

Colonial Discourse in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Counter-Discourse of Decolonization in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Scholars have examined several aspects of the ideological processes the narrations in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* enact. The allegorical mode of representations through which it conveys those processes can be re-read as imperial/colonial discourse. Consistent with theoretical arguments, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* on the other hand, represents the reaction of an African writer to canonical works that present negative stereotypes of Africa and Africans. In light of the foregoing, this study does a comparative textual analysis of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a good example in the canon of colonial discourse and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a good example in the canon of counter-discourse of decolonization. Through close reading, the study extends the argument further by investigating the strategies both texts adopt to achieve their aims and the effectiveness thereof. Consequently, the flawed views of the African through imperial/colonial discourse which have shaped the social construction and contemporary representations of the African are corrected. By conducting this study, we largely contribute to the evolving debate on counter discourse to the narratives presented by early European writers.

Keywords: Colonial Discourse, Counter Discourse, Decolonization, Stereotype, Canonical

Introduction

The paper commences with an overview of extant literature on the definition of discourse as a genre. Consequently, in a number of significant ways, the study reviewed existing literature in the subject area to advance its arguments. Exploring the issue on discourse, Foucault (1971) describes it as the name for that language by which groups within society constitute the field of truth through the imposition of specific knowledge, disciplines and values. In other words, discourse is a complex of signs and practices which organizes social existence and social reproduction with the function to giving differential substance to membership in a social group or class through the mediation of an internal sense of belonging to that group and an outward sense of otherness (Bain, 1996; Fox & Alldred, 2018; Prasad, 2003; Signification, 1992). Exploring it from a different angle, critics such as Bhabha (1986); Hulme (1986) have identified a widespread form of cultural management as colonial discourse or the discourse

of colonialism. This discourse concerns itself with the system of signifying practices whose work it is to produce and naturalize the hierarchical power structures of the imperial enterprise and to mobilize those power structures in the management of both colonial and neo-colonial cross-cultural relationships. Thus, in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, there is the construction of truth through the imposition of specific knowledges and values by a dominant character who functions to produce and naturalize the hierarchical power structures of his imperial enterprise.

Perhaps even more of concern is the observation made by (Slemon, 1987) in his work 'Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing' (1987). According to Slemon (1987), 'Within the discourse of colonialism allegory has always functioned as an especially visible technology of appropriation; and if allegory literally means 'other speaking', it has historically meant a way of speaking for the subjugated others of the European colonial enterprise – a way of subordinating the colonized, that is, through the politics of representation.'(8)

To explore the issue on colonial discourse further, we begin by focusing on the role played by Defoe in the ideological processes of the empire-building project. Incidentally, a careful study of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* reveals strategies which promote the empire-building project and imperial ambitions of the era. This is evidenced by the portrayal of the protagonist, Crusoe, as an explorer, then as a colonizer through dispossession, domination, ownership, and the colonized being subjugated and dispossessed and as a result becoming a subject of the empire. Like Joyce Cary, Joseph Conrad, Sir H Ryder Haggard, Graham Greene, etcetera, Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* reinforces the racist assumption upon which the British Empire was built and consolidated (Biccum, 2005; Procter & Srivastava, 2013).

Consequently, the construction of truth and the production and naturalizing of hierarchical power structures of the imperial enterprise manipulated and even sought to re-write the history of Africa. Most post-colonial African novelists thus, have as their primary concern, the critique of the colonial portrayal of Africa and Africans (Miller, 1985). European socio-cultural and historical representations of Africans in the Colonial period stemmed from the negative, exaggerated and sensational myths that writings in pre-colonial times propagated about Africans (Snowden, 1970; Dunston, 1990).

In order to address the negative stereotyping of the African and the deliberate distortion of African history, Chinua Achebe in his first work, *Things Fall Apart*, reacted to the image of Africa portrayed in Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Considering the distorted image of the African and the African continent that was widely spread, it is not surprising that the African writer felt the critical need to as a matter of urgency, correct those flawed views through their writings. Chinua Achebe has been widely acclaimed as one of the first African writers at the forefront of Counter Discourse and Post-Colonial genre (Kehinde, 2006; Slemon, 1987).

Synopsis of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* details the adventurous life of the eponymous protagonist who defies his father's wishes and goes sailing for a while but is captured and becomes a slave off the coast of Africa. He succeeds in escaping and ends up as the owner of a sugar plantation in Brazil after Portuguese captain rescues him. Crusoe gets involved in a business to procure slaves from Africa but is shipwrecked and becomes the only survivor. Left alone on a deserted island, Crusoe demonstrates his dexterity at surviving perfectly well and acquires a servant whom he names Friday after rescuing him from his fellow cannibals. Crusoe and Friday are

eventually able to leave the island after helping to restore order on a ship full of sailors who had revolted against their captain. He gets his sugar plantation back and becomes a very wealthy man (Canada, 2020; Kehinde, 2006; Tiffin, 1987).

Colonial/Imperial Discourse in *Robinson Crusoe*

Defoe, through Crusoe, depicts the history of the building of the British Empire by presenting the solitary image of an individual. Defoe portrays Crusoe as such an intelligent and ingenious human being that he is able to build up his colonizer identity. He captures the entire island and by using the stock of goods from the ship, he finally gets the position of an unchallenged king. Through domination and subjugation, Crusoe transforms the island into a colony and claims ownership of everything and everyone. He has created a kingdom (Vital, 2008).

Crusoe's civilizing mission in an isolated island is a process of establishing his self-image as a superior being, intelligent and resourceful even in the worst of the most impossible situations. Without any competitors and any contest, Crusoe claims he is 'king and lord of all this' (128) and 'lord of the whole manor' (165). He tries to establish his own civilization there. He says, 'My island was now peopled ... The whole country was my own property so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. I was absolutely lord and lawgiver' (310). The 'undoubted right of dominion' is self-imposed because there was already a presence on the island which he dispossesses. Crusoe's authority and the concept of taking care of and nurturing people and the island is a reflection of the concept of colonialism of his time.

In addition, Crusoe introduces English language as the medium of teaching and learning to Friday and teaches him words, which reinforce Crusoe's domination and Friday's subjugation, strengthening the notion that language has power. After rescuing him, Crusoe orders Friday to call him "Master" and teaches him only those words, which are useful for the master-slave relation and helpful for total servitude from Friday. Now when Friday calls him 'Master', he consciously and unconsciously accepts his colonial identity and a 'political symbol' of racial injustice.

Though Crusoe shows his humanity by saving Friday's life from the cannibals, Defoe has Friday offer lifelong subjugation or so at least Crusoe imagines in his confident interpretation of Friday's gestures. Friday is so obedient, grateful and faithful to Crusoe that he does not seem to realize that this man, who saved his life, is not only helping him from his good will but his main purpose is to make him a devoted slave. Crusoe and Friday live harmoniously on the island, but the methods with which Crusoe enslave Friday also link him to colonial history.

Crusoe's use of language throughout the narrative depicts his self-imposed belief in himself as a powerful authority on the island. His authority and power on the island is inherent in and reinforced by his possession of a gun. It is not surprising then that Crusoe is able to subjugate beast and man and maintain his authority on the island as 'lord and lawgiver'. (310)

Kubayanda in 'On Colonial/Imperial Discourse and Contemporary Critical Theory' (1992), asserts, 'As readers of colonial discourse we are confronted with the mechanisms which a center uses to deny its periphery any voice, the means which the self employs to interpret its needs and the processes utilized by the other to appropriate its own being in the world. To study colonial discourse is therefore to engage in a critique of domination within the context of different cultural encounters and conflicts.' (6)

So, by using language such as

... where I was distinguished from such dreadful creatures as these (212)

... found a better sort of creatures than cannibals (212)

... an abhorrence of the savage wretches (212)
 ... christianising Friday (278)
 ... most blinded ignorant pagans in the world (278)
 ... my man Friday (296)

Crusoe entrenches his ideology of being better than the 'merciless savages of human kind' (28) and justifies his mission to dominate, dispossess and own, thereby denying them any voice. Friday has to forsake his entire family and culture and take on Crusoe's and follow him everywhere without ever returning to his family. Not once, do we have Crusoe exhibiting any compassion towards Friday about the fact that he might miss his family and may want to return to them. Crusoe simply takes over the running of Friday's life for him without any consultation with him or permission from him.

The relationship between Crusoe and Friday shows the relationship of master and slave which portrays Crusoe as a metaphor of the imperial figure/ colonizer while Friday is a metaphor of the "other" or colonized people. The author represents Crusoe as a saviour; he rescues Friday, the only native of the story. After saving him from cannibals, Crusoe gives him the name "Friday", though he most definitely already had a name; which human being doesn't? But then, does Crusoe regard him as human as in the kind of human he, Crusoe is, and who can have a name?

Crusoe's transformation from explorer to survivor and to master shows a power relationship between him and Friday - one is superior and other is inferior and with Defoe's representation of Friday and his people as savages and cannibals, the narrator constantly creates the dichotomy between uncivilized and civilized. As a result, Crusoe's civilizing mission and claims of uncontended ownership and strategies to uplift his image finds justification.

Synopsis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* traces the loss of cultural and moral values of the Igbo people when they open their doors to the European who colonizes them. He does this by first depicting the well-organized lives of the people of Umuofia before the arrival of the European. He then takes us through events leading to Okonkwo's exile and the arrival of the European. The last section deals with the devastating effects of the European's religion and culture on the life of the Igbo people.

Analysis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as Counter Discourse of Decolonisation

Ample studies have investigated Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and concluded that it is a literary text which contests and subverts the carefully orchestrated misrepresentations of the African by Europeans. The Europeans without a doubt were in Africa to further their economic and political interests while impacting negatively on the African but positively for the European and his entire race (Meisenhelder, 2003; Miller, 1985; Poulsen, 1981). *Things Fall Apart* is a novel concerned with an elaboration of a new knowledge of Africa. Therefore, critics such as Ashcroft et al (1998); Hulme (1994) and Slemon (1998) have identified this form of cultural management as counter discourse (France, 1971; Shahjahan, 2005).

In support of this viewpoint, O'Reilly (2001) notes that Achebe presents a pre-colonial view of Igbo society as a counter discourse to euro-centric misconstructions to reclaim African history from an African perspective. Achebe has declared that he wrote *Things Fall Apart* "in order to reassert African identity and as part of the growth of Nigerian nationalism' (O'Reilly 2001: 61). Achebe is passionate about the fact that

'African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; ... their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty... they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity' (Ojaide, 2013:150).

Achebe opines in his essay 'Named for Victoria, Queen of England', that *Things Fall Apart* 'was an act of atonement with my past, a ritual return and homage of a prodigal son' (1995: 103). Achebe felt the need to atone for his past and pay homage as a prodigal son because he had thought himself equal to the white man and did not see himself as an African. He rather 'took sides with the white men against the savages' (Achebe, 1990:9) until he reached the age when he realized that a fast one had been pulled on him by European writers who had perpetuated the misconstruction of Africa and Africans in their writings. That was when he became fully aware that their stories were not innocent after all but meant to serve a well-calculated purpose – advancing their imperial colonializing enterprise or project. So, Achebe's writing and that of several other African writers is a means of rewriting the history of Africa and the African from an Afro-centric perspective. Achebe appropriates counter discourse in his article, 'African Literature as Restoration of Celebration' (1990) to dismantle the imperial dominance on the history of Africa whose colonized cultures have been left uninscribed. Consequently, through the allegory of *Mbari*, Achebe describes African literature as celebration because African literature acknowledges the presence of the African, on his own continent as well as the presence of the European on the African continent, it has the courtesy of giving everyone his due. This means that the true African history which Europeans (Western literature) refused to tell or portray has been refused a presence and as such celebration. African literature, on the other hand, has acknowledged that presence and even that of the European presence (history) Pieterse; 1972:4).

Achebe's 'celebration' of the Igbo People and their Culture

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe sets his sights on looking at Africa from the inside and not without, to create a superficial picture such as the likes of Joyce Cary, Joseph Conrad and Daniel Defoe had done. Achebe does this without idealizing his representation of the Igbo people and their culture. He does not in any way attempt to justify or defend what may be viewed as worrying aspects of their culture, but, rather, attempts 'to look back and try and find out what went wrong, where the rain began to beat us' (Achebe, 1975:44).

So it is, that when we are introduced to *Things Fall Apart*, it is to a community that is populated by human beings; human beings with diverse personality and character traits as one would find anywhere in the world of a community of human beings, living in a well-structured and carefully planned community. Achebe's portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo community presents the everyday ordinary life of the people and their customs and norms.

In the very beginning of the first chapter, Achebe invites us into the world of Okonkwo who is so strong and wily that he is able at the young age of eighteen to throw Amalinze the Cat, the champion wrestler from Umuofia to Mbaino who had been unbeaten for seven years. This gives Okonkwo and his village such an honour that he becomes well-known in all the nine villages. He is described as quite a giant with a fearful countenance whose bad temper lead to his using his fists often and one who has 'no patience with unsuccessful men' (3).

Achebe skillfully, brings in a contrast at this point in his counter narrative. He immediately contrasts Okonkwo with his own father, Unoka, who had been 'lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow' (3). Here are two men with the same blood and genes running through their veins but have very different personalities. Achebe's point here is presenting to us human beings with the normal human condition of being hardworking or lazy, which applies to any group of people anywhere.

The discourse in the colonial domain had being that the African was less than human and lazy (Tiffin, 1987). Here is Achebe, countering it with two people of the same blood – one is hardworking while the other was lazy. Is it not within human societies that such a phenomenon can be seen? Moreover, if so, wherein lies the justification that the African is sub-human? Achebe does not present superhuman beings but normal human beings who have strengths, weaknesses and flaws as all other human communities display. As an African writer, Achebe is no flatterer of the Emperor (Achebe, 1990:11). He is appreciating every human presence and according 'every people their due of human respect' (Achebe, 1990:12).

Achebe's description of African literature as celebration is just apt when juxtaposed with the supposedly 'master texts' like *Robinson Crusoe*. This is because these texts have flatly refused to acknowledge other 'presences', that is, they have failed to objectively and dispassionately give a voice and a hearing to the 'savages', the 'cannibals', the uncivilized for them to tell their own story. Crusoe has done the telling for them, hiding behind the excuse that they do not have a language. They do not have the courtesy of giving everyone his due as Achebe has described. This means that the true African history which Europeans (the master texts) have refused to tell or portray has been refused a presence and as such celebration. African literature on the other hand, has acknowledged that presence and even that of the European presence (history).

In his counter narrative to correct the flawed misrepresentation of the European about Africans, Achebe does not venerate his representation of the Igbo people and their culture. He does not in any way attempt to justify or defend what may be viewed as worrying aspects of their culture, but, rather, describes all aspects of their culture as they are. So, the infamous killing of Ikemefuna, the callous throwing away of twin babies into the Evil Forest at the mercy of the weather and wild animals, similar treatment given to people who unfortunately get swollen stomachs and feet are cultural practices Achebe refuses to hide from the public and also refuses to condone.

Instead of defending and justifying such cultural practices, Achebe condemns them through characters like his friend, Obierika his uncle, Uchendu and his (Achebe's) son, Nwoye. Obierika does not support Okonkwo joining in the killing of Ikemefuna by telling Okonkwo, 'But if the Oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it' (47). Ezeudu, the messenger to Okonkwo when the time for Ikemefuna to be killed comes, specifically warns Okonkwo, 'That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death' (40). Okonkwo, always consumed by that strong passion not to be viewed as effeminate and a coward, actually does strike the final blow to kill him. Obierika warns him that the earth goddess cannot be happy with him for that because the boy called him father.

Even Uchendu, Okonkwo's uncle, condemns the killing of the white man at Abame by saying, 'Never kill a man who says nothing' (98). Nwoye has a vague chill descend on him and his head swell 'like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way' (43) when he hears the voice of an infant crying in the thick forest and remembers how twin babies are put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the thick forest. He is aghast with some of the cultural practices of his people and his father's staunch defense of them. It is not surprising that when presented with an alternative culture and religion, he soon turns his back on his own culture and religion.

Achebe's sympathies certainly do not lie with Okonkwo, but with the likes of Obierika, who unreservedly condemns Okonkwo's obsessive clinging to callous cultural practices and the European colonizer's deliberate abuse of the hospitality accorded him by humans who are of a different race. Okonkwo's domineering, callous and unreasonable behaviour towards his wives and children as well as his indomitable support for all their cultural practices, regardless of their friendliness or otherwise to humanity creates an aching void in Nwoye. When the missionaries eventually get to Mbanta, Okonkwo's mother's village where he takes refuge during his seven years exile with his three wives and eight children, and sing, there is an inevitable pull on Nwoye, which tugs at his heartstrings:

The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. (104)

Nwoye, apparently, had been harbouring misgivings and disappointment throughout his life with some aspects of their culture and his father's behaviour. He probably, had been seeking an avenue to express his disillusionment with his father's behaviour and those aspects of their culture. The hymn resonated within him something akin to his life – living in fear of his father's bad-temper, never being able to please him and with the deadly fear of babies left in the forest to die. He had also had to contend with the fear of Ikemefuna's killing and not being able to talk about it with anyone. Nwoye struggles with these traumatic experiences until he sees an opportunity of escape – joining the missionaries whose religion, to his inexperienced and puzzled mind, seemed like balm to his tortured soul.

Achebe's Counter Discourse to the Negative Colonial Representation of Africa

One of the negative colonial representation of Africa has been that the African lives without any kind of order because of being primitive and with lesser intelligence than the European does but through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe counters this by introducing a well-structured intelligent community to us. When a daughter of Umuofia, the wife of Ogbuefi Udo goes marketing in Mbaino and is killed there, the people of Umuofia, supposed by European colonial representation to be irrational creatures with the intelligence level of a seven-year European boy, actually fail to live up to that expectation.

They rather, patiently and in an orderly manner, assemble at the market place to discuss the tragedy and possible course of action as very rational human beings. They do not immediately rush on the people of Mbaino as actual savages would probably do. They reason and send a delegation to the village of Mbaino to reason with them before the course of bloodshed will be taken by them. By so doing, a possible war between the two villages is averted and a

peaceful settlement is reached amicably. This is certainly not the behaviour of primitive sinned savages, is it?

Achebe's counter discourse to the colonial misconception of the African as possessing lesser intelligence and needing to be rescued affords us the opportunity to acknowledge the great intelligence of the African when we read how meticulously the business of preparing the land for planting, the planting itself and harvesting is done. Mind you, all these are done without the assistance of mechanical equipment.

This methodical, systematic, orderly and logical planning of farming cannot be undertaken by creatures who are sub human and with lesser intelligence than the European but by human beings equal to the European, if not superior; that is, if the European is the standard and measuring stick for being human and intelligent. Without the help of any mechanical equipment or mechanized tools, they are able to accurately and arduously mark out perfect straight lines all over acres of their farm to sow the yams. They are smart enough to protect the young tendrils from the scorching heat of the sun with leaves strong enough to withstand any abuse of the weather. Lastly, they have the presence of mind to know how many times to weed the farm after planting to ensure the plants are well-cared for and not left to the mercy to weeds (Gikandi, 2007).

Interestingly, if the truth be told, then the people of Achebe's Umuofia have the same level of intelligence as Defoe's Crusoe, who is also described as painstakingly, growing crops successfully without any mechanized assistance.

Achebe's Counter Discourse to Africans having no Culture, Religion and History

Achebe explains that the imperial/colonial discourse of Africans as creatures having no soul, no religion, no culture, no history, no human speech, no I.Q. nor responsibility was a carefully orchestrated plan through the 'common knowledge' of the educated classes in children's books, Sunday school tracts, popular press etcetera which was perpetuated by the explorers and administrators who went to Africa. The devastating contribution of a scholar like Trevor Hugh Roper and writers like John Buchan and Joseph Conrad cannot be overemphasized. All these resulted to all intents and purposes, in the birth of the African writer who had found the writing of his history unsatisfactory (Bonnie, 2021).

Imperial/colonial discourse has hidden behind the assertion that Africans are a people without culture or religion but we see the exact opposite in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which lends credence to the contestation that *Things Fall Apart* is a counter-discourse to present the actual reality about the African to erode the damage caused by the European to justify his unlawful domination of the African.

The people of Umuofia take their culture, traditions and beliefs so seriously that when Okonkwo breaks the peace during the Week of Peace for beating his second wife, Ojiugo, he has to pacify the earth goddess, Ani with a she-goat, a hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. It is their belief that during this week, no one has the right to utter a single harsh word to his neighbor but rather, live peacefully with everyone during the week before planting, to merit the blessings of the earth goddess. This cultural practice ensures peace and harmony if not at any time at all, at least, during that week (Yaeger, 2007).

Their celebration of the Feast of the New Yam, marriage and funeral rites form an integral part of their culture and traditions just as in any other community of human beings. 'Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New Yam Festival because it began the season of plenty – the new year'. (26) Everything had to be polished to make the celebration worthwhile and lots and lots of food was prepared and shared among all. During the marriage ceremony of Obierika's daughter, Akueke, we notice the camaraderie that is displayed by all. Some of the men of the village join Obierika to kill the two goats for the soup while many of the women join his wife to cook for an entire village. The entire village of Umuofia join Obierika and his family to welcome Akueke's suitor, Ibe, his father, Ukegbu and their family and all assist to make the marriage ceremony a successful one.

When Ezeudu, the oldest man in the village dies, an elaborate funeral is organized for him in line with the customs and traditions of the people of Umuofia. Achebe demonstrates without a doubt that Africans have always had a culture and religion which directs their every activity and lifestyle in a smooth manner. By clearly depicting the highly organized structure of the Igbo people, Achebe provides a counter discourse to the erroneous assertion by the European including Conrad that, Africa was the heart of darkness with chaotic native societies (Kurtz, 2014).

Symbolic but Ironic title of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Achebe significantly gives his novel a symbolic as well as ironic title to expose more clearly the devastating effects of European colonialism and its attendant discourse in Africa and on Africans. Imperial/colonial discourse has sought to justify the dastardly act of colonialism by misrepresenting Africa as the Dark Continent, the heart of darkness and Africans as so primitive and sinful in need of rescuing. Achebe appropriates a line from W. B. Yeats' poem, 'The Second Coming' for the title of his novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Yeats bemoans the loss of control humans have in the affairs of the world. As humans lose touch with nature, there is the inevitable collapse of systems in the society and humanity descends into moral confusion. The world Yeats describes as falling apart is a world in which the European has been in control and yet, it has fallen apart (Bain, 1996; Sackey, 2010).

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo people live an organized and ordered life with their culture and traditions clearly defining their way of life. They have their own judicial system, which works perfectly well for them (Christian, 2006; Cross-examined, n.d.; Visser, 2011). The Europeans come in quietly with their religion and culture and bring about disintegration of the values that define Okonkwo's cultural community and his own sense of moral order with the collapse of the institutions he has fought so hard to sustain in the face of European colonialism. Okonkwo represents himself, an individual, as well as Africa. He works hard to maintain a good grip on his life, family and cultural values. It is his refusal to reason like Obierika does, by upholding humane cultural values while condemning the inhuman ones that lead him to attempt to fight a solitary battle and lose (Ibala et al., 2013; Sougou, 2001). The irony lies in the fact that the European presents his race as being superior and able to live in an ordered community while the African is inferior and lacks order in his life. However, it is only when the European comes into the life of the African that the African's life becomes disordered and falls apart just as the European's civilization and spirituality disintegrates in Yeats' poem.

Conclusion

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, reveals representations which can be re-read as imperial/colonial discourse. Strategies which promote the empire building project and imperial ambitions of the era are enacted through the portrayal of the protagonist, Crusoe. He is portrayed as an explorer, then as a colonizer through dispossession, domination and ownership. Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* perpetuates the racist assumption upon which the British Empire was built which manipulated and even sought to re-write the history of Africa.

In contrast to Defoe's imperial/colonial discourse, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, represents a counter discourse to euro-centric misconstructions to reclaim African history from an African perspective through skillfully planned strategies. Achebe deftly counters the negative stereotyping of Africa and Africans in the text in reaction to canonical works like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe's initial identification with the culture of colonialism and his ultimate disillusionment with it makes him decide self-consciously to write a different story to the colonial novel.

Achebe's conclusion to his article, 'African Literature as Restoration of Celebration' (1990) bears a fitting fundamental to the cultural function of *Things Fall Apart* and inevitably, the new literature in Africa:

The new literature in Africa is aware of the possibilities available to it for celebrating humanity in our continent. It is aware also that our world interlocks more and more with the worlds of others. For, as another character in *Ambiguous Adventure* says to a Frenchman: 'We have not had the same past you and ourselves, but we shall have strictly the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course' (12, 79).

The denial of the African presence by the European 'was the keynote of colonialist ideology' (7), pursued to serve the empire building project and the imperialist ideology of their justification for colonizing the African because he was less human and lacked any form of intelligence. Modern African literature has evolved as celebration to represent correctly, the erased and misrepresented presence of the African on his own continent.

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