

CULTURAL STUDY OF ERDRICH'S *TRACKS* (1988) AND ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* (1998): A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper explores the novels *Tracks* (1988) by Louise Erdrich and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe through the experiences of traditional, pre-colonial societies and the challenges they face in the face of cultural change and external pressures. In both novels, themes such as identity, gender, local mythology and tribal traditions play a significant role in shaping the experiences of the characters and their communities. This article examines the themes of both novels, including the impact of colonization on the Igbo and Ojibwe societies, the quest for identity in the face of cultural change, the role of gender and the importance of local mythology and tribal traditions. By comparing and contrasting these two novels, this paper aims to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted experiences of traditional societies and the challenges they face in navigating a rapidly changing world. Through analysis, this research also gains insights into the broader issues of cultural change, identity and the preservation of traditional cultures which remain relevant today in many parts of the world.

Key Words: Identity, Gender, Local mythology, Colonization, Indigenous communities, Traditional values, Changing world, Quest for identity, Tribal traditions

Introduction

Things Fall Apart is a novel written by Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author and first published in 1958. It is considered one of the most significant works of modern African literature and is often studied in schools and universities around the world. The novel tells the story of Okonkwo, a respected warrior and leader in a fictional Igbo village in Nigeria during the late 19th century. Okonkwo is known for his strength and courage, but also for his quick temper and tendency toward violence. He struggles to balance his desire for success and power with the traditional values of his community. The novel explores themes of colonialism, tradition, masculinity, and the clash of cultures. It depicts the effects of British colonization on the Igbo people and their way of life, as well as the resistance and resilience of the Igbo culture in the face of these changes. *Things Fall Apart* is considered a ground-breaking work because it challenges the stereotypes and misconceptions that were prevalent in Western literature about African societies and their people. It also highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage and traditions, even in the face of modernization and external influences.

Tracks (1988) is a novel written by Louise Erdrich, an American author of Ojibwe and German ancestry, and first published in 1988. The novel is set in North Dakota in the early 20th century and follows the intertwined lives of two Ojibwe characters, Nanapush and Pauline. Nanapush is an elder of the tribe who acts as a guide and mediator between his people and the white settlers who are encroaching on their land. Pauline is a young woman who is deeply influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church and becomes increasingly isolated from her tribe and culture as a result. The novel explores themes of identity, culture, and the effects of

colonization on Indigenous communities. It depicts the complex relationships between Indigenous people and the white settlers who seek to control their land and resources, as well as the ways in which individuals navigate their own identities and cultural heritage in the face of these pressures. Furthermore, Erdrich's writing is known for its vivid imagery and powerful storytelling, as well as its exploration of the complexities of Indigenous identity and experience. *Tracks* (1988) is considered a seminal work of Indigenous literature and has been widely studied and acclaimed for its insight into the lives of Indigenous people in North America.

Besides, a significant theoretical foundation of this work is the notion of the cultural resistance via narrative whereby literature is considered as a dynamic location whereby marginalized groups challenge colonial rule. According to postcolonial theorists, colonial power is discursively working by suppressing the indigenous voices through the control of the representation and historical narration (Said, 1978, pp. 1-3). In reaction, indigenous and postcolonial authors use storytelling as counter-discursive to topple their histories and identities. This rebuilding of the Igbo life as narrated by Achebe and Erdrich as narration of Ojibwa survival can be seen as the application of what Fanon (1963) defines as cultural reclamation whereby the colonized subject reclaims an identity by narrating the past in their own indigenous terms (pp. 210-212). In this conceptual framework, narrative is a mode of opposition, which disrupts the epistemic power of colonialism and re-centers indigenous cultural knowledge. Also, the paper is based on such theoretical approaches as cultural continuity and cultural adaptation that underline that imperial pressure does not lead to the collapse of colonized cultures but only to the negotiation and transformation processes. According to Hall (1990), "culture identity is not fixed in some fundamental past, but continuously produced on historical experience" (p. 224). This theoretical standpoint is especially pertinent in the interpretations of Erdrich about Ojibwa survival as a result of adaptation and the Achebe resistance as Igbo faced fragmentation. Bhabha's (1994) cultural negotiation concept also elaborates on how the indigenous communities inhabit in-between spaces "between resistance and accommodation" (p. 112). These theories enable this paper to not only view both novels as a story of loss, but also as works that discuss indigenous resilience and continuing to build cultural identity in the face of colonialism.

Cultural theory is a broad term that refers to a range of critical approaches that emphasize the social, political, and cultural contexts of literary works. Cultural theory of criticism suggests that literature cannot be analysed in isolation from its cultural and historical background, and that the meaning of a literary work is shaped by the society in which it was produced. Some key themes of cultural theory of criticism include the relationships between culture, power, and representation; the role of ideology in shaping literary works; and the ways in which literary works reflect and reproduce social norms and values. It encompasses a range of approaches, including Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism, queer theory, and critical race theory. These approaches share a common emphasis on the ways in which literature reflects and shapes social and cultural structures, and they often seek to challenge dominant power relations and hierarchies. The analysis explores how the novel represents issues such as gender, race, or class, and how these representations reflect or challenge dominant social and cultural norms. Overall, cultural theory of criticism is a useful tool for understanding the complex relationships between literature and society, and for analysing the ways in which literary works reflect and shape cultural values and power relations.

Literature Review

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) are two literary masterpieces that have received much critical acclaim over the years. The novels have been widely discussed and analysed by scholars and critics alike, and a number of scholarly articles

and books have been written on various aspects of these works. One notable work is “Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart: A Casebook*,” edited by Isidore Okpewho. This book includes a collection of essays by scholars from different parts of the world, providing insights into various themes of the novel. The essays examine the novel’s portrayal of colonialism, religion, gender, and power dynamics, among other things. Another important work is “The Cambridge Companion to Chinua Achebe,” edited by Ernest Emenyonu. This book provides a comprehensive overview of Achebe’s life and work, including his major novels and essays. The chapters on *Things Fall Apart* examine the novel’s portrayal of Igbo culture, religion, and society, as well as its treatment of colonialism and the impact of Western education on traditional African values.

In the case of *Tracks* (1988), a notable work is “Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks* (1988), The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse, The Plague of Doves” by Deborah L. Madsen. This book provides a detailed analysis of Erdrich’s novels and examines the themes of gender, identity, and spirituality in her work. The author argues that Erdrich’s novels challenge conventional notions of gender and identity, and foreground the importance of Native American traditions and beliefs in shaping the experiences of her characters. Other notable works on these novels include *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* edited by Nina Baym, which includes both *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Tracks* (1988) in its collection, and *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature* edited by Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer, which provides an overview of Native American literature and examines the themes of identity and cultural survival in Erdrich’s work. Overall, these works provide a rich and varied literature review for an article on the comparative analysis of *Tracks* (1988) and *Things Fall Apart*, highlighting the importance of themes such as identity, gender and local mythology in these two works of literature.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology for this article involves a combination of close reading, interpretive analysis and comparative analysis, all of which are used to explore and analyses the themes of identity, gender, and local mythology in *Tracks* (1988) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

Theoretical Framework

The postcolonial theory is the major source of this work as it allows focusing on the cultural, psychological, and structural effects of colonization on the native communities as discussed in Erdrich’s *Tracks* (1988) and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The theorists of postcolonialism state that a colonial regime acts not only based on political and economic subjugation, but also via cultural and epistemic violence, which marginalizes local ways of world thinking (Fanon, 1963, p. 9; Said, 1978, p. 3). The way Achebe has depicted the Igbo society prior to and during the colonial intervention reveals the ability of the colonial to disrupt the indigenous institutions, belief systems and communal ethics. Equally, Erdrich traces the slow disappearance of Ojibwa territory, spirituality, and social and cultural bond through settler colonialism. This study can thus examine both novels as a literary reaction to a colonial disruption, as well as a cultural resistance, using postcolonial theory. The paradigm also includes the study of culture, especially in terms of cultural as a dynamic place of identity construction and ideological contestation. Stuart Hall (1990) maintains that cultural identity is not a given or a necessity and that it is an ongoing creation that is historically produced, through memory, and representation (p. 225). Achebe reinvents the Igbo culture in terms of proverbs, rituals, oral traditions, and shared practices to reject the colonial attempts to depict African societies as barbaric. On the same note, *Tracks* (1988) is used as a cultural repository that upholds Ojibwa culture by narrating stories, spirituality, and shared memory. In the context of cultural studies, the two texts can be regarded as counter-hegemonic texts that re-establish the indigenous cultural authority in literary texts.

Another prominent aspect of this theoretical model is indigenous epistemology that presupposes non-Western knowledge systems based on oral tradition, spirituality and communal memory. According to indigenous scholars, colonial discourse usually nullifies indigenous knowledge in favour of Western rationalism and chronological history (Smith, 1999, p. 4). The nonlinear narrative structure, multiple narrators, and spiritual realism by Erdrich is based on Ojibwa epistemological patterns that reject Eurocentric historical patterns. On the same note, the abundance of folktales myths and proverbs employed by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* strengthens Igbo knowledge and perception of the world. In this context, these narrative techniques are seen as epistemic resistance, and not as aesthetic methods. The comparative aspect of this work is informed by the comparative theory of postcolonial literary theory, which allows conducting the cross-cultural analysis without losing the historical and cultural specificity. The idea of cultural negotiation and hybridity introduced by Homi K. Bhabha comes in handy in determining how colonized societies react differently to the colonial encounters (Bhabha, 1994, p. 113). Even though the colonial experience in Africa and North America is different in shapes and historical setting, both novels show common trends of cultural disruption, opposition and adjustment. This paper juxtaposes *Tracks* (1988) and *Things Fall Apart* by using the juxtaposition technique to demonstrate how indigenous cultures remain resilient and how literature serves as a cultural survival and articulation place.

Data Analysis

Comparative Analysis of Both the Novels

Tracks (1988) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) are classic postcolonial texts that anticipate the indigenous cultures during the crucial stages of colonization. Both novels are autobiographical, one written in the Native American and another in the African voice, and both of these novels address Eurocentric historiography by adding back the cultural depth, agency and epistemological legitimacy to the communities that the colonial discourse silenced historically. Achebe and Erdrich do not re-create the pre-colonial and early colonial worlds as such, but rather as dynamic and multi-layered cultures with social rules, spiritual views and a set of collective ethics. A comparative cultural analysis of the two novels is made to study how the intrusion of colonizers disrupts the traditional cultural structures in indigenous land, and yet establishes ways of resistance, accommodation of the culture and survival. However, the juxtaposition of both novels shows that although they share similar geographical and historical settings, they express similar cultural undergoing in a fight against colonial oppression and defend the strength of indigenous mindsets.

Both Achebe and Erdrich start by creating richly-woven native cultural worlds, as a response to colonial portrayals of non-Western societies as disorganized or savage. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe begins with a precise description of the Igbo society, its social structure, religious practices and the justice system of the community. Marriage, kinship, agriculture and spirituality at Igbo world are governed by customs. According to Achebe, the proverbs are at the center of cultural expression where he says, proverbs are palm “oil on which words are fed” (Achebe, 1958, p. 7). This metaphor prefigures oral tradition as the source of Igbo communication and wisdom. Equally, *Tracks* places the readers in the cultural life of the Ojibwe tribe, where land, spirituality and storytelling create the identity. Not only is the land not a material location, but a living being that is tied to the common existence. This relationship is underlined by Nanapush when he writes about the scenario: “We were planted here in the snow... and we survived” (Erdrich, 1988, p. 2). This first line makes the survival both cultural and spiritual, making the Ojibwa life based on place and shared memory. Culture as a structuring process in both novels determines the individual behavior and social accountability. Igbo people appreciate peace as a community, which was witnessed in the Week of Peace, denying violence to guarantee a thriving agricultural land, “It was a sacred week... and in which

people did not work” (Achebe, 1958, p. 30). Similarly, spiritual law and social morality ruled the Ojibwe culture in *Tracks* (1988), in which the human and non-human world had to be in a balance. Through such representations, indigenous disorder is explicitly challenged in colonial assumptions, and represents consistent cultural systems, based on a long history of traditions.

Furthermore, in the two novels, colonialism is also exhibited as a disruptive element that breaks the cultural structures of the natives and establishes a foreign system of authority. British colonialism in *Things Fall Apart* creates new legal system, Christian missionary ideology and Western education which threatens Igbo independence. The conventional justice is substituted by the colonial court, and Igbo elders are humiliated when they are thrown into the hands of the colonialists, “they were not even heard” (Achebe, 1958, p. 140). This scene is an indication of the loss of native control and cultural pride. When Okonkwo becomes a tragedy, it is the cultural result of colonial interference. His failure to make an Igbo tradition meet with colonial modernity alienates and brings about despair. When he understands that his people will not revolt against the colonial rule, he deplores, “He pitied the clan, which he saw dispersing and disintegrating” (Achebe, 1958, p. 152). Okonkwo did not simply commit suicide but he committed a cultural suicide, which is a failure of native authority in the face of colonization. Here, one can note that colonialism results in psychological and cultural alienation of people which is proclaimed by Fanon, as Okonkwo feels “alienated to his culture and to himself” (Fanon, 1963, p. 18).

Besides, in *Tracks* (1988), the modes of colonial disruption include settler colonialism, land distribution and economic exploitation. Compared to the rather rapid colonial conquest in *Things Fall Apart*, Erdrich depicts colonialism as a gradual, creepy one. Ojibwe loss of land is the main focus of the culture fragmentation. The ancestral land of Fleur Pillager is threatened again and again, as is the dispossession in general. Nanapush notes, “land is the only thing that will last life to life” (Erdrich, 1988, p. 33), it emphasizes the cultural destruction of loss of land. The enforced Western legal and economic order disrupts the Ojibwa communal existence and the characters must negotiate with the colonial bodies. But Erdrich emphasizes the sense of perseverance as opposed to absolute failure. This difference is similar to the settler colonial theory as it focuses on “continuous domination and no historical breakage” (Smith, 1999, p. 55). Achebe describes the direct decline of the Igbo autonomy whereas Erdrich portrays the loss of culture as a long-term survival fight.

Oral Tradition and Storytelling in Cultural Resistance

In both novels, oral tradition is an effective instrument of cultural maintenance and opposition. Achebe makes folktales, myths, and proverbs a part of the narrative form of *Things Fall Apart*, a step that strengthens the indigenous epistemology. The tortoise and the birds, among others, is a story about the community values and moral teaching (Achebe, 1958, p. 97). These stories are cultural memory storage and moral teachings, and they validate the indigenous knowledge systems. The very narrator of the story (Achebe) is a parody of the oral storytelling style, with its repetition, use of proverbs and shared opinions. This stylistic decision is opposed to Western structural literary conventions and is a reclamation of narrative power onto African voices. Reclaiming representation is the key to struggling against colonial discourse according to Said (1978, p. 7). The application of oral tradition, therefore, on part of Achebe is a political move that enshrines the cultural legitimacy of Igbo.

Likewise, *Tracks* (1988) depends on narration as a survival strategy to a large extent. One of the main narrators of the story, Nanapush, is the one who clearly defines storytelling as a resistance, “I got well by talking” (Erdrich, 1988, p. 46). His storytelling maintains Ojibwa history and refutes the official colonial histories that erase the indigenous experience. The discontinuous, nonlinear narrative of the novel is an indication of the oral epistemology of Ojibwes, which has a cyclical rather than linear time. Erdrich approach to storytelling is similar

to the native ones, which prioritize the use of stories as “a knowledge production” (Smith, 1999, p. 30). The novel goes against Western historiography by inserting Ojibwe cosmology into the story and reasserting the indigenous forms of knowledge. The narration of stories, as a weapon of culture, against erasure, makes continuity possible against interruption by colonialism in both novels.

Gender Roles in Texts

In addition, both texts have important roles of gender roles in responding to colonialism culture. In *Things Fall Apart*, masculinity is strongly linked with power, strength and dominance. The masculine concepts that Okonkwo is obsessed with make him denounce feminine qualities, which he considers to be synonymous with weakness. His father is hated “because he is lazy and improvident” (Achebe, 1958, p. 4), which can be attributed to strict gender roles in the Igbo society. Colonialism increases these tensions through destabilizing traditional masculinity. The loss of status by Okonkwo under the colonial rule worsens the crisis of identity which culminates to the self-destruction. He is unable to assimilate which is the inability of the rigid identities “in the colonial contact zone” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). *Tracks* (1988) on the other hand depicts gender roles that are more fluid, especially in the character of Fleur Pillager. Fleur is a representation of spiritual force, sexual independence and defiance of the colonial rule. She goes in defiance of colonial and patriarchal forms of organization and enforces cultural continuity by means of embodiment and land belonging. Resistance expressed by Fleur can be associated with the indigenous feminist views of a woman as a key figure in the cultural survival. Nanapush adaptive masculinity also opposes the inflexibility of Okonkwo. Through his example of negotiating with the colonial systems without forgetting their cultural memory, Nanapush is a good example of a cultural survivor who was not confrontational, but flexible. This juxtaposition brings out differences in indigenous approaches to dealing with the pressure of colonialism in different cultures.

Besides, gender is presented as a complex and fluid concept, with characters challenging and redefining traditional gender roles in various ways. The character of Pauline is torn between the expectations of her community and her own desires for personal freedom and autonomy. Similarly, in *Things Fall Apart* gender is presented as a rigid and hierarchical system, with clear expectations and limitations for both men and women. Men are expected to be strong, aggressive, and dominant, while women are expected to be subservient, nurturing, and obedient. The character of Okonkwo embodies this traditional masculine ideal, while the women in his life, such as his wife and daughter, are portrayed as being confined and limited by their gender roles. Also, the arrival of white settlers and the imposition of European cultural norms lead to a further disintegration of traditional gender roles and expectations in *Tracks* (1988). While in *Things Fall Apart* the arrival of Christian missionaries and colonial officials introduces a new set of gender norms and expectations, challenging the traditional Igbo concepts of masculinity and femininity. Overall, both novels explore the ways in which gender roles and expectations shape the experiences of their characters, and the challenges and opportunities that arise when those roles are disrupted or challenged by external forces.

All an all, comparative reading of the novels shows that that there are convergence and divergence in their culture. Achebe prefigures the destruction of culture as an aftermath of imperial incursion whereas Erdrich stresses survival in the face of continuous colonial oppression. These variations are historically accurate as the British imperialism in Africa tended to be followed by the rapid culture change, whereas settler colonialism in North America pursued the long-term displacement and assimilation. Regardless of this, both novels postulate indigenous agency. Even though the story has a tragic conclusion, Achebe by itself is resistance in reconstructing the Igbo culture. Erdrich focuses on Ojibwa survival, which highlights the survival of this culture despite the violence of the colonizers. As Hall (1990)

says that cultural identity is not something fixed but it is constantly being recreated over time and in the memory. The examples of this dynamic process are in both novels.

Impact of Colonization on Igbo and Ojibwe Societies

The impact of colonization on Igbo and Ojibwe societies was profound and had lasting effects on their cultures, societies, and ways of life. In the case of the Igbo people in Nigeria, the arrival of European colonialism led to a disruption of their traditional social and economic systems. European powers, such as Britain, imposed their own systems of governance, education, and religion, which often contradicted and undermined Igbo customs and beliefs. The colonial administration introduced cash crops and market-based economies, which replaced subsistence farming and disrupted traditional patterns of trade and exchange. The introduction of Christianity also led to a decline in the traditional religion and beliefs of the Igbo people.

The impact of colonization on Ojibwe society in North America was similarly devastating. The arrival of European settlers and the subsequent forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands disrupted traditional patterns of trade and resource management. Treaties were often broken, leading to the loss of Ojibwe land and resources, and the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples into American culture undermined traditional ways of life and cultural practices. Ojibwe children were often taken away from their families and sent to boarding schools, where they were forced to adopt European-American culture and language and often suffered physical and emotional abuse. In both cases, the impact of colonization led to a loss of cultural practices and beliefs, as well as the marginalization and oppression of Indigenous peoples. The legacy of colonization continues to impact these societies today, as Indigenous peoples struggle to regain their cultural heritage and identity, and to assert their sovereignty and rights in the face of ongoing colonialism and systemic oppression.

Also, the quest for identity is a central theme in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The main character, Okonkwo, is constantly striving to define himself and his place in his Igbo community. Okonkwo's pursuit of identity is complicated by the legacy of his father's failures, which have left him with a deep-seated fear of weakness and a desire for strength and masculinity. He seeks to prove himself through his accomplishments, both in his personal life and in his community. Okonkwo's success as a warrior and farmer, as well as his accumulation of wealth and status, are all part of his quest for identity and self-worth.

However, Okonkwo's search for identity is also complicated by the arrival of European colonialism, which challenges his sense of cultural identity and social status. The arrival of the colonizers and the imposition of their ways of life disrupts the traditional social and economic systems of the Igbo people, and threatens the very fabric of their culture and identity. As Okonkwo struggles to define himself in the face of these challenges, he becomes increasingly rigid and inflexible in his beliefs and behaviours. His fear of weakness and failure leads him to take extreme actions, such as killing his adopted son, Ikemefuna, and eventually contributing to the downfall of his own community. In the end, Okonkwo's quest for identity is ultimately unsuccessful, as he is unable to reconcile his sense of self with the changing world around him. His tragic ending underscores the complexities and challenges of the search for identity in a rapidly changing world, and the profound impact of cultural and societal forces on individual lives. The quest for identity is also a central theme in Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks* (1988) (1988). The story follows the lives of two narrators, Nanapush and Pauline, who are both Ojibwe and who are struggling to define themselves in the midst of cultural and social change.

Nanapush, an elder member of the tribe, seeks to preserve the traditional ways of his people and maintain their cultural identity in the face of the encroaching forces of white settlers and the U.S. government. His quest for identity is tied to his sense of duty to his community and his desire to protect them from harm. Pauline, on the other hand, is a young woman who is deeply conflicted about her identity as an Ojibwe person. She is torn between the traditional

ways of her people and the allure of the white culture, which promises a different kind of life and a different kind of identity. Her quest for identity is tied to her struggle to find a sense of belonging and purpose in the world. As the story unfolds, both Nanapush and Pauline are forced to confront the challenges of their quest for identity. They must navigate the complexities of cultural change, including the impact of colonization and the loss of traditional ways of life. They also grapple with the complexities of personal identity, including the impact of family history and personal trauma. Ultimately, Nanapush and Pauline both find a sense of identity and purpose in their connection to their community and their culture, though their paths to this understanding are vastly different. Through their stories, Erdrich explores the complex and multifaceted nature of identity, and the challenges and opportunities that arise in the search for meaning and belonging.

Characters of Nanapush and Okonkwo

Nanapush and Okonkwo are both central characters in their respective novels, *Tracks* (1988) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) respectively. While they come from different cultural and historical contexts, they share some similarities as characters. Nanapush is an elder member of the Ojibwe tribe, who serves as a narrator and a guide through the story. He is a wise and respected member of the community, who is deeply committed to preserving the traditions and cultural identity of his people. Nanapush is a resilient and resourceful character, who adapts to changing circumstances while remaining true to his cultural values and beliefs. He is also a caring and compassionate figure, who acts as a mentor and protector to younger members of the community, such as Fleur and Lulu.

On the other hand, Okonkwo is a proud and ambitious warrior and farmer from the Igbo tribe in Nigeria. He is a complex and multi-dimensional character, whose pursuit of strength and masculinity is shaped by his troubled family history and the legacy of his father's failures. Okonkwo is a driven and determined character, who is committed to achieving greatness and proving his worth through his accomplishments. However, his fear of weakness and his rigid adherence to traditional values also make him prone to violence and inflexibility. Despite these differences, Nanapush and Okonkwo share some common traits as well. Both are deeply rooted in their cultural traditions and identities, and both are committed to protecting and preserving them. They are both characters who must navigate the complexities and challenges of a changing world, and who must confront the legacy of colonialism and cultural oppression. Ultimately, both characters offer insights into the ways in which individuals and communities adapt to change, negotiate cultural identity, and find meaning and purpose in the face of adversity.

Local Mythology and Tribal Traditions in the Novels

Both novels explore the importance of local mythology and tribal traditions in shaping the beliefs, values, and experiences of their characters. In *Tracks*, the Ojibwe community is deeply connected to its rich mythological and spiritual traditions. These traditions provide a sense of identity and belonging for the characters, and serve as a way to understand and navigate the natural world around them. For example, characters like Nanapush and Fleur rely on the stories of their ancestors to understand the complex interplay between the natural and supernatural worlds, and to make sense of their own place within the community. Similarly, in *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo tribe is deeply rooted in its own rich traditions and cultural practices. These traditions are embodied in the character of Okonkwo, who strives to embody the ideals of Igbo masculinity and strength, and who is deeply committed to preserving the cultural identity of his people. The novel explores the complex web of customs and practices that make up Igbo society, from the role of the extended family to the importance of ancestral worship and storytelling. However, both novels also highlight the ways in which these traditions are challenged and disrupted by external forces, such as colonialism and cultural change. In *Tracks*,

the arrival of white settlers and the imposition of European cultural norms threaten to displace and erase the traditional Ojibwe ways of life, while in *Things Fall Apart*, the arrival of Christian missionaries and colonial officials introduces a new set of cultural norms and practices that challenge the traditional Igbo way of life. Overall, both novels depict the importance of local mythology and tribal traditions in shaping the identity and experiences of their characters, and the challenges that arise when these traditions are threatened or challenged by external forces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of *Tracks* (1988) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has highlighted the complex themes of identity, gender and local mythology in both novels. The analysis revealed that both novels address the impact of colonization and cultural contact on indigenous communities, and the ways in which these communities navigate the tension between traditional values and the changing world around them. The novels also explore the quest for identity, particularly in the context of gender, and the role of local mythology and tribal traditions in shaping individual and collective identity. Overall, this study has demonstrated the rich cultural and literary traditions of the Igbo and Ojibwe peoples, and the ways in which these traditions continue to shape contemporary indigenous cultures. Also, this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted experiences of indigenous peoples in the face of cultural contact and change. This cross-cultural comparative analysis has shown that both novels are anti-colonial texts that re-appropriate indigenous history, identity and epistemology. Achebe and Erdrich oppose the colonial discourse through elaborate portrayals of cultural order, portrayal of colonial disturbances and the centrality of narratives to demonstrate the strength of native culture. As Achebe resorts to the theme of cultural disruption and tragedy, Erdrich prefigures continuity and acculturation, which is characteristic of different colonial backgrounds. In conclusion, that indigenous cultures are not mere inert remnants of the past but dynamic thematic and resistance points. With its reinstatement of indigenous voices into the main stream of literary discourse, *Tracks* and *Things Fall Apart* are a part of a larger postcolonial endeavour of cultural decolonization and narrative recovery.

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