Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers
The PROFESIOLab electronic, peer-reviewed, open-access Magazine

ISSN 1989-9572

DOI:10.47750/jett.2024.15.04.006

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Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol.15(4)

https://jett.labosfor.com/

Date of Reception: 24 Mar 2024

Date of Revision: 20 Aug 2024

Date of Acceptance : 08 Oct 2024

Dr. Rafik Laceb. (2024). Achebe and Daoud as African Authors Writing Back to Conrad and Camus Respectively: A Pstcolonial Study. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol.15(4).60-68.

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Achebe and Daoud as African Authors Writing Back to Conrad and Camus Respectively: A Pstcolonial Study.

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Abstract

This article aims at shedding light on the colonial and postcolobnial use of language in relation to the description and literary portrayal of the native. It takes Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1900) and Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) as prominent European texts dealing with colonial Africa and Africans and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Kamal Daoud's *Meursault Investigation* (2013) as postcolonial responses respectively. The analysis is undertaken through the lens of Bill Ashcroft's *et al*'s notion of writing back. This, according to Ashcroft, comes as a political rejection of the imposition of language on the colonized by means of dialects, variants, unorthodox use of grammar, and refusal to use certain vocabulary. The writer's attitude therefore oscillates the use of colonially imposed language from a means of oppression to a defiant voice that broadcasts his community's frustrations and resistance. This study highlights the use of techniques and tools such as the first-person narrative and silence, which allowed the reinforcement of colonial discourse to paint Africa in a negative light. The colonized people are reduced to the margin only serving as background to develop the stories of Marlow and Meursault. In response to that, postcolonial writers reclaim the narrative and offer alternate perspectives which are descriptive to their experiences rather than be limited by the marginalization of their people. Such counter discourse is in fact very important in terms of repairing the historical narrative from which they were systematically excluded, as argued by Bill Ashcroft in his acclaimed book on postcolonial literary responses to the voyeurism of the empire on its colony's suffering. Okonkwo and Harun thus emerge as symbols of the reframed and reclaimed African identity separate from the confinements of the rigid European tale.

Keywords: The Empire. Colonial Discourse. Poscolonial Response. Narrative. Silencing.

Introduction

20th century European literature is marked by a cultural hegemony that painted Africa as a savage land, and adopted descriptions of its people with colonial themes and reductive undertones. Conrad' *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Camus's *The Stranger (1942)* are no exception. *Heart of Darkness* is a novella published by Conrad in 1899 and follows the story of Marlow and his journey to Congo that explores European imperialism and colonialism in the heart of Africa. *The Stranger* by Camus is a story introduced to the world in 1942 recounting the philosophical journey of Meursault who is a *pied noir* living in colonial Algeria. Much criticism has targeted colonial discourse in both works; most relevantly are from Edward Said and Homi Bhabha , who condemn exoticizing the African land in *The Heart of Darkness*. Other major thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Conor O'brien' produce criticism on Camus' stance on colonial violence in Algeria in his works, most notably *The Stranger*. Studies have then been made as postcolonial responses against the alienation of Africans in their own lands: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *The Meursault Investigation* (2013) by Kamal Daoud of both works. The first work is a story following Okonkwo who navigates life in precolonial Igbo

society as it loses autonomy to colonial forces. The second work is a counter narrative centering an 'Arab' who was the victim of Camus' most infamous character Meursault. The perspective is thus provided by his brother.

In that context, Atkinson (2018) writes Conrad and Achebe's stories into a journal article titled *Yet Again, Achebe and Heart of Darkness updating the horror* in which he revisits Achebe's critique and elaborates on Marlow's ambiguous perspective on imperialism. Other relevant studies include Lawtoo's (2016) who argues mimesis is a tool utilized by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to counter colonial discourse put forward in the novella. Radhakrishnan (2017) in turn presents a study of Camus' Nobel-winning novel *The Stranger* and its response under the name *The Meursault Investigation (2013): A Contrapuntal Reading.* The latter explains the reconstruction of identity and the use of a Bakhtinian dialectic to question colonialism. Brozgal (2016), in her work The Critical Pulse of the Contre-enquête: Kamel Daoud on the Maghrebi Novel in French, also discusses the counter narrative and the marginalization of the Magherbi people. The richness of the repertoire of studies examining colonial discourse books and their post-colonial counterparts leave us an interesting opportunity to conduct comparative research between *Things Fall Apart* as a response to *Heart of Darkness* and *Meursault Investigation* disseminating colonial discourse in *The Stranger.* Our main interest is dissecting the similarities of techniques employed by European authors of the 20th century whether consciously or not to dissipate colonial discourse on the pages of said works and promote its practices while putting analyzing together while inspecting the tools used to maintain the discourses.

In order to bring to light the colonial discourse portraying Africa through biased lenses, we highlight the techniques of first-person narrative, language, and silence utilized to further the aforementioned discourse. In the same fashion, we display post-colonial responses presented by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Kamal Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation (2013)* respectively to *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *The Stranger* (1942). These postcolonial works serve to reframe the narrow European perspectives enabled by the use of the first-person narrative to paint Africa and its societies as 'primitive', 'savage', and 'wild'. The two authors reject this problematic portrayal and present a critique and an alternate depiction of the African lands and people through fresh narratives and appropriated language. *The Empire writes back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin thus emerges as an appropriate method for discussing the abovementioned issues and presents us with key tools to utilize in the process of dismantling colonial discourse by postcolonial writers throughout the struggle against cultural hegemony; the techniques being language appropriation and abrogation, narratives, and reclaiming history and culture.

The Empire writes back stresses the importance of language. The authors explain that the colonized people can reconstruct the colonial discourse through from their perspective by transforming language to a tool to shape and represent their experiences, as stated, "if language constructs the world then the margins are the centre and may reconstruct it according to a different pattern of conventions, expectations, and experiences" (1989, p.90). In this way, language represents an opportunity to carve narratives representative of indigenous identity and history. In addition to this, appropriation of language is an act of reclaiming power to express post-colonial realities. It is relevant because of the history of imposing languages on the colonized whose languages were regarded as inferior, implying the superiority of the colonizers'. Hence, the postcolonial author appropriates the language by infusing indigenous culture into it and giving it a different shape more suitable to express the cultural depth of the community. This is displayed by the extensive use of idioms, proverbs, cultural terminology, and religious practices that create a different English or French than that of the oppressors' crafted tongue, one used to reclaim and reconstruct cultural identity rather than victimize the marginalized (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 38). The book also discusses the concept of abrogation that usually goes hand to hand with appropriation and is the deliberate use of language in an 'incorrect' and non-standard manner (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 73-74). This, according to Ashcroft, comes as a political rejection of the imposition of language on the colonized by means of dialects, variants, unorthodox use of grammar, and refusal to use certain vocabulary. The writer' attitude is therefore oscillates the use of colonially imposed language from a means of oppression to a defiant voice that broadcasts his community's frustrations and resistance.

Consequently, it is important to note that appropriation is not confined to languages, it also extends to include power. Postcolonial writers often choose to reclaim their power through narratives that enable them to represent a culture and a reality tailored to their experience, for "it is through an appropriation of the power invested in writing that this discourse can take hold of the marginality imposed on it and make hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural redefinition" (Ashcroft et al., 1989, P. 77). A considerable amount of postcolonial works are seen to be written to reclaim stories or rectify the unjust portrayal of marginalized people by rewriting existent colonial literature with new perspectives.

Historical context of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

To produce a productive analysis of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, it is important to provide sufficient context regarding Belgian colonial efforts in the Congo and British imperialism in Nigeria during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both lands suffered from the European imperialistic expansion, which had persistent social, economic, and political impacts on African

societies. Belgian colonialism in the Congo (1860–1905) inspired the setting of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The establishment of The Congo Free State in 1885, proclaimed the land as the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium. He acquired the colony under the guise of a civilizing mission that serves as means to suppress the slave trade and spread Christianity. However, the rich rubber and ivory resources found within the territory, which had become highly in demand due to the industrial revolution in Europe, betrayed this motive of colonization, as it presented a chance for the revitalization of the national economy.

Leopold's regime instituted the System of Forced Labor, which mandated that Congolese communities fulfil unachievable quotas for rubber and ivory under the imminent threat of violence. Between 1890 and 1900, there was a significant increase in rubber production, resulting in the creation of collection posts where local villagers endured severe mistreatment mandated and executed by The Force Publique, Leopard's private army. Similarly, British colonial efforts in Nigeria within the same period can be contextualized in the broad perspective of European imperialism, which was formalized through the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. By 1914, the British had fully established control over Nigeria through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates. The British, like the Belgians, described their effort as a civilizing mission, one destined to achieve modernization, Christianization, and commerce.

The religious missions greatly changed Nigerian society by spreading Christianity and breaking down traditional belief systems. Western education opened up new prospects and the same time created social barriers between those who accepted European values and those who tried to preserve the local traditions. British legal and administrative systems restructured traditional administration and increased opposition and conflict between the colonialists and locals. In both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, European colonial endeavours imposed significant economic, cultural, and social upheaval. Such historical narratives underpin the postcolonial evaluations articulated in *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*, wherein the phenomena of imperialism, cultural degradation, and forms of resistance constitute primary themes. Grasping this historical context enhances the examination of both literary works, providing a deeper understanding of the catastrophic repercussions of European colonialism on the African continent.

Historical context of The Stranger by Albert Camus and The Meursault Investigation by Kamal Daoud

The colonization of Algeria by France began in 1830, when France invaded and then annexed the territory, establishing it as a settler colony that would remain so until Algeria gained its independence in 1962. For the next century, the French government put in place a highly segregated social system, separating European colonizers, above all *les pieds noirs* (French citizens born in Algeria), from the indigenous Arab and Berber populations.

French colonialism in Algeria also set up a system of racial and economic segregation by privileging access to land, resources, and political power to the European colonizers, while the rights of the native Algerians were systematically denied. Certain laws, like the Code de l'Indigénat put tight legal and social constraints on the indigenous people, granting French citizenship to those who would renounce their Muslim status and adopt French culture, an option only few considered.

By the mid-20th century, *les pieds noirs* numbered over a million and dominated Algerian society. They controlled much of the fertile land and lived in relative luxury compared to the native population who were confined to low-paying jobs, inferior housing and restricted civil rights. In addition to their political and economic dominance, the French colonizers attempted to "civilize" Algeria through missionary work and establishing western systems of education. French missionaries tried to convert the majority Muslim populace to Christianity, although they were not that successful. The strict segregation, economic oppression, and suppression of the nationalistic identity created immense resentment among the citizens of Algeria, thus setting up the Algerian War of Independence from 1954 to 1962, considered one of the bloodiest wars of decolonization in the 20th century.

To facilitate the analysis of Achebe's book *Things Fall Apart* and *Meursault Investigation* as post-colonialist responses to the colonial discourse in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *The Stranger* by Camus respectively, it is important to identify the tools used to propagate colonial discourse and spread its influence. Focusing on the literary devices that support the discourses, we will also look into the ones used to mirror or counteract the pejorative terminology of the Europeans writing about Africa. The use of the first-person narrative, silence, and language in the colonialist books readily serve to frame colonial bias and prejudice in the renowned novels, while the implementation of African-centered narratives along language appropriation constitutes a break in the cultural hegemony in European literature.

***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe as a post-colonial response to colonial discourse in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad**

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe share a colonial experience forced on African territories by Belgium and England respectively. Conrad describes the horrors of the 'dark continent', its venomous influence on European morality and sanity, and the savages that inhabit it while making note of the importance of the region of Congo as a centre for trade and production of rubber and ivory; ivory being the material Kurtz was in charge of procuring from the wilderness. The economic importance

of the land and the exhausting demand for labour are the causes for the enslavement of the 'criminals' in the station Marlow faced. Despite the truth, he chooses to diverge his attention from the consistent state of suffering of black people throughout the station due to his dehumanization of the 'other'. This is an inexistent issue in Things Fall Apart as the portrayals are descriptive of the colonial violence and expansion into Umuofia, the hometown of the protagonist. Achebe describes the arrival of the missionaries and colonizers, who were on a 'civilizing' mission to spread the word of God and educate the 'savages', alongside their slow infiltration into the Igbo society and overtaking it. The latter achieved by the gradual replacement of political, social, and religious structures by new colonial administrations, courtrooms, jails, and churches. Many confrontations take place in those newly established places and mark the fall of the village's leadership starting with the conversion of multiple people and the arrest of one of the village leaders, which categorically undermines the authority of natives' leadership that culminates in the failure of revolutionary action by the main character.

Things Fall Apart*: a postcolonial response to the colonial discourse in *Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness by Conrad centers the European and colonial experience within an African setting where the use of the first-person narrative emphasizes the superiority of the white man. It is a technique employed to personify the white character, Marlow, his perspective and opinions, and most importantly reinforce his views on the African wilderness in the heads of the readers, hence becoming the voice of colonial discourse. Marlow defers the othering outlook he takes on Africans to a natural perception regardless of its negative connotations which the European characters do not consider at all. This furthers colonial ideology by the means of a subjective viewpoint that limits and distorts the scope of perceiving reality. This European individual perspective creates a narrow vantage point for the readers also because it enhances the effects of centring it by presenting it from the comfort of a privileged position. Achebe then proposes another perspective for the onlook of the readers, and humanises the African experience bringing it from characterized by African inclusivity in his book Things Fall Apart, to reclaim the colonized people's identities and give voiceless people a chance to speak, while illustrating their complex experiences and rich culture in opposition to the primitive monstrous depiction of the colonizers.

The use of the first-person narrator by Conrad is central to how colonial discourse functions in *Heart of Darkness*. The story is told by Marlow, a sailor who sails atop a riverboat across uncharted African territory in the Congo. This narrative style, along with descriptions used to bring the journey closer to visualization, places the reader in the position of experiencing colonialism with Marlow. His lenses reflect his ideology and morality and that produces a biased view on Congo, its people, and the correct moral frame within which to place the white men's demeanours. The first-person viewpoint centers subjective and fragmented experience while blurring or outright denying the existence of other valid points of view.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow constantly turns the mirror on himself, examining the reasoning behind his actions in a modernist tendency to follow one's stream of consciousness. In his journey, he is then shown to develop a critical stance towards imperialism. Having witnessed the violence brought upon the indigenous people by Europeans, Marlow feels disillusioned to the effects of European violence, but only to an extent that has him worried it might be affecting the moral superiority of his peers, rendering them as "savage" as the Africans. This instance shows the importance of the use of the first-person narrative because it paints an honest yet limited stance on morality that the readers are encouraged to adopt. It also expresses the distortion of truth and its separation into two camps, each whether representing ultimate good or infectious savagery. The moral ambiguity of the discourse thus promotes colonialism. Hagopian (1982, p.1) comments of the colonial blindness which emphasizes the ambiguity Marlow represents in his description, "The 'tranquil waterway' of the Thames...seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness from which Marlow's protective deflection of the truth should not be expected in any sense to defend us."

Despite the critical stance Conrad paints within the story through Marlow then, its motivations lack the moral equilibrium of rejecting violence or colonialism, and instead postulates another view of the phenomenon as arising from the unsanctimonious spread of African barbarianism to Europeans. This is solidified through Marlow's relationship and compassion towards to Kurtz, who can be read as a symbol of colonialism and white supremacy. Marlow harbours an undying admiration for him that is not completely extinguished even at his eventual descent into madness at the dusk of being consumed by savagery. Kurtz's madness Marlow believes is an odd spell cast on him and not the result of his own nature, he declares, "I tried to break the spell—the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness—that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions" (Conrad, 1899, p.109). This proves the readiness Marlow has for deferring any moral flaws he sees in his peers and superiors to dark, strange, and even magical sortilege that can easily be blamed on Africans. The violence and exploitation thus become problems of corruption of mind enabled by the otherness of the dark continent. Singh (1978, p. 3) solidifies the idea in his analysis of the scene, "According to Marlow the colonizers became psychologically depraved because, being cut off from the norms of civilization, they turned to the Lawless jungle." The cultural hegemony systematically perpetuated by colonialist discourse then maintains the justification for the injustice inflicted on African people through whatever means available.

This moral washing of the colonial discourse and the effacement of its effects by destroying the validity of a counterview is deflected in Achebe's work. The Nigerian novelist instead widens the scope for readers and presents a more realistic depiction of the African experience rooted in humane experiences that are shaped by the colonial presence. Shifting the portrayal of Africans from the backdrop to the centre through complex characters breaks the Europeans' relegation of Africans to props and instead showcases the culture and customs of the Igbo people. In his novel, Achebe reclaims the humanity of African voices through his black protagonist Okonkwo, and tell his story by incorporating an abundant portrayal of the land, social and political structures, customs, beliefs, and practices spread in Nigeria that were completely dismissed before. By so doing, Achebe shows the complexity and layers compromising different characters which detaches from the oversimplification of black people in *Heart of Darkness*; it also builds a functioning self-sustained society with its own governance body and justice system. As Wise (1999, p.4) puts it, "Achebe aims not only at rehabilitating Africa's pre-colonial past; he also wants his novel to fulfill a more primal human need by providing "an alternative Handle on reality"

Achebe also draws a parallel between Kurtz's death, who was considered a great man and stood to represent capitalism, and the main character Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* who, despite being considered a symbol of tradition and Igbo strength, breaks down and commits the taboo act of suicide. Comparably to Kurtz's symbolic death as European moral decay after contact with the 'untamed wilderness', Okonkwo's suicide is emblematic of the cultural death brought by the poisonous colonial expansion into Igbo territory.

Conrad used another technique to further colonial discourse in his novel, which is silence, a voicelessness that is necessary for the ignorance and erasure of identity, suppression of resistance, and dehumanization of the colonized people. Their silence becomes necessary in the book lest they express disenchantment or dislike of the colonial practices initially guised in a religious and civilizing robe. The Congolese were robbed from their subjective experiences in the novel so as not to disturb the European superior perspective that would potentially unveil the atrocities committed against Africans. This use of silence is accompanied with problematic portrayals of black characters by the means of oversimplification and trivialization of their demeanours, thus depriving them of autonomy, personality, and sound. In fact, the reader would perceive the black characters as existent only in relation to European characters.

The depiction of colonial expansion in Africa lacked any real condemnation on the part of Conrad on humanitarian basis, along with any forms of functioning societies. This is why Achebe paints a new and more authentic image of Igbo people in a process of 'disidentification' or the active practice of reclaiming the marginalized identity and culture under colonial rule while actively presenting a European perspective. Ashcroft explains Pecheux's theory of disidentification, and says it "is the product of political and discursive practices which work 'on and against' the dominant ideologies. Pêcheux's third modality, then, recognizes that dominant ideologies, whilst they are inescapable (...), are transformable" (Ashcrot & al., p. 168, 1989) In accordance with this, Achebe's work does not deny nor reject the reality of colonialism in the Igbo society, instead he strives to paint a more-rounded image of the reality of the hybridized society that cannot accept modernity nor go back to tradition. He describes the infiltration of European influence to the community as poisoning their social structure to implementing a new form of government ruled by white men. He also remarks on the missionaries who preach religion and provide education; all of this paints the slow takeover of the foreign culture over his ancestral home.

In addition to this, European languages are forced on colonized people and set as the superior language. The use of language propagates stereotypes and vocabulary that holds negative connotations and weaponizes it against the Africans. *Heart of Darkness* consistently reinforces the image of voiceless and silent in the description of black people. When Marlow encounters them in the station for the first time, he calls them 'black shapes' and describes their faces "like grotesque masks" (Conrad, 1899, p. 20). This language is maintained and encouraged by the silence and silencing of Africans throughout the story as they had seldom uttered an intelligible word. Marlow describes their speech as "a violent babble of uncouth sound" (Conrad, 1899, p. 29). The depiction of these characters trivializes them through the language as they are referred to as 'brutes', 'bundles of acute angles', 'These moribund shapes ', and 'dusty niggers '. (Conrad, 1899, p. 26,) . When faced with the suffering enslaved black people, he declares, "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, 1899, pp.25-26). This goes to showcase his apathy towards them and his relegation of their identities to their shadows or physical space they occupy in his periphery. There are however, two distinct instances where Africans are depicted otherwise. The first occurs when Marlow exoticizes Kurtz's mistress, describing her as "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent" (Conrad, 1889, p. 100) thus still fetichizing her beauty rather than recognizing her full humanity. Singh (1978, p. 3) comments on the transferability of the qualities attributed to the jungle into the woman who serves as symbol, "By describing the woman in terms of the wilderness, Marlow transfers its evil qualities to her, and she becomes the personification of the spirit of the jungle." The second instance involves the manager's boy, whom Marlow reluctantly acknowledges as somewhat more human due to his association with Europeans. Conrad's use of quotation marks when referring to him as

the manager's "boy", "an overfed young negro from the coast" highlights Marlow's reluctance to fully humanize him. The boy's behaviour, described as "provoking insolence," showcases Marlow's uneasiness when confronted with the scene, as even his limited recognition of the boy is overshadowed by his discomfort with the boy's proximity to European authority.

The portrayal of black people in the novel is consistent with the depiction of the land which is described as "primitive," "mysterious," "ominous," "dark," and "silent." The way the people and the land are portrayed is crucial to the use of silence, which is used to disparage the language and culture of colonized people and marginalize them in order to support and legitimize colonial discourse and reinforce European viewpoints. Thus language emerges as a powerful tool in propagating negative stereotypes about the colonized and installing labels in the minds of readers that align with colonial values and practices. In opposition to these diminutive descriptions, Achebe's portrayals are human and reflective of the people rather than the ideology of the onlooker. In response to the oppressive use of language, Achebe's book *Things Fall Apart* answers with an exemplary use of appropriation of English. He uses Igbo idioms, proverbs, and customs to imbue the language with African culture. Many examples could be found for instance, "his chi might now be making amends for the past disaster" (Achebe, 1958, p. 156). The author effectively makes use of cultural terminology (chi refers to the personal god every human is born with) to add depth and transmit religious beliefs. Proverbs are another important tool Achebe employs proverbs which create an African aesthetic and passes down Igbo wisdom, while actively creating a new form of expression with the language of the oppressor. for instance, he says "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk" (Achebe, 1958, p. 15). This proverb not only provides insight into cultural beliefs that presume the healing powers of the moon, but it also enhances the aesthetic of the writing. In addition, Achebe utilizes oral traditions and unique African storytelling techniques to write his novel. This is exemplified through Okonkwo's wives who tell their children stories and the tribe leaders who pass down legends and myths. for instance: the tale of the tortoise and the birds told by Ekwefi to her daughter Ezinma.

Hence, we can perceive the main tools Achebe used to contrast and mirror Conrad's diminutive view of Africans by presenting a story from the centre of a community so often blurred by misleading European lexicon and narratives. Through emulating style then, we can see the instances Achebe took charge of the African experience and retold the story of his own by adopting the very language colonial discourse used to break the backbone of the Igbo community in particular and the African experience in general. In true postcolonial fashion, the novel *Things Fall Apart* exhausts the repetitive machine of European stigmatizing of non-white values by feeding and growing on their colonial styles.

M*eursault Investigation*: a postcolonial response to the colonial discourse in *The Stanger*

The two books' relationship lies in their mirrored narratives, Daoud relies on Camus' very techniques to extrapolate instances of colonial bias in his work and turn them on its head to present a raw and realistic depiction of the other's point of view, being Omar's, the brother of the Arab whom Meursault shot in *The Stranger*. The way in which the Arab remains unnamed in Camus' work is then used and abrogated by giving him a name and story, Musa. In this section, we are going to be looking at Camus's stance and deferring to Daoud's to understand the postcolonial themes he evoked in an explicit manner to denounce the othering of natives' stories in their own lands.

Camus uses the first-person narrative in order to navigate the protagonist's existential crisis and shed light into his deepest thoughts and reasoning which centre on the European experience and entail a biased view that enables colonial ideology and perpetuates an indifference towards the setting that is French Algeria. The perspective further drives the otherness of the colonized as the main character himself is a *pied noir*, which makes a distinct separation between the two sides. With the power dynamic unequal, the weak are reduced to the margin and do not have neither depth and complexity of character, nor identity and culture worth portraying in a quest for philosophical enlightenment.

The Stranger's author draws a distinctive line between the *les pieds noirs* and the 'other' while the environment fostered by the story is exclusionary to 'otherness'. It limits the interactions with or humanization of natives, whose role is always peripheral, even when victimized. The case of the man referred to as an Arab is itself is a reduction of the multicultural pot that Algeria is. In fact, Camus made the Algerian landscape an exotic extravaganza for existentialism, meanwhile relegating the role of the Algerians to stepladders in the advancement of his plot. Additionally, all the main events that took place in the story have to do with *les pieds noirs* who comprise all the main characters as such as Marie and Raymond. What's more to it, if the courtroom, jury, and ruling system are all French, the crime Meursault is sentenced for also has to do with the death of a French *pied noir* in Algeria: his mother. The murder of the Arab that got him arrested did not sound alarming bells to the jury as did his nonchalance at the funeral of his mother. This is an instant that shows that the lives of Algerians did not hold much weight to the French, hence the convicted tragedy is apathy against his own, not hostility against the othered.

In response to the narrow-sided perspective employed by Camus in his book, Daoud writes back in his novel the *Meursault Investigation* to give the flipside of the story. He criticizes the indifference of the author towards the erasure of both Algerian culture and identity and sets up the brother of the Arab with a chance to

give his perspective on the story that to Camus only served as a steppingstone for Meursault to navigate his existential crisis. The protagonist rebuilds the scenery from scratch and reclaims his identity, not as an other, but rather as Musa's brother, the brother of the victim who was never given a name apart from the Arab.

Harun functions as an outlet for Daoud not only to reclaim the Algerian culture and identity, but he also serves as an agent for providing the historical context for that period of time which Meursault was indifferent towards. Harun is entangled in the complexity of that timeframe which was plagued by suffering brought by colonialism and changes occurring due to the Algerian revolution war and independence. Harun's perspective serves as form of intertextuality that allows Daoud to not only provide another side to the story but also critique Camus's work and discuss its implications. He does so by drawing a parallel between Harun and Meursault who both commit murder in the story. While Meursault's crime is motivated by an existential whim that is brought by the entertainment of the absurd, Harun's crime is burdened by the aftermath of the colonial violence and struggle with the emotional weight originating from his brother's death and his mother's treatment. This juxtaposition highlights the privilege of the colonizer, who affords the murder of an expendable Arab life to entertain his philosophical experiment, and the colonial power dynamics dedicated by the historical context.

The language in *The Stranger*is also reflective of broader colonial influence on the story and French literature. Aside from the obvious themes of the absurd that the novel deals with, its language when describing the natives betrays an even lower level of interest in the working of their lives. It then acts as a device that transmits the indifference, emotional detachment and absence of any conversations between the colonizer and the colonized. The indifference is descriptive of the power dynamic and detachment from the reality of living in a colony rather than a home country. Thus, the constant avoidance of the natives and erasure of identity is a result of alienation and lack of belonging alongside colonial ideology maintained and enforced through segregation of les *pieds noirs* and the colonized populace.

To rectify, reclaim and honor the identity of the victim, Daoud insists through Harun to make his name known: Musa. Repeated a dozen times by the insistence of the brother, the victim is finally given a name and identity. Harun recounts his childhood and gives Musa a story beyond being a mere victim. He paints him as a complex character with a considerate and responsible side while still flawed by anger and burdened by the absence of his father. The 'other' is given a name, a voice and a story; he is no longer a silent shadow who is only an object to further the philosophical journey of Meursault. Daoud humanizes Musa and extracts him from the background to shine light on his experience as a person and not only as a victim of colonial violence.

Daoud writes in French as a calculated move which he uses in order to accentuate his post-colonial discourse. Once used to oppress the colonized Algerian people while disfavouring Arabic and Tamazight as inferior languages, the author writes in French to take back the power and address the crimes committed against his people by French colonialism. The main character in the *Meursault Investigation*, Harun, learns French in order to investigate his brother's murder. In an act of defiance, Harun appropriates the language to use it as a tool of reclaiming his agency; he states, "The murderer's words and expressions are my unclaimed goods" (p.1) . He explains that in the same way the revolution is using the dismantled bricks of the once colonial presence in Algeria to rebuild the country, he uses their language to tell his story and the story of his brother Musa who was victimized by their violence. The use of French is a powerful statement to the French, not only can he master the language, but he is also able to shape it in a way that recounts his own story that was once undermined by the very speakers of French. In a similar manner, he defies the cultural hegemony in French literature for the goal of correcting the portrayal of the Algerian people as background characters, silent, faceless and marginalized for a long time.

Conclusion

This study examined the tools employed by postcolonial discourse in both *Things Fall Apart (1958)* by Chinua Achebe and *The Meursault Investigation* (2013) by Kamal Daoud in order to respond to *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad and *The Strange r* (1942) by Albert Camus respectively. We noted the use of techniques and tools such as the first-person narrative and silence, which allowed the reinforcement of colonial discourse to paint Africa in a negative light. The colonized people are reduced to the margin only serving as background to develop the stories of Marlow and Meursault. In response to that, postcolonial writers reclaim the narrative and offer alternate perspectives which are descriptive to their experiences rather than be limited by the marginalization of their people. They weaponize language by appropriating and abrogating it to weave the realities of their society, culture and identity. These tools proved to be essential to repairing the historical narrative from which they were systematically excluded, as argued by Bill Ashcroft in his acclaimed book on postcolonial literary responses to the voyeurism of the empire on its colony's suffering. Okonkwo and Harun thus emerge as symbols of the reframed and reclaimed African identity separate from the confinements of the rigid European tale.

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