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**Colonial Shadows and Female Resistance:
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Trauma in Maaza Mengiste's The Shadow King**

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Colonial Shadows and Female Resistance: Examining Power Dynamics and Psychological Trauma in Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King*

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Abstract

Power relations, gender roles, and psychological trauma are themes explored in this book as Maaza Mengiste rewrites the histories of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in *The Shadow King*. The novel includes a story that is dissimilar to other colonization liberation stories, due to the portrayal of Ethiopian women, like Hirut, who is unconventional and becomes a warrior. Mengiste challenges the trope of colonialism by U.S. Spotlighting the mental cost of the Italian colonizers, Mengiste, as well as examining trauma and resistance in Ethiopian characters, provides a sobering portrayal of colonial evil. The themes contained in the work are discussed through the lens of post-colonial theories – Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak, focusing on the way in which Mengiste's novel undermines colonial and patriarchal systems, and uncover the perpetual effects of trauma on the character. This research underscores *The Shadow King* and its possibilities for the postcolonial literature project of interrupting historical narratives and subjugated histories in historical fiction.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 also called the Second Italo-Ethiopian War is considered to be one of the most important events in the history of Africa, as it was one of the last attempts of the European powers to expand the colonial domain in the black continent. Italy under Benito Mussolini's fascist government aimed at reconstructing an empire by claiming dominance over Ethiopia, a country that had not been colonized despite European pressures. It was primarily concerned with Italian expansionist policy that Mussolini pursued as well as an aspiration to improve Italy's standing amongst the world powers. Italy's imperial aims were

provided for in an attempt to colonize Ethiopia during the First Italo-Ethiopian War in 1896, which motivated the formation of a powerful Ethiopian force and is celebrated globally as the country won its independence after the battle of Adwa and therefore becoming the symbol of Africa's fight against colonialism (Bahru, 2014).

Resistant against the Italian invasion, Ethiopia was characterized by mobilization and resistance effort that was beyond expectation. Despite the fact that the Ethiopian forces lacked modern equipment they were able to compensate for this by factors such as understanding of the territory, false tactics, and nationalism. Most important of all, this resistance was not only confined to male soldiers. Ethiopia's history, as relayed through the country's leaders generally portrayed by emperor Hailé Selassié or through colonialist lenses, does not tell the full story of women's anti-colonial warrior-ship, wherein camp followers and nurses are also warriors. They supplied information to the resistance movements, mobilized food, gave medical aid and in a few cases fought themselves (Pankhurst, 1990).

Nonetheless, the experiences of Ethiopian women during the resistance struggle have received limited attention due to the prevailing historically contaminated practices that have portrayed the war with emphasis on male soldiers and political figures. Moreover, this marginalized date is not unique to Pratt's book, as extricating colonial historiography from the similarly gendered and selective focus that privileges some individuals while erasing others is virtually impossible. This is an omission that Mengiste's book *The Shadow King* takes on headfirst by telling the story of Ethiopian women who fought the colonial invasions. Despite remembering the Amharic language and tropical climate, Mengiste presents the agency of women who directly refused both colonial and patriarchal oppressors like Hirut, the youthful servant turned warrior. This narrative focus disrupts the established practices of colonial anti-resistance asserting that women were not only supplementary but crucial to Ethiopian resistance (Mengiste, 2019).

Another Italian- relevant aspect of *The Shadow King* is that Mengiste's representation of the invasion also documents the psychological features of colonial brutality. Damage done by the colonizers to other colonizers as well as the effect on the colonized: For it clearly establishes the effect that violence has even after the conflict has ceased. For the Italian soldiers, the invasion is accompanied by a blatant depersonalization process which forces the soldiers to kill and destroy in the name of their civic responsibility. The story of Ettore, an Italian photographer, can express the ethical and emotional cost that functionaries of colonial invasion experience. On the other hand, for Ethiopian characters like Hirut the invasion and subsequent war generates not only an experience of trauma and survival but also of a patriarchal society amidst death and upheaval. Such psychological effects go to show how colonial violence deforms citizens and subjects' identities, and bequeaths those of trauma and displacement (Fanon, 1963).

Increasingly, postcolonial theorists write that colonial violence is not simply confined to physical subjugation—instead, it refers deeply to a process of social transformation of both the subordinate and superior. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon paints a picture of the

psychological states of the colonized, and he observes that the effects of colonial oppression and violence are deeply felt on the psychological aspect of the colonized individual. Contracting colonial trauma is fully vested in Mengiste's novel as characters constantly deal with the psychological ramifications of war. Mengiste's emphasis on the role of women deepens the potency of colonial suffering and survival further as women therefore occupied a specific intersectionality (Fanon, 1963; Mengiste, 2019).

Being a historical novel, *The Shadow King* doesn't only tell a different history of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia but also comments on issues of gender, power and trauma. In this manner, Mengiste breaks patriarchal and colonial historical, and cultural paradigms that have sidelined and silenced women by portraying them as involved in the fight. In addition, the novel provides an analysis of psychological effects of a traumatic experience and, therefore, adds to the discursive construction of the continued effects of colonial violence that assert that the effects of such violence endure through generational lines. This multilayered representation places *The Shadow King* in a clear and important position within the context of postcolonialism, since the novel brings to light hidden stories of women and demonstrates effects of colonial war on psychic life.

RATIONALE

The Shadow King provides a way of exploring the trauma carried out in colonial violence and its effects on people and what comprised such a period. Mengiste's novel breaks the stereotype representations of Women and war, Women as victims and Women as resisters. Main character Hurit under contention advances from a submissive young female to brave woman warrior who resists colonial domination. The presence of womanhood and the illustration of women's situation in the literature work of Mengiste also challenges conventional history as well as analyzes the consequences of trauma on all the colonizers and the colonized (Mengiste 2019, p 84).

This study is informed by the desire to examine how some of the more contemporary issues in postcolonial literature relate to colonialism. Colonial violence writes its scripts on the minds of those who experienced it, an area that has received scant attention from historical scholars who are normally interested only in warfare and political stalemates (Fanon 1963). It is thus for these reasons Mengiste's novel affords a way with which lit can be used to shed light on coloniality, causes and implications of coloniality such as psychological traumas and marginalized groups in liberation struggles. Study of *The Shadow King* is an attempt of this research to explore how literature can transform historical realities for the better by giving more attention to silenced histories

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the Italian invasion of Ethiopia is a subject that has received much research attention, very little has been said about the Ethiopian women and how they contributed to the fight against colonialism through literature. Most of the past research analyzes resistance in terms of male agency and does not take into consideration the diversified roles of women in supporting and driving the anti-colonial struggle (Bahru, 2014; Pankhurst, 1990). In addition, Ethiopia and

Italian soldiers' colonial violent stories are sometimes described mostly in bodily or political terms and not as deep examination of trauma. That is why this research aims to cover these gaps focusing on the analysis of *The Shadow King* to understand how Maasa narrative unravels the roles and relations of gender, power, and trauma as part of the colonial oppression and liberation processes exploring psychological aspects of subjugation and rebellion.

AIM

This research aims to critically examine the ways in which Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King* portrays the dynamics of power, gender roles, and psychological trauma in the context of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Specifically, this study will investigate how Mengiste's depiction of female characters challenges traditional narratives of colonial resistance and explores the emotional and psychological repercussions of war on individuals and communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does *The Shadow King* depict the power dynamics between colonizers and the colonized during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia?
2. In what ways does Mengiste portray the roles of Ethiopian women in the resistance, and how do these roles challenge traditional gender expectations?
3. How does the novel explore the psychological impact of colonial violence on both Ethiopian characters and Italian soldiers?
4. What insights does *The Shadow King* offer regarding the enduring effects of colonial trauma on individuals and communities?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the portrayal of power dynamics between Ethiopian characters and Italian colonizers in *The Shadow King*, focusing on how these interactions reflect broader colonial relationships.
2. To examine the roles of female characters in the novel, particularly how they engage in resistance and defy gender norms within Ethiopian society.
3. To explore the psychological dimensions of colonial violence as depicted in *The Shadow King*, including the trauma experienced by both Ethiopians and Italian soldiers.
4. To assess how *The Shadow King* contributes to postcolonial literature by offering a nuanced understanding of colonial trauma and its effects on marginalized voices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COLONIALISM AND ITS LEGACY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

The impact of colonialism has been widely discussed in African literature where authors focus on the colonial experience and its implication in the power relations, identity formation and subjection of the colonized. Gordon further notes that other scholars have noted that colonialism was also a project of transformation of the psychological and cultural dimensions of the colonized world (Gordon 1995, as cited in Casas, 2014: 163; Fanon, 1963). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon insists how colonialism created a rank where the colonized is worthless and has to stay a worthless person their entire life, and that would even cause doubt among the colonized individuals whether they truly deserve to be free or not. This psychological violence,

according to Fanon, had repercussions after the physical defeat of the colonizers left their mark on societies which they colonized.

In continuation of Fanon's ideas, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), reveals how and why colonial powers colonized the geographical space of Africa as well as the psychological space of African people, thanks to cultural imperialism begun through language. Europeanizing and of African languages and culture as barbaric was a deliberate way of redesigning the African subjectivities in interest of the colonizers. Culturally, this imposed change had ripple effects on the African societies as it impacted their identity and memory. In present day African literature, this theme is mostly represented in texts that recapture certain significant historical time and place to dismantle and resist colonialism. While the above mentioned theories have not been named in Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King*, it also addresses some of the themes. Casting the Italian invasion of Ethiopia not only in terms of territorial conquest, Mengiste carries out the psycho-social war of the invaders positioned against the collectively imagined Ethiopian spirit, the stubborn negus and Ethiopia's popular resilience to imperialism (Mengiste, 2019).

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN AND POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Female participation in the fight against colonialism has traditionally been subjugated in history and literature with references being scarce. In her paper, 'Can the subaltern speak', postcolonial feminism scholar Spivak points out that women in colonial and post colonial societies are 'double colonized' that is, they suffer from both imperialism and patriarchy. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has delivered a speech in her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" show how women especially those from oppressed races have been ignored for most of the colonial and patriarchal structures. Huh? The fact is, Spivak's work has informed many postcolonial feminist theories and stresses the role of recovering women's agency in resistance struggles which seems to be erased by male historiography.

African literature has in the last few decades pulled a straw by ensuring that women's roles in the anti-colonial struggle are brought into focus. For example, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* (1981) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) use raised voices to show how these women fight for their places in societies that have emerged after colonization and are still dominated by males. However, as these novels do not focus on the wartime resistance, they look at the day to day life resistance that African women have to engage in within systems of oppression. In writing about Ethiopia such representations are few, and this makes *The Shadow King* an exceptional read. Women are portrayed at Mengiste's novel as they fight for the independence of their country and they oppose not only the Italians but also the local Ethiopians who are convinced that women cannot work and who oppress the women (Mengiste, 2019). Thus, Hurit, a main character, symbolizes the value through her rising from a submissive character to the fighter against both colonial and sexist oppression.

Mengiste's narrative is located within a strong and rationalist trend of current African literature where marginalized women's histories are rewritten. Critics like Florence Stratton (1994) pointed out that by writing literature, African women give voice to the women's

patriarchy denying by depicting the situations that enable female characters to be assertive. In Mengiste's *The Shadow King* this process is rather crucial and shows how the fictionalized Ethiopian women were silenced and explores how and why they were able to take power back and be present in an extremely patriarchal setting.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND COLONIAL VIOLENCE

Postcolonial literature demonstrates that one of the most significant consequences of colonialism ever is the psychological one, as the trauma connected with colonial violence and management leaves its mark on the people. They include questions of psychological components of colonial violence where Homi Bhabha also noted how colonial powers wanted to gain mastery not only of the physical body, but also of the minds of the colonized (Bhabha, 1994). For example, in *The Location of Culture* Bhabha shows what kind of trauma the colonial violences intended and enforced the splitting of the psychic in the colonized subject. This internal tension commonly resulted in inferiority and replacement of emotions after colonization, which was not only existent during this historical period, but may continue even after it was over.

This psychological trauma is that which Mengiste portrays in the Ethiopian characters in *The Shadow King* and the Italian soldiers as well. Such Italian soldiers as Ettore are traumatized as well, because they have to perform actions that are contrary to reason and common human morality and their own personal values. In this case Ettore's character is an exemplary figure showing how colonial violence dehumanizes the perpetrator. The representation of Ettore embodied by Mengiste implies that the colonial violence does not only influence the physical and mental state of the colonized but also changes the nature of the colonialists who become devoid of their humanity (Mengiste, 2019). This rather fine-grained model of trauma also appears in the work of scholars like Fanon and Bhabha who masterfully showed that colonial violence produces traumatic effects transmitted through generations.

Psychological trauma has become the novel's central theme, which indicates the fact that, gradually, writers of the postcolonial literature have identified the necessity of giving the concept of mental health and the defenseless spirit together with the concern for the decolonization procedure. According to Seligman and Kirmayer, (2008) there are postcolonial traumas which need to be redressed in the societies experiencing colonialism to build anew. Through characters that fight and survive these psychological struggles, *The Shadow King* joins this conversation, pointing out how to undergo trauma becomes a form of strength.

REIMAGINING HISTORY THROUGH FICTION: THE ROLE OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Thus, it is often the case that representations of colonial and postcolonial history in postcolonial texts subvert the colonial discourse by rewriting history. Many colonial histories were narrated by the side of the colonizers and this has been criticized by scholars such as Edward Said (1978). This became revealed by Said in his book *Orientalism* where the West produced representations about the East in order to justify colonization. Post colonial literature aims at reclaiming those lost stories by enriching the opposite voices and agency of the subaltern. *The Shadow King* by

Maaza Mengiste is a good example of this reclamation or abolition process as it rewrote the Italian invasion of Ethiopia from the side of the resisted and specifically Ethiopian women.

Despite writing about marginalized and gendered women, Mengiste suggests readers study historical records through a critical lens through the character of Hirut. Something as simple as postcolonial literature in the form of 'counter- narrative', as Elleke Boehmer (2005) suggests, offers the colonial powers' account of history a form of negation. As such, *The Shadow King* stands as the kind of counter narrative that advances Ethiopian agency and representation and that recasts the Italian invasion partake as not only a historical event, but as a very private and psychological ordeal to the people involved.

Furthermore, fictioning over fact-making in Mengiste's novels underlined that official history is problematic and literature contains the possibility of depicting feeling that are suppressed in histories. According to Linda Hutcheon (1988), historiographic metafiction enables the authors to write history, and consequently, can present a historical truth as thoroughly tainted by the subjectivity of the writer. Mengiste skillfully opens up reflection on the politics of historical representation through her heroization of Ethiopian anti-colonial agents, her use of fictional characters, and her juxtaposition between prototypical historical narration and literary representation.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted by this research is qualitative in nature, focusing on critical interpretation of texts to explore the power relationship, gender and trauma portrayed in Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King*. Since the present research focuses on how Mengiste's narrative interacts and subverts historical and postcolonial paradigms, a quantitatively oriented research method hinders revealing the novel's intricate layers. Employing techniques of detailed reading and thematic analysis, this work will examine how Mengiste builds her characters and environment in such a manner as to behind the emotional and psychological horizon of colonial violence.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The traditional approach of text analysis chosen in this work is a close reading, which is a type of critical analysis of literature. The purpose of this method is to review primary themes and subjects, character transformations, and techniques in *The Shadow King*. Melzer starts the process with the initial deconstruction of certain passages which focus on power, gender, and trauma. Through a rhetorical analysis of Mengiste's language, images, and symbols the dissertation will uncover and highlight ways in which the novel presents the dynamics of colonizers/colonized and how most of the female characters in the novel respond to these oppressive systems. Through identifying when specific conventions are employed in the narrative it is possible to gain a better understanding of how Mengiste deals with questions of colonialism both in the structure of the novel and the themes of the story.

For example, some of the episodes, which will show how Hirut changed from a servant girl to a warrior, will be considered to uncover how Mengiste rewrote gender roles and breakdown patriarchal discourses. In the same manner, passages involving Ettore, a soldier from Italy, will be discussed in an effort to analyze the colonization brutality's effect on the

implementer. These literary analyses will also shed more light on Mengiste's general colonialism narrative analysis and her endeavors to rewrite Ethiopian history with women included. As the chief characters' actions and primarily something like their inner dialogues will be analyzed, it will be easy to show how Mengiste develops a story which interweaves the history of colonial trauma and the history of the individual first-person narrator, thus exposing the psychological reaction of the characters.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

After the Close reading, a thematic analysis will also be sought in order to understand the motifs and themes that reappear in the novel. Thematic analysis is a technique that is used to categorize patterns within qualitative data and since the objective of this paper is to look at how the novel always talks about specific issues, thematic analysis is suitable for this purpose. This will entail coding themes that are unique to power relations, gender and trauma. For instance, the theme of resistance in physical and psychological ways will be used to analyze how Mengiste parallels the strength of evicted Ethiopians especially women against colonialism.

Further, this study will also reflect how Mengiste deals with the question of trauma not only in the colonized society, but also in the minds of the colonizers. It enables a thematically driven analysis of the novel which emphasizes the major leitmotivs of the work including the concepts of violence as a circle, the function of memory in constructing the ethos of the nation, and gender and power relations. These patterns will be linked to other postcolonial theories that will position the research on *The Shadow King* within and among other postcolonial discourses on trauma and resistance. Through the analysis and interpretation of such patterns, the study will advance a significant understanding of how Mengiste engages and subverts historiography of the Ethiopian resistance through her narrative.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Additional features of the novel will be discussed in the broader context of history and culture of the societies that are presented in the novel by using historical data, theoretical and meta-theoretical concepts from postcolonial theory. In this context assessment, *The Shadow King* is placed under Ethiopian history and Italian colonization to establish the ways in which Mengiste rewrites history. Information coming from history written by Italian invasions of Ethiopia and other scholars writing on Ethiopian resistance will form the basis on which Mengiste will tell a story. Such historical background is crucial for understanding how Mengiste takes actual historical events as the basis for a historical fiction that is historical both in terms of historical accuracy while implementing the elements of a modernist story that captures the interest of contemporary readers.

Additionally, postcolonial feminism will be employed to analyze how Mengiste's representation of women's resistances overthrows colonial hegemonies as well as patriarchy. In the research, through a discussion with theories of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha it will analyze *The Shadow King* in terms of how it rewrites colonial confrontation as a gendered war of resistance. This contextual approach will set up my consideration of Mengiste's narrative choices with regard to her perceptions of Ethiopian identity, memory and colonial trauma. In

the end, it will be identified that this approach enables an examination of historical fiction and postcolonial novels as historical restorations and postcolonial studies.

SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Besides the selected primary source, the secondary one, such as articles, history, and theory, will be employed to bolster and explain the implications of the primary text. Contents which will be helpful for understanding the historical background of the Italian invasion and the Ethiopian people's resistance plus postcolonial theories as the framework for the study. Secondary data will be sourced from both academic and scholarly databases including but not limited to JSTOR, project MUSE, Google Scholar among others for adequacy of the literature review. These sources shall help in textual analysis to buttress this research's theory for understanding the ways and extent the novel discusses power relations, gender, and psychological trauma.

By using diverse postcolonial literature on trauma, Gender literature and Ethiopian history a diversity of opinion on such themes present in *The Shadow King* will be printed. This secondary literature will assist in situating Mengiste's work as a postcolonial text, and illustrate the ways in which her narrative intervenes and extends debates on colonial trauma. This methodology will help to provide both a detailed textual interpretation of Mengiste's novel and a broader engagement with existing theories, which feasible richness will make this work stronger.

RESULTS

POWER DYNAMICS BETWEEN COLONIZERS AND THE COLONIZED

Colonial power and the way it plays out between the Italian colonizers and the Ethiopian opposition is perhaps one of the most dominant themes that churn out of *The Shadow King*. Mengiste stages these dynamics both in terms of open conflict and less overt subjugation, to illustrate how colonial power descends through violence, embarrassment and mental manipulation. One of the more deplorable depictions of colonial command is the Italian commander, Carlo Fucelli. In one of the scenes, Fucelli says that Ethiopia shall become a copy of Italy. They are our children, after all. They have to learn to listen, to follow orders" Mengiste (2019, P. 115) This statement reveals the patronizing attitude of the colonizers, who view Ethiopians as inferior subjects in need of "civilization." Fucelli's language symbolically erases the human identity of Ethiopians and turns them into objects which can be directed.

Mengiste uses this moment as an example of the psychological dimension of the colonists who represent not only the desire to capture the land, but also the minds of the colonized people. Fucelli's assertion that Ethiopians are "children" reflects the infantilizing discourse often employed by colonial powers to justify their actions. In depicting such interactions, Mengiste shows how colonial powers employed the 'civilizing' and thus, over-towering 'arrogance,' which informed violent prejudices. This leads to an engaging depiction of how the colonial power attempts to strip the indigenous subject of his/her agency and individuality to provide a story of compliance and compliance.

WOMEN'S RESISTANCE AND REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

One of the strongest concerning *The Shadow King* is that of women as agents of liberation, as subtly undermining the Ethiopian Patriarchal society as the Italian colonialists. One can see this theme reflected in the character of Hirut from a servant woman to a warrior woman. Hirut is depicted as the living, on one hand, and a lowly servant, scorned and kicked around at the opening of the novel on the other. But when the war escalates she becomes a fighter, a symbol of Ethiopian resistance in the novel. In an epiphany, she considers her new status by saying, "I am not a servant." I am not someone's property. 'I am a soldier, a daughter of this land' He didn't call me a woman or a girl; Mengiste, (2019), p.220). This declaration thus marks a deep change in the representation that Hirut has of herself, as she refuses any forms of submission that have been idealized in her society as well as by the colonial powers.

Gender and resistance become crucial concepts in Mengiste's novel, as the author illustrates how Hirut becomes not just a patriotic soldier, but a liberated woman. By claiming her identity as a "daughter of this land," Hirut aligns herself with the national struggle, positioning herself not as a passive observer but as an active defender of Ethiopian sovereignty. In this particular moment it becomes clear how war empowers Hirut to step out of her perceived role as a woman, and redefine herself in terms of endurance and muscle. Via Hirut's experience, Mengiste posits the reader to shift the way he/she conceives the history of women as everyone in themselves is actively fighting for freedom, although they have been marginalized by history.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COLONIAL VIOLENCE ON BOTH COLONIZERS AND THE COLONIZED

Mengiste's novel also does not shy away from portraying the stems of psychological traumatic results of colonial violence on both the resistance fighters of Ethiopia as well as the Italian soldiers. An example of this theme is illustrated beautifully in the character of Ettore, an Italian soldier who suffers from the orders to commit vile acts. During one of the travels, while looking at the photographs he shot of Ethiopian prisoners, Ettore begins to think to himself: 'How long will it take me to get rid of these faces?' These feelings put concise as, "I am no longer myself but a stranger in my own skin" Mengiste 2019. This reflection gives the audience a sneak peek into the effects of colonial violence on the perpetrator, showing how such actions make one feel like an outcast and filled with self-hatred.

Mengiste's representation of Ettore is very layered and multidimensional because it recognizes that in colonialism, the colonized and the colonizers are both dehumanized. Ettore's sense of being a "stranger" in his own skin speaks to the internal conflict that arises when one is complicit in acts of brutality. He cannot escape sullen faces and it's evidenced that his conscience perhaps has been splintered by the violence he has committed. This passage can be related to Frantz Fanonian theories of psychological consequences of colonization where both the colonizers and the colonized are damaged by the violence of the colonial master (Fanon 1963). To illustrate this point that colonial violence fosters generational trauma, Mengiste directs the reader to the interiority of Ettore when she writes.

In the case of the Ethiopian characters the impact of colonial violence is expressed in psychological terms. For instance, Hurit suffers the psychological effects of any abuse she went through, and is thus transformed into a spark of rebellion. She sometimes looks at a specific misfortune and thinks: "That's not a scar, that's still a part of my living." Not only fashioning themselves carried that she wanted to wear them as proof that I am still here, that I have not been broken" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 354). This statement shows that Hirut adapts to some of the worst experiences one can imagine and turns them into strength. Mengiste employs Hirut's consciousness to focus on the_initialized_, that is, the victim state analyses of the colonization process and how the colonized can find ways to persevere and fight despite the rampant violence. This conflict, of pain and power, is seminal to the Ethiopian resistance within the text since trauma is not framed as a sign of vulnerability but a means of agency.

MEMORY AND THE INTERGENERATIONAL LEGACY OF COLONIAL TRAUMA

Mengiste also concerns herself with how violence within colonial contexts has lasting generational impact on memory in particular. The novels' subject of remembering the struggle is depicted through a character named Aster who leads a group of women fighters. Aster continues, 'They may one day forget us to wake up and do it again to someone else or to wake up and hear this story from us.' In our blood will they remember: blood, body, and culture in contemporary Ethiopian writing by Assmae A. Mengiste. The computation in Aster's words is also a message of an obligation of a people to recount the instances of a fight which is an emphasis of memory in the construction of ethnicity and nationalism.

By emphasizing the intergenerational transmission of memory, Mengiste addresses the concept of "postcolonial trauma," wherein the scars of colonial violence are passed down through cultural narratives and family histories. Such are direct indications of the novel and, accordingly, it can be stated that it postulates memory as a form of rebellion since those who remember are those who follow the only available way of preserving history and, thus, one's roots. In this way, Mengiste joins other postcolonial scholars who posit that memory is a form of the resistance through which the oppressed groups subvert their masters in an effort to write their narratives against erasure. Aster's determination to "carry this story" reflects the idea that storytelling itself is a form of resilience, a means of honoring the sacrifices of those who fought for freedom.

RECLAIMING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES THROUGH FICTION

The Shadow King is not simply a novel but a historical story that challenges historians' stereotyped narratives of the Ethiopian experience from the tenancies of the experience's actors. In doing so, Mengiste responds to hegemonic historiographies that have often writing women characters out of the struggle for freedom. In re imaging the Italian invasion in its novel, Mengiste poses a question to the reader about what the novel can or must tell, which official history leaves out. In the afterword, she says, "This story is for those who vanished from history, who were not given the chance to speak. Thus, following the tradition, I have given them a voice, a place in the record" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 412). In this statement, Mengiste explains why she wrote this novel, as she aims to give voices to the silenced in history.

Mengiste's method corresponds to the postcolonial literature goals which aims at re-writing the colonial discourses. Speaking for the oppressed, she offers a different HERstory of Ethiopia as an anti-colonial history that also involves and accounts for the feelings and emotions of the fighters. This use of history in fiction resonates with other thinkers such as Edward Said, who believed that literature is the method, which can help to unmask and challenge colonial discourses (Said 1978). In *The Shadow King* Mengiste effectively demonstrates how fiction unearths a lost history to enable those who were colonized to remember and pay tribute to the heroes who fought back.

DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis demonstrate that Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King* offers a nuanced exploration of colonial power dynamics, gender roles, and psychological trauma within the context of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Through detailed textual analysis, the novel reveals how Mengiste uses her characters and narrative structure to critique the dehumanizing effects of colonial violence, celebrate the resilience of women, and examine the intergenerational impact of trauma..

COLONIAL POWER DYNAMICS AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LEGACY OF OPPRESSION

Analyzing relationships of power in *The Shadow King* one can use Frantz Fanon's concept of colonial violence as the physical and psychological means of submission. A colonized person is of lesser value to a colonizing one and is, in a sense, an object of the colonizer's dominion according to Fanon (1963). This dehumanizing process is evident in the character of Carlo Fucelli, who refers to Ethiopians as "children" needing to be "remade in the image of Italy" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 115). In this manner, Fucelli infantilizes the Ethiopian population and thereby supports commonly colonialist ideas about the superiority of the ruling power. This echoes Fanon's statement on the domination that colonial masters set whereby they become superior and the colonized are portrayed as if their actions are predetermined.

Altogether, Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry is useful for the understanding of the psychological aspects of colonial domination in the novel as well. According to Bhabha (1994), mimicry is defined as the submission to emulate the colonizers and it results in the production of hybridizing ideologies that is at once obsessive and dissonant. This idea is further complicated by Mengiste who demonstrates that Ethiopian characters do not allow themselves to be mimicked, but instead, compel compliance and assert their culture whenever they get the opportunity to do so. For instance, Aster directs a group of women warriors with traditional Ethiopian dresses and chanting spirits of ancients that suggest they absorb not colonialism's assimilation. These characters regain control and refuse the domination from the colonizers' psychological perspective, mapping their cultural histories. This resistance is an example of how Bhabha suggested mimicry as a kind of subversive agency that is worked into the colonial domain, as the indigenous peoples replicate colonial discourse but use it to speak back to colonial power.

WOMEN'S RESISTANCE AND THE SUBVERSION OF PATRIARCHAL NORMS

The Shadow King stands out from other novels about the Ethiopian war of independence and contributes to postcolonial feminism by introducing women into the context of the war and complicating the masculine narrative dominant in the warrior culture of the times. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the "subaltern" is relevant here, as it describes marginalized individuals who are often silenced or erased within dominant historical narratives (Spivak, 1988). Both from society and historiography, Ethiopian women constitute a subaltern subject in Mengiste's *Sudden Departure*. However, Mengiste restores these voices by collapsing them into agents waging the struggle against colonial forces. Unlike typical portrayals of women who were relegated to the margins waiting for the men to fight the war, characters such as Hirut and Aster take up arms and initiate resistance, disrupting both colonial and Patriarchal powers.

As commented by Florence Stratton (1994), one of the main focuses of the African women writers, therefore, is to re-vision female subjectivity and to turn one's back on the kinds of representations that are patriarchal in construction, to find spaces where they can be active. Mengiste's depiction of Hirut's transformation from a servant to a warrior conforms to this objective, since it shows a woman who stands up and redefines herself despite cultural boundaries. Hirut's declaration that she is "not a servant" but "a soldier, a daughter of this land" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 221) represents a rejection of the roles imposed on her by both Ethiopian patriarchy and Italian colonialism. This transformation highlights the disobedience of gender expectations because it portrays women as being as strong as they need to be to defend their nation. Mengiste's representation of Hirut and other female characters is coherent with the postcolonial feminist critics who, following Stratton (1994), claimed that a novel is a way of rewriting the history of women and restoring them their rightful place.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COLONIAL VIOLENCE ON THE COLONIZER AND THE COLONIZED

The analysis of psychological trauma in the novel *The Shadow King* by Mengiste paints a layered picture of the effect of colonialism on both, the subjugate and the subjugators. Fanon labeled it a colonial trauma that in the process of colonizing the subject, the colonizer offers violence, physical and psychological that throws the self worth of the colonized into disarray. This is well depicted in the character of Hirut who like most women of her time is traumatized by the ordeal but at the same time is empowered by the fact that she survived the harsh incident. Hirut's reflections on her wounds as "marks of survival" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 354) illustrate the resilience of the colonized, who are able to transform their suffering into a source of empowerment.

However, Mengiste also raises a question about how colonial violence affects the colonizers, which is relatively a rare theme found in most Postcolonial literatures. As it will be seen through the character of Ettore, Mengiste wants to show that those, who commit violence, are not immune to the consequences of their actions. Suffering from a feeling of inferiority and the spirits of the people who he killed are what Ettore experienced, the author supports Fanon who once stated that colonization deliberately dehumanizes both sides. This double

representation of trauma seems to epitomize Mengiste's broader condemnation of colonialism and its central claim that violence and dehumanization infect all parties concerned. Thus, focusing on the psychological suffering of the Ethiopian and Italian characters, Mengiste emphasizes the notion that colonialism leaves a scar in the hearts of all the people of the warring parties, and it takes years, even decades, to recover from it.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND THE ROLE OF MEMORY

The focusing on memory and intergenerational trauma corresponds to postcolonial theories that consider how the violence of colonialism remains entrenched in political and individual memory. Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," which describes how the children of trauma survivors inherit the memories and emotional burdens of their ancestors, is particularly relevant to Mengiste's portrayal of Aster and her fellow fighters (Hirsch, 2008). That Aster is very keen on telling the tales of Ethiopian resistance is probably informed by knowledge that memory is fundamental in maintaining culture. They have to be told that many people suffered so that the society could be free; these stories are very important, they are the basis for humanity.

This emphasis on memory being a form of resistance is in harmony with Said (1978) when stating that history keeps a central position in postcolonial subject formation. Said's concept of "narrative reclamation" is evident in Mengiste's novel, as the characters repeatedly invoke the stories of their ancestors, drawing strength from their shared history. Aster's determination to "carry this story" (Mengiste, 2019, p. 275) suggests that storytelling itself is an act of defiance, a way to counteract the erasure of history imposed by colonial powers. Whereas memory helps the Ethiopian people resist, Mengiste underscores the continuity of colonial trauma across generations; colonial history, therefore, does not end with one generation, but is transferred from one generation to the next through cultural discourses we are socialized in that determine the kinds of subjects we become.

RECLAIMING HISTORY AND IDENTITY THROUGH FICTION

Lastly, by providing an individualistic narrative and representing the voice of the oppressed, *The Shadow King* adds to the pool of postcolonial literature. Thus, the concept which comes to mind and might be somehow applicable to Mengiste's approach is Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction, which addresses the ideas of a literary postmodernism representation of history through the narration of history and fiction at the same time. Mengiste's aims at subverting colonial discourses on the Italian invasion by recreating the history with fictional characters and incidences interwoven. That she chooses to center women's experiences in the resistance deeply aligns with such an undertaking of seeking to reclaim oppressed histories.

This reclamation of history is a powerful example of what postcolonial theorists describe as "writing back" to the empire (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). Through depicting the Ethiopians side, Mengiste's novel stages a radical decolonial reading of colonial narratives of the invasion. Thus, Mengiste not only rewrote Ethiopian women's history but she also argued for the presence of history in the form of stories as the form of cultural memory. Her work and writings can be categorized in the contexts of postcolonial literature because she fights against

colonizers' control of how people in the colonized regions are portrayed in literature and offer the views that can empower the colonized.

CONCLUSION

Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King* is a multi-layered representation of the Ethiopian resistance against the colonial Italian forces and it brings to the front the agency of its female characters which colonial narratives have systematically tried to erase. In placing Hirut and Aster within postcolonial Ethiopia as two hunted Ethiopian women, Mengiste underscores the ways in which anti-colonial struggle is not only a matter of territory or battlefields but of manners and minds as well. It also delves into the constant theme of colonial trauma and its aftermath, which is also echoed with the characters dealing with the moral as well as the aftermaths of the war. From the view of power and gender, and trauma, *The Shadow King* rewrites colonial history from the subjugated the agency of the colonized, and therefore can be lauded for its role in the postcolonial discursive. Consequently, this study reveals the significance of the novel in exposing readers to an ideology that recognizes the traumatic effects of colonialism and honoring the spirits of those who rebelled against colonial and patriarchal domination.

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