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# The invention of the Other

From violence in Elspeth  
Huxley's *Red Strangers*  
to African Publishing  
History in Italy

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To Andrea

Why do we follow leaders who never lead?  
Why does it take catastrophe to start a revolution?  
If we're so free, tell me why?  
Someone tell me why so many people bleed?

Cages or wings?

Which do you prefer?

Ask the birds

Fear or love, baby?

Don't say the answer

Actions speak louder than words

(J. Larson, *Louder than words*)

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## Introduction

African publishing is becoming more and more well-known these days, and readers are curious to learn about and comprehend works from other parts of the world that offer distinct values, customs, and cultures. However, since African authors have long been viewed as the Other due to Eurocentric descriptions of the continent and its people, from the earliest days of travel to the colonial and postcolonial eras, it has been extremely difficult for them to get published and gain international recognition.

This thesis investigates the significance of the African Other, and following the narration of Elspeth Huxley's novel entitled *Red Strangers*, it focuses on the path from colonial era to independence from the British Empire to modern society and the global acknowledgement and celebration of the Other's heritage, values and culture.

The concept of the Other is introduced in the first chapter in both a postcolonial and philosophical context. It examines how and why Africans were viewed negatively by Europeans, as the Other, and how, particularly as a result of colonialism, the negative stereotype against Africans came to be seen as the most accurate way to characterize them. The topic of who opposed this stereotype is then explored in detail, with a mention of who worked to offer African justice through research on the subject.

The second chapter explores the theme of the physical and psychological violence that the colonizers used to subjugate the African Other. The colonizers used European religion, culture, and languages to undermine the identity of the colonized, as well as guns and weapons, which sparked uprisings that led to the independence of African nations from the British colonial Empire.

The journey that took Africa from oral tradition to having writers known around the world is the subject of the final chapter, which analyzes the Italian publishing environment regarding Africa. It begins with the shift from oral traditions to writing, which paved the way for the printing press's introduction in colonial Africa. Then, after a summary of the publishing houses that were established in Africa, the attention turns to Italy, to investigate which publishing houses published books about and from Africa, as well as which publishing houses currently handle this subject.

# 1 Life and Death of the Other

Supériorité? Infériorité?

Pourquoi tout simplement ne pas essayer de toucher l'autre,  
de sentir l'autre <sup>1</sup>

History is often written by the victors. The results are frequently a distorted, sweetened perspective of the reality of the facts, adjusted and adapted depending on who would be the ultimate consumer. History is often sabotaged, to the point that some truths are buried for generations before resurfacing, first as hearsay, then as reality, in a hypothetical future. There is almost never an absolute truth, and it is pointless to pretend that we can always understand the reasons why something happened or who caused it. But the most dangerous thing is getting carried away with a thought that looks to be an incontrovertible truth. Ian Smith, Former Prime Minister of Rhodesia, claimed in his apologia entitled *The Great Betrayal*, that colonization was a blessing, bringing civilization, a written language, schools, and hospitals. To that Chinua Achebe would answer, arguing that the white man was clever, came pacifically with his religion, and then pressed the knife, splitting previously united populations.<sup>2</sup>

Niall Ferguson, one of the world's most famous historians, begins the introduction of his book on the British Empire declaring

“Once there was an Empire that governed roughly a quarter of the world’s population, covered about the same proportion of the earth’s land surface and dominated nearly all its oceans. The British Empire was the biggest Empire ever, bar none. How an archipelago of rainy islands off the north-west coast of Europe came to rule the world is one of the fundamental questions not just of British but of world history.”<sup>3</sup>

The British Empire was one of the largest empires of all time. It included colonies, domains, protectorates, and other regions governed by the United Kingdom. In 1920, the

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<sup>1</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, marques blancs*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1952, p. 188. “Superiority? Inferiority? Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?” Fanon F. *Black skin white masks*, London, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London, Penguin, 2001, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London, Penguin Books, 2002, p. IX.

British Empire ruled over 458 million people, one-fifth of the world's surface. As a result, it left a significant political, legal, and linguistic legacy. In 1783, the independence of thirteen North American colonies as a result of the American Independence War costed Great Britain some of its most ancient and important colonies. This focused Empire's attention on Asia, the Pacific, and Africa.

The first British approach to Africa is known as the Invasion of the Cape Colony, which was a military campaign conducted in 1795 against the Dutch Cape Colony in southern Africa. This Dutch colony was established in the seventeenth century and served as the only landing point for ships traveling from Europe to the East Indies. Vice Admiral Elphinstone commanded the British mission, which began in April 1795. After several failed attempts to negotiate the settlement of the colony, the British allowed the army to interfere. Following an attempt to seize Cape Town directly, the Dutch governor handed the colony to the British.

The British Empire's supremacy throughout Africa, particularly in Kenya, was achieved mostly through violence. It is widely acknowledged that the Empire used civilization and missionary propaganda to conceal the atrocities committed against invaded lands and populations between 1806, when they were officially assigned Boers as their first colony, and 1968, when Mauritius gained independence. On this subject, Edward Said sustained that every empire professes to be different from all the others, stating that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. But what was even sadder was that some intellectuals were on Empire 'side, ignoring the evidence of destruction, misery and death brought by that civilization missions.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to study the evolution of the concept of the Other, with a focus on the differences between European and African cultures, using Elspeth Huxley's novel *Red Stranger* as a guide. Where and when the African stereotype originated, as well as who produced it, led to an investigation into the meaning of the Other from a literary and philosophical standpoint. Given a definition of the Other, this work tries to determine whether anyone attempted to undermine or eliminate this distinction between Europeans and Africans, ultimately leading to the discussion of who

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<sup>4</sup>Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 2003, p. XIV.

is now attempting to give Africa and Africans a new, honest identity, depicting things as they are, free of stereotypes and preconceptions of any kind.

### **1.1 The arrival of the Red Strangers and African stereotype**

According to Elspeth Huxley's own admission in the novel's foreword, *Red Strangers* lacks historical, scientific, and anthropological accuracy. Through the use of observations, notes, literature, and oral histories, *Red Strangers* depicts the event of the British colonists' entrance on an uncontaminated area that had been inhabited by African populations from ancient times and by the Kikuyu community during the narrated period. Through the eyes of a fictional family, this book provides voice to individuals who were subjected to violence, lacked the possibility to tell their story, and were overtaken by the colonization-era prejudices.<sup>5</sup> However, the origins of the African stereotype can be traced back to before Jesus Christ was born. Wole Soyinka, Nigerian playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist in the English language in his book entitled *Of Africa*, defines Africans as Children of Herodotus. It is possible to interpret Soyinka's allusion as a critical reaction to the way that ancient writings continue to shape modern ideas about Africa and its inhabitants. Early Western historians like Herodotus' accounts have structured or misframed African history and identity, and the resulting Eurocentric viewpoints that have persisted as a result of these histories. In fact, Herodotus already mentioned a population that resembled Africans as quite different from Greeks. Pliny the Elder's descriptions of African Populations in *The Natural History* deal with the Ægipani, a half-human, half-beast population, and the Blemmyae, an Ethiopian tribe known for their predatory and ferocious habits, which led to negative imagery in the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> More than 1500 years later, Johannes Leo Africanus, born al-Hasan Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, a Moroccan traveller and scholar captured by pirates and brought to Europe, published *Description of Africa* in Italian, influenced by Pope Leone X. This work is a collection of comprehensive observations and cultural preconceptions about Africa and its peoples, which are portrayed as culturally inferior to Europeans. This work served as the principal source of African information for Renaissance Europeans, cementing the concept of

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<sup>5</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, pp. 11-12.

<sup>6</sup>Pliny, *The Natural History*, London, Taylor & Francis, 1855, p. 405.

exotic and barbaric Africa in European vision. Michel de Montaigne's opinion, expressed in his *Essays* on European explorations, has historically been more widely regarded. Even if he did not participate in the ideology of superiority of Europeans, his work nonetheless depicted non-Europeans as wild in the same way as we say that fruits are wild<sup>7</sup>, Other compared to European culture, contributing to the emergence of savage imagery, used to depict non-Europeans, combining admiration and detachment. From a scientific perspective, William Perkins was one of the intellectuals who published pseudoscientific essays and presented them as scientific, reinforcing the racist image of Africans being suitable for slavery and incapable of self-government. Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, in one of his works, produced racial ideas that served as a basis for scientific racism, which led to the perception of non-white races as inferior, justifying European dominance over them. Even Charles Darwin, who disapproved colonialism, appears to support the thesis that when a more developed community meets a less evolved one, there will be a clash, and that the developed one, using the word we, provides, among other things, schools and medical aid to populations in need.<sup>8</sup>

During British colonization period travelers, missionaries, novelists and intellectuals have depicted Africa in many various ways. German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* published in 1837 explains that in order to understand Africa, you have to divide it into three parts. The Africa Proper, that is what lies out of the Sahara Desert, which is what was unknown at that time. The European Africa, the region to the north of the Desert, and the third part is the river region of the Nile, connected to Asia.<sup>9</sup> Then, referring to the so-called Proper Africa, he adds “Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World, shut up.”<sup>10</sup>

His opinion of Africans was that they were a difficult character to understand because they did not fit into the category of Universality, since their consciences had not yet realized any significant objective existence, such as God or Law, so their knowledge of an absolute being, an Other, and Higher than the individual self, had not yet

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<sup>7</sup> Michel De Montaigne, *Essays*, London, Penguin, 1993, p. 109.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species and Descent of Man*, New York, Appleton, 1971, p. 501

<sup>9</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, London, George Bell & Sons, 1894, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 95.

developed.<sup>11</sup> To end up his dissertation on Africa, presenting it as a history-less continent, he states “At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it — that is in its northern part — belong to the Asiatic or European World.”<sup>12</sup> With this sentence Hegel summarized why it was useless to mention furthermore Africa in his essay on philosophy of history, marking permanently Africa as an unremarkable country.

Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, also known as Joseph Conrad, a Polish-British novelist, published novels like *Lagune* and *An Outpost of Progress* in 1897 and *Heart of Darkness* in 1899, in which he narrated what he saw when he travelled to Congo. It is impossible to determine whether he was racist or not, but one thing is certain: his narrative contributed to the portrayal of a terrible Africa.

His descriptions of African landscapes oscillate between heavenly and peacefully places, with

“The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day, after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs forever, but in the august light of abiding memories.”<sup>13</sup>

or

“On the sands in the middle of the stream, hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. And stretching away in all directions, surrounding the insignificant cleared spot of the trading post, immense forests, hiding fateful complications of fantastic life, lay in the eloquent silence of mute greatness.”<sup>14</sup>

and opposite distressing glances of nightmare-like areas, where “stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect”,<sup>15</sup> and “darkness oozed out from between the trees, through the tangled maze of the creepers, from behind

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<sup>11</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, London, George Bell & Sons, 1894, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Conrad, *An Outpost of Progress*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.137.

the great fantastic and unstirring leaves. The darkness, mysterious and invincible, scented and poisonous of impenetrable forests.”<sup>16</sup>

According to Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author, critic, and key figure in modern African literature, Joseph Conrad, or more specifically, his works, are mostly responsible for colonial stereotypes of Africa and Africans. In 1975 Achebe held a lesson at University of Massachusetts Amherst, that was then published as an essay entitled *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, and included into a collection of selected essays, in which he sustained that Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist.<sup>17</sup> Achebe’s major critique was the author’s denied bestowal of human expression to his African characters, as it was not part of Conrad’s purpose to confer language on the “rudimentary souls” of Africa.<sup>18</sup> Even though intellectuals like Edward Said, by stating that “as a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them.”<sup>19</sup> and Cedric Watts, explaining that Conrad was influenced by the climate of prejudice of his times, but he managed to transcend it,<sup>20</sup> took the Polish-British novelist ‘side, it is undeniable that some passages of Conrad’s novels set in Africa may have influenced British and world’ society, making it inevitable to look at Africans and Africa through the eyes of the narrators of these novels. On this subject, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o explained that Culture does not just reflect the world in images, but through them it conditions a child to see the world in a certain way, in the culture of the language of imposition, and since those images are passed on through literature, children are condemned to see the world as that of literature. The fact that the imported literature carried great humanist tradition, like Shakespeare and Dickens, does not imply that it is right to look at the world only from Europe and eyes of European intellectuals.<sup>21</sup>

Following colonization and independence, numerous intellectuals testified to injustices and atrocities committed by colonizers, whether physical, physiological, or

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Lagoon*, Mankato, Creative education, 1990, p.

<sup>17</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments*, New York, Anchor Books, 1988, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Knopf, 1993, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Cedric Watts, “‘A Bloody Racist’: About Achebe’s View of Conrad.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 13, 1983, pp. 196–209. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3508121>. Accessed 30 Oct. 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Ngũgĩ W.T. *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, James Currey, 1986, pp. 17-18.

moral. Thanks to Chinua Achebe's current, the rest of the world was able to read works about the arrival of Europeans in Africa from the perspective of those who witnessed them coming, rather than the conventional narrative of Europeans arriving in Africa. Elspeth Huxley's novel *Red Strangers* is one of the works that best captures the phenomena of European unexpected took of power in Africa. More specifically, this novel, which was first published in England in 1933, tells the story of the advent of British colonizers in Kenya and was written by a British author who had lived in British Kenya since she was six. *Red Strangers*, divided into three books, each focusing on a different character and covering the period from 1890 (the first) to 1937 (the third), tells, among other subjects, the story of the impact of British strangers on Kikuyu's population. Kikuyu are the largest ethnic group in Kenya, accounting for roughly 20% of the total population, who live in the highlands of south-central Kenya, near Mount Kenya, where they settled during the 17th and 19th centuries and whose economy rested upon intensive hoe cultivation of millet and husbandry.<sup>22</sup>

What makes *Red Stranger* so outstanding is that, although the British landing is an important event, it is not the work's main focus. Kikuyu are the true protagonists, not their subjugation. Elspeth Huxley's realistic descriptions of the landscape, village inhabitants, culture, and traditions let the reader to immerse himself in Kikuyu reality, which is very different from what an average western reader's life is about. Furthermore, total immersion in a population's culture and traditions allows the reader to understand Kikuyu's roots and beliefs, overcoming the stigma of a black, savage, barbarous, primitive, in a word, inhuman population that every western country holds against Africans as a result of narrations like Conrad's.

As previously said, the British arrival comes as a rumor, a distant narration, similar to hearsay, heard in market conversation.

“Three young men who took goats to Kaheri’s country in search of food came back with a curious story. A strange man, they said, had come into Kaheri’s from Masai land; but he was not like a Masai at all. His companions carried sticks which made a loud noise like bamboos cracking in a fire, yet they did not break. These sticks were a sort of magic; they seemed to possess some peculiar

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kikuyu>. Accessed 30/10/2024.

power of killing at a distance. This man, they said, had gone to live with Kaheri. he wore strange clothes and kept his legs covered.”<sup>23</sup>

The true arrival, on the other hand, is anything from soft; it strikes like an earthquake, breaks every order, overcomes hierarchies and regulations, imposes itself as the rule, and settles via force, leaving the Kikuyu population completely perplexed. At first, a single British colonizer settles where ivory traders have usually settled, looking for the district's ruler to speak with. But when locals decide to expel the strangers from their territory, the warriors simultaneously pitched headlong to the ground bleeding, even though no spears or arrows had been thrown. The fact that the contact with the strangers arrive only in chapter 11.7, "*The Red Strangers*," after a deep immersion in Kikuyu culture, allows the reader to perceive the extent of British violence against a population that was living peacefully, without the need for a guide to bring them to civilization, in the western sense of the term.

Another critical aspect of *Red Stranger* is the interaction with the Other. Extensively narrated from a European perspective, relationships between two individuals of the same species that differ significantly on a superficial level is a fundamental issue in postcolonial studies. In Elspeth Huxley's work, there are no British characters defining Africans as savages; instead, Kikuyu describe these red foreigners, sunburned, who symbolized the news in their daily routine. However, defining a human being as Other is a highly complex issue that has been disputed for many years.

Elspeth Huxley's *Red Stranger* is fully understood by examining the contrast between European and African during colonization historical period. As a result, those who are typically characterized as Others become the protagonists, while Europeans are the strangers, the Others.

## **1.2 What/Who is the Other?**

The notion of The Other, meant as the difference between two human beings, can be understood in many various ways, depending on the philosophical, social, or cultural context. The Other, indicated using a capital O, is commonly associated with the

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<sup>23</sup> Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 274.

dichotomy between the self and the alterity, such as what differs from ourselves. This is a fundamental notion in existential philosophy, social science, and cultural studies.

Existentialism is a catch-all term for those philosophers who consider the nature of the human condition as a key philosophical problem.<sup>24</sup> It is a predominantly European current that emerged between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influenced many other genres such as fiction and drama, and has continued to influence artists and intellectuals to this day.

Although many scholars consider Soren Kierkegaard to be the father of existentialism because he placed existence at the center of his research, even though he believes that humans are responsible for their actions in front of God, Jean-Paul Sartre was the first intellectual to identify as an existentialist. The major contraposition regarding the meaning of the Other is between that of two existential philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Lévinas.

Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher, dramaturge, novelist and literary critic. The core of his philosophical thinking lies in having rearranged Martin Heidegger statement “The essence of Dasein (Heidegger’s way of referring both to the human being and to the type of Being that humans have)<sup>25</sup> lies in its existence”<sup>26</sup> declaring that “existence precedes essence”<sup>27</sup>, meaning that humans should stop wasting time questioning their own existence and begin instead by accepting it as a fact.

According to Sartre, the Other serves as a mirror to ourselves, because through him we get to know of our existence, making explicit our body's three dimensions of being.<sup>28</sup> However, the fact that the Self only exists through the eyes of the Other, makes the Self the Other’s object. Sartre explains:

“Such is the origin of my concrete relations with the Other; they are wholly governed by my attitudes with respect to the object which I am for the Other. And as the Other's existence reveals to me the being which I am without my being able either to appropriate that being or even to conceive it, this existence will motivate two opposed attitudes: First-The Other *looks* at me and as

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<sup>24</sup> <https://iep.utm.edu/existent/> accessed 05/11/2024.

<sup>25</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/book/577/chapter-abstract/135306582?redirectedFrom=fulltext> Accessed on 05/11/2024.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell Publisher, 1962, p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a humanism*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 292.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Philosophical Library Inc, 1956, p.361.

such he holds the secret of my being, he knows what I am. Thus, the profound meaning of my being is outside of me, imprisoned in an absence. The Other has the advantage over me.”<sup>29</sup>

In *Red Stranger*, there is a point in the plot where the reader learns that Matu, the protagonist of the second part of the novel, is working for one of the strangers due to his terrible behavior. After several months of doing what Matu considers to be pointless activities, he is released, pledging never to do such things again. When he returns to his town, the only thing he recognizes is the journey he took to get there. Houses are different, and his fellow residents are depressed and ill. When he wonders about what is going on in his village, he discovers that the strangers have designated one member of each district as the ruler, to whom everyone must submit. British colonies were ruled using Indirect Rule, such as the designation of a ruler picked from the same village he had to command.<sup>30</sup> This ruler, compensated in rupees, has the authority to treat his family and friends like objects, imposing jobs and activities. If someone had the courage to refuse the order, the ruler had the right to go to the disobedient and seize his cattle or his goats. Matu hears that once the victim could bring a charge of theft before the council and the njamas would then be ordered to repay the stolen stock, and fined; but they paid no attention to the council’s commands. In the old days their fathers would have paid the goats. Now the old men repudiated all responsibility, saying that their sons were only doing what the strangers told them.<sup>31</sup> Through the eyes of the strangers, and those of the delegated ruler, Matu sees himself as an object, as he feels incapable of escaping the rules imposed by the strangers, just as Sartre explains that the Self must not escape the Other’s gaze. Sartre believed that this assumption of the Other looking at us as objects represents a limit to our individual freedom. Although he states that “l'enfer, c'est les autres”<sup>32</sup>, who judges us, and through his eyes, we recognize who we truly are, transitioning from being subjects to objects for another person, Sartre recognizes the concept that the Other is an indispensable mediator between us and ourselves,<sup>33</sup> as the Other announces their presence

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<sup>29</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Philosophical Library Inc, 1956, p. 363.

<sup>30</sup> Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1994, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Huxley E. *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 378.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos, suivi de Les Mouches*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1973, p.93. (Hell is other people)

<sup>33</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Philosophical Library Inc, 1956, p. 222.

as the gaze. Sartre does not limit the gaze to the human eye; rather, being gazed upon is the central aspect of Being-in-the-world. World is gaze.<sup>34</sup>

While Sartre sees the Other as the limit, who in his eyes reduces us to an object, Lévinas sees the Other as the place or being in which the concept of infinity resides, as something beyond our comprehension, that helps and forces us to open our minds to the fact that Otherness is something real, which cannot be analyzed and understood solely through our knowledge, language, and by ascribing things to ourselves. Referring to Sartre's definition of the Other, in his *Totality and Infinity*, Emmanuel Lévinas states

“The other person as he comes before me in a face-to-face encounter is not an alter ego, another self with different properties and accidents but in all essential respects like me. This may be the expression of an optimistic hope from a self-centered point of view which is often verified. The other may, indeed, turn out to be, on the surface at least, merely an analogue of myself. But not necessarily! I may find him to be inhabiting a world that is basically other than mine and to be essentially different from me. He is not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories and given a place in my world<sup>35</sup>”

Furthermore, according to Lévinas, the Other is more than just someone to know and comprehend; he is someone to respect as the source of a transcendence that imposes a responsibility on us. The relationship with the other must not be founded on ethics or, worse, conflict; we must set aside our egoism and relate to the Other without making rational judgments.

In a broad sense, this concept described by Levinas serves as the foundation for all relationships with people and things that are not part of our bodies. Considering, for example, the possibility of not being able to fully understand the reason for an action put in place by a member of our family, let alone how endlessly the concept expands if the person or phenomenon that you want to comprehend is very far away and different from us, on several meters of comparison. It is senseless to believe that we can travel and fully understand the cultures, traditions, reasons of a place, of a population. When nineteenth-century philosophers, and others before them, wrote about Africa and Africans, they had no idea that they would have to shed their preconceived notions in order to better understand what they were looking at, as they thought to be better, superior compared to

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<sup>34</sup>Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, Boston, Martinus Nijhoff, 1979, p. 13.

the Other they were writing about. The illusion of being able to judge another population through oneself and alone their knowledge of the world led to the stereotyped image of Africa.

Looking at *Red Stranger* through this key to understanding makes it significantly simpler to understand the novel. As Richard Dawkins explains in the introduction to the novel, Elspeth Huxley's work portrays this issue from both sides. The British invaders do not grasp the traditions and rites of a population they perceive as primitive and in need of civilization. On the other hand, Kikuyu do not understand the changing brought and put into effect by the strangers. Among the many misunderstandings, there is one passage in which the narrator describes the strangers' method of burying excrement under the ground to enrich the soil. Matu, knows that this action will not bring the results that the stranger desires, and feels confused about the orders he receives, and fears the consequences.

“He had bought three cows, which were herded in a small boma at night. One day he gave orders that dung from the boma was to be carried to the front of the house and buried in a part of the shamba that had been dug for seeding. Matu could not believe his ears. To bury the dung of a cow was to bring death upon it, just as death, or at any rate severe sickness, would come to a man whose excreta were covered with earth. If Kichui's cows died, Matu knew that he himself would be blamed. He refused emphatically to obey the order.”<sup>36</sup>

When strangers begin to exert power, they continue to commission jobs for Kikuyu and pay them in rupees. However, Kikuyu do not have a concept of value in this sense. Their form of currency is goats, which they swap. So, when it comes to getting paid, locals are bewildered and feel tricked when strangers hand them a piece of metal that cannot be eaten.

“The elders, to whom the word was strange, asked: “What is a rupee?”

“It is the round metal object which was given by this stranger to those who dug the ditch at Tetu,” the interpreter said.

“How can we give this person such things?” the elders asked. “Only those who went to Tetu received them, and since they appeared to serve no purpose, most of them have been thrown away.”

“That is very foolish,” the interpreter replied. “Do you not know that such things can be exchanged for food and goats?”

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<sup>36</sup> Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 372.

“It is you who are foolish,” the elders rejoined, “to think that any man would exchange a good goat for such objects. Can you eat them, or use them for ornament? Perhaps, however, our smiths could learn to make them, and then we could give them to the strangers.”<sup>37</sup>

The narration that follows next is hilarious to western readers of that time, as well as to any reader now, because money as a currency is a widely understood concept. What happens is that kikuyu lose, bury, or throw away their rupees, thus slowing the process of introducing cash into colonies planned by strangers.

Then there is another significant discussion about polygamy. Matu learned that strangers are only allowed to have one wife due to religious restrictions. So, believing he misheard, he asks Sasi if that is real.

“When he went to receive rupees for his month’s work, he asked Sasi to explain a statement that Kamau had made, but which he could not possibly believe.

“I have heard,” he said, “that your God, who lives in the sky, does not wish a man to have more than one wife. Surely this cannot be so?”

“It is indeed so,” Sasi replied. “To have many wives is a very great sin.”

“But this cannot be true!” Matu again persisted. “Only poor men have one wife, and God does not like poor men.”

“Nevertheless God forbids more than one wife,” Sasi said. “A man and a woman should be together always, and when they are dead their spirits become as one.”

“But why is this?” Matu asked.

“It is the law of God.”

“And in your country, does everyone obey such a law?”

“Yes, everyone. There is no man with two wives.”

“That is the most remarkable thing that I have ever heard,” Matu exclaimed. “What, then, does a man do when he is rich? And if he cannot marry many wives, what is the object of wealth? Does not God, then, wish his people to increase?”

“Yes, if they keep the law.”

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<sup>37</sup> Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 309.

“Then he must wish them to have many wives, who will bear children to increase their clans,” Matu said. “One woman cannot bear many children; but the clan of a man with ten wives increases greatly. This God of the strangers is not”

“Like ours. No doubt it is best for every people to have their own God.”

“There is only one God,” Sasi said. “I have come to teach this to the Kikuyu, who live in an ignorance as dark as night. If you work here for two years, I will explain to you all these things.”

“I cannot do that,” Matu said. “I have a wife, and goats, and a shamba; but I will bring you more eggs.”

Matu went home deep in thought and more confused than ever before. But a solution of the greatest of all the mysteries concerning the strangers, the mystery of why they had left their own homes, began to appear. They had rebelled, perhaps, against the cruel and senseless law forbidding a man to take more than one wife; they had come to a place where God desired them to have as many wives as they could afford.”<sup>38</sup>

This lines perfectly demonstrate Lévinas' theory that it is impossible to understand the Other by means of ourselves. To do so, it is essential to abandon preconceived notions and prejudices and accept the Other and Otherness for what they are.

If a general definition is to be formulated, it could be that the Other is a person or entity that differs from the self in some way, whether cultural, physical, psychological, or of a different nature, and is viewed as separate, different, or foreign to the subject. The Other is the one who is different from the subject, being another person, with another identity and his traits, and in terms of alterity, which is a complex and multidimensional notion that involves numerous fields, from philosophy to anthropology and ending with postcolonial studies. Defining someone the Other means to set a distinction between what is known, familiar, and what is considered by members of a supposedly dominant group as alien, exotic, threatening, or inferior, because of different racial, sexual, or cultural characteristics.<sup>39</sup> In colonial context, most of the times, the Other is the colonized, and his identity is built as opposite to that of the colonizer, as Frantz Fanon said, “C'est un fait : des Blancs s'estiment supérieurs aux Noirs.”<sup>40</sup> Africans were depicted as the barbaric

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<sup>38</sup> Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, pp. 419-420.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/other#:~:text=3-,a,other>. Accessed 30/10/2024.

<sup>40</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, marques blancs*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1952, p. 7. “There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.” *Fanon F. Black skin white masks*, London, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 12.

Other, in need of guidance. This separation established a hierarchical and racial morality that placed the Other (Africans) under the European colonists.

### 1.3 Black existentialism and Négritude against alterity between European and African

Black existentialism can be considered an alternative to European existentialism, as the latter takes things for granted that Black people do not. It is a current, led, among the others, by American sociology and historian William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, that highlights the struggles that black people had in order to achieve what Europeans consider ordinary. For example, while freedom is an inalienable idea for Europeans, it wasn't normally granted to black people, who fought for it. Another subject that has yet to be solved is equity, which originates from years of portraying Black people as inferior to white, in this case Europeans. On freedom and equity, Du Bois believed that there can be no perfect democracy curtailed by color, race, or poverty. But with all we accomplish all, even Peace.<sup>41</sup> However, the key difference between existentialism and black existentialism is the concept of the individual. So, while Existentialism focuses on the individual, who lives his life and defines anything that differs from his body as "Other," Black existentialism expands on a community notion, focused on the struggle and emancipation of black people worldwide. Furthermore, Black existentialism explains that black people did not have the same life or struggle. It is impossible to put together every black person in a single episode of violence, as white people are accustomed to do. This latter element is the biggest challenge for Black existentialism, since it makes it extremely difficult to develop a specific identity based on one's unique background, rather than a distorted, confused, and collective label that applies to all black people. This collectiveness, which is frequently attributed to black people, is precisely what must be undermined in order to achieve what exists as the cornerstone of Existentialism individualism, such as the concept of a recognized individual, with his unique features, consciousness, and freedom.

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<sup>41</sup>William E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, 165.

Nigerian novelist and activist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie claims that Western literature is ultimately responsible for the idea that there is a single story of Africa. She emphasized the danger of the single story in a Ted Talk, which is the peril of accepting something heard, seen, or read as truth without verifying the sources or providing an opportunity to consider opposing viewpoints. As an example of her personal life, Adichie talks of a time when she studied in the United States and found that the rest of the world thought Africans were poor, ignorant, tribal, and so on. She picked the episode in question to highlight how western narrative, together with philosophy, biology, and other disciplines, produced a stereotype of Africa that was very different from the continent's current state and portrayed a typical situation of poverty. This stereotype has continued to influence people to this day.<sup>42</sup>

Due to a scarcity of African books with the same resonance as those by European novelists, Africa became a collage of Europeans' untruthful beliefs, resulting in a fundamentally invented continent. Referring to Valentin-Yves Mudimbe's work, *The Invention of Africa*, Shaul Bassi, professor of English literature at the University Ca' Foscari in Venice, where he directs the master's program in Environmental Humanities, explains in the opening of the first chapter of his book *Turbo Road* that our depiction of Africa tends to polarize on two sides: the primitive, exotic, and romantic Africa, and the one destroyed by war and famine, shutting up hundreds of stories and favoring those that present striking or frightening images.<sup>43</sup>

The idea that Africa was invented is introduced by Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, a Congolese philosopher, lecturer, poet, novelist, and scholar of African culture. According to him, Africa as it is currently understood as a place and an idea did not exist. Instead, it is the outcome of western novels and narratives. Europeans used to describe what they discovered in Africa, indigenous traditions and mysteries, not to understand it, as they were only interested in interpreting everything through the Eurocentric perspective, but rather to better dominate the indigenous and savage population,<sup>44</sup> and exploit African environment, to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European

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<sup>42</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." Ted: Ideas Worth Spreading, July 2009, [www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story).

<sup>43</sup> Shaul Bassi, *Turbo Road, Il Kenya, i suoi scrittori, un bambino*, Ariccia, Meltemi, 2022, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup>Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 81.

constructs.<sup>45</sup> He emphasizes in his work how the western knowledge system imposed a knowledge order that marginalizes African indigenous epistemology, describing it as illogical.

According to Mudimbe, for an accurate understanding of Africa, one must first understand the concept of Gnosis. It can be defined as a system of knowing and interpreting the world. Mudimbe believes that the colonial discourse may have imposed a system of gnosis that organizes African knowledge relying on Europeans values. On his attempts of understanding gnosis, he states that gnosis is by definition a kind of secret knowledge. The changes of motives, the succession of theses about foundation, and the differences of scale in interpretations that I have tried to bring to light about African gnosis witness to the vigour of a knowledge which is sometimes African by virtue of its authors and promoters, but which extends to a Western epistemological territory.<sup>46</sup>

Mudimbe concludes his study by stating that what is presented as African essence is merely an artificial construct created and legitimized by colonialism and its system of knowledge.

The depiction of the African Other was not only a geographical matter, but rather cultural and racial. During colonial period, Europe used the idea of alterity to justify their domain over Africans. As Frantz Fanon observes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, it is in the name of the spirit, in the name of the spirit of Europe, that Europe has made her encroachments, that she has justified her crimes and legitimized the slavery in which she holds the four-fifths of humanity.<sup>47</sup> In the name of this spirit, the belief that the African other was lower, primitive, and needed to be civilized, Europeans were able to objectify the Other, reducing him to something to conquer, study, and control rather than recognizing his humanity.

This alterity between African and European could be interpreted in a variety of ways. According to Indian philosopher Homi Bhabha father of the theory of the Ambivalence of Cultural Authority, such as the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is self-produced<sup>48</sup>, the Other is not a set figure or something

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<sup>45</sup>Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 199.

<sup>47</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 313.

<sup>48</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 34.

wholly different; rather, his identity is constructed in such a way that Africans might be a projection of Europeans' fears and desires simultaneously. This concept is explained exhaustively in his book *The location of Culture*, in passages like “Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of the discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of official and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse.”<sup>49</sup>

A literary and philosophical current against African stereotypes that aspired to establish and nourish a black consciousness, emerged in the early twentieth century with the name of Négritude. It arose mostly among francophone intellectuals, was supported, among others, by Sartre, and promoted African culture. Thanks to Jean-Paul Sartre, who spoke about Négritude in the introduction of a collection of poems entitled *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et Malgache*, the Négritude issue, presented as something opposed to colonial racism, was introduced to French intellectuals. The concept of Négritude emerged as a reaction to French colonialism and racism.<sup>50</sup> The word Négritude was invented and implied by Aimé Césaire, Francophone Martinican poet, author and politician. He believed that Western imperialism was responsible for black people's inferiority complex. Then he himself rejected it and took distance from the movement.

Although the significance of this movement cannot be overstated, not every intellectual embraced it, believed in its ideals, and saw it as a method to improve African culture. Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka, for example, criticized the concept of Négritude, claiming that tigers do not declare their tigritude, and considered it as a surrender to colonialism, its ideals, mentality, and portrayal of Africans.

Binyavanga Wainaina, a Kenyan author and journalist, wrote about this in his book *How to Write About Africa*. Actually, this essay presents satirical features, that underline every stereotype associated with African or African-set narratives. For example, when it comes to creating a new character, he proposes that African characters should be colorful, exotic, and larger than life, but empty on the inside, with no dialogue, conflicts, or endings

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<sup>49</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 81-82.

<sup>50</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/> Accessed 15/11/2024.

in their story, and no depth or eccentricities that could confuse the audience.<sup>51</sup> In describing a prospective setting, he advises treating Africa as if it were a single country, hot and dry, with rolling grasslands, massive herds of animals, and tall, skinny people who are hungry. Or hot and steamy, with extremely short people eating primates. He invites the writer to avoid getting bogged down in detailed descriptions.<sup>52</sup> Then, to conclude this literary work about Africa, Wainaina says that the writes should always close his book with Nelson Mandela stating something about rainbows or the renaissances, as this shows that the writer cares about Africa.<sup>53</sup>

To put it bluntly, the Other in the context of European and African relations is a conceptual reconstruction rather than an empirical fact. This alterity was created and used to consolidate European hegemony and define western identity as superior to what was deemed primitive and savage.

Although Mudimbe maintains that anthropology as a discipline altered the vision of Africa, distorting it according to colonial stereotypes, modern African anthropology can be perceived as the best way for westerns to understand the true essence of Africa without resorting to analysis through western knowledge and preconceptions, as Marc Augé states

anthropological research deals in the present with the question of the Other. The question of the Other is not just a theme that anthropology encounters from time to time; it is its sole intellectual object, the basis on which different fields of investigation may be defined. It deals with the Other in the present; that is sufficient to distinguish it from history. And it deals with it simultaneously in several senses, thus distinguishing itself from the other social sciences.<sup>54</sup>

## 1.4 Anthropology and the redemption of the Other

As Ryszard Kapuściński maintains in his essay entitled *The Other*, in this era of cultural change, passing from narrow Eurocentrism to more universal visions that embrace the entire world, a new branch of social science was born, anthropology. Anthropology is aimed towards the Other, dedicated exclusively to him. Contained within

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<sup>51</sup>Binyavanga Wainaina, *How to write about Africa*, New York, One World, 2022, p.460.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, p. 458.

<sup>53</sup> Binyavanga Wainaina, *How to write about Africa*, New York, One World, 2022, p. 462.

<sup>54</sup>Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, London, Verso, 1997, p. 18.

it is the idea of understanding the Other by getting to know him, the idea of accepting diversity and otherness as constituent features of mankind.<sup>55</sup>

Anthropology, as a field that studies human beings in their cultural, historical, and biological distinctions, has played an important role in developing and deconstructing narratives about populations and societies. Anthropology is the study of humanity, including the biology and evolution of *Homo sapiens*, as well as the social and cultural characteristics that distinguish humans from other animals. Since the mid-20th century, anthropology has evolved into specialized fields due to its wide-ranging nature. Cultural anthropology, or ethnology, social anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and psychological anthropology are the fields that examine the social and cultural structures of human communities.<sup>56</sup>

Among the most contentious issues is the portrayal of Africa, a continent whose image has been shaped by colonial preconceptions and distorted interpretations. In the anthropological context, Africa has frequently been looked over as the exotic, mysterious, and primitive Other, a place to be investigated and documented in terms that rarely related to the realities of its cultures and communities. However, the primary objective of anthropology should not be to reduce Africa to a single, stereotypical reality, but rather to explore its diversity of experiences, histories, and perspectives on the world.

Anthropology and colonialism have been intertwined since the nineteenth century. First, western anthropologists, the majority of whom were from Europe, saw the African continent through colonial preconceptions. During this time, Africa was frequently viewed as a continent caught between civilization and savagery, and anthropological research added to the confirmation of this dualistic viewpoint. Bronislaw Malinowski, for example, was known for his innovative approach in the field of participant observation in Melanesia. He argued that in order to properly comprehend a group, you must be a part of it, not just by means of interviews and observations, but by actively engaging in the population's daily existence. However, he also shared reductive representations of African cultures, reinforcing the concept of radical Other, in which African culture was viewed as inferior to European culture. Furthermore, the colonial perspective of Africa, which was

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<sup>55</sup>Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Other*, New York, Verso, 2018, p. 32.

<sup>56</sup><https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology>. Accessed 15/11/2024.

infected with scientific racism, was reflected in publications at the time that depicted Africans as primitives incapable of evolving without the guidance of Westerners.

“Again, they have no idea of what could be called the evolution of the world or the evolution of society; that is, they do not look back towards a series of successive changes, which happened in nature or in humanity, as we do. We, in our religious and scientific outlook alike, know that earth ages and that humanity ages, and we think of both in these terms; for them, both are eternally the same, eternally youthful.”<sup>57</sup>

With the rise of African independence in the twentieth century, many intellectuals began rewriting Africa's history in opposition to Eurocentric views. African Anthropology played an important role in this field by rejecting colonial portrayals and promoting a more authentic and detailed understanding of Africa. Ali Mazrui, one of the most well-known African intellectuals of the 20th century, is among the most significant examples in this field of study. In his exploration of colonial narratives, Mazrui enhanced a picture of Africa that included its indigenous customs together with elements of European, Asian, and Arab culture. He emphasized the multitude of African cultural, political, and religious influences, arguing that culture is a celebration of diversity. He urged Africans to not only accept their heritage, but also to enjoy it as a cultural mosaic. In fact, his objective was to free Africa from its narrow perspective and write about it from a historical and cultural standpoint, and he fulfills his ambition in his book, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, in which he emphasizes that, as the title suggests, contemporary Africa has a triple history, including indigenous, Islamic, and Western traditions as present manifestation of a much older triple inheritance, such as the legacy of indigenous, Semitic, and Greco-Roman influences on Africa.<sup>58</sup>

Not to be overlooked is the contribution of Chinua Achebe, whose literary works brought attention to the richness of African cultures and the difficulties faced by colonialism. Achebe emphasized the necessity for an African narrative that acknowledged the richness of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial African society rather than relying on the dichotomy of civilization and savagery.

Despite not being an Africanist anthropologist, Marc Augé provided valuable tools for understanding global dynamics that also affect the African continent. His idea of

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<sup>57</sup> Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> Ali Mazrui, *The Africans: a Triple Heritage*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1986, p. 81.

"Non-Places" refers to locations such as freeways, subways, and airports that are not important or associated with any particular culture. Even though they exist all over the world, these locations bring feelings of alienation and anonymity. In his essays, Augé concentrated on the effects of globalization and modernity, which he claimed resulted in the establishment of places deprived of genuine links to local identities.

The Other is frequently confined to a Non-Place with no meaningful historical or cultural ties in an era of increasing uniformity and globalization. According to Augé, the non-place is a space that facilitates travel, consummation, and transactions without consent for a proper link to community, culture, or territory. Places where the individual—and so the Other—is reduced to the status of a consumer or bystander. According to Marc Augé, the Other is viewed as a being that travels through these dehumanized environments without a clear cultural identity or sense of belonging. A person who lives in a world of anonymity and in globalized settings is no longer connected to a community or a patrimony; instead, they become a consumer of experiences. According to this idea, the Other is a person who becomes lost in the numerous connections and disconnections created by modernity rather than just a stranger.

This notion can also be extended to Africa, which is frequently portrayed as a non-place in international contexts, its vast historical and cultural heritage being reduced to a generalization that deprives it of its importance. An illustration of how the continent is frequently minimized to a non-place in global narratives is the African vision as a single, homogeneous entity that ignores distinct local realities and various meanings associated with particular locations. On the matter of recreating an honest description of Africans, enriching it with proper features and peculiarities that pertain to them, Augé affirms, to conclude his essay on the sense of the Other, that the image of different societies, of human creatures who were other than ourselves in two ways, first, like all Others, even those close to us, they were simply not ourselves, second, they were visibly culturally marked, stamped with a certain difference, so exotic, added a supplementary dimension to the mediating function. Now, in the media age and with the loss of exoticism, a type of short-circuit is created that confronts each individual directly with the image of the world. This phenomenon provides the anthropologists with a complex, intriguing, paradoxical, and new object of study. What Marc Augé believes is that on the horizon of

anthropological research, they are able to glimpse the possibility of an anthropology without exoticism.<sup>59</sup>

Another great impact on modern view of the Other can be attributed to Ryszard Kapuściński, Polish writer and journalist. Although not being an anthropologist in the strictest sense, he managed to provide one of the most prominent depictions of the Other in his journalistic works. He was able to speak about Africa in a way that combined reportage and social analysis, avoiding clichéd images typical of Western journalism and media, which sought to produce a precise image of the Other. According to him, when Europeans started out to dominate the earth, they had a picture of the Other as a naked primitive, a cannibal and a pagan, whose humiliation and tyranny was the holy right and duty of the European, who was white and Christian. The cause of whites' extraordinary brutality and cruelty was not only their lust for gold and slaves, which consumed their minds and blinded the ruling elites of Europe, but also the incredibly low standard of culture and morals among those sent out as the vanguard for contact with Others.<sup>60</sup> Kapuściński sees the Other as more than just an object of observation or a symbol of cultural differences. Meeting the Other is a difficult process that requires awareness of one's own limitations as well as the pursuit of empathetic comprehension, even if it is only partial. Kapuściński's journalism tackles the notion of the Other and the challenges of accurately portraying it. Kapuściński perceives the Other as an individual with his own stories, feelings, and legitimacy, rather than simply being different from us. Kapuściński depicts the Other in the African context as a complicated interlocutor living in a world of uncertainty, historical changes, and conflicts, rather than just the native object to colonize. Kapuściński portrays Africa as a location of contradictions and internal tensions, where the Other is constantly evolving alongside economic, political, and social transformations. This dialogic and reflexive method enabled the author to engage with the richness of African identities, sharing them without reducing them to labels and stereotypes. His work highlighted the political, social, and economic issues plaguing many African states, never simplifying the African struggling to a single story of suffering and conflict. His writing aimed at emphasizing the human, psychological, and historical

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<sup>59</sup>Marc Augé, *A sense for the Other*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 121.

<sup>60</sup>Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Other*, New York, Verso, 2018, p.26.

complexity of the African population, resisting the urge to simplify everything by giving the continent a unique label.

To conclude this analysis, Sally Falk Moore undoubtedly made the most significant contribution to redefining the figure of the African Other compared to the European. She was a legal anthropologist, one of the most influential of the twentieth century, who spent the majority of her time investigating power dynamics and cross-cultural interactions. Moore's research of African legal systems and social structures, particularly in terms of cultural traditions and interactions with colonists, provided a profound meditation on the concept of the Other. Moore's perspective of the Other stands out for its integrated approach, which acknowledges the diversity of experiences and meanings. Moore disagrees with a monolithic view of African society and emphasizes the need of investigating how African communities negotiate and re-elaborate their identity in relation to the Other, whether they are colonialists, missionaries, or other African populations. In this sense, the Other is more than just an object of study; it is a figure with whom one can interact and construct meaning. Moore reflects on the social and politic legitimization practices, analyzing how cultures build themselves through dialogue and contestation. The Other, in this vision, is not only a separated entity, but rather a person who actively participates to the construction of social relationships, an agent that interacts and contributes to the definition of the historical and cultural context in which he lives. The Other becomes a crucial actor in societies' evolution, both in colonial and postcolonial context.

Anthropology's purpose should be to accurately represent the real Africa, which means moving away from the simple and stereotypical perspectives that have hitherto dominated its representation. The anthropological perspective is the most complex and plural, capable of grasping the cultural and historical diversity that distinguishes each country and ethnic group on the continent.

The concept of the Other is crucial in anthropology and social sciences because it demands not only the awareness of cultural differences, but also a reflection on how such differences are perceived and portrayed. The Other, in his anthropological meaning, is more than just an abstract term; it is inextricably related to power dynamics, social institutions, and identity production.

The perception of the Other has changed a lot throughout history. In just seventy years, the World has passed from Jean-Paul Sartre saying that *l'enfer, c'est les autres* <sup>61</sup> to Byung-Chul Han, South Korean philosopher stating that is the Other who saves us from the Hell of sameness. <sup>62</sup>

It is essential to remember that the Other is not just an object to be observed, but a person with a unique identity. To make the concept more understandable, it is possible to consider a Ben Jelloun quotation in which he affirms that we're always a foreigner to someone. Learning to live together is how we fight racism. <sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos, suivi de Les Mouches*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, P.93. (Hell is other people)

<sup>62</sup>Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup>Tahar B. Jelloun, *Racism explained to my daughter*, New York, New Press, 1999, p. 52.

## 2. Violence and dehumanization

These creatures are all over black,  
and with such a flat nose that they can scarcely be pitied.

It is hardly to be believed that God,  
who is a wise Being,  
should place a soul,  
especially a good soul,  
in such a black ugly body. <sup>64</sup>

The British Empire's entry in Africa was not the first act of European submitting Africans. Africa, a continent with ancient populations and tremendous cultural diversity, has been subjected to multiple invasions and dominances throughout ages. The first foreigners' dominance in Africa may be traced back to ancient Egypt, one of the most powerful empires in history, which had a significant impact on neighboring countries. Its expansion southward along the Nile and westward in Nubia marks the beginning of interactions between Northern Africa and the rest of the continent.<sup>65</sup> Phoenicians from today's Lebanon established colonies along the African coast beginning around 1000 BC, particularly where is now Tunisia. Their most famous colony was Carthage, which became a dominating city in the Western Mediterranean. The Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage for control of the Mediterranean had significant consequences for North Africa, with the end of Carthage's and the rise of the Roman Empire's authority in Africa.<sup>66</sup> With the spread of Islam in the seventh century, Arab armies soon conquered northern and eastern Africa. This brought to a profound shift in the continent's political, cultural, and religious structures. The Arab Caliphates expanded their domain into Egypt, the Maghreb, and a portion of sub-Saharan Africa. Islamization and Arabization of Western regions and African coasts coincided with a significant spread of knowledge,

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<sup>64</sup>Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001, p. 264.

<sup>65</sup>V.V.A.A. *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, London, University College London Press, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Maria Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 52.

particularly in scientific, philosophical, and artistic fields. Arab rule, though less violent than other forms of colonization, had a considerable impact on the social, economic, and political systems of local inhabitants.<sup>67</sup> In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to actively enter Africa. Starting in 1415, with the taking of Ceuta, an important Moroccan port, the Portuguese began to build a system of fortifications along the western African coast.<sup>68</sup> In the sixteenth century, other European countries, such as Spain, the Netherlands, and France, began to arrive on African coasts, establishing commercial outposts and colonies, primarily for slave trading, in an “immense territory full of resources crying out for exploitation”.<sup>69</sup> However, the beginning of true colonialism, with political authority over African regions, begins in the nineteenth century with the scramble for Africa, which culminated in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, in which European powers divided the continent.<sup>70</sup> The British Empire, which already had a significant presence in Africa through possession of countries such as the Cape of Good Hope (now South Africa) and Sudan, began to enforce its influence in the nineteenth century. The British authority soon expanded into Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and other Western African territories. The British domain was distinguished by a strong colonial administration and the establishment of an economic system aimed toward the extraction of natural resources and the development of products meant for the European market.

Even if the intention was to benefit from the territory's natural resources, there is also to mention the brutality through which the indigenous population was dominated. The violence utilized in this colonization involved different spheres, but what is more surprising is that the colonizers not only felt justified in their actions, but also masked any cruelty performed as part of the civilizing mission.

## **2.1 Civilizing mission; religion and language as non-physical violence**

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<sup>67</sup>Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2000, p. 490.

<sup>68</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p. 297.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, London, Abacus, 1991, p. 379.

<sup>70</sup> VV.AA. *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa*, London, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. VI.

Although the civilizing mission is not specifically acknowledged by Elspeth Huxley, there are several passages in *Red Strangers* that discuss the elements that made up and defined the mission and can be interpreted as significant events in the lives of the characters during the colonization period.

Imperialism literature had a significant impact on colonial powers' civilizing missions, particularly during the early years of the British Empire. Literature was used to defend, reinforce, and promote colonial ideology, portraying colonization as a moral mission necessary to civilize cultures considered inferior. In this context, imperialist literature helped to legitimize the belief that Europe, with its culture, religion, and social structure, was destined to govern and teach barbaric tribes in other areas of the world, particularly Asia and Africa.

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said provides an excellent explanation of the situation throughout the colonizing period, stating that

For the European of the late nineteenth century, an interesting range of options are offered, all premised upon the subordination and victimization of the native. One is a self-forgetting delight in the use of power, the power to observe, rule, hold, and profit from distant territories and people. From these come voyages of discovery, lucrative trade, administration, annexation, learned expeditions and exhibitions, local spectacles, a new class of colonial rulers and experts. Another is an ideological rationale for reducing; then reconstituting the native as someone to be ruled and managed. Third is the idea of Western salvation and redemption through its "civilizing mission." Supposed jointly by the experts in ideas (missionaries, teachers, advisers, scholars) and in modern industry and communication, the imperial idea of westernizing the backward achieved permanent status world-wide, but it was always accompanied by domination.<sup>71</sup>

The Civilizing mission is an ideological justification for the continued colonization of non-western areas and inhabitants by European colonial power, particularly between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was based on the notion that colonial power had a responsibility to introduce civilization to previously deemed barbarian populations. The civilizing mission assumed that European colonizers were superior in terms of religion, culture, politics, and economy, and that it was their

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<sup>71</sup>Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Knopf, 1993, p. 131.

responsibility to elevate other populations, often by imposing Christian religion, western education, legal order, and transforming social structures and local politics.

An author that explained better the real ideal of the civilizing mission was literature Nobel prize Rudyard Kipling. He was born in British India and can be identified as the voice of Imperialism. The philosophy of this period can be found in Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden*, in which, in reference to the United States' invasion of the Philippines, white men are asked to devote their own lives to complete their civilizing mission, to save and elevate this half-devil, half-child people.<sup>72</sup> Kipling portrayed Africa and Asia as primitive regions in need of moral direction and the advancements brought about by Western culture, justifying imperialist activities as humanitarian.

Rider Haggard, another colonial writer, presented stories of travels and adventures in African nations, reinforcing the image of Africa as a mysterious and dangerous continent, yet promising in terms of civilization due to British influence. Haggard's tale, entitled *King Solomon's mines*, portrayed Europe as in possession of superior wisdom, capable of resolving tensions and fights between African societies populated by monkey-like creatures.<sup>73</sup>

Similar ideals can be found in philosophical works of that time, such as, among the others, those of Thomas Carlyle, who, in his *Occasional discourse on the Negro question*, published in 1849, stated that white people should be Masters and black people should be Slaves and they decidedly have to be servants to those that are born wiser than them, that are born lords of them, servants to the whites,<sup>74</sup> and John Stuart Mill. His most notable works inspired the so-called civilizing mission, reinforcing the notion that certain countries have a right and a duty to bring civilization to people who are regarded as inferior and non-civilized. In his well-known essay *On Liberty* published in 1859, Mill argues in favor of ultimate individual freedom, claiming that everyone should be free to pursue his own happiness as long as it does not harm others, stating that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is

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<sup>72</sup>Rudyard Kipling, *Stories and Poems*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 479.

<sup>73</sup>Henry Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's mines*, London, Cassel & Co, 1907, p. 131.

<sup>74</sup>Thomas Carlyle, *The works of Thomas Carlyle*, East Sussex, Delphi Classics, 2014, p. 15634.

not a sufficient warrant.<sup>75</sup> This notion of non-affection is critical to understanding his political theory, which opposes paternalism. However, Mill does not apply this approach in all situations, particularly when it comes to colonies. According to Mill, populations living under non-civilized regimes, a broad and Eurocentric term that refers to African, Asian, and indigenous American nations, require an enlightened administration to lead them toward civil progress. In this sense, Mill acknowledges some paternalism, intended as the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and defended or motivated by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm,<sup>76</sup> towards the colonized, defending European domination as a necessary guide to civilize those who were considered incapable of self-government, questioning

if the consequences of misconduct could be confined to the vicious or thoughtless individual, ought society to abandon to their own guidance those who are manifestly unfit for it? If protection against themselves is confessedly due to children and persons underage, is not society equally bound to afford it to persons of mature years who are equally incapable of self-government?<sup>77</sup>

Even though Mill was not a supporter of colonialism, he recognized something positive in European domains, such as the ability to educate and guide inferior populations to a more logical and free form of government. Throughout his life, he had an ambiguous attitude toward colonization. In his works, he promoted liberal values such as democracy and self-government. When it came to British colonies, he acknowledged the need for external control in order to promote the development of local society, even if it meant justifying a temporary form of authoritarian rule. However, he repeatedly emphasizes that pushing civilization is not the correct thing to do, as no one is forced to civilize. Mill argues that he heard from a writer that, in order to help a retrograde polygamous community, it was needed not a crusade, but a civilizade, and he agrees with this concept, but he then adds that he's not aware that any community has the right to force another to be civilized.<sup>78</sup> To end up his dissertation on liberty and on civilization, he underlines that forcing civilization will result in a furious rebellion. If civilization has got the better of barbarism when barbarism had the world to itself, it is too much to profess

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<sup>75</sup>John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 80.

<sup>76</sup><https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism/>. Accessed 24/11/2024.

<sup>77</sup>John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 144.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154.

to be afraid lest barbarism, after having been fairly got under, should revive and conquer civilization. A civilization that can thus succumb to its vanquished enemy, must first have become so degenerate, that neither its appointed priests and teachers, nor anybody else, has the capacity, or will take the trouble, to stand up for it. If this be so, the sooner such a civilization receives notice to quit, the better. It can only go on from bad to worse, until destroyed and regenerated (like the Western Empire) by energetic barbarians.<sup>79</sup> Karl Marx is another significant philosopher who expressed his thoughts on colonialism. Since colonial development was driven by the need for accumulation of wealth and seek for new resources, markets, and labor, he maintained that colonialism was a component of capitalism, as the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.<sup>80</sup> In his writings, Britain is seen as the archetype of a capitalist state that expands its economic domain through colonialism. Marx could not, however, overlook the fact that British colonialism was marked by ruthless violence, as he states that there is no army in Europe or America with so much brutality as the British. Plundering, violence, massacre, things that everywhere else are strictly and completely banished, are a time-honoured privilege, a vested right of the British soldier.<sup>81</sup> Together with violence, other aspects to be mentioned are the devastation of local economies, as narrated by Elspeth Huxley in *Red Strangers*, when coins are imposed by British colonists to replace the exchange of animals and goods as basis of economy, and cultural estrangement in order to accomplish this economic and territorial expansion.

One of the most important aspects of the civilizing mission was the spread of Christianity in British territories. As Chinua Achebe says in his novel *Things Fall Apart*, there have been those who declared that colonialism was a benediction, that brought civilization, a written language, schools and hospitals. And there is who answers to that, stating that the white man was clever, arriving pacifically with his religion, and by distracting everyone with his funny stupidity, pressed the knife, dividing populations that used to be united.<sup>82</sup> According to the Eurocentric perspective of colonial mission, colonists used Christian religion as a tool to enforce their rule and civilize African

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<sup>79</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 155.

<sup>80</sup> Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1981, p. 292.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p.181.

<sup>82</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London, Penguin, p. 129.

populations. Kenneth Scott Latourette, one of the few historians who has dared to write a complete, scholarly history of Christianity in all its branches, considered that it was not until 1944 that Christianity began to be a world religion, rather than what he called a colonial or imperial extension, ecclesiastically speaking, of an Occidental faith.<sup>83</sup> He believed that the history of the planting of Christianity formed an essential part of the history of European empires.

In Elspeth Huxley's *Red Strangers*, Christianity appears to be synonymous with evolution, wisdom, and civilization.

“He was a Christian, an educated man who could write and speak fluent English. He did work of the highest importance for the Government, work which made him exceedingly rich.”<sup>84</sup>

Because of this approach of understanding reality, several characters in the novel express a desire to be baptized, not for their faith in the Christian God, but to become civilized.

“This morning, I will buy two bicycles, one for each of us, and trousers and shirts, and European hats and shoes. Then we will go to Kijabe, to the mission; I wish to become a Christian and to learn to write.”<sup>85</sup>

Throughout the story, Kikuyu characters display interest about Christian religion, questioning the true meaning of European faith. However, the red strangers are usually imprecise, and their responses are never thorough enough for African characters. For example, there is a chapter in which a character questions a Christian about polygamy, and the consequences of having more than one wives, considering that in Kikuyu culture, people used to have more than a wife.

“He plagued Roland with many questions about Christianity, and foreign races, and the ways of Europeans. Some of the things that Roland told him made him begin to doubt whether it was wise to become a Christian after all.

“Is it impossible, then,” he asked, “for one who has two wives, or more, to be a Christian? Must all the elders who have married several women go to this place of fires the Christians know about, and burn?”

“No, a man with two wives can still become a Christian,” Roland said, “if he promises not to increase the number afterwards. But a young man with only one wife may not marry any more.”

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<sup>83</sup>Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 40.

<sup>84</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p.556.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 565.

“Then,” Karanja said thoughtfully, “it would be best to wait to become a Christian until several wives have been acquired.”

Roland looked shocked, and remarked:

“That, however, is not what the missionaries say.”<sup>86</sup>

This passage captures exactly what John Stuart Mill believed he had heard from another author at the time regarding the need to civilize populations that had not yet denounced polygamy. Frantz Fanon's works express this concept, reporting that in Europe, that is to say, in every civilized and civilizing country, the Negro is the symbol of sin.<sup>87</sup> The settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense, the native is the absolute evil.<sup>88</sup>

In *Culture and Imperialism*, an essential classic for postcolonial studies, Edward Said, Palestinian-American academic, literary critic, and political activist, explains that the one relationship that does not change is the hierarchical one between the metropole and overseas generally, between European- Western-white-Christian-male and those peoples who geographically and morally inhabit the realm beyond Europe (Africa, in the British case)<sup>89</sup>

With this quote he enforces the idea that in colonies British used to spread Christian religion as it was one of the main features that made Europeans superior compared to Africans. Edward Said is the father of the notion of Orientalism, which is a way of seeing the world centered on an ontological and epistemological dichotomy between "the Orient" and "the Occident".<sup>90</sup> His theory supports the premise that Westerners constructed a stereotypical vision of the Orient, which was reflected in how missionaries and conquerors viewed Africa. Christianity became a means of exotizing

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<sup>86</sup>Elsbeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, pp.599-600.

<sup>87</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 189.

<sup>88</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup>Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Knopf, 1993, p. 106.

<sup>90</sup>Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979, p. 2.

and mentally dominating African populations, imposing a worldview that replaced their pre-existing cultural, spiritual, and religious traditions. Catholic and Protestant missionaries behaved and looked extremely differently in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, Protestants had moved in a decidedly 'Catholic' direction, whereas Catholics had learned far more from Protestants than they would want to admit. What remains most striking is that Protestant emphasis has changed from eschatology to ecclesiology. While both may use the term 'civilization', it was not their primary focus. The eschatology tended toward the annihilation of African culture.<sup>91</sup>

Religion was a cultural and physical form of violence in colonial societies. Christian missionaries, working alongside colonial authorities, destroyed temples and native religious customs. Soon, Christian imposition became a method of imposing norms, such as controlling families, schools, and educational systems, as Said explains, referring especially to British colonies in India, no area of experience was spared the unrelenting application of these hierarchies. In the system of education designed for India, students were taught not only English literature but the inherent superiority of the English race.<sup>92</sup>

Frantz Fanon, a French Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French colony of Martinique, was influential in the fields of postcolonial studies and critical theory and was concerned with the psychopathology of colonization as well as the human, social, and cultural consequences of decolonization. He had a clear understanding of the civilizing mission, particularly the consequences of introducing Christian religion in colonies. In his most famous work entitled *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961, he makes an unusual comparison between the DDT, usually implemented to kill parasites, and the introduction of Christian religion in colonies. He states:

“We must put the DDT which destroys parasites, the bearers of disease, on the same level as the Christian religion which wages war on embryonic heresies and instincts, and on evil as yet unborn. The recession of yellow fever and the advance of evangelization form part of the same balance sheet. But the triumphant *communiqués* from the missions are in fact a source of information concerning the implantation of foreign influences in the core of the colonized people. I speak of the

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<sup>91</sup>Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 298.

<sup>92</sup>Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Knopf, 1993, p. 101.

Christian religion, and no one need be astonished. The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor."<sup>93</sup>

As previously said, in the novel *Red Strangers*, one of the first act of power put in place by the colonizers is that of imposing their own culture, religion and language, in order to civilize the Kikuyu. As Silvia Albertazzi, explains in her book on postcolonial literature that there is always a previous story, and of that story, it must be understood what it means before it starts, and explains what is behind it,<sup>94</sup> because White men are never satisfied with simply razing cultures and populations; what they care about most is erasing memory and overlapping it with their culture.<sup>95</sup> Due to the fact that British foreigners brought the idea to Africa that in order to be more civilized and superior, people had to be like them, so educated, with Christian faith and English speakers, some characters in the novel insist that they would like their people to be like them, asking why Europeans do not build schools everywhere quickly so that our children can become educated and learn to read and write.<sup>96</sup> However, a few lines after this statement, the reader understands that the character grasped the real intentions of the colonizers, as he states that it is because they wish to keep them in ignorance so that they shall not know how to claim their rights.<sup>97</sup>

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said quotes an extract from Michael Edwardes' book *The Sahibs and the Lotus*, in which the psychological concept that drives the use of English in colonies is explained during a dialogue.

“Few really bothered to learn the language of the people they ruled with any fluency, and they were heavily dependent on their native clerks, who had taken the trouble to learn the language of their conquerors, and were, in many cases, not at all unwilling to use their masters' ignorance to their own advantage”.<sup>98</sup>

David Ogilvy, the British advertising entrepreneur, stated that if you want to persuade people to do something, you must use their language, the language in which

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<sup>93</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p.42.

<sup>94</sup>Silvia Albertazzi, *La letteratura postcoloniale*, Roma, Carocci, 2013, p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>96</sup>Elsbeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p.600.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 600.

<sup>98</sup>Michael Edwardes, *The Sahibs and the Lotus*, London, Constable, 1988, p. 59.

they think. However, because colonizers had no intention of persuading the colonized, they had no real interest in learning the local language, but they forced the subjected population to learn English, as the one who learns the language of the other is inferior to the one who already knows the language, because in order to say, do, or have something, you must explain it in the colonizers' language. This method creates a sense of addiction in the minds of the colonized, as they require the colonizers to master the language in order to have something that the colonizers took away. In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference.<sup>99</sup>

A quote attributed to William Butler Yeats, Irish dramatist, writer and poet, says that a language represents the natural collective memory of a population and that when it takes possession of a new linguistic instrument, if it loses contact with its most ancient means of expression, it becomes completely unable to recognize itself in its own traditions. So, the author asks himself how it can affirm one's identity. Colonists imposed languages to strike at the thing that bound communities, and to control memory. As a result, following the independence of various African countries, many colonial authors decided to share with the rest of the world about what occurred during the British Empire's colonization period. Even the father of this genre, Chinua Achebe, wrote his most famous works in English for the first time, changing people's perceptions of what happened during colonization and the African stereotype. Achebe explained in his essay entitled *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that he did not condemn those who use English language to write about Africa, because even if he recognizes the importance of native languages, he sustain that English-written works can reach a wider audience. To him followed by Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. However, the latter changed his position over his career, becoming the precursor of a school of thought that encouraged the writing of African works in their native languages.

Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasized the necessity of remembering one's roots and resisting conquerors'-imposed identities. One of his most fundamental arguments is that it is critical to rediscover the native language while rejecting the colonial one.

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<sup>99</sup>Ngũgĩ W.T. *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, James Currey, 1986, p 11.

“How did we, as African writers, come to be so feeble towards. the claims of our languages on us and so aggressive in our claims on other languages, particularly the languages of our colonization?”<sup>100</sup>

Ngũgĩ argues that language is the primary means of oppressing Africans. He equates language, which is considered spiritual subjugation, to a bullet, which is a sign of physical subjugation, placing both on the same scale of violence.<sup>101</sup>

According to the author of *Decolonising the Mind*, a collection of essays on language and its crucial role in country culture, history, and identity, language is more than a mere mean of communication, but it is rather a carrier or culture and history of a Nation. This is why he believes that the decolonization must start from the re appropriation of the native language, because every person has the right to their mother tongue or the language of their culture, as well as the right to express themselves intellectually in their native language.<sup>102</sup> In accordance with what he stated, the author thereafter released a work in his language. So, following his initial novels *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between*, and *A Grain of Wheat*, he abandoned his colonial name James and his English writing in favor of Gikuyu, in which he composed the novel *Devil on the Cross* using prison-issued toilet paper, declaring “I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African people”.<sup>103</sup>

Identity, both individual and collective, for Ngũgĩ resides in language. As he explains in a passage of his work, values are the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable froth the language that makes possible its genesis growth banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Ngũgĩ W.T. *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, James Currey, 1986, p.9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p.9.

<sup>102</sup>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: “*Europe and the West must also be decolonised*” September 2019, <https://youtu.be/FOXqc-8zCPE?feature=shared>.

<sup>103</sup>Ngũgĩ W.T. *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, James Currey, 1986, p. 28.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid, p, 15.

The introduction of Christian religion in British colonies in Africa, combined with the African stereotype, as a result of years of racism in both philosophical and scientific fields, led to a complete alienation of the colonized, a disintegration of the personality<sup>105</sup>, who sees himself in a present in which he does not belong, with his past erased in favor of the colonizers' culture. Even taking into account the absence of an African common background, as extensively explained by Black Existentialists, it is undeniable that the civilizing mission's goal, carried out through violent repressions, the imposition of Christian religion, and the teaching of the foundations of Western culture in schools, was the complete annihilation of colonized populations' identities. The colonized would quietly submit to the superior race's authority since they lacked roots to defend, beliefs to hold, and a history to claim. Words like identity, roots, ethnicity, nationalism, and nationality, can be used to justify conflict to legitimize everything done to build, maintain, and develop power relations, as well as variations in consumption and exploitation links.<sup>106</sup>

## 2.2 Identity

The concept of identity has been a long-standing topic of discussion and study in philosophical, social, and anthropological fields since ancient times and touches with psychological, cultural, social, and historical issues. It has a significant historical dimension, especially in the context of societies that have experienced traumatic events such as colonialism, its social and political consequences, and the battle for independence. In the case of Africa, European colonization had a significant impact on identity by imposing new political and social systems and attempting to erase or change local cultural identity.

There are numerous ways to define identity. One definition of identity is an individual's or group's concept of himself or itself, which incorporates physical, psychological, cultural, and social components. It is constructed and defined in relation to the Other, through the identification of similarities and distinctions. There are numerous ideas attempting to explain the origins of an identity. Nowadays, it is possible

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<sup>105</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 58.

<sup>106</sup>Adriano Prospero, *Identità*, Bari, Laterza, 2018, pp.73-74.

to claim that identity is who someone is, so the name of a person or the qualities, ideas, etc., that distinguish a particular person or group from others.<sup>107</sup> According to Adriano Prospero, Italian historian, every human being's identity is a complex thing composed by a lot of factors, and each of them is not a static thing, but rather a reality to which the person is subjected, let it be hereditary or conquered.<sup>108</sup>

Identity is not a static concept. On this subject, sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall thought that identity is not a set of fixed attributes, the unchanging essence of the inner self, but a constantly shifting process of positioning. We tend to think of identity as taking us back to our roots, the part of us which remains essentially the same across time. However, identity is always a never-completed process of becoming - a process of shifting identifications, rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being.

During the colonial period, dehumanization was one of the results of conquerors' actions. As Frantz Fanon observes, violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them.<sup>109</sup> So, dehumanizing implies destroying identity and making it impossible to have one. In postcolonialism field, he defines identity as a complex process that emerges from the clash between the person and the world around him, a world controlled by racism, discrimination, and subjugation in the colonial setting. Fanon examines how colonized identity is created by his relationship with the colonizer, who imposes a picture of reality that portrays the submissive as inferior, illogical, and nonhuman. Fanon's work *Black Skin, White Masks* portrays the psychological experience of the colonized, in which his identity is warped by the colonizers' racist lens. The colonized are compelled to confront an identity imposed by the Other, which reduces them to objects and hence negates their subjectivity. His search for an authentic identity is a painful and conflictual process in which the colonized must confront the status of Other, a being who lives solely in relation to colonial domination.

Fanon emphasizes that colonial experience causes a type of schizophrenia in colonized people that is not only psychiatric, but also social and cultural. Colonized people live in a divided society in which their bodies and cultures are judged inferior, and

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<sup>107</sup><https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/identity>. Accessed 28/11/2024.

<sup>108</sup>Adriano Prospero, *Identità*, Bari, Laterza, 2018, p. 22.

<sup>109</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 15.

as a result, they crave absorption into colonists' cultures and try to adopt their beliefs. He investigates the phenomena of the White Mask, which refers to the colonized's attempt to adapt to colonizer-imposed criteria by wearing a mask that distances him from his own identity and pushes him to take a role that is not his own.<sup>110</sup>

This phenomenon appears in a variety of forms in Elspeth Huxley's novel *Red Stranger*, from the way that, due to the indirect rule technique, Africans designed to rule over those of their own population tend to become more like the strangers, with young men that have cropped their hair, like Europeans, and were even ceasing to have their ears pierced and to wear ornaments in the lobes,<sup>111</sup> to the desire to become Christian and learn English, to be a civilized person, just like the red strangers.

René Descartes, a French philosopher, said the famous line "I think, therefore I am" in his *Discourse on the Method*, published in 1637, a century before Locke. John Locke emphasizes the significance of thinking in order to be as he attempts to define the concept of personal identity.

“For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that that makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity.”<sup>112</sup>

According to John Locke, consciousness and memory are synonyms, hence the identity also resides in memory. In today's world, identity is associated with collectivity, cultures, and nations as much as the individual. Our memory is made up of our individual memories and our collective memories. The two are intimately linked. And history is our collective memory. If our collective memory is taken from us - is rewritten - we lose the ability to sustain our true selves.<sup>113</sup> This is why collective memory is so important in order to regain an identity. When Primo Levi discusses the Holocaust, he effectively explains the danger of losing one's identity in favor of one depicted violently by another.

“Many people—many nations—can find themselves believing, more or less consciously, that “every stranger is an enemy.” For the most part, this conviction lies buried in the mind like some latent infection; it betrays itself only in random, disconnected acts, and is not the basis of a system

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<sup>110</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 154.

<sup>111</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 325.

<sup>112</sup>John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, Penguin, 1997, p.302.

<sup>113</sup>Haruki Murakami, *1Q84 Book 1-2*, London, Random House, 2011, p.275.

of thought. But when this happens, when the unspoken dogma becomes the major premise in a syllogism, then, at the end of the chain, stands the Lager. It is the product of a conception of the world carried to its logical consequences with rigorous consistency; as long as the conception exists, the consequences remain to threaten us. The story of the death camps should be understood by everyone as a sinister signal of danger.”<sup>114</sup>

From an anthropological point of view, culture, which is defined as the way of life, particularly the general habits and beliefs, of a specific group of people at a specific time, can be seen as another characteristic that structure an individual’s identity.<sup>115</sup>

The term was initially used in France in the 18th century, first in conjunction with an art form and later by itself. It denotes a specific state of the human spirit, of superiority, and is used to describe a man of culture, someone who has studied, or an intellectual who possesses expertise in more than one field. Its development led to civilization, such as the defeat of ignorance, in favor of an evolution of those superior costumes.<sup>116</sup> The definition of culture and its function in determining an individual's or group's identity were the subject of research of many scholars. Alfred Kroeber, American anthropologist, together with Clyde Kluckhohn, gave more than 200 definitions of the word culture, many of which were just repetitions, divided into seven categories. Sir Edward Tylor opens his *Primitive Culture* stating that Culture, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.<sup>117</sup> One of the most important intellectuals in this field is Claude Lévi-Strauss. He wanted to find a universal law that allowed to comprehend human beings and their manifestations. According to him, any culture can be considered as a combination of symbolic systems headed by language, the matrimonial rules, the economic relations, art, science and religion. All the systems seek to express certain aspects of physical reality and social reality, and even more, to express the links that those two types of reality have with each other and those that occur among the symbolic systems themselves.<sup>118</sup> Even though he is a supporter of

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<sup>114</sup>Primo Levi, *The complete works of Primo Levi*, New York, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015, p. 61.

<sup>115</sup>[https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture#google\\_vignette](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture#google_vignette) Accessed 14/12/2024.

<sup>116</sup>Marco Aime, *Cultura*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2020, p. 19.

<sup>117</sup>Edward Tylor, *Primitive culture*, New York, Dover Publications, 2016, p. 20.

<sup>118</sup>Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss*, London, Routledge 1987, p. 16.

cultural relativism, he acknowledged that certain people are barbarians, and despite his denials, scholars like Edward Said consider him as a Eurocentric European.

Franz Boas introduced the significant concept of cultural relativism. This notion suggests that culture includes all of a person's social expressions within a group. Every cultural expression, though, needs to be viewed through the lens of the society that created it. This characteristic calls into question the idea of racial classification, which was already struggling because of the late biological findings that eliminated the connections between behavior and skin color. Boas' researches and scientific advancements challenged the ideas that served as the basis for colonialism and the justification for the civilizing mission in Africa, such as the notion of a pure European culture and identity, as well as ethnocentrism, which was intended as the only correct perspective and allowed one to judge others by making one's own culture, race, and ethnicity the only ones that truly mattered.<sup>119</sup>

The existence of any pure race with special endowments is a myth, as is the belief that there are races all of whose members are foredoomed to eternal inferiority.<sup>120</sup>

As explained by Byung-Chul Han in his book on *Hyperculturality*, European culture is far from being pure, in the sense that it originates from European ancestors, and it has never been altered by the influence of the non-European Other. He adds that since Hegel believed that both the Romans and the Ancient Greeks were the result of cultural clashes, it is reasonable to argue that European culture can pertain to the field of Multiculturalism, rather than being considered a pure one.

In the context of European culture and multiculturalism, the concept of hybrid stands as the crucial topic, perfectly studied and developed by Bhabha. According to the Indian philosopher, the concept of hybridity questions the purity or originality of culture itself. Cultures are not fixed, unchanging entities that could be the subjects of hermeneutic understanding, and the hybridization creates the so-called interstitial passage that creates the identity, considering the border as a space in which to create.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Marco Aime, *Cultura*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2020, p.97.

<sup>120</sup>Franz Boas, *Race and Democratic Society*, New York, Augustin Publisher, 1946, p.20.

<sup>121</sup>Byung-Chul Han, *Hyperculture*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2022, p.21.

As a result, this border constantly reinterprets identity and the notion that a pure race—whether European or of any other origin—could exist.

In his book entitled *Eccessi di culture*, that can be literally translated as excesses of cultures, Italian anthropologist Marco Aime states that the Stranger was seen as that human being that alters established behavior models, spreads anxiety and confounds lines of separation that must be well marked and visible.<sup>122</sup> Discriminating against a culture by calling one's own culture superior led to the use of collective categories that combine the history, culture, and identity of people that are part of this category, which are characterized as inferior and incompatible with the practices of superior races.

One of the most enduring effects of European colonialism is racism, which is defined as the discrimination and marginalization of individuals or groups of people on the basis of their race. The social, political, and cultural structures of both African and Western nations were profoundly and permanently impacted by British colonization in Africa. Racist ideology and imperialist policies that legitimized African submission had its roots in colonial society's hierarchical view of races, which was mirrored in post-colonial societies not only in Africa but also in European nations that participated in the colonial effort, such as Great Britain. The discriminatory belief of a superior race (the white race) and an inferior race (the African race) served as the foundation for British colonialism in Africa, which legitimized the exploitation of African populations. The practices of colonization, including enslavement, forced labor, land confiscation, and social segregation, were influenced by this racist worldview. As other colonial powers, Great Britain used a civilizing mission that was supposed to enlighten the primitive inhabitants and civilizations to justify the possession of African territory and the enslavement of Africans.

Racism developed as a direct result of British colonialism in Africa, and its effects may still be seen in contemporary society in both former colonial cities and African nations. In addition to being a deeply established phenomenon that shows up in individual actions, racism has its roots in social, political, and economic systems and continues to exist in modern society. Racist ideologies have impacted Western societies that imposed colonial dominion, such as the British one, and despite abandoning actual colonization,

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<sup>122</sup>Marco Aime, *Eccessi di culture*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, p. 74.

British culture continues to confront its racial legacy. Racism is still deeply ingrained in European society, as seen by xenophobic politicians, migrant flows, and issues with immigrants' integration. Racism is the most prevalent problem in today's global setting, although being less apparent in its most overt manifestations. In addition to increasing migratory movements, globalization has led to the perpetuation of inequality in both developed and developing nations. Despite political liberation, the fight against postcolonial racism required coping with new forms of dominance, such as economic neocolonialism, which continued to marginalize African populations and those of African descent worldwide. Racial disparities have expanded globally as a result of economic and globalization, since new kinds of exploitation impact people through economic, migratory, and political processes rather than through direct territorial rule.

Prejudices against Africans and other non-European ethnic groups, restricted immigration policies, and the prevalence of racial conflicts in modern society are all direct outcomes of colonial-era power systems. Achille Mbembe provides a viewpoint in *Necropolitics* that helps readers understand how racism continues to determine the fate of Black people in postcolonial nations in both Africa and the West. Mbembe asserts that racism and violence are not personal expressions but rather have their roots in the political and economic systems that continue to control Africans' lives on a worldwide scale.

“In many regions of the postcolonial world, the turning point was to be the generalizing of belligerent relations, often as the ultimate consequence of the authoritarian course that many political regimes took to deal with intense protests.”<sup>123</sup>

According to Italian anthropologist Marco Aime, racism in modern culture originates from a fear of the Other. People think that a stranger can change their culture and identity, threatening the pure lineage of Western people. But he thinks it's incorrect to assume that we are all equal. This is due to the fact that people would accept the Other as equal to themselves rather than recognizing and honoring him for who he is—different but neither superior nor inferior.<sup>124</sup> Regarding this, Claude Lévi-Strauss explained that racism is a theory that seeks biological proof of human equality. In contrast to the racism of exploitation that defined the colonial era, which involved the exploitation of groups of

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<sup>123</sup>Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2019, p. 34.

<sup>124</sup>Marco Aime, *Eccessi di culture*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, p. 61.

people who were considered inferior and dehumanized, this racism can be understood as a racism of contact, originating from the fear of encountering the Other, that brings to a fear of contagion from the Other. Cultural racism creates classifications and hierarchies that result in exclusion based on cultural characteristics and attributes rather than biology and exteriority, as in classic racism. The true concern is that other laws and religions may overlap or contaminate, leading to violent acts, both physical and psychological.<sup>125</sup> Violence can be seen for example in 1938 *Manifesto of Race* published by the fascist Italian government of Benito Mussolini. In line with Blaise Pascal's theory that all human misfortunes stem from the inability of men to live in peace in their own chamber,<sup>126</sup> it promoted the idea that Italians were the Aryan race, the purest race, which should have discouraged interaction with non-Italian cultures and races because it would have contaminated them.<sup>127</sup>

Theories by thinkers like Charles Darwin and books like Joseph Conrad's that are still regarded as contemporary, despite the fact that they are results of the era in which they were written,<sup>128</sup> created an evolutionary scale of the human race that was used to defend British dominance. Former African colonies had to deal with the wounds caused by racism and colonial structures after colonialism officially ended and independence was gained. The disparities between races and distinctions introduced by colonization were typically passed down to the new political class. With the elite frequently perpetuating discriminatory social structures set by conquerors, racism changed the political, economic, and social landscape of African countries. Racism, however, persisted after independence.

Fanon does not limit himself to exploring the psychological dimension of identity; instead, he concentrates on the political ramifications of this process. In his writings on decolonization, particularly in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon examines how the liberation of the colonized is achieved through the regaining of his collective identity. Rebellion against colonizers is more than just a political and economic struggle; it is also a fight for recognition of one's own cultural identity.

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<sup>125</sup>Marco Aime, *Eccessi di culture*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, pp. 92-93-94.

<sup>126</sup>Blaise Pascal, *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, London, George Bell & Sons, 1901, p. 30.

<sup>127</sup>Marco Aime, *Cultura*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2020, p.53.

<sup>128</sup>Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London, Verso, 2014, p.27.

According to Fanon, decolonization entails a profound shift that includes not only political and social aspects, but also psychological ones. Colonized people must break free from colonial mentalities that consider them inferior. In this view, political independence is inextricably linked to psychological freedom, which allows individuals and groups to reclaim their dignity and value.

The role of violence in decolonization is central to Fanon's philosophy. He believes that violence is an unavoidable response to colonialism's repeated and systemic violence. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he argues that armed conflict is a necessary act for the redemption of the colonized because it allows him to reclaim his own cultural identity and break free from the colonists' psychological and cultural dominance. Violence is more than just a means of regaining freedom; it is a psychological process that allows the colonized to heal and overcome the humiliation caused by colonization.<sup>129</sup> Freedom is viewed as a rebirth of the identity that manifests itself through the fight against oppression and the establishment of a new social and psychological balance.

### **2.3 Independence, repression and physical violence**

British Colonial violence manifested itself in a variety of ways. Colonial forces did not hesitate to use force to suppress uprisings, including horrific methods such as torture, executions, and aerial bombardment. As John Stuart Mill theorized, from violence can only come violence. Elspeth Huxley's *Red Stranger* mentions physical violence, which is undoubtedly a game-changing incident. The first reference of violence is depicted by the first story in which the reader learns about the entrance of strangers who are believed to be carrying odd noisy wounds capable of killing from a distance.<sup>130</sup> Following this, Kikuyu mundu-mugu, a healer and diviner, foretold that if people allowed the strangers to settle where the African warriors had been slaughtered, horrible things would happen. This attempt to force the strangers to flee fails, resulting in a catastrophe in which the strangers are alleged to have used their powers to slay the rebels.

“The warriors of Karuri’s district were called and paraded in full force. At dawn they attacked Kaheri’s homestead, where the sorcerer lived. At first victory seemed certain, but then the sorcerer invoked his magic against the attackers and men fell dead without wounds from spear, sword or

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<sup>129</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 59.

<sup>130</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 172.

arrow. Terrified, Karuri's men fled. The sorcerer continued to live at Kaheri's, and drought continued to ravage the land."<sup>131</sup>

In the final chapter of Book Two, Kikuyu appear perplexed by the behavior of red strangers, as the reader learns that the British, while suppressing African tribes, are also fighting another European force.

"Matu heard that they had gone to fight in a war against other Europeans who lived a long way to the south. This surprised him, for he had not known that more than one kind of European existed in the world."<sup>132</sup>

The physical persecution of Kikuyu by the red strangers, which is referenced throughout the text, leads to this sentence. "The time had come, he said, for the Kikuyu to cease their abject obedience to the foreign oppressors."<sup>133</sup>

Frantz Fanon opens his work *The Wretched of the Earth* saying that national liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used, or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.<sup>134</sup> However, according to him, even if he mentions Africans' violence

It is Europe and the Europeans that are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. Is Europe who undertook the leadership of the world with ardor, cynicism, and violence.<sup>135</sup>

Fanon's main purpose is to indict Europe for having divided human beings into a hierarchy of races that reduced and dehumanized the subordinates to both the scientific gaze and the will of the superiors,<sup>136</sup> in order to justify rebels' violence.

During World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and United States President Franklin Roosevelt, agreed on the *Atlantic Charter*, in which they expressed their goals for the world after the end of the World War. One of the main points of this document established the respect of the right of all peoples to choose the form of

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<sup>131</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 172.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid. p. 291.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 383.

<sup>134</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p.35.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 311.

<sup>136</sup>Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London, Verso, 2014, pp. 21-22.

government under which they will live, and that they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.<sup>137</sup>

This agreement, combined with the severe debts resulting from World War II, laid the groundwork for African colonies' independence from European powers. However, as the quotation from Frantz Fanon anticipated, not every act of independence ended peacefully.

“Because of the Cold War there were first of all two Europes, East and West; and then, in the peripheral regions of the world going through the throes of decolonization, there was the Europe that was representative of the great empires, now seething with insurrections that were finally to develop into struggles beyond European and Western control.”<sup>138</sup>

African independence from colonial powers, primarily the British Empire, was a long and complicated process that saw the emergence of nationalist movements, armed conflicts, and political and social transformations throughout the area. Even though decolonization began in the 1940s, the majority of African governments achieved independence between the 1950s and 1970s, marking the end of the colonial era. British responses to African insurgencies varied depending on the circumstances, but they tended to follow a similar pattern. To maintain control over the colonies, Great Britain utilized a combination of military power, propaganda, and political concessions. The anti-insurgency techniques, including search and destroy operations such as village destruction and brutal interrogation, were documented in several cases. In many colonies, like Kenya, the British sought to disrupt the unity of resisting troops by encouraging collaboration among different ethnic groups and utilizing auxiliary local forces. In *Red Strangers* there is a point in which Kikuyu are exposed to the atrocities of war. After discovering that British are fighting against other Europeans, the acknowledgement that just as there were Masai and Wakamba and Kikuyu, so there were many white tribes, and that these fought among each other in the same way<sup>139</sup> is suddenly replaced by the understanding that the red stranger are capturing Kikuyu in Karatina, forcing them to fight alongside with them against the other Europeans.

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<sup>137</sup>[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_16912.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm). Accessed 04/12/2024.

<sup>138</sup>Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London, Verso, 2014, p. 18.

<sup>139</sup>Elsbeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 291.

“Matu returned to his homestead quickly and resolved to go no more to the shops until the battle had been fought. He did not want to get caught by the Europeans and made to go to war, as he had been made to build roads or drive away the Masai. He was more than ever pleased that he had left Karatina for a place beyond Muthengi’s reach.”<sup>140</sup>

Through the eyes and the disbelief of the characters of the novel, Elspeth Huxley narrates how British colonizers captured Kikuyu in concentration camps, to divide them essentially into those who can help them in fighting against other European and those who must remain there.

One day a njama had come to his homestead, he said, with a message from Muthengi: a big law case was to be held at Karatina and everyone was to attend. When he approached the market-place he saw that a wire fence had been put around it, making it into a big pen. He also saw a number of soldiers ordering people to enter the pen. He hid, waiting to see what would occur. When the pen was full the soldiers shut the gate, and all the people inside were trapped. He himself ran away and hid in the forest for fifteen days, and avoided capture; but since then he had not dared to appear openly on the road or at places where Europeans might be looking for him. So he had fled from his home to escape Muthengi’s njamas, who were capturing young men everywhere as if they had been seizing goats for the slaughter.

He heard afterwards that the people in the pen had been divided into three batches. One batch was called Fita, and these were sent to Nairobi with a guard of soldiers. The second, a small batch, was called Shamba, and they went to work for Europeans on farms close to Tetu. The third was called Rotha; these were the old and infirm, and they were allowed to return to their homesteads.<sup>141</sup>

The following narrative shifts from times when the reader and the protagonists are not receiving any word from the battlefield to the moment when the first Kikuyu returned to their homeland.

A few days later, the first batch of young men returned from the war. Eight came from Tetu, walking in silence along the path with bundles of clothes and cooking-pots strapped to their backs. Their faces were gaunt, and their skin tightly stretched over ribs and shoulder-blades. They looked about them with dazed, deep eyes whose glances seemed to brush indifferently over the surface of all they saw, as a mundu-mugu will brush the curse from a man with the cow’s-tail stopper of his medicine gourd. They recognized their relatives and asked for news, but their voices were strange, like the flat note of a hollow tree struck by a club where before they had been like clear goat-bells

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<sup>140</sup> Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 291.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p. 296.

on the mountain. Those who had left as youths returned as old men, walking slowly. Three wore beards, showing that they had been sick, and their hair was unshaven.<sup>142</sup>

However, neither during the conflict nor when it is ended and the Kikuyu return, the reader is never given a true account of what actually occurred on the battlefield. This is because the warriors witnessed such horrific acts throughout the conflict that they chose never to tell anyone about them.

“Now that you have come back,” Nduini said, “and the strangers’ war is over, we wait to hear news of the country to which you went, and of all that became of you and the others who were captured at Karatina fifteen months ago.”

The young man turned his head away as if he had seen something unclean, and said in a deep voice: “You must not ask me of such things, for I will not speak of them so long as I live.”<sup>143</sup>

“My son will not tell me anything of the places he has seen, or of what he did there; he is not well, and I think it is because of something that he saw while he was away. You are his friend, and of his age-grade; tell me what is troubling his mind.”

The young man said: “Do not ask him about the things that he has seen; they are too terrible to be spoken of.”

“There is much that is terrible in war,” Nduini replied. “It was very terrible when the Masai fell upon us, and the corpses of our warriors and the ashes of our homes lay about us like dead cattle in a year of plague. But he who goes to a mundu-mugu may be purified, and the evil vomited away.”

“Do not ask me,” the young man said, “nor your son; for we who have returned have sworn an oath between us never to speak of what we have seen.”<sup>144</sup>

After returning from war, Kikuyu are so horrified by what they seen that they don't even think their traditional healing methods can save them. It is impossible for Kikuyu culture to recover from the horrors they endured.

One day Matu said to him: “How can you fail to be sick when you are so severely troubled by spirits? I will give you a goat if you will vomit out the thahu and let a mundu-mugu drive the evil away.”

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<sup>142</sup>Elsbeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 301.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid. p. 303.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid. pp. 303-304.

“The spirits that cause my sickness are not those which you can understand,” Reri answered. “They come from a long way off and trouble me with memories. What I have seen is too deep and too evil to be vomited out. But I will buy a goat, and you shall cleanse me if you wish.”<sup>145</sup>

Toward the end of book two, after a few years, Reri, one of the Kikuyu who saw the horrors of the European war, finally makes the decision to share with Matu and the reader what he saw on the battlefield.

A month later we marched on again; we reached some mountains, and then a country as cold as our own. We stayed at a place called the camp of bullets. It was on the top of a hill. We carried bullets down to the bottom, where wounded men were taken, and we carried wounded men back to the top. Sometimes they died on the way, but we still had to carry them, and to defile ourselves with corpses; and at night we were too tired to cook food. From the camp of bullets, we were taken to a place where we had to dig graves and to bury those who had been killed. We had to lay our hands on corpses. There were two flags, a red one and a white. When the red flag was hoisted, we were told to stop work and lie down. When the white flag was put up, we had again to bury corpses. There was a European in charge. He walked up and down with a stick in his mouth, and this stick was a form of magic, because bullets flew all around his head and over his shoulders, but he was never struck. Some of us were struck, and many more died from sickness. A man who was working close to me was struck in the wrist. He looked at his wrist and his blood gushed over me like a waterfall, and there was blood even in my eyes. He fell down to the ground and died at my feet, away from his own clan. I was no longer afraid to touch corpses. I wished to die, and therefore no danger could come to me from thahu. I walked about seeking a bullet that would kill me, but I could not find one. I did not think that I should ever see my home again. Sometimes I dreamt of home, but we did not speak of our own country at all in the camp, because we tried to keep our minds empty of such thoughts that hurt us more than hunger or wounds.<sup>146</sup>

Those who witnessed the European War transitioned from being perplexed by the conflict's objective to being so shocked that they chose to keep their experiences of the horror to themselves. However, there had been historical correspondence concerning something similar to this narrated event during World War II.

During WWII, numerous African soldiers fought alongside the British. This sparked an increase in political awareness and demand for autonomy. African nationalist groups began to enforce, using as an example independence conflicts in other regions of the world, such as India. Ghana became the first African country to declare independence from British rule in 1957, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, one of the most

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<sup>145</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Red Strangers*, London, Penguin, 2006, p. 305.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid. pp. 306-310.

prominent figures in African decolonization. Ghana served as an example of Pacific decolonization, as well as a sign of hope for other colonies fighting for independence. Nkrumah promoted an African unification policy of economic development, but his government encountered several internal challenges, including political resistance and economic troubles. Nigeria, one of Africa's most populous and influential countries, gained independence from Britain in 1960 following a negotiating process involving major ethnic and political parties. Despite initial political stability, Nigeria experienced internal crisis and ethnic disputes, resulting in an unstable period that ended in a civil war between 1967 and 1970 between Nigeria and the republic of Biafra, as portrayed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

In other African regions, independence battles have become far more violent. Between 1952 and 1960, the Mau Mau movement in Kenya challenged British colonial rule, as narrated in the novel entitled *Weep Not, Child* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. The Mau Mau rebellion is one of the most well-known examples of African insurgencies against British colonial rule. Prior to the rebellion, Kenya was a British colony with a large European colonist presence, especially in agricultural regions where fertile soils were concentrated. White colonists expropriated the land that served as the foundation for the Kikuyu people's culture and economy. Furthermore, discriminatory laws, such as the imposition of taxes on African workers and the limitation of political rights, fueled growing anger among indigenous populations. The Kikuyu community suffered the most as a result of colonial policies, particularly land expropriation and segregation.<sup>147</sup>

“Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who went with tattered clothes but had at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money.”<sup>148</sup>

Under the pressure of nationalist movements and global developments brought about by World War II, Kikuyu began to mobilize in the 1940s to demand the end of colonial dominance and land restoration. In this very atmosphere, the Mau Mau movement emerges.<sup>149</sup> The initially nonviolent opposition evolved into an armed conflict with the formation of the Mau Mau group, which derived its name from a secret formula.

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<sup>147</sup>Charles Hornsby, *Kenya, a History since independence*, London, Tauris, 2012, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup>Ngũgĩ W.T. *Weep Not, Child*, New York, Penguin, 2012, p. 57.

<sup>149</sup>Charles Hornsby, *Kenya, a History since independence*, London, Tauris, 2012, p.42.

The word "Mau Mau" has become synonymous with the most brutal episodes of African decolonization. However, its roots are complicated. Kikuyu civilization, like many others, had a strong tribal and hierarchical structure, but colonization severely weakened social cohesion. The Mau Mau movement arose from intolerance for colonial occupation and discord of traditional chiefs who collaborated with the British. The Mau Mau movement is primarily led by young people who are attracted to the prospect of freeing the country from colonial rule. This extreme group rejected the moderation of the more conciliatory politicians, urging more direct action to confront the occupation. The employment of secret oaths, symbols, and traditional rites served to unify and motivate movement members. The Mau Mau rebellion began officially in 1952, when the British government announced a state of emergency as a result of attacks on colonials and police. The Mau Mau movement was organized into guerrilla groups that carried out sabotage operations against colonial forces and African collaborators. The violence, while defended by the rebels as legal self-defense, became a contentious issue: on the one hand, the Mau Mau movement was viewed as a war for liberation; on the other, it appeared to be a terroristic attack on colonial institutions' collaborators.<sup>150</sup> The British government's response was severe repression. British imperial soldiers and auxiliary African troops, made up of kikuyu enlisted to fight against their own people, conduct a severe campaign against the rebellion. Entire villages were destroyed, the population was tortured, and hundreds of suspected sympathizers of the movement were incarcerated in gulags with exceptionally severe living circumstances. Imperial forces utilized propaganda to denigrate the movement, portraying it as a threat to national stability and security. Despite the rebellion, insurgents continued to resist with intermittent attacks until the late 1950s. The Mau Mau uprising officially ended in 1960, but by then, it had already had a profound impact on Kenya's political and social dynamics. The struggle became one of the most bloody and divisive in the history of the British Empire. Although Great Britain attempted to portray the insurrection as an act of terrorism, many analysts and historians believe the Mau Mau struggle was a fight for liberation against colonial oppression. Repression was harsh, destroying hundreds of villages and interning thousands of Kikuyu in gulags, where many died.

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<sup>150</sup>Cora A. Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 102.

The armed struggle in Kenya, led by Jomo Kenyatta, resulted in the dissolution of the colony and the establishment of the Kenya Republic in 1963. Despite the military defeat, the Mau Mau insurrection had major consequences for politics. The brutality of repression, along with growing discontent among the African population, accelerated the decolonization process. Independence requests grew stronger, and Kenya gained independence in 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta serving as the country's first president. Although it did not achieve every goal, the Mau Mau movement remains a symbol of resistance to imperialism and social justice.<sup>151</sup>

The insurrections that marked the end of the British Empire in Africa were more than just violent wars; they were also symbolic campaigns for autonomy and dignity. The violence of the British reinforced the determination of nationalist groups. The end of British domain, while ending in freedom, left lasting scars that resulted in internal struggles that shaped the history of former colonies. The memory of the violence suffered during the colonial period, as well as the economic and moral reparation provided by the British government, is still a topic of dispute today.

Years before the Mau Mau uprising and Kenya's and Africa's freedom from British colonialism, Elspeth Huxley's novel *Red Strangers* comes to an end in 1937. The novel's Kikuyu characters would find it inconceivable that the cessation of their persecution would not also mean the end of the violence and discrimination experienced by African communities. The novel's narration concludes so that the reader is unable to determine whether the protagonists would encounter racial discrimination outside of their homeland.

Among other factors, the end of World War II and Africa's independence from colonial powers contributed to the phenomenon of globalization. The ease of moving from one nation to another resulted in increased interaction between cultures, which confronted the difficulty of coexisting in the same community on a basis of equality without being superior or inferior. The connection between culture and location progressively vanished as a result of this phenomenon, leaving culture as a notion that is only associated with the individual rather than a particular location. Cultural space is becoming less distinct due to the acceleration of globalization brought about by new technology. The intimacy that results produces an extensive variety of cultural lifeworld

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<sup>151</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p.737.

customs and expressions. Globalization is an accumulation and condensation process. Side by side, diverse cultural components are pushed together and cultural spaces permeate and overlap with one another.<sup>152</sup> De-distancing and de-siting contribute to one another. Sites are separated by distance. De-siting results in proximity. Removing cultural expressions from their historical or ritual context and placing them next to each other de-distances them. De-siting is about being everywhere, not about being nowhere.<sup>153</sup> Globalization, however, erased the distinction between There and Here, leading to a society where people from all over the world live, each with their own unique identity and culture, in a location that is neither home nor even a There,<sup>154</sup> leading to the disappearance of both the culture of the Other and the arrival of the Stranger, negating to the European the status of being superior to another.

Byung-Chul Han makes a comparison between the multitude of cultures and an orchestra, stating

Are we today approaching a culture that is no longer characterized by the deafness and blindness on which happiness depends, a culture that, expressed in acoustic terms, has become a boundless, even site-less, hypercultural acoustic space in which the most diverse sounds are jammed together side by side? The hypercultural condition of the ‘side by side’, of simultaneity and of the ‘as well as’, would change the topology of happiness.<sup>155</sup>

Underlining how living together with the Other can turn the stranger from sickness to something new to get along with.

The key word to understand and living in the post-globalization society, according to the South Korean philosopher is friendliness. Unlike politeness and toleration, friendliness allows people to connect in a pacific way, without reinforcing the difference between us and the Other, that is what toleration does, deleting that conservative aspect that characterized politeness.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Byung-Chul Han, *Hyperculture*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2022, p.10.

<sup>153</sup>Byung-Chul Han, *Hyperculture*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2022, p. 37.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid. p. 70.

From the point of view of literature, decolonization and globalization made it possible for African authors to be widely read throughout the world and for their writing to be valued for its literary, cultural, and social significance.

In 1986 Wole Soyinka, Nigerian poet, novelist and playwright, author of *Myth, Literature and the African World*, *Dance of the Forests*, *Death the King's Horseman*, *A Play of Giants*, *Idanre*, and *Other Poems*, *A Shuttle in the Crypt* and *The Man Died: Prison Notes*, is the first African author to win the Nobel prize for literature.

According to the Nobel Prize press release, Wole Soyinka's writing is full of life and urgency. For all its complexity it is at the same time energetically coherent.<sup>157</sup>

To this award followed Naguib Mahfouz's Nobel Prize in 1988, Ben Okri's Booker prize in 1991, John Maxwell Coetzee's Nobel Prize in 2003, Chinua Achebe's Booker International Prize in 2007 and Abdulrazak Gurnah's Nobel Prize in 2021.

However, African literature did not fit into every national literary scene because of political issues. For instance, African literary works that exposed or denounced the brutality of colonialism were either prohibited or published in a difficult manner as a result of the fascist administration in Italy.

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<sup>157</sup><https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1986/press-release/>. Accessed 21/12/2024.

### 3. Publishing Africa: Italian case study

There is that great proverb,  
that until the lions have their own historians,  
the history of the hunt  
will always glorify the hunter.<sup>158</sup>

The African publishing landscape is well known and appreciated for its significance, depth, and complexity of cultures, history, and values. It has also brought to the world's attention a portion of history that has been obscured during the colonial era. In light of Wole Soyinka's 1986 Nobel Prize win and the inclusion of African works in literary events, African literature nowadays is never seen as being less important than works from other parts of the world. However, publishing history of Africa is very complex, served as a bridge between colonial influences and millennial old oral traditions, which have contributed to the spread of writing in diverse African contexts.

The African publishing history has a rich and intricate past that connects oral traditions, regional writing systems, and the colonists' introduction of printing. Many African societies used oral storytelling techniques to transmit knowledge, history, and social values before printing emerged. Some areas did, however, have writing systems, such as the geoglyphics of the Egyptians, the Ge'ez system in Ethiopia, and the Nsibidi in western Africa. The Europeans brought printing to Africa, and the first books printed there were primarily religious texts in Arabic or other European languages that the missionaries spoke, due to their religious aim.

#### 3.1 From oral tradition to writing and printing: Arabic and colonial influences

African communities relied heavily on oral tradition to transmit knowledge, cultural values, laws, and history prior to the advent of printing and writing. In his book entitled *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*, John Reader often uses the phrases:

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<sup>158</sup>Chinua Achebe, <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1720/the-art-of-fiction-no-139-chinua-achebe>. Accessed 22/12/2024.

according to oral histories,<sup>159</sup> or oral histories recount,<sup>160</sup> followed by a historical information. In order to ensure that a population's culture and experiences were maintained and passed down from one generation to the next, oral storytelling functioned as collective memory.

Oral tradition is composed, among the other elements, by proverbs, used to transmit knowledge and moral teaching, often part of everyday conversations and narrations. As said in the introduction to *African Proverbs; Wisdom of People*, a book on African proverbs written by Comboni missionaries and published in 2019, proverbs provide a window into a people's realities and, more importantly, their hearts. Those who are able to tell them have unlocked a small container of pearls that hold wisdom that sheds new light on attitudes and occurrences. Proverbs, however, are a mirror in which a community can examine itself and show itself to others, not some kind of oracle that asserts the final word. They draw attention to people's values, goals, concerns, behaviors, perspectives on and appreciation of their world, and reactions. By reading or hearing proverbs, it is possible to observe that African wisdom is not only deep and rich, but that it can also be gathered and grouped into broad topics that highlight both cultural similarities and contrasts. The proverb is a way of looking at life. It has the advantage of showing the direction of travel, but it is not only possible route. The proverb intervenes in a conversation to express an idea, summarize the public opinion, clarify a point, start a discussion, or inject humor into serious issues. Through proverbs that are recounted by the Griot or storyteller and from persons who have been described as tellers of the truth, keepers of ancient knowledge, or people who awaken the conscience, African wisdom has been passed down from generation to generation.<sup>161</sup>

The Griot is a significant figure in African oral culture. It acts as a kind of storyteller, preserving a population's lineage. Griots, a term that was presumably originally a translation of the Fulani *gaoulo* (wandering poet or praiser) or Wolof *gewel* (poet and musician) and now popularly used as a term to refer to almost any kind of poet or musician,<sup>162</sup> have traditionally been in charge of preserving the oral traditions,

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<sup>159</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p. 255.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid, p. 261.

<sup>161</sup>VVAA. *African Proverbs; Wisdom of the People*, Glasgow, Comboni Missionary Publications, 2019, pp. 3-5.

<sup>162</sup>Ruth Finnegan, *Oral literature in Africa*, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2012, p. 97.

historical narratives, and genealogies of their people in addition to singing praise songs. Furthermore, griots have served as their people's primary storytellers, advisers, and ambassadors. Over time, their consultative and diplomatic roles have diminished somewhat, but their appeal as entertainment has increased.<sup>163</sup>

African history is presented through oral tradition also in the forms of epics, like that of Sunjata, an epic poem of the Malinke people, an instance of oral tradition of thirteenth century narrated by generations of Griots, that tells the story of the hero Sundiata Keita, the founder of the Mali Empire, myths, songs, and poetry that were means of transmitting stories and traditions, often with a spiritual and community component. Narrators memorized long stories, that often slightly varied with the passing of time, to adapt to social and cultural context of the public. Through questions, answers, and chants, the audience used to participate in the interactive narration. The narratives reflected the worldview, values, and beliefs of a community or ethnic group, embodying their identities.

An important step in preserving and transferring culture in Africa was the transcription of oral histories. However, different historical, cultural, and religious factors were at play when this occurred. This process was particularly influenced by two significant eras, that of Arabic influences, and the colonial period. Arabic impact in Africa began in the seventh century as Islam spread, bringing with it the Arabic writing system and alphabet. In Northern, Western and Eastern Africa this is a pivotal moment. Not only was Arabic itself a vehicle of communication and literature, but many African languages in these areas came to adopt a written form using the Arabic script.<sup>164</sup> Many oral histories, poetry, and customs were transcribed as Arabic writing spread, mostly in governmental and religious settings. Through a method called Ajami, a word that comes from the Arabic word for non-Arab, or foreigner, and also refers to the practice of writing other languages using a modified Arabic script,<sup>165</sup> many African languages, including Fulani, Hausa, and Swahili, began to be written using the Arabic alphabet. Even if they had a significant Islamic or religious influence, this made it possible to preserve oral histories and poetry.

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<sup>163</sup><https://www.britannica.com/art/griot>. Accessed 16/01/2025.

<sup>164</sup>Ruth Finnegan, *Oral literature in Africa*, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2012, p. 53.

<sup>165</sup>Fallou Ngom, *Introducing the Ajami Literatures of Islamic Africa*. <http://alma.matrix.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/AjamiIntroductionFallou.pdf>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

Oral history transcription evolved as a political, cultural, and academic instrument throughout the colonial era. For a variety of causes, including Christianization, anthropological curiosity, and governmental control, Europeans began collecting and writing down oral traditions. Oral history transcribing was viewed by Christian missionaries as a mean of evangelization. Actually, they frequently modified African stories to make them aligned with Christian principles, because as Marco Aime stated, only the things from our past that can be applied to the present day become traditions.<sup>166</sup> As part of ethnographic research, colonial academics began to write oral histories and customs. Many narratives were preserved in this work, but they were filtered via a colonial lens, which changed their structure and made the stories more commonplace. The impact of oral transcriptions under colonial and Arabic influences was not entirely clear. On the one hand, it made it possible to preserve and spread numerous narratives that would have otherwise been lost. However, it changed the oral traditions' characteristics to suit the ideals and necessities of the people who transcribed them.

African culture was impacted in certain ways by oral tradition's transcriptions. Colonial transcriptions, for instance, frequently separated oral histories from their performative settings, eliminating the audience-narrator interaction. One characteristic of oral storytelling was its ability to evolve over time and location, adjusting to the historical and social context. However, the stories tend to be crystallized in a set form in colonial transcriptions. Some stories were preserved thanks to colonialists, but prejudices based on culture frequently affected the process.

The introduction of printing in Africa had a profound effect on the continent's educational, religious, and cultural landscape. Christianity achieved a remarkable degree of acceptance in the Kongo kingdom during Afonso's reign and thereafter. Its success stemmed first from the ease with which Catholic rituals and sacred objects could be incorporated into customary ceremonies and shrines, and second from a Portuguese willingness to accept the indigenous character that Christianity gradually acquired in the Kongo.<sup>9</sup> It was a unique melding of cultures. The Kikongo catechism published in 1555 was the first printed transcription of a Bantu language.<sup>167</sup>

Beginning in the 19th century, this method was a component of a larger missionary attempt to educate, evangelize, and civilize African populations. In this

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<sup>166</sup>Marco Aime, *Cultura*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2020, p.46.

<sup>167</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p.374.

setting, the printing process was an essential tool for the spread of Christianity, the alphabetization of local communities, and the establishment of a publishing infrastructure that would have shaped the publishing landscape of Africa in the future. European languages like English, French, and Portuguese began to take leading roles in the written world with the advent of colonization. The Bible and other religious literature were translated into African languages by missionaries, who also brought printing. This was a conflicting process that imposed foreign cultural and linguistic paradigms while also introducing alphabetization.<sup>168</sup>

One of the most significant technological innovations in human history was the invention of printing. Its capacity to generate large amounts of knowledge transforms communities and cultures, facilitating the development of political systems, ideologies, and religions. A printing press is a device that uses ink to transfer text and images from moveable type to paper or other media. China is credited with inventing moveable type and paper, while the oldest book ever printed with movable type was produced in Korea in the fourteenth century. In Europe, printing was first automated in the fifteenth century. A lawsuit filed in Strasbourg in 1439 shows the construction of a press for Johannes Gutenberg and his collaborators, which is the first recorded reference of a mechanized printing press in Europe. The medieval paper press, which was based on the ancient wine-and-olive press of the Mediterranean region, was a major influence on Gutenberg's press and others of its time in Europe. The paper was placed over the type set on a wooden platen, and a large wooden screw was turned with a long handle to provide downward pressure. The first full book still in existence in the West and one of the first books printed from moveable type was the Bible, which Gutenberg printed using his machine in 1455.<sup>169</sup> Europeans brought printing and other modern equipment with them when they began colonizing Africa, and they used these as tools to impose their beliefs and assert their control. Printing was seen as a key tool for cultural and political control during the colonial era. It was employed by colonial powers to assist Christian evangelizing, promote learning patterned after Europe, and disseminate propaganda. However, the effects of printing in colonies were multifaceted and complex, varying according to the local environment and the political views taken by various European powers.

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<sup>168</sup> John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p.634.

<sup>169</sup><https://www.britannica.com/technology/printing-press>. Accessed 17/01/2025.

Throughout Africa, printing was introduced gradually. Beginning in the 18th century, Europeans introduced the first printing machines, mostly in coastal areas. The first people to use them were missionaries and officials, who printed Bibles, scholastic guides, and newspapers primarily for the local elite and colonial population. The introduction of printing in African colonies was significantly helped by Christian missions. For instance, Anglican church missionaries established typographies in South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria. These printing centers produced educational and religious materials in the languages of the colonists and, occasionally, in the native tongues as well. Printing was seen as one of the instruments to civilize indigenous populations, making them closer to European values.<sup>170</sup>

Europeans used printing in African colonies to perceive some strategic objectives. These aims included political and cultural propaganda, spreading colonial ideologies and legitimate European presence, and promoting the cultural superiority of Westerners. Missionaries used print to translate and distribute religious texts, like the Bible, in local languages, often standardizing them to make them more suitable for writing practices. They also used print to improve alphabetization, which was strictly controlled to ensure that local populations could only read materials approved by governments or churches. The spread of printing had a significant impact on colonial African civilization. On the one hand, it made it easier for European ideas to proliferate and brought in new models for education and religion. On the other hand, marked a distinction between the non-alphabetized people and the alphabetized indigenous elite. The elite, who were frequently educated in missionary schools, became collaborators with the colonial system and cultural mediators.

In order to promote cultural communication and preservation, printing occasionally helped standardize regional languages, such as Yoruba and Swahili. However, native communities' autonomy was severely curtailed by European control over written materials, which prevented the propagation of anti-colonialist opinions. Some local communities managed to use printing to their advantage against European control. In several colonies, independent newspapers began to appear in the second half of the 1800s, frequently created by educated Africans. These publications discussed social,

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<sup>170</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p. 634.

cultural, and political issues while endorsing nationalism and denouncing colonialism. African intellectuals, for instance, produced newspapers like *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Ilanga lase* in South Africa to represent indigenous peoples.<sup>171</sup> In Ghana and Nigeria as well, with *The Pan-African* and *The Lagos Weekly Record* printing was essential to the emergence of political movements.<sup>172</sup>

Africa's colonial printing legacy is complicated. Printing was first used as a weapon for control, but it later became a tool for African populations' political and cultural freedom. Following their independence, many African nations promoted public information and education through printing as part of their development plans. Freedom of speech and printing access, however, continued to be issues in many areas. In order to maintain their colonial politics, authoritarian governments frequently restricted printing independence. Nevertheless, African postcolonial print developed into a significant voice for political and social transformation. Europeans' introduction of printing to African colonies is an iconic example of how a technology may be used for both freedom and control. African populations have gradually embraced printing as a means of expressing their goals and rebelling against colonialism, even if it was first used as a means of imposing colonial ideology and values. Africa's cultural and political landscape is still shaped by printing traditions today, highlighting the potential of communication technology to impact countries.

The majority of the first African publications were composed in European languages, such as Portuguese, English, and French. This demonstrated colonial dominance and control over cultural and educational institutions. Nonetheless, there were notable exceptions. The establishment of publishing houses in Africa is closely associated with religious missions and colonialism. European missionaries established the first publishing houses, which published scholarly and spiritual texts. In 1823, Presbyterian missionaries established the Lovedale Press in South Africa. It published religious and educational writings as well as literary works in indigenous languages like Xhosa and was among the first typographies in Africa.<sup>173</sup> Another publishing house was Church

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<sup>171</sup><https://www.sahistory.org.za/node/124256>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>172</sup>John H. Enemugwem, *The Impact of the Lagos Press in Nigeria, 1861 – 1922*, 2009. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/lwati/article/view/46508/32903#:~:text=The%20most%20viable%20and%20nationalist,balances%20in%20the%20colonial%20administration>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>173</sup><https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/stories/lovedale-press>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

Missionary Society Press (CMS Press), Founded in Nigeria in the 1800s, and was specialized in publishing religious and educational materials in Yoruba and other Nigerian languages.<sup>174</sup> The initially published works predominantly introduced issues related to education and religion. But eventually, African authors began to examine topics of oppression, colonialism, cultural identity, and resistance. Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford's 1911 book *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* is regarded as the first book published by an African author. But this book, which blends fiction and essay, and explores topics like African identity, racial emancipation, and Pan-Africanism, was written in English and published in London. However, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, which was released in 1925 by the Lesotho publishing house Morija Sesuto Book Depot, is regarded as the first Western-style book written by an African author in an African language, such as Sesotho (Even though the first two books in the trilogy were written before *Chaka*, they are not regarded as the first books to be published because they were serialized in *Leselinyana*).<sup>175</sup> The African publishing landscape rapidly evolved following the independence of numerous African nations in the 1950s and 1960s. In an effort to maintain cultural traditions and promote indigenous literature, publishing houses began to appear. To name a few, Longman Kenya published literary and educational works; East African Publishing House, situated in Kenya, concentrated on work in English and Swahili; and Nigerian Publishing House, established in 1960, promoted Nigerian literature. Despite being a publishing company based in the United Kingdom, Heinemann Educational Books was crucial in the release of African literature, including those by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. Writers like Wole Soyinka, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who chose to write in Gikuyu to emphasize the value of indigenous languages, and Chinua Achebe, who discussed the conflict between Igbo culture and British colonialism in *Things Fall Apart*, all made significant contributions to the development of the African literary landscape. African culture is now more widely known thanks to the translations of their works into numerous languages, as well as the printing and distribution of these works in other nations.

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<sup>174</sup>John H. Enemugwem, *The Impact of the Lagos Press in Nigeria, 1861 – 1922*, 2009. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/lwati/article/view/46508/32903#:~:text=The%20most%20viable%20and%20nationalist,balances%20in%20the%20colonial%20administration>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>175</sup><https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Mokopu-Mofolo>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

### 3.2 African literature in Italian publishing landscape

The history of Italian publications regarding Africa is complicated and has undergone numerous phases that have mirrored the nation's political, social, and cultural shifts. The publishing industry was vital to the creation and spread of images and narratives about the African continent, starting with the earliest novels on the continent written by Italian authors and continuing with those written by African authors. Travelers like Marco Polo, who co-wrote *Il Milione* with Rustichello da Pisa between 1298 and 1299, in which are included descriptions of various foreign locations including Northern Africa, are among the first people to write about Africa. Following Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa, Leo Africanus published *Descrittione dell'Africa* with Ramusio editor in 1550. Going towards the Italian colonial period in Africa, there are Giuseppe Sapeto's *Viaggi alle Due Etiopie*, published by Tipografia Eredi Botta in Genoa in 1857, Guglielmo Massaia's *Lettere dall'Abissina*, published by Tipografia Vaticana in 1879, Romolo Gessi's *L'Africa Italiana*, published in 1881 by Tipografia degli Editori della Casa del libro Italiano in Rome, and *Le Colonie e l'Italia*, written by Francesco Crispi, a prominent politician who supported Italian colonial expansion in Africa, published in 1888 by Fratelli Treves in Milan.<sup>176</sup> Following the establishment of the Italian kingdom in 1861, Italian colonialism in Africa began, with Eritrea being the first Italian colony in Africa in 1890.<sup>177</sup> The concept that Africa was an inferior continent that needed direction and could receive it from Italy was reinforced by the publishing of these works.

The Italian publishing landscape experienced severe censorship issues as a result of Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, which was established in 1922. As explained by Giorgio Fabre in his books entitled *L'elenco. Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei* and *Il censore e l'editore, Mussolini, i libri*, during fascist regime several books were not allowed to be published, as their content was considered against the ideology of the regime. According to Fabre, Italy has also lightened its book burning during those two decades, much like Germany. The Italian one, however, was distinct from the German one in that there was no fire, and masses of paper and perhaps millions of volumes

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<sup>176</sup><https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-crispi/>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>177</sup>John Reader, *Africa: a Biography of the Continent*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1998, p.584.

vanished.<sup>178</sup> All publications and narratives about Africa, whether in literature or journalism, were strictly regulated by fascism. Publications must obey the regime's enforced rhetoric of racial and cultural superiority and present Italy as a civilizing power. For political reasons as well as to prevent Italian citizens from encountering critical and sympathetic perspectives on African populations, writings that challenged this narrative were suppressed. Some of the characteristics of book censorship can be traced back to colonialism propaganda, which required journalism and literary production to support a view of Italians as civilizing; the 1938 Manifesto of Race, which upheld the superiority of the Italian race over the inferior and dangerous African race, and the prohibition on the translation of works that presented Africa in a positive light, classifying them as subversives. Numerous Italian writers criticized the fascist regime's oppression in their books. Translations of foreign novels by Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini were prohibited from publication, and the latter faced allegations of indecent exposure made public by the regime itself.<sup>179</sup> Carlo Levi in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and Ignazio Silone in *Fontamara* both discuss how the regime's censorship and repression led to marginalization.

We're not Christians," they say. "Christ stopped short of here, at Eboli." "Christian," in their way of speaking means "human being," and this almost proverbial phrase that I have so often heard them repeat may be no more than the expression of a hopeless feeling of inferiority. We're not Christians, we're not human beings; we're not thought of as men but simply as beasts, beasts of burden, or even less than beasts, mere creatures of the wild. They at least live for better or for worse, like angels or demons, in a world of their own, while we have to submit to the world of Christians, beyond the horizon, to carry its weight and to stand comparison with it. But the phrase has a much deeper meaning and, as is the way of symbols, this is the literal one.<sup>180</sup>

The topic of propaganda and censorship in Italian colonies was often examined by the Italian historian Angelo del Boca, who is well-known for his writings that critique Italian imperialism. In books like *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale* and *L'Africa nella coscienza degli Italiani*, Del Boca wrote extensively about the crimes and abuses that took place in Africa, highlighting the ways in which the fascist government dominated and influenced publishing and public narratives about the continent. Along with

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<sup>178</sup>Giorgio Fabre, *L'elenco, censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei*, Torino, Silvio Zamorani Editore, 1988, p. 7.

<sup>179</sup>[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elio-vittorini\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elio-vittorini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>180</sup>Carlo Levi, *Christ stopped at Eboli*, New York, Farrar Straus and Company, 2008, p. 7.

independent publishing houses or those with alternative political views, such as Laterza, the publishing house of Angelo Del Boca, authors who publicly opposed Italian colonial politics or provided non-stereotypical depictions of Africa were also subject to censorship.

One of the first Italian publishing house to ever publish an African author is Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, when in 1962 Giuliana de Carlo translated the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, with the title *Le Locuste Bianche*, that literally means The white locusts. The novel's release by one of the most prominent Italian publishing houses, Mondadori, represents a significant turning point in the development of the Italian publishing landscape. The fact that it was one of the first times African literature was translated into Italian and made available to a European audience, gave voice to an alternative viewpoint to the then-dominant Eurocentric one. Mondadori was instrumental in advancing African writers with the initial release of Chinua Achebe. This publishing decision opened the door for additional African writers, helping the Italian public become familiar with them and their postcolonial narrative, which began to take shape in the 1960s. The Italian intellectual landscape's increasing interest in postcolonial dynamics and to a more critical reading and interpretation of colonial experience is reflected in the decision to translate Achebe. In this regard, Achebe has been an example, and his release in Italy marks a significant milestone in the recognition of African literature by the Italian publishing community.

Some publishing houses were interested in African topics from the start of the colonial era. It is important to keep in mind, however, that because of the historical and political context, mention of interest in African topics does not necessarily imply that such topics were viewed favorably. Numerous publishing houses addressed the African issue, portraying it in a bad light in contrast to the Italian regime's perfection. Fratelli Treves, a very significant publishing house founded by Emilio and Giuseppe Treves in 1889, and active from the second half of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, published a lot of works on colonial expansionism, including those by Francesco Crispi and Enrico Corradini.<sup>181</sup> In their written works, they justified colonialism, emphasized the Italian burden of civilizing African populations, and reflected the growing interest of

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<sup>181</sup>[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/emilio-treves\\_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/emilio-treves_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/). Accessed 19/01/2025.

Italians in expansionism in Africa. The Unione Tipografico Editrice Torinese, or simply UTET, founded in Turin in 1791, published the writings of colonial officials and explorers such as Romolo Gessi and Ferdinando Martini.<sup>182</sup> Despite their descriptive nature and abundance of geographical and historical information, the published works frequently promoted the concept that Italian culture was superior, which served as justification for Italian interventions and colonial occupations in Somalia and Eritrea. In the 1920s and 1930s, Edizioni Alpes published works about the spread of fascism in Africa as well as a variety of propaganda materials during the fascist regime that promoted the idea of Italian empire in Africa and celebrated victories in nations that were deemed to be far less civilized than Italy, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Libya. Laterza Editore, whose history is linked with Benedetto Croce, an antifascist intellectual who played the role of advisor in the publishing house,<sup>183</sup> which began publishing critical works of Italian experience in Africa in the 1960s, was one of those publishing houses that distanced themselves from colonialism ideology. As previously mentioned, Angelo del Boca, who is regarded as the initiator of the Italian colonial political critic movement, was one of their most significant published authors.

Heilè Selassìè is deserving of respect and consideration regardless of the ultimate judgment. It is impossible to avoid feeling a great sense of respect and acknowledgment for the man who, on June 30, 1936, from the League of Nations tribune in Geneva, revealed the horrors of fascism to the world and warned that Ethiopia was only the first victim of that regime. We are all indebted to him because of this message, which regrettably went unheard.<sup>184</sup>

Laterza, marked a shift in the narratives concerning Africa by publishing works that critically analyzed racism and colonial crimes, resulting in the emergence of a more impartial and balanced viewpoint.

Then there are also the first publishing houses that have published works by African authors. Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, with the publishing of the first translation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, with the title of *Le Locuste Bianche* in 1962. With

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<sup>182</sup><https://www.utetlibri.it/chi-siamo/>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>183</sup><https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/benedetto-croce/>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

<sup>184</sup> Angelo del Boca, *Il Negus, Vita e morte dell'ultimo re dei re*, Bari, Laterza, 2007, p. 336. Qualunque sia il giudizio definitivo su Hailè Selassìè, la sua figura merita rispetto e considerazione. È impossibile non provare un sentimento di grande ammirazione e di riconoscenza verso l'uomo che il 30 giugno 1936, dalla tribuna ginevrina della Società delle Nazioni, denunciava al mondo i crimini del fascismo e avvertiva che l'Etiopia non sarebbe stata che la prima vittima di quella funesta ideologia. Per questo suo messaggio, malauguratamente non ascoltato, gli siamo un po' tutti debitori.

the help of translators Carla Muschio, Cristiano Screm, Marco Grampa, and especially Armando Pajalich, a former English literature professor at Ca' Foscari University in Venice and an expert in colonial and postcolonial studies, Jaca Book, a publishing house recently purchased by the Rusconi Libri group, translated and published in their book collections, like Calabuig, works by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka like *The interpreters* in 1979, *Season of anomie* in 1981, *Aké: The Years of Childhood* in 1984, *The man died: prison notes* in 1986, *Death and the king's horseman* in 1993, *Myth, literature and the african World* in 1995, *Isara: A voyage around essay* in 1996 and *The road* in 1997, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o works like *Weep not, Child* in 1975, *A Grain of Wheat* in 1977, *Petals of Blood* in 1979, *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir* in 2010 and *Decolonising the Mind* in 2015.

Thanks to the efforts of several Italian publishing houses that specialized in translating and publishing works by African authors, interest in African literature has grown significantly during the past few decades. The work of 66thand2nd, a publishing house renowned for publishing contemporary African narrative, including works by Binyavanga Wainaina, Igoni Barrett, Alain Mabanckou, Yewande Omotoso, and Noo Saro-Wiwa, among others, should be mentioned today. This independent printing firm, founded in Rome by Isabella Ferretti and Tommaso Cenci, and whose name comes from the crossing of the two streets in Manhattan in which the project was born,<sup>185</sup> offers a series of books under the name of Bazar, that deal with the integration or preservation of their own cultural identities. These books include the testimony and novels of writers from all over the world, who were frequently transplanted far from their home country. Bazar is a guide to navigating the multiethnic present, a journey through locations, myths, and customs that takes us from Paris and New York to the African city. The writers of this series lead the readers on an exciting and remarkable journey around the globe.<sup>186</sup> The summary emphasizes the books' objectives and the publishing house's aim of presenting global writers that delve further into issues of cultural identity, integration, and migratory problems. Important to mention is the effort of Einaudi Editore, the Italian publishing house of Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche and Coetzee's works, that of Feltrinelli,

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<sup>185</sup><https://lnx.66thand2nd.com/fare-libri-passione-e-mestiere-intervista-a-isabella-ferretti/>. Accessed 23/01/2025.

<sup>186</sup><https://66thand2nd.com/collections/bazar>. Accessed 19/01/2025.

that publishes works by Karen Blixen and Doris Lessing, that of La Nave di Teseo, that re-edited the works of Chinua Achebe and publishes those of Nobel Prize winner Abdulrazak Gurnah, and that of the previously mentioned Jaca Book.

The venetian Supernova is another publishing firm that deserves recognition. It was founded in 1987 with the release of a book of poetry, and its aim was to fill certain gaps in the Italian publishing landscape by focusing, among other works, on African authors' poetry and plays.<sup>187</sup> These targets, along with the assistance of the previously mentioned Armando Pajalich and Marco Fazzini, another professor at Ca' Foscari University, resulted in the translation of a number of books by African authors. These include Wole Soyinka's *Ogun Obibiman*, translated by Armando Pajalich, a collection of South African poetry edited by Armando Pajalich and Marco Fazzini, and collections of poetry by South African authors, like that of Douglas Livingstone entitled *Il sonno dei miei leoni* and translated by Marco Fazzini, and that of Jeremy Cronin entitled *Dentro*, and translated by Armando Pajalich.<sup>188</sup>

Even though this has not always been the case, regardless of the subject matter, the author's cultural, sexual, or political identity, or their place of birth, it is no longer possible to categorize one literary work as being inferior to another. This does not imply that all literary works are believed to be on the same level, particularly when it comes to the author's notoriety, influence and resonance in the publishing industry. It implies that it is illogical to believe that discrimination will prevent an author from being published, as discrimination is no longer a factor in the criteria used by publishing houses to decide whether to publish or reject a piece of literature. These criteria are established for commercial purposes, and since the interest of readers of all ages in learning more about the history and culture of the Other from themselves is increasing, the Italian publishing landscape is more diverse than ever before, offering, thanks to the collaboration of publishing houses, translators and bookstores, works by authors from throughout the entire world.

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<sup>187</sup><https://supernovaedizioni.it/casa-editrice>. Accessed 23/01/2025.

<sup>188</sup><https://supernovaedizioni.it/collane/sudafrica>. Accessed 23/01/2025.

## Conclusion

Following the protagonists' journey in Elspeth Huxley's novel *Red Strangers*, the reader experiences a sense of astonishment due to their initial encounter with the Other, who is viewed as different on the inside as well as the outside and is not viewed negatively until they refuse to leave and submit to the Kikuyu. However, research and publications pertaining to science, history, and philosophy suggest that the colonial era and the intellectuals who were active during that time, together with novelists and their works set in Africa, contributed to create the negative perception of the African Other. This is because, instead of accepting the Other as it was, with its own culture, traditions, customs, religion, governance, and values, colonizers attempted to understand the Other in terms of European civilization. The dispute between Sartre and Levinas' existential philosophy about the Other explains the effort to understand the Other and how Europeans went from not knowing the Other to forcing their culture on the Other.

The physical and psychological harm inflicted by colonizers on Africans—from the use of weapons and concentration camps to the imposition of Christianity and the use of English—left them with lasting wounds that seem to influence contemporary culture. The justification of the civilizing mission, which has veiled violence, was used to defend every action taken against African populations by British colonists (not the only European force to have committed acts of violence in Africa, but the only colonial power referenced in this thesis). This violence favored the British colonization of Africa by destroying people's true identity and making it impossible to have one. Uprisings sparked by these crimes led to brutal wars, such as the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, as African nations struggled for independence from the British Empire.

A more accurate and truthful portrayal of Africa and the African people, with a focus on their culture, customs, and history, has resulted from the work of anthropology and anthropologists, as well as the worldwide translation and publication of novels by African authors. This has been made possible by a change in perspective from merely passive judgment on the Other to becoming curious about the underlying meanings of a culture that is significantly different from Eurocentric ideals. However, African authors did not have easy access to a global audience once the European printing press and Arab

writing influenced African oral culture. For instance, the fascist governance in Italy strictly censored any work that did not conform to its ideas and values and that depicted Africa as equal to Italy and not in need of Italian leadership to advance to a civilized state. Thanks to the efforts of a few publishing houses that translated and published African authors' novels, the Italian publishing landscape now offers a selection of authors from nearly every country. These products are readily accessible, even in book collections that are dedicated to authors from specific areas of the world, like the 66th and 2nd publishing house's book collection entitled Bazar. This allows readers to learn about and comprehend African culture through the stories of African authors without the need for an intermediary who might introduce bias into their work.

However, racism is evident and continues to refer to preconceptions associated with a tragic past characterized by violence, injustice, and subjugation, even in spite of the increased interest in publishing African works worldwide. The publishing landscape is crucial to the translation and publication of works from around the globe, giving everyone the chance to learn more about each culture and to appreciate the Other in its Otherness rather than trying to find sameness and shared characteristics.

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