Cultural Disjunctions and Imperial Echoes: A Post-Colonial Analysis of Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Mahfouz's Miramar, and Conrad's Heart of Darkness

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Abstract:

This research examines the post-colonial motifs in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Naguib Mahfouz's Miramar, and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. This text provides a detailed examination of how these important works depict the clash between indigenous cultures and European imperialism. It specifically focuses on the intricate formation of colonial and post-colonial identities. Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart offers a thorough analysis of colonialism by illustrating the gradual breakdown of the Igbo community due to the influence and intrusion of European colonization. This work not only emphasizes the harmful consequences of colonialism on African customs and identity but also prompts inquiries about the erosion of cultural independence and the internal tensions that emerge within colonized nations. Mahfouz portrays a community in Miramar that is grappling with the lasting effects of colonialism in post-revolutionary Egypt. The book delves into the complexities of socioeconomic class, gender, and national identity within a post-colonial context, going beyond a simple portrayal of national conflicts. Mahfouz's storytelling prompts readers to contemplate the enduring influence of colonial legacies on social frameworks and personal identities, even in the absence of the colonizers. Conrad's Heart of Darkness is subject to critical re-evaluation, not just due to its depiction of colonial exploitation but also because of its poor portrayal of Africa and its inhabitants. This view emphasizes the novel's contribution to the continuation of colonial ideas while also recognizing the intricacies of its criticism of the empire. The research uncovers thematic consistencies in the portrayal of colonialism, identity, and resistance by comparing these writings. Additionally, it highlights the writers' unique cultural and historical perspectives. This study contributes to the discussion on post-colonial literature by providing new insights into how these significant novels question, undermine, and even inadvertently support the narratives of colonial authority and cultural supremacy.

Keywords: Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, Identity, Imperialism, Cultural clash, Resistance, Gender, Modernity.

Chinua Achebe and Naguib Mahfouz, renowned African writers, provide tales that starkly differ from the Eurocentric viewpoints that used civilization as a pretext to justify colonialism. European colonial aspirations, sometimes supported by misconceptions of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species (1859), justified their control by depicting African cultures as backward and requiring education. This story functioned as a moral rationale for colonialism, implying that it was the responsibility of the white race to provide civilization to these countries. In his book "Culture and Imperialism" (1993), Edward Said, a prominent figure in post-colonial studies, analyses the imperialistic perspective and its impact. He specifically focuses on the works of European writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad, highlighting how they perpetuated colonial ideals. Said expands his criticism to include literary luminaries such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, exposing the interconnectedness of their works with the imperialistic endeavors of their day. In the introduction to a Penguin Classics version of Austen's Mansfield Park, it is said that Said sheds light on the Bertram estate as a component of the wider framework of British imperialism, emphasising its connections to slavery and the sugar trade. Achebe specifically criticizes Joseph Conrad, whom he accuses of being a "blatant racist" due to his portrayal of Africa in Heart of Darkness. Conrad's depiction of the Congo, seen from a Eurocentric perspective, deprives African characters of their ability to act independently, making them devoid of voice and importance—merely serving as background components in a "primitive" environment. Achebe believes that this dehumanizing attitude reinforces the prejudices and reasons that supported colonial exploitation.

Heart of Darkness is often regarded as a semi-autobiographical novella that recounts a voyage up the Congo River, mirroring the actual events of both its creator, Joseph Conrad, and his fictitious narrator, Marlow. The narrative structure of Heart of Darkness is distinctive since it employs an anonymous narrator who progressively introduces Marlow, enabling a multifaceted examination of colonialism. Conrad skilfully examines the imperialistic ambitions of dominant countries exerting their influence on weaker ones, a topic that becomes evident when Marlow contemplates the supposed "greatness" of colonialism, executed by people who wield both military might and ideological persuasion (137). Marlow observes the savagery of European colonizers but struggles with his own position in this repressive structure. The protagonist's inner conflict highlights the many ethical dilemmas associated with colonialism, demonstrating his disapproval of its materialistic objectives and his inevitable involvement in carrying them out.

Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart presents a realistic and objective depiction of Nigerian tribal society before and during the arrival of colonization. The book, published in 1958, explores the period before Nigeria gained independence from Britain. It delves into the pre-colonial age characterized by violence and social unrest while also highlighting the presence of enduring customs and a strong sense of community. Achebe's book effectively portrays the evolution of a community from its customary practices to a contemporary, colonized culture, therefore exemplifying the wider repercussions of colonial governance on African cultural identity.

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Naguib Mahfouz's Miramar, released in 1967, delves into post-colonial Egypt during the period after the revolution and gaining independence from Britain. The book explores the enduring impact of colonialism on national identity, emphasizing the challenges faced by different socioeconomic groups in adjusting to the changed political environment. The narrative takes place in a boarding house located in Alexandria, and it follows the experiences of a variety of inhabitants, each of whom symbolizes certain aspects of Egyptian culture. Mahfouz portrays the ambiguities of the post-colonial period, in which the enduring influences of the past continue to mold the present while the future remains unpredictable. The story implies that even when a country has gained formal independence, the lasting impacts of colonialism make it difficult to establish a unified national identity.

Colonialism is a multifaceted and persistent force, assuming various forms over time. In the context of the African countries depicted in the three novels under consideration, it is evident that the legacies of colonial rule continue to exert influence even after independence. However, this is not to suggest that the postcolonial era is inherently worse than the colonial period; rather, it highlights the enduring and evolving nature of colonialism. Colonialism can be likened to an octopus, with its influence re-emerging in different forms even when one aspect is dismantled. This phenomenon reflects the tendency of powerful nations to impose their will on weaker ones, a dynamic that persists as long as the colonized internalizes the narratives propagated by their colonizers.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe uses the metaphor of locusts descending upon the village of Umuofia to symbolize the arrival of white settlers. The locusts, much like the colonizers, consume the resources of the Igbo people, leaving behind devastation. The villagers initially perceive the locusts as harmless, just as some Igbo people view the arrival of Christianity as benign. However, both the locusts and the colonizers ultimately bring destruction, stripping the land of its wealth and fracturing the cultural fabric of the community. Achebe's use of language underscores the symbolic weight of the locusts, with the repetition of terms like "settled" and "every" highlighting the pervasive and sudden presence of these invaders. The locusts' heaviness, which causes tree branches to break, mirrors the disintegration of Igbo traditions under the relentless advance of colonialism.

Obierika's observation in Chapter Fifteen, where he likens the white men to locusts, further cement this allegory: "The Oracle ... said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts...." (91). Additionally, the folktale told by Okonkwo's wife, Ekwefi, to her daughter, Ezinma, about Tortoise and the birds serves as a prelude to the impending colonial invasion. Tortoise, who does not belong to the birds, manipulates them into sharing their food, ultimately exploiting them. This tale illustrates two potential responses to colonial encroachment: unity and resistance. When the birds work together to strip Tortoise of the feathers they had lent him, they render him powerless. This metaphor suggests that collective resistance is key to overcoming colonial domination.

Colonialism often starts with a deceptive narrative disguised as a noble endeavor to educate and refine the Indigenous people of Africa, who are derogatorily referred to as "savages." The pretense is well shown in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, when Kurtz, a key character, becomes profoundly aware of the fundamental evils of colonialism. The picture created by Kurtz serves as a representation of his consciousness, depicting a lady with a blindfold who is holding a light. This image represents the lack of insight and understanding of the colonial endeavor. Upon Marlow's first contact with this picture in the brickmaker's chamber, it functions as a nuanced but impactful criticism of the European colonial endeavor. Marlow stood up. Subsequently, I saw a little oil painting on a wooden panel depicting a lady who was clothed and had her eyes covered while holding a lit candle. The backdrop had a gloomy and nearly black hue. This portrayal emphasizes the intrinsic depravity and ethical ignorance of colonization.

The novella ends with Marlow's return to Brussels, a place he links with hypocrisy since it is the center of colonial discourse. Although the colonizers made grand assertions about civilizing the Indigenous people, the essence of their actions may be summed up in Kurtz's last words, "The horror! The horror!" (239). These statements reflect a deep sense of disappointment with the colonial endeavor, exposing its actual essence as a system of exploitation and dehumanization.

Marlow's ultimate objective in Brussels is to pay a visit to Kurtz's Intended, a lady who continues to grieve and is still wearing black attire, even after a year has passed after Kurtz's death. As Marlow waits at her door in the dark, he is overcome by a strong feeling of death, which reminds him of his previous view of the city as a "whited sepulcher" (145). The Intended, characterized by her sincere, deep, self-assured, and trusting expression, desires to learn Kurtz's last utterances in the hopes of finding something meaningful to hold onto. Nevertheless, Marlow deceives her by falsely claiming that Kurtz's last utterance was her own name. This falsehood exemplifies the wider deceit carried out by the colonizers, who justify their acts by supposing that the colonized are incapable of handling the truth. The division between the colonizers and the colonized is reinforced by gendered presumptions, depicting the colonized as effeminate and the colonizers as manly. Marlow's internal struggle, similar to Kurtz's, exposes a conflicted essence caught between virtue and malevolence. Conrad, via Marlow, implies that while colonialism is intrinsically wicked, the achievements it brings about are paradoxically seen as advantageous.

On the other hand, Naguib Mahfouz's Miramar is firmly grounded in the essence of Egyptian culture, with a specific emphasis on the complexities of everyday life in Egypt. The narrative tone and viewpoint clearly exhibit Egyptian characteristics, mirroring the political and social realities of the country. Mahfouz strategically situates the book in Alexandria during the winter season, using the city's Mediterranean environment to symbolize the inner unrest experienced by the inhabitants of the pension. Their lives are characterized by turbulence, much like the unsettled sea. The fundamental topic of the story is the clash between traditional and modern ideas. Mahfouz portrays his characters from the lower and middle socioeconomic strata. Irrespective of their societal standing, these characters communicate using traditional literary Arabic instead of the common languages associated with their positions. Mahfouz's language selection demonstrates his aim to engage a wider Arab readership, including not just Egypt but also other Arab states that were subjected to colonialism, ranging from Iraq to Morocco. The cause he emphasizes is of great importance, requiring acknowledgment and unity across the Arab world.

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Aamer Wagdy, an old journalist in Miramar, provides both a witness to a past age and a position from which to reflect on the future. Aamer, an unmarried man in his nineties, represents the lack of fertility and lack of progress of the past era that he personifies: "I observed my hands that resembled the hands of a preserved corpse in the Egyptian Museum" (12). The book starts and concludes with chapters entitled "Aamer Wagdy," enclosing the tale from his introspective perspective. The subsequent chapters are titled after three individuals of a younger age, Hosny Allam, Mansour Bahy, and Sarhan El-Behiry, whose experiences are characterized by disappointment and a feeling of being lost on the verge of a new period. Nevertheless, these individuals exhibit a deficiency of bravery when it comes to really embracing what lies ahead, resulting in each of them finally being seen as unsuccessful. Their withdrawal to a former boarding house owned by a sentimental Greek lady symbolizes their fruitless quest for significance in the forthcoming times. The pension, an antiquated institution, serves as a representation of their misdirected endeavors to seek meaning in a location detached from the advancements of the contemporary world. These characters are imprisoned in the persistent illusions that remain from colonialism, unable to break free from its lasting impact.

Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart takes its title from W.B. Yeats's renowned poem, "The Second Coming," in English literature. The reference to Yeats's poem evokes its whole thematic framework, with the phrase "Things fall apart" appearing in the fourth line. Achebe deliberately incorporates a section of the poem at the start of his book to strengthen the fundamental philosophy and theme issues of his work. The poem commences:

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre;
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." (1880)

Achebe quotes these opening words to capture the essence of the poem's pervasive chaotic and senseless violence. Yeats's lines are imbued with the poet's profound anguish over the slaughter in Ireland, the Irish Civil War, and other terrible occurrences in Europe, and they possess a prophetic significance. Yeats posited that history operates in cyclical patterns, with the present cycle commencing two millennia ago with the arrival of Christ and the Christian revelation. The Greco-Roman civilization held sway from around 2000 B.C. until its final demise over a span of two thousand years. Yeats predicted that the Christian civilization, which had been around for two thousand years, was approaching its end and would be followed by a "Second Coming." The poet envisions a gyre, a swirling movement characterized by a stable core that ultimately loses its grip as the outer edges spread, resulting in disintegration: "Things fall apart; the center cannot maintain its position." The metaphor portrays the falcon as a representation of intelligence and the falconer as a symbol of the spiritual part of people. The poem implies that the world's imminent demise is a result of the falcon, symbolizing intelligence represented by science and technology, straying away from the control of the falconer. As a result, anarchy has been unleashed globally, indicating the breakdown of structure and the beginning of chaos.

Chinua Achebe's apprehensions about the future of Nigeria are powerfully depicted in his novel Things Fall Apart. Achebe offers a critical analysis of the consequences of colonialism, specifically examining the coming of the white colonizers and the imposition of their religion, which displaces the native beliefs and traditions. The lack of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous customs and language by the white man intensifies the problem, resulting in fragmentation within the community. As some individuals embrace Christianity, they start seeing their customary rituals as inferior, leading to divisions between families and communities. The internal conflict within the clan diminishes its capacity to defend against outside dangers, providing the colonizers with a tactical edge as they covertly destroy the clan's cohesiveness. Achebe's portrayal of cultural fragmentation demonstrates how colonial interference dismantles pre-existing social frameworks, resulting in the breakdown of community ties.

Similarly, Naguib Mahfouz used excerpts from the Holy Qur'an to depict the protagonist Aamer Wagdy's quest for comfort in the midst of his seclusion and the challenges of aging. Aamer recites verses from Surah Ar-Rahman (The Most Beneficent) to find solace and meaning in the midst of life's intricate challenges and seemingly pointless nature.

"The Most Beneficent (Allah)! Has taught (you mankind) the Qur'an (by His mercy). He created man. He taught him eloquent speech. The sun and the moon run on their fixed courses (exactly) calculated with measured-out stages for each (for reckoning, etc.). And the herbs (or stars) and the trees both prostrate. And the heaven He has raised high; and He has set up the Balance."(27)

Aamer derives solace from this recital, a ritual he has treasured since his time at the University of El-Azhar. However, the heavy rain outside the pension contributes to a gloomy mood, reflecting the profound sense of existential despair experienced by the characters. This widespread sense of sadness represents their incapacity to negotiate the complexities and ambiguities of life. Housny Allam aimlessly navigates the streets of Alexandria, Sarhan El-Behiry's ill-fated endeavor to accumulate fortune via stealing culminates in suicide upon being found out, and Mansour Bahy, deceived by his own acts, unintentionally becomes the cause of El-Behiry's demise. The remaining occupants of the lodging are deeply rooted in their own individual desolation, unable to break free from the all-encompassing gloom of their lives. Mahfouz juxtaposes the metaphysical comfort provided by the Qur'an with the palpable desolation that envelops the protagonists, accentuating their endeavor to find significance and lucidity in their fragmented existences.

The last paragraphs of Heart of blackness depict the pervasive blackness that engulfs the narrative and Nellie, the vessel from which Marlow narrates his tale. Upon the completion of Marlow's narrative, the Director comments, "We have lost the first of the ebb" (252). This statement not only refers to the fluctuating water level of the Thames River but also indicates the declining interest of the listeners in Marlow's narrative. The frame narrator carefully studies the celestial expanse and the flowing body of water, taking note of their presence.

"I raised my heart…the offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed somber under an overcast sky seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (252). This visual strengthens the significance of the novel's title, "Heart of Darkness," which conveys several levels of meaning. It refers to the actual darkness of Africa, the deep center of colonial exploitation, and Kurtz's dual nature—promoting enlightenment while embodying barbarism. The absence of a reaction from the audience highlights the overall apathy of mankind toward individual pain and the wider ramifications it has on our indifference toward acts of cruelty.

W.H. Auden's poem "Musee des Beaux Arts" (1940) explores the issue of apathy in a profound manner. Auden contemplates the portrayal of sorrow in art, appreciating how previous artists skilfully caught the fundamental nature of human misery within the context of ordinary existence: "About suffering they were never wrong, The Old Masters: how well they understood Its human position; how it takes place While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along."

In his important article "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," Chinua Achebe offers a critical analysis of Conrad's depiction of colonialism and racism in Heart of Darkness. Achebe contends that Conrad's portrayal of Africa and its inhabitants is tainted by racial stereotypes rather than authentic uniqueness. He provides a critical analysis of Conrad's portrayal of Kurtz's African mistress, observing: "Toward the end of the story, Conrad lavishes a whole page quite unexpectedly on an African woman who has obviously been some kind of mistress to Mr. Kurtz and presides (if I may be permitted a little liberty) like formidable mystery over inexorable imminence of his departure: 'She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent ... She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose'" (254).

Achebe's criticism focuses on the reductionist and exoticized depiction of African people in Conrad's story, which questions the picture of Africa as nothing more than a setting for European ethical and intellectual conflicts. The mistress is juxtaposed with Kurtz's Intended:
…she fulfills a structural requirement of the story: a savage counterpart to the refined, European woman who will step forth to the end of the story: She came forward all in black with a pale head, floating toward me in the dusk. She was in mourning… She took both my hands in hers and murmured, "I had heard you were coming." She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering" (254).

Achebe explains that the differing depictions of the two ladies are conveyed to the reader via a variety of explicit and implicit techniques. Conrad grants the European lady the ability to convey human emotions while withholding this ability from the African woman. Achebe accuses Conrad of exploiting Africa as a setting and backdrop, which eliminates the African as a human factor. Africa is a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, and the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse

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arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? (257). Achebe contends that Conrad used Africa as a contrasting element to Europe, using the Congo as a convenient target to exalt England, which is first portrayed as the epitome of advanced society. The focus is on: ... the dehumanization of Africa and Africans, which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel that celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot. I do not doubt Conrad's great talents... (257).

Achebe's article reveals the European biases shown by Conrad and the unquestioning acceptance of these perspectives by readers in the Western world. Keith Windschuttle claims that:

...Orientalist scholarship provided the means through which Europeans could take over Oriental lands. Said is quite clear about the causal sequence: "Colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact." Imperial administrators like Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, agreed that the products of this scholarship— "our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history, and religion"—had provided "the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won" (3).

It is not only Orientalist scholarship but also a long series of novelists and poets who praise the white man's role in civilizing the uncivilized world. Keith Windschuttle tries to highlight Said's continuous connection between the past and present. He tries to prove that history repeats itself, though always with a difference. Colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differs in method and style, whereas it shares the same goals: "In the late twentieth century, the field helps preserve American power in the Middle East and defends what Said calls 'the Zionist invasion and colonization of Palestine'" (3).

English literature cannot be encapsulated just by the literary works of authors who expressed admiration for colonialism. Authors like E. M. Forster have expressed criticism against English colonization and its deeds in foreign contexts. A Passage to India (1924) is one of his works that impartially portrays two distinct civilizations. In contrast to Conrad, E. M. Forster's work depicts Anglo-Indian and Indian individuals in a sprawling nation and conveys his criticism indirectly via conflicts. He remains impartial. The main character, Dr. Aziz, and the logical Anglo-Indian Fielding symbolize the conflicting viewpoints of the colonized and the colonizer. The narrative delves into their perspectives on colonization. Dr. Aziz first establishes a friendly relationship but then develops a stance against the British. The narrator emphasizes the pervasive corruption in the English officialdom, which is clearly shown via Aziz's accusation, trial, and subsequent consequences. The tale culminates with the renowned encounter between Dr. Aziz and Fielding as they engage in horseback riding. Fielding raises the question, "Whom would you prefer over the English?" "The Japanese?" The number is 315. Aziz embodies the Oriental individual who opposes British colonial control in India and expresses his viewpoint to Fielding, stating:

"Down with the English anyhow. That's certain. Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty or five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then" ... he concluded ... "you and I shall be friends" (315, 16).

The Orient is seen as a product of Western political and cultural influences shaped by Western knowledge, awareness, and imperial aspirations. It serves as a mirror for the West, reflecting what is seen to be inferior and alien. Edward Said offers a critical analysis of the progress of Middle Eastern studies in the United States, highlighting its tendency to maintain the conventional European viewpoint and operations (295). This emotion is reflected in the dialogue between Marlow and the brickmaker at the central station, where Europe is often mentioned. The brickmaker characterizes Kurtz, the leader of the Inner Station, as a representative of several Western principles: "We desire... for the direction of the mission entrusted to us by Europe, in a manner of speaking, superior intellect, broad sympathies, and unwavering determination" (169).

The portrayal of Orientals and Africans in Heart of Darkness embodies preconceptions associated with femininity, fragility, and underlying danger, presenting them as challenges to Western dominance. This depiction presents a stark contrast to the dialogue between Marlow and the brickmaker: "He abruptly extinguished the lamp, and we left the premises. The moon has ascended. Dark shadows wandered aimlessly, pouring water on the light source, resulting in a hissing sound; steam rose in the moonlight while the injured individual cried out in pain. "What a commotion the brute is causing!" The number is 170. In this context, the African individual is stripped of their humanity and shown as a savage entity, with their pain and suffering being seen as a minor annoyance that disrupts the story centered on Kurtz, the exceptional European. The comparison highlights the idea of Africans as unchanging, regressive, and inferior compared to the innovative, forward-thinking Europeans. Their worth and advancement are evaluated only in comparison to European benchmarks, therefore sustaining their image as conquerable and subservient.

Orientalists in the 19th century, who translated works from the East into English, believed that successful colonial governance required a deep knowledge of the subjugated populations. Said's criticism highlights the concept of knowledge as a source of power, indicating that Western control over the Orient was strengthened via the possession of this information. Said argues that there is a continued presence of contemporary Orientalism in Western representations of Eastern civilizations, where Orientals are often depicted as irrational, menacing, and deceitful. According to Said, Middle Eastern studies in America operate inside an established network that maintains its power through biased portrayals.

"There is, of course, a Middle East studies establishment, a pool of interests, an 'old boy' or 'expert' network linking corporate business, the foundations, the oil companies, the missions, the military, the foreign service, the intelligence community together with the academic world... there are organizations... there are institutes, centers, faculties, departments, all devoted to legitimizing and maintaining the authority of a handful of basic, basically unchanging ideas about Islam, the Orient, and the Arabs" (301-2).

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The novel A Passage to India depicts how the colonialists' misunderstandings about the colonized people reflect the perspectives of Orientalist intellectuals towards the East. E.M. Forster demonstrates this by portraying characters that personify the Western viewpoint toward Eastern people. Mr. McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police and the most knowledgeable individual among the officers in Chandrapore puts up a hypothesis concerning crime and criminals in India. The observer comments on Dr. Aziz's behavior at the time of his detention, noting that Dr. Aziz is escorted to the prison while shedding tears:

Mr. McBryde was shocked at his downfall, but no Indian ever surprised him because he had a theory about climatic zones. The theory ran: "All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30. They are not to blame; they do not have a dog's chance - we should be like them if we settle here. Born in Karachi, he seemed to contradict his theory and would sometimes admit as much with a sad, quiet smile." (175, 6)

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's narrator, Marlow, recounts the progress of the steamer along the Congo River, detailing an incident where the natives attack the vessel, resulting in the death of the black helmsman. Marlow's portrayal of the helmsman is notably derogatory: "The fool nigger had dropped everything to throw the shutter open ... He stood before the wide opening, glaring, and I yelled at him to come back" (201). This depiction suggests that the helmsman's death is an inevitable release from what Marlow describes as his futile existence: "He looked at me anxiously, gripping the spear like something precious, with an air of being afraid I would try to take it away from him. I had to make an effort to free my eyes from his gaze and attend to the steering" (202).

Heart of Darkness cannot be characterized as a critique of colonialism but rather as a subtle justification of it. At the outset, Marlow reflects on London's past, acknowledging, "And this also, has been one of the dark places of the earth" (138). He then delves into the Roman conquest of Britain, suggesting that enlightenment came with the Romans: "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago - the other day .... Light came out of this river since - you say, knights? Yes, but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds" (139). Marlow describes the Romans' struggles with the climate, disease, hostile inhabitants, and mortality during their conquest of the British Isles, depicting them as "men enough to face the darkness" (139). This narrative subtly supports the colonization of Africa by drawing parallels between the Roman conquest and European ventures into Africa. Marlow's own moral distancing from the colonialists, framed as a quest driven by youthful curiosity about unmapped territories, mirrors the broader European perspective. His depiction of the journey and the land reflects the perceived superiority of Europeans who venture into unknown territories, viewing the experience as a testament to their courage and superiority: "The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us - who could tell? ... traveling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign - and no memories" (186). This portrayal underscores the contrast between the civilized explorers and the so-called uncivilized lands they seek to conquer.

Marlow's persistent illusions drive him to idealize Kurtz as the epitome of European enlightenment, supposedly benefiting both Africans and Europeans. Upon discovering Kurtz's true nature—an unhinged European who exploits his intellect for personal gain—Marlow clings to the notion of European righteousness. Kurtz's dismissive remark about women, "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it completely. The women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it" (205), reflects his paternalistic view. This paternalism mirrors Marlow's own condescending attitude toward women, evident in Marlow's final lie about preserving the "beautiful world" of women. Both Kurtz and Marlow's views on women reveal a broader European paternalism towards Africans.

The early depiction of Kurtz as a proactive idealist contrasts starkly with his true character revealed in his conversation with Marlow. Kurtz embodies the European perspective on Africa as an extension of their own possessions. His delusional claim—"My ivory? Oh yes, I heard him 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—' everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places" (206).

In *Things Fall Apart,* Chinua Achebe challenges the stereotypical European portrayal of Africans as savages. Achebe's use of complex language, rich in proverbs and rhetorical devices, subverts these stereotypes. The protagonist, Okonkwo, embodies the struggle against perceived weakness, which he associates with femininity, and despises his father, Unoka. Okonkwo's extreme aversion to weakness drives him to adopt traits diametrically opposed to those of his father—becoming active, wealthy, and stoic while rejecting gentleness and emotional expression. Achebe uses Okonkwo to symbolize the resistance of the colonized, illustrating his inability to adapt as colonial pressures intrude upon Umuofia. This conflict highlights Okonkwo's struggle to maintain his identity amid the encroaching influence of colonialism.

Okonkwo's struggle epitomizes his incapacity to acclimatize to a swiftly evolving society, thereby designating him as a tragic hero in the traditional sense. He has a similar destiny to Oedipus, where fate forcefully determines his life, and his fatal defect resembles Mr. Tulliver's in The Mill on the Floss (1860)—an impulsive and reckless deed associated with masculinity, eventually resulting in his demise.

Achebe juxtaposes Reverend James Smith with Mr. Brown in order to illustrate the contrasting effects of colonialism. Mr. Brown's open-minded approach, which includes listening to and respecting local traditions, leads to remarkable success in converting others. On the other hand, Smith, who takes over from Brown, represents a lack of acceptance and inflexibility. The moniker "Brown" symbolizes his skill in navigating ethnic barriers and finding compromises, while "Smith" indicates a rigid commitment to Biblical dogma, disregarding any subtleties in cultural comprehension.

Smith's stringent regulations incite conflict, as seen by Enoch's blasphemous act of unveiling an egwugwu, resulting in the egwugwu themselves destroying his house. When the egwugwu make an effort to demolish the church, disregarding Smith's instructions, the appearance of the District Commissioner intensifies tensions even further. He deceives the Umuofian leaders by seeming to engage in a cordial conversation but then has them apprehended by military personnel. This experience shows the clear distinction between Smith's inflexible, dualistic perspective on race and culture and the many complexities of colonial relations.

The tranquility that enveloped the community upon the liberation of the convicts, including Okonkwo, highlights the state of unrest. Ezinma, the daughter of Okonkwo, witnesses the evident physical impact of colonial abuse on her father. At a village assembly, a speaker strongly condemns the detrimental impact caused by the colonial presence and the disrespect shown towards traditional beliefs. Okonkwo's conference is abruptly interrupted by the entrance of messengers, prompting him to defiantly murder one of them. Upon recognizing that his tribe would not endorse a conflict, Okonkwo chooses to terminate his own life. He is discovered hanging from a tree by the District Commissioner and his group, signifying a sorrowful conclusion to his defiance.

In *Miramar*, Mahfouz illustrates a profound sense of alienation among the pension's lodgers, each retreating into their own isolated world. The societal context and institutional structures appear to hold no meaningful significance for them, serving merely as a backdrop for their personal disengagement. The pension acts as a microcosm of detachment, where the lodgers are depicted as solitary islands adrift amidst the turbulent sea of Alexandria's winter. Their interactions are minimal and superficial, confined to the necessity of shared space rather than genuine connection. This lack of meaningful communication underscores the failure to transcend individual isolation and form a cohesive community.

The relationship between the older and younger generations, symbolized by Aamer Wagdy and Mansour Bahy, fails to develop beyond initial attempts. Aamer Wagdy, akin to the hermaphroditic narrator of *The Waste Land* (1922), remains a detached observer throughout the narrative. Even after Sarhan El-Behiry's suicide and Mansour Bahy's confession of El-Behiry's murder, Wagdy's role as an observer persists. The contrast between Sarhan El-Behiry and Mansour Bahy, representing the transformative potential of the younger generation, and the aging Aamer Wagdy highlights the generational divide. El-Behiry's demise and Bahy's imprisonment reflect the bleak prospects for progress, as Bahy, who should succeed Wagdy, finds himself trapped in a new form of confinement.

Zahra's arrival at the pension, motivated by a desire to start anew, ends in disillusionment, leading her to abandon her initial goals. By the novel's conclusion, the pension's remaining elderly occupants, including Aamer Wagdy, engage in a cynical dialogue with Tolba Beik Marzouk. They discuss the potential alternatives to the Revolution with a sense of irony:
"I imagine that I'll travel to Kuwait soon," Marzouk remarks.
"The late?" Wagdy inquires.

"He wanted to convince me that the Revolution's only alternatives are the communists or the Muslim Brotherhood," Marzouk responds, laughing briefly. "He thought he had trapped me. I replied honestly, 'But that is right!' He cynically added, 'There is a third alternative.'"
"What is it?" Wagdy asks.
"America!"
Wagdy responds angrily, "America rules us?" To which Marzouk calmly suggests, "Through a reasonable right-wing party, why not?" (281).
Mahfouz's conversation alludes to an impending shift from the Revolution to a new form of colonialism, a prediction that materializes with the advent of globalization at the turn of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. This emerging colonialism adopts a new and compelling guise under the banner of globalization.

The notion of death as a logical and inevitable conclusion is central to the fates of the principal characters across three novels. Kurtz's final exclamation, "The horror! The horror!" reflects the profound dread and disillusionment that accompany his harrowing experience in the Congo. Okonkwo's suicide stems from his profound alienation from a society where his son Nwoye has forsaken traditional customs in favor of Christianity. Okonkwo's anguish is encapsulated in his lament: "Why, he cries in the heart, should he be cursed with such a son?" (108). His inability to accept a world where his descendants no longer honor ancestral traditions culminates in his despair, as he envisions his ancestors' shrines left in vain, their rituals supplanted by the worship of a foreign deity (108). Sarhan El-Behiry's suicide represents a tragic culmination of shattered dreams and personal betrayal. His failure to achieve personal aspirations and his disillusionment with the Revolution—marked by his involvement in a factory robbery and his romantic entanglements—lead to his demise.

Colonialism, as a formidable force in world history, has profoundly shaped global dynamics over the past four or five centuries. It systematically divided entire continents and imposed severe oppression on indigenous populations, whose languages, cultures, and identities were systematically undermined. Despite achieving independence, many former colonies continue to grapple with the enduring legacies of nineteenth-century Western colonialism. By 1914, Western civilization had reached its zenith of global expansion, manifested through extensive economic investments abroad—building railways, ports, mines, plantations, and public utilities. The economic disparity between industrialized Europe and America and the rest of the world widened significantly between 1750 and 1900. This disparity was driven by the reorganization of land under colonial rule and the deliberate stifling of industrialization in regions deemed suitable only for the consumption of Western manufactured goods. Additionally, the era saw significant European emigration driven by poverty and overpopulation during the Industrial Revolution. In response, European settlers in the United States and Australia enacted laws to restrict further mass migration from Asia.

The expansionist policies of European powers from 1880 to 1990 aimed at establishing extensive political empires in Africa and Asia, resulting in the domination of millions across these continents. This period of colonialism, driven by competition for trade, military supremacy, political ambitions, and a deep-seated belief in European racial superiority, significantly reshaped global dynamics. The causes of colonialism reflect a complex interplay of economic, political, and racial motivations and continue to be the subject of extensive scholarly debate. The responses to colonialism in Africa and Asia varied widely. While resistance efforts focused on expelling colonizers and securing independence, many groups acquiesced to European rule, leading to enduring conflicts and struggles for sovereignty. Additionally, some indigenous populations, particularly those educated in Western traditions, embraced aspects of European culture, technological advancements, and political ideals. This modernist response illustrates a nuanced reaction to colonialism, where admiration for Western achievements contributed to the broader dissemination of Western cultural values.

In sum, the legacy of colonialism and the diverse reactions it elicited underscore the complex interactions between colonizers and the colonized. The spread of Western culture and ideals, alongside the ongoing impact of colonial rule, highlight the intricate ways in which colonialism has shaped contemporary global relations and cultural exchanges.

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