ISSN: 1812-0512 (Print) 2790-346X (online)

Waist Journal for Human Sciences

Journal Homepage: https://wjfh.uowasit.edu.iq/index.php/wjfh/en

Research article

Frantz Fanon's Manichean Binary In Wilbur Smith's The Triumph of the Sun

Res. Abdullah Hussain Aziz[1], Asst. Prof. Siham Hattab Hamdan [2]

Mustansiriyah University / College of Arts / Department of English Language and Literature, Iraq[1-2]

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: *Postcolonial Theory, Colonial Discourse, English Fiction*

***Correspondence author*:**

a.azizkt@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq
sihamhattab1970@uomustansiriyah.edu.i

Received: **24 June** 2026
Accepted: **07 September** 2026
Published: 01 **November** 2026

1812-0512 /© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Wasit Journal for Humanities Sciences, Wasit University. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

***Cite*:**

Aziz, A. H., & Hattab, S. H. (2026). Frantz Fanon's Manichean Binary In Wilbur Smith's The Triumph of the Sun. Wasit Journal for Human Sciences, 22(4/Pt1). https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol22.Iss4/Pt1.2121

ABSTRACT

Frantz Fanon's observations in postcolonial theory posits that the colonial world is strictly organized according to a set of moral, social, and material opposites, where the colonial side is put in a superior stance, and the colonized placed in the inferior stance. A clear Manichean binary separation is established, which is named Manichean Delirium, relying on the absolute dualism that the ancient Manichean philosophy adopted, dividing between good and evil. The research applies Fanon's Manichean binary on Wilbur Smith's *The Triumph of the Sun* and examines how it stretches from spatial spheres, to narrative, interiorized depiction, reaching the very agency of the colonized subjects upon themselves and their own lives. Through close reading and analysis, the research finds that Smith's imperial fiction consistently depicts the colonized Sudanese subjects as inferior in all respective areas, which confirms the Manichean structure within the literary context of imperial fiction.

الثنائية المانوية عند فرانز فانون
في رواية ولبر سميث *إنتصار الشمس*

الباحث عبد الله حسين عزيز[1]، أ. م. د. سهام حطاب حمدان [2]
الجامعة المستنصرية / كلية الآداب / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية وآدابها[1-2]

المُستخلص

تطرحُ ملاحظاتُ فرانز فانون في نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار أنَّ العالمَ الاستعماريَّ مُنظّمٌ بشكلٍ شديدٍ وفقاً لمجموعةٍ من الأضدادِ الأخلاقيَّةِ والاجتماعيَّةِ والماديَّة، حيثُ يوضعُ المُستعمِرُ في جانبِ التفوُّق، بينما يوضعُ المُستعمَرُ في جانبِ الدُّونية. هذا التنظيمُ المُتقابلُ يسمَّى بالثنائيَّةِ المانويَّةِ عندَ فانون، وهو مسمى بُني على الفلسفة المانويَّةِ القديمةِ التي تقسمُ بين الخيرِ والشرِّ بشكلٍ مُطلق. يعزمُ هذا البحثُ على تطبيقِ ثنائيَّةِ فانون المانويَّةِ على روايةِ ولبر سميث *انتِصارُ الشَّمس*، حيثُ يدرسُ امتدادها من الجوانبِ المكانيَّةِ إلى السَّردِ والتصويرِ الذاتي، وصولاً على مدى سيطرةِ المُستعمَرينَ على أنفسهم وحياتِهم. من خلالِ القراءةِ والبحثِ المُعمَّقين، يخلصُ البحثُ إلى أنَّ روايةَ سميث الامبريالية تصوّر باستمرار المُستعمَرينَ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، الخطاب الاستعماري، الأدب الإنجليزي

Theoretical Introduction to Fanon's Manichean Binary

When dealing with the terms that Frantz Fanon popularized in postcolonial theory, one of the most essential of them is the term of Manicheanism, or the Manichean Delirium, which he analyzed in his books. Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*, was published in French in 1961 and translated into English by Constance Farrington in the Grove Press edition of 1963, a copy that was prefaced by Jean-Paul Sartre who complimented and approved Fanon's ideas, this book witnessed the enrichment of the concept of Manicheanism that was firstly introduced in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952. This term does not describe a mere racial prejudice or social inequality, as it highlights something considerably more total, that is the division that runs ontologically in the colonial world, dividing it into two absolutely opposed zones, with two species of being, governed by two entirely different moral and spatial logics. The way this concept (Manicheanism) operates cannot be well understood without a close reading of Fanon's own account and the full theoretical context that will help grasp the reasons why this concept remained powerful as a tool of literary and cultural analysis for over six decades. The opening of Fanon's analysis is directed towards a spatial aspect that holds purposes deeper than it looks: Fanon states:

The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation 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. (Fanon, 1963, p. 41)

Fanon's description of the colonial world is very clear, it is a world based on division, yet, this spatial division of the colonial world is nothing but the beginning of the observations of Fanon, as the deeper and more devastating side of Manicheanism operates on an ontological, rather than geographical level, meaning that the colonial order does not only separate the colonizer and the colonized into different physical, geographical zones, but it assigns to them different modes of being, different moral registers, different relationships to humanity itself, and different "zones", with the colonizer occupying what he needs or desires of it, and reserving the native quarter of the world, or the "zone of non-being" as Fanon termed it in his introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks,* to the colonized subjects to live in. (Fanon, 1986).

In the chapter quoted above from *The Wretched of the Earth*, that is "Concerning Violence", Fanon describes the native quarter in terms that clarifies the Manichean structure in a rather concrete manner.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. (Fanon, 1963, p. 39)

This description of the town of the colonized is directly put in contrast with Fanon's description of the colonizer's town which he describes as:

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. . . The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners (Fanon, 1963, p. 39)

As it can be seen, the colonizer-colonized binary is total, with no intermediate positions available, no spaces of negotiation or overlap, and one side is defined by fullness and humanity, while the other by emptiness and hunger.

Fanon treats the concept of Manicheanism in analytically distinctive, and very much productive manner, in terms of literary criticism, as he insists that this binary is not merely a description of social conditions, but an ideological construction that covers every available mechanism, whether it is cultural, legal,

physical, or discursive. The colonized subject, Fanon writes, is not simply described as an inferior, as the colonial order goes much further:

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, he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces (Fanon, 1963, p. 41)

Fanon declares that in the colonial point of view, the colonized subject is not seen simply as a lesser human being when put against the colonizer, but the actual embodied negation of humanity itself, the absolute evil against which the colonial order defines its claims, and defends its calls to represent and spread civilization, progress, and the absolute goodness.

Fanon -also- insists that this Manichean distinction is not a matter of individual prejudice or personal tendency, it is a colonial necessity that the colonizer needs in order to justify the committed violence, abuse, dispossession of land, economic exploitation, and overall dehumanization. When the Manichean divide is intensified, it helps the colonizer appear in the benevolent, civilization-spreader image, to go into educational, religious, literary, and scientific aspects in order to sustain this Manichean binary. The ideas of Edward Said can also strengthen the binary posited by Fanon but within literary aspects, as he argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that the literary imagination of the colonial empire is not innocent of its ideological consequences, but rather deeply complicit in them:

The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future--these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in literary narrative. (Said, 1993, p. xii-xiii)

Thus, Colonial narrative is an active mechanism of the Manichean binary, through which the colonial ideology is implemented in a natural, desirable, and yet invisible manner.

Patrick Brantlinger, the professor of English and Victorian Studies at Indiana University, composed a study named *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*, and published it in 1988, in which he identifies the imperial romance as a genre that is based on the overcompensation of the English, imperial side, against any other side, and away from reality or justice, as he states that:

The adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after *Robinson Crusoe* were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism. They were, collectively, the

story England told itself as it went to sleep at night, and, in the form of its dreams, charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world to explore, conquer, and rule" (Brantlinger, 1988, p. 11)

Brantlinger also confirms that the imperial romance is a representation of the Manichean binary as it is based upon "dividing the world between warring moral forces - good versus evil, civilization versus savagery, west versus east, light versus darkness, and white versus black" (Brantlinger, 1988, p. 265). The imperial romance as a genre has a set of conventions, such as the heroic white protagonist, the threatening native mass, the landscape that is awaiting for civilization, the narrative of rescue performed -mostly- by the Europeans, those conventions encode the Manichean binary not as an explicit colonial tool, but as an aesthetic structure available to readers as a way of seeing and feeling the colonial world unconsciously, rather than as a set of propositions that might be consciously fought and rejected, as Brantlinger states how the imperial romance:

Externalizes the villain, who increasingly became the corrupt rajah, the ludicrous Chinese or Japanese nobleman, the barbarous 'fuzzy-wuzzy' or black, facing a cross-class brotherhood of heroism, British officer and ranker together. Thus, imperialism was depicted as a great struggle with dark and evil forces, in which white heroes and heroines could triumph over black barbarism, and the moral stereotyping of melodrama was given a powerful racial twist. (Brantlinger, 1988, p. 35)

This encoding of Manicheanism in a broad manner makes the imperial romance act as a very durable and effective vehicle for colonial ideology, as it does not directly force colonial ideals in the minds of readers, but it induces pleasures that are not primarily intellectual but emotional and aesthetic, inside the unconsciousness of readers, pleasures that are inseparable from the Manichean structure that produces them.

Another important point to be clarified for the purpose of this research is the predictions made by Fanon for the future of Manichean binary after the formal end of colonialism, or within the period approaching to it. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon clearly states that the Manichean structure does not disappear with the end of the colonial power, as it is deeply absorbed into the social fabric of the nation that newly got its independence, and it continues to operate along new combinations of discrimination. (Fanon, 1963). As it was mentioned before, Fanon wrote that "The colonial world is a Manichean world" (Fanon, 1963, p. 41), and if a world is deeply altered, it does not go back to its original state once the motivator of the alteration ceases to exist, and the results are reproduced in all available hierarchies, such as between the educated elite and the rural poor, and between those whose cultural formation aligns with the former colonizer's values and those whose lives remain organized around indigenous social structures. This reproduction and integration of Manichean impacts, or the postcolonial mutation of the Manichean binary, as it will be demonstrated in this research, is exactly what Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* depicts

extensively, and with the comparative view between it and Wilbur Smith's novel, the full temporal reach of the structure that Fanon identified can be revealed.

Homi Bhabha, who wrote the foreword for Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* in 1986, produced an influential reformulation of Fanon's concept of Manicheanism in his book *The Location of Culture,* that was published in 1994, in which he offers an extensive theoretical resource for Fanon's analysis, primarily presented in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In his book, Bhabha argues that despite being structured in a Manichean binary, the colonial discourse is never fully coherent within itself, and is always passed and reflected in a form of anxiety that cannot be completely suppressed, a phenomenon that he named "ambivalence" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66). The colonized individuals are constructed not only as inferior, but also as threatening, traits that are different, but are well-connected to each other, and the colonial texts always assert and manage this ambivalence simultaneously, in a process that leaves traces of inner confliction and contradiction within colonized individuals, and the imperial text itself. (Bhabha, 1994). This insight of Bhabha is particularly valuable in reading an imperial text such as Smith's novel, which, as this research will present contains moments of narrative ambivalence, that further reveal the Manichean structure and the ideological labor required to maintain it in continuation. Then, when compared with Aboulela's text, it can illuminate how and where Smith's novel produces ambivalence as a by-product of the effort to maintain the colonial binary, while Aboulela's novel, on the other hand, presents ambivalence as a deliberate and politically significant feature of postcolonial consciousness.

Thus, it will be seen how the Fanonian concept of Manicheanism can provide this research with a historically grounded and analytically rich framework, through which the two novels will be examined, with an engagement with the Sudanese colonial, postcolonial and anticipated neocolonial experience, through two radically different ideological positions. The research will proceed through four parts: an introduction to Fanon's concept that is grounded in his own writings, as it was presented in this section, a close reading of Manicheanism and its application in Smith's *The Triumph of the Sun* through the spatial organization of imperial narrative world, the Manichean distribution of interiority between the colonial and colonized subjects, the Manichean division of agency, and a final conclusion to sum up the findings of the research. Throughout the research, the analysis will make sure to keep in view both the precision of Fanon's original formulation and the capacity of it to illuminate literary and social phenomena that extend beyond the Antillean context in which it was developed.

The Manichean Binary in Wilbur Smith's *The Triumph of the Sun*

Wilbur Smith's novel *The Triumph of the Sun* was published in the year 2005, that is over a century after the events it depicts, which is the siege of Khartoum of 1884–85, the critical crisis of British imperial history that culminates in the fall of the city -Khartoum- to Muhammad Ahmad's "Mahdist" forces and the death of General Charles Gordon, who was the commander of the British forces during that period,

and whose fate had been a subject of many political controversies in Britain for decades. The novel can be sharply considered within the tradition of the imperial adventure, or imperial discourse, which -as Brantlinger describes- a tradition that stretches from the works of Marryat, Mayne Reid, G. A. Henty, W H. C. Kingston, Dr. Gordon Stables, Stevenson, Haggard, and Kipling, (Brantlinger, 1988), with characteristics similar to what will be seen in Smith's fiction, as it reproduces the basic conventions that carry the Manichean binary as their default structure. The analysis that will be presented attempts to read the novel through a Fanonian lens, in order to clarify the ideological elements inserted subtly between the lines, and beneath the adventurous story that excites and pleasures readers.

The Manichean Spatial Organization of the Colonial World

The opening pages of the novel -and right at its outset- establish the Manichean division of the colonial world with a spatial manner that directly reflects Fanon's ideas, as Rebecca Benbrook, the eldest daughter of David Benbrook, the British consul in Sudan, is looking across the Nile from the consular palace in Khartoum and towards the Mahdist forces who are camping in Omdurman on the far bank, and what she sees is described in terms that encode the Manichean binary, through the grammar of choice for landscape description:

The sprawling buildings of the native city of Omdurman pressed up to the far riverbank, earth-coloured like the desert around them, tiny as dolls' houses at this distance, and wavering in the mirage. Yet menace emanated from them as fiercely as the heat from the sun. Night and day, the drums never stopped, a constant reminder of the mortal threat that hung over them. She could hear them booming across the waters, like the heartbeat of the monster" (Smith, 2005, p. 4)

This passage is worth focusing on in detail, as it plainly expresses the first part, or the colonized side part of Manichean binary, that is -in Fanonian terms- called: the Zone of Non-Being, through every literary device available.

The native city is plainly "earth-colored, like the desert", this is not a description of a human settlement but an extension of the natural landscape, a formless chunk of it that is indistinguishable from the rest, while "wavering in the mirage" simply describes an area that lacks the solidity of real civilization. "The menace it emanates" the danger that Rebecca is sensing from the Sudanese crowd is compared to the heat of the sun, an unavoidable and unemotional natural phenomenon, rather than a political or military reality that might be engaged with on human terms. And though it is common-sense for things that are faraway to look tiny, the focus on the size of the native land as being "tiny as dolls' houses" is done as a form of encapsulation of the city, being very limited and small to be concerned with.

The drums, heard across the water, that keeps going eternally, takes the analysis to Fanon's narration of the "Tom-toms" in *Black Skin, White Masks,* as he writes in describing his experience of his blackness as

a moment of realization: “I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: ‘Sho’ good eatin’” (Fanon, 1986, p. 112).

The Tom-toms Fanon speaks of are the constant reminder of the blackness of the black people, and thus, their inferiority that they have to live with, and those huge, traditional African drums are transformed by Rebecca’s perception into “the heartbeat of the monster”, another constant reminder, but for the monstrosity and danger that is emanating from the Sudanese people. The monster, that his heartbeat is the drums, could mean the abstract being of the natives as a whole, or a single entity of recognition, namely: the Mahdi, now figured not as a human or a political leader, but as a monstrous organism, along with his city as his body, and his followers being his blood.

Undoubtedly, this is Manicheanism operating not directly through racial violation or blunt insult towards black people, but subtly through the aesthetics of landscape description, and the spontaneous gaze of Rebecca. The native city is crafted as a natural threat, rather than a populated location, its inhabitants as an undifferentiated biological force, rather than a normal community of human beings with their own political opposition, cultural practices, and inner lives. Fanon’s description of the native quarter as a place defined by its menace and its otherness, as he stated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1963, p. 39) is reproduced by Rebecca’s view, not through explicit racial arguments but through the benign-looking literary conventions of describing what she saw.

The other side that Smith’s narrative divides the space into, is the opposing Manichean zone: Khartoum, the British side that is well-organized and structured, centered around the palace, including the consulate, and the harbor, and organized under a clear system of governance and commerce, with the people in Khartoum being individualized, having names, distinct faces, inner lives and moral depths. This can be seen, also right at the first pages of the novel, in the preparations that Rebecca is planning given that she is the “official hostess to Her Britannic Majesty’s consul general to the Sudan” a title, by itself, is enough to depict the huge gap between the masses described on the other side of the river, who it would not be logical to associate an “official hostess” to an individual on their side, let alone the preparations detailed in a way that reveals the colonizer’s side of the Fanonian Manichean binary. The narration states the importance of Rebecca’s managerial role as:

This evening, under her supervision, the servants had laid the dinner table on the terrace that overlooked the Blue Nile so that David’s guests might enjoy the breeze off the river. At sunset the servants would light braziers of eucalyptus branches and leaves. The smoke would keep the mosquitoes at bay. The entertainment would be provided with the compliments of General Gordon. (Smith, 2005, p. 15-16)

The division is beyond being subtle that it almost appears ironical, as it is portrayed clearly, with a physical line that divides civilization from what is beneath, as at the same time Rebecca is supervising an aristocratic dinner night for the high-valued guests of her father, the Sudanese, the other side, in Omdurman are depicted -as previously mentioned- in an "earth-colored" area, associated with menace and primitive imagery, with its people lacking the psychological depth that is given to the people on the side of Khartoum (Smith, 2005, p. 4). The narration focuses on minute details that shows the complexity of the characters associated with the colonial side, they prefer to sit in open air and enjoy the breeze, which is the reflection of their distinct taste, but they might be annoyed of the swarming mosquitos, associated with the natural location they have to fill; thus, they will use their means of civilization by lighting up "braziers of eucalyptus branches and leaves", and enjoy the rest of the evening.

Finally, and as the research will further reveal, the narrative in *The Triumph of the Sun* rarely enters Omdurman from within the consciousness of its inhabitants, as it is always seen from the outside, and always acts as the object of a colonial gaze that depicts it as threat rather than as normally lived world.

This inequality of narrative perspective, with the British characters being subjects and the Mahdist world and what it contains being objects, is the formal expression of the Fanonian Manichean binary at the level of spatial narrative structure.

The Manichean Distribution of Interiority and Humanity

Perhaps the most systematic expression of Manichean binary in Smith's novel is his asymmetry of the distribution of interiority and humanity in characters, the different proportion given of inner lives, psychological depth, narrative sympathy, between the two sides mentioned in the previous section: The British and the Sudanese. It will be shown how the asymmetry is the structural principle that is consistent throughout the entire text, it is a systematic feature, rather than local or accidental, as British characters are depicted with considerable sophistication and depth of individuation, while the Sudanese characters being the opposite of that. The main example for this is General Gordon himself, the novel's martyred hero, who is introduced with the weight of imperial mythology behind him, as the narration states:

General "Chinese" Gordon was a hero of the Empire, the victor of wars in every part of the world. In China his legendary "Ever Victorious Army" had earned him the sobriquet. He had come out of his headquarters in the south wing of the palace with his red flowerpot fez on his head. "The order has already been sent to the gunners, sir." Gordon's reply was crisp and assertive, edged with annoyance. He did not need to be reminded of his duty. (Smith, 2005, p. 7)

The individuation of General Gordon is produced through a weave of historical heroic references and physical details, the tone of his voice "crisp and assertive" and the quality of his response "edged with annoyance" show that he is not simply a figure of governmental authority, but a distinct human being,

with a sincere sense of duty and depth of emotional response. He is the named hero that the narration choses, and commands sympathy towards, rather than a character that readers might tend to recognize as a hero, by reading the novel and going through its events.

Another example can be seen in the character of Ryder Courtney, the heir of the long linage of Smith's Courtney Novel's protagonists, and the novel's other principal main character, who is described with psychological richness that is somewhat similar to that of Gordon. Courtney, the prosperous trader and strict character is well-described through the eyes of Rebecca, as she witnessed him navigating his steamer "The Intrepid" under the overwhelming Mahdists' fire, as he is trying to reach the Khartoum bank in order to deliver what Saffron, Rebecca's younger sister, excitedly recognized as "tons of food" (Smith, 2005, p. 6). Ryder Courtney is described as nonchalant, strict and focused on his mission, as he is puffing the smoke of his "cheroot" from between his lips despite shrapnel punching holes in the walls of his vessel. Ryder Courtney is still unmoved, as he is commanding his vessel calmly, and leaning on the rail of the bridge with "faint amusement". (Smith, 2005, p. 6)

The acts of solidity and ability to perform under pressure depict the sophistication of the colonial characters being established at an early stage of the novel, such actions did not go in vain, as they were well-received and even admired by Rebecca, and sparked immediate concern and sympathy towards him, as the narration reveals: "she experienced a twinge of admiration for Ryder's composure in the midst of such danger, followed almost immediately by the warming glow of friendship. "Well, there is no harm in admitting that we are friends." she reassured herself, and felt quick concern for his safety. "Please, God, keep Ryder safe in the eye of the storm," she whispered, and God seemed to be listening" (Smith, 2005, p. 7).

The quoted passage shows how Courtney was instantly recognized as an equivalent human being by Rebecca, as she went on addressing him as a friend, recognizing his composure as a sort of moral quality, and ironically, the narration commands sympathy towards the character of Courtney even with the representation of God's soft and warm assumed reaction towards Rebecca's concerned prayers for him.

Continuing with British characters being described with substantial sophistication, it is essential to speak about the character of Captain Penrod Ballantyne, who is firstly introduced -not through an outward, "dead" description but through a form of self-presentation:

Penrod Ballantyne shot a glance at himself in the gilt-framed ceiling-high mirror that adorned the side wall of the antechamber and, with satisfaction, noted his own likeness to the young Prince Consort, now long dead while Penrod was young and vital. The captain's epaulettes on his shoulders and the frogging of his uniform jacket were bright new gold. His riding boots were polished to a glassy sheen, and the fine glove leather creased around his ankles like the bellows of an accordion. (Smith, 2005, p. 78)

This passage clearly shows how Ballantyne is individuated through physical details, self-conscious narcissism, comparison to the line of royalty, and a full awareness of his imperialistic display, as he is not a mere soldier who represents himself only, but a subject with complex self-awareness and complete understanding of the hierarchical order practiced by his imperial controlling power. Even his attire, his uniform jacket, his riding boots, his leather gloves, are -ironically- given more sophistication than many other Sudanese characters, as it will be further detailed.

This sort of interiority reflects the capacity for self-reflection, self-presentation, and self-awareness, which are the fine markers of a human character in his human status in the midst of the novel's world.

On the other side of the novel, the Sudanese and Mahdist characters are almost never represented within their own consciousness, as they often appear as an advancing force, a threatening mass, a savage horde that is defined by their collective functions rather than their personal, individual uniqueness. An example can be seen -also- through the eyes of Rebecca, and through the same telescope lens in which she observed Ryder Courtney with utmost admiration, went to conceive the Sudanese with inmost degradation, and that was not after a break of time, but at the same moment of Ryder Courtney's steamer attack, reflecting the other side of the Manichean divide, as the Mahdist cavalry were riding along the far bank, what Rebecca saw through her telescope was described as it follows:

She swept it over the swarming Dervish cavalry, who were half obscured in the red clouds of dust thrown up by their racing mounts. They appeared so close that she could see the expressions on their fierce dark faces, could almost read the oaths and threats they mouthed, and hear their terrible war cry: "Allah Akbar! There is no God but God, and Muhammed is his prophet. (Smith, 2005, p. 7)

The significance this passage offers is critical, the Sudanese cavalry, even though they are horse riders, were only seen as a moving menace, their faces were described to reflect the danger they carry, their war cry was detailed to depict the sound they produce rather than the meaning they could intend, and their overall exterior was narrated only in order to make them appear as a sort of objects of vision, rather than subjects of experience, as their introduction carried no interiority nor psychological depth whatsoever, unlike the previously mentioned British characters.

It might be thought that the asymmetrical distribution of interiority against Sudanese fighting forces can be somewhat justified, as they are there in order to attack and cause damage, and they are not expected to be illustrated in a humane manner, while this is not necessarily true, the asymmetrical interiority is applied against average Sudanese characters, or to be specific, hungry Sudanese characters in Khartoum, who went on a violent riot after General Gordon has reduced their daily grain rations, and attacked Ryder Courtney's compound in the city. The event is described extensively, and the part that is to be focused on is the following:

Once the leaders were inside, they came up short. They were in unfamiliar territory and they looked about curiously. Then they caught sight of the row of heads above the parapet of the inner wall, and the hunting chorus went up again. They charged straight at the inner gate like a pack of savage hounds." (Smith, 2005, p. 241)

Though the overall description of the starving natives is somewhat similar to that of starving animals, the narration does not leave a space for readers' imagination, as it uses a clear form of simile, describing the group of the Sudanese as a "pack of savage hounds", in a clear form of degradation of them to the level of savage animals. It is important to note that, though those starving Sudanese are on the Khartoum side, the side that is associated with the colonial civility, it did not change the depiction of Sudanese, and they were still reduced to inferiors who are simply living in a better place.

The Manichean Division of Agency

After the study of Manichean representation through asymmetrical interiority, it is important to analyze the employment of Manicheanism in the aspects of self-agency, especially in the description of Sudanese characters and the Mahdist forces.

Smith, when describing the Mahdist fighters, uses a language that systematically naturalizes them, and empties them of their human agency, by depicting them as a continuation of the primal forces of nature, similar to the depiction of their quarter as a continuation of the wild desert. The human agency is removed from Sudanese characters, as they are deprived of their human moral consideration, and stripped off their chance of being interacted with, or understood.

A clear example can be seen with the metaphor of flood or tide that is frequently deployed: "From the depths of the creek bed rose the dread chorus of Dervish war cries. The hordes poured back in a flood that filled the creek from side to side." (Smith, 2005, p. 185) The Dervish characters are described with the metaphor of a flood, a natural, often disastrous, occurrence, rather than the use of a somewhat human trait, in another tie between the Sudanese mass and natural disasters or uncontrollable occurrences. The employment of the literary devices of choice is essential to maintain the Manichean binary, as the same literary devices that are used to dehumanize and degrade the natives can be used to humanize and elevate the colonizer.

Another example appears when the relief forces that were sent to save Khartoum were spoken about, Smith described how they have to "fight their way through the Dervish hordes who guarded the long marches along the banks of the Nile before they could reach the city and raise the siege" (Smith, 2005, p. 14). The Dervish army is described using the word "horde" that is not often associated with a group of distinctive gentlemen, but rather with a group of people that is "disorganized, disorderly, or threatening"

as the Oxford English Dictionary states ("Horde," 1.c), showing how those forces are not quite different from other biological masses, being primitive and acting with passive mental states.

Similarly, the Ansar, despite being the elite fighters of the Mahdi, are also described using terms that are not associated with humans, for instance, the moment of their victory over Hicks army was narrated as it follows: "Hicks himself was mortally wounded as he stood at the head of the last formed square of his troops. When he fell the square broke and the Ansar swarmed over it" (Smith, 2005, p. 27). The used words do not give attention to their military abilities, or their overwhelming triumph, but portrays them as a mass that is irresistible rather superior in political motivations and military planning, the verb "swarmed", often used for insects or locusts, once more naturalizes Sudanese characters and purge them off their agency, instead of individualizing them, making their victory a representation of a natural catastrophe, rather than a military triumph.

The Mahdi himself is not spared of the degrading language, as he is depicted through a set of metaphors that construct him as a monstrous being rather than a human, when Rebecca thinks of him, she imagines "him sitting at the centre of his web, gazing hungrily across the river at them, a fanatic with a quenchless thirst for human blood. Soon he and his minions would come for them" (Smith, 2005, p. 4). The depiction of the leader of the Sudanese forces using the metaphor of a spider plainly positions the Mahdi as a predator, that is patient and malevolent at the center of his trap, and while The Mahdi might sustain his agency partially, though in a demonized manner, the metaphor removes the human agency from his followers completely, as being under the thumb of a predator, stripping them of their humanity and sense. The use of a phrase such as "quenchless thirst for human blood" is not a political description of a military and religious leader but a characterization drawn from the vocabulary of monstrosity, that removes the Mahdi completely from the domain of historical and political record, and places him in the realm of the irredeemably evil.

It is worth mentioning that such character construction is a representation of the "absolute evil" that Fanon spoke about in his *Black Skin, White Masks*:

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 he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon, 1963, p. 41)

The Mahdi is depicted as a character of a political power but is being built not as a human adversary with a certain ideology, but as an evil force that is a threat to humanity

The colonial Manichean binary of agency is used also in the context of an English character towards native characters, as the ability of Ryder Courtney, who is somewhat sympathetic towards the Africans, is described as: “His Arabic was so fluent that he could debate the Koran with the mullahs in the mosque. He spoke a dozen other more primitive tongues and could bargain with the naked Dinka and the Shilluk” (Smith, 2005, p. 21). The quoted passage speaks about a British character, who has the knowledge of languages besides his native tongue, the description reads “primitive tongues” describing any other language he knows as inferior to his original, English language. Furthermore, the Dinka and the Shilluk, two of the indigenous Sudanese ethnic groups, are firstly introduced as being “naked”, implying the pre-civilizational state they live in.

One more ideological operation of Manicheanism against the Sudanese individual capacities, and perhaps the most important of them, is expressed through the passage where Ryder Courtney delivers what functions as a speech on the relations between backwardness, fanaticism, and the uprising of the Mahdists, the passage states: “In our western societies we pride ourselves in glorious traditions and high moral standards. Yet in savage and uneducated peoples ignorance provides its own source of great strength. It engenders in them the overpowering stimulus of fanaticism” (Smith, 2005, p. 25). The passage is delivered by a British character situated within a Sudanese context, but the logic of it produces, with clarity, a Manichean binary, as the speech is built upon a clear distinction between “we”, that is the Western societies, with their full agency, and “They”, that is the savage, dependent, and uneducated natives. The Mahdist uprising, and with the use of the words “we and they” is not approached politically, and not interpreted as a response to colonial exploitation and misgovernment, even though Courtney acknowledges these material factors, he does not treat them as the main cause of the uprising. The uprising is treated as a mere reflection of the primitive population, an inevitable outburst of the savages, who are constructed as incapable of rational political action, and the use of binary Manichean words sets a clean-cut division between the world of the civilized and the world of the savages.

Conclusion

The research has examined Fanon’s Manichean binary as a reading framework for colonial representation in a narrative form, with a focus on how it structures the perception upon colonized subjects, rather than a mere reflection of social division. Manicheanism is reproduced in Smith’s *Triumph of the Sun* in a consistent moral, spatial manner, in which Khartoum is associated with order and stability, while Omdurman is associated with disorder and threat, this spatial division is further reinforced through the used descriptive language rather that an explicit ideological statement by characters or narrators.

A central finding of the research is that the narrative power is controlled and distributed through interiority, with the British characters having sufficient psychological depth and individuality, while Sudanese characters and Mahdist figures being represented as a collective, externally defined entities.

The analysis also reveals that agency is systematically removed from native characters, through metaphorical means, where political and military actions are framed as flood, tides, or swarms, which converts the political history into natural occurrences, and removes the intentional human capacity from the Sudanese characters. The research concludes that the ideology of the novel is not explicit and blunt, but formally inserted within the narrative technique, as the Manichean binary operates in its most effective manner in the level of description, metaphor, and narration, rather than blunt political, ideological statements.

References

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Brantlinger, P. (1988). *Rule of darkness: British literature and imperialism, 1830–1914*. Cornell University Press.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (1986). *Black skin, white masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). Pluto Press.

Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Horde. In *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com

Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Knopf.

Smith, W. (2005). *The triumph of the sun*. Macmillan.