

**SILENCE AND DEFEAT: THE SHOCK OF COLONIZATION IN  
CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND  
ABDELRAHMAN MUNIF'S *CITIES OF SALT***

Thesis submitted to the  
Institute of social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Language and Literature

by

Hamid MOUSA

Fatih University

October 2012

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*I dedicate this thesis for those who have been traumatized by the colonizer in their  
home*

## APPROVAL PAGE

**Student** : Hamid MOUSA  
**Institute** : Institute of Social Sciences  
**Department** : English Language and Literature  
**Thesis Subject** : Silence and Defeat: The Shock of Colonization in Chinua's  
*Things Fall Apart* and Abdulrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*.  
**Thesis Date** : October 2012

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Barry Charles THARAUD  
**Head of Department**

This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Mohamed BAKARI  
**Supervisor**

### Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Mohamed BAKARI .....

Prof. Dr. Mehmet İPŞİRLİ .....

Prof. Dr. Barry Charles THARAUD .....

It is approved that this thesis has been written in compliance with the formatting rules laid down by the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences.

Assoc. Prof. Mehmet KARAKUYU  
**Director**

## **AUTHOR DECLARATIONS**

The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Hamid MOUSA

October, 2012

## ABSTRACT

Hamid MOUSA

Oktober, 2012

### SILENCE AND DEFEAT: THE SHOCK OF COLONIZATION IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND ABDELRAHMAN MUNIF'S *CITIES OF SALT*

In the era of post-colonialism, the once-colonized countries still suffer from a legacy of the colonial period. A part of the legacy, however, can be seen through the deep-rooted feeling of inferiority by the colonized subject and through the dominance of imperial policy in former colonies, among them oil-rich states now undergoing a form of neo-colonialism. In response, however, many post-colonial writers have emerged to voice their denunciation of past and present practices of foreign interventions. This resistance can be observed in works such as *Things Fall Apart* by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, and *Cities of Salt* by the Saudi-Iraqi writer Abdulrahman Munif. This study seeks to examine the dire consequences and implications of colonization on indigenous peoples' psyches. These issues will be investigated through the events in both *Things Fall Apart* of *Cities of Salt*, *The Wilderness* (Al-Teeh). As a result, some of this study will focus on portrayals of life in these two novels before and immediately after colonization. The largest part of this study will be devoted to analyzing how each depicts the native people as they suffer the shock of colonization, and how the presence of foreigners defeats and silence them.

#### Key Words

Colonialism, interference, silence, counter-narrative, psycho.

## KISA ÖZET

Hamid MOUSA

October,2012

### SESSİZLİK VE YENİLGİ: CHINUA ACHEBE’NİN PARÇALANMA VE ABDULRAHMAN MÜNİF’İN TUZDAN KENTLER ROMANINDAKİ KOLONİZASYON ŞOKU

Postkolonyal dönemde, kolonyalizmi yaşamış ülkeler o dönemin mirasını hâlâ taşımaktadır. Kolonyalizm mirasının yanı sıra, kolonyal kraliyet nüfuzuna maruz kalmış ve beraberinde köklü aşağılık duygusunu yaşamış eski kolonilerin, bugün petrol zengini olan ülkeler dahil, neo-kolonyalizm farklı bir formuna maruz kalmaktadırlar. Buna yanıt olarak, bu gerçeğin içinden gelen postkolonyal yazarlar geçmiş ve bugünkü yabancı müdahaleleri kınamaktadırlar. Bu karşı koyuş Nijeryalı yazar Chinua Achebe’nin *Parçalanma* ve Suudi Arabistanlı-Iraklı yazar Abdulrahman Munif’in *Tuzdan Kentler* eserinde görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada kolonizasyonun yerli halkların psikolojisi üzerinde yarattığı etkiler ele alınmaktadır. Bu konu hem *Parçalanma*, hem de *Tuzdan Kentler*’in birinci cildinin ilk on bölümü merceğe altına alınarak incelenecektir. Bu çalışmanın bir kısmı dış müdahalenin öncesini ve sonrasını kapsayan hayat karelerine odaklanacaktır. Ancak bu çalışmanın büyük bölümü her iki yazarın kolonizasyon şokunu ve yabancıların varlığının nasıl yerli halkı yenilgiye uğrattığı ve onları nasıl sessizliğe ittiğini, işleyişlerini ele almaktadır.

#### **Anahtar Kelimeler:**

kolonyalizm, görülmekte, sessizlik, karşı-anlatı, pisko.



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## INTRODUCTION

History shows us that many countries have been exposed to foreign interference. Undoubtedly, any hostile or exploitive intrusion in the domestic affairs of a country is not only unwelcome, but also strongly opposed, particularly by the indigenous people, who may become aware only gradually of the scale of risk posed by the interference. It should be remembered that African regions, such as Nigeria and the Arabian Peninsula countries, such as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, have suffered from negative consequences because of foreign interferences in the past. Yet, though many channels have combined in transferring this fact to researchers and to the reading public -- such as Open Media Series, documentaries, cultural production, and movies -- still the novel has a strong delicate flavor to add in carrying out this task.

Despite the abundance of published literature in the twentieth century, the past few decades have been distinctly marked by famous postcolonial writers who took occasion to produce literary works in order to fictionalize the historical facts that occurred in their countries. Among those writers are the Nigerian, Chinua Achebe, and the Saudi-Iraqi Abdulrahman Munif, both of whom are deemed eminent and prominent not only for their literary writings, but also for the apocalyptic vision behind those writings which enable them to foresee the future. Moreover, the great importance attached to the two authors is due to the influential role of their writings which caused and are still causing strong responses in the minds and the hearts of their readers. Achebe and Munif are considered to be writers of genius and this is not due only to the type of writings as we mentioned earlier, but to various other reasons,

one of which is their ability to access the depths of the colonized psyche deeply and transparently and to express profoundly the tendencies and impulses on which the psyche operates. Dealing with those psychological processes, and other related issues, those two authors added value to their novels and to the role of historical research in their literary creations. Thus, one may say that their novels surpass the direct vision.

Many countries were under the influence of the great powers. But there was some variation in this regard as different colonial powers pursued different expansionist policies. Both Nigeria and the Arabian Peninsula were exposed to foreign interventions during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Those historical events became the focus of some literary interest by such writers as Achebe and Munif. So, both writers used their pens to fictionalize the historical actuality of events which occurred in the modern history of their countries. For example, Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* to address many subjects associated with the culture of his community, the experiences of his ancestors, the African past, the African personality, and what these issues meant in the context of the pre-colonial period as well as the colonial domination in his country. Also through his novel, the author counters the portrayal of African communities in the narratives of other writers. So, Achebe used writing as a way to answer back to those narratives. But still the focus of attention in *Things Fall Apart* is on the fall of the main character, who represents a situation of an indigenous person under the weight of colonization and how his attitude changes during the presence of the intruders which led him to his death. As Obi Nwakanma says,

The violation of the cultural and moral ethos of the Igbos resulted in the initial resistance, which is imaginatively retold in the writings of Chinua Achebe, especially in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. This conflict imaginatively replayed in the tragic persona of Okonkwo and Ezeula in those novels . . . . British colonialism spread her wings over the soul of the traditional Igbo society, accompanied by its own new mysteries and power. The Roman Catholics were to become the most influential mission in this part of Igboland. (Obi Nwakanma 3)

As *Things Fall Apart* discusses subjects on African communities before and after foreign interference, its Arabian counterpart *Cities of Salt*, written by the Saudi-Iraqi author, Abdulrahman Munif, (particularly the first ten chapters), is aligned closely with it. Munif's *Cities of Salt* contains a number of important historical incidents which reveal the discovery and exploitation of oil in the Arabian Peninsula and its aftermath as these impacted on the indigenous people. In his novel, *Cities of Salt*, Munif sets a similar context to the one in *Things Fall Apart*. (It should be noted that our analysis of Munif's massive novel is limited to the first ten chapters of the first of five volumes). Here, Abdulrahman Munif unfolds issues of tradition and ancestral experiences, but of a different country. The novel also bears resemblance to that of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in that both describe the fall of a man who is a strong, proud, capable and well-known member of his community. Thus, the presence of the oilmen in the Wadi al-Uyoun in *Cities of Salt* results in creating much the same situation to that of the intrusion of the missionaries among the Igbo people in Achebe's novel. In fact, Munif's *Cities of Salt* is far from myth and close to recorded history: As Susanne Enderwitz remarks,

At the time Saudi Arabia was a country of abject poverty; the petroleum boom, the beginnings of which Munif was to describe in a novel, was only getting started during this period. As it happened, the year of Munif's birth was also the year in which the Arab –American Oil Company (ARAMCO) was founded, the starting point for a massive restructuring of politics, economics, and society. (Susanne Enderwitz 1)

Just as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* revolved around the tragedy of its main character, Okonkwo, so the main character, the elderly Miteb al-Hathal, is the tragic hero in *Cities of Salt*, particularly the first ten chapters in the volume of *The Wilderness* (Al Teeh), and suffers a misfortune analogous to that of Okonkwo. However, while the foreigners in both novels increase their presence, the tragedy of both characters started with 'silence' and ended with 'defeat'. Yet, has the shock of colonization supported us with a persuasive argument about how the intervention affects the psyche of the indigenous negatively? To deal with this question, this study attempts to discuss and analyze the parallel impacts, reflections, and implications of the colonial process on the native in *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*.

## CHAPTER I

### *THINGS FALL APART: COUNTER-NARRATIVE*

Many writers entered the literary world not out of desire, but rather their profession came out of a backlash over an event that occurred in their lives. The Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, is one of those writers who launched his career in response to colonialist writers. However, Achebe was raised in a Christian family in the village of Ogidi, educated at Government College in Umuahia, and graduated from the oldest University in Nigeria, the University College of Ibadan. After finishing his undergraduate studies in 1954, Achebe began teaching at Merchant of Lights College in Oba. Then, he started a career in broadcasting. During those years, Achebe made his debut in writing novels. In the following quotation from the book *Christopher Okigbo Thirsting For Sunlight*, the African poet, Okigbo, argues with Chinua Achebe about his writings, particularly *Things Fall Apart*:

The trip to the east was an opportunity to meet with the new writers living and working in the Eastern region. They spent some time in Enugu where they stayed with Chinua Achebe, who had by then moved to the city of the red hills, as the regional director of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. During the visit, Achebe had shown them the completed manuscript of his second novel, *No Longer at Ease*, and they had spent time discussing aspects of the new novel. Achebe had plainly fictionalized important elements of Okigbo's life in that novel. Indeed Obi Okonwo is an Okigbo hybrid. The character Christopher in the novel is also a compromise of Okigbo, and the incident in the girls' school, where the white principal chased them out, was an actual incident that involved Okigbo. (Obi Nwakanma, 2010:51)

However, in his book *Home and Exile*, Achebe reveals the reason why he became a writer. Of all the incidents described in this book, the writer draws attention to a particular experience during his University education. Here, the writer tells us how colonial lessons were taught in his classroom. In the section titled 'My Home Under Imperial Fire', Achebe shows to what extent the novel *Mister Johnson* by Joyce Cary



infuriated him. He says, “My problem with Joyce Cary’s book was not simply his infuriating principal character, Johnson. More importantly, there is a certain undertow of uncharitableness just below the surface on which his narrative moves and from where, at the slightest chance, a contagion of distaste, hatred and mockery breaks through to poison his tale” (2000:23-24). Then, when we jump to the following chapter, ‘The Empire Fights Back’, Achebe proceeds to reveal that Cary’s novel was clearly the rationale behind his becoming a writer:

I will begin this segment with a question: what did I do with my experience of the classroom over *Mister Johnson*? Anyone familiar with the gossip in African literature may have heard that it was that book that made me decide to write. I am not even sure that I have not said it somewhere myself, in one of those occasional seizures of expansive ambition we have to sum up the whole world in a single, neat metaphor. Of course we need such moments now and again to stir things up in our lives. But other times we must be content to stay modest and level-headed, more factual. What *Mister Johnson* did do for me was not to change my course in life and turn me from something else into a writer: I was born that way. But it did open my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or a town, but more importantly, an awakening story in whose ambience my own existence had first begun to assemble its fragments into a coherence and meaning . . . I still do not have a sufficient mastery, but about which I can say one thing: that it is not the same story Joyce Cary intended me to have. (37-38)

Elsewhere, Achebe also asserts that *Mister Johnson* was the driving force behind imagining and writing *Things Fall Apart*: “I was quite certain that I was going to try my hand at writing, and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Cary’s novel set in Nigeria, *Mister Johnson*, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that this was a most superficial picture . . . and I so thought if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from the inside” (qtd.in ix).

Undoubtedly, Chinua Achebe has won great global acclaim and this fact is reflected in the circulation of his novel *Things Fall Apart* in the academic world and

in the countless interpretations of it as well. Not only did this archetypal narrative gain the author an international literary reputation, but also it still has a profound resonance for the present time. Some writers, like Simon Gikandi, in his book *Reading Chinua Achebe*, sees Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* the starting point of modern African literature and a reason for his growing reputation:

For many students and scholars of African culture, the inaugural moment of modern African literature was the publication of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958); since then the Nigerian novelist's reputation has never been hard to sustain. Achebe is read and discussed more than any other African novelist, and his works have come to constitute important interpretive spaces in the development and critique of the post-colonial condition and its aesthetic. (1991:1-2)

Actually, Achebe is not the only novelist in the African literary world, and his novel *Things Fall Apart* is not the only narrative in African literature. Many African writers came before Achebe such as Amos Tutuola, Sol Plaatje, and Casely Hayford, but probably what granted Achebe this special status is the following extract from Simon Gikandi's appraisal of Achebe's reputation among African writers:

Achebe's seminal status in the history of African literature lies precisely in his ability to have realized that the novel provided a new way of reorganizing African cultures, especially in the crucial juncture of transition from colonialism to national independence, and his fundamental belief that narrative can indeed propose an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in the colonial and post colonial relations of power. In other words, Achebe was possibly the first of our writers to recognize the function of the novel not solely as a mode of representing reality, but one which had limitless possibilities of inventing a new national community. . . . Achebe was possibly the first African writer to be self-conscious about his role as an African writer, to confront the linguistic and historical problems of African writing in a colonial situation, and to situate writing within a larger body of regional and global knowledge about Africa. (3-6)

Other writers place vital importance on the publication of *Things Fall Apart*. They attach this significance to the novel by regarding it as a motivational book which could inspire many African authors to write and publish. And this is nowhere more

evident than in the following quotation from the book of *Christopher Okigbo*

*Thirsting For Sunlight* by the Nigerian Writer Chukwuemeka Ike:

When Chinua's book came out in London, it was one of a stimulating, inspiring experience. Suddenly, there was one of us who had become published, a living writer! it was suddenly clear to us that we too could write. It was certainly one of the motivations for Chris. We used to talk about it in one of the frequent times he dropped into my home [the novelist Chukwuemeka's] or C.C. Momah's in Ibadan while he was living in Fiditi. But being Christopher, he chose the lateral option; he chose to be a poet. To be a poet in that period, late in the 1950s, was even more fascinating. Poets were romantic figures. Christopher was a romantic figure. (qtd.in Obi Nwakanma128)

Although the central theme of *Things Fall Apart* is about an encounter between the Africans and the Europeans, it is also a work that addresses the culture of indigenous people in Africa. Clearly, Achebe identifies some cultural and social practices of the Igbo society around which the first part of the narrative revolves. The author fictionalizes this community and its traditions in pre-colonial and colonial times. In *Home and Exile*, the reader may see how this book agrees with many of the points that the author makes in *Things Fall Apart*, particularly the issues associated with the culture of his society. Achebe includes some details of the Igbo society which assist the reader in imagining the structures and the traditions of this people. Actually, the town in which the writer lived and was raised is called Ogidi. This village is one of the many towns and villages of the Igbo state and it is considered to be an earlier center in Eastern Nigeria for missionary activity. Further, throughout reading *Home and Exile*, the researcher may notice how the author doesn't create things out of nowhere. The writer fictionalizes the events of the narrative without deviating from truth; he describes reality as he had experienced it. In the following lines, Achebe introduces us to the fabric of this society:

The Igbo nation in pre-colonial times was not quite like any nation most people are familiar with. It did not have the apparatus of centralized government but a conglomeration of hundreds of independent towns and villages each of which shared the running of its affairs among its men folks according to title, age, occupation, etc; and its womenfolk who had domestic responsibilities, as well as the management of the scores of four-day and eight-day markets that bound the entire region and its neighbors in a network of daily exchange of goods and news, from far and near. . . . Competition among these communities has remained a strong feature of Igbo life from antiquity through colonial times to the present. At its worst it could lead to conflict. But there were also compelling reasons for peace and cooperation arising from the need to foster vital regional institutions such as the intricate and vibrant network of markets, the rites and obligations of cross-communal marriages and funerals, the dissemination of recreational songs and dances that one village would travel to learn from another and later, in the role of host and mentor, pass on to a third. (6-7)

Confirming these lines from Achebe's novel, in his book *Christopher Okigbo Thirsting For Sunlight*, Obi Nwakanwa gives us a picture which contains assertion of the previous paragraph about the structure of Igbo society. Nwakanwa also exposes us to the cultural and moral ethos of Igbo society before its land came under the control of the British. The writer argues that the practices and customs of Igbo people in pre-colonial time were dynamic, he says:

The typical Igbo societal system is organized around the family with a head, the age grade, the cult of titled men. The hamlets, the villages and the town with a market place, are usually where most commercial and diplomatic relationship are conducted. Here is also where the central assembly of the people meets regularly and sometimes the shrines of the various deities — chief of which is Ala, the earth goddess — are located. The Igbo system was of such sophistication that individual participation was supreme. Each decision was based on consensus. Being autonomous, every community addressed its peculiar concerns and imposed its own sanctions based on the compact with the earth goddess. Social conduct thrived on the sovereignty of these independent communities on the principles of egalitarianism, freedom, individualism and a certain distrust of supreme authority. There were no absolute monarchs. Each man worshiped his own gods and followed the path carved for him by his *chi*. (2-3)

In reading *Things Fall Apart*, we find that the novel indeed focuses on three central themes: the traditions of the Igbo society, the effect of Christians and Western

influences on it, and the clash of values during and after the colonial era. But if we read the writer's biography, we discovered that the narrative includes some things that are related to the writer's biography. As we mentioned earlier, Achebe was born in a Christian family, his father was an evangelist, and in addition, his great grandfather had been among the first people who received the missionaries into his village. Hence, Achebe echoes the life story of his family in the novel. In his article 'Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Literature', Gikandi tells us that:

As an author, Achebe may be separated from the central events in *Things Fall Apart* by a period of seventy years, but his own biography is very much part of the story he tells and its context. Achebe's family occupies a central role in the history which his novel narrates. We know, for example, that his great grandfather was the man who first received Christians Missionaries in the village of Ogidi ( Umoufia in the novel). More significantly, Achebe's father Isaiah Okafor (like Nwoya in the novel), was one of the first converts to Christianity in the area and worked for many years as an evangelist and teacher in the Christian Missionary society, the evangelical branch of the Church of England. (xiii)

In this part of the study we want to talk address the issue of the universality of the novel *Things Fall Apart*. In fact, like most anti-colonial texts, the value of this novel stems from its power to show the repudiation of colonialist discourse on Africa. In the narrative, especially the first part, Achebe guides us through the intricacies of Igbo culture so as we read the novel we get more and more familiar with the patterns of the lives of the Igbo people, and when the beauties and wisdom of their culture start to reveal themselves, it forces the reader to see how the culture of these African people — who have always been depicted as savages and primitive in European texts — is actually very rich and sophisticated. This strong culture value can be seen in an interview recounted by Simon Gikandi in which Achebe says that "What I think a novelist can teach is something very fundamental, namely to indicate to his

readers, to put it crudely, that we in Africa did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans” (qtd. in Gikandi 24). In such passages, Achebe makes a conscious effort to rectify the savage image of African society as publicized by the racists who depict it as barbaric and primitive. Moreover, the writer makes what he calls a recovery of the historicity of the culture of his Igbo society:

To write is to reconcile oneself to a past foreclosed by the experience of colonialism; it is an archeological gesture that seeks to recover the historicity of the Igbo life and culture. But before this act of restitution becomes possible, it must overcome the ‘objectified Forms’ of colonialist discourse, the representation of Africa as what Hammond and Jablow have succinctly called a field for the free play of the European fantasy. (qtd. in Gikandi 25)

So in *Things Fall Apart* Achebe manages to challenge the dual narrative we encounter in most Western Literature, the narrative of bad black savages versus the good white civilized man. As a reflection of many of the African writers’ anxieties, Achebe uses techniques of resisting, wrestling and confronting the modes of representing African history or the African character as reflected in the colonial tradition. So this novel gives us an invaluable opportunity to see African people from a different perspective. Unlike the Western perspective which tends to stereotype and objectify different cultures, Achebe gives us a universal perspective: By “universal” we mean that, while reading the book the reader feels that he or she reads about people who are just like us, who share all the features of our common humanity. Simply, the Igbos are just like other people: they embody dignity, passion, courage, wisdom, and loyalty as any other people do. The following quotation by Achebe stresses the same point:

One general point ... is fundamental and essential to the appreciation of African issues by Americans. Africans are people in the same way that Americans, Europeans, Asians, and others are people.... Although the action of *Things Fall Apart* takes place in a setting with which most Americans are

unfamiliar, the characters are normal people and their events are real human events. The necessity even to say this is part of a burden imposed on us by the customary denigration of Africa in the popular imagination of the West. (qtd. in Rhoads 21)

Another noticeable characteristic in the novel is the genuine feeling embedded in the text. Many critics such as Eric Sipyinyu Njeng, refers to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a counter-narrative to Western texts:

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is often placed against Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a counter discourse, interrogating the view that pre-colonial Africans were savages. Achebe himself confesses that his intention in writing *Things Fall Apart* was to situate it as a counter-discourse. In his essay "Named For Victoria, Queen of England," he fosters this view when he clearly states: "Although I did not set out consciously in that solemn way, I now know that my first book, *Things Fall Apart*, was an act of atonement of my past, a ritual return and homage of a prodigal son" (193). In another essay, "An Image of Africa", Achebe takes issue with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, accusing Conrad of being a "bloody racist." (328) (Njeng 2)

But when we analyze the text in detail we can see that this definition is a bit problematic and that is why we prefer to refer to it as a 'universal' text. When critics refer to Achebe's text as "counter-narrative" to Western narrative, the reader expects to read a highly sentimental work that victimizes the non-Western world by giving a bad image of the technologically superior but morally benighted West, yet Achebe's text has a quite different attitude. It is true that Achebe emphasized the culture and the tradition of African people, but he did that in a balanced way. He neither romanticizes the culture of the indigenous nor apologizes for the colonial, in other words, the religious, cultural, and traditional concepts are given with their good and bad sides, both skillfully interwoven into the narrative. Achebe shows no hesitation in presenting the peculiarities of Igbo culture, so the beauties and wisdom of their art and culture conveyed together with the apparent weaknesses of some religious and

traditional practices. Achebe is aware of the fact that such weaknesses could be found in any other cultures but in different forms and practices:

Achebe's novel presents the colonial experience from an African perspective, but it does so without romanticizing the African past. Thus, one of the most enduring aspects of *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's ambiguous representation of the Igbo past as heroic but, at the same time, compromised by Okonkwo's blind commitment to his culture and his obliviousness to alternative values and interpretations. This is the meaning of what is probably the definitive moment in the novel — the killing of Ikemefuna. Okonkwo strikes the fatal blow against his adopted son in the name of tradition and the moral order of his community but, as he is reminded by his friend Obierika, although the oracle of the hills (the custodian of moral authority) had decreed that the boy must be killed, she had not ordered Okonkwo, the surrogate father, to carry out the sentence. This one disturbing episode encapsulates the very essence of Achebe's philosophy, especially his concern with moral complexities and dualities. As he told Bill Moyers in a famous television interview, his values as a novelist are guided by a powerful Igbo proverb — 'wherever something stands, something else will stand beside it' (*A World of Ideas*, 333). Culture is, in other words, defined by ambivalence rather than unquestioned authority. (Gikandi xii)

Then the reader naturally derives the conclusion that having peculiarities in some cultural practices does not mean that these cultural and traditional concepts require change or destruction by another 'superior' nation. Now we want to jump back to the issue of genuine emotion which is embedded in the text. Related to what we have discussed so far, we now want to communicate our personal experience when we first read the novel, so as we said before the author succeeded in avoiding superficial elements; like overly flattering or idealizing the way of life of the natives and drawing an unrealistic picture implying that Umuofia was like a utopian place before the coming of the missionaries. ". . . in presenting a total world and a total life as it is lived in that world . . . I am writing about my people in the past and in the present, and I have to create for them the world in which they live and move and have their being" (qtd. in 31). Therefore instead of giving us an unrealistic view, Achebe gives



us an authentic vision of these African people, particularly the Igbo world, free from any artificial, which enhances the emotion conveyed in the novel to the highest degree. The perspective in which the story is narrated had an enormous impact on the reader because the story was narrated from the perspective of someone who grew up in Africa. One feels that the writer has an intimate association with the people he writes about that no Western writer could possibly have. Of course there are a lot of non-African writers like Sven Linqvist, who wrote sympathetically about African people, and we cannot deny the works of other sincere writers who gave us valid and rich images about African people. However, the writing of Achebe as an African writer has a spirit that reflects the inner feelings of these people, and we are fully aware the fact that even an 'outsider' might convey the inner life of the African people just as the 'insider' writer or even better. But if we think in terms of such a book that is heavily loaded with very deep cultural elements, we would dare to say that an 'outsider' cannot have access to the insights of native people that come naturally to an 'insider'. So for us the authenticity of the story stems from the unique window it opens on worlds that we might never get a chance to see again, we want to stress the fact that our appreciation of what has been written about Africa by some few Western writers is beyond words, but Achebe as an African has achieved something different. And here we can list many examples from the story, yet we would be content here in discussing one of the best parts in the novel which corroborates the points we mentioned earlier; the part of the story when Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu criticizes the men of Abame for killing a white man. 'Then he burst out: 'never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about the man?''(57). Of course this shows us the remarkable degree of

dignity, wisdom, and tolerance of Igbo society, but in addition, it reveals a very culture-specific concept that the ‘silence’ in Igbo culture has a very specific meaning. Additionally, Uchendo tells a story relating to the ‘silence’ and he says ‘there is something ominous behind the silence’: the silence is some kind of prophetic sign that something evil will occur so unlike the concept of Westerners in which silence is interpreted as weakness, in Igbo culture the silence has a powerful threatening effect ( There is another incident in the novel related to silence that we will discuss in the final chapter of this study: when we go back to the issue of conveying genuine emotions, Achebe is an African writer who absorbed African culture, and therefore he has an advantage of depicting Igbo culture with a full authenticity that it is almost impossible for a non-African writer to achieve. Gikandi reveals this truth:

. . . semiotic codes which Achebe evokes to represent his people, codes which are important not only because they evoke the schemas and grammar of this culture, but also point to the ways it represents and interprets itself. The Igbo world which Achebe seeks to represent in this novel is dependent on certain signs and images, a collection of social codes and signs, which are central to the development of meanings in *Things Fall Apart* (32).

Thus, in examining the way Achebe narrates his novel, we find that the novel contains many “semiotic codes” which the writer uses in representing the culture of Igbo society. In the process of reading the narrative, there are some social codes and signs which provide a cultural background for these people. One of the inaugural signs in the novel is “the kola nut” (5) which is a traditional way of entertaining that the Igbo use to serve their guests and socialize. In addition, the kola nut is used for sacrifices: “[Okonkwo] worshipped [the ancestral spirits] with sacrifices of kola nut, food, and palm-wine” (14). Another social code is “the Week of Peace” (27). It is a sacred week, and during this week people must be at peace with each other, not

work, and not inflict violence. “The Feast of the New Yam” (35) is “. . .an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the goddess of the earth and the source of all fertility” (35) is also intended to provide a cultural background. “The Feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honor the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan” (35). These signs and other such as, “The annual worship of the goddess earth” (176), which Achebe evokes through his narration, represents the culture of his people, establishes its authenticity, and increased the popularity of the novel.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MUNIF'S FICTION AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

Everything in the life of Abdulrahman Munif was designed to achieve Arab unity. His parents are from two different Arab countries — his father from Saudi Arabia, his mother from Iraq. Politically, he was a member of the Arab Ba'ath movement for whom unity is at the forefront of its aims, according to Sabry Hafez in "An Arabian Master". Hafez claims that "At Baghdad [Munif] found an intense political ferment. . . . Munif became an early member of the Ba'ath party" (40). In the field of literature, his entire literary works mirror an anxiety for Arab unity, and when Munif writes, he refers to the Arab people as a whole: "I refuse to give names to the locations in my novels because I feel that the Arab calamity is the same everywhere. I have travelled in most the Arab countries and what I find in one is likely to be similar to what I will find in the next" (qtd. in Kalid Belkasher 3). In the study of Muhammed Abdeljabar, "Parallel Texts in the Literary Works of Abdelrahman Munif: A Critical and Analytical Study", the writer emphasizes this fact in the following paragraph:

Shaker Al-Nabulsi labeled Munif as an ideological writer who widely believes in Arab Unity, Arab freedom, and Arab socialism. Most of Munif's works present such ideas which were as a reaction to the Arab conflicts from the Egyptian revolution in 1952 to the present day. Munif doesn't write to amuse his readers but he writes to reveal his readers to themselves. Munif depicts characters who defend their existence. Thus, Munif presents an ideological narrative. (8 my translation)

Actually, Munif was unclear in his affiliation to any Arab country. For example, the Palestinians think that Munif is Palestinian; the Lebanese think that he is from Lebanon, the Jordanians think that he is from Jordan and so on with the other Arab

nationalities. In fact, Munif didn't belong to those lands with their mountains and stones; rather, he belongs to the Arabic people among whom he lived.

From the age of forty, Munif devoted himself to literature for nearly 35 years, but his dedication came after years of political activity. As Sabry Hafez asserts, before his political involvement, Munif was profoundly affected by a chain of important political events such as "...the mysterious death of Ghazi, King of Iraq, in 1939, and the pro-Axis — Because anti- British — sympathies of most ordinary people in Amman during the Second World War" (Hafez 40). The Arab-Israel war of 1948 was among the political events that had a deep effect on Munif. In his article "A Patriarch of Arab Literature", Tarik Ali says, "Like the bulk of [Munif's] generation he was shattered by the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948 and became a staunch Arab nationalist." Then, according to Sabry Hafez, when he entered Baghdad University, Munif became a political activist:

At Baghdad University [Munif] found an intense political ferment. The campus teemed with political groups covering the whole spectrum from communists to the pro-British conservatives, with many shades in between, and Munif became an early member of the Ba'ath party, establishing himself as one of the its most cultured and trusted cadres.( Hafez 40)

At this time, and due to his participation in the wave of protests unleashed against the signing of the Baghdad Pact, Munif was expelled from Baghdad, and unable to complete his undergraduate degree. He moved to Cairo and joined Cairo University. During his residence there, he witnessed Nasser's Pan- Arab nationalist drive. Afterwards, Munif went to Yugoslavia where he obtained his doctorate in oil economics at Belgrade University. Upon his return to the Arab world, he worked in some oil firms which enabled him to get a lot of experience not only at the profession as level, but also at the level of knowing to what extent the foreign forces exploit the

oil industry in Arab world, and this was among the influences that caused him to devote himself to write literary works. Thus, both his political and economic backgrounds provided Munif with the skill and knowledge for his narratives.

As mentioned above, Munif had more than enough experience to become an oil expert because he had worked for some Arab oil firms. While working in this field, Munif noticed how the policies of foreign companies involved a process of exploitation and oppression, so he decided to mirror the curse of this exploitation by writing novels. This and other political reasons caused Munif's decision to withdraw from political activity to write novels. The following is an interview with the author when he emphasized that the Arab-Israel war of 1967 was one of those motives, "The defeat of 1967 pushed me [Munif] towards the novel not as a means of escape but of confrontation. It had an unforgettable effect to see such a vast area as the Arab world —with all its enormous clamours and slogans – crumble and fall, not just in six days but a mere few hours" (qtd.in Hafez 47). Other critics like Susanne Enderwitz also stresses this piece of information in her article, "Memories for the Future: Abdelrahman Munif" she says:

Following the June War of 1967, faces with disquieting developments in the regimes of Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, Munif saw his hopes fading away and he gradually withdrew from active political life. He turned to writing novels, convinced that this was where his true vocation lay, firmly believing that it would continually lead him to new shores and enable him to contribute to a more humane, freer, and fairer world. Munif's faith in the power of literature was boundless, and he had reasons for his unshakable conviction (136).

Munif's wide experience in economy and oil was also another contributing factor to many of his writings and here, in his essay, "Abdul-Rahman Mounif: Novelist and political activist who highlighted the Arab plight", Abdul –Hadi Jiad provides us with clear explanation about how Munif's experience in this field enabled him to

write. He says of Munif that “A political activist for the nationalist cause and a widely travelled oil economist, the breadth of his experience enabled him to create a richly imaginative body of work” (1). The fact that his father was a trader who took caravans across the Arab World also gave him detailed background for his fiction (Hafez 3). Thus, Munif transformed from active political life to a devoted literature writer who later won great fame. The following quotation puts it in a clear way:

Munif enjoys an excellent reputation amongst Arab literary critics and, above all, the Arab reading public. He possesses a detailed knowledge of the facts, he is aware of cultural differences, he strikes the right tone, he criticizes economic globalization, and he castigates despotic rulers – enough reasons to guarantee him a cult status cutting across the usual boundaries of national literatures. But through these aspects Munif’s fame in the public perception feeds mainly on his role as a dissident, as a critic of imperialism, politics, and society. (Susanne Enderwitz 8)

What we have covered so far is a brief historical background about the writer’s life. Now, we will shed light on the most prominent literary works of Munif, particularly the five part novel *Cities of Salt*. In fact, the literary scene of Munif almost started in the second half of his life. As we mentioned earlier, Munif was first a political activist before coming to be a novelist. Through the following lines, Munif reveals how he retired from politics and took up writing as a career: in his own words, “I came from this reality. I had a passion for reading and an interest in literature, but I didn’t think that I would be a writer. The conditions I have lived, as is the case of many of my generation, got us preoccupied with the political activity and the public work. Consequently, the time and the work were spent on this course” ( Abdeljabar 45). In another place, in another conducted interview with Munif about how he started writing novels, the writer puts it more succinctly thus:

I took up writing by accident or out of necessity. I was deeply engaged in political activity. After working in this area, I found out that the existing

political formula were unsatisfactory and not inadequate. Therefore, there was a need to look for alternative forms to communicate with others and to express their concerns, the concerns of the stage and generation. As I was an avid reader, particularly reading novels, I supposed that through this area, and since I can express my ideas through writing, therefore, it was an alternative approach. So, instead of a political party or a political activity, the novel could be a means of expression. Thus, I took up writing novels. As for economy, especially oil, it was a contributing factor in reading the society, particularly in the current stage; hence economy and other sciences could be of help to the novelist for reading society and to know the influencing factors. (Iskander Habash, My translation)

These lines emphasize two facts. The first one is that Munif was well aware of the political life in the Arab world and this comes under observation in his narrative. The other one is why Munif came late to the literary work, as Hafez says “coming to fiction late, when he was almost forty, he could draw on first-hand knowledge of political life in several Arab countries, and an intimate experience of certain kinds of revolutionary organization and their outcomes” (Hafez 41-42)

Munif’s first literary production, which was *Trees and the Assassination of Marzouq*, was in 1973, and if we go back to the date of this first novel, we will find that this time coincides with the ongoing Arab-Israel conflicts. The reader of Munif’s novels may find how the content of most of his works refer to political issues related to the Arab world whether it is in the colonial or post-colonial period and this truth is proved by the following passage in a dissertation by Khalid Belkasher, “Generally speaking, the works of Munif exhibits a remarkable variety and motifs. However, the most frequent ones are the political themes, especially the themes of oppression; the social change particularly the move from a simple Bedouin life to a more sophisticated life, themes of alienation and self-exile, to mention only a few” (Belkasher 3).



After being a political activist and oil expert for many years, Munif joined the ranks of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialism writers. Throughout studying Munif's personality and his political orientation, we found that his whole inclination is against the violence and repression around him, particularly against the oppression of Arab dictators. Almost all his writings are imbued with political, social, historical and cultural factors. In his writing, Munif registers historical facts and reflects the reality of the Arab world which usually can be questioned, and Sabry Hafez observes that, ". . . Munif followed . . . experimental work by writing a realistic novel of political intrigue" (50). In the context of talking about the many ways that people handle the legacy of imperialism in the Third World, Edward Said says in his *Culture and Imperialism*:

But, equally, debate in Third World countries about colonialist practice and the imperialist ideology that sustained it is extremely lively and diverse. Large groups of people believe that the bitterness and the humiliations of experience which virtually enslaved them nevertheless deliver benefits — liberal ideas and national self-consciousness, and technological goods — that over time seem to have made imperialism much less unpleasant. Other people in the post-colonial age retrospectively reflected on colonialism the better to understand the difficulties of the present in newly independent states. Real problems of democracy, development, and destiny, are attested to by the state persecution of intellectuals who carry on their thought and practice publicly and courageously — Eqbal Ahmed and Faiz Ahmed Faiz in Pakistan, Nguigi Wa Thiong O in Kenya, or Abdelrahman el Munif in the Arab world — major thinkers and artists whose sufferings have not blunted the intransigence of their thought, nor inhibited the severity of their punishment. (1994: 18-19)

Munif was like many other post-colonial writers who took up writing as a way to express their indignation at the negative legacy left by colonialism and maintained by neo-imperialism. In fact, the years of the political activities and working in some Arab oil firms opened the door before Munif to see to what extent the Arab regimes were authoritarian and repressive. Furthermore, Munif acquired a great deal of

knowledge about how the Arab regimes had been involved in collaborating with foreign powers to rob the Arab people of their wealth. As an outlet for his indignation, Munif, therefore, found that writing novels is the best means to transform this kind of an ongoing colonialism in the Arab homeland. In the following paragraph, Edward Said proceeds to show how these forms of imperialism are utterly abhorrent to some post-colonial authors such as Munif:

Neither Munif, Nguigi, nor Faiz, nor any others like them, was anything but unstinting in his hatred of implanted colonialism or the imperialism that kept it going. Ironically, they were listened to only partially, whether in the West or by the ruling authorities in their own societies. They were likely, on the one hand, to be considered by many Western intellectuals retrospective Jeremiahs denouncing the evils of a past colonialism, and, on the other hand, to be treated by their governments in Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Pakistan, as agents of outside powers who deserved imprisonment or exile. The tragedy of this experience, and indeed of so many post-colonial experiences, derives from the limitations of the attempts to deal with the relationships that are polarized, radically uneven, remembered differently. The spheres, the sites of intensity, the agendas, and the constituencies in the metropolitan and ex-colonized worlds appear to overlap only partially. The small area that is perceived as common does not, at this point, provide for more than what might be called a *rhetoric of blame*. (19)

### **Oil fiction**

Most writers try to benefit from history whether it is local history or international one. During the twentieth century, major events happened in the Arabian Peninsula. The Arab author, Abdulrahman Munif, was the first Arabic writer to put pen to paper to fictionalize those historical events. So, in 1983, Munif wrote the first part of his quintet *Cities of Salt* which is *The Wilderness*, but it wasn't published until 1984. In fact, the five part novel is the greatest one written by Munif. It is an epic novel which spans seven decades from 1902 to 1975. It contains a number of important historical events which occurred in the Arab Gulf. Throughout *Cities of Salt*, Munif managed to portray Arab societies, particularly the Gulf ones, in a clear way. Also, Munif

could reflect the huge cultural shifts in the Arab Gulf communities. Furthermore, the writer devoted a large part of his quintet, *Cities of Salt* to experience gained in the field of oil after he had worked in the petroleum companies. Here, Munif presents the scale of changes brought about by the oil revolution in the heart and structure of the Arab Gulf societies, “. . . the fate of a desert community during the petroleum boom” (Enderwitz 136). In an interview by Mohammad Abdeljabar with Munif about the content of his novel, *Cities of Salt*, the author says:

The core subject of *Cities of Salt* stems from a fundamental problem. As Arabs, we have suffered from it for a long time. The problem is oil which is not only related to wealth; rather it is a complete change in the situation of the Arab region during the last thirty to forty years. This change is going on to the present and it is not confined to the countries of oil, but it extends to non-oil Arab countries as well as the non Arab states. (Abdeljabar 112 My translation)

The reader of the above quote may pause at the phrase “fundamental problem” and may ask a question, why is the writer calling the oil a problem?, of course, this label didn’t come from a vacuum due to the fact that Munif had a long experience in this field. Yet, to get a better answer for the question mentioned above, *Cities of Salt* may be of help since this narrative stems from this problem. Here, the author documents the fact that the blessing of oil turned to a curse in the Arab World because the oil wealth is the rationale behind bringing many troubles to the Arab region. In *Culture and Imperialism*, there is a context in which Said talks about the Desert Storm and its effects on people, as a person who lives in both East and the West. Said finds it troubling that American debate attacking Iraq as though it is mathematical/economic problem, with no concern for the way it will impact the Arab World, Said says:-

From the Arab point of view, the picture is just as skewed. There is still hardly any literature in Arabic that portrays Americans, the most interesting exception is Abdulrahman el Munif massive series of novels *Cities of Salt*,

but his books are banned in several Arab countries, and his native Saudi Arabia has stripped him of his citizenship. To my knowledge there is still no institute or major academic department in the Arab World whose main purpose is the study of America, although the United States is by far the largest, most significant outside force in the contemporary Arab World.(355-356)

The novel contains graphic details of an encounter with drilling for oil and its subsequent consequences. Through *Cities of Salt*, Munif chronicles the history of discovering oil in the Arabian Peninsula and examines its wider implications on the structure and the standards of Arab societies, particularly the Arab Gulf. In his article “The Hidden Lives of Oil”, Rob Nixon asserts that these impacts on the Arab societies are the main theme in Munif’s work, he claims, “His [Munif’s] great subjects is the rise of the Gulf State petro despots; his subsidiary theme, the role that American oil gluttony has played in sustaining them. The novels include, within their sweep, a sense of growing disillusionment among ordinary Muslims, whose lands and lives have been trampled by the petroleum behemoth” (2).

The first volume of *Cities of Salt* is *The Wilderness* (Al-Tih), which talks about an oasis called Wadi Al-Ouyun before and after the oil discovery. In this place a nomadic Bedouin group live in a great simplicity and in this environment, suddenly a group of American engaged in a dangerous mission. Being in doubt about this mission, Miteb al-Hathal shows resistance to it. Miteb al-Hatah is a fierce fighter whose ancestors previously defended their oasis against the Turk, and he will resist against the American who drill for oil. When the Americans start uprooting the trees, Miteb al-Hathal disappears in the desert.

If we start with the meaning of the title, *Cities of Salt*, and the title of the first part *The Wilderness*, we find that the main title consists of two words; the first is ‘Cities’,

the plural of the word city, which is a component associated with a place of human gathering. The other is 'Salt' which refers to a fragile material with salty taste and it is an instant substance, and when we add 'Cities' to the word 'Salt', the component of 'Cities', which the title refers to, will be crystallized. Yet, in the following statement, the author provides us with a detailed analysis, he says:

*Cities of Salt*, means cities that offer no sustainable existence. When the waters come in, in the first waves will dissolve the salt and reduce these great glass cities to dust. In antiquity, as you know, many cities simply disappeared. It is possible to foresee the downfall of cities that are inhumane; with no means of livelihood they won't survive. Look at us now and see how the West sees us. The twentieth century is almost over, but when the West looks at us, all they see is oil and petrodollars. Saudi Arabia is still without a constitution; the people are deprived of the elementary rights. ( Enderwitz 140)

As for the explanation of the title of the novel, in her article 'Ecological Dimensions in the Work of Yaşar Kemal and And Abdulrahman Munif' Clare Brandabur also helps us understand the writer's meaning of the title of the novel. She says, "Munif explained that his title, *Cities of Salt*(Mudun al- Milh) refers to his conviction that the exploitation of oil in the Middle East would build sky-scrapers and palaces for the west, but leaves for the Arabs only "cities of salt" that would crumble at the first wind or rain in the desert" (15).Throughout these lines, one may conclude that the title symbolizes a loss and a disappointment waiting for the societies of oil Arab countries which are exploited by a supper power.

The first volume of the narrative, *The Wilderness* (al-Tih) spans the period from 1933, in fact, it is the same year when Munif was born, to 1953. In the opening scene of this part, the writer portrays the environment of an oasis called Wadi al-Uyoun in the desert of the Arabian Peninsula in a period of a pre-oil discovery. The author starts with a wonderful descriptive passage talking about the nature of this valley,

“Wadi al-Uyoun: an outpouring of green amid the harsh, obdurate desert as if it had burst from within the earth or fallen from the sky. It was nothing like its surroundings, or rather had no connection with them, dazzling you with curiosity and wonder: how had water and greenery burst out in a place like this?” (1989:1).

In the novel, Munif talks about a society dominated by a nomadic lifestyle. In fact, the Bedouin are considered to be the pristine representation of the Arab culture. This piece of information may be attributed to the fact that since the Bedouin communities took the desert as a settlement, they had stayed away from the colonial campaigns; as a result they didn't mix with the culture of the colonizer. Bedouin have special language, social structure and culture. Their houses are still the same as those their ancestors lived in goat and camel skin tents. Yet, the writer draws a realistic portrayal of Bedouin life. He shows most of the distinctive characteristics the nomadic society possesses such as simplicity, smoothness, and adjustment. Besides, there is a strong feeling of solidarity among the people of Wadi al-Uyoun. They share happiness and sadness with each other, “Peaceable and happy, they were always quick to help out and expected little in return . . . In the Wadi itself, people were poor, but they were happy with the life they lived and praised it extravagantly”(8-9). Furthermore, Munif presents us the traditional way of Bedouin life for example, how they serve a drink or a food either to each other or to a guest, their customs in entertaining themselves, and how they express their happiness. For these social performances and activities, the narrator says:

When things got better, the people acted differently, talking more and spending long nights socializing. On summer nights it was not enough to sit around the coffeepots telling stories; they wanted to sing and sometimes dance, to unleash endless ideas, sorrows and memories. Some men would be overcome by sleep and others by an urge to fight, all for unknown reasons or

even no reason at all. If their guts were still tormented by hunger and the vessels of sour milk were no longer making the round, someone would shout to the rest, “Grilled meat! Yes, that’s just what we are going to eat tonight!”(9).

In this paragraph, we want to pause at the word ‘coffeepots’, which is called ‘Della’ in Arabic( a long nosed Arabian coffee pot) because this is the most distinctive ritual of the nomadic tradition in serving a drink for each other or to a guest. As for the way of preparing this drink, they use greenish or yellowish coffee beans and roast it lightly in an open pan. Then, they would put the beans in the ‘Della’ on hot coals and whenever a guest comes; they would pour the coffee in a little handle- less coffee cups called ‘Finjan’.

The first part of Munif’s quintet, *Cities of Salt*, includes the tragedy of two groups of people who live in a separate place. The first group is the people of Wadi al-Uyoun who live interdependently and with an amicable relationship. Then, when the oil men come for drilling for oil, a disaster strikes them. The people of the oasis are forced to leave their Oasis whose landmarks are obliterated by the oil discoverers. The second group is the people of Haran who also are forced to leave their place and receive the same fate; Belkhasher describes the situation as the following:

The new mode of the existence that accompanied the oil discovery has shattered their entire system of values: social, economic, and political. El-Enani argues that the paradisaical life of Bedouins came to an end by the very beginning of oil-discovery. He writes, [the] moment the drilling rigs first struck oil in the Arab peninsula can in retrospect likely be compared to the first bite from the apple of the Tree of knowledge. (qtd.in 18)

**CHAPTER III**  
**THE IMPACT OF COLONIZATION IN *THINGS FALL APART* AND *CITIES***  
***OF SALT: SILENCE AND DEFEAT***

Both Nigeria and Saudi Arabia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were in a similar predicament. They were plagued by the curse of foreign interference. This intrusion succeeded in removing the cultural and social norms of the two nations mentioned above. Both the Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe and his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Abdulrahman Munif, could fictionalize their own account of the historical events brought about by this interference in their respective regions. Although, the process of colonization is different in each case, the fictionalized consequences of those lands, which are depicted in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and in *Cities of Salt* by Abdurrahman Munif, are somewhat the same. It is interesting for the reader to see how the imagination of both authors has much in common, particularly in examining the shock of colonization and its consequences on their people.

While reading the two novels, we may clearly see how Achebe and Munif examine the inaugural backlash of the indigenous people against the coming of the strangers. Since the interference in both Nigeria and Saudi Arabia is depicted as a predicament with a sense of oppression, as *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt* tell us, in his essay “Frantz Fanon and Colonialism: A Psychology of Oppression”, Blake Hilton describes the result of that situation as “... oppression is often a resulting factor. Oppression ... can precipitate many powerful and negative effects on the psyche of the colonized individual” (45). In the process of reading the two narratives, all kinds of questions may run through the reader’s mind, but we may



pause at a particular one, is this examination a coincidence or an inevitable result that are obtained naturally in any colonized country?. Since colonization has a big influence on the indigenous psyche, undoubtedly, the second possibility is the closest.

As a fact, history taught us that any foreign intrusion in any country's affairs, whether it is social, economic, or political would drag that country into chaos and throw it into confusion, and evils were about to be loosened upon the native. However, when the foreigners came to the specific regions in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, as it is depicted in both novels, dramatic changes had been caused by those strangers not only on social and economic level, but also on the individual level. As soon as the "albino" in an "iron horse" appears, the wise men had soon perceived the scale of the disaster and foresee that there will be serious potential danger to their lands, for example, in *Things Fall Apart*, the elders of the clan soon go and consult with their oracle about the white man, "The elders consulted their Oracle and it told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them" (130). *For Cities of Salt*, the potential danger is also confirmed. In chapter eight, when the foreigners left the oasis and came back again, the elderly man, Metib Al-Hathal, gives them nicknames which predict that evil will come to their village, "In the last days of that bitter winter, without warning, the American who had left them long months before returned with others and some of the emir's men. Miteb had nicknamed him Nahs (Disaster) while others called him Ghorab (The Crow) . . ." (67). Actually, using the word 'Ghorab' is part of Arab culture. The Arabs use the name of this bird 'Ghorab' as a symbol of evil from pre-Islamic periods up to now. It is presented in the Arab ancient intellect as a predictor of pessimism and dark, and

some Arabs employed this feature in their poetry and proverbs to describe issues that imply evils and carry misfortunes.

Yet, if we take the word colonization which is applied to both countries mentioned earlier in a broad sense of the term, we can get the following: a symphony of disaster; a story of suffering, and a storm of pain ripped through the villages and cities of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia which left their prominent people such as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Miteb al-Hathal in *Cities of Salt*, in the most confused state of their mind. Shortly, the unwelcome intrusion, as it is depicted through the two main characters mentioned above, of the missionaries in Achebe's novel and of the oilmen in Munif's narrative has caused a widespread disruption in those countries.

As every process of colonization, as soon as the missionaries in *Things Fall Apart* and the oilmen in *Cities of Salt* arrive in the villages of the indigenous people, they start explaining the reason behind their coming. They exercise slogans such as liberating, civilizing, developing, and so on. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, the missionaries use "the new faith"(136) as a justification for dominating the land of the Igbo people. "And he [the white man] told them [the people of Umoufia] about this new God, the Creator of all the world and the men and women. He told them that they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone" (136). With regard to *Cities of Salt*, the strangers come to Wadi al-Oyun to extract oil and to get the people of the oasis rich, "They [the oilmen] said, 'Wait, just be patient, and all of you will be rich' . . ." (29). But, as time goes by, the reader finds out that from the day the intruders come to the village Igbo in *Things Fall Apart* and to the oasis of Wadi al-Oyun in

*Cities of Salt* onwards the situation worsens, and the way of life of the aboriginals is never the same again.

In the light of what we discussed so far, we can say that the reader, who is familiar with colonial history, may see that the Americans and the British are among the leading countries to colonize areas worldwide and this is generally attributed to the steam power and canon that enabled them to dominate large swaths. Edward Said notes in his *Culture and Imperialism*, “By the beginning of World War one, Europe and America held most of the earth’s surface in some sort of colonial subjugation”(267). Their total control has extended from Northern and southern America, Australia to Africa and Asia. Depending on their power and their tendency toward occupying the lands of the others, they could dominate the peoples and absorb their wealth. A case in point is India, which was colonized by the British for over 300 years, was considered the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. Another example is the British colonization of Africa, the so-called, ‘the Dark Continent’, and many African countries have endured the scourge and tragedies of British occupation. The British invasion created divisions of the African continent into fragile countries and still being torn by civil strife, and famine. As Ngugi Wa Thiong’o puts it in clear way in his essay “Writing For Peace”, “The water he [the colonizer] drinks often taken from the thirsty in the third world and the food he eats is snatched from the mouths of the hungry in Asia, Africa and South America” (Thiong’o).

Shockingly, when we read books about colonialism, we discover that the life of indigenous peoples is exposed to a process of negative changes. Thus, in this kind of

reading, we are introduced to scenes of agony, sufferings, disruption, anarchy, and a cruel life for native people whose lives are filled with desperation and humiliation. Noticeably, most of these phases are not present in pre-colonial life. Yet, the disruption caused by foreign intrusion is so tangible in *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, and here, the reader is offered two different portrayals of life before and after colonial intervention: the “before” attracts the reader to the simplicity of native’s culture, way of life, and traditions, but after the foreigners come, all the elements of normal life become under threat and the reader is exposed to a melancholy portrayals. In her book *Colonialism/ Post colonialism*, Ania Loomba asserts this fact, she says that “Colonialism, we have seen, reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities”(2005:155).

*Things Fall Apart* by Achebe and *Cities of Salt* by Munif are similar to each other in dealing with issues associated with colonialism. As these novels aroused much interest since they were published, they still affect new readers. Many contemporary critics and specialists deal with them as if they were written yesterday. Perhaps, the seriousness that distinguishes their content is one of the characteristics for which they still maintain significance. Also, both of them manage to provide the reader with a memorable recreation of the Nigerian and the Arabian lives before, and, during the foreigners’ intrusion. Characteristically, the two authors evoke a pre-colonial image of their countries and how it becomes tainted with the colonial status. Thus as Achebe’s novel gives us an account of what happened to African villages due to the arrival of Westerners, the main function of the early pages of Munif’s work appears to present a similar image on the effect of Westerners on the nomadic and oasis

community of Wadi al-Uyoun. The two writers' contribution shine light on the human element in their story. Both novels discussed the social, economic, and psychological disruption that inflicts the people of the two novels. With the description of the way of life before and after the coming of the foreigners, the reader is enabled to see to what extent the scale of the damage they caused to the natives traditional home and how they throw townsfolk's lives into disarray. The depiction of those two novels looks somewhat sad and awful because of the social and the economic developments which leave negative influence on the native. The two narrators portray how those in power use "progress" to enrich or protect their own interest and create more victims or worsen the plight along the way.

Achebe and Munif fictionalize scenes and incidents of stark realities that happened in their respective societies. In both novels, the two authors depict how the magnificent nature and way of life in harmony with it come to an end. In spite of the widely differing settings, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* doesn't set itself apart from Munif's *Cities of Salt*, both novels are aligned with each other in many ways. In the city of Umoufia in *Things Fall Apart* and in the oasis of Wadi al-Uyoun in *Cities of Salt*, the same peaceful life is disrupted by the sudden intrusion of the foreigners. The Igbo townsfolk and residents of Wadi al Uyoun are reduced to utter devastation. The former are destroyed by the missionary and the policeman who followed him, and the latter are disturbed by the oil-men. Yet, the presence of the outsiders in the village of the Igbo and in Wadi al-Uyoun augurs ill for both of them.

Both novels are fashioned as a view from the insiders. Achebe and Munif position themselves as a kind of anthropologists who represent from within the life of a

fictionalized colonized city. As cultural insiders, one may deem their novels as ethnographic mode due to their vivid representation of their customs, ceremonies, beliefs, and traditions. Furthermore, they detail the intricate formalities of the clan, in short, both writers combine the role of novelists and anthropologists. Thus, these two novels help the reader to discover the foreign from within. What is more, and since the foreigners descriptions are notorious for their distortion due to the unfamiliarity with the native's customs and culture, these kinds of novels help the reader to enter a native world and see past and present indigenous experiences from an indigenous perspective.

With their detailed documentation of the cultural practices, the two novels, particularly, part one of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Munif's first ten chapters of the first volume of his quintet *Cities Of Salts*, plunge the non-native reader into the world of an African society and an Arabian society. The most striking quality of the two novels is their emphatic account of the Igbo and Wadi al-Uyoun people. Seamlessly woven into the narrative fabric are accounts of the ceremonies, and customs for example, marriage customs in Umoufia and the rituals of hospitality in the Bedouin society. These details, together with the number of proverbs embodying clan wisdom that punctuate the narrative, function collectively to create rich, vivid portraits of a traditional Nigerian and Arabian culture. Both narrators intricate acquaintance with Igbo and Bedouin Arabian culture is signaled by the ability to closely document such beliefs and practices to use the native tongues and to omnisciently enter into the minds of Igbo and Arabian character.

Throughout the two novels, the two narrators open for the reader a clear window to see to what extent the native well-being collapsed psychologically and economically as soon as his/her country is exposed to foreign intrusion. The aesthetic analogy between the two novels is the emphatic account of the people of the Igbo and Wadi al – Uyou. Achebe and Munif portray a case of a community prior to extensive contact with the intruders and how even the most prominent people suffered from the high level of paralyzing anxiety created by those interferences. These two authors depict that under the weight of colonization, life loses its taste and the colonial era is condemned as worse than hell and under its process all kinds of calamities are to happen. Many issues have been opened for discussions that were not on the agenda before and there is no discussion of the fact that the land of the native becomes a tortured land. Thus, after colonization, no one realistically can guess the possible costs and consequences. Through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe shows us how the appearance of the missionaries eroded Okonkwo's voice. In a similar way, among its overlapping chapters and reverent portrayal, *Cities Of Salts* by Munif bears a remarkable resemblance to the one indicated earlier when the fountain of Miteb al-Hathal's speech has dried up due to the emergence of the foreigners.

As the incidents of the two novels progress, the reader may pause for thought at the first moment of the shocked silence of the two main characters when they heard about the foreigners. This impact can be seen through paying attention to two paragraphs. The first one in *Things Fall Apart*, when Obierika came to visit

Okonkwo in his exile and told the men in the meeting about the coming of the foreigners to the village of Abame, it tells,

“‘He [the foreigner] was not an albino. He was quite different’. He sipped his wine. ‘And he [the foreigner] was riding an iron horse. The first people who saw him ran away, but he stood beckoning to them. In the end the fearless ones were near and even touched him. The elders consulted the oracle and it told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them. (130)

The second parallel paragraph is in *Cities of Salt*, when Fawaz came back home after watering the camel and sheep and informed his father, Miteb al-Hathal, about the strangers he saw in his way, it says:

“Ibn Rashed has foreign guests, “he [Fawaz] told his father [Miteb al – Hathal], who was still busy with the fire.

His voice fell among the coals and the clinking coffeepots as his father kept at his task, as if he he had not heard or did not want to hear excuses for the delay. Fawaz spoke again, more loudly and with something of a challenge in his voice. “They’re Franks, and they speak Arabic.”

His Father [Fawaz’s] raised questioning eyes at these words and wanted to hear more. They sat across from each other with the fire and coffespots between them.

“Three foreigners with two marshes Arab, and they speak Arabic.” He [Fawaz] raised his voice for effect. “They speak differently than we do — it’s comical. But you can understand what they say.”

He saw a sudden change in his father, whose concentration now gleamed in his eyes as he looked at Fawaz sternly, as if he wanted to read in his face and eyes what had been left, in order to know what kind of men these had been.(26)

Clearly, the above two parallel paragraphs show that the news on the strangers resulted in an impact upon the hearings of the presence. Yet, the reader may see that the news about the foreigners’ coming to Umoufia and to Wadi al-Uyon is seen as the starting point, which causes the continuance of the life style of Okonkwo and Miteb al-Hathal to stop. It may be considered to be like an initial paralysis which led the two main characters to the beginning of their psychological collapse, for example



in the case of Miteb al- Hathal, from the time of the appearance of the foreigners on we can clearly notice how the incidence of foreigners extremely infuriates Miteb al-Hathal and get him adopted another attitude. The appearance of the oilmen also creates painful condition for Miteb al-Hathal, and every passing day his case becomes worse than the day before.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE COLONIZED AND THE EPIDEMIC OF SILENCE

It was said that silence may tell a thousand words, and death that results from a disease of silence is better than the one caused by talk. Silence is a matter of conscience, psychological thoughts, ideas, and concerns, and it is a mixture of hope which is nestled and settled in the heart of the silent person. Calm and balanced behavior can be seen as properties and characteristics of silence. It keeps a person from speaking or revealing his\her secrets as well as it keeps a tight rein on a person's tongue from falling into uncontrollable revelations or sliding into the shafts and the slopes of danger that threaten him.

What we discussed so far is a simple definition or description to the general concept of 'silence', yet this concept tells us a different story when it is interpreted in terms of colonialism. As a fact, the concept of 'silence' is often understood as a case of weakness which inflicts the human being, particularly when he or she is exposed to humiliation, provocation, or any kinds of injustices. In the repository of literature, many authors, such as Chinua Achebe and Abdulrahman Munif, help us understand or acquire another meaning of our main topic. By their works, those writers simply let us know that outward silence suggests inward boiling. In the depth of the silent person, blazing over the days to formulate a new bright template which is geared to human being a decent life and a desired happiness. So, those kinds of literary works such as *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe and *Cities of Salt* by Munif, in which these two works contain many imagery scenes of silence, remind us with the common proverb

of ‘the calm before the storm’. Thus, when human being is exposed to life grievances and tragedies, this person becomes silent, facing big challenges. We see him absorbed into a sea of thinking and reflections showing outward calm, a veneer of stoicism with great patience. However, in their depths, the silent individual lives in another world interacting with worries and fears meditatively and patiently in order to break and tear the constraints which surrounded him. Thus, the silence is a heart fraught with ideas, anxieties, ordeals, and calamities that inflict the people. This brimful heart moves between wings of darkness to illuminate the lamp of the dawn to remove the dimness of the night.

Actually, and above all what we have discussed so far; it may be true that there are many sides of silence. The following paragraph by Beryl Markham in her memoir *West With The Night* adds a further insight to our understanding of the types of silence:

There are all kinds of silence and each of them means a different thing. There is the silence that comes with the morning in a forest, and this is different from the silence of a sleeping city. There is silence after rainstorm and before rainstorm, and these are not the same. There is the silence of emptiness, the silence of fear, the silence of doubt. There is certain silence that can emanate from a lifeless object as from a chair lately used, or from a piano with old dust upon its keys or from anything that has answered to the need of a man for pleasure or for work. This kind of silence can speak. Its voice may be melancholy, but it is not always so . . . whatever the mood or the circumstance, the essence of its quality may linger in the silence that follows. It is a soundless echo. (1)

Yet, in the colonized country, ‘Silence’ is seen as an aftermath of a murder on a large scale in which the colonizer is involved. Having voice and being silenced were inscribed as integral processes of colonial agency and in any reading of the histories associated with colonialism, we find out that the colonized remain voiceless and silenced.

Now, if we go back to the *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, we can see that the two novels offer a fertile ground to apply all that we have discussed so far. However, let us start our discussion by focusing on the protagonists in the two novels, Okonkwo and Miteb Al-Hathal. Both are sympathetic persons. The reader of what happened to both characters may ask, is it just coincidence that what happened to Miteb al- Hathal also happened to Okonkwo? or is it a case of fate to both of them?. If we think with a possible and convinced answer, one may argue that neither the mentioned question nor the probability that followed it. Yet, the reader who is interested in issues associated with colonial encounter may find out that it is an epidemic that inflicts the indigenous people in general in an encounter with colonization. Okonkwo is so humiliated that he commits suicide. Miteb al- Hathal is so overwhelmed that he mounts his white Omani camel and disappears. Both are silenced.

Focusing on some character at the beginning of the narrative, a writer surely prepares a base on which he tries to achieve his aim. In doing so, and generally, when the writers describe details of some character, they hide some message from their audience about that character till they lift the cover and reveal the point they want to make in the end. However, postcolonial writers have a different style. By examining details of some characters, those authors convey a message to their readers not about the character himself, rather they try to refer to a nation.

*Things Fall Apart* provides a fresh insight into the life of its main character, Okonkwo, and the same does *Cities Of Salt* with its main character, Miteb Al-Hathal. Having given glimpses and clues about the rationale behind the element of ‘Silence’ in the two narratives, *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, the writers unfold a tale of

the negative and corrosive nature of the colonization. It is worth mentioning that Okonkwo and Miteb Al-Hathal are among the prominent figures who are afflicted by silence after they had been like "... a jewel flashing in the night ..." (Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* 2) in their sayings and actions in their communities. What is the most noticeable about these two figures is the degree to which pain and grief shape their lives due to the existence of the foreigners and seemingly: what paralyzes Okonkwo's voice has done the same to Miteb al- Hathal's. Achebe and Munif show us that the two main characters' lives were dynamic in the pre-colonial stage, but both are deprived of life by colonialism.

Achebe and Munif early, in these novels, expose to the reader the social superiority of the two main characters, Okonkwo and Miteb al-Hathal, in the tribal setting. Okonkwo is depicted as a heroic figure, the writer says:

That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during his time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush fire in the harmattan. He was tall and his bushy eyebrows and wise nose gave him very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children on their out houses could hear him breath. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father (3).

This introduction about Okonkwo's position in the clan tells the scale of the importance of this character. Also, in the course of reading *Things Fall Apart*, one may see to what extent this protagonist is wise enough, particularly when he shares with the others in the clan about issues associated with crises that hit their village.

Regarding Miteb al-Hathal, who is a descendent of valiant resistance fighter, the author of *Cities of Salt* doesn't depict his main character as a heroic character, rather

than Miteb al-Hathal is portrayed as a simple Bedouin tribesman whose strong passion toward his oasis, the following paragraph puts it in clear way:

There was a special relationship, a rare passion between Miteb al-Hathal and Wadi al-Uyoun. Those who had lived there in both periods- the one when Wadi al-Uyoun was as Miteb knew it, and the following period- would speak about it differently. They would say that this Wadi, with its palm trees and plentiful water, which soothed and supplied travelers on their ways to better places, was indispensable; without it there would have been no life or movement, no road; no tribes would have come; there would never have been Miteb al-Hathal and in his tribe, the Atoum.(3)

What one may conclude from the above paragraph that the writer is likely to convey a message to his reader that by explaining the relation between Al-Hathal and the oasis in which he lives, the author may show the scale of this character's association for this land. Thus, Miteb al-Hathal and Wadi Al-Uyoun are integral part of a whole.

In fact, the most remarkable thing about Miteb al Hathal as Munif tells us in the outset of his novel that Miteb al Hathal, "... Would tell stories which in some cases dated back to the days of Noah". (3) These and other things such as saying proverbs in the meetings, the metaphorical terms they use, and prediction about the weather, whether or not it will rain show how wise Miteb al-Hathal is. Also, due to the fact that the eldest is important in the Bedouin because he represents the forefathers, and since Miteb al-Hathal is the eldest, "... because of his age and social standing..." (31), so some analysts consider this figure as a spectral. Accordingly, in his essay "Petro-capitalism, Petrofiction, and Islamic Discourse: The Formation of an Imagined Community in *Cities of Salt*" Ilana Xinos says :

Miteb Al-Hatha symbolizes the origin of the imagined community in the novel and that community's Edenic past. Miteb is the ancestral father of the indigenous tribe, the Atoum and serves as the people's ancestral leader and spectral protector. An ancestral figure is important to the Bedouin ... Miteb al-Hathal is the eldest of the al-Hathal clan, and the direct leader whose father and grandfather fought the Turks who used to occupy the Wadi. (6)

From this, we may infer that before coming to the radical changes to the village of Igbo and to the oasis of Wadi al-Uyoun and before reaching the turning point for those two protagonists, both writers may want to show the reader the first image of their main characters as they were in the pre-colonial era. On one hand, giving simple descriptions to both of the main characters, Achebe and Munif fictionalize the real nature of the life of the native people not only to the individual but the community as the same time and they portray the magnificent performance and dynamism in pre-colonial life. On the other hand, the writers intend to show how the natives experience a sense of disarray and disorder in the presence of the foreigners, and in this way they use the plight of an individual to the collective pain of the people. Showing such details, the authors also aim to clear the fogged image in front of the reader to see later in the advanced chapters the transformations from the clarity of the lives to their moodiness for the indigenous people. Another instance, those preliminaries in the opening scenes of the novel about peaceful lives of the protagonists, are ways to show contrast by the trauma of the impact on these two characters of the intrusion of the foreigners.

Clearly, *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salts*, the opening chapters focus attention on the plight of Okonkwo and Miteb al-Hathal. These two natural leaders are guilty of no wrongdoing except they are loyal to their homes and traditions. While mapping the course of these two characters, Achebe and Munif depict to the reader the backlash against the presence of the foreigners throughout the feeling of these characters. An example of this case shown clearly in *Things Fall Apart* when Okonkwo has been shaken with fury over seeing the foreigners, as indicated in the

following statements, “ After the singing the interpreter spoke about the Son of God whose name was Jesu Kristi. Okonkwo, who only stayed in the hope that it might come to chasing the men out of the village or whipping them out...” (138), and “As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his matchet, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang.” (144)

In a similar way, Munif puts us in front of the same scene. The writer shows us the scale of impact on his main character, Miteb al-Hathal. Being shocked by the news of the foreigners, Miteb al-Hathal reacts with anger against the arrival of the westerners, particularly when they have started establishing their presence in the oasis, he says,

Miteb al-Hathal quickly agreed to spend the night at Ibn Rashed’s and stayed there until sundown the next day, always watching the three foreigners closely, speaking to them, asking himself and others what had brought these men here... Miteb chose a long road for the ride back to Zahra, one he almost never used, and when he got back he was a changed man to all those who saw him and knew him. He was confused and depressed. ( 28)

Also, in another place in the novel, the writer says, “People long remembered the moment he[Miteb al-Hathal] arrived, shaking like a leaf and glancing about him like a wolf. When he caught sight of the newly built camp, he could not stop cursing. He wanted to destroy it utterly, but the people prevented him.” (68) Throughout the above two paragraphs, the one may simply interpret the muscle tension and the feeling of being filled with deep resentment of the two natives, Okonkwo and Miteb al-Hathal, as case of refusing the existence of the foreigners, but Frantz Fanon makes a more general appraisal. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, he says, “The native’s muscles are always tensed. You can’t say that he is terrorized, or even



apprehensive. He is in fact ready at a moment's notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter. The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor.”(41)

As the events progress, we may clearly see how the whole attitude of the protagonists of both novels changes, and how they start suffering from psychiatric problems such as confusion, depression, and anxiety. These symptoms indicate psychological abnormality according to C. George Boeree, in his essay “A Bio-Social Theory of Neurosis”, who says “Neurosis refers to a variety of psychological problems involving persistent experiences of negative affect including anxiety, sadness or depression, anger irritability, mental confusion . . . .” (1). while it may be true as Ania Loomba says that “Every new arrival on this planet is faced by the task of mastering the Oedipal complex; anyone who fails to do so falls a victim to neurosis” (Loomba qtd.in121), in arguing the same issue in postcolonial theory, Loomba adds a further insight to our analysis, when she says:

But given the history of psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The wretched of the Earth* were explosive. Fanon's work directly intervened in the legacy of racist theories of biological and psychological development. It pushed to its logical conclusion the view that ‘modernisation’ led to native madness by suggesting that it was not modernisation as such but colonialism that dislocated and distorted the psyche of the oppressed. The colonized could not ‘cope’ with what was happening because colonialism eroded his very being (122).

Many issues fly in the face of expectation and are opened for discussion that were not on the agenda before the colonial era, one result of which is not only bringing the native people to their knees, but also reduce them to silence. Particularly this consequence is suffered by the leaders of the first order such as the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, and the patriarch, Miteb al-Hathal in *Cities Of Salts*.

These novels offer a useful point of entry for thinking about what is indicated above. The change that occurred in the village of Umoufia and in the oasis of Wadi al-Uyoun has affected vehemently those characters. As soon as the news of the foreigners reaches the hearings of Okonkwo and Miteb al-Hathal, an incident brings attention to the reader which is the production of the melancholy portrayal of these two native leaders; the attitude of each one is no longer the same as before. Here, a similar phenomenon occurs with both of them. The most distinctive feature which the reader may observe is the deafening silence that descends on them, and this noticeable trait is seemingly not inherited, rather it is imposed by the advent of the westerners to their communities. As time passes, the wave of anger and the rush of revulsion against the interference of the foreigners fuels them. These forms of revolutionaries turned to an inner glow more like a tumult wraps them in unbroken silence.

Certainly, the foreigners have caused a big upheaval in Okonkwo's village, "The village was astir" (188) and in Miteb al-Hathal's oasis, "Within days everything in the Wadi changed — men, animals, and nature" (67). Accordingly, these two characters have thrown themselves into the building of another world which is the world of silence. In doing so, both have tried to swallow the bitter pill created by the westerners' domination in front of their own eyes. Moreover, Joseph R. Slaughter, in his essay "A Mouth with Which to Tell the Story: Silence, Violence, and Speech in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", suggests that the silence imposed by the colonial world is a form of resistance, he argues, in the part of Igbo individuals, that, "While the narrator increasingly stresses the imposition in Umuofia, the plot foregrounds the encounters between Igbo individuals and the colonial institutions.

Silence, then, becomes the paradigmatic medium of negotiation, resistance, and resignation”(88-89). This text suggests the functions of the silence, and if we focus attention on the element of resistance, we can find both novels offer fertile ground for this analysis as we will discuss later in our study.

Actually, as soon as the country comes under the colonizer’s control, as we mentioned earlier, many issues are opened for discussion which were not on the agenda in pre-colonial era. For example, the people of the colonized country divide into two camps. The first one is the followers who support the colonizer and whose voices rise during the colonial period, and the second one is the resistant ones to the colonial project who fall silent. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salts*, both writers show that one of the ways to respond to the change created by the intrusion upon the society of Igbo and Wadi al-Uyoun is the silence. This is very vivid throughout depicting the backlash of the two main characters mentioned earlier against the arrival and the establishment of the foreigners in their midst.

Actually, in the last part of *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator increasingly stresses the imposition of the issue of silence in Umoufia. This silence imposed by the colonial administration infects the characters in the novel, Slaughter adds that “Achebe’s novel thematizes the impositions of silence and the equally important representations of silence, suggesting that no easy equation between silence and passivity is possible”. (96). In *Things Fall Apart*, the most recognized character to be hit by the silence is the hero, Okonkwo. In regard to this character, the issue of silence and in spite of the great distance between the foreigners and Okonkwo when he heard of them first, we find the impact of the news coming from Abame gagged him and gagged the other townsmen, “There was a long silence” (131). In his essay,

““We can eat the chick””: Textual Institution of Colonialism in Nigeria”, Slaughter explains how the intrusion doesn’t only pose a major threat to the fabric of the society, but also changes the way of talking in the earlier chapters that the reader may notice in the Umoufian society the analyst says:

*Things Fall Apart* represents the threat of both institutions in terms of generic inclusion and exclusion. That is, the intrusions of the church and the state radically transform the life of the natives not only challenging the social, cultural, and political institutions of Umoufia but also by restructuring the kinds of speech and language in which life is conducted. (88)

In his fiction, Achebe pushes the boundaries of realistic fiction beyond its limits and allows us to see how the harm and the sufferings are indeed done under the weight of intrusion. In the final chapters of *Things Fall Apart*, the author helps us to examine those agonies through the inner voyage into the self and psyche of the native. Thus, in the climax of events of the novel, the changes to the Umoufian society are radical and they proved that the surprises shown by the colonizer are countless and unpredictable. Consequently, and with the passing of time, reduction into silence could be seen in *Things Fall Apart* through its characters. Being extremely affected by the incidents that surrounded him, Okonkwo is chased by the spirit of restlessness and anxiety. This angst increases and paralyzes him particularly when the shells of the upheavels caused by the foreigners affect the people of his home, the following paragraph puts it in a clear way:

One morning Okonkwo’s cousin, Amikwu, was passing by the church on his way from the neighboring village, when he saw Nwoya among the Christians. He was greatly surprised, and when he got home he went straight to Okonkwo’s hut and told him what he had seen. The women began to talk excitedly, but Okonkwo sat unmoved. (143)

Conspicuously, the impacts and the implications of colonialism on Okownkwo’s psyche are caught in this excerpt. Being stunned by the news about his eldest son

having joined the Christians is enough reason for putting Okonkwo in the circle of silence. Actually, it is clear that the speech function of Okonkwo fails at the moment of receiving the news, but this failure puts the situation between action and reaction. Thus, being “unmoved” undoubtedly refers to the scale of the striking event which paralyzed the once-great man. Consequently, this action results in accumulating the rage inside Okonkwo, as Slaughter describes it “... silence with a kinetic potential hidden as a glint of static steel...” (90) and its reaction is told by the lines that followed this paragraph, “ It was late afternoon before Nwoye returned. He went into the obi and saluted his father, but he did not answer. Nwoye turned round to walk into the inner compound when his father, suddenly overcome with fury, sprang to his feet and gripped him by the neck” (143)

As the events develop, Okonkwo grows muter about what is happening and clearly, the incident of his son added fuel to fire. Okonkwo, who had always been able to speak or tell his world as any usual man, but also “Okonkwo was popularly called the ‘Roaring Flame’(145), now he throws himself into the building of another world. It is the world of isolation; the following is a penetrating example of how Okonkwo merges into muteness mourning the bygone days:

Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his father crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man’s god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth.... He sighed heavily, and as if in sympathy the smouldering log also sighed. And immediately Okonkwo’s eyes were opened he saw the whole matter clearly. (145)

As the events of the novels go on, Okonkwo’s anxieties are proliferating due to the increased influence of the missionaries. In the thick of the encounter with the

reality the foreigners imposed on the Umoufian people, the loftiness of Okownkwo is bowed down and he gets worse after this encounter. His eldest son's conversion into Christianity and the dramatic changes to his village caused by the foreigners have worsened his case. So, the future of his sons and his village under the influence of the missionaries has occupied the largest room in his memory. Thus, Okonkwo has spends lonely times, becoming involved in speechless controversy and mourning the loss of the past days. The following paragraph asserts that "Okownkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the warlike men of Umoufia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women"(173). Actually, the fact of the reduction of men's status comes under the observation of Marnia Lazreg when she points out in her book *The Eloquence of Silence*, that, "...colonial intervention meant a loss for men's status, now perceiving themselves as reduced to the social status of women..." . (1994:53) Consequently, Okownkwo starts suffering the pain and bitterness of defeat.

The frequent reference to silence in the last part of the novel, particularly the one that descends upon the man of war, Okownkwo, helps us to see that the destructive impact of the colonial domination generates in this man a sense of feeling impotent. When the novel reaches its climax, Okownkwo's plight is increasingly exacerbated, especially when he is exposed to humiliation. The silence which occurs after being exposed to abuses and violence can indicate the frustration and the limitless emotions that someone feels when he cannot find a proper word to express it. The following quotation illustrates that:

Okonkwo and his fellow prisoners were set free as soon as the fine was paid...They neither spoke to anyone nor among themselves. ..As they made their way to the village the six men met women and children going to the stream with their waterpots. But the men wore such heavy and fearsome looks that the women and children did not say "nno" or "welcome" to them, but edged out of the way to let them pass. In the village little groups of men joined them until they became a sizable company. They walked silently. As each of the six men got to his compound, he turned in, taking some of the crowd with him. The village was astir in a silent, suppressed way. ..His male relations and friends had gathered in his obi, and Obierika was urging him to eat. Nobody else spoke, but they noticed the long stripes on Okonkwo's back (188)

It is crystal clear that the dignity of these people who were highly respected in their society was severely harmed, so here the silence does not indicate weakness, on the contrary it indicates the untamed feelings that seek refuge in building emotional barriers which led to a deep silence, and as a consequence this powerful silence poses some danger, so Igbo people believe. The pent up emotion can show up in very dangerous forms. To my own way of thinking nothing in this world can load the human with such strong emotion more than humiliating him or her; this feeling can turn the very quiet and harmless person to a giant who is ready to destroy all the world let alone the proud and reactionary one, and this exactly happens in the story

Okonkwo slept very little that night. The bitterness in his heart was now mixed with a kind of childlike excitement, before he had gone to bed he had brought down his war dress, which he had not touched since his return from exile. He had shaken out his smoked raffia skirt and examined his tall feather head-gear and his shield. They were all satisfactory, he had thought...As he lay on his bamboo bed he thought about the treatment he had received in the white man's court, and he swore vengeance. As he thought of these things he heard the sound of the iron gong in the distance. He listened carefully, and could just hear the crier's voice. But it was very faint. He turned on his bed and his back hurt him. He ground his teeth. The crier was drawing nearer and nearer until he passed by Okonkwo's compound. "The greatest obstacle in Umuofia," Okonkwo thought bitterly, "is that coward, Egonwanne. His sweet tongue can change fire into cold ash. When he speaks he moves our men to impotence. If they had ignored his womanish wisdom five years ago, we would not have come to this." He ground his teeth. "Tomorrow he will tell

them that our fathers never fought a 'war of blame.' If they listen to him I shall leave them and plan my own revenge."(189)

The quotation above illustrates the pain of a proud man who is insulted by the people who came to dominate his land, in his essay "The Story of a Man and his people" Ernest A. Champion says, "He [Okonkwo] now an anachronism, a man tossed by time into a world that moved without him." (276) At the end Okonkwo kills a messenger and then hangs himself, Okonkwo was a man who bound to his society's tradition and customs yet he did the most degrading act in his custom which is ending his own life. It is unacceptable in his culture but he did it, because of the maddening feeling of revenge he felt, he wanted to gain his self dignity which the colonizer took from him and at the end he chooses to sacrifice his dignity in his own society rather than living in a world which no longer belongs to him, Slaughter argues that "Okonkwo's sense of impotence overboils ... But, Okonkwo's personal fate is exacerbated by colonialism and missionary adventurism. The text suggests that his inability to accommodate and adapt to the social and cultural structures of Umuofia made him not long for its world." (90)

Regarding *Cities of Salt*, Munif similarly designs the same character that is subjected to oppression of intrusion. Clearly the coming of the strangers to Wadi al-Uyoun has made great impact on the main character, Miteb al-Hathal. Accordingly, in a way similar to what happened to Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Miteb al-Hathal has also resorted to silence. In his essay, "Silence: The Gap and the Bridge of Modernity in *Cities of Salts*" Puente puts it quietly in clear way when he argues that, "Miteb al-Hathal, the patriarch of the Wadi al- Uyoun, is confronted with changes



being brought to his home and is unable to use his words or to analyze the events going on around him, and because this, silence ... is the only way to respond." (1)

Having being outraged by the intentions of the foreigners, Miteb al-Hathal has isolated himself from the current world in an attempt to cope with this situation, he soliloquizes,

They certainly didn't come for water – they want something else. But what could they possibly want? What is there in this dry desert besides dust, sand and starvation? They say they'll be here a long time? How will they live? They look like chickens when they eat. And the questions they asked were damned crafty. Saying they weren't like the ones who came before. 'Have any foreigners besides us come?' 'Have you heard about any foreigners, English or French coming here?' 'Did they stay long? Did they do anything?' they're afraid-they've done something... They don't want to stay here-they want to travel around, to go and then come back, and others will come after them. That's what they said. They said, 'wait, just be patient, and all of you will be rich' But what do they want from us, and what does it concern them if we get rich or stay as we are? (29)

The volley of soliloquized questions in the above paragraph lays the cornerstone in expressing the misgivings, the fears, the anxieties and the anticipations that run through Miteb al-Hathal's mind. Also with respect to the above passage, the reader may see through it how it provides a confirmation that Miteb al-Hathal has become suspicious of the intentions of the strangers. As well, this extract leads us to some conclusion that these doubts expressed in this long monologue, which have led Miteb al-Hathal to throw himself into deep thinking, raises the reader's attention to the abrupt change in the behavior of this character. Actually, the news of the foreigners has constrained Miteb al-Hathal from speaking so he has resorted to isolate himself and to think about this incident and to speculate about what might happen.

In fact, the growing backlash by Miteb al- Hathal against the emergence of the westerners in the oasis where he lives increased his fears and resulted in silencing

him. Conspicuously, the arrival of the oil-men at the Wadi al-Uyoun turned the tranquility of this oasis into a whirlwind. Also, their establishment has unleashed endless suspicions, particularly by the ancestor of courageous fighters, Miteb al-Hathal. Thus, in the course of events that happened in Wadi al-Uyoun, Miteb al-Hathal has got a very different state and he becomes more like the one who suffers from psychological illness. He grows more pessimistic and obsessed with the coming days on his oasis and becomes overtaken by fears and apprehensions which the sight of the foreigners caused. Not only that Miteb al-Hathal was filled with worries, but also he began hallucinating, and his health starts to deteriorate. The following paragraph underlines how this character is agonized by the impending tragic consequences on his oasis:

The summer passed, then the fall. The foreigners who had come through Wadi al-Uyoun long months before were forgotten; no one asked about them or remembered them. Miteb al-Hathal still anxious and expectant found that any mention of them redoubled his anxieties, especially since his friends had begun to show impatience at his notions and questions. They considered it bad luck even to mention the Americans, so Miteb kept the subject to himself. But nothing could save him from the dreams and fears that stalked him at night. Nighttime became a torment to him, and to avoid it he began napping for a few hours during daylight, though the broken sleep did him little good. Wadha and the others took notice and feared that his health would fail. They spoke to him gently to help him forget, treating him with tenderness and sympathy, but instead of soothing his fears this made him more irascible (46-47).

Alongside this paragraph, there is another place in the novel which portrays us how the dismissive attitude towards the presence of the foreigners and anger boil up inside Miteb al-Hathal, it says:

After a watchful vigil lasting three days and nights, with little real sleep and even less food and water, Miteb al-Hathal went back to Zahra a different man. He was utterly changed: after dismounting from his horse, haggard and wild eyed, extremely feeble or ill, he staggered to his house and fell in front of the door. Nothing his wife could do roused him, so she brought out a mattress

and pillows for him to sleep where he lay. She could not convince him to wash his face or to take a cup or two of tea, for he was as spiritless and weak as he was insistent, he seemed to be in a state crushing depression and frailty, as if the end of the world had come, but he was completely conscious, if despairing, when he finally spoke: "They talk about the resurrection day? Today is resurrection day. They say when iron moves on iron? Today I saw iron move on iron!" (70-71)

It is crystal clear that these statements offer us an indication of the magnitude of the proliferating harm to the existence of the foreigners caused to this man. As time passes, a collection of syndromes is caused to Miteb al- Hathal, as a result of his great sense of restlessness and deep suspicion of the advent of the foreigners such as being insomniac, lowering his head and being isolated thinking of the coming days. Actually, Miteb al-Hathal has a distinguished stature among his tribe not only because of his age rather than is due to the strong relationship which links him with the land on which he lives, so when his case has changed extremely, it was something of the utmost importance for the townsfolk. In the following passage, Puente claims that:

The tribal and nomadic people survived by living life according the law of the land to which they called home. Miteb al-Hathal, Munif tells us, has a "special relationship, a rare passion" with Wadi al-Uyoun that is based on his ability to hear and communicate with the natural elements that surrounded him. Because life in the desert is so dependent upon water and its saving grace, people such as Miteb were invaluable to the community. (4)

In the light of what we have learned and undoubtedly, the moments of silence, which fell upon Miteb al-Hathal throughout the novel, are unequivocal signifiers of his refusal to the existence of the westerners. In one important sense, the silence of the character Miteb al-Hathal can be considered a form of rebellion against not only the presence of the foreigners, but also against the collaboration of the sons of his home such as Ibn Rashid and the Emir. Here and through the character of Miteb al-

Hathal, Munif offers a radical investigation of the psychological insight of the native under the weight of the intrusion. Munif's work also is focused on giving the reader a more in-depth look at the native's psyche which suffers the sense of alienation from the society surrounding him. This feeling, which is provoked by the reasons mentioned above, will bring dire consequences to this man. As the subsequent chapters tell us Miteb al-Hathal's case is increasingly worsened and he starts suffering from psychological ill-effects just as he decides to disappear from view, and assume a total isolation, Fawaz, his son comes and breaks the silence. The following paragraph describes how Miteb al-Hathal is heavily affected:

He [Fawaz] neared his father and saw his sallow face, wild eyes and his violently trembling lower lip. Miteb ran his hand rapidly, convulsively up and down the rifle barrel. He could not speak, even when Fawaz asked him if he [Miteb] had seen a wolf or an enemy. He wordlessly shook his head no, but his eyes conveyed more than censure or reproof. His eyes said, "The depths of the earth are better than its face. I don't want you to see my weakness ... to see me like this."

After long silence which hung heavy between the two, broken only by Miteb's nervous and despairing hand moving along the rifle barrel, a weary croaked voice: "Did you [Fawaz] water the animals?" He did not look up as he spoke or as he listened to his son's reply. (75)

In fact, the events of the novel tell us that the days are pregnant under the presence of the strangers in *Cities of Salts*. Not only the collaboration of the Emir and Ibn Rashed was the reason that drove Miteb al-Hathal to deafening silence, but also there were other factors. In a way similar to what happened in *Things Fall Apart*, Munif also portrays to us the scene of tradition clashes with the native. As it is known, the people of Wadi al-Uyoun are a segment of society which belongs to values and traditions inextricably fed on rules inherited from forefathers and fathers. From this point, we find that the sudden interaction of the traditions of the westerners with the one of the Arabians leads to a serious clash. This matter drives the people of

the Wadi al-Uyoun, particularly Miteb al-Hathal, who mainly refuses the entire existence of the foreigners, to be uneasy. The following extract explains the situation:

At first this daily occurrence was greeted with surprise, then anger and resentment. Even Ibn Rashed, who always defended Abdallah, tried to explain to him that the people would not accept the idea of having to look at men lying around like this. But he got nowhere. The men still passed by the camp and the boys as well, but the women, whose habit was to pass it on their way to bring water from the brook, stopped completely, in real shock. (78)

In fact, the issue of the clashes of traditions takes place in most if not all the conquered countries. This important event is considered to be one of the most serious matters that face the indigenous people. This extract also brings to our mind the clashes of faith in *Things Fall Apart* between the relation of the aboriginal and those of the missionaries. However, the event cited is a further addition to the list of the causes that exacerbate Miteb al-Hathal's concerns and the deathly hush that seems almost sinister. Actually and after the cumulative things that happened to the people of Wadi al-Uyoun in general and to Miteb al-Hathal in particular this man reached a point of no return. The dramatic change caused to the oasis ignited glowing embers inside the psyche of Miteb al-Hathal are as it is seemed, never extinguished. In the later chapters, Miteb al-Hathal becomes wordless man more than before and this factor, which is clearly created by the new circumstances that descended upon the Wadi al-Uyoun, looked like a chronic illness infected Miteb al-Hathal and no way to escape.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, writers such as Chinua Achebe and Abdulrahman Munif offer narratives which give extensive attention to the aftermath of foreign interventions on the psyche of indigenous people. In their works, Achebe and Munif were not the first authors to raise such issues in writing novels; many writers preceded them. But what made eyes turn toward their literary works, particularly *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, is the events they took from actual history, the inclusion of personal experience in their narratives, and the emphasis on showing the culture and tradition of indigenous people. A distinctive characteristic is shown because those customs and religious practices are seen through the eyes of indigenous writers.

The fictionalized string of historical events narrated in *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, illustrates actualities which happened in Nigeria and the Arabian Peninsula. The former novel, by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, deals with the colonial experience of Nigeria at the hands of Britain. Munif's narrative depicts the effect of the discovery and exploitation of oil in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Yet, as the two narratives progress, the connections between them become evident. Clearly, the Igbo community in *Things Fall Apart* and the people of the oasis in Wadi al-Uyoun early in the first volume of *Cities of Salt, The Wilderness* (Al Teeh) share the same consequence as those in the aftermath of the foreign intervention in Achebe's novel.

Actually, *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt* offer much more than our restricted analysis of a few examples and symbols, but we have limited our study to the psychic shock of the indigenous people created by colonization and dire

consequences. In both novels, we observe the phenomenon of silence to which the two main characters are reduced. And after an intensive psychic struggle, both characters were unable to find any escape from their situation, so they were closer to defeat than any alternate choice. Thus, the hero of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, was silenced by his death, and the protagonist of *Cities of Salt*, the elderly Miteb al-Hathal, disappears.

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