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The undoing of Eurocentric view of African personality in Achebe's *Things fall apart*

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Abstract

This dissertation has examined the distorted representation of African personality in Western literature, focusing on how Achebe's *Things fall apart* (1958), offered a deliberate counter-narrative that deconstructs colonial racial typology. It has employed a narratological and transtextual approach derived from Gérard Genette's theory, in combination with postcolonial critique particularly the concepts of *Appropriation and abrogation* as discussed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Post-colonial studies reader* (2000). In deploying this eclectic approach, this research has reached the following results: A) Achebe has expanded the figure of Okonkwo a tireless farmer, accomplished warrior, social reformer and cultural guardian into a multidimensional character who embodies the dignity, strength and internal contradictions of pre-colonial African identity. B) It debunks the myth of the African as a lazy personality by confronting Locke's theory of labour and property, which historically positioned Africans as mere labourers. Achebe deconstructed the colonial stereotype of the African as idle by presenting Okonkwo as a man of relentless toil. C) Africa is not devoid of aesthetic life and the African is depicted as a man capable of aesthetic experiences, as seen in Unoka's love for music and the deep appreciation of Igbo oral traditions countering Hegel's claim that Africa lacks artistic and spiritual development. D) Africa is not a tropical abandoned land as Hegel suggested, but a land of heritage, labor and human presence, as the Igbo people cultivate their land, build communities and preserve customs that reflect presence, order and continuity. E) Africa is not a land devoid of systematic reason, as defined by Weber but rather it possess organized institutions, ethical systems and a strong communal structure. F) African societies, such as the Igbo, possess structured systems of justice, governance and social order principles echoed in Aristotle's politics, which Achebe reclaims through his portrayal of cultural resilience amid colonial disruption. Through this reclamation, Achebe has restored African voices and reclaimed a cultural heritage long silenced by colonial narratives. *Things fall apart* reaffirmed Africa as land of strength, beauty and enduring human presence.

Keywords: Achebe, African personality, colonial discourse, Eurocentricism, narratology, Postcolonial theory, stereotypes

Contents

Introduction

"Eurocentric views of African personality have often dismissed the richness of African identity, framing it as primitive, homogeneous, and lacking complexity." So wrote Appiah (1992), In *My father's house: Africa the philosophy of culture* (p.89). This citation illustrates perfectly the major issue in Achebe's *Things fall apart* (1958), a novel that engaged with the ways in which Africa had been historically misrepresented in colonial discourse. This perspective dominated imperial narratives for centuries, reducing African societies to simplistic caricatures that failed to capture their intricate cultural, social, and political systems. Such portrayals not only misrepresented African traditions but also perpetuated stereotypes that marginalized the continent's diverse histories and worldviews.

Achebe's *Things fall apart* emerged as a profound counter-narrative to these reductive depictions. Through the vivid portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society, the novel illuminated the sophistication of African customs, beliefs, and governance structures. Achebe explored the complexities of Igbo life, from its communal values to its judicial systems, challenging the colonial narrative that African societies were devoid of depth and dynamism. The novel's depiction of Okonkwo's struggles and the community's resilience underscored the richness of African identity.

Achebe's work not only contested Eurocentric misrepresentations but also reclaimed the narrative of African history. By countering indigenous perspectives, *Things fall apart* exposed the flaws in colonial discourse and highlighted the devastating impact of cultural erasure. The novel's exploration of themes such as tradition, change and identity provided a nuanced understanding of African societies, dismantling the myth of their supposed simplicity. Achebe's story telling became a powerful act of resistance against the dehumanizing portrayals of Africa.

Issue in context

Larger cultural and historical context

Achebe's *Things fall apart* appeared in 1958, at the eve of the Nigerian independence, and refers to a period that was thoroughly documented by Crowder's (1962) in *The story of Nigeria*. During this era, British colonial forces systematically dismantled indigenous political, economic, and cultural systems under the guise of a civilizing mission, replacing them with European models of governance, religion, and trade. Crowder noted that the Igbo society like many others in Nigeria was characterized by complex social structures, vibrant traditions, and decentralized governance, all of which were disrupted by the arrival of missionaries and colonial administrators.

Achebe's novel captured this disruption through the lens of Umoufia, where the introduction of Christianity and colonial rules creates profound internal conflict, as seen in the character of Nwoye who abandoned his father's traditions for the new faith. *Things fall apart* was set in the Igbo land directly challenging the colonial narrative that had long misrepresented African identity and culture, offering instead a nuanced portrayal of a society in transition.

This misrepresentation of Africa started as early as the Greek times when Herodotus, depicted monstrosity as a major characteristic of the Africa and its people. In our modern times, authors such as Hobbes (1996), Locke (1988), Hegel (1956), Conrad (1988), Carry (1939), and others have all contributed to the creation of a monstrous image of Africa. In *Heart of darkness* (1988), Conrad contributed significantly to the creation of a monstrous image of Africa through his portrayal of the continent as a dark and savage land. The novel presented Africa as a wilderness filled with mystery and danger, reinforcing the stereotype of Africa as a place of barbarism, and irrationality. Conrad's descriptions of Africa and its people often reduced them to symbols of primitivism and chaos, reinforcing colonial stereotypes of African inferiority. For instance, he described the African landscape as a "thing monstrous and free" (p.36). In addition,

the people as “black” and “shadows of disease and starvation” (p. 17). These depictions stripped Africans of their humanity, presenting them as a part of the “darkness” rather than as individuals with their own cultures and histories. Conrad’s characters, particularly Kurtz, embody the destructive effects of European colonialism, but they also reflect the racist and Eurocentric ideologies of the time. The African people in the novel are depicted as passive, voiceless subjects, reinforcing the view that they lacked agency and were inferior to Europeans. Conrad’s portrayal of Africa aligned with the colonial perspective, which depicted the continent as devoid of culture and history, in stark contrast to the civilized European world. This portrayal helped perpetuate the idea that Africa was a primitive and uncivilized land, reinforcing the monstrous image of the continent that justified colonial control and exploitation.

In the essay *An image of Africa: racism in Conrad’s Heart of darkness* (1977), Achebe criticized Conrad’s depiction of Africa for its dehumanizing portrayal of Africans and its role in validating imperial ideologies. He contended that *Heart of darkness* did not simply depict Africa through a European perspective but actively constructed an “image of Africa” as a place of chaos, darkness, and primitivism, serving as a contrast to European civilization. Achebe asserted that Conrad stripped African characters of voice, individuality, and agency, reducing them to mere shadows that existed only to highlight the experiences of European protagonists. He argued that this depiction functioned as an ideological state apparatus (ISA) by legitimizing colonial dominance and justifying the oppression of African peoples. Achebe further maintained that Conrad’s narrator, Marlow, and even Conrad himself, failed to recognize Africans as fully human, instead presenting them as part of the natural landscape, silent, menacing, and incomprehensible. He emphasized that Conrad’s repeated association of Africa with savagery and darkness was not just a literary device but an expression of deep seated racial prejudice. Achebe also criticized scholars who excused Conrad’s racism under the pretense of historical context, asserting that the novel sustained harmful stereotypes that had real consequences for Africa’s global perception. By

exposing these biases, Achebe called for a reassessment of the western literary canon and demanded that African identity be reclaimed from the distortions imposed by colonial narratives.

In addition, Achebe sharply criticized Conrad's portrayal of Africa arguing that the novel constructed a dehumanizing and racist image of the continent and its people. Achebe (1977, p. 788) asserted that Conrad's Africa was "a place of negations, a foil to Europe". The analysis emphasizing how the novel reduced Africa to a symbol of savagery and otherness. Achebe further noted that Conrad "refused to bestow human expression on Africans, reducing them to limbs, rolling eyes, and grotesque faces" (1977, p.8). This dehumanization, according to Achebe, reflected the racist ideologies of Conrad's time and contributed to the monstrous image of Africa in western literature. He also challenged the notion that *Heart of darkness* was an anti-colonial text, arguing that while Conrad analyzed the exploitation and brutality of colonialism, he failed to confront the racism that underpinned it. Achebe wrote, "Conrad saw and condemned the evil of imperial exploitation but was strangely unaware of the racism on which it sharpened its iron tooth" (p.11). This critique highlighted the novel's complicity in upholding colonial ideologies, as it portrayed Africans as part of the "darkness" rather than as fully realized human beings.

Furthermore, Achebe (1958), argued that Conrad's portrayal of Africa as a place of "savagery" reflected the broader western tradition of depicting Africa as the "Other", a place devoid of civilization and humanity. He noted that this portrayal was not merely a reflection of Conrad's personal views but was deeply embedded in the cultural and ideological frameworks of his time. As Achebe (1958) stated, "Conrad's Africa was not just a setting; it was a metaphor for the unknown, the primitive, and the monstrous" (p.13). This metaphorical use of Africa reduced the continent and its people to a backdrop for European moral and psychological struggles, further dehumanizing them.

In *Mister Johnson* (1939), Cary a modern English author, contributed to the creation of a monstrous image of Africa through his portrayal of the continent and its people. While Cary's

novel is often seen as more sympathetic to African characters than earlier colonial literature, it still maintains stereotypes and reinforces a distorted image of Africa as a place of primitivism and moral decay. He argued that Africans were inherently incapable of self-governance, lacking the intellectual and moral discipline necessary to function within a civilized society. He constructed a monstrous image of Africans by depicting them as impulsive, irrational, and childlike, reinforcing the colonial stereotype that they were in need of European intervention. Through the character of Johnson, Cary presented an African who is overly enthusiastic about European culture but fundamentally flawed, incapable of responsibility, and ultimately doomed by his own incompetence.

This portrayal aligned with the broader colonial ideology that sought to justify imperial rule by portraying Africans as savages shackled by their own backwardness. Cary's narrative suggested that African societies were governed by superstition and disorder, unable to establish stability without the guiding hand of European colonizers. By reducing African characters to caricatures of ignorance and servitude, Mister Johnson contributed to the dehumanization of Africans in western literature, reinforcing the notion that they were inherently inferior and unfit for independence. Cary's work exemplified how colonial literature participated in the construction of racial hierarchies, legitimizing the oppression and exploitation of African people under the guise of a civilizing mission. Cary's protagonist, Mister Johnson, is an African clerk who embodied the contradictions of colonial representation. On the other hand, Johnson is portrayed as energetic, imaginative, and charismatic; however, he is also depicted as irresponsible, naive, and ultimately self-destructive. Cary (1939) described Johnson as "a child of nature, full of laughter and mischief, but without the capacity to understand the consequences of his actions" (p.45). This infantilization of Johnson reinforced the colonial stereotype of Africans as childlike and incapable of rational thought or moral responsibility.

Furthermore, Cary's portrayal of African society as chaotic and corrupt contributed to the monstrous image of Africa. The novel depicted African communities as rife with violence, superstition and moral decay. For instance, Cary (1939) described a village as "a place of darkness and confusion, where the people lived in fear of spirits and each other" (p.78). Such descriptions reduce African societies to a state of savagery, ignoring their complexity and richness. This portrayal aligns with the colonial narrative that Africa was a land in need of European civilization.

Critics have argued that Cary's novel, despite its sympathetic portrayal of Johnson, ultimately reinforced colonial ideologies. As Said (1993) noted, "Even when colonial literature attempts to humanize its subjects, it often does so within a framework that legitimizes the idea of European superiority and African inferiority" (p.22). In *Mister Johnson*, Cary's Africa is a place where European administrators, such as Rudbeck, are portrayed as rational and benevolent, while Africans are depicted as irrational and in need of guidance. This dichotomy reinforced the monstrous image of Africa as a land of darkness and chaos, in contrast to the "enlightened" European world.

For modern English writers, they preceded Cary and Conrad in their production of a negative view of Africa. Long before colonial narratives were fully crystallized, these writers were already shaping Africa through distorted lenses. Their texts often leaned on stereotypes, reducing the continent to a backdrop of darkness, silence, or primitive chaos. This early literary pattern laid the foundation for later colonial representations. In the sense, Cary and Conrad merely followed a well-worn path rather than forging a new one.

For example, Hobbes (1996), in *Leviathan*, articulated the concept of the state of nature as a condition of a continuous war, famously describing it as a "war of all against all", where life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (p.89). This Hobbesian vision of pre-civilized existence, characterized by constant conflict and violence, became a foundational metaphor for European writers who depicted Africa as land of savagery and disorder. The idea of war as an inherent

condition for the state of nature profoundly influenced later authors like Conrad and Cary, who perpetuated a monstrous image of Africa in their works.

Hobbes's concept of war in the state of nature was not limited to physical conflict but also encompassed a general condition of insecurity, fear, and chaos. He argued that in the absence of a central authority, human life was marked by a relentless struggle for survival, where "every man is enemy to every man" (Hobbes, 1996, p.90). This idea of war as a universal condition of pre-civilized societies provided a philosophical justification for colonialism, as it framed non-European societies, including Africa, as existing in a state of perpetual conflict and disorder. European writers, drawing on this Hobbesian framework, portrayed Africa as a land in need of civilization to impose their order and end the "war" of its natural state.

Conrad's *Heart of darkness* (1988) drew heavily on this Hobbesian imagery to portray Africa as a place of unending conflict and chaos. The novel's depiction of the Congo as a place where "the earth seemed unearthly" (p. 35), reflects the Hobbesian notion of a state of nature defined by war and violence. Conrad's Africa is a land where European rationality and order are absent, and the "war of all against all" manifested in the brutal exploitation and dehumanization of its people. Notably, Conrad described the colonial enterprise as a "rapacious and pitiless folly" (p. 42), while also highlighting the violent and chaotic nature of European intervention in Africa. This portrayal reflects the colonial narrative that depicts Africa as a place of inherent conflict, requiring European civilization to impose order and end the continent's presumed natural state of war.

Similarly, Cary, in *Mister Johnson* (1939), echoed these Enlightenment ideas in his depiction of African society as a place of ongoing strife and disorder. Cary's portrayal of African villages marked by violence and superstition, aligns with Hobbes's concept of primitive state characterized by persistent conflict. This notion is reinforced by Cary's depictions of African religious life as driven by superstition further reinforce these Eurocentric assumptions. This notion is particularly evident in his description of the fictional African village of Fada, where strangers

are met with deep suspicion and believed to bring misfortunes such as war, disease, or bad magic. Such portrayals highlight a collective fear rooted in past experiences, painting a picture of a society governed more by rational structures. Through this lens, Cary's narrative supports the colonial ideology that Africa required European intervention to impose order and reason upon an inherently chaotic and superstitious world. While Cary's protagonist, Mister Johnson, is portrayed with sympathy, he is ultimately depicted as a product of this chaotic environment, incapable of escaping the violence and disorder that define his world. This portrayal aligns with Hobbes's assertion that without the structures of civilization, human life is inherently marked by conflict and war.

The influence of Hobbes's ideas on later writers is particularly evident in their depiction of African societies as lacking the social and political structures necessary to overcome the "war of all against all". For example, Conrad's portrayal of the Congo as a place of "monstrous and free wilderness" (1988, p. 36) reflects the Hobbesian view of the state of nature as a realm of unchecked violence and chaos. Similarly, Cary's troubling portrayal of African communities as engulfed by conflict and irrational beliefs reinforced the notion that Africa existed in a pre-civilized condition, requiring European intervention to establish order and bring an end to the enduring state of warfare that characterized its existence.

Locke (1988), in the *Second treatise of government*, articulated a vision of the state of nature and civil society that profoundly influenced European perceptions of non- European societies, including Africa. Unlike Hobbes, Locke described the state of nature as a condition of relative freedom and equality, where individuals possessed natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Locke argued that governments in civil society were necessary to protect these rights, particularly property, which he considered a cornerstone of civilization. He famously stated that "labour", the act of working the land, gave individuals a right to ownership, asserting that "The labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever [a man]

removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property" (p. 19). This emphasis on property and labour as markers of civilization provided a philosophical justification for colonialism, as it framed non- European societies, including Africa, as lacking in productivity and ownership, and therefore, in need of European intervention.

This emphasis on labour as a moral and civilizing force was later echoed in the cultural and economic ideology known as *The protestant work ethic* (2000), as theorized by Weber. His framework of work, individualism and rationalism encapsulated this ethic, portraying industriousness not only as a virtue but as a marker of divine favour and civilizational superiority. Within this Eurocentric logic, societies that did not adhere to such values were deemed idle, irrational and thus uncivilized. Africa, represented as a space of leisure and stagnation, was positioned outside the moral geography of progress. This ideological construct reinforced the colonial mission: to bring "productive" labour and moral discipline to lands seen as wasteful or empty, further justifying European intervention and expansion.

Locke's ideas about property and labour contributed to the creation of a monstrous image of Africa by portraying it as a land of untapped resources and unproductive people. In Locke's view, land that was not cultivated or "improved" through labor was considered wasted, and those who did not work the land had no legitimate claim to it. This logic was used to justify the dispossession of African lands by European colonizers, who argued that Africans were not making productive use of their resources. Locke's assertion that " God gave the world to men in common for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it" (1988, p.21) was interpreted to mean that Europeans had a right to exploit African lands, as they were seen as more capable of extracting its "benefits". This portrayal of Africa as a land of wasted potential reinforced the colonial narrative that Africans were incapable of self-governance and productivity, contributing to a monstrous image of the continent as a place of idleness and

disorder. The application of this logic was rooted in Weber's *The protestant work ethic* (2000), which emphasized work, individualism, progress, efficiency and rationalism. Under this framework, European civilization was equated with industriousness and rational economic activity, while Africa was seen as inefficient and underdeveloped. By aligning Africa with idleness and stagnation, Europeans positioned themselves as not only morally superior but as the rightful stewards of African land, entitled to its exploitation. This ideological justification, thus, became central to both Locke's theory and the imperial expansionism of European powers.

Locke's philosophy, particularly his emphasis on property and labour as the basis for legitimate ownership, profoundly influenced later literary portrayals of Africa by authors like Conrad and Cary, who reinforced this negative view of Africa in their works. In *Heart of darkness* (1988), Conrad casts the Congo as a vast, untamed wilderness, a raw landscape seemingly awaiting transformation through European intervention. The depiction of Africans as passive and unproductive figures echoes Locke's claim that land belongs only to those who cultivate it. Thereby denying indigenous peoples legitimate claims. Conrad's imagery of the African environment as both potential that Europeans are destined to realize through labour and control.

Cary, In *Mister Johnson* (1939) similarly reflects Locke's ideas, depicting African villages not simply as places of idleness but as sites of fear, disorder and lacking the productivity that Locke equated with civilization. His portrayal reinforced the notion that without cultivation and structured governance, these societies were deemed illegitimate in their claim to land and authority. Together these works echo Locke's logic to justify colonial domination, framing Africa as a continent awaiting the imposition of European order and labor to achieve "civilization". While Cary's protagonist Mister Johnson is characterized by his inability to engage in substantive labour or exercise legitimate ownership, this portrayal serves to reinforce the notion of Africans existing in a state of disorder.

Ultimately, Locke's theories, particularly his views on the state of nature, property, and the social contract, were co-opted by colonial powers to reinforce the idea of Africans as savage and to justify the subjugation and exploitation of African peoples and lands. These ideas cemented a monstrous view of Africa, presenting it as a land devoid of civilization and in need of western control.

Hegel in *Philosophy of history* (1956), explicitly excluded Africa from history, stating that it had "no movement or development to exhibit" and was a land of barbarism. This erasure of African civilizations directly contributed to the monstrous image of the African personality by portraying Africans as people without culture, intellect, or historical progress. By denying Africa a place in the "march of history", Hegel reinforced the notion that Africans were inherently inferior and incapable of contributing to civilization. This view justified colonial rule by portraying Africans as eternal children who needed European governance to escape their supposed stagnation. This monstrous portrayal of Africa as a land of childhood, devoid of history and civilization, aligned with his claims in *Lectures on aesthetics* (2000), where he maintained that true artistic and intellectual expression belonged to the European tradition, while African art remained in a primitive and underdeveloped state(*Lectures on Aesthetics*, Chapter III/ Symbolism of the Sublime). Hegel insisted that African artistic forms lacked the spiritual depth and rational complexity that defined European aesthetics, thereby relegating African culture to the realm of the pre-civilized. By characterizing African artistic and intellectual achievements as rudimentary, he reinforced the idea that the African man was unable of producing high culture or philosophical thought. His depiction of Africa as stagnant and undeveloped helped construct a narrative that justified colonial intervention as a means of bringing progress and enlightenment to the continent. By excluding Africa from his historical and aesthetic frameworks, Hegel presented African societies as being incapacitated in achieving the same cultural and intellectual milestones as Europeans. This self-characterization by Hegel was part of a larger intellectual tradition that

rationalized the colonization of Africa by casting its people as incapable of self-governance and in need of western rule.

Hegel's portrayal of Africa as a stagnant and underdeveloped contributed to a narrative that legitimized colonial intervention as a means of delivering advancement and cultural elevation to the continent. By excluding Africa from his historical and aesthetic frameworks, he depicted African societies as primitive and unable to attain the same cultural and intellectual milestones as their European counterparts. This representation was part of a broader intellectual tradition that rationalized colonization by portraying Africans as unfit for self- governance and in need of European direction.

Achebe's *Things fall apart* occupied a pivotal place in the literary canon as one of the first African novels to challenge the Eurocentric narratives that had dominated global literature for centuries. Prior to Achebe's work, African voices were largely absent from the literary world, and the continent was often depicted through the lens of colonial discourse.

It is in against background of stereotypical representations of Africa that Achebe wrote his novel *Things fall apart* to deconstruct the African personality established by major European cultural figures. These figures helped to create a distorted image of Africa, portraying it as primitive and uncivilized. Achebe's novel responds to this by presenting a rich and detailed portrayal of African life. Through the story of Okonkwo and his community, Achebe challenges these stereotypes. *Things fall apart*, serves as a reminder of the complexity and depth of African cultures. It reclaims the dignity and identity that colonialism sought to erase.

Literary context

Things fall apart has been widely studied within postcolonial literature, particularly or its critique of colonial narratives. The novel has been analyzed by a vast number of critics, with scholars from diverse fields offering a wide range of interpretations exploring themes such as identity, peace and war, land ownership, and justice, which are central to the novel's narrative.

These critical perspectives explore various aspects of the novel, including its portrayal of the Igbo culture, its critique of colonialism, its narrative techniques and its depiction of individual and collective identity.

In the context of the stereotypical representations of Africa perpetuated by European cultural figures, Achebe's novel emerged as a powerful act of cultural reclamation. As Jones (2000) argued *in Exile and African literature,* African writers have long sought to counter the dehumanizing narratives imposed by colonialism, and Achebe's novel is a seminal example of this effort. By presenting a rich and complex portrayal of Igbo society, complete with its own traditions, governance, systems, and moral codes, Achebe dismantled the monolithic and savage image of Africa depicted in works like Conrad's *Heart of darkness.* Jones has emphasized the role of African literature in restoring cultural pride and identity, consonant with Achebe's portrayal of Okonkwo and the Igbo community as fully realized human beings, rather than the savage of European imagination. McDowell (1997), in her interview with Achebe included in Lindfors collection, explored the novel's role as a response to misrepresentations of Africa in western literature. She emphasized that Achebe's engagement with colonial portrayals was not merely reactionary but an act of narrative expansion that sought to place African voices at the center of their own histories. Achebe analyzed Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson (1929), a novel set in Nigeria, as one of the main distortions of African identities. Achebe originally acknowledged *Mister Johnson* as a reason for writing *Things fall apart,* but later retracted that statement, remarking, " I wish I had never said that" (pp. 118-119). This comment suggested that while Cary's depiction of Africa was troubling, Achebe did not want his novel to be framed solely as a reaction to colonial literature but rather as an independent and authentic representation of African identity.

In *Crisis of Filiation: exile and return in John's Munonye's*, Akwanya (2000).it is argued that in *Things fall apart,* Achebe deliberately omit detailed descriptions of Okonkwo's extended family, presenting him as an isolated figure whose struggles highlight broader themes of cultural

and political collapse. He noted that "In *Things fall apart* we know nothing of Okonkwo's extended family, and so we know a lot of Ezweulu's in *Arrow of God*, their relation seems to play no role at all in social organization" (p.54). Unlike *Arrow of God*, where male characters are depicted as part of a structured ruling class, *Things fall apart* presented individuals as members of fragmented communities without clear political structures. This absence reflected the disruption caused by colonial forces, reinforcing Achebe's critique of colonialism's erasure of indigenous systems.

In an interview with Achebe (As cited in Lindfors, 1997), McDowell described Achebe as a writer whose work is both hesitant and determined, reflecting the tensions of African identity at the time of independence. McDowell noted that Achebe's approach to literature is deeply rooted in social and political awareness, as he examined historical events with a lucid and objective eye, refusing to romanticize Africa's past while also rejecting colonial distortions. This perspective is evident in *Things fall apart*, where Achebe reconstructed Igbo traditions while acknowledging internal conflicts within pre-colonial African societies.

In conversations with Achebe, Lindfors (1997) created 21 key interviews with Achebe that span over three decades. Through these discussions, Achebe consistently addressed the necessity of contesting colonial clichés and restoring African dignity through literature. Lindfors noted that over the years, Achebe's focus shifted from literary concerns to pressing political and social issues, reflecting the evolving needs of Nigeria and the African continent (pp. 118-119). Achebe himself asserted, "Art is always at the service of the people" indicating that while *Things fall apart* is an artistic achievement, it is fundamentally a political and cultural intervention (p. 119).

Ohaeto biography of Achebe (1997) further reinforced these themes by documenting the public speeches, interviews, and lectures that Achebe gave over his lifetime. Ohaeto recorded how Achebe consistently challenged the colonial image of Africa, stating that even decades after independence, "it remains necessary to contest the clichés of colonialism as these still have a

surprising currency" (p.119). Ohaeto's work underscored Achebe's belief that literature is an ongoing struggle against misrepresentation, a struggle that *Things fall apart* actively engaged in.

In *Land, war and literature in Zimbabwe : A sampling*, Jones (2000), contended that the clash of civilizations between Europe and Africa and the inevitable conflict that arises from it have been a recurrent theme in African literature since Achebe's *Things fall apart*, but rarely have they been portrayed with such subtlety and artistry as in Achebe's novel. He emphasized that the lack of common ground between the colonial invaders and the indigenous people is vividly represented through the contrast between the spoken word, which is flexible and human, and the printed word, which is rigid and inhuman. As they stated "The paper is the stranger's own peculiar custom, a trick he employs against time. Among ourselves, speech is not like rock. Words are as malleable as the minds of the people who create them". (p. 51). This contrast underscores how colonial power relied on written agreements and treaties to assert dominance, whereas African societies valued oral traditions, which allowed for negotiation, adaptation, and communal consensus.

Moreover, he noted that the colonizers initially arrived in Africa in search of wealth but ultimately sought to deprive the indigenous people of their land, self-respect, and independence. The author argued that Achebe illustrated this reality through his narrative, showing how colonialism systematically dismantled Igbo traditions and governance. He also highlighted Achebe's use of multiple-role playing as a technique to dramatize this conflict, stating that Achebe presented both the white man, as the messenger of his people, and the Igbo chief, who embodies indigenous values, within the same narrative space. This technique, according to him, effectively captured the ambivalence of colonial encounters, where individuals were forced to navigate between two opposing cultural worlds. As he explained, "By refusing to sit with the people, the white's man's contempt for them emerges, but his absence puts a blanket over his head". (Jones, 2000, p.51).

Using these elements, the authors contended that *Things fall apart* not only depicted the cultural dissonance between Africa and Europe but also highlighted the psychological and social fragmentation that resulted from colonial rule. These scholars suggested that Achebe's portrayal of this conflict was particularly powerful because it extended beyond a simple oppresor-victime dynamic; instead, it revealed the complexities of identity, resistance, and adaptation in the face of colonial disruption.

Via these critical lenses, *Things fall apart* emerged not only as a literary masterpiece but also as a cultural and political statement. Achebe's work dismantled Eurocentric narratives by offering a nuanced and humanized portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society, challenging distorted representations, and advocating for African self-representation. By foregrounding the complexities of Igbo social structures, the impacts of colonial expansions, and the tensions between individual and collective identity, *Things fall apart* remains an essential text in postcolonial studies. So far, however, and in spite of the huge volume of criticism written and received by *Things fall apart* as a writing back to empire and the celebration of Igbo and African literature, little attention has been given to the way Achebe deconstructs the African personality established by a huge number of western colonial figures. This issue of African representation, particularly in the context of colonial literature, remains underexplored. It is this very issue that my research will investigate.

The research will address the following questions: Which European and African authors does Achebe's novel interpellate? Why does he interpellate them? How does he convey this interpellation? By examining these questions, the study aims to shed light on Achebe's deconstruction of the African personality as portrayed in colonial literature and his efforts to reclaim African identity through *Things fall apart*.

This investigation will not only deepen our understanding of Achebe's literary strategies but also contribute to the broader discourse on African representation in postcolonial literature. Through a close analysis of the novel's engagement with both European and African literary

traditions, the research will highlight Achebe's role as a pivotal figure in challenging and redefining the narratives imposed by colonial writers.

Methodology

To investigate the issue of the misrepresentation of the African personality, I shall employ Genette's theory of transtextuality and narratology as my primary analytical framework. Transtextuality, as outlined by Genette, is closely related to intertextuality; however, it encompasses a broader range of textual relationships, including paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality connections. While intertextuality primarily focuses on direct textual references and influences, transtextuality extends beyond this to explore how texts interact on multiple levels, shaping meaning through explicit and implicit dialogue with other works. From a narratological perspective, Genette's narrative analysis involved examining narrative voice, focalization, temporal structure, and levels of narration. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how the narrative discourse is constructed within texts and how it influences the reader's reception of meaning. However, special attention is given to the concepts of expansion and contraction, which served as a key analytical tools for exploring the dynamics between colonial narratives and Achebe's counter-narrative.

Transtextuality as defined by Genette refers to the broad spectrum of relationships between a given text and other texts. It encompasses five key categories as mentioned above intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. These textual interactions shape meaning, as no text exists in isolation but is instead part of a vast literary network. In *Things fall apart*, Achebe engages transtextuality to challenge colonial discourse and reconstruct African identity. Through explicit and implicit references, the novel dialogues with western literary traditions while affirming the legitimacy of African narratives. Achebe's work serves as a counter-narrative, directly responding to Eurocentric misrepresentations found in texts like *Heart of*

darkness. By employing transtextuality, Achebe subverts dominant narratives and reclaims African historical and cultural agency.

Intertextuality according to Genette refers to the direct or indirect presence of one text within another, whether through quotation, allusion or plagiarism. Achebe's *Things fall apart* participates in intertextuality by engaging with canonical colonial texts and ideologies that perpetuate Eurocentric views of Africa. These include Hobbes political theories, Locke's *The Second treatise of government*, Hegel's *Philosophy of history*, and Conrad's *Heart of darkness*. Achebe reclaims narrative authority by rewriting and responding to these texts, disrupting their colonial logic and restoring African subjectivity.

Hobbes's notion of chaotic state of nature requiring a sovereign to impose order aligns with colonial justifications for dominating uncivilized societies, but Achebe counters this by portraying the Igbo as self-regulated community with its own systems of governance and justice. Locke's argument that unimproved land in wasted and available for colonization is challenged by Achebe's depiction of the Igbo's deep connection to their land and sustainable practices. Hegel's dismissal of Africa as a continent without history or civilization is directly refuted by the novel's rich portrayal of Igbo traditions, spirituality, and social structures. Finally Conrad's *Heart of darkness*, a novel that presented Africa as an uncivilized, mysterious land devoid of history exemplifies how colonial literature constructed Africa as the "Other" in the Western imagination. While Conrad's depiction aligns with the colonial imagination, Achebe is counter this narrative by portraying a structured, vibrant Igbo society.

By rewriting the Eurocentric gaze, *Things fall apart* subverts Conrad's portrayal of Africa as the other and restores historical depth to African civilization. This intertextual relationship transforms Achebe's novel into a direct response to the colonial literary tradition, challenging the racist assumptions embedded in earlier western texts. Through intertextuality, Achebe disrupts the

monolithic representation of Africa, demonstrating its cultural complexity and political organization.

Paratextuality involves elements that surround and frame a text, such as titles, prefaces, and footnotes, which influence interpretation. A notable example in Achebe's *Things fall apart* is the title its self, which is derived from W.B .Yeats's poem *The Second coming*. The poem describes societal collapse and chaos, reflecting the novel's exploration of colonial disruption in Igbo society. The epigraph, "*Things fall apart*; the center cannot hold", sets the thematic tone, foreshadowing the novel's tragic trajectory.

By referencing Yeats, Achebe's invites a comparative reading, aligning the disintegration of Igbo traditions with broader historical cycles of collapse and imperial conquest. This paratextual connection expands the novel's scope beyond a local African context, situating it within a universal framework of historical upheaval. Through paratextuality, Achebe strategically positioned his work within both African and European literary traditions, fostering a dialogue that challenges colonial historiography.

Metatextuality refers to the commentary of one text on another, often through critique or reinterpretation. Achebe's engagement with Hobbes's *Leviathan* through metatextuality by presenting a critique of the social and political order that Hobbes advocates. In *Leviathan,* Hobbes described the "the state of nature" as a chaotic, violent condition in which individuals are driven by self-interest, leading to a life that is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (p.89). Achebe, through the Igbo society depicted in *Things fall apart*, challenged this view by presenting a complex, organized society with its own systems of governance, justice, and communal values. The Igbo community's system of elders, justice and ritual contrasts with Hobbes's notion of a lawless state of nature. Achebe's portrayal of pre-colonial African society thus served as a metatextual response to Hobbes, suggesting that African societies had their own forms of order

and governance, challenging the idea that they were inherently chaotic or primitive, as implied in Hobbes philosophy.

Hypertextuality refers to a text's transformation of or derivation from a prior text, whether through parody, adaptation, or expansion. *Heart of darkness* by Conrad can be seen as an hypertextual work in relation to earlier colonial narratives, particularly on how it responds to and reshapes the portrayal of Africa in western literature. Conrad's novel revises the romanticized and exoticized depictions of Africa found in previous works, challenging the notion of the continent as a dark and untamed wilderness.

In *Heart of darkness,* Africa is represented as a blank space awaiting European civilization but as a place where the moral darkness of colonialism is revealed. Conrad's use of the heart of Africa as a metaphor for European corruption and exploitation transforms earlier colonial narratives, creating a dialogue between them. The text becomes a vehicle for critiquing the colonial enterprise, exposing its brutality and the complex dynamics between colonizer and colonized. Through this hypertextuality, *Heart of darkness* offered a darker, more critical view of the imperialist mindest, subverting earlier idealized representations.

Architextuality refers to broader generic and thematic conventions that shape a text. *Things fall apart* draws from both oral and written traditions, blending African story telling techniques with western novelistic structures. The novel incorporates Igbo proverbs, folktales, and communal dialogue, which reflect the oral tradition's role in African epistemology. At the same time, Achebe employs a linear narrative structure, aligning with the conventions of the western realist novel. This architextual hybridity allows Achebe to bridge cultural and literary traditions, positioning *Things fall apart* as both an African and a global literary work. By integrating multiple narrative forms, Achebe resists colonial classifications that separate African literature from the broader literary canon. Instead, he asserts African literature's rightful place within world literature, demonstrating its depth and intellectual richness.

Narratology as theorized by Genette focuses on the structure and the storytelling techniques used in a text. It was developed by Genette through key concepts such as time (how events are arranged), mood (perspective or focalization), voice (who tells the story). His framework explored how events are ordered, how perspective influences meaning, and how narration directed the reader's interpretation of the story.

In this context, Achebe acted as a participant observer in his seminal novel skillfully embedding an insider's voice to shift the narrative focus toward the Igbo perspective. Unlike an external, detached narrator, Achebe immersed himself in the cultural fabric of Igbo society, blending anthropological precision with literary artistry. By doing so, he not only humanized Igbo traditions, values and complexities but also dismantled colonial distortions. His narrative technique rooted in an authentic, emic viewpoint constructs a powerful counter-narrative that reclaims African identity and historical agency, challenging Eurocentric portrayals while redefining postcolonial discourse.

Expansion is the act or process of making something larger, broader, or more extensive. It involves growth, increase; Achebe employs transtextuality to expand the representation of African culture by engaging with and countering colonial texts like Conrad's *Heart of darkness.* Through intertextuality, he strives to undo the portrayal of Africa by presenting Okonkwo, as rich and complex character deeply tied to Igbo traditions, unlike the dehumanizing Africans in Conrad's work. In terms of narratology, Achebe adopted the perspective of a participant observer, blending an insider's intimate knowledge of Igbo society with a narrative style that guides the reader's understanding. Techniques such as focalization and narrative voice immerse the audience in Igbo customs, values and social structures. Together transtextuality and narratology work to present Africa not as a primitive "other", but as a vibrant, dynamic civilization with its own history and complexity.

Contraction is a literary technique used to highlight differences between two or more ideas, characters, or concepts by emphasizing their opposition. It often serves to diminish or make certain aspects appear smaller or less significant in comparison. Achebe also used both techniques to contract or diminish the dominance of the colonizers. Through transtextuality, Achebe responds to Eurocentric works, exposing their limitations and arrogance in portraying Africa as primitive. For instance, the district commissioner's trivialization of Igbo history into a single line in his book satirizes colonial literature's reductive views. Narratology enhances this contraction by focalizing the narrative through Igbo characters.

In addition to Genette's theory of transtextuality and narratology, I shall also incorporate postcolonial concepts such as abrogation and appropriation, as developed by Ashcroft. These concepts are crucial for understanding how postcolonial texts interact with colonial narratives. Abrogation refers to the rejection or dismantling of colonial representations and ideologies, where colonized authors challenge and displace the colonial discourse. Appropriation on the other hand, involves the reworking or taking over of colonial language, genres, and forms, transforming them to express the experiences and voices of the colonized. Ashcroft's framework provided a nuanced way of understanding how postcolonial authors, like Achebe both engage with and challenge the language and structures imposed by colonial powers. Through abrogation and appropriation, Achebe reclaims the narrative, constructing a counter-discourse that reasserts African identity and agency.

The crucial role of language in postcolonial discourse underscores how postcolonial writing defined its self by challenging and transforming the language of the colonizers. In this process, two main strategies are at play: abrogation and appropriation. These strategies work together to subvert the colonial legacy embedded in language, reclaiming it as a tool for the expression and empowerment of the colonized people. Through these processes, post-colonial

writers confront the language of the colonizers and adapt it to their own needs, thus rejecting the colonial domination that language often symbolizes.

Abrogation is the rejection of colonial imposition, a firm refusal to accept the colonizer's language as the standard. This involves saying no to the influence of colonial powers on life, culture, and identity. In literary terms, abrogation manifests when the colonized writer challenges the linguistic norms and structures imposed by the colonizers. It seeks to dismantle the linguistic and cultural superiority that the colonial powers once claimed through their language. By rejecting the colonizer's version of reality, abrogation opens the door for indigenous voices and narratives to emerge, free from the constraints of colonial rule.

Appropriation is the process by which the language is taken and reshaped to express the cultural experiences of the colonized. As Raja Rao (1938) is Quoted in Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's *The Empire writes Back*, "it involves the effort to convey in a language that is not one's own" (2000, p.50). This process involved the colonized adapting the language of the colonizers to bear the weight of their own cultural history, identity, and values. The language is repurposed as a tool to reflect the diverse and complex experiences of the colonized. In postcolonial literature, appropriation thus becomes a dynamic act, where writers engage in a cross-cultural negotiation between worlds. This negotiation creates a gap, one in which both abrogation and appropriation work simultaneously to define the narrative. The literature produced in this context reflects the tension between rejecting the colonial language, which originally represented the colonial center, and appropriating it to fit the vernacular and evolving forms of the colonized society. Postcolonial writers use the language of the colonizer but shape it to express indigenous speech habits, local English variations, or even new forms of communication that emerge within a monolingual society seeking to establish or define its own identity and connection to the land.

However, it involves the strategic use of the colonial imposition to serve the needs of the colonized people. Rather than rejecting the colonizer's language outright, appropriation adapted it,

remolding it to express the realities, values, and culture of the colonized. Through appropriation, the colonized take control of the language and repurpose it to articulate their own experience. It is not merely about using the colonial language but reshaping it to reflect indigenous identities and histories. This process challenged the notion of colonial language as a tool of oppression, transforming it into an instrument of resistance and cultural reclamation.

Results and discussions

Following the methodology outlined above, this research concluded that Achebe's *Things fall apart* profoundly challenged the Eurocentric representation of African personality with regard to work, ethic, economy, governance, justice, heroism, war, peace and gender relationships. The novel deconstructed colonial stereotypes and redefined African identity, affirming its complexity, dignity, and humanity. Through narratological techniques, transtextuality, abrogation, and appropriation, Achebe dismantled Eurocentric distortions and reclaimed the African personality as dynamic, sophisticated, and deeply human.

The findings revealed that the novel effectively countered the colonial narrative that depicted African societies as uncivilized and barbaric. Work was portrayed as a cultural and spiritual practice, while governance was shown to be rooted in consensus and fairness. The novel approached war and peace with strategic and ritualistic precision, and heroism was depicted as multifaceted, embodying both strength and vulnerability. In addition, African art and creativity were celebrated as vital expressions of cultural identity, and the roles of men and women were explored to provide a holistic view of Igbo view life.

Achebe's battle against Hobbes and Locke

In *Things fall apart*, Achebe challenged the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke, which defined war as the inevitable result of human nature and peace as the product of a rational social contract. That is to say, that Achebe waged a philosophical battle against the ideas of these Enlightenment philosophers, whose concepts of war, property and governance have deeply shaped

the trajectory of western political thought. These doctrines, historically utilized to justify colonial domination, depicted African societies as either chaotic or in need of civilizing influence. Achebe's narrative resisted these reductions, offering a counter-narrative that reclaimed the intellectual and cultural complexity of African systems. In his novel, war is not merely the result of human instinct but a measured response rooted in justice, while peace is not simply a passive state but an active, dynamic harmony maintained through communal diplomacy and ritual. Through this literary intervention, *Things fall apart* transcends the confines of fictional storytelling, becoming a philosophical challenge to the assumptions that have historically marginalized African intellectual traditions. Achebe elevated Igbo society as a coherent and dignified alternative to western frameworks of governance and order, asserting that these indigenous systems are not only valid but capable of redefining justice, peace and human agency. Hobbes in *Leviathan* (as mentioned in issue in context), famously portrays the state of nature as a relentless and chaotic struggle "War of all against all ", where human life is driven by self-interest and lasting security is achievable only through the imposition of a strong, centralized authority. Locke, on the other hand, grounded his theory of property in the idea that the land belongs to the one who works on it, framing ownership as a product of labor. Both views are rooted in western individualism, where social order is maintained through authority or through personal ownership and control.

Achebe, however, presented a radically different view of war and peace, one that resists the Hobbesian narrative of inherent violence and the Lockean theory of property as ownership through labor. In the Igbo worldview, War (ogun) is not the chaotic struggle Hobbes described, nor is peace (udo) a mere absence of conflict or a passive legal contract. Instead, war is a structured response to justice, a social tool for restoring balance and maintaining moral order, not a fight for individual survival. Peace, too, is not a passive state; it is an active, communal harmony achieved through ritualized diplomacy and collective responsibility.

In this way, Achebe commented on both Hobbes and Locke, Hobbes's view of war as an inevitable human condition is subverted by the Igbo's sense of justice through structured conflict, which maintained societal balance rather than descending into chaos. Locke's idea of property as a product of labor is questioned by the Igbo understanding of communal land use, where land belongs to the community, not to the individual ownership. Achebe's *Things fall apart* offered a counter-narrative to these western philosophies, highlighting an African system where justice, peace and ownership are deeply intertwined with communal life, not imposed from above or based on individual control.

Philosophically, *Things fall apart* created a profound tension with Hobbes and Locke's theories of war and peace , particularly their depiction of the state of nature as a condition marked by continuous hostility and competition, where individuals, motivated by self-preservation and fear, exist in an unending struggle He argued that without a sovereign power imposing absolute authority, "life would be poor, nasty, brutish and short". This notion parallels the belief that strength and dominance served as the foundation of peace, a concept reflected in Okonkwo's worldview and the broader struggles within *Things fall apart*. However, he viewed war as the natural human condition, necessitating an absolute authority to impose order, a notion that parallels Okonkwo's belief in strength and dominance as the foundation of peace.

Conversely, Locke's perspective presented a more optimistic vision of the state of nature, where humans are rational and bound by natural laws. He acknowledged that conflict rests primarily on property, which he sees as the basis of individual liberty and social order. In *Things fall apart* colonial expansion disrupted this balance, as British imperial forces imposed new laws that redefined ownership, undermining the Igbo's communal land system. Therfore, while Hobbes's vision aligned with the necessity of force to establish order, Locke's theory highlighted how conflicts over land and sovereignty become central to the struggle of identity in Achebe's narrative. That is to say that he posited that peace is the natural state, disrupted by tyranny and

conflict; this aligned with Igbo system of negotiation, where war is the last resort rather than the default state. Achebe further engaged with Hegel's dialectic, presenting war as a transformative force where conflict between Igbo tradition and colonial modernity creates a synthesis, African literature as a counter-narrative. Okonkwo's downfall embodied the failure to adapt to this dialectical process, as his rigid adherence to pre-colonial norms make him incapable of negotiating the imposed colonial peace. Achebe, however, subverted this imposed pacification by using the novel itself as an act of literary resistance, ensuring that Igbo history is not erased but reasserted in the global discourse.

Through narratology, Achebe structured *Things fall apart* to reveal the fragility of imposed peace when it disconnected from indigenous governance. Okonkwo's tragedy is not merely personal but emblematic of a broader societal collapse, where external forces destabilize the balance between war and peace. The Igbo understanding of peace is deeply tied to justice; war is sectioned only when all diplomatic avenues fail, contrasting sharply with the colonial use of war as an instrument of domination. This distinction reinforced Locke's argument that legitimate authority derives from the consent of the governed, a principle absent in colonial rule. Achebe commented on the colonial justification of war through missionary and administrative narratives, showing that British intervention was not about peace but about control. Okonkwo's suicide is symbolic of this loss of agency; his final act of defiance is rendered meaningless in a world where indigenous resistance is systematically dismantled.

Furthermore, Achebe's function as both a participant observer and a mythmaker, expanding mythology to reconstruct African identity. Through Igbo oral traditions, proverbs, and historical allusions, he constructed literary mythology that encapsulates the struggle of identity in the face of colonial disruption. His narrative does not merely recount history but mythologized the resistance against cultural erasure, demonstrating that war and peace, in the Igbo context are not merely oppositional forces but integral to the negotiation of identity. Thus, *Things fall apart*

became a site of counter-expansion, where Achebe reclaimed African selfhood from the distortions of colonial ideology, reinforcing that true peace can only exist within the framework of indigenous governance and justice.

Building upon this idea, Achebe structured *Things fall apart* around the interplay of expansion and contraction, mirroring the struggle of identity in a colonial context. This tension operated at both a narrative level and a transtextual level, where interwoven texts and perspectives shaped the novel's critique of imposed authority. The expansion of Okonkwo's character and worldview unfolds through transtextuality, as Achebe's narrative interacted with oral traditions, Igbo mythology, and colonial literature. Conversely, the contraction of the Igbo social order under colonialism is reinforced through narratology, particularly through shifting focalization and narrative compression, which diminish indigenous agency within the textual space.

In the realm of war and peace, Okonkwo's expansion is a response to perceived weakness, both within his community and himself. His disdain for his father's failure fueled his relentless pursuit of dominance, reinforcing the idea that peace is only sustainable through strength. This belief aligned with Hobbes's notion of the war of all against all as mentioned before, where survival depended on power and control. For Okonkwo, peace without the constant assertion of force is fragile, making him instinctively resistant to diplomacy and accommodation. Unlike Igbo elders who advocate for measured responses to colonial presence, Okonkwo viewed hesitation as surrender. His expansion therefore manifested as an increasing alignment with war, as he pushed for confrontation rather than compromise.

In addition, it is not solely personal but transtextual, extending beyond its character into a broader textual dialogue. Achebe's use of intertextuality and hypertextuality, references to the Igbo folklore, proverbs, and historical echoes situates Okonkwo within a lineage of African heroism and resistance. This transtextual expansion allowed Achebe to challenge Eurocentric portrayals of Africa by embedding *Things fall apart* within a network of indigenous narratives that

assert autonomy and historical continuity. However, an opposing force destabilizes Okonkwo's expansion: the contraction imposed by colonial rule, both within the narrative and within the structural composition of the text itself.

The contraction is narratological, as the colonial presence disrupted and compressed the existing storytelling framework. Achebe's narrative voice initially aligned with the communal storytelling tradition, reflecting a decentralized Igbo worldview. However, as colonial rule tightens, the narrative became increasingly focalized through external perspectives, culminating in the abrupt and reductive ending imposed by the district commissioner's Eurocentric lens. This contraction both within the story and in its structural execution, mirrored the erasure of indigenous identity under colonial discourse.

Moreover, this contraction occurred also within the white man's representation within the narrative. Unlike Okonkwo and other Igbo figures, whose stories are developed with depth and nuance, the colonial characters are narratively diminished, lacking individual agency or cultural depth. They appear almost mechanical, defined only by their administrative roles , district commissioner, missionaries, court messengers, rather than by personal complexities. Their reduction to functions rather than fully realized characters reinforced their contraction; they are neither transformative nor adaptive but instead brittle and incapable of true dominance.

Notably, Achebe's *Things fall apart* embodied both the rejection and adaptation of colonial language and ideology. Through abrogation, the novel challenged the authority of English by embedding Igbo expressions, proverbs and cultural idioms, forcing the reader into an African linguistic framework. This rejection of colonial linguistic dominance destabilized the Eurocentric narrative that portrayed African societies as primitive and voiceless. At the same time, Achebe appropriated English as a means of self-representation, transforming the colonizers language into a tool for narrating African identity on its own terms. This dual process of abrogation and appropriation revealed the complexities of resistance within colonial and postcolonial framework.

The struggle within *Things fall apart* is not merely physical or political but deeply ideological. The conflict between Igbo traditions and European colonial structures reflected the broader tension between war and peace. While some characters like Okonkwo resisted colonial expansion with force, others like Nwoye submitted to it, illustrating the fractured responses to colonial imposition. This struggle for identity is at the core of the novel peace, became a form of cultural erasure, whereas resistance though necessary leads to fragmentation and self-destruction.

The breakdown of cultural synchronization between Igbo traditions and colonial rule highlighted the impossibility of a seamless coexistence. Igbo society structured around its own laws, religion and justice system is destabilized by the arrival of foreign order that refused to acknowledge indigenous legitimacy. The failure of hybrid adaptation suggested that Achebe does not portray the cultural fusion as a viable solution; instead, he revealed the violence rupture caused by forced expansion. This aligned with the larger theme of national identity, Achebe's literary intervention against colonial narratives, asserting African agency in historical and literary discourse.

Okonkwo's tragic downfall symbolized the collapse of indigenous resistance, yet his failure is not the end of the African story. Achebe's novel itself becomes an act of cultural reclamation, demonstrating that the war for identity continued beyond the confines of the narrative. By engaging with colonial discourse through transtextual and narratological strategies, Achebe constructed a literary space where African identity is not merely defined by its inherent richness and complexity.

To put it briefly, Achebe's portrayal of war and peace extended beyond Igbo society to a broader critique of historical distortion. The novel's transtextual engagement with colonial literature is not just oppositional but reconstructive, asserting African intellectual and political complexity. By appropriating the English language while embedding Igbo oral traditions, Achebe subverted colonial linguistic dominance, demonstrating that peace, in an African context, is not

the absence of conflict but the presence of justice and self-governance. The collapse of Igbo resistance under colonial war illustrated the asymmetry of power between indigenous societies and European imperial forces; the novel itself becomes a testament to resilience. Expansion occurred not only as a narrative strategy but also as a cultural reclamation, placing Igbo history within the global literary canon. Achebe therefore uses *Things fall apart* as a counter-narrative, where war and peace are not simply historical events but ideological battlegrounds where African identity is contested and reaffirmed.

In essence, *Things fall apart* redefined war and peace beyond their conventional oppositions, showing that in Igbo society, these forces exist in a delicate balance disrupted by colonialism. Through transtextuality, Achebe engaged with and subverted colonial misrepresentation, using intertextual expansion to reposition African perspectives within historical discourse, narratology; contraction through focalization on Okonkwo personalized the broader political conflict, making his downfall a microcosm of the Igbo struggle against colonial imposition. Ashcroft's theories of appropriation and abrogation frame the colonial narrative as a war on African self-definition, where forced peace operates as cultural erasure. Philosophically, Achebe, situated his analysis within the frameworks of Hobbes and Locke, illustrating how different conceptions of war and peace shape both indigenous and colonial ideologies. Ultimately, the war in *Things fall apart*, is not just between the Igbo and the British but between competing worldviews, one that sees peace as communal justice and another that equates peace with submission. Achebe's novel thus served as an act of intellectual resistance, ensuring that the history of African agency, conflict and negotiation is not lost but expanded into global consciousness.

The ethic of work: Achebe versus Weber

The theme of work in Achebe's *Things fall apart* is analyzed through Genette's transtextuality and narratology, particularly the concept of intertextuality, which reveals how Achebe's portrayal of labor responded to colonial narratives that dismiss African societies as primitive. Okonkwo's identity as a hardworking farmer and warrior reflected the Igbo values of self-resilience and communal contribution. His success in yam farming, despite initial setbacks, symbolized his determination to rise above his father's failures and achieve status within his community.

Achebe's *Things fall apart* employed transtextuality, as theorized by Genette, to dismantle Eurocentric ideologies of work and productivity, particularly those articulated by Locke and Weber. Locke's *Treatise of government* argued that land not cultivated or "improved" through European-style labor was inherently wasted, a perspective that justified colonial exploitation. Achebe countered this narrative through narratological strategies, such as the use of stylization, to depict the Igbo agricultural system with vivid, culturally specific details. The novel's portrayal of the yam harvest a symbol of wealth, masculinity, and social status directly challenged Locke's Eurocentric assumptions. The meticulous care, with which Okonkwo and other characters cultivated their farms, combined with the spiritual rituals surrounding planting and harvesting, underscored a deeply rooted ethic of work that was both productive and culturally meaningful. Through this transtextual engagement, Achebe not only reclaimed the dignity of African labor but also exposed the arrogance of colonial claims to superiority.

Achebe's transtextual dialogue with Weber's concept of *The protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (2000), further revealed the novel's narratological complexity. Weber's framework, which linked hard work, discipline, and economic success to moral virtue and divine favor, was often weaponized to portray Africans as lazy and morally deficient. Achebe inverted

this narrative through narratological techniques, such as the focalization of an indigenous work ethic that rivaled and even surpassed Weber's ideal.

Okonkwo's relentless ambition, his rise from poverty to prominence, and his unwavering commitment to his cultural values were rendered in a style that emphasized his strength, determination, and moral integrity. The novel's use of proverbs, such as "If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings." (Achebe, 1958, p. 6), further reinforced the Igbo belief in the transformative power of hard work. By juxtaposing Okonkwo's achievements with the failures of colonial characters like Mr. Brown, who misunderstood and undermined Igbo values, Achebe dismantled the Eurocentric myth of African indolence and redefined the African personality as industrious, disciplined, and morally grounded.

The novel's narratological structure also played a crucial role in undoing the Eurocentric African personality. Achebe's use of focalization allowed readers to experience the world from the Igbo people's perspective, offering insight into the enduring challenges posed by colonial viewpoints. For example, the vivid portrayal of communal labour like the responsibilities of obedience and the sharing of harvests underscore the collective values central to Igbo society. . These scenes contrasted sharply with the individualistic, capitalist model promoted by Locke and Weber. The novel's emphasis on the social and spiritual significance of labor, such as the new yam festival, further underscored the complexity of Igbo work ethics. Through these narratological techniques, Achebe not only reclaimed the African personality from colonial distortions but also affirmed the value and richness of pre-colonial African societies.

As mentioned in the issue in context and further developed in the methodology, Achebe's engagement with colonial ideologies extended beyond Locke and Weber to include broader philosophical and historical discourses, such as Hobbes's *Leviathan,* with its emphasis on the need for a sovereign to impose order on the chaotic world, provided intellectual justification for colonial domination. Achebe countered this narrative by portraying the Igbo society as orderly and

self-regulated, with its own systems of governance, justice (e.g. The *egwugwu*), and the social cohesion. Similarly Hegel's *Philosophy of history*, which dismissed Africa as a continent without history or civilization, was directly refuted by Achebe's detailed depiction of Igbo culture, traditions, and historical continuity. The novel's rich portrayal of Igbo spirituality, such as the role of the Oracle of the hills and caves, and its emphasis on oral history and storytelling, challenged Hegel's Eurocentric narrative and reasserted the historical agency of African societies.

Achebe's transtextual strategy extended to the broader narrative structure of *Things fall apart*, which implicitly dialogued with colonial texts while asserting the autonomy and complexity of Igbo society. Through narraological techniques such as stylization and focalization, Achebe weaves the Igbo work ethic into the historical fabric, using vivid expressive language to depict communal labour, such as the responsibility of obedience and the sharing of the harvest, thereby emphasizing the collective spirit of Igbo productivity. These scenes contrasted sharply with the individualistic, capitalist model promoted by Locke and Weber. The novel's detailed descriptions of agricultural rituals, the significance of yams, and the social status tied to labor all served to reclaim the African personality from colonial distortions. By employing a narratological approach that combined transtextuality with stylization, Achebe created a counter-narrative that undid the colonial portrayal of Africans as passive or unproductive. In doing so, *Things fall apart* became a powerful tool for decolonizing the African identity, dignity, and historical agency.

Hegel and the aesthetic dimensions of the African man

In *Things fall apart*, Achebe masterfully intertwined the aesthetic traditions of Igbo culture with a profound critique of Eurocentric notions of art, drawing Hegel's *Lectures on aesthetics* to explore the interplay between beauty, meaning, and cultural identity. This chapter delves into the role of art as a vessel for communal memory, spiritual expression, and resistance, positioning it as a cornerstone of Igbo society. Achebe's narrative, rich with transtextuality, abrogation, and appropriation, challenged the colonial dismissal of African art as primitive and devoid of

intellectual depth. Within this framework, Unoka, Okonkwo's father, embodied the significance of Igbo aesthetics through his music and storytelling, his artistry was not merely for entertainment but served as a means of cultural transmission, emotional expression, and social connection.

In this sense, Achebe can be seen as the heir of Unoka, carrying forward the legacy of Igbo artistic traditions in literary form. Achebe also constructed *Things fall apart* as a tragedy, employing narratological techniques to frame Okonkwo's downfall within the classical tragic arc. Through his narration, readers are drawn into Igbo cultural aesthetics and the unstoppable forces of fate and change, gaining insight into the intricate textures, rhythms and significance of Igbo art and society.

Hence, Achebe presented a vibrant aesthetic tradition that is both functional and symbolic, deeply embedded in the daily lives and spiritual practices of the Igbo people. Using narratological techniques, Achebe invited the readers to engage with Igbo art not as distant spectators but as involved participants, fully immersed in its texture, patterns and significance. This chapter, therefore, becomes a site of cultural reclamation, where the aesthetic values of the Igbo people are celebrated and the colonial narrative of art as a purely European domain is dismantled.

Unoka embodied the aesthetic dimensions of *Things fall apart* through his deep connection to music, storytelling and artistic expression. As a skilled flurist, his artistry reflects the Igbo cultural tradition, where music serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of preserving history, expressing emotions, and fostering communal bonds. His love for beauty and artistic expression contrasted sharply with Okonkwo's rigid, pragmatic worldview, highlighting the tension between aesthetic appreciation and societal expectations of masculinity and success. Unoka's character challenged the Eurocentric notion that African societies lacked refined artistic traditions, instead showcasing the sophistication and emotional depth embedded in Igbo cultural practices. Through him, Achebe presented art as an essential component of identity, memory and resistance, reinforcing its central role in shaping both individual and collective consciousness.

Achebe's use of transtextuality is particularly evident in his engagement with Hegel's *Lectures on aesthetics,* which famously relegated African art to the realm of the "symbolic", a lower form of artistic expression compared to the "classical" art of Europe. By incorporating elements of Igbo art, such as the *egwugwu* masks, the intricate patterns of *Uli* body art, and the rhythmic cadences of oral poetry, Achebe directly challenged Hegel's hierarchical framework. These artistic forms are not merely decorative but serve as conduits for spiritual and communal expression, embodying the interconnectedness of the physical and metaphysical worlds. Through transtextuality, Achebe decontextualized Hegel's ideas, asserting the intellectual and aesthetic sophistication of Igbo art. This act of reclamation is both a critique of colonial aesthetics and a celebration of African creativity, positioning Igbo art as a vital and dynamic tradition that resists reductionist categorizations.

The concept of abrogation is central to Achebe's portrayal of Igbo art, as he deliberately rejected the colonial lens through which African aesthetics have been historically viewed. Colonial narratives often framed African art as exotic, primitive, or devoid of meaning, reducing it to curiosity for European consumption. Achebe, however, presented Igbo art as a living, breathing entity, integral to the social and spiritual fabric of Umoufia. The *egwugwu* masks are not mere artifacts but embodiments of ancestral spirits, mediating between the human and divine realms. Similarly, the *Uli* designs, painted on the bodies of women during festivals, are not just ornamental but carry deep cultural significance, symbolizing fertility, beauty, and communal identity. By refusing to explain or translate these artistic practices for a western audience, Achebe abrogated the colonial expectation of accessibility, forcing the reader to engage with Igbo art on its own terms. This narrative strategy not only affirmed the autonomy of African aesthetics but also reviewed the colonial project, which sought to erase all cultural and indigenous artistic traditions.

At the same time, Achebe employed appropriation as a means of reclaiming the narrative authority that colonialism had stripped from African voices. By writing in English, a language imposed by colonial rule, Achebe infuses with Igbo proverbs, idioms, and cultural references, transforming it into a vehicle for African expression. This act of linguistic appropriation mirrored the resilience of Igbo art, which adapted and endured despite external pressures. The oral tradition of storytelling, with its rich use of metaphor and symbolism, is seamlessly woven into the narrative, creating a hybrid form that bridged the gap between orality and literature. Through this Achebe, not only preserved the aesthetic traditions of the Igbo people but also asserted their relevance in a global context. The appropriation of the English language becomes a powerful act of resistance, challenging the colonial narrative of cultural superiority and reclaiming the dignity of African artistic expression.

The role of art in Igbo society is further illuminated through Achebe's use of narratology, which allowed him to present it as a dynamic and participatory experience. Unlike the static, objectified view of art in colonial discourse, Igbo art is portrayed as an active and communal practice. The egwugwu performances, for instance, are not mere spectacles but rituals that involved the entire community, blurring the boundaries between performers and audience. Similarly, the creation of *Uli* designs is a collaborative process, reflecting the interconnectedness of individual and collective identity. Achebe's narrative style mirrored this participatory ethos, immersing the reader in the sights, sounds, and textures of Igbo art. Through this immersive approach, he challenged the colonial notion of art as a passive, detached experience, presenting it instead as a vital and transformative force.

The narrator as a participant observer of Umuofia and its hero

In *Things fall apart*, the narrator functions as a participant observer within Umuofia, providing both a close-up view of its people and a broader perspective on the forces that disrupt their world. Umuofia, once defined by the rhythms of tradition and communal life, becomes the

stage for a hero to emerge not one who seeks empire, but one who defies the forces of disintegration that threaten his world. Okonkwo, the fierce and the determined protagonist, embodies a form of heroism deeply rooted in the values of his people. However, as the influence of the white man begins to cast long shadows over the land, Okonkwo heroism begins to crumble not from internal failings, but under the weight of an external, colonial imposition.

Nevertheless, in the heart of Umuofia, where the rhythms of tradition once defined life itself, a hero emerged not to conquer empires, but to defy the unraveling of his world. Okonkwo, the fierce and determined protagonist of Achebe's novel, embodied a heroism that is deeply rooted in the values of his people. Yet, as the white man's cross and flag cast their shadow over the land, that heroism begin to crumble, not from within, but under the weight of a world being forcibly remade. Achebe's novel is a profound exploration of heroism, not as a static ideal but as a dynamic force shaped by culture, conflict, and change. Through the lens of narratology, the study of narrative structure, Achebe constructed Okonkwo's heroism as both a personal journey and a cultural metaphor. The novel's use of proverbs, shifting perspectives, and cyclical storytelling roots Okonkwo's heroism in the oral traditions of the Igbo, where individual actions are inseparable from communal identity. Yet, Achebe also employed parody to critique the colonial narrative, exposing the contradictions and hypocrisies of the white man's so-called civilizing mission. This duality expansion through Okonkwo's character and contraction through the white man's formed the core of Achebe's exploration of heroism in a world undergoing seismic change.

In *Things fall apart*, Achebe redefined the concept of heroism through the character of Okonkwo, employing narratology to expand his portrayal as a tragic hero while simultaneously contracting the perceived heroism of the colonial figures. As a participant observer, Achebe adopted the role of an anthropologist, immersing himself in the cultural fabric of Igbo society to present a nuanced and authentic portrayal of its values, traditions, and complexities. This narrative stance allowed him to explore Okonkwo's heroism from within the cultural framework of

Umoufia, while also reviewing the external forces that seek to undermine it. Okonkwo's heroism is deeply rooted in his cultural context, where strength, ambition, and adherence to tradition are highly valued. From the outset, Achebe established Okonkwo as a man who has risen from humble beginnings to achieve greatness, a narrative that aligns with the Igbo ideal od self-made success. His physical prowess, demonstrated in his victory over Amalinze the cat, and his relentless work ethic, which transformed him into a wealthy and respected figure in Umoufia, are markers of his heroic stature.

However, Achebe complicated this image by revealing Okonkwo's flaws, his fear of weakness, his rigid adherence to masculinity, and his inability to adapt to change. These contradictions make Okonkwo a deeply human and tragic figure, one whose heroism is both celebrated and critiqued within the narrative. Through Okonkwo, Achebe challenged the Eurocentric notion of heroism as a monolithic and unchanging ideal, presenting instead a more nuanced and culturally specific understanding of what it means to be a hero.

The expansion of Okonkwo's heroism is achieved through Achebe's use of narratology, particularly his reliance on a third-person omniscient narrator who provided insight into Okonkwo's thoughts, motivations, and struggles. This narrative perspective allowed the readers to emphasize with Okonkwo, even as they recognize his flaws. For instance, the narrator revealed Okonkwo's deep-seated fear of failure, which stems his father's perceived weakness and laziness. This fear drives Okonkwo to achieve greatness but also leads to his downfall, as his inability to reconcile his personal ambitions with the changing realities of his society ultimately isolates him. Achebe's portrayal of Okonkwo as a flawed yet sympathetic figure challenged the colonial stereotype of Africans as one-dimensional and uncivilized. Instead, he presented a hero who is complex, multifaceted, and deeply human, embodying both strengths and weaknesses of his culture.

As a participant-observer, Achebe's anthropological lens allowed him to delve into the intricacies of Okonkwo's character, presenting him as a mere archetype but a product of his cultural environment. This expansion is a testament to Achebe's nuanced storytelling, achieved entirely through the protagonist's personal journey. Okonkwo is introduced as a man of immense strength and determination, a self-made figure who raised above his father's failures to become a respected leader in Umuofia. Through narratological techniques such as focalization and indirect discourse, Achebe immersed readers in Okonkwo's internal conflict, revealing his rigid masculinity as both his greatest strength and his ultimate downfall, as the narrative structure followed his rise and fall, reinforcing his tragic arc while simultaneously analyzing the cultural and colonial forces that shape his destiny. In doing so, Achebe expanded the portrayal of heroism beyond Western archetypes, situating Okonkwo's struggles within a richly detailed Igbo sociopolitical framework.

His heroism is defined by his adherence to traditional Igbo values, hard work, masculinity, and a fierce resistance to weakness. However, Achebe gradually complicated this portrayal, revealing the contradictions and vulnerabilities that lie beneath Okonkwo's imposing exterior. His fear of appearing weak, rooted in his father's legacy, derived many of his action, from his harsh treatment of his family to his participation in the killing of Ikemefuna. These moments expand Okonkwo's heroism, showing how his rigid adherence to tradition blinds him to the nuances of human relationships and the changing world around him.

In contrast to Okonkwo's expanded heroism, Achebe contracted the perceived heroism of the colonial figures, particularly the missionaries and district commissioners. While these characters are often portrayed as bringers of civilization and order in colonial narratives, Achebe subverted this trope by exposing their arrogance, ignorance, and destructive impact on Igbo society. The missionaries, for example, are depicted as dismissive of Igbo culture and traditions, viewing them as primitive and inferior. Their attempts to convert the Igbo people are not driven by

a genuine desire to uplift or empower but by a condescending belief in their own cultural superiority. Similarly, the district commissioner's portrayal as a bureaucratic figure who reduced Okonkwo's life and death to a mere footnote in his book, The pacification of the primitive tribes of the lower Niger, underscored the dehumanizing nature of colonial rule.

Through these characters, Achebe critiqued the Eurocentric notion of heroism, which often glorified colonial figures while erasing the agency and humanity of the colonized. As an anthropologist, Achebe meticulously documented the cultural clashes and power dynamics at play, revealing the destructive consequences of colonialism on Igbo society.

The contraction of the white man's further heroism is further emphasized through Achebe's use of irony and juxtaposition. For instance, the missionaries claim to bring peace and salvation is undermined by the violence and division they sow within Umuofia. Their arrival disrupted the social order, creating rifts between converts and non-converts and leading to the erosion of traditional values. Similarly, the district commissioner's self-proclaimed mission to civilize the Igbo people is revealed to be a thinly veiled justification for exploitation and control. Achebe's use of narratology here is deliberate; by presenting the colonial figures through the eyes of the Igbo people, he exposed the hypocrisy and destructiveness of their actions. This narrative strategy not only undermined the colonial narrative of heroism but also reaffirmed the dignity and resilience of the Igbo people, who resisted and adapted to the encroaching forces of colonialism. As a participant observer, Achebe's anthropological approach allowed him to present these dynamics with authenticity and depth, challenging the reader to question their assumptions about heroism and civilization.

Okonkwo's heroism, while flawed, is ultimately rooted in his commitment to his culture and traditions. His tragic downfall, brought about his inability to adapt the changes wrought by colonialism, served as a powerful critique of the destructive impact of colonial rule. In contrast, the colonial figures lack of understanding and respect for the Igbo cultures highlighted the

limitations of their so-called heroism. Achebe's portrayal of heroism thus becomes a site of resistance, where the values and traditions of the Igbo people are affirmed and celebrated, while the colonial narrative of heroism is deconstructed and critiqued. Through this, Achebe not only reclaimed the narrative authority that had been stripped from African voices but also challenged the reader to reconsider their understanding of heroism in postcolonial context. As an anthropologist, Achebe's participant observation allowed him to present a holistic and empathetic portrayal of Igbo society, one that resisted the reductive stereotypes imposed by colonial narratives.

Achebe's exploration of heroism in *Things fall apart* served as a powerful critique of Eurocentric narratives that glorified colonial figures, while erasing the agency and humanity of the colonized. Through the expansion of Okonkwo's heroism and the contraction of the white man's perceived heroism, Achebe presented a nuanced and culturally specific understanding of what it means to be a hero. Okonkwo's tragic flaws and ultimate downfall highlighted the complexities of heroism in a changing world, while the colonial figures arrogance and ignorance expose the limitations of their so-called civilizing mission. By employing narratology and adopting the role of a participant observer, Achebe not only reclaimed the dignity and resilience of the Igbo people but also invited the reader to engage with text on its own terms, fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural and political dynamics at play. This narrative strategy not only undoes the Eurocentric African personality.

Through Ashcroft appropriation, Achebe reclaimed the narrative of African heroism, challenging colonial stereotypes and asserting the complexity of indigenous cultural values. Okonkwo's tragic death symbolized the collapse of a certain kind of heroism, yet his story remained a powerful act of resistance. However, Achebe's *Things fall apart* engaged with Ashcroft's concept of appropriation to reclaim heroism from colonial distortions, redefining it through an Igbo cultural lens. In colonial narratives, African figures were either erased from

heroic tradition or framed as tragic, incapable of true valor outside of western definitions of civilizations. Achebe subverted this by crafting Okonkwo as a complex, culturally grounded hero, whose strength, flaws, and downfall emerged within an indigenous framework rather than a Eurocentric heroic archetype.

Via appropriation, Achebe does not reject the literary conventions of heroism but reworks them to reflect Igbo values, such as communal responsibility, spiritual alignment, and ancestral honor. Unlike the solitary, conquest driven western hero, Okonkwo's heroism is deeply interwoven with his society, making his downfall not just personal but emblematic of cultural disruption under colonialism. His story challenged the colonial trope of the African as passive or primitive, instead portraying heroism as a struggle for self-definition amid cultural upheaval. This reclamation is essential because it asserted that African societies had their own heroic ideals, rooted in resilience, tradition, and communal duty, long before colonial intervention sought to impose its own definitions of greatness.

Achebe, Aristotle and policis: (justice, governance and social order)

Politics is both classical philosophy and postcolonial literature, emerges as a vital framework through which human societies organize power, define justice and maintain social order. In Aristotle politics, the city-state (polis) is presented as the natural environment for human flourishing, where governance and justice were inseparable from ethical life. Centuries later, Achebe reengages these classical concerns from within the fractured political landscape of colonial and postcolonial Africa. His narrative lens does not reject philosophical tradition but rather reclaims and reframes it, showing how indigenous governance systems, like those of the Igbo, embody complex political thought. Through this dialogue between Achebe and Aristotle, politics becomes more than a structure of authority; it becomes a site of cultural meaning, moral negotiation and resistance.

Justice, government and social order are foundational pillars of political, philosophy, intricately examined in Aristotle's *Politics. As discussed in* Reeve's chapter*, "Justice and the aims of political association"* (1991), justice is framed as the guiding principle of a political community, what binds people together through fairness, moral law and shared purpose. Achebe echoed this indirectly in *Things fall apart* by depicting a society where justice is lived through ancestral law and communal judgment. In this intersection of classical and postcolonial thought, Achebe indirectly dialogues with Aristotelian ideals by portraying a society where justice is not abstract but embodied in ancestral customs and communal law. It also emphasized government as Aristotle conceived it: a structure for organizing political life, whether through monarchy, aristocracy or democracy all aiming (ideally) at the common good, hence, government in Umuofia operated through a decentralized democratic council of elders, representing a proto-political order based on deliberation and ritual rather than coercive rule, mirroring Aristotle's view that politics is a space for rational deliberation. Finally, Reeve (1991) highlights Aristotle's view that social order arises when people are shaped by law and habit, cultivating virtue and cohesion. Umuofia sustained its social order, though shared customs, myth and spiritual accountability. By applying Transtextuality, narratology and postcolonial theory we can trace how Achebe reconstructed African political and moral philosophy not as chaotic or primitive, as colonial texts suggest but as a complex, deliberate and governed by an internal logic rooted in indigenous justice and social cohesion. Through this multi-method approach, Achebe's novel become a stage for reasserting Africa's own political grammar in the face of western dismissal. In other words, the concepts of justice, governance and social order are central to understanding the societal upheaval caused by colonialism. Justice in the Igbo community is deeply embedded in communal values, spiritual beliefs and societal roles, where actions are measured not merely by legal standards but by the moral and ethical obligations of each individual to their community. Governance, within this context, is exercised through a decentralized yet structured system of elders and leaders, where

authority is based on wisdom and collective decisions making. The social order of the Igbo people is rooted in complex rituals, customs and a shared sense of responsibility that ties individuals to their community. The advent of European colonial powers and the introduction of Western laws and systems of governance destabilize this indigenous order, imposing a foreign authority that seeks to replace the deeply rooted justice structures with new, aliens ones. Achebe analyzed this colonial disruption, revealing how the imposition of foreign systems not only challenged the legitimacy of Igbo governance but also undermined African identity and cultural cohesion.

Aristotle's political philosophy, particularly his concept of justice as discussed in Politics and further interpreted by Reeve (1991). Provides a useful framework for analyzing the tensions in *Things fall apart* between indigenous governance and colonial authority. Aristotle defined justice as the "habitual disposition to act in ways that benefit society" (Reeve, 1991, p.215)), wherein governance is closely tied to the well-being of the polis and its citizens. For Aristotle, justice is not merely a matter of enforcing laws but involves the promotion of virtue and the common good. He believed that the ideal state should function as a means to achieve the flourishing of its people. In comparison, the colonial state depicted in *Things fall apart* operated under a different logic: one that imposes foreign governance and justice systems that views the Igbo as inferior and in need of civilizing. The colonizers belief in their superiority contrasted sharply with Aristotle's vision of governance, which would require rulers to act in the best interests of the community they govern. Achebe, through his portrayal of Igbo society, challenged this colonial view, revealing how indigenous system of justice, governance through different, is no less legitimate or functional than western models.

Through the lens of Transtextuality, Achebe's *Things fall apart*, entered into an implicit dialogue with Aristotelian political philosophy, particularly his views on justice, governance and the maintenance of social harmony. While Aristotle emphasized justice as the "bond of men in states", government as the administration of the polis by rational deliberation and social order as a

natural hierarchy, Achebe redefined these principles within the context of Igbo society. The novel's depiction of clan assemblies, decision-making by consensus and the ritual role of elders directly mirrored the philosophical weight Aristotle places on deliberative governance, yet it roots these ideals in African traditions, not Greek ones. Justice in Umuofia is not lawless but conducted through oracles and communal trials, countering the colonial assumption of African primitiveness. Achebe's text thus reclaimed the narrative by weaving a transtextual fabric that challenged Eurocentric typologies, replacing the Western classical ideal with an indigenous one that is equally complex and ordered. This silent confrontation with Aristotelian ideals invited the reader to re-evaluate what constitutes true civilization.

Achebe's narratological strategy in *Things fall apart* operates through the subtle stance of a participant-observer, one who intimately knows the culture being described but filters is through a layered, often ironic narrative voice. This technique created a unique window into the justice system of Umoufia, its decentralized form of government and the embedded nature of social order within ritual, gender roles and generational hierarchy. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe constructed a figure of cultural expansion, a man whose personal and social authority reflects the ideals of indigenous governance and justice, albeit tragically rigid. In contrast, the white man's presence is narrated in a tone of cultural contraction: vague, shadowy and increasingly invasive, disrupting the equilibrium of traditional structures. The narrative voice resisted full omniscience, allowing Igbo values to stand on their own, without Western interpretation, creating a layered storytelling form that mirrored Aristotle's belief that tragedy should provoke reflection on ethical and civic life. Thus, the narrator's partial immersion and critical distance allow the novel to deconstruct colonial assumptions while revealing how justice and order were already present through vulnerable in pre-colonial systems of governance. In other terms, from a narratological perspective, Achebe adopted the role of a participant observer a figure who both belongs to the Igbo world critically reflected on its vulnerability. This dual stance allowed him to articulate the

intricacies of indigenous justice and governance without romanticization. The narrative voice is intimate yet analytical, grounding the reader in Igbo traditions while revealing the fragility of its social order under external pressure.

The expansion of Okonkwo as a tragic hero illustrated the tension between individual will and communal responsibility. Okonkwo represented both the strength and the limits of traditional justice: his downfall is a result of both personal rigidity and structural disruption. In contrast, the white colonial presence is contracted, reduced to agents of fragmentation who impose alien legal codes and undermine the authority of indigenous institutions. Achebe's narrator frames the colonial intrusion not as civilizational advancement but as epistemic violence. The narrative structure highlighted the erosion of moral and political coherence when external powers impose order without understanding local contents.

Achebe's linguistic choices reflect a postcolonial strategy of both abrogation and appropriation, as articulated by Ashcroft. Abrogation is seen in the novel's dismissal of Eurocentric notions of primitive justice, challenging the colonial narrative that deemed African governance chaotic or cruel. Instead, Achebe, affirmed the legitimacy of Igbo justice rooted in consensus, community and elders authority, as a sophisticated system of social regulation. Through appropriation, Achebe used English not to mimic colonial voice but to infuse it with Igbo proverbs, rituals and legal practices, thus subverting and reterritorializing the language of power. Governmental systems are portrayed through the roles of elders and the *egwugwu's* and village assemblies, which function collectively rather than hierarchically. Social order too is defined not only by authoritarian imposition but also by deeply embedded traditions, which colonial structures eventually dismantle. This dialogic tension between rejection and reinvention reflects Achebe's deliberate effort to restore dignity to African social systems using the tools of the colonizer without surrounding to their ideological framework. To put it differently, he abrogates the colonial authority of English by dismantling its dominance and refusing to conform to its idiomatic purity.

This is evident in the way he incorporates untranslated Igbo terms and idioms, making the language of the colonizer subservient to indigenous expression. At the same time, he appropriates English as a medium to convey the philosophy, justice systems and worldview of his people. This dual strategy enabled Achebe to wield the colonizer's language as a tool of resistance and reconstruction. It also repositioned English as a vessel for African epistemology rather than European superiority. The effect is a layered discourse that communicates with global readerships while remaining rooted in local ontologies. Achebe's linguistic hybridity is thus an act of political justice, reclaiming narrative space of African voices and forms of governance.

Aristotle viewed the polis as a moral and rational community founded on justice, which he defined as the essence of political life. In *Politics,* he argued that governance must aim at the good life, which can only be achieved through the establishment of just laws and virtuous citizenship. Achebe's Igbo society mirrored this Aristotelian ideal in its emphasis on community deliberation, shared rituals and moral codes enforced through symbolic institutions like the *egwugwu's*. The destruction of this order through colonial intervention disrupted not only political sovereignty but also the ethical coherence of the society. The British system imposed laws without legitimacy, replacing participatory justice with hierarchical decrees. In Aristotelian terms, this is a fall from a true polis to a perversion of governance a tyranny that ignored the consent of the governed. Achebe's narrative thus implicitly argued that African societies possessed political philosophies akin to classical ideals and that colonialism introduced not civilization, but justice.

Nevertheless, in revisiting the intricacies of justice, government and social order through the intersecting perspectives of Aristotle and Achebe, *Things fall apart* emerged not merely as a novel but as a conternarrative, an intellectual reclamation of African identity. Achebe reconfigured colonial discourse using Transtextuality, narratology and postcolonial strategies to assert the legitimacy of precolonial African systems. The dismantling of Igbo governance and communal harmony by colonial intrusion is not portrayed as inevitable but as a violent rupture, otherwise

coherent social fabric. Thus, Achebe not only dialogues with Aristotelian political thought but expanded it, situating African knowledge and order as equally rational and worthy of philosophical consideration. In this literary restoration, justice is not abstract; it is lived, remembered and fought for.

Conclusion

To sum up, Achebe's *Things fall apart* serves as a monument to Okonkwo, a hero whose life and actions defy the Eurocentric misrepresentation of African identity. Through Okonkwo's character, Achebe constructed a powerful counter-narrative to colonial depictions of Africa, emphasizing its complexity, resilience and dignity. By centering Okonkwo's life, values and struggles, Achebe directly confronts the dehumanizing stereotypes pervasive in colonial literature.

Achebe's portrayal of Okonkwo can be read through the prism of Hobbes's *Leviathan,* where the natural human condition is a war of all against all, a chaotic struggle to establish order and security. Rather than a primitive savage, Okonkwo is driven by a deep dear of dishonor and social collapse, haunted by his father's failure and fiercely defending fragile social equilibrium to preserve his dignity. This philosophical reading shows how Achebe's intention to portray Okonkwo as a complex human being shaped by universal anxieties about power and identity, not a caricature of African barbarism. The novel remains deeply rooted in specific cultural and historical realities, making Okonkwo's tragic struggle like a waterfall clashing against Saul both universal and singular in its context.

From Locke's *Second treatise of government*, we find further dimensions of Okonkwo's humanity. Locke defined the individual by labor and property, by the effort to cultivate and improve the land as a sign of reason and selfhood. Okonkwo embodies this ethic fully. He begins with nothing and raised through discipline, toil and strict adherence to Igbo cultural values. In Locke's terms, this is the path to sovereignty; Okonkwo earned his place through moral labor. Achebe thus dismantled the myth of the African as lazy and passive. He showed instead a society

built on merit, order and responsibility, where man are neither idle nor ruled by instinct but by communal contracts and ancestral laws.

When Hegel excluded Africa from unfolding of the World spirit in his *Philosophy of history*, he denied the continent any role in human progress. Achebe's novel responded directly to this erasure. The novel charted the historical arc of a society facing disruption, debate, resistance and redefinition, all of which are hallmarks of spirit in motion. Okonkwo is not a man without history, but one caught in the dialectic of old and new, tradition and invasion. His fall does not mark the end of history, but its acceleration. Achebe constructed a historical consciousness that demands recognition. His Africa is not static; it is in motion, full of contradiction and struggle, as any society undergoing transformation.

In Hegel's *Aesthetics*, art is where people express their highest truths, where spirits manifests sensibly. Achebe turns the novel itself into such an artistic statement, rich with Igbo proverbs, rituals and symbolic acts. Okonkwo as a character, experiences pride, shame, fear and beauty, he is capable of aesthetics judgment and emotional complexity. Even Unuka Okonkwo's father, is portrayed as a man deeply moved by music and storytelling, he plays the flute and delights in festivals and song. In the colonial narrative, such sensitivity might be dismissed as weakness, but Achebe reclaimed it as aesthetics vitality, a reminder that the African spirit is not just functional, but expressive, emotional and refined. Through characters like Unoka, Achebe affirmed that art, beauty and joy were always part of African life. This deconstructs the colonial image of the African as devoid of inner life or cultural refinement. Achebe allows us to dwell in Okonkwo's world, to witness its form, rhythm and tragedy. Through art the African spirit speaks not in reaction to Europe, but in affirmation of its own being.

Weber's *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* associated modernity with discipline, rational work and deferred gratification. These qualities are not foreign to Achebe's Africa, they are central. Okonkwo's yam framing is both economic and spiritual, a sacred

discipline that organizes his identity. His rejection of idleness, his moral rigidity and his pursuit of personal honor are traits Weber might have admired. Achebe subverted the stereotype of the lazy African by presenting a man whose life is structured by duty, production and ethical self-mastery. Here Webern rationality finds a mirror not in Europe but in Umuofia.

Finally, Achebe constructed more than a novel; he constructed a philosophical challenge to the very foundations of colonial thought. Through the lens of resilience, growth, perspective and truth, Achebe dismantled Eurocentric typologies that sought to define Africans as lazy, ahistorical and devoid of culture. Okonkwo is not only a fictional character, but also an existential declaration. He works, he thinks, he suffers, he judges, he rebels. He is history, he is aesthetics, he is ethics and he is spirit. Achebe humanism is not naïve; it is radical. It reclaims Africa from the margins of philosophy and literature, returning the African man to his rightful place: not as a myth, but as a full participant in the human condition. Through Okonkwo Achebe succeeded in deconstructing the misrepresentation of African personality and restoring its depth, dignity and truth.

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