is associated with crime, sin, illiteracy, darkness, pessimism and deprivation, while the white is associated with progress, prosperity, modernization and light etc. As a result the gulf between the whites and the blacks gets wider and deeper and their animosity against each other reaches its zenith. In this regard, Mackenzie holds that,

Once the first person has arrived in Umuofia, a repudiation of indigenous clan religious beliefs follows almost immediately: At this point an old man said he has a question {for the white man}. ‘Which is the god of yours,’ he asked, ‘the goddess of the earth, the god of the sky, Amadior of the thunderbolt, or what?’ . . . ‘All the gods you have named are not gods at all. They are gods of deceit who tell you to kill your fellows and destroy innocent children. There is only one true God and He has the earth, the sky, you and me and all of us’. After this, the notion of the traditional “Oracle,” so strong hitherto, disappears without a trace from the novel. It is never again mentioned or even intimated.

(Clayton: 2009; 129)

What is underlined in the above lines is, the very factor that is responsible for the break up of the clan system of the natives and it is torn apart merely on the arrival and working of the white who have created a fissure very systematically. Moreover, the natives neither perceive the whites as torch bearers of civilization nor the saviors who would enlighten and educate them. In fact, Achebe misses few opportunities to satirize the colonial

presence in Africa and in this process he never hesitates to label them as oppressors and transgressors. He digs out the whole scheme adopted by the missionaries and shows that the economics of Mr. Brown's religion demand ideological substitution, not concurrence or hybridization.

Mackenzie holds that,

*In things Fall Apart*, Christianity, like colonialism in general, is depicted as offering a clear rationale of "exchange" for Umuofia. In return for adherence to Christian doctrine, the church offers explicit routes for individual economic advancement, as the meaning and decisiveness of that interaction dawns on the clan it corrupts the ancient way of things.

(Clayton: 2009; 138)

So the Christians seem to be affluent and organized and Achebe's wrath over the breaking up of the native structures, through certain discursive measures, is evident when he cannot help himself in repudiating the whites. Its invariable mentioning in the novel gives different names to the whites. Sometimes they are called foolish, abominable creatures, desecrate, and at other times mad, lunatic and ignorant. It also happens at an occasion when the natives arrive and destroy the red-earth church turning it into a pile of earth and ashes. After the building was demolished, the prevailing sense of fear and uncertainty are described by Achebe with the help of animal imagery. He says, "Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent ominous air and not knowing which way to run" (Amin: 2004; 172). And what resulted was full of humiliation and disrespect. The District Commissioner cunningly invited the six leaders including Okonkwo and treated them very harshly and punished them for their said crime. He has been shown as quite a ruthless person with the whole machinery behind him to undo the wrongs

done to the whites' interests. Resultantly, he summons all the native leaders by deceit and imprisons them. The deception and shrewdness of the whites renders the titles-earned lords of the natives helpless and they become the object of mockery though the spirit of rebellion cannot be pacified especially in Okonkwo. Their stay in prison is one of hunger, humiliations and insults. They are not allowed to go out to urinate; their heads are shaved and then knocked together by the court messengers. The next day, all the villagers gathered together and resolved to "root out this evil" (Emeke: 2009; 163-173). They also resolved that those siding with the whites shall also be rooted out and they will do it at that very moment. It infuriated the crowd and its manifestation was seen only when Okonkwo, seething with anger, killed one of the messengers who tried to disrupt the meeting, and after that Okonkwo hanged himself. What is most shocking in this tragic death is that the District Commissioner plans to write a paragraph on Okonkwo's death whereas Achebe has written the whole book on Okonkwo. The title of the book is also shown to be utterly biased, '*The pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*', which marks off their hatred towards the natives that Achebe wants to expose in this novel. Okonkwo's suicide is another way of rejecting his father's shameful death. He, therefore, "preferred a heroic suicide to an ignoble and disgraceful torture and eventual execution by the colonial administration" (Achebe: 1978; 174). Achebe finally proves that the whites were evil incarnate and "Africa's pre-colonial past was creatively superior to its historical European counterpart" (Christopher: 2009; 1054-1070

## Chapter 4

### Representation of the Colonizers in *A Grain of Wheat*

*A Grain of Wheat* chronicles the events leading up to Kenyan independence, or Uruhu, in a Kenyan village. Gikonyo and Mumbi are newlyweds in love when Gikonyo is sent to detention camp. When he comes back six years later, Mumbi has carried and given birth to his rival's child. Instead of talking about their trials, a wall of anger separates them and they drift poles apart. Earlier, Mumbi's brother Kihika, a local hero, is captured and hanged, and his comrades search for the betrayer. It is a deep mystery until the Uruhu celebrations as who exactly double crossed Kihika, when Mugo appears out of blue and confesses his guilt that he betrayed Kihika and caused his death.

The novel is formed of multiple narrative lines and, far from being linear in structure, dwells upon the flashbacks and shifts in time frame. In this way, the portrayal of different characters in different circumstances elicits varying viewpoints about the same situation. So, not only are there different centers of focus but also show the protagonists running parallel with each other, struggling, colliding, coinciding and at times getting fused together. The ultimate fusion of the narrative lines comes at the end of the novel when the reader learns of the final destinies of the protagonists, such as Mugo, Gikonyo, Karanja and Mumbi etc.

Although, the basic premise of Ngugi seems to have been re-tracing the post-colonial history of the mother-land Kenya and exposing the colonizers' dictums of civilizing the darkest continents but at the under current he cannot help *representing* them. His basic source for counter-discourse is

none else but Conrad, who infused a spirit of rebellion in Achebe as well. As said earlier, Conrad was labeled as a racist by Achebe in *Heart of Darkness* and it infuriated Achebe to document the history of Africans in *Things Fall Apart* and give a rebuttal to Conrad implying that the Africans were not the inhabitants of the darkest continent but rather were civilized and fully equipped with the civilizational richness. The assumption of the whites that they were the liberators and source of enlightenment for the Africans has been challenged by Achebe very effectively. Ngugi maintains that Conrad's thesis that one type of imperialism is slightly better than the other, in fact, impairs his vision. In one of his interviews Ngugi talked of Conrad and his concept of imperialism in the following way,

Conrad is very despondent when he comes to portraying workers' efforts to overthrow it or when he portrays people over racists in Africa in the *Heart of Darkness* or Asians in *Lord Jim* and others. There the people are made to look as if they were waiting for their parents or a white hero would come and save them.

(Rao: 2009; 167)

But Ngugi does not present the whites as torch-bearers or harbingers of a new civilization on a divine mission to civilize, educate and deliver them from the clutches of backwardness, irrationality, dogmatic beliefs and darkest holes, rather he presents them as colonizers, usurpers and a band of ruthless people who ruin the African civilization. And as Kenneth Harrow notes, even, "the storm aptly suggests the pervasive destruction caused by the white man's arrival and invasion" (Harrow: 2010; 251).

Ngugi's representation of the colonizers is subtle, mostly implicit and holistic. Whenever he refers to them through different characters or through an omniscient narrator, he takes them, on the whole, aiming at hegemonism and expansionism. Taking a holistic picture, the native people deem their

usurpation and confiscation of land as unjustified and have therefore been striving to recapture their lands. It is the whites who are virtually responsible for all the wrongs done to the natives, be it the killings, lawlessness, oppression and brutalities or the full throttle rebellion launched against them. The ultimate aim is to get what the natives term as Uruhu or freedom by all means and bring an end to the illegitimate foreign rule, thus belittling, naming and showing the seamy side of them to show their indifference and differentiation from them. In my perusal of *A Grain of Wheat*, I have focused on two-pronged stereotypical interpretations: How do the blacks perceive the whites and how do the blacks present the whites in their fiction carrying stereotypes about the whites?

The arrival of the white man in Kenya was grounded on the same old justification to *civilize the uncivilized brutes*; therefore, they came,

Clutching the book of God in both hands, a magic witness that the white man was a messenger from the lord. His tongue was coated with sugar; his humility was touching. For a time, people ignored the voice of Gikuyu seer who once said: there shall come a people with clothes like butterflies. They gave him, the stranger with a scalded skin, a place to erect a temporary shelter. This he called the House of God where people could go for worship and sacrifice.

(Thiong'O: 1996; 10)

It appears that the white man enshrouded himself in the religious robe to justify his claim of the natives and to ascribe a holy and divine justification to their advent in Kenya. But, the natives would perceive the whites as *strangers*; thus amplifying and alluding to them as different and alienating themselves from them. The whites were hailed and identified as *strangers*, because the Kenyans would find no point of affinity and assimilation with them. They also gave a contemptuous and scornful look to their *scalded skin*, which was so scalded that, "the black outside had peeled off" (Ibid). So for the natives, the *burnt* skin of the whites would qualify them as nothing but a

laughing stock. It revealed to them that the whites were not even complete and perfect human beings and the Whiteness was but a deformity which would give natives a reason to glee.

In addition, it appears that the whites were treated as outcasts and therefore were given a place to erect a temporary shelter *yards away*, implying that the essential differences between the whites and blacks were like two banks of the river never to be bridged up. Moreover, the natives would deem their teachings not worth an iota of seriousness and would rather term the whites as mad men whose senses might have ceased and “the hot water must have gone into his head” (Ibid). Religion apart, even the designs of cultural and political expansionism convinced the natives of the eccentricity of the whites. When the white man expounded that there was another country, “beyond the sea where a powerful woman sat on a throne while men and women danced under the shadow to cover the Agikuyu. They laughed at this eccentric man” (Ibid). All the above three things namely; the rule of the woman, the homage paid to her by all men and women and the Queen of England’s aspiration to spread her benevolence over the Kenyans and conquer Kenya showed nothing but backwardness and impotency on the part of the whites especially when compared with the Kenyans. It showed backwardness when compared with the Kenyans because the Kenyans had already experienced the rule of the women years ago and had undergone the period of political transition and evolution already, but the whites were still experimenting with the *out-dated and obsolete methods* the Kenyans were done with. And it was only by impregnating the women that the Kenyans brought an end to the rule of the women. But, the whites have not been able to

do so, thus appearing impotent for the above job. Harrow Kenneth encapsulates the whole situation in the following words;

The protecting shadow of the Christian woman, the white man's benevolence and protection, that hang over the land like a sword, only form part of the larger irony of history for which the appearance of changing events is belied by the recurrence of oppression.

(Harrow: 2010; 258)

Another reason for the inability of the women to rule is narrated a bit later when a woman ruler is narrated to have "overreached herself, removing all her clothes, she danced naked in the moonlight" (Thiong'O: 1996; 10). The men were awe struck and, "the moon played on her: an ecstasy, a mixture of agony and joy hovered on the woman's face. Perhaps she, too, knew this was the end: a woman never walked or danced naked in public. She was removed from the throne" (Ibid).

So, it was on a premise that women were unable to rule and they were prone to swaying in the flow of emotions combined with a very deep sense of superiority imbibed in the very genesis of the natives' civilization that labeled the whites as strange, eccentric and insane.

The natives express their apprehensions at the Christian myths narrated to them about crucifixion and the concept of trinity mainly because they cannot reconcile with seemingly dichotmic interpretations. It was virtually a naïve idea to them that, "God would let himself be nailed to a tree"? (Ibid) For them, God was the ultimate authority who was over and above everything and not dependent on anyone or not liable to punishment by any force whatsoever. But here, the whites lured the natives by the religious hymns and started imperceptibly acquiring more land to meet the growing needs of their fellows. The elders of the land protested and "they looked beyond the laughing face of



the white man and suddenly saw a long line of other red strangers who carried, not the Bible, but the sword” (Ibid). These swords are “Whiteman’s swords hung dangerously above people’s necks to protect them from their brethren in the forest” (Ibid). It reveals the double- edged face of the whites who hypocritically strive for their ulterior motives and, “religion is used to inflict what Ngugi calls, a psychological wound and he maintains that religion is a tool for oppressing the people” (Ibid). It also highlights the representative aspect of the whites, who are seen as *red strangers*, hitting both their racial origin as well emphasizing their differences with the natives.

After the whites’ advent in Kenyan lands, violence and resistance ensued and engulfed the whole land and laid natives barely exposed to the whites’ ruthlessness and ambient enormity. The local defiant voice namely those of Waiyuki, Harry and Kihika were silenced and crushed mercilessly. They had,

denounced the white man and cursed that benevolence and protection which denied people land and freedom. They had amazed them by reading aloud letters to the white man, letters in which he set out in clear terms people’s discontent with taxation, forced labour on white settler’s land, and with the soldier settlement scheme which after the first big war, left many black people without homes or land around Tigoni and other places.

(Ogude: 2010; 91)

It is evident that the natives characterized the whites as the harbingers of brutality, bloodshed, injustice and exploitation of both the Kenyans as well as their resources. They had grabbed their possessions and left them impoverished and helpless. The teachings of the *Bible* were put aside and the teachings of lust, greed and gun had begun. The natives believed that they were clearly robbed off and betrayed by the whites in broad day light. Addressing their treachery, Kihika thus unfolds the truth to the people,

We went to their church. Mubia, in white robes opened the Bible. He said: Let us kneel down to pray. We knelt down. Mubia said: Let us shut our eyes. We did. You know, his remained open so that he could read the word. When we opened our eyes, our land was gone and the sword of flames stood on guard. As for Mubia, he went on reading the word, beseeching us to lay our treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them. But he laid his on earth, our earth.

(Thiong'O: 1996; 10)

Kihika's fiery speeches inflamed the people and recharged them against the whites' occupations of their lands. His dissenting note appealed to the people and they applauded when he un-earthed the whites' schemes. The whites were portrayed by him as shrewd, cunning and highly mischievous working for nothing else but for the sake of the Queen and the British Raj. He was worshipped as a hero but then, his tragic fate doomed him to the end when, after being trespassed, by a fellow named Mugo, was hanged. He was made a horrible example and his body laid dangling on the tree for many days. In their portrayal of the whites, the natives portray them as essentially biased and indifferent to the blacks, with certain pre-meditated and inherited hatred towards them. They are shown having unjust opinions and observations of the natives and unable to think with impartiality. Particularly, the administrative machinery and the missionaries were never free of these follies of exhibiting their bias towards Africa and Africans evidently. For example, when one of the forest researchers aims at establishing the research centre at Githima, "he wrote letters to anybody of note and even unsuccessfully sought an interview with the Governor. Mad they thought him: science in dark Africa" (Thiong'O: 1996; 33).

Science could not be introduced in Africa, merely because it was a dark continent; it was such a cogent justification for the scientific mind of the whites! At another occasion the whites are shown sparing no moment and

opportunity to belittle, undermine and stereotype the blacks. When Mugo is arrested and being interrogated by Thompson, he becomes furious because of the non co-operation of Mugo and while thumping his feet on ground looked and Mugo noticing, “the man’s face seemed vaguely familiar. But then it was difficult to tell one black face from another: they looked so much alike, masks” (Thiong’O: 1996; 133).

The undistinguishable features and over-emphasis on them clearly marks the whites as stereotypists. Not only this, rather astounded, Thompson-a white investigator- would call the blacks the vermin, shouting at them and while pointing towards Mugo ordered his officers to “eliminate the vermin” (Ibid). It seems that the blacks’ portrayal of the whites reflects them as extremely narrow-minded who dwell upon racism to justify even their plans of development and appearing only as obscurantists.

The whites’ moral demeanor is not even incorruptible, because they are seen as liars and antipathetic towards the blacks. During a conversation about the blacks, Dr.Lynd and Thompson give access to their impenetrable corners of mind where hatred rests for the blacks. Since Thompson’s dog was killed by the black dacoits, Mrs. Thompson had started hating the blacks outrightly. Dr.Lynd asks her,

“Don’t let it worry you, he said, his eyes vaguely following the dog.

I tried not to, but-but-I hate them. How can I help it? Every time I see them I remember-I remember” (Thiong’O: 1996: 10).

The whites are also perceived as liars because when the dog of Thompson jumped at Karanja and Thompson in return unleashed anger at Karanja, Dr.Lynd appeared on the scene and assured of his dealing with the

matter, but practically he did nothing. So, when the boy sees him next day expecting him to have dealt with the issue, Dr.Lynd desperately approaches him asking himself, what did he want? The dialogue begins;

“Yes?  
 ‘I took the letter’.  
 ‘So?’  
 ‘I want to thank you.’  
 Thompson remembered his lie; he stared at the boy and passed on.  
 On second thoughts, he called Karanja.  
 ‘About that dog \_\_\_\_\_’  
 ‘Sir?’  
 Don’t you worry about it, eh? I’ll deal with the matter.’  
 ‘Thank You, sir.’ .

(Ibid)

In fact the real problem was that he himself did not want to undergo any trial if even any complaint had been filed by Karanja because the transition of power –from blacks to whites-was taking place and he wanted to avoid confrontation at all costs. Therefore, he told a lie to the boy and drifted himself away. The same impression is being reinforced by Gatu, a detainee from Nyeri, who says that, “I will tell you something. Believe it or not, but the white man just wants to break us with lies” (Thiong’O: 1996: 10). And Gatu ardently believes that it is because of these hegemonic and supposedly Machiavellian tricks that the whites have been able to maintain their control, otherwise the whites are inherently so coward that, Napoleon’s “voice alone made the British urinate and shit on their calves inside their houses” (Ibid). The British are tricksters and are enveloping their cowardice in such unmanly guises.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, at many occasions, the natives portray the whites as compiling, editing and propagating many negative epithets about them. For example, Thompson, a civil servant in Africa, scribbled notes about the Africans titled as *Prospero in Africa*, which run like the following:

“The Negro is a child, and with children, nothing can be done without the use of authority” (Thiong’O: 1996: 10), and later on he maintains that

Every white man is continually in danger of gradual moral ruin in this daily and hourly contest with the African. In dealing with the African you are often compelled to do the unexpected. A man came into my office yesterday. He told me about a wanted terrorist leader. From the beginning, I was convinced the man was lying, was really acting, perhaps to trap me or hide his own part in the movement. He seemed to be laughing at me. Remember the African is a born actor, that’s why he finds it so easy to lie. Suddenly, I spat into his face. I don’t know why, but I did it.

(Ibid)

The whites as portrayed by Ngugi in this novel are reduced to the size of the dwarfs because of their irrational, prejudiced, immoral and inhumanly behaviour throughout. Ngugi’s reading of the whites’ confessional thoughts reveals that the natives look at the whites through dark glasses, taking them to be evils incarnate. The very irrationality that the whites ascribe to the blacks seems to have intervovwen into their own character. That is why when he spat into the Negro’s face he did it out of no reason at all. Moreover, labeling Africans as actors, passing stereotypical statements, thinking of them as nothing more than children all these depict whites as suffering from many character-complexes in the eyes of the natives. Quite interestingly, the blacks, who themselves were subject to the charges of idleness and lethargy, labeled whites with the same as the story of Gikonyo-a black’s rise to wealth, although on a small scale, carried a moral every mother in Thabai pointed out to her children saying, “his wife and his aged mother need no longer go rub skirts with other women in the market. This is only so because their son was not afraid to make his hands dirty. He never slept to midday like a European” (Ibid).

The blacks’ perception of the whites as oppressors and exploiters is manifest at many occasions. The whites, through their bottle-necked tight

control of the commercial as well as political empires strengthened their grip and maneuvered the system for their own benefit. The police stations were yet another example and Kihika could not help saying, “destroy that, and the white man is gone, he rules with the gun, the lives of all the black people in Kenya” (Thiong’O: 1996; 10). They established many detainees’ camps to unleash the horror and terror in order to intimidate and tame the natives. In one of the episodes, the detainees speak of those frightful experiences denouncing the whites. Ngugi documents that in the following words,

The rhetoric tone was seized by the detainees who rose to speak. They talked of suffering under the white man and illustrated this with episodes which revealed their deep love of Kenya. In between each speaker, people would sing: Kenya is the country of the black people.

(Thiong’O: 1996; 65)

In this way not only they show their resentment towards the oppressive forces of the whites but repudiate their claims of being the masters of the Kenyan land and populace. So much so, that even the train which was introduced by the colonizers in Kenya, was thought to be an *iron snake*, that terrified the blacks in the beginning but later on they came to know that, “the snake was harmless, that the red strangers themselves were touching it” (Thiong’O: 1996; 71). This was a sigh of relief for the blacks and it manifested the mistrust in everything that belonged to the *red strangers*. It were these red strangers “who had ended the tribal wars to begin the world wars” (Ibid), thus threatening rather ruining the world peace, as native noticed and perceived it.

As far as the religious teachings and interpretations were concerned, the whites used to misconstrue, distort and twist the Biblical notions for their own good and ends. For example, when Kihika was a school boy, his teacher

interpreted the lines from Bible, talking of the circumcision of women and calling it a heathen custom, and authoritatively announced that, “as Christians we are forbidden to carry on such practices” (Ibid),to which Kihika did not agree and said,

“This is not true, sir’

‘What!’

Even teacher seemed scared by the sudden silence. Some of the boys hid their

faces, excited yet fearing that the wrath of the teacher might reach them. ‘It is just the white people say so. The *Bible* does not talk about circumcising women”.

(Ibid)

Nevertheless true, the boy had to face the brunt and he was charged with blasphemy, although he escaped the punishment fortunately by running out of the show arranged in the church. The intolerant attitude of the British is again shown when Kihika gives the examples from the success stories of Indian freedom struggle against the British. When the Indians would cheer for freedom, “The British laughed; they are good at laughing. But they had to swallow back their laughter when things turned out serious. What did the tyrants do”? (Ibid).

The imaging of the whites as tyrants was not confined to the Kenyans borders only; rather it included all those parts of the world where the British had subjugated the lands and the people in order to execute their colonial agenda. When Kihika and Wambuku are discussing the foreign occupation of the Kenyan lands, they explicitly deem the whites as thieves and dacoits saying, “in any case, whether the land was stolen from Gikuyu, Ukabi or Nandi, it does not belong to the white man” (Ibid). The enslavement and imprisonment of the black emerging voices against this tyranny was expedited by the whites at large to teach them the lessons. However, as a counter

strategy, the blacks, in their private parties, would carry out the mimicry of the whites and make fun of them through mock-imitation. One such example is at the tea party where at the announcement of the tea being ready Wambuku asked, "Have you become the Europeans, taking tea outside in the wind?"

'Yes, yes, true Europeans but for the black skin,' Karanja replied, imitating a drawling European voice. Everybody laughed.

'You do it well,' Njeri said." (Ibid).

The slow and lazy manners adopted by the blacks are an example of imitation and blabbed talk to scorn and belittle the whites through stereotyping. The mimicking and miming of the whites continues in the stories of Gatu who narrates an unexpected meeting with the Queen of England in the detainees' camp. It unfolds like the following;

"You can imagine my surprise when I saw the famous Queen-Queen of England. She said (mimics her voice): 'Why are you living in this dark place? It is like a cold, dark cell in prison.' I lay there on the grass. I could see she was quite surprised, naturally, because, I was not impressed with her blood-stained lips. 'I like it where I am.' I told her lying on the ground. She said (mimicks her): If you sell me your valley, I'll let you . . . . once'. Women are women you know. 'In my country,' I told her, 'we do not buy that thing from our women. We get it free'. But man, my own thing troubled me. I had not seen a woman for many years. However, before I could say anything more, she had called in her soldiers who bound my hands and feet and drew me out of the valley. I have just come from there, and that's why, gentlemen, I am back with you here in case you are surprised'. 'Man', he said after the laughter. 'I wish I had agreed at once to satisfy my thing which troubles me to this day.' They went on laughing. 'Show us how he walked,' one of the men called out. Gatu stood up and mimed the whole drama amid appreciative murmurs and comments."

(Thiong'O: 1996; 108-109)

The above extract from the novel encapsulates the whole miming drama and the stereotypical discourse that not only focused on the common whites but instead also targeted the highest and the noblest figure no less than



the Queen of England. The mimicry of her manners of discourse as well as her gait reduces her to the stature of a laughing stock for the blacks and becomes the source of amusement for them. It also refers to the westerner's "moral laxity and sexual degeneracy" (McLeod: 2007; 22), so long attached with the Orient.

When the whites discuss the Africans and their ongoing onslaught against them, they look at the blacks contemptuously and are never ready to believe that the blacks can survive without them even for a day or two. In his deliberations with Margery, Thompson concludes that,

"Perhaps this is not the journey's end, he said, at last,  
 'What?'  
 'We are not yet beaten, he asserted hoarsely. 'Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe.'  
 Margery looked up at him, but said nothing".

(Thiong'O: 1996; 166)

So, the freedom movements and *blacks' rebellion* against the whites are looked down upon by the whites and in their underestimation of the blacks they are convinced that the blacks are incapable of self rule and cannot sustain and survive without the governing structures and the white administrators. Again, Ngugi shows to the readers the unmasked faces of the whites who consider themselves inevitable and indispensable for the survival of the blacks. But Margery's silent and dubious stare at Thompson does not seem to reinforce his ideas and notions.

However, the blacks' valuation of the whites, till the very end of the novel, remained consistent. They considered the faces of the whites as "inscrutable" (Ibid, which is a synonymous of mysterious, and the mystery enshrouded their faces because of their mistrust in the blacks, that is why whenever they looked at Mugo, they looked with, "cold eyes" (Ibid). This

leads us to yet another episode where these cold eyes and inscrutable faces behave very unpredictably and display unmanly manners. When Mugo went to D.O's office to report the whereabouts of Kihika, the response of the white officer was highly insulting and humiliating. Ngugi presents him as a giant who is swelling in his might and is suffering from deeply entrenched superiority complex. After having listened to Mugo,

“The D.O. again stood up. He walked round the table to where Mugo stood. He held Mugo by chin and tilted his face backwards. Then quite unexpectedly he shot saliva into the dark face. Mugo moved back a step and lifted his left hand to rub off the saliva. But the white man reached Mugo's face first and slapped him hard, once. ‘Many people have already given us false information concerning this terrorist. Hear? Because they want the reward.’”

(Thiong'O: 1996; 199)

There is no doubt that this hatred begot hatred in the very hearts of the blacks as well. Therefore, a day before the Uhuru, Koina entered into Dr.Lynd's house and shouted at her saying,

“Let me never see you again in this country,’ he told her as he felled her dog with panga blows, ‘do you hear? Let me never see your face in Kenya again!’”<sup>41</sup>.

(Thiong'O: 1996; 21)

This multiplied hatred towards the whites was mainly because they considered the blacks as sub-humans or animals, always behaving wildly and never succumbing to the whites' *civilized dictums*. Moreover, they also had the realization that whites' usurpation of their material resources is wholly unjustified. All these situations ended up when the blacks moved into the forest taking up arms and fighting for their rights. Now, the whites were perceived as nothing else but enemies.

In fact Ngugi believed that if colonialism involves colonizing the mind, then resistance to it requires decolonization of the mind, and therefore,

in this process of decolonization the iconoclastic images of the whites were to be removed, broken and made to crumble down from the minds of the colonized. Thus, he like Achebe endeavors to establish the identity of the colonized and label the whites with all the stereotypes that they would profusely use for the natives.

## Conclusion

### **A comparative analysis of *representation* in *Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat***

*Things Fall Apart* and *A Grain of Wheat* share a striking balance: the former chronicles the advent of imperialism in the Dark Continent (as the Westerners term it) and the latter accounts the celebrated occasion of *Uhuru*, (independence from the foreigners) thus marking an end to the *civilization mission* and hegemonic control of the imperialists. Both the writers write back to the empire and unveil the history of the mysteries surrounding the much trumpeted colonial expeditions justifying the conquest of the African land and subjugation of the natives. Both are writing back not from the heart of the imperial cosmopolitan centers, as Conrad did, but from the peripheries and are trying to re-establish and re-trace their contact with their own history, culture and civilization that had been denied to them after the beginning of the *civilization process* in Africa. There is no denying the fact that both the writers, consciously or unconsciously, while writing back to the empire, undertook the representation of the colonizers who had been doing so to annihilate the existence of the natives so far. Now the coins were being exchanged and the rebuttals were thrown back. A comparative analysis of their narratives reveals that both the writers meet at certain cross-roads in their endeavors to write back to the empire.

Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O', quite interestingly, are reactionary writers. Chinua Achebe resolved to scribble because he was disappointed and enraged by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which the

Africans' representation and whites' glorification bracketed Conrad with the Western Imperialism. According to Achebe, Conrad's partiality and tilt towards the West and his depiction of them as saviors was wholly biased, showing the blacks at the foot-hills of civilization that needed the uplift by the West in order to climb high. His labeling of the blacks as primitive, exotic and irrational etc who had no history at all ignited Achebe who denounced Conrad by calling him, "bloody racist" (Sewlall: 2010; 56), and resolved to do justice to the Africans. In his further denunciation of Conrad Achebe maintains that he is "a thoroughgoing racist who has contributed to the general repetition of such racism, referring to the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster" (Huddart: 206; 51).

Achebe's thesis is that the Westerners had denied the Africans their past and history depicting them as ignorant apes and having no past whatsoever. The West, in her hysterical efforts seemed to have justified its expedition on the same premise, placing itself at the pulpit of deliverance and showing to have been acting as messiah on God's commands. It was the one-eyed depiction by the West that provoked Achebe to delve deep into the African history and bring forth the natives' viewing of the colonizers.

Similarly, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, though slightly influenced by Conrad as far as the choice of English language is concerned, also resolved to follow the foot steps of Achebe in order to launch the counter-discourse in response to the stereotyping by the Western academia. Apart from Ngugi's choice of the second language, perhaps Conrad played no big role in shaping Ngugi's imagination, and even this short term allegiance broke very soon when Ngugi categorically switched over to Gikuyu, his mother tongue. The story did not

end here however, because as a gesture of his swelling nationalism he changed his name from James Ngugi to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. His acknowledgement of Achebe's stature and invaluable contributions clearly shows that Ngugi was trying to create his own space by de-centering the Europeans' view of Africans which, according to him envisaged the Africans through tinted glasses. While discussing the role of the writer Ngugi submits that,

The role of the African Writer was to challenge the European literary imagination by creating the Okonkwos of the new literature who would die resisting than live on bent knees in a world which they no longer define for themselves on their terms.

(Sewlall: 2006; 51)

Thus, Ngugi breaks away completely from Conrad and finds a new African literary giant to undertake his occidental stance further. To him, the awakening of national consciousness and resisting the imperial pundits was the basic and pivotal obligation of the writer. He could not long ignore the truncated images of Africa by the Western cannons and ultimately, he had to re-trace the history of the colonized himself. The assertion that like Achebe, Ngugi was also a reactionary writer is further reinforced when we find the intertextual links between *A Grain of Wheat* and Conrad's *Lord Jim* and *Under Western Eye*. Though, the similarities may be far greater than the differences, but the localization of *A Grain of Wheat* and an anti-imperialistic stance in it clearly reveal that though he was influenced by Conrad but the treatment that his themes and characters meted out was entirely different. In one of his interviews to Venkat Rao he asserts that Conrad is,

Very despondent when he comes to portraying workers' efforts to overthrow it when he portrays people over racists in Africa in *The Heart of Darkness*, or Asians in *Lord Jims* and others. There the people are made to look as if they are waiting for their parents or a white hero would come and save them.

(Rao: 2009; 167)

Therefore, it was mainly because of the above reason that Ngugi undertook his responsibility of liberating and de-colonizing the mind of the Africans and narrated purely African histories in which no white man or father is awaited by the natives to deliver them on God's commands. Rather, in this novel it is the African Christ named Kihika who strives to liberate the land as well as the minds of the subjugated Africans, which was mainly in reaction to what Conrad had portrayed in the above named novels. So unlike Conrad he shows the real face of the colonizers as looters, plunderers and aliens. As far as the whites are concerned, they have continued, "to lie about the past and to misdescribe it in the most egregious terms" (Jackson: 1991; 123).

Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, adopts a two pronged strategy to challenge the narratives of the cosmopolitan center. On the one hand, he denies the imperialists' stance that the Igbo had no history and on the other hand he grapples with the assertion that the whites were the liberators. In the first half of the novel, Achebe reciprocates to the representation and stereotypical discourse of the colonists by re-inventing and reconstructing the history of the natives, but through literature. In his documentation of the pre-colonial tribal life, he reveals the richness of the Igbo culture through local folk tales, myths, values, traditions, legends and socio-politico and religious beliefs, thus establishing the fact that these structures already existed in Africa and were not imported or were not the result of any foreign *enlightenment mission*. So, the local culture was bathed in its own very light altogether. The second half of the novel reveals the brutalities, usurpation, massacres, humiliation and racism of the whites by which they perceive the natives as sub-humans, incapable of self-rule. Therefore, the District Commissioner

boasts of the Queen of England and refers to the administrative and judicial system introduced by them in Africa. He says to the nobles of the village that, “We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice as it is done in my country under a great Queen” (Achebe: 1978; 120).

The reality of such boasts is surfaced when the whole Igbo village was set ablaze by the Whites and the *Kotmas* or the court messengers had increased fifty bags of cowries on their own to fill their own pockets, showing the lacunas in the administrative and judicial structures of the whites.

Ngugi, on the other hand exposes the *enlightenment claims* of the whites by blood-bathed history of resistance in Kenya documented in *A Grain of Wheat*. Every page of this history is soaked in red and tainted with the African blood. The concentration camps, carefully planned genocide, torture cells, massacres and repression of the natives reduce the whole *civilization process* to a farce. The repression results into resistance and resistance results into rebellion that has been carried out by the Mau Mau guerillas. The whites, usually boasting of their intellectual and structural superiority, are now intimidated and forced to succumb to the might of the natives. They are packing off and are withdrawing. The whole edifice of their superiority has crumbled down.

In order to launch the representation of the colonizers, Ngugi has dwelt upon the non-linear narrative technique, in *A Grain of Wheat*, advocating its merits in comparison to the linear narration which, to him, is far divorced from reality. Ngugi believes that people don't narrate and listen to the stories of each other in a linear mode; rather, they intervene, take their own turns and supplement the narrators etc. In this regard he says that,



My own observation of how people ordinarily narrated events to one another had also shown me that they quite happily accept interventions, digressions, narrative within a narrative and dramatic illustration without losing the main narrative thread. The linear/biographical unfolding of a story was more removed from actual social practice than the narrative of Conrad and Lamming.

(Jackson: 1991; 13)

It is interesting to note that Ngugi has borrowed this technique from Conrad but his purpose of writing, however, is diametrically opposed from that of Conrad. Far from justifying the colonial conquest, he undertakes the journey to show them a mirror. It is same as replying back in the same coin. It is needless to assert here that this non-linear narrative structure authenticates the representation carried out from multiple centers.

Another striking similarity between the above mentioned novels is their representation of hegemony. In *Things Fall Apart*, the religious pundits and the district administration, in their simultaneous efforts to tame and control the natives, unleash unprecedented violence stemming out of the failure of their ideology. Mr. Smith and the District Commissioner are bent upon institutionalized persecution and Achebe represents them as the vile agents of hegemonic forces aiming at the destruction and obliteration of the Africans' identity. This is evident at many a places, for example, Okonkwo, after his return from exile, is imprisoned along with some other elders of the village. Since, they are dissidents, so the hegemonic forces humiliate torture and handcuff them, get their heads shaved and release them only after they had paid their fine. Although, Okonkwo never gave in and preferred a heroic death rather than a humiliated life, but he could never bring an end to the whites' hegemony. The exercise of power, violence, force and coercion illustrate, "hegemony which the colonizer uses to control and oppress the natives" (Hagblom: 2010; 07).

Quite similarly, the hegemony of the colonial administration is represented by the district administration in *A Grain of Wheat* too. John Thompson, the District Officer, brutally treats the detainees at the detention camp in Rira, and when incapable of controlling them, kills eleven of the prisoners. Since, whites are represented as the inefficient administrators; they rely on hegemonic violence to make the natives obedient. This aggravated the situation during the course of Emergency when the colonizers have to use more and more violence to maintain their hegemony. The culmination point of hegemony is touched by the whites when Mugo, the collaborator and betrayer, informs the District Officer about the hide outs of Kihika but embraces humiliation in turn. Although, Kihika is hanged and made an example for the whole village, Mugo never feels hatred towards the whites as he did to Kihika, mainly because the former had intimidated the natives through the hegemonic control of them. Inger Hagblom sums up the argument in the following words,

There are similarities between hegemony in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Things Fall Apart*, as the white man decides administration of justice. In contrast, coercion and violence are much more arbitrary and cruel in *A Grain of Wheat* and the oppression increased also by the Emergency.

(Ibid)

Ironically, the District Commissioners in both the above novels are portrayed and represented as equally callous, indifferent and brutal as far as the treatment of the natives is concerned. Both of them strove to establish their tight control, tame the natives, humiliate them when encounter them and strangle the main *culprits* to make an example of them. So much so, that after the *arch enemies* of the hegemonic control are publicly hanged, the natives are brought to the scene by the official machinery to learn the lesson. Furthermore, both the district administrators make almost similar notes for

their upcoming books. In *Things Fall Apart*, the Officer chooses the title as, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, whereas, in *A Grain of Wheat*, the Officer of the same rank chooses the title as, *Prospero in Africa* after having killed Okonkwo and Kihika respectively. Finally, the perception of the Africans of “missionaries as the spiritual arm of imperialism, complementing the secular arm symbolized by the District Commissioner” (Malaba: 1998; 2010), proves tangible and true.

There are some striking parallels in the deaths of both the heroes in the above novels. In fact, these parallels end in the anti-climax as a result of the strangling of the protagonists namely Okonkwo and Kihika. Both of them were the bravest of the brave who could move mountains, explicitly defy the super imposition of the alien structures, heave high hopes among the fellow natives, are the icons of national liberation and receive the similar treatment to much dismay of the African natives. Furthermore, the reaction of the colonizers is also shown to be exactly the same at the end of both the lives. Achebe and Ngugi have also intersected at this point of the resulting anti climax and their treatment of the aforesaid protagonists. It is also pertinent to note that whereas Kihika was intriguingly betrayed by Mugo, Okonkwo was also disappointed by the betrayal of his fellows who had abandoned him at the time of crisis. When he killed the messenger from the district commissioner, he received no approval from the clansmen at all. Okonkwo, after having slain him,

Stood looking at the dead man, He knew that Umofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices saying: ‘why did he do it’? He wiped his machete on the sand and went away.

(Achebe: 1978; 120)

This was followed by Okonkwo's death. He, like Kihika, was betrayed by the very loyalist for whom he was fighting against the hegemonic control of the whites.

Achebe and Ngugi widely differ in their theorization and use of English as the medium of writing. Their use or abandoning of English involves many sociological, linguistic and representationist views. It is firmly established that Achebe had deep affiliation, affinity and emotional attachment with his mother-tongue Igbo, and he had never concealed it whenever asked. As he asks elsewhere, "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's?" and replies, "It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling" (Talib: 2002; 91). But this deep rooted association could not provide him with any local or native substitute for English. The inevitability of English was such that his classical novel, *Things Fall apart*, was not only written in English but could not be translated in Igbo at all. Achebe had to confess that since Igbo had multiple dialects which differed from town to town, there was no single and widely recognized version of Igbo that he could turn to. It must, however, be noted that Achebe's choice of English was not based on its so called *universal cultural superiority*, but merely because he had, "no choice" (Ibid), to bend to any other language. Rather, he was so hostile to the use of Universalism of English that he had to denounce such claims by saying that, "I should like to see the word *universalism*, banned altogether from discussion of African Literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe" (Ashcroft: 1989; 127). His choice, nevertheless, is

grounded on the pretext of addressing larger audience including the former imperialists, in order to, “infiltrate the ranks of enemy and destroying him from within (Talib: 2002; 91). Achebe’s uniqueness in choosing English for his writings involves his localization and contextualization of it on the African soil. The idea and use of *standard language* was very disenchanting for him, having very little to offer to the Africans in Nigeria. Therefore, when Achebe wrote in English, he gave it a local and African color by adhering to many African words and proverbs assimilated in English. Achebe is of the view that, “among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Vain: 2004; 170). In this regard, Achebe, undoubtedly, not only wanted to familiarize his readers with the ideas and thoughts of the Ibo people but was expanding and enriching the resources of English as well. Commenting on this kind of appropriation of English by Achebe, George Awoonor Williams says,

I think Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* achieves overall effect of freshness by the translation of Ibo thoughts and words into English. Proverbs are woven into speech and dialogue. Far from being a desecration of the English Language, which seems to have come to stay, this transliteration of thoughts, concepts and images give the language freshness and a new scope for which I am sure the native speakers of English will thank us.

(Ashcroft: 1989; 177)

So, Achebe needed, “to transform the language, to use it in a different way in its new context and so, as Achebe says, quoting James Baldwin, make it ‘bear the burden’, of their experience” (Talib: 2002; 91). For Achebe, the use of English is inevitable because of the status of English as a “lingua franca”, since, no other language including Igbo enjoys such status in Nigeria.

Returning to Ngugi, however, brings forth many opposing and nationalistic arguments deriding the use of English for numerous seemingly

cogent and pertinent reasons. Ngugi holds that, “the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation; language was the means of spiritual subjugation” (Ibid). Africa met both. But while it succeeded in throwing away the yoke of the first, it had a long struggle ahead to shun the second one. In the beginning of his career Ngugi wrote in English, but later he substituted it for Gikuyu; his mother tongue. At a yet later stage, he would translate his works into English but since 1987, he has ceased even translating his works in English at all, mainly, “to return to pre-colonial languages and cultural modes” (Ashcroft: 1989; 127). He asserts that the use of English is ultimately class-based since the peasantry and the semi educated local people are precluded and ultimately, it is the western- educated masses and the whites that include the majority of readership. For Ngugi, “an oppressor language inevitably carries racist and negative images of the conquered nation, particularly in its literature, and English is no exception” (Sewlall: 2010; 55). It was specifically for this reason that Ngugi resented the use of English language as the vehicle of the foreign, alien and colonizers’ culture aiming at destroying the local and national consciousness of the people. To him, it was not acceptable that the foreign language would not change or shape the world-view of its users and may not influence their culture according to its very own cannons.

Ngugi’s thesis that decolonization means breaking away from the European and foreign values held language at the center of the imported culture and traditions. Therefore, Ngugi bade farewell to English in the final phase of his literary career as a homecoming gesture. But throughout his English- writing career, Ngugi felt alienated, as he himself puts it that, “thus, whether I was based in Kenya or outside, my opting for English had already

marked me as a writer in exile" (Ibid). While encapsulating the argument, Ngugi asserts that it is the obligation of the new generation of writers to help de-colonizing the minds of the new generation since the aftermath of colonization have rendered irreparable loss to their cultural entity. Thus,

the strength of Ngugi's position is that it is as concerned with the sociological implications of the use of English in terms of the control of production, distribution, and readership which this implies as with any formal idea of language as 'bearer' of culture.

(Ashcroft: 1989;131)

There remains a fact yet to be mentioned that in spite of Ngugi's hatred and resentment for English, Ngugi would, perhaps, never have been able to establish himself had he only written in Gikuyu only. English was one of the main reasons for his exposure and penetration into the body of world literature. Achebe and Ngugi may have had different means of re-inventing and re-establishing the histories of their societies but both succeed in answering to the stereotypes of the west, rather, they make them the subject of their own stereotypes as well.

One important difference in both the novels is that in *Things Fall Apart*, the colonization results into internal strife and on a large scale the division is between the Christians and non-Christians. As a result even Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo, sides with the colonizers thus submitting before the religious justification of colonization. But, in *A Grain of Wheat*, the driving force is not religion but *nationalism*, so, even Kihika, the martyred hero, keeps the holy Bible abreast and seeks guidance to terminate the oppressors. So much so that he calls himself the African Jesus at many occasions in the novel. Why could this sense of nationalism not develop among the Ibo's is an important question. But the answer of the above

question lies in the very assertion that *Things Fall Apart* deals with the early part of colonization whereas *A Grain of Wheat*, documents the movement of decolonization in the African continent. Therefore, the surging nationalism in the later novel is the result of continued and age long struggle and resistance against the colonizers. Achebe however, locates the focal points of different tribal structures through the depiction of them as a monolithic entity governed by shared knowledge of customs, traditions, culture and ethical codes. Although, the modern connotation of nationalism was, perhaps, something alien for the African tribes in Nigeria but the consciousness was intact in their collective consciousness. This consciousness is reflected in the depiction of the Igbo tribes as far more superior than the European civilization. Many examples can be cited to prove this point. The Europeans, for instance, in their vendetta, wipe out the whole village of Abame when only one white person is killed by the tribals. They set the whole village ablaze and do the collateral damage to the natives in the name of religion and *superior civilization*. Moreover, the whites are less tolerant of the natives' culture and traditions and regard them as the beasts. The whites claim only their God to be true and those of the natives' as false but Uchendu, a native, shows more depth by saying that, "what is good among one people is an abomination with others" (Rhodes: 2008; 61-72), and does not denounce the other cultures altogether. Another finer example of the cultural depth of the Africans is that they do not fight for their gods at all. Any kind of heresy and blasphemy is a matter between the sinner and god. On the other hand, the Europeans' history of Crusades and holy and *just* wars reveals that they fight for their God on his behalf thus unleashing the institutionalized persecution on the infidels. In this way Achebe



proves the Europeans' claims of enlightenment as hollow from inside. Ngugi's thesis is also the same and he also exposes the reality of enlightenment project through the concentration camps, torture cells, betrayals, humiliation and indifference of the whites towards the natives and their civilization. In both the novels the colonizers control the natives through fear and force and deny them their separate existence.

In both the novels, the colonizers are shown exploiting and executing the same methods of colonization mainly by exclusively relying on the unholy alliance of Christianity and colonial hegemony through administrative structures. In *Things Fall Apart*, the missionaries penetrate the Igbo society by *illuminating the primitive minds* of the Africans, followed soon after by gunpowder, massacres and machetes. After having established a couple of church buildings and alluring and winning the young converts, they raze the whole town as a response to the killing of one white person. And then the story goes un-ended and finally the arch leader, Okonkwo, becomes the victim of their ruthlessness. Similarly, in *A Grain of Wheat*, the same methods of carrot and stick are applied. In the beginning the *Book* is presented to Kenyans but later on it is replaced by torture cells, concentration camps and large scale killings of the natives. Both the writers unravel the colonization mission by showing the same hegemonic tendencies and techniques in both the societies but by the same colonizers.

There is an interesting parallel in the writings from the empire and those written back. There is no doubt that Novel played an important part in the colonization process and shaping the minds and ideologies of the empire and undertaking of the representation of the colonized. In response, it is the

very same genre that has been used by the colonized, not only to decolonize the minds of the natives but also to stereotype and carry out the representation of the colonizers. Both Achebe and Ngugi have been the prime examples of such resistance, representation and decolonization

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