

Valorising African Identity: Reading Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

The Eurocentric ideology is vigorously challenged by the African writers who attempt to recover their native identity, culture, and African values. 'Writing back' to the centre is an important aspect of the works of Third World writers as they resent the concept of 'racial othering'. Through their writing these writers register a sense of pride in their ancestry and the beauty of blackness. They believe in the intrinsic value of African culture moulded by indigenous practices and rituals. The paper analyses the African writer's defence against the alien encroachment and prejudices of colonial power and the role played by them in affirming their indigenous cultural identity through their works.

Nigerian Writer Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1976) are attempts to revive the native values, identity, culture through counter discourse and their writing is a quest for the total essence of the African identity. Both the works show the protest of the natives against the shackles of colonial authority. The rejection of the colonial authority and its 'civilizing mission' is symbolised by a return to Yoruba and Igbo culture.

Keywords: civilizing mission, othering, Yoruba, Igbo, indigenous, culture

The 'Third World' writing emerged in the early fifties of the twentieth century to counter the European novels that depicted the Africans as savages who required enlightening through 'civilizing mission'. The African writers thus protested against the Western misrepresentation of African values and rebuilt the lost dignity, denied identity and distorted history through their writing. They narrated and celebrated the black consciousness and also the writings which represented Africans not as 'objects' of Colonial rule but as individuals in their own right. Through counter discourse the third world writers registered their voice against the hegemonic power, thus subverted the relation between colonizers and colonized. Colonial authority often

... referred to as colonialist discourse to mark its relationship to the language in which colonialist thinking was expressed, was based on the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) peoples, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded. The colonizers believed that only their own Anglo-European culture was civilized, sophisticated, or, as postcolonial critics put it, metropolitan. Therefore, native peoples were defined as savage, backward,