

Colonial Legacy and Environmental Degradation in Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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ABSTRACT: *Over the years, Africa has been plagued by the effects of the atrocious impacts of colonialism on humans and the environment. This paper analyses how environmental degradation and colonial heritage themes are interwoven in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Nnedi Okorafor's Who Fears Death. These works highlight the enormous consequences of colonialism on African communities and their ecosystems despite their different chronological and cultural settings. Achebe's Things Fall Apart provides a historical perspective on how colonial intervention disrupted indigenous customs and ecological equilibrium. On the other hand, Okorafor's Who Fears Death explores the long-term effects of environmental degradation and colonial exploitation by projecting these themes into a hypothetical future. This article highlights the ongoing impact of colonialism on African landscapes and communities through a comparative analysis of these works, underscoring the need for a critical reevaluation of historical narratives and contemporary environmental policy. The paper adopted the Postcolonial Ecocriticism Theory, propounded by Graham Tuffin, to examine the intersection between colonialism, environment, and culture. The selected texts were subjected to critical, qualitative analysis, highlighting the impacts of colonialism on the environment and humans. The paper reveals how environmental degradation caused by colonialism influences people's social realities in Africa. Thus, the negative consequences of colonial legacies on the environment can be avoided when adequate measures are taken to promote environmental sustainability.*

KEYWORDS: *Colonial legacy, Environmental degradation, Postcolonial Ecocriticism.*

INTRODUCTION

The colonial legacy and its environmental impacts have become increasingly critical issues in Africa, necessitating urgent attention. Several factors contributed to the colonization of Africa by European powers, with one of the primary drivers being the Industrial Revolution. This period saw a rapid increase in production, outpacing the agricultural sector's ability to meet the growing demand for raw materials. Chinweizu (1978) highlights that Europe's embrace of industrial capitalism significantly heightened its demand for global resources. To meet these needs, European powers exploited African labor, often through coercive means, including forced labor. This exploitation not only supported European industries but also played a crucial role in generating wealth for colonial powers at the expense of African societies. In his seminal work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), Walter Rodney provides a comprehensive historical analysis of Africa's pre-colonial and colonial periods, exploring how colonial powers drove economic exploitation and underdevelopment. Rodney argues that colonialism disrupted social structures, creating hierarchies that favored certain ethnic or racial groups.

European cultural influences were imposed, resulting in a profound clash between traditional African practices and Western values. Similarly, in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Chinua Achebe examined the disruptive consequences of colonialism on African societies, highlighting the cultural conflict between indigenous traditions and European imperialism. Colonialism's effects were not limited to the socio-economic and cultural realms; it also had profound psychological impacts.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon critically analyzed the psychological and social consequences of colonialism in Africa, underscoring its dehumanizing effects on both colonizers and the colonized. These psychological scars and other colonial legacies continue to influence the postcolonial era. In addition to social and psychological impacts, colonialism has left lasting environmental consequences. The colonial exploitation of Africa's resources has contributed to contemporary issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and ecological degradation. Ecological degradation, defined by Lester Brown (2003) as the depletion and deterioration of natural resources—including soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity—is often a result of human activities and unsustainable development. Colonial methods of exploitation, such as infrastructure development, mining, deforestation, and monoculture, have had long-term environmental impacts in Africa.

Though colonialists may not have intentionally sought to cause environmental damage, the effects of their actions cannot be dismissed. As Rob Nixon argues in *Slow Violence* (2011), even well-meaning ecological preservation efforts by Western environmentalists have sometimes inadvertently harmed native ecosystems. The environmental challenges Africa faces today can, therefore, be traced back to the legacies of colonialism.

This paper employs postcolonial ecocriticism as a subfield within ecocriticism, drawing on Rob Nixon's principles of postcolonial ecocriticism. In his influential work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Nixon highlights the environmental challenges marginalized communities face, particularly in the Global South. He discusses the importance of environmental justice and the need to decolonize environmental thought, emphasizing that the impacts of environmental degradation and ecological violence are often slow, invisible, and disproportionately borne by vulnerable populations. Nixon calls for greater visibility of these issues in academic and social discourse.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial ecocriticism emerged as a theoretical framework in the 20th century at the intersection of postcolonial studies and environmental literature. Its origins can be traced back to the global environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when scholars from formerly colonized nations began to publish works examining the enduring effects of colonialism. They developed critical analyses of the history, culture, literature, and discourse surrounding imperial powers, often European. This emerging field combines postcolonialism's critique of colonial regimes and transnational capitalism with ecocriticism's focus on the environment, land, and exploitation. Both fields are concerned with how social realities, such as colonialism, can be addressed and transformed through

literary and cultural criticism as fields rooted in the humanities and political activism. Postcolonialism and ecocriticism are centrally concerned with the material and social realities of their respective subjects. Postcolonial thinkers argue that human social issues must be addressed before focusing on environmental concerns related to non-human entities.

One key contributor to postcolonial ecocriticism is Ursula Heise, whose book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008) examines how literature and other cultural forms shape our understanding of the environment. Heise emphasizes the global interconnectedness of ecological issues and argues that postcolonial literature offers alternative environmental perspectives, highlighting the significance of Indigenous knowledge and local ecological practices. Postcolonial ecocriticism also draws on ideas from prominent postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. These scholars have examined the cultural and political implications of colonial and neocolonial power structures, providing a foundation for exploring how colonialism and its legacies continue to shape human-environment interactions. This theoretical approach underscores that colonization is not only a history of human societies but also one that profoundly alters the physical environment, including the movement of resources, animals, and plants. In some cases, eco critics have identified a link between ecocide and genocide, showing the radical transformations brought about by colonization. Postcolonial ecocriticism provides valuable insights into how current climate crises are intertwined with the historical narratives, material practices, and global systems established by colonialism and globalization.

THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HUMAN ACTIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The concept of interconnectedness between human actions and the environment explores the complex relationships and mutual dependencies between human activities and the natural world. Like all humans, colonists interacted with the environment, and their actions had lasting effects, just as our current behaviors continue to shape the ecosystems we inhabit. This is central to ecocriticism, which examines the interactions between the environment and all it contains, underscoring the need for a reciprocal relationship in which humans and the environment rely on each other for survival. Scholars and activists have analyzed this topic from diverse perspectives, emphasizing how human activities impact ecosystems and how environmental changes, in turn, affect societal and economic structures.

Bill McKibben, a prominent environmentalist and author, has been instrumental in advancing the understanding of human-environment interconnectedness. In works such as *The End of Nature* (1989) and *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (2010), McKibben examines how human activities, notably the burning of fossil fuels, contribute to climate change and alter ecosystems. He argues that humanity must rethink the notion of the environment as a separate entity, recognizing that humans have fundamentally transformed Earth's systems through their actions. McKibben advocates for sustainable practices and urges collective action to mitigate climate change's impacts. Rachel Carson, a pioneering biologist and writer, also exemplifies the interconnectedness of human actions and the environment. Her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* (1962) addressed

the devastating consequences of pesticide use, such as DDT, on ecosystems and human health. Carson demonstrated how pollution and the disruption of natural ecosystems could have far-reaching effects on the environment and society. Her work catalyzed the modern environmental movement and led to the banning DDT in the United States, symbolizing the critical relationship between human actions and environmental stewardship.

Wangari Maathai, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and environmental activist, emphasized the link between human actions, land degradation, and social justice. Maathai promoted reforestation and sustainable land use in Kenya through her Green Belt Movement. She recognized that deforestation and the depletion of natural resources harmed the environment, exacerbating poverty and socio-economic inequalities. Maathai's work highlighted the interconnectedness of ecological conservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development, advocating for integrated approaches that account for human well-being's social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

Aldo Leopold, a pioneer of modern environmental ethics, also emphasized the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. In his seminal work, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), Leopold introduced the "land ethic" concept, calling for an ethical relationship between people and the land. He argued that humans are part of a larger ecological community, and that human well-being is inextricably linked to the health of the land. Leopold's work has had a lasting influence on environmental ethics and conservation practices, underscoring the importance of recognizing the interdependence of all life forms.

These scholars and activists have illuminated the profound interconnectedness between human actions and the environment through their writings and actions. Their contributions underscore the importance of a holistic approach to environmental stewardship, which acknowledges the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world. By understanding and respecting this interconnectedness, individuals and societies can work toward sustainable solutions that promote the well-being of both people and the planet.

COLONIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA

Scholarly opinions on colonialism and its effects vary, but many agree that it has left a profound and lasting impact on postcolonial societies. Researchers examine colonial rule's economic, social, and cultural consequences, addressing issues such as uneven development, identity formation, and institutional challenges. Criticisms also highlight the exploitation of resources, cultural imperialism, and the persistence of inequalities in postcolonial states.

In *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1987), Chinua Achebe argued that Nigeria's colonial legacy has significantly harmed the environment. He contended that the extractive resource exploitation introduced by colonial powers led to a decline in environmental quality. Smith (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on the ecological impacts of resource extraction, highlighting the significant consequences these activities have on ecosystems. The exploitation and extraction of natural resources, which include mining, logging, drilling, and fishing, involve removing raw materials from the environment to

meet human needs. Smith's research emphasizes that, if not managed sustainably, these processes can result in severe environmental degradation, habitat destruction, and the depletion of essential resources, thereby threatening ecological balance and long-term sustainability. In line with Achebe's observations, Jean-François Bayart, in *The State of Africa: Politics of the Belly* (1993), also noted that colonialism fostered a culture of corruption and patronage in many African countries, contributing to the mismanagement of natural resources and resulting in severe environmental degradation. Bayart further argued that the lack of democracy and transparency in many African states has made it difficult to hold leaders accountable for environmental governance. Nigeria's political instability since independence has made it challenging to address environmental issues effectively.

The exploitation and extraction of natural resources often result in the dispossession and displacement of people, mainly from their homes and farmlands. The societal changes brought about by colonialism have exacerbated these issues, leading to the displacement of individuals, cultural practices, and traditional ways of life. Cooke and Kothari (2001) have examined the challenges faced by indigenous peoples and local communities displaced by large-scale development projects, highlighting the economic, social, and cultural disruptions caused by forced eviction and inadequate compensation. Their research underscores how displacement undermines the social fabric of these communities. Literary examples, such as Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), offer a poignant illustration of dispossession and displacement. Tess and her family are driven from their home and livelihood due to their inability to cope with industrialization's rapidly changing economic and environmental conditions. Similarly, in the postcolonial era, many people lost their jobs, farms, and means of livelihood due to the changes initiated by industrialization and the legacy of colonialism. These examples demonstrate the profound impact of resource extraction and industrialization on communities, emphasizing the need for more equitable and sustainable practices.

Conversely, Nathan Andrews (2009) argued that Africa's environmental crises are not solely the result of colonialism but also the failure to implement effective policies for sustainable development. He critiqued Western aid programs for focusing on short-term solutions that fail to address the root causes of environmental degradation, which often stem from historical and contemporary issues. Similarly, Coleman, in *Nationalism and Development in Africa: Selected Essays* (1994), argued that the negative impacts of colonialism were not only the result of direct exploitation by colonial powers but also indirect factors such as population growth and urbanization—both of which were influenced by colonial structures. He also emphasized that the colonial legacy has created a dependency on Western technological and financial resources, making it difficult for African countries to develop sustainable solutions to their environmental problems. These varying perspectives reflect a shared understanding that colonialism has had enduring ecological, political, and socio-economic impacts. However, scholars interpret the extent and causes of these effects differently.

DATA ANALYSIS: COLONIAL LEGACY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe explores the profound consequences of colonialism on Igbo society in Nigeria. The arrival of the colonial powers disrupts the existing social and cultural structures, eroding traditional practices and values. This disruption also extends to the relationship between the people and their environment. Achebe portrays the destructive nature of colonialism through the character of Mr Brown, a missionary who establishes a church in the community. Mr Brown's disregard for the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Igbo people contributes to the rupture of their connection with the natural world. As the church's influence grows, the people abandon their traditional rituals and customs, including their reverence for nature. This shift further exacerbates the degradation of the environment as resource exploitation intensifies in the pursuit of colonial economic interests.

Additionally, Achebe emphasizes the detrimental effects of the colonial legacy on the mental and emotional well-being of the people. The protagonist, Okonkwo, embodies the internal conflict caused by the clash between traditional values and the imposed values of the colonizers. The pressure to adapt to the new ways enforced by the colonial powers leads to toxic masculinity that promotes violence and destruction. This poisonous masculinity further contributes to the degradation of the environment, highlighting the interconnectedness between the physical and psychological impacts of colonialism:

Okonkwo had just blown out the palm-oil lamp and stretched himself on his bamboo bed when he heard the ogene of the town crier piercing the still night air. Gome, gome, gome, gome, boomed the hollow metal. Then the crier gave his message, and at the end of it, beat his instrument again. And this was the message. Every man of Umuofia was asked to gather at the marketplace tomorrow morning. Okonkwo wondered what was amiss, for he knew certainly that something was amiss. He had discerned a clear overtone of tragedy in the crier's voice, and even now, he could still hear it as it grew dimmer and dimmer in the distance (Achebe 1958:12).

This illustrates how the environment can serve as a narrative device in literature, highlighting the interconnectedness between human society and the natural world. The sound of the ogene (clapperless forged iron bell) piercing the still night air and traveling through the environment reinforces the idea that everything is connected. Like other elements of nature, sound travels and affects everything in its path.

It highlights the potential for the environment to provide information and insight into the state of the community. Okonkwo discerns a clear overtone of tragedy in the crier's voice, suggesting something troubling is happening within the community. This highlights the significance of human connection to the environment and its role in signaling changes in the community. This reflects on the impact of human activity on the environment. The gathering of every man of Umuofia will likely cause physical damage to the local environment, such as increased foot traffic and soil erosion. This practice highlights the importance of sustainable practices that minimize the environmental impact of human activities.

The novel demonstrates how literature can use the environment as a narrative device to highlight interconnectedness, provide insight into the state of the community, and reflect on the impact of human activity on the environment. The narrative also underscores the importance of sustainable practices in protecting the environment and supporting human society. The text suggests that Okonkwo's unease may be related to the changing cultural and societal landscape of Umuofia, particularly the encroachment of Christianity and European beliefs on traditional practices:

More jars of palm wine, but he was always uneasy at large gatherings. Part of this uneasiness may stem from his fear of looking weak or soft, especially in front of his peers and fellow clansmen. Another aspect of Okonkwo's unease may result from his growing awareness that traditional practices, such as the Feast of the New Yam, were slowly losing their cultural significance and were being replaced by Christianity and European beliefs. (*Achebe 1958:37*)

Okonkwo is a proud and traditional leader in the Igbo village of Umuofia. He prides himself on upholding his people's customs and traditions, including the Feast of the New Yam, a ceremony celebrating the beginning of the harvesting season. This feast is a crucial cultural event that signifies the vitality and abundance of the land, and Okonkwo takes great pride in participating in it.

As the novel progresses, Okonkwo's unease at large gatherings becomes more pronounced. This uneasiness may stem from his fear of appearing weak or vulnerable in front of his peers and fellow clansmen. In a society that values strength and masculinity, Okonkwo feels pressure to uphold a particular image of himself as an influential and respected leader. He cannot afford to show any signs of weakness or doubt, as this could jeopardize his standing in the community. Okonkwo's unease may also be linked to the changing cultural landscape of Umuofia. As European missionaries began to spread their influence in the village, traditional practices like the Feast of the New Yam were slowly losing significance. Christianity and European beliefs are starting to replace the traditional beliefs and customs of the Igbo people, and Okonkwo struggles to come to terms with this shift.

From an ecocritical perspective, Okonkwo's unease can be seen as a manifestation of the broader environmental and cultural shifts occurring in Umuofia. The arrival of European missionaries and the spread of Christianity represent a disruption to the traditional way of life in the village. The encroachment of Western influences threatens the Igbo people's connection to the land and their traditional practices. Okonkwo's discomfort at large gatherings can be viewed as a reflection of the tension between the old ways and the new. He is caught between his loyalty to tradition and his awareness of the changing world around him. As the Feast of the New Yam loses its cultural significance and is replaced by Christian ceremonies, Okonkwo grapples with nostalgia and loss for the traditions that once defined his identity.

In this context, ecocriticism allows us to understand how environmental and cultural factors intersect in shaping Okonkwo's character and motivations. His unease at

large gatherings is not just a personal quirk but a symptom of more extensive societal changes impacting the natural and cultural landscape of Umuofia. The novel can be read as a commentary on the destructive effects of colonialism and the erosion of indigenous cultures in the face of Western influence. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe highlights the complexity of human relationships with the environment and the profound connection between cultural practices and the land. Okonkwo's unease at large gatherings is a microcosm of the broader social and environmental transformations in Umuofia. By examining his character through an ecocritical lens, we gain deeper insights into the novel's themes of tradition, change, and the impact of colonialism on both people and the environment.

The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store, and for the first time, palm oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia. (Achebe 1958:162)

The arrival of the white man brought new economic opportunities to Umuofia, such as the trading store, which changed the value of natural resources like palm oil and kernel. However, these new economic opportunities came at a considerable cost to the environment. The introduction of new crops and livestock and the expansion of the trading economy resulted in significant deforestation and land degradation as people cleared more land to cultivate crops and build new infrastructure. The changes in the environment and economy disrupted traditional ecological knowledge and practices, leading to cultural erosion and biodiversity loss. Furthermore, the introduction of the white man's religion had a profound impact on the social and cultural practices of Umuofia. The clash between traditional religious beliefs and the new religion introduced by the white man reflects the cultural imperialism that was common throughout the colonial period.

COLONIAL LEGACY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN NNEDI OKORAFOR'S *WHO FEARS DEATH*

In Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, the influence of colonialism is evident in the post-apocalyptic setting of the novel. The land is depicted as ravaged and barren, with few resources available to the people. Okorafor emphasizes the connection between colonialism, environmental degradation, and the exploitation of natural resources. The oppressive rule of the colonizers has led to the destruction of the environment, leaving the land's inhabitants to suffer the consequences. The character of Onyesonwu, a sorceress who fights against the oppressive regime, symbolizes resistance against colonial rule and environmental degradation. Okorafor highlights the importance of reclaiming one's cultural heritage and connection to the land through her journey. Onyesonwu's ability to commune with nature and tap into its power signifies the people's resilience and determination to heal the wounds of colonialism and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, Okorafor explores the impact of colonialism on gender dynamics and the mistreatment of women. The protagonist, Onyesonwu, is faced with discrimination and violence due to her mixed heritage, a result of the colonial legacy of rape and oppression. This reflects how the colonial past continues to shape and perpetuate social

inequalities, including the mistreatment of women. Okorafor raises awareness about the need for societal transformation to address the lasting impacts of colonialism and environmental degradation. Postcolonialism theory seeks to analyze the power dynamics of colonialism and its effects in postcolonial societies. It examines how the legacy of colonialism has shaped the cultures of formerly colonized countries and how it continues to influence their cultural, political, and economic systems. Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* is a postcolonial novel that brings up several key themes of postcolonial theory. One of the critical themes of postcolonialism theory is the formation of hybrid identities in postcolonial societies. In the novel, the protagonist, Onyesonwu, is a hybrid of two cultures and experiences discrimination and oppression from both. She was born as a child of rape from a union between her Okeke mother and a Nuru father. She is also an Eshu, a supernatural being with magical powers that both groups fear and reject. Her hybrid identity threatens both groups' social power structure, making her an outcast. This theme highlights the complexity of forming identities in postcolonial societies and how it can create an imbalance of power between groups.

Another critical theme in postcolonialism theory is the representation of the colonised in literature and media. Okorafor reverses the traditional roles of the colonizer and the colonized in the novel. The Nuru people, who are portrayed as oppressors, are lighter-skinned and technologically advanced, while the Okeke people, who are oppressed, are darker-skinned and more in tune with nature. This is a subversion of the traditional colonial narrative, which portrays the Europeans as the advanced race and the colonized people as primitive and backward. Okorafor challenges this notion by presenting a society where the colonized are technologically advanced, and the colonizers are primitive and superstitious.

Environmental degradation caused by colonialism is another aspect of postcolonial theory explored in the novel. The expansion of palm tree farms resulted from colonialism and the destruction of natural habitats for the cultivation of cash crops. This has led to environmental degradation, which significantly impacts the livelihoods of the people who depend on the land. Introducing non-native species that disrupt the ecosystem's natural balance is another example of how colonizers' actions have led to environmental degradation. Okorafor uses the natural setting to reflect the impact of colonialism on the environment and the people who depend on it.

Additionally, language is another crucial theme of postcolonialism theory evident in the novel. The book is written in English, a language introduced by colonizers. However, Okorafor incorporates several African languages and dialects into the text, highlighting the importance of preserving Indigenous languages. This is a significant theme in postcolonial theory, as the loss of native languages directly results from colonialism.

Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* addresses several themes of postcolonialism theory, including hybrid identity, representation, environmental degradation, and language. Okorafor challenges the traditional colonial narrative by reversing the roles of the colonizer and the colonized, showcasing the impact of colonialism on the environment and emphasizing the importance of preserving Indigenous languages. By addressing these themes, she highlights the complexities of postcolonial societies and encourages readers to reflect on the long-term impact of colonialism on formerly colonized countries.

What I can tell you is that the book and all that it touched and then all that touched what it touched and so on, everything ... began to shift. Not in the wilderness, that wouldn't have scared me. Someplace else. I dare say a pocket in time, a slit in time and space ... this kingdom, it will change after today. Read it in your Great Book. You won't notice that it has been rewritten. Not yet. But it has. Everything has. The curse of the Okeke is lifted. It never existed, sha. (Okorafor 2010:359)

Onyesonwu said the excerpt above and the statement "everything began to shift" implies a significant change beyond the physical realm. It suggests a shift in the cultural and ideological narrative imposed on the community by colonialism. The reference to the Great Book implies a religious and colonial influence, which has shaped the cultural narrative. The use of the terms "pocket in time" and "slit in time and space" emphasizes the rupture in the colonial narrative that has been imposed on this community, highlighting the need for reclamation of their history and cultural identity.

The mention of the curse of the Okeke being lifted emphasizes the impact of colonialism on cultural and spiritual beliefs. The curse may have been an aspect of the community's belief system demonized and suppressed by colonizers. Lifting this curse symbolizes the liberation of the indigenous people's cultural identity and reclaiming their spiritual practices. Furthermore, the phrase, "Read it in your Great Book," implies that the colonizers have delegitimized and questioned this community's beliefs and practices, emphasizing the power dynamics at play. The emphasis on rewriting history suggests a need to acknowledge and value the Indigenous perspective and their relationship with the environment.

This excerpt highlights the need for decolonizing environmental discourse and decision-making processes. Postcolonial ecocriticism emphasizes the importance of understanding colonialism's impact on cultural and ecological issues and prioritizing marginalized communities' voices in these conversations. The text suggests a shift in power dynamics and reclaiming the community's cultural identity, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and valuing Indigenous perspectives in environmental discourse.

Greeeeen! As I'd never seen it. As I'd never imagined it.... From horizon to horizon, the ground was alive with dense, high leafy trees.... My chest ached, but it was a good ache. It was an ache of ... home. This place was too far ever to get to. But maybe someday it would not be. Maybe someday. Its vastness made the violence and the hatred between the Okeke and Nuru seem small. On and on this place went.... What I remember most about it was the deep sense of hope it placed in my heart. If a forest, a true vast forest, still existed someplace, even if it was very far away, then all would not end badly. It meant there was life outside the Great Book. It was like being blessed, cleansed. (Okorafor 2010:286-87)

In this incident, the narrator's descriptions of the forest can be seen as a representation of a pre-colonial natural world that has been lost or damaged by colonialism. The narrator's longing for this forest and the sense of hope it elicits can also be interpreted as a desire to reclaim and restore the natural environment negatively impacted by colonialism. The reference to "the Great Book" can also be understood in this context. The Great Book can be interpreted as a symbol of Western civilization and its accompanying culture, which has been imposed on indigenous communities and their lands through colonialism. This imposition has often resulted in the degradation and exploitation of natural environments. However, the narrator's discovery of the forest suggests that there are still natural landscapes that colonialism has not destroyed.

The narrator's observation that the vastness of the forest makes the violence and hatred between the Okeke and Nuru seem small suggests that the forest has a unifying effect, bringing people together in the face of natural beauty and wonder. This observation also highlights the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of human and natural systems and the need to preserve both in the postcolonial context. This story can be seen as a reflection on the impact of colonialism on natural environments and indigenous communities, as well as a call for the restoration and preservation of both. It also suggests that literature can be a powerful tool for critiquing and challenging the negative impacts of colonialism and that, in the face of violence and exploitation, hope can still be found in the resilience of nature.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the portrayal of colonial legacy and environmental degradation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*. Both texts illustrate the intricate connection between these issues and their significant impact on societies and the natural environment. The characters in these novels represent resistance, resilience, and the urgent need for societal change. Through the depiction of colonialism's consequences and environmental degradation, these works provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by communities in the postcolonial era and demonstrate that colonial legacies persist and continue to shape environmental conditions. Ultimately, they underscore the importance of addressing the enduring impacts of colonialism and working towards sustainable and equitable futures.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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