

The Missionary Colonist: Narrative Authority in Representing the Subaltern

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores various questions about narrative authority by exploring missionary narrative tropes and how these tropes are contested in the work of contemporary novelists who attempt to challenge the dominant narratives that portray subaltern groups. Missionaries have often dominated the narrative authority that speaks about the peoples they encounter and the morality of their cultures. Missionaries open the door to Western ideology, create a physical presence that then justifies an imperial presence that allows Western power to seize control. The missionary emphasis on Western education and indoctrination furthers their impact on these communities as not only is their land taken, their doctrines and ideologies are shifted. Novels such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* offer alternative perspectives by granting voice to subaltern peoples in an attempt to challenge the dominant narratives controlled by missionary perspectives. This thesis attempts to understand how these accounts are heard and understood and to highlight the continuance of limitation to subaltern speech.

Introduction: The Missionary Colonist: Missionary Narrative Authority in Representing the Subaltern

The importance of story when attempting to understand any culture, time, or place cannot be overstated. Who is telling the story is, likewise, of great significance.

Whenever reading a story one must ask who is doing the telling, from what position are they doing the telling, and what compels them to do the telling. This project will examine various stories told from various perspectives all relating to missionary work in either formerly or soon to be colonized parts of the world. I have selected works from differing times and places rather than focusing on one specific culture or geographic place with the purpose of demonstrating how my argument is not restricted to a particular group of missionaries in a solitary time or place. Rather I hope to highlight the way in which such missionary work has been and continues to be systemic in places and times related primarily to British imperialism with its far reaching and continuing scope of impact. I propose that missionaries have been, and continue to be, tools of the imperial apparatus who serve to both introduce and perpetuate imperial ideology through their seemingly benevolent acts in colonized places. One way they have been and are still able to carry on this imperial work is through their long established control of narrative, or story. With this project, I hope to shed light on the established literary traditions that have allowed missionaries to paint themselves as benevolent benefactors, ministering to dark and desperate places. The five texts given here as examples primarily cover various parts of Africa and India. It is important to understand that each text wrestles with different stages of colonial control, and Africa and India are in no way homogeneous.

To begin, it is critical to understand what I mean by “missionary narrative” as the term is, certainly, not a universally understood style of literary text. The missionary narrative, as I reference it, is most frequently auto-biographical or biographical, though there are certainly exceptions. The narratives I include are any stories told with the expressed intent of furthering the messages about the importance of missionary work that missionaries wish to convey. These stories support the missionary purpose by platforming their work. According to most religious scholarship, Abraham is technically considered the first missionary, as he was commanded by God in the book of Genesis to leave his homeland and demonstrate the power of God in foreign places (Porter 565). However, the trend of missionary narrative that I discuss excludes many of the traditional Biblical missionaries such as Abraham, or the notable Apostle Paul who, essentially, ushered in the modern manifestation of the Christian church in the New Testament book of Acts (Acts 13-14). I exclude such missionaries as they were subaltern individuals attempting to spread the word of their faith in places that traditionally held power over them. The narratives I refer to begin, primarily, during British colonial rule and continue into present day. These are the stories of missionaries who come from the perceived places of traditional power and use their influence to indoctrinate subaltern groups in subaltern places. The line between colonized peoples and now independent peoples is often somewhat blurred, as though many subaltern communities are now free from the physical imposition of colonialism, they are still greatly impacted by both the past influence and the current neo forms of imperialism. I make the distinction between the two terms in reference to Edward Said’s understanding of the difference. He explains, “As I shall be using the term, ‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a

dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism,’ which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlement on distant territory” (Said 9). When I refer to “colonized people” I refer to any group of people who have been impacted by imperial power at any time, whether they are still under the control of literal colonialism described by Said, or only continue to live with the ideologies of imperialism.

Said addresses the ways in which many critics wish to divorce the concept of culture from the concept of imperialism, implying that somehow imperialism does not wed itself to the culture it invades in order to best substantiate itself, but Said indicates that culture is part of imperialism, joined together to create the experience depicted in novels. Said discusses the importance of the novel in understanding the culture that created it, and I thoroughly agree, as demonstrated by the novels used to challenge missionary narratives. Again, I agree with Said’s point, but will push further beyond the argument he poses in *Culture and Imperialism* to explore the ways in which various genres utilize the idea of narrative authority--again, who is doing the telling and for what purpose are they doing the telling-- to further cement the importance of the novel in understanding imperialism’s role in culture and the missionary’s place in that narrative. I will take from Said’s idea that importance of the novel genre as cultural artifact and explore the same idea with the missionary auto-biography and biography. When missionaries tell their stories of interacting with these colonized peoples, the important fact that most of the narratives are autobiographical or biographical cannot be overstated. Missionaries have traditionally employed such a tactic, seemingly, because they understand the power of first or secondhand story to present itself as fact or truth.

However, I suggest that the biographic account is a fierce competitor of truth. So often the compelling nature of experience is able to silence all other perspectives and overshadow physical evidence that is contradictory to experience. Both genres are impacted by the questions that I have posed throughout this introduction about the importance of who is doing the telling. Missionaries tell their stories or allow those close to them to tell their stories and by doing so, insulate themselves as dictators of history. Missionaries are able to go to places often regarded as having no history before colonization and create a history through autobiography, or biography that supports their understanding of the people they encounter. These accounts are then cemented as cultural productions that speak for the places and peoples the missionaries supposedly benefit.

The stories I reference give account of the impact that Evangelical missionary work had, and continues to have, on colonized peoples and places, and I will show how each narrative perspective, i.e., who is doing the telling, from what perspective, and what compels them can easily reshape one's thinking about missionary work and its impact. Traditionally, the work of the missionary has been regarded as benevolent and generally noble. The missionary narrative, most frequently, relies heavily on tropes that depict the potential missionary as humble, self-sacrificing, and willing to give up anything and anyone to serve their god. Missionaries portray themselves and are portrayed by others as seeking only to make a difference in dark places and this notion is largely accepted by dominant society.

As I have researched this topic, I have met with some significant push back when discussing with fellow academics. My argument is sound and supported by textual evidence, but do I really want to attack missionaries? In conversation with a longtime

friend who engages with missionary work, I was humbled by her frustrations; yes, she admitted, perhaps there are times she engages in some questionable imperial behavior, but does the good not outweigh the bad? Is she not supposed to help people for fear of perpetuating imperial ideology? Is she, as a person in a position of power, not obligated to extend some of her comforts and freedoms to those who inhabit a traditionally subaltern state? It is not the good that I hope to undermine or the help that I hope to delegitimize. It is the utilization of language that refers to missionaries as “lights in dark places,” with heavy emphasis on the idea that those who inhabit these “dark spaces” are destined to damnation without the benevolent intervention of the called-by-god missionary that I seek to challenge. I rely heavily on concepts laid out in *Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Said who draws on understandings of the British novel when confronting imperialism. Though he does not specifically address missionaries, in chapter one he mocks the concept that pervaded the British mindset that colonized places were dark and evil, white people shed their benevolent light, and now that they have left and given the people their freedom, the native people revert back to their dark and evil ways. I propose this mindset that Said sees in the British novel is partially created by the narrative control of the missionaries working in such places. I do not seek to attack the work that missionaries perform, denigrate their sacrifices, or suggest they help with ill intent. I do seek to understand the way they have shaped the West’s idea of the colonized.

Though I have already stated I have no desire to malign the work of the missionary, it is important to examine their work. This work often primarily benefits the missionary and those who have sent the missionary to places primed for exploitation. Benefits may be as simple as the missionary feeling some personal sense of satisfaction

in knowing that they have lived a “good life” or as complex as peacefully introducing untouched societies to white or Western civilizations and thus opening the door for direct colonial expansion. It is important to understand various accounts of missionary work, so that the work is not blindly accepted as “good” or “helpful” and can be recognized for its potential harm. For this section, I will introduce three novels, one biography, and one auto-biography to explore missionary activity in depth. Each text referenced is, essentially, the same story: how white missionaries impact communities they seek to help. But each portrays a distinct experience and offers the reader an understanding from various perspectives. The texts discussed are divided into chapters based on the topics which they address. The proceeding section will offer significant introductions to each work that will be used as the primary sources of reference throughout the project but with more than a simple introduction in mind. With this section, I will lay the groundwork for my theoretical framework that will build this project by offering snap shots of the critical points of each piece, with a closer, in depth explanation of points and further reading in later chapters.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe offers a blatant and devastating account of how the presence of missionaries deteriorates and ultimately destroys a great leader of the African Igbo community. *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga tells the story of a girl who has already been colonized. The work of the missionaries has so permeated her world that her primary interaction with missionaries is through her own uncle, who has been converted, and now seeks to convert his family and fellow Africans. *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver is a story told by those doing the colonizing. A missionary family attempts to tell the story of how they seek, but ultimately fail, to

convert their Congolese neighbors and the dramatic impact that it has on the community and their own family. *A Chance to Die* by Elisabeth Elliot tells the story of Amy Carmichael, a well-known missionary who sought to rescue children from Hindu temples throughout various parts of India. She is conscious of the work of other missionaries who use their superior status among the peoples they supposedly wish to help in order to boost their own financial or social positions and allows author Elliot to tell her story, primarily through Eliot's understanding and perception of her own writings including journals and letters, to ensure that she is not mistakenly perceived as the same. Finally, *Kisses from Katie* leans heavily on the missionary tropes that are found in works such as David Livingston's seminal piece *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857). Katie tells her story as a young missionary woman living in Africa, ministering to young women, and finding her place in the world according to what she believes to be God's calling. She uses the biography to elicit financial support through horrific renderings of the people she encounters, superfluous narration of her impact on their lives and overall culture, and heavy emphasis on her own personal sacrifice and suffering while she studies these unfortunate wretches and brings them into the light of god. Each account tells the story of the role missionaries from various time periods, serving in various parts of the world, play in colonialism, but each gives the narrative authority, and position of power to a different teller with no concern placed on traditional positions of power or authority. These stories demonstrate the way in which Western thought has streamlined the role of the missionary, allowing their impact to resonate in devastating ways no matter the time or place. I will rely heavily on the theory of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak posed in her seminal work "Can the Subaltern Speak?" to explore the importance of this narrative

authority and suggest that the position of “subaltern” (which throughout should be understood as: a person or group of persons who are considered “less than”, “other” or are in positions of powerlessness or general weakness) can shift based on who is doing the telling. Spivak urges that the Subaltern cannot speak due to a variety of factors, I hope to add to the discussion the ways in which missionaries have and continue to impact the ways in which the subaltern cannot speak.

The position of authority I reference is the power of the those who hold positions which allow them to dictate and shape the telling and understanding of narrative. What Spivak accurately draws attention to is the issue of Subject in representation. Spivak does not suggest that subaltern individuals or characters are unable to physically speak, but that their voices are most often filtered through the understanding of the intellectual doing the telling. She emphasizes the difference between representation, such as a political representation of constituents, and re-presentation, as in an intellectual telling the, supposedly, accurate story of a subaltern figure. Often, according to Spivak, the intellectual approach is to rely so heavily on the notion of the “concrete” version of events or “what actually happened” without an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the Subaltern experience or a recognition that the intellectual telling of the “concrete” is still only a re-presentation. This understanding of the intellectual re-presentation must be applied to the missionary narrative. The missionary, due to the benevolent understanding of their mission, is very often glossed over in the discussion of representations of the Subaltern. The missionary is perceived as a greater narrative authority because they often live in and among the people for whom they speak. They are granted a greater narrative authority because, in many ways, they claim to share the lived

experience of the subaltern, which gives their narrative the illusion of the concrete. They sacrifice their Western lives, often live in poverty, and generally sacrifice most of the comforts of their lives previous to entering missionary work. This perception that they willingly enter themselves into subaltern positions grants them greater narrative freedom and allows them to control the story in many ways that are so often harmful to those they claim to represent.

The first text that I will address here in this introduction is *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Though this is not the novel discussed in the first chapter, it is important to have at least a minimal understanding of the novel before moving into the additional texts. *Things Fall Apart* offers us a clear picture of a subaltern community before the infiltration of missionaries. It grants us access to a figure who lives outside of a position of subalternity pre-missionary exposure who is then moved into a position of subalternity post-missionary exposure. By understanding this particular, critical event we are better able to grasp the nuances about relative subalternity and relative morality that are woven all throughout the additional texts. Chinua Achebe is a member of the Igbo community of which he writes about in his novel. Though it is important to stress that even though he is able to tell the story of the Igbo community not as an outsider or a missionary, he is an academic, or an intellectual which Spivak references. Achebe can speak about the community with which he is familiar, but he speaks from the position of elite member within his community.

In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe gives an account of Okonkwo, a clan leader in a large tribe in Igboland positioned in the lower Niger region during the 1890's, just as the British authority was beginning its move into Igboland. The novel tells the story of

Okonkwo, his rise to success, his downfall, his rise back into power, and his eventual, complete demise. The novel gives an account of Okonkwo's life that attempts to offer the readers perspectives into the culture and tradition of Igbo life and demonstrates what such a clan would traditionally value. Okonkwo is the descendant of a lazy man who did not care for his family, carried too many debts, and was a general disgrace. The clan does not hold one's lineage as a direct indicator or barrier to one's own success, so through his ability to wrestle and grow a great crop, Okonkwo ascends to a position of leadership. The story tells of his daily life, his values, and his flaws. Achebe, though he is telling the story of a great and powerful tribal leader, makes no attempt to hide Okonkwo's perceived flaws. He beats his wives, he offers no emotion or warmth to his children, he fears most that his son is like a woman, and he believes violence and the shedding of blood to be a great honor. All traits that a western reader would view as staunchly negative and place him in a position of low respect. However, Achebe makes it clear that these Western values are perceived differently by the clan. Achebe uses this narrative technique to ensure that readers do not misunderstand Okonkwo and the tribe to be idyllic or perfect prior to colonization. Achebe is aware of flawed narrative techniques that paint the picture of "the noble savage" which gives readers a dehumanized idea of such peoples. Achebe gives the readers an understanding of the clan's humanity, while challenging the readers to confront their idea that Western morality is the only true guide for good character. While Okonkwo struggles with his own shortcomings in his character, he does so through the lens of his clan's system of morality, rather than a more traditionally expected Western idea of morality.

Okonkwo is punished for beating his wife, but only on a day that is specifically set apart for peace. He is punished for the murder of a young boy, but only because the young boy was part of the clan and therefore his murder is prohibited. Order, duty, and a sense of morality is strong throughout the novel. The story demonstrates Okonkwo's struggles to obey the rule of the clan and restrain his own power as a member. Achebe allows for no discussion as to whether or not the values and rules of the clan are "good" or "right" or whether the perceived flaws of Okonkwo are legitimate from a Western perspective. It is clear that Okonkwo makes mistakes, but only the mistakes that break the clan's rules are openly regarded as a detriment to Okonkwo's life. Spivak touches on this idea of perceived morality and creating "good societies" in part four of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" where she discusses the practice of *sati* or *suttee*. *Sati* most simply defined is the ritualistic burning of widows in India upon the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. It is a sacrificial system that allows the widows to demonstrate their devotion to their, now dead, husbands. Spivak highlights how from a Western perception of morality, such a practice is immoral and denigrates women to the positions of object. What Spivak proposes is that by imposing a homogeneous understanding of morality and placing concepts of right or wrong on cultural traditions that are other than what Western Subjects find proper, the West moves practitioners of such traditions into subaltern positions in which they cannot speak, and their traditions cannot be understood. Achebe plays with this concept in highlighting flaws in Okonkwo but ensuring that the reader understands that these flaws are flaws according to clan law, not according to Western imposed morality.

In the second half of the novel, missionaries begin to show up in the Niger region. Okonkwo is distressed by the presence of white men and does not understand why various parts of the tribe would allow their presence. Most of the clan perceives the missionaries only as silly, and a non-threat. They allow them to live in a believed to be haunted forest where the clan members believe they will die. When they do not die in the forest, some lower members of the clan begin to gravitate to them. They are able to attract the lowest members of the clan with promises of redemption and chances to elevate their position through their god: Jesus. It is not until the missionaries break a clan rule, much as Okonkwo did, that the clan turns on them and understands them as a threat.

A member of the missionary group kills a sacred python. An act, undoubtedly, perceived by the missionaries as necessary for their safety, but for the clan, it is an unforgivable sin that sparks the violence which eventually leads to the downfall of Okonkwo and the destruction of his clan. The understanding of perception is important here. If this story were told from the perspective of the missionaries, the understanding of the sacred python would be lost. The story would depict violent, aggressive, presumed subaltern clansmen attacking white missionaries who were accepting and helping the lowest, outcast members of a society. But Achebe was careful in setting up the story to convey the importance of clan law. Okonkwo was not above the rules of the clan; of course the white missionaries would not be. By shifting this narrative and allowing the traditionally subaltern characters to control the authority of the narrative, Achebe shifts the perception of the reader to understand that though they may not understand the values of the clan, they cannot be disregarded. This misunderstanding of values and culture is what ultimately allows the white government to seize control. The clan is forced into

violence with the missionaries, and the government is forced to react. Okonkwo begins to realize that these white missionaries are not just unwise, but understands the threat they pose; he states:

Does the white man understand our custom about land? How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also says that our customs are bad. 'How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us?' The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put the knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Achebe 176)

The narrative directly illuminates exactly how missionaries are able to take control of the narrative authority by portraying the clan's actions according to their own morality. The missionaries invade a space they do not understand and develop a narrative that creates justification of colonialism. They come with peace and religion and leave behind violence and submission that they believe necessary due to their lack of understanding of clan law. This narrative directly describes a group's shift from a position of power in which their customs and traditions are expressed and understood within their own sphere, into a position of submission. Okonkwo holds a position of respect and demonstrates a heavy hand of authority. His position as, presumably, subaltern due to location, global status of power, global currency etc. is unknown and plays no adverse role to him. Okonkwo, prior to exposure to colonization, held a position of respect and authority. Even despite his various troubles throughout his life, he maintained a position of respect. His financial standing and male gender propped him up from amidst the subaltern of his clan, such as his father who was always destitute or the women who are destined to a subaltern position through their gender, but with the shift of colonialism into his land, his position

shifted. It is only through the re-presentation and misunderstanding of the missionaries that Okonkwo and his clan are then moved into a subaltern position in which they cannot speak and be heard. Their customs and beliefs are held up as an example for the need for colonial rule and missionary conversion.

Similarly to *Things Fall Apart*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* confronts the question what standard should be used to judge any group of people and how the application of these standards intersect with the heterogeneous position of the subaltern. Tambu is a girl who lives in an impoverished village and seemingly inhabits the space of a traditionally subaltern character. As her life progresses, she is eventually enrolled in a missionary school where her uncle, a converted African man, is the headmaster. This appointment and move away from her traditional home, her learning English, and her eventual enrollment in a Catholic boarding school for young girls appears to be a shift away from a subaltern life. Tambu is convinced that if she can escape the poverty and perceived backwardness of her home life, she can escape the sense of powerlessness that she feels. This hope is dashed as Tambu lives with her uncle's family and is constantly exposed to the results of her cousin Nyasha's move out of her understanding of the realm of the subaltern. Nyasha speaks primarily English, she has a difficult time remembering her native language and is made uncomfortable when confronted with her native customs. Yet, Nyasha understands that she cannot be fully assimilated. She will always be a black woman, under the control of black educated men, and under the control of the white people who converted the black men in her life. Nyasha represents a duality that Tambu struggles to reconcile. Nyasha has escaped the dominant understanding of a subaltern position, but in the process has lost all sense of

identity, belonging, and has developed a voice that is constantly stifled. Much to Spivak's point that the position of the subaltern cannot be distilled into a single definition, Nyasha represents a girl who, from the perspective of her less prosperous family, inhabits a position of authority, but from the perspective of the White missionaries who have colonized her family, referring to her father as a "good African" who is useful for their conversion tactics, Nyasha is still subaltern. She is unable to be properly heard or understood. Nyasha expresses her frustration with the position the colonial rule, brought about by missionary conversion, has placed her in:

The process, she said, was called assimilation, and that was what was intended for the precocious few who might prove a nuisance if left to themselves, whereas the others – well who really cared about the others? So, they made a little space into which you were assimilated, an honorary space in which you could join them, and they could make sure that you behaved yourself. I would be comfortable in such a position, she remarked nastily, because look how well I had got on with Babamukuru. But, she insisted, one ought not to occupy that space.
(Dangarembga 179)

While Tambu controls the literal narrative by serving as the narrator and seems to possess some level of narrative authority, the influence of Nyasha cannot be ignored. Much like Nyasha, Tambu is technically allowed to speak, but how is she heard or understood? Nyasha reminds her that her position is an honorary removal from the subaltern position that does not actually lend her any legitimate voice. She highlights the heterogeneous nature of a subaltern position by suggesting that a move out of poverty and into submissive success may not actually be an improvement in Tambu's life. Tambu's move from poverty to perceived success possesses the same duality that Nyasha feels, and the missionaries demonstrate:

The Whites on the mission were a special kind of white person, special in the way that my grandmother had explained to me, for they were holy. They had come not to take but to give. They were about God's business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come and lighten our darkness. It was a big sacrifice that the missionaries made. It was a sacrifice that made us grateful to them, a sacrifice that made them superior not only to us but to those other Whites as well who were here for adventure and to go help themselves to our emeralds. The missionaries' self-denial and brotherly love did not go unrewarded. We treated them like minor deities. With the self-satisfied dignity that came naturally to white people in those days, they accepted this improving disguise. (103)

Tambu recognizes their deception. She recognizes the harm, she sees it in Nyasha, she saw it in her now dead brother. Yet, the dominant narrative dictated that these missionaries were saints, to be trusted, revered, and thanked. Her move from a position of poverty to a position of comfort does nothing to empower her or to give her a sense of identity and security.

So far, I have discussed two novels in which the narrative voice and presumed authority is given to the colonized groups. The next piece by Barbara Kingsolver, an American author who spent a brief portion of her childhood in the Congo, attempts to flip that narrative perspective and tells the story of missionary colonization through the voice of the colonizers. Kingsolver attempts to break free of the typical missionary account referenced earlier by allowing her narrative voices to question what they are doing, question their own intentions, and reveal a darker, yet inherently more heterogeneous portrayal of missionaries as they work in subaltern, colonized communities. The story is told through the voice of the wife of a missionary preacher and their four daughters, all who have different perceptions on what they are doing in the Congo. Kingsolver draws heavy attention to the way in which Nathan Price, the patriarch of the family, has no

understanding of the culture of the village he is attempting to convert. He continuously begs the people to be baptized in the river, cannot understand why no one is willing to show their conversion with baptism, and is then frustrated when he learns that the people's fear of the baptism is not due to their unwillingness to surrender to Christ, but rather a justified fear of alligators in the river as recently a young girl was killed and eaten in that river. He cannot understand why he cannot rely on the power of god to show these inferior people how to grow their own food and thus raise themselves out of their subaltern positions by growing crops that are completely unsuited for Congo growing conditions. Throughout the novel, Nathan Price is portrayed as fiery, passionate, blundering, and oblivious. Oblivious to the differences between himself and the peoples he is attempting to convert, oblivious to the political tension rapidly growing in the colonized state, and oblivious to the extreme distress that his family is experiencing as non-willing participants in his quest to save the people of the Congo.

Throughout the telling of the story, the girls point out ways in which Nathan does not seem to understand where he is, "Father said, 'They are living in darkness. Broken in body and soul, and don't even see how they could be healed,' Mama said, 'Well maybe they take a different view of their bodies.' Father says the body is a temple. But mama has this certain voice sometimes" (Kingsolver 53). This telling by Ruth May, the youngest of the four girls, who eventually ends up dead by a mamba snake bite, highlights the way in which Nathan Price presumes the people in the community to be inferior because he views them through the lens of his own Christianity. His faith has taught him that every body is a temple unto God and therefore should be treated with respect and care. The body should be preserved and protected. What his wife Oreleanna

seems to recognize is that, in this particular culture, a broken body does not represent a broken spirit. She notices the way in which these people do not perceive those of them who carry deformities and maladies as subaltern but treat them the same as if their bodies were not broken. Kingsolver does not specifically suggest that this view of the body is in some way superior or inferior but seems to suggest that one's position as empowered or dis-empowered depends very much on who is doing the telling of that person's story. Again, the heterogeneous nature of the position of subaltern that Spivak highlights is illuminated. Nathan sees the crippled as subaltern; the people of the village do not. The neighbor with the legs that do not work is a subaltern individual in the eyes of the missionary Price family, but is a normal, functioning member of society to the Congolese tribe. Understanding this duality of meaning draws attention to the potential harm that the missionaries pose. By allowing them to tell the story of this tribe, they are able to change the perception of the people who inhabit it. The perception of what is broken or in need of fixing is warped by the perception of the white missionaries who then invite the intervention of white government set on righting those wrongs.

I move from *The Poisonwood Bible* and its telling of missionary story through the perception of the girls who do not fully ascribe to their mission and are able, through novel, to offer a critical perspective of missionary activity from missionaries to the autobiography and biography. I start with the biography of Amy Carmichael whose story is narrated by fellow missionary Elisabeth Elliot as it weaves a complicated picture of narrative authority and sheds light on my argument about benevolent intention vs. harm. The biography tells Amy's story of her time as a missionary and ascribes to many of the missionary narrative tropes that I discuss, but it does so through a second-hand telling,

effectively removing Amy's authority to convey intention. This is then followed by the contemporary example of missionary narrative through Katie Davis' autobiographic piece *Kisses from Katie* which provides a narrative understanding through a first person telling and expressed intention.

Amy Carmichael, in Elisabeth Elliot's *A Chance to Die*, felt called to missionary work predominantly due to an inescapable feeling that god had called her to greatness. She did not believe god had called her to a life of typical piety, but one of great sacrifice, duty, and surrender to his will. As a result, she determined that the best way to demonstrate these qualities was to visit places she considered dark and bring the light of god to the people there. She begins in Japan, but eventually settles into a mission in India where she steals young girls from what she believes is temple prostitution, becomes their "Amma" or mother, and trains them up to be pious, Christian girls according to her understanding of Christianity. This service eventually extends to young boys, and Amy builds an enormous compound, which she believed to be fully funded by god, to house hundreds of children and the caretakers she hand selected. Amy runs the compound with a relentless sense of self-righteousness. She becomes the all-knowing authority and rarely allows for any disagreement or contradictory view. She is quickly outcast from multiple missionary societies and rejected by various Christian organizations. She faces criticism for homeschooling the children and depriving both the children and the caretakers from any knowledge of sex or reproduction to the degree that even many of the married caretakers seems completely ignorant of consensual, biblically approved, marital sex.

The narrative voice of the biography pretends to confront many of the problems with missionary work in places under colonial rule like India. The narrator makes

frequent references to the way in which Amy did not approve of other missionaries, believing them to be exploiting those they were sent to serve by living lavish lifestyles among the poor and destitute of the surrounding land. Amy supposedly hated the way in which many missionaries closed themselves off, living just like the British or Americans. Amy, instead, chose to learn Tamil, wear the attire of her Indian neighbors, and conduct herself as if she were one of them. The narrator portrays her attempts to submerge herself in the culture of the people who she is attempting to change as noble, while glossing over Amy's lack of understanding and racist tendencies:

Amy felt that her ability to sleep in such condition out to prove to her fellow missionaries that she was robust enough to 'live native.' Why on earth did they make such a fuss about her wanting to do this? Their attempts to teach her the wisdom learned through longer experience than her made little impression, and she continued to try to persuade them to allow her to discard all Western way. (Elliot 85)

Amy demonstrated a belief that by presenting herself in traditional native attire and custom, she could understand the natives. This example from Elliot demonstrates how Elliot and Amy fully believed that by sacrificing Western ways and fully immersing oneself in native traditions, one could assimilate with the culture and hear and understand the voice of the subaltern. Amy and by proxy, Elliot fails to recognize the complexities of the subaltern voice and what is quite clear throughout the biography is that her attempts to understand the natives were never for the betterment and benefit of the natives. Her attempts were made for the sole purpose of figuring out how to convert them more effectively. Amy frequently referred to converts as "trophy of my faith," demonstrating her extreme objectification of these perceived inferior people and highlighting the possibility that she did not go to India because she loved Indian people and wanted to

understand their existence. She went to India so that she could live her, believed to be, specially ordained by God life as one set apart for holiness, by amplifying the visibility of the subaltern people she encountered, while simultaneously silencing their voices. She offered the benevolent voice for their stories, thus substituting herself as the representative of the subaltern voice, similarly to the intellectuals commented on by Spivak. Amy re-presents the stories of the subaltern by relating their experiences through her own warped understanding. By drawing attention to what she believed to be the dark and evil way these people lived, she could amplify her own holy mission and inspire others to do the same. India had already been physically colonized. However, Amy believed that the indoctrination of the people was not complete. She wrote countless letters, published books and articles that all described the misery of the people in India. She wrote of their poverty, disease, hunger, perceived sin, and ungodly way of living in an attempt to galvanize a different sort of colonization. Not one that suggested land seizure, but one that called for defining the people as subaltern and demanding an intervention.

Kisses from Katie expands our knowledge about the missionary narrative by offering a contemporary understanding of how missionaries such as Carmichael inspired the continuing work of colonization through missionary conversion. Katie is nineteen when she decides that god has called her to Uganda, “For years before I went to Uganda, I had fantasized about doing something incredible for God and others; what I have learned is that I can do nothing incredible, but as I follow God through impossible situations, He can work miracles through me” (Majors 1-2). Katie saw herself as an instrument of god. Much like Carmichael, she had no real reason to go to Uganda, but

decided that was where god had called her. She details the difficulties of leaving her boyfriend, her parents, friends, etc. She worries that she is breaking her promises to her parents by not attending school and embarks on her journey with every intention of doing this work for a time, and then returning home.

Throughout the auto-biography, she constantly reflects on all that she has given up in order to minister to the fourteen girls she eventually adopts and their communities. She reflects on losing her high school boyfriend, not accomplishing a degree, missing out on trips to the mall with friends. She props herself up as a humble and unworthy vessel of god who is willing to give all of her life so that those around her may experience the love of god. Katie remains in complete control of the narrative throughout the auto-biography. Though she is telling her own story, she is also telling the story of the subaltern individuals who she seeks to help without any input from them. She explains how she helps them and solicits financial support to continue said work. Her control of the narrative makes it difficult to distinguish fact from embellishment and places the people she helps in a position of complete silence.

Each of these stories will play a pivotal role in understanding the impact and importance of the missionary narrative in understanding the subaltern position and silence. Chapter one will address the missionary biographies specifically. This first chapter will set the groundwork and offer the reader an understanding of what I refer to when I say, “the traditional missionary narrative.” This chapter will familiarize the reader with common missionary tropes and give them an understanding of how missionaries represent themselves through story. Having this initial understanding of missionary

narrative will then allow the reader to explore the next chapters that specifically address impact.

Chapter Two will explore missionary introduction into virgin society primarily with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and then countered with *The Poisonwood Bible*. These two novels both tell the story of missionary introduction into othered communities, but from different perspectives. This chapter addresses the ways in which missionaries are perceived and the ways in which missionaries perceive those who they encounter. Much emphasis will be placed on response through narrative, importance of multiple perspectives, and understanding cultural morality. This chapter will draw from the previous chapter's portrayal of missionary narratives in juxtaposition with *The Poisonwood Bible* and Spivak's disagreement with the notion of the concrete being more genuine. This chapter will specifically highlight the way in which the missionary narrative control covered their introduction of colonial power by allowing them to shift the narrative from land seizure and control to their own benevolent work.

Chapter three will shift the conversation from missionary introductions to missionary long-term impact. Chapter Two analyzes missionary introduction of colonialism, while Chapter Three analyzes missionary continuance of colonialism. By exploring the narrative authority in *Nervous Conditions*, I will attempt to move the reader away from the simplistic idea that allowing the subaltern to tell their own story allows them to speak. This chapter heavily emphasizes the impact of colonial education on subaltern communities. *Nervous Conditions* allows the reader to hear the story of the subaltern from the subaltern perspective, but to realize they are still not fully heard or

understood. Chapter three explains why missionary control of the narrative matters and what impact it has had on numerous communities.

As previously stated, the purpose of this project is to fill in a major gap in postcolonial study that I find glaringly obvious, but fear that many postcolonial theorists are hesitant to acknowledge due to the benevolent nature of missionary work. The question “would it not be better to help the less fortunate even at the risk of perpetuating imperialism rather than doing nothing and allowing the subaltern to suffer?” lingers. Edward Said offers some suggestions about narrative authority that contribute to the argument I make but does not directly analyze representations of missionaries. Just as Spivak and Mignolo argue against the imperialist ideologies that directly fuel missionary practices, they do not specifically reference missionaries. Postcolonial scholars seek to enhance the momentum of the concept of de-coloniality in which communities impacted by colonial presences are able to move away from the traumas experienced, shed their imperial ideologies, and grow their unique cultures independently. I argue this goal cannot be achieved until the colonial activities that missionaries continue to engage in in the present cease. Mignolo, a prominent postcolonial scholar who calls for a shift away from the term postcolonial, argues for de-coloniality rather than accepting colonialism as “post” makes the same argument, that we cannot be “postcolonial” until colonialism ceases, but the activity of missionaries does not make it onto their radar when discussing continuing colonial activity.

With this project, I will address the problem directly and on a macro level. My approach, which places emphasis on examining the colonial impacts of missionaries through narrative authority, deviates from existing scholarly approaches. Missionary texts

receive little attention in postcolonial theory, and even less substantial attention from literary scholars. The novels discussed all contain direct reference to missionaries, but literary criticism has failed to make significant comment on their presence and has devoted even less attention to the topic of missionary narrative. Postcolonial and literary scholars have given little attention to this connection, but historians and religious scholars have made some attempt at calling attention to the missionary/imperial connection. Scholars such as F.K Ekechi have addressed missionary behavior in specific places; I reference the article “Colonialism and Christianity in West Africa: The Igbo Case, 1900-1915” in which Ekechi addresses the way colonialism caused the Igbo people to convert to Christianity rather than their actual belief in the faith. But Ekechi limits his argument to this specific time and place rather than fully unpacking the system that is missionary work. This work is significantly valuable and makes effort to tackle the specific cultural impacts missionaries have had on particular groups. Ekechi recognizes that culture is not homogenous and therefore missionary harm cannot be homogenous. However, I argue that such specifics cannot be fully understood until the larger system is analyzed and corrected. I will contend with religious theorists such as Norman Etherington and David Maxwell who, though they recognize the correlation between empire and missionary work, argue that Christian conversions are a movement of God, not of imperial ideology and that God used something evil (imperialism) to create something good (conversions of lost souls). It is a significant trend in religious theory to recognize harm as a way to combat criticism, but to argue that the benefit outweighs the harm inflicted. For religious theorists in favor of missionary work, the imperial nature of missionary work is often acknowledged but the benefit of converting lost souls outweighs the concern. This again

highlights my urgency in understanding this problem. By studying narrative, we can gain an alternative understanding of harm and allow different perspectives of this harm to come to the discussion. These approaches must be contended and insight gained into this still highly prevalent appendage of Western culture that continues to perpetuate imperialist ideology. In reference to Spivak's notion that the subaltern cannot speak, I certainly do not contend that by removing the narrative control from missionaries and shifting it to the subaltern, the problem of the subaltern being unable to speak will be solved. I do contend that this hurdle is a significant piece of the puzzle and cannot continue to be ignored.

Chapter One: Missionary Story: Narrative Construction Techniques and Common Tropes

The goal of this chapter is to examine missionary narratives in order to understand common tactics used in telling the story of the missionary and to examine how those trends continue into the present. As stated in the introduction to this project, the most common literary types used by missionaries are the autobiography and the biography. This chapter will examine both of these common examples. It will be important to note the subtle differences between the two, particularly in reference to ideas about perception and self-awareness. The autobiography author, Katie Davis, is careful to apologize for statements or ideas that she is aware may be perceived negatively and is quick to offer alternative explanations to concepts that may be read as negative. In contrast, the biography author, Elisabeth Elliot, though she is aware of some of her subject's concerns about perception, is never apologetic on behalf of her subject's behavior. Though she may acknowledge some of the subject's ideas are odd or even off putting, she frames the subject's behavior in a way so that even what could be perceived as negative behavior is cast in a positive light, and it is the reader who should change their pre-conceived ideas about the subject's choices. I am careful to highlight this distinction because of how it speaks to the use of narrative authority in the missionary narrative in both forms. Though they both approach potentially sensitive topics with slightly different tactics, they are both acutely aware of the need for particular tactics. They are intentional with wording, form, and style. They both frame their narratives in the most positive manner possible. Not only are both genres concerned with the potential negatives that may arise from their telling, but both use specific narrative techniques that serve what I propose is their

purpose. With this chapter I will draw heavy attention not only to the common language, ideas, or tropes that are popular in missionary narratives but will suggest that missionary narratives are written and circulated with a financial and ideological purpose. The narrative techniques employed, the language used, and the messages conveyed are highly curated and embody an imperial ideology.

In addition to discussions about the tactics of missionary narratives, this chapter will highlight the commonality of missionary narratives and attempt to understand the purporting of truth that these narratives claim. I suggest that missionary narratives most frequently use biography and autobiography because such accounts are more readily accepted as true or factual than non-fiction pieces such as the novels that will be discussed in the proceeding chapters. I do not suggest that autobiographies or biographies do not carry a different sort of weight than fiction in that they are based upon real events and do take on a level of scrutiny that requires some level of fact, however, I would suggest that this general understanding of biographies and auto-biographies as “true stories” often dismisses the fact that the writers always possess some level of motive for writing, write from their own perspective, and can easily falsely represent events or figures around them. Readers are quick to accept first or secondhand story as factual, making them easy to manipulate. I am not necessarily suggesting that missionaries are intentionally manipulative or dishonest but that they have learned this power of story over the many decades that they have been telling such stories. Though it is stated in the introduction, I think it is important to mention again, the missionaries I reference are not all missionaries across all time. I specifically exclude New Testament missionaries who began the practice after the resurrection of Christ when He instructed his disciples in

Matthew 28:19 “Therefore go and Make Disciples of All Nations, Baptizing Them in The Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit.” I exclude these early missionaries and some others due to their lack of positions of authority. These missionaries were subaltern individuals within their own community, spreading their beliefs to those who had power over them and their peers. This sets them apart from the missionaries who I discuss, specifically missionaries who lived and operated throughout the British colonial rule and into the present. The difference is the social positions of subalternity that they held, which blocked them from wielding the narrative authority that I reference throughout. What I mean by this narrative authority is the idea that there is some level of authority in dictating who does the telling of any particular story, and who shapes the understanding of the story told. Though narrative authority often takes many forms, what I specifically reference in regard to missionary narrative authority is their positions of respect in the societies in which they disseminate their work. As I discuss throughout, modern and British colonial era missionaries are generally held in high regard, considered benevolent and sacrificial members of society, granting them access to social or economic power that places them in a relationship with geo and socio-political powers that the early missionaries I reference did not have access to. The missionaries I address held authoritative positions of power beyond the text itself which influences the reception of the text. They were and still are generally well respected members of the dominant society and generally hold a higher position than those who they witness to in terms of class, race, and education. The early missionaries and other missionaries who operate in their own communities do not possess positions of authority over those who they attempt to convert. They espouse their beliefs with the intention of bringing others

into the folds of their faith. This excludes them from the imperial shading of British colonial rule and forward missionaries who I am discussing. What I am suggesting removes the criticism that I am strictly anti-missionary. The idea that all missionaries are inherently harmful is not an idea that I hope to transmit. I hope to deconstruct that homogenous position that missionaries hold as benevolent, sacrificial, saints who gave up the comforts of their native homes to bring a supposed light to the supposedly dark places of the world. I am anti-manipulation of power dynamics in order to achieve one's purpose of indoctrination for the introduction, immersion, and preservation of imperialism.

The missionary narrative tropes that I examine begin during the height of the British colonial empire, specifically during a period referred to as "Pax Britannica" or "British Peace." It was during this time that Britain had defeated France in the Napoleonic War and despite its loss of the United States, had developed itself as the indisputable superpower of the world. The period between 1815 and 1914 was a period of supposed peace, where Britain could rule its colonies without much threat from any other powers. It is during this time that missionaries began to flourish, growing in numbers and reach. These missionaries such as the famous David Livingstone, who was the first Western person to explore many parts of the African continent when he traveled there in 1840, began documenting their trips; drawing inspiration from the popular genre of the travel narrative, they told their stories as if they were tales of adventure for the purpose of serving god and bringing dark souls to heaven. These stories were widely read and received tremendous, positive feedback. As the British empire continued to expand, its British citizens were curious about the peoples and places that they controlled and perhaps more importantly, they wanted to spread their own doctrines, beliefs, and

customs to these people and places they controlled. Missionaries were able to meet both of these desires. Missionaries were able to write compelling narratives about their adventures in these dark places, and they were able to spread the doctrines of the Western homelands. I frequently reference the missionary work done by David Livingstone as he is largely believed to be the first British missionary in the African continent. Whether this belief is true or not is made irrelevant by the narrative ability that he possessed and the success he found as a missionary/travel narrator. This success, and the status that came along with it, lends tremendous credence to the narrative tropes that he established. Livingstone, in his seminal work *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) reflects the attitudes of his imperial counterparts when he states: “For neither civilization nor Christianity can be promoted alone. In fact, they are inseparable” (Livingstone 18). He recognized that his work as a missionary not only promoted his specific religion, but it promoted the cause of imperialism disguised as “civilization.” Livingstone set the groundwork for the missionary narrative tropes that I will be discussing throughout this chapter. Specifically, Livingstone frequently references the intelligence of the native populations that he encounters but with a significant degree of surprise. He often attributes extraordinary merit of character to native people who exhibit even the most basic levels of human decency and frequently describes the way the native inhabitants view white Westerners as superior. Another trend of note is Livingstone’s seeming obsession with describing native physical features and compelling his readers to find beauty in the native people. He frequently refers to natives as “specimens” when he describes their physical or athletic abilities. He describes one group that he encounters, “Their splendid physical development and form of skull show that, but for the black skin

and woolly hair, they would take rank among the foremost Europeans” (43). These tendencies will appear in both the autobiography and biography that I will now discuss demonstrating a pattern of British colonial ideology that extends to the present. The effective nature of these tactics has not waned, and though modern missionaries may be slightly more careful in their verbiage, the sentiments are the same.

A Chance to Die, written in 1987 by Elisabeth Elliot, is the biographic narration of the somewhat infamous missionary Amy Carmichael who conducted missionary work in various places throughout the world but is best known for establishing a missionary compound in British controlled India in 1895. Carmichael’s story is one taught to many young evangelical children in the United States, particularly in Southern Baptist regions of the states. As a person raised in a Baptist Evangelical church, I was first exposed to Carmichael as a child of eight at a missionary conference where we were taught how becoming a missionary and sacrificing all for god was the highest possible calling a person could have on their life. A frequently told anecdote from Carmichael’s life is how she was born with brown eyes, but always wished she had blue; she prayed to god to change her eyes to blue, but he denied her request. When she became an adult and had to disguise herself as an Indian woman in order to remove children from the temple, she recognized that if god had given her blue eyes, she would have been caught. This story was told to me as a child to attempt to show that god has a plan for every part of a person’s life, that god makes no mistakes, and that he places everyone and everything in its proper place. This anecdote sets the tone for the entirety of Elliot’s telling of Carmichael’s story and is a heavy theme throughout missionary narratives: god has placed everyone as they should be and the job of the missionary is not necessarily to

impact institutionalized systems or change circumstances caused and perpetuated by imperialism; rather, it is the purpose of the missionary to find glory for oneself and the Western god who has put everyone and everything in their place. This attitude overtly perpetuates imperialist attitudes as it gives Western readers of such narratives a pass for their subjugation of subaltern groups: subaltern people are where they are and in the circumstances that they are in because god designed it to be that way. It is not the job of the missionary to change that; it is the job of the missionary to further that ideology while indoctrinating subaltern communities in order to create a passive acceptance of their imperial circumstances.

According to Elliot's biography, from an early age, Carmichael believed herself to be something more than normal. She believed that god had a very specific calling on her life. She could not be satisfied with any normal sort of life and even when conducting ministry in her home city of Belfast she felt that god must have more for her. This idea that missionaries as individuals are set apart by god to be extraordinary throughout their lives of giving and sacrifice is an abundantly common theme throughout missionary narratives. There is a level of extremity to the missionary narrative that requires the missionary to demonstrate their superior faith through extreme acts of sacrifice. It is not enough to minister to one's own community; one must risk the perils of the wild, uncivilized parts of the world in order to fully realize god's special calling. This idea furthers my argument that missionaries do not go into subaltern places with the sole intention of helping the native people there, but that their motives are often guided by their own need for glorification of self. There was nothing remarkable about Carmichael; she would have most likely lived a fairly ordinary life and never risen to the level of

Evangelical fame that she holds had she not decided that god had called her to the ministry in a foreign place. If she had not been able to display her own humility, willingness to sacrifice, and commitment to self-inflicted poverty, she would not have been able to achieve her belief that she was extraordinary.

The story of Carmichael, according to Elliot, is somewhat difficult to fully piece together for even though Carmichael wrote letters in abundance and even at one point circulated her own magazine called *Scraps*, Elliot finds that Carmichael was rarely honest about her feelings and experiences. Elliot makes this claim based upon her own interpretation of Carmichael's life. Elliot believed Carmichael to be lonely and in significant physical pain throughout most of her life but notes that Carmichael rarely complained. Elliot points to Carmichael's extreme views on celibacy and fear of physical intimacy as evidence of Carmichael's unhappiness, but Elliot paints this as noble and profound, that Carmichael was able to endure so much suffering and pain, but rarely complained and always gave glory to god. However, it is important to note that Carmichael's magazine was written and circulated with the expressed intention of generating funds for Carmichael's home for girls. She did not circulate the magazine in an attempt to truly represent the people she was ministering to, but rather to generate financial resources, which she openly admitted.

According to Elliot's telling, Carmichael was often critical of other missionaries, believing them to be exploiters of subaltern communities. Carmichael believed the only way to be an effective missionary and win souls to god was to subject oneself to the same circumstances as the subaltern. Carmichael expressed frustration with other Western people who encouraged her to rest more, to utilize more Western comforts. This trope is

seen with Livingstone when he scolds his detractors who believe he is not taking enough safety precautions while traveling among “the savages” and later with Davis who scolds her readers who encourage her to utilize more modern conveniences. Clearly, this concept of denying Western comforts is a narrative tool utilized by successful missionary narrators; what purpose does it serve? As stated previously, many missionary narratives are conscious of some of the perceived imperialist pitfalls of missionary work. From early in the conception of the missionary narrative, missionaries were aware that their presence could be seen as harmful to the native cultures. Therefore, this tactic of rejecting all Western comforts and conveniences and throwing oneself fully into the culture being penetrated became the standard practice. By removing themselves from the perceived privilege of white life among brown people, the white missionary is able to absolve themselves of criticism and further the narrative of benevolence, sacrifice, and humility. By reducing themselves to poverty in the subaltern communities, they elevate themselves to saintliness in their home communities. This ideology is reflected in Spivak’s work where she discusses the intellectuals’ attempt to represent the subaltern. Spivak criticizes the intellectual who claims to speak for the subaltern by placing themselves in subaltern communities, interacting with subaltern people, and then claiming to have an understanding, and thus right to speak on their behalf. Spivak highlights how such a practice does not actually allow the subaltern to speak in a way in which they are actually heard and understood but colors their experience through the intellectual’s understanding of their experience. Similarly, Carmichael believed herself to be part of the subaltern communities. By stripping herself of Western comforts and inundating herself with the

practices and customs of the subaltern community she immersed herself in, she believed herself to be a voice for these subaltern people.

Despite her attempts at speaking for the subaltern community she had become a part of, Carmichael did little to offer her readers an understanding of the humanity of those she was attempting to help. Elliot frequently uses dehumanizing language in representing Carmichael's beliefs:

The new missionary who is sure of his call can hardly help expecting to see miracles when he reaches the place of service. Amy Carmichael had had a glimpse through her work with the shawlies, of how the "other half" lived, had experience what it is to be a quaint figure presenting a hardly credible message, and knew that not by any means all who hear it find it even interesting, let alone compelling. She had seen some fruit, however. God had honored her faith and her labor of love, and there were many "trophies" of grace to show for it. Surely in Japan where the need was far more acute she could expect even greater miracles and trophies. (Elliot 87)

The language used does not recognize the needs of the individuals or offer means that benefits them in a tangible way. Elliot talks of "seeing fruit" in terms of having success in converting souls. She does not reference specific individuals or their move into the faith but speaks of them only as a collective pool of potential trophies. Carmichael was interested in saving souls, bringing subaltern individuals into the fold of her individual faith, and claiming them as "trophies" of her faith, according to Eliot's telling. This description of missionary work makes clear the ultimate goal of the work regardless of Carmichael's intentions or beliefs. The language reveals the goal. While it is impossible to know or fully understand anyone's intentions for their actions, this passage frames Carmichael's mission as one of conquest. The people she was ministering to were obstacles to conquer, souls to win, and, ultimately, stories to exploit for the glory of god.

Elliot is careful throughout the biography to touch on some of Carmichael's shortcomings, a common trend in missionary biographies. She addresses the way in which Carmichael was far too strict on purity and sexual chastity. She addresses the way in which Carmichael had an obvious preference for lighter skinned girls and was far stricter and more punitive on the dark skinned girls. However, Elliot forgives this indiscretion by highlighting the way in which Carmichael feared that god had created lighter skinned girls with a higher calling, and darker skinned girls were destined for the heathenism that Carmichael was sent to rescue them from. This idea again reflects the missionary narrative trend to expound god's intentionality with all people and places. Light skinned girls were set apart by god to be holy; dark skinned girls were set apart for impurity, poverty, and sin. It is only through the intervention of the missionary with their strict enforcement of chastity and purity that such dark skinned girls can rise out of their destined degradation and be holy before god. Elliot recognized this concept might be perceived in a negative light, and so was abundantly careful to highlight the way in which these punished young girls were grateful, post indoctrination, for Carmichael's intervention. While Elliot intended for this idea to be positive and absolve Carmichael of wrongdoing, it only serves to highlight the way in which missionary ideology functions to perpetuate imperial ideology by disguising it as god's plan and benevolent intervention. Dark skinned girls are convinced that they are less than their light skinned counterparts unless they submit themselves to the imperialist, Western ideology introduced to them by the humble and benevolent missionary.

This careful framing of Carmichael's life brings me to an explanation of why I chose to use Elliot's biography of Carmichael rather than one of Carmichael's own

writings. In his article, “Human Agency in Mission Work: Missionary Styles and Their Political Consequences” H. B. Cavalcanti discusses the business of missionary work:

Colonial missions adopted a sponsored, monopolistic approach, whereas missions in non-colonial countries competed with local faiths for segments of the host religious markets. With notable exceptions, European missions adopted the sponsored model, with colonies operating under an established church. Religion was simply another aspect of the larger social order being implanted by the colonizing nation. (Cavalcanti 383)

He continues throughout the article to discuss the way missionary work in colonized spaces is unique in the way in which it specifically competes for the attention of its home sponsor’s financial support. Carmichael often wrote requesting financial support, but she was inept at navigating the large scale business model that is colonial missions. Though Carmichael was often successful in generating the funds that she needed, the Church of England Zenana missionary society, who originally sponsored her mission, ultimately rejected her as a leader and frequently requested that she cease writing. The church was unhappy with the ways in which Carmichael rarely utilized the missionary narrative tropes that find glory for god in all things, including suffering. Carmichael’s writing lacked the missionary narrative spin that counted suffering and poverty as a gift from god. Carmichael’s writing simply described circumstances and scolded believers back home for their lack of action (Sharpe 121). What Elliot succeeded in was to take Carmichael’s story and make it marketable in order to generate revenue. I do not presume to know Elliot’s intentions in regard to her purpose for the financial gain, but it is clear that she understood the need to craft a narrative that would preserve the benevolent, imperial missionary narrative. Elliot was the wife of another famous missionary, Jim Elliot, who was killed by an untouched native population who he attempted to infiltrate in

1956. Elliot was familiar with the tropes needed to generate attention to the work she was doing. Unlike Carmichael, who did express an immense amount of concern about missionary colonial behavior, and who wrote strictly for the purpose of guilting her audiences into better service of her god, Elliot was careful and intentional in her use of Carmichael's story to craft a narrative that excused and perpetuated the imperialist ideology of Carmichael's missionary work. By using Elliot's accounting of Carmichael, I demonstrate the way in which individual missionary intention or motive is irrelevant to the harm done. Carmichael's story was still used in an imperial manner through Elliot's telling.

The reach of Carmichael's influence is immense. Despite her difficulties with organized missionary groups, for modern Evangelical communities, Carmichael is often propped up as the perfect missionary, the essential blueprint for missionaries hoping to earn their own trophies of faith. The tropes that Elliot utilizes in the telling of Carmichael's story have helped perpetuate the same concepts and inspired modern missionaries such as Katie Davis. Davis, a prominent modern missionary who has managed to secure her own position as a beacon of light for future missionaries, obviously draws many of her narrative techniques from Elliot's telling of Carmichael and embodies many of the same ideologies purported by Elliot. I discuss her auto-biography and the details of her narrative trends not to be repetitive, but to demonstrate the patterns and show how the missionary narrative trends have continued into the present. Davis borrowed heavily from concepts that Carmichael embodied, which mirror concepts from Livingstone, but she particularly drew from the narrative influence of Elliot. The way in which these tropes carry throughout history and are then used also by Davis emphasizes

the power that such tropes wield in serving to motivate readers to contribute financially to the writers and to alter perceptions of subaltern communities. The highlighted tropes were effective for Livingstone and Elliot in that they cemented imperialist ideology into the minds of their readers. These tropes offer Western readers an understanding of the people who are being helped by missionaries that reduces them to tools for the imperial apparatus, and Davis carries them into modernity.

Katie Davis created this auto-biographic piece *Kisses from Katie* (2011) with the purpose of telling her story of ministry in Uganda, generating funds for continued work in Uganda, and encouraging other Western people to join in her crusade to bring Jesus to this dark part of the world. Davis fully controls the narrative in this work; her voice is the only voice throughout the entire piece, and she only allows the readers to see from her perspective. She frequently references her own fallibility and need for god's direction in her life, but she does so in a way that makes her appear more humble or contrite. The entire auto-biography is set up as if merely an account of her service to disenfranchised peoples, but if read closely, it becomes apparent that the narrative techniques employed do not serve the subaltern individuals Davis is supposedly helping, but instead serve to prop Davis up as a savior figure among silent, subservient, and helpless people who are reduced to objects, stripped of their humanity and voice.

Similarly to accounts of Carmichael, Davis describes her decision to become a full time missionary in Uganda as one directed by god. She expresses her desire to be something more than normal, something useful in the hands of her god. She has no interest in ordinary life and wants to prove her commitment to her faith. She visits Uganda during a high school mission trip, a practice that has become increasingly

popular in Evangelical communities over the past decade (Cavalcanti 37). While there, she describes falling in love with the land, the people, and the culture. She goes home feeling spoiled and aimless with a tremendous desire to return. Davis goes into significant detail throughout the beginning of the work to describe all that she is giving up by deciding to go back to Uganda after that initial high school trip. She details the way her parents wanted her to pursue a traditional education, the way she would be missing out on university life and experience, and the way she would be losing her boyfriend, who she believes is the man god ordained for her to marry (Davis 7). This description of hardship superimposed with her gratefulness for the opportunity to sacrifice for god is a heavy theme throughout the auto-biography and a common theme of imperial literature in general. Durba Ghosh explores the impact of white women in colonized spaces, their perceived fragility and sacrifice when entering these “wild” spaces. Ghosh points out that, quite often, white women are given a pass in colonial accountability due to their status as the “weaker sex”(Ghosh 738). Ghosh suggests this is a massive oversight and attempts to correct this assumption in “Gender and Colonialism: Expansion of Marginalization,” and I suggest we take that argument a step further in regard to white missionary women. These women, such as Davis, are able to utilize this assumption that Ghosh highlights to their narrative advantage when describing the hardships they must endure for their mission. Not only are they seen as pure of colonial intention, but they are the “weaker sex” who chose to endure such hardship for the glory of god.

This emphasis on hardship is found all throughout Davis’ work. When Davis fully commits to her desire to move to Uganda and begins teaching, she shares a diary entry designed to give the readers a more intimate connection to her life:

The classroom where I teach is between the animal feeding grounds and the pit latrines, so my classroom is constantly filled with the smell of waste, animal and human. The weather is stifling here. The moment I step out of my icy shower, I begin to sweat. I sleep under a mosquito net to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes infected with malaria and other diseases, but I still cannot avoid ants and crickets in my bed. In my bathroom lives a rat the size of a house cat and there are a few bats in the shower. This morning I almost grilled a lizard in my toaster. Fred, my piki man, is almost always late, sometimes runs into cows, runs out of gas, or forgets to warn me of impending potholes. When it rains, the awful roads turn into muddy swamps, making it nearly impossible to go anywhere. For lunch and dinner we eat posho, which is corn flour boiled in water until it is thick and pasty. It tastes a little worse than Elmer's glue. Sometimes the children are so dirty they actually reek, it is impossible to touch them without becoming filthy. With the wind blowing red dust everywhere, it is impossible not to be filthy anyway. (Davis 17-18)

She offers this image of her life in Uganda, one of poverty, filth, and misery, but the entry continues with the familiar trope from missionary narratives where they portray their misery in these places as a gift from god:

And to you, these may sound like complaints. They are not, this is me, rejoicing in the lord, because you can see... I love my tiny classroom. I love the hot sun on my face. I love my bed, cozy under my net after a long day. I love my home sweet home, all its creatures included. I love Fred, my piki man. I love my long walks home, day or night, rain or shine. I love the beating, cleaning Ugandan rain. I love my Ugandan meals, prepared with such love and generosity. I love to be hugged and touched and jumped on and cuddled by these precious children. I love the cool, dusty breeze in my hair. I love every African sunrise, the cool and calm of a new morning. I love each and every day, each and every moment that I spend in this beautiful country; I rejoice in each breath I take. (18)

With this entry, Davis attempts to demonstrate her own humility and acceptance of her position in this subaltern community. She claims gratitude for the hardship that god has awarded her for her faithfulness. She highlights her own suffering alongside the suffering of those around her but suggests that she is immune to the misery because she has god and his calling on her life. This narrative carries potentially dangerous connotations. This

idea that Davis can exist in a subaltern community, but with god's help can lift herself above the suffering and find joy in the circumstances suggests that the members of the community around her have been unsuccessful in their own attempts to lift themselves out of their states of misery. By highlighting her living conditions and her peace with them, Davis suggests that such living conditions are, in fact, acceptable if only one can learn to trust god and rejoice in the suffering he allows. I certainly do not suggest that those living in subaltern communities should never make any attempt at finding satisfaction in their circumstances, or "make the best" of their conditions; however, the precedent being set is that some places are simply the way that they are because god has some desire to teach his chosen ones. Some must suffer so that god and his chosen people can be glorified. This narrative technique wholly and completely silences the voices of those living around Katie. There is no suggestion from her about how they feel about the conditions she describes; there is only her own glorification of her acceptance of this subaltern existence.

As the auto-biography continues, Davis shifts from explaining her own calling and suffering to more intimate detailing of her time with the people of Uganda. Most of her interactions are with children, children of poverty and disease who she represents for the furtherance of her own story. In total, Davis adopts fourteen young girls. Fourteen young girls who range in backgrounds, needs, and reasons for ending up under her care. Though Davis does reference each girl by their actual name at times throughout the biography, it is difficult to parse out any actual defining features or characteristics of each girl. She makes frequent reference to their physical attributes and shows a particular interest in the blackness of their skin, "In the dark, her black face blended right in with

the night and all I could see was the flash of her teeth” (70). This idea of finding beauty in the supposed ugliness of dark skin is a trend found with Davis in her need to adopt young black girls, with Livingstone and his amazement over the beauty and physical prowess of the black men, and Carmichael with her obsession with making dark skinned girls pure and chaste. This narrative tactic attempts to falsely humanize the subaltern characters of the story by offering them forgiveness for their darkness from a Western character in a position of power over them. Davis forgives these girls of their dark skin and allows them a space in her privileged life and completely neglects an understanding of the institutions that create poverty, “I had no idea what it felt like to spend the first twelve years of life without knowing a parent who would cover me in love. I grieved these things for my children, and I always will. I fully trust that this is the way that God intended for their lives to unfold and that He is working all things for their good” (63). Davis has effectively reduced the girls to instruments for god that only she, a white Western missionary, can play. This tendency to view the native communities missionaries have submerged themselves into as helpless or less than human is an issue Carol Berg highlights in her discussion of missionaries in Native American communities in the article “Missionaries and Cultures”. It is important to note that Berg discusses Native American experiences with missionaries, and I do not mistake African cultural and political environments to be the same as Native American cultural and political environments. I include Berg not in an exercise of generalization but in an effort to demonstrate the continuance of missionary practices across various geo-political spaces and indicate that such tropes are not restricted to Africa. Berg discusses how the governing powers would use missionaries essentially to pacify the native communities

they served by propping the missionaries up as non-violent or aggressive authority figures. Berg describes the missionary relationship to the native people they supposedly served, “Missionaries viewed the Indians as having an inferior culture, inferior to that of white people. Furthermore, they saw the Indians as children needing much guidance, discipline, and protection. With the best of intentions, most missionaries failed to respect Indian culture for its own worth” (Berg 31). What Berg points out reflects heavily on Davis’ treatment of the girls in her care, their families, and community around her. Berg highlights a missionary relationship with Indian children where the missionary saw those that they are supposedly helping in terms that do not express the fullness of their humanity. The children need the intervention of the white missionary. This is the guiding ideology that Davis carried with her throughout her time in Uganda. The young girls and community that she was a part of needed her intervention, they were misguided and helpless, not fully expressed humans capable of defending and caring for themselves. She does not demonstrate respect for her girls and their culture, but a pity for their plight, a sense of superiority to their positions, and a misplaced need to correct the culture with which she did not agree.

Again, I will stress that I do not hold these accounts of missionary lives up as materials for scorn or with the assumption that Davis, Carmichael, or even Elliot intentionally inflicted harm or made attempts to deceive their readers and supporters. I hold these accounts up as they demonstrate a pattern of behavioral ideology and highlight the movement of this pattern across history. This particular field of study that I have submerged myself into is considered “post-colonial” as if colonial behavior and impact is something that had a definitive beginning and end and we are currently past the end. I

suggest that “post-colonial” is an egregious misnomer if one takes into consideration the colonial work that missionaries are allowed to continue. Again, I do not suggest that missionaries continue to minister in foreign places with the expressed desire to seize land and physically colonize, but the imperial ideology that they continue to utilize when indoctrinating the local populations that they visit has related traumatic impact on the people they minister to. It is important for scholars to recognize the patterns, to see how imperialism is being carried into contemporary times through the work of missionaries and the narratives that they control and disseminate. The next chapter will move away from these harmful missionary narratives and allow us to see the colonial impact that missionaries inflict through the narrative of those impacted as well as through a series of narrators who offer various perspectives on the day to day work and lives of missionaries living in, what they consider to be, subaltern communities.

Chapter Two: Missionary Introductions and Questions of Perspective

This chapter seeks to understand the impact of missionary introduction into perceived subaltern communities. Though the utilized texts are not strictly limited to virgin introductions (*The Poisonwood Bible* tells of a community previously introduced to missionaries, though it is clear their infiltration was somewhat minimal) they seek to understand the introductions from both the perspective of the native people encountering the missionaries and the missionaries themselves. This chapter will explore questions that address the native response to missionary infiltration, the impact that missionaries have on native communities, and how native responses to missionaries are used against them as a justification for violence and land seizure based on an ambiguous moral code imposed upon them by the colonizing authority introduced in conjunction with the missionary actors. Additionally, this chapter seeks to explore the missionary perspective, by exploring a missionary story which does not employ the previously discussed narrative tactics. This chapter shifts from the exploration of auto-biography and biography genres to the fiction genre. I utilize works from this genre to illustrate these points as I believe fiction can often shift the focus from a singular narrative point of view and give us a broader understanding of the communities involved in the whole of the story. The auto-biography and biography genres utilized in Chapter One offer only a singular perspective and are closely tailored to the desired outcome of maintaining and promoting imperial ideology by generating financial support for missionary work. The selected fictions give us a perspective from multiple vantage points and angles that allow alternative perspectives and broader interpretation. This exploration hopes to give some voice to the missionary experience as missionaries are used as tools of the imperial

apparatus to explore what impact it has on them, and answer if they are capable of being a positive force. This chapter heavily critiques narrative techniques used by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and Barbara Kingsolver in *The Poisonwood Bible*. Finally, this chapter attempts to shed light on the dichotomy between Western morality and native tradition, questioning how morality can be imposed in places of cultural difference.

I will start this chapter with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. A brief synopsis of the story is provided in the introduction which includes some details about Okonkwo and his clan and some description of the missionary introduction to his community. What is not highlighted, which I find critical to the narrative tactics of this story, is that though I am using this novel as an example of missionary introduction and eventual harm in a native community, Achebe does not introduce the missionaries into the narrative until Chapter Seventeen, well over half-way through the novel. Achebe spends the first three quarters of the novel discussing Okonkwo and his clan. He starts with Okonkwo's early life, his father, his wife, and children; Achebe gives the majority of the novel to Okonkwo and his fellow clansmen. This point is critical as it highlights Achebe's desire to give voice to Okonkwo's experience. A tendency for many who write about or for subaltern communities is to focus primarily on the trauma inflicted on them by colonial power and to view the rest of their lives as irrelevant. Achebe flips this narrative by ensuring that his readers experience Okonkwo, his family, and his clan for the majority of the novel and only gives limited space to the colonizers who destroy the life detailed. The narrative is an account of Okonkwo's life, which is unfortunately ended by the presence of colonizers. It is not a narrative of the colonizers and their experience with Okonkwo.

Okonkwo is the primary protagonist of Achebe's narrative. He is the son of a lazy man who refuses to accept the same fate that his father accepted for himself. The novel starts by describing the way Okonkwo has established a name for himself by defeating a man named Amalinze or "the Cat" in a wrestling match. This was considered a great feat in the Igbo community that Okonkwo was raised in as they were a people who allowed individuals to establish their own sense of identity and greatness despite the circumstances of their upbringing. Okonkwo had been raised in poverty by an alcoholic man, but because of his physical prowess he was able to rise above the status of his father and earn for himself three wives and two barns full of yams (Achebe 7). In addition to his wives, Okonkwo had many children who he took considerable pride in, though he was careful never to show too much affection to them. Achebe details events during which Okonkwo beats his wives for not having meals ready, scolds his sons for being too feminine, and openly wishes that his daughter were born a male (53). These stories of violence and abuse indicate Achebe's intention of representing Igbo culture and people in a transparent and unapologetic manner. Achebe does not create a noble savage narrative that sets Okonkwo up as a noble hero invaded by ill-intentioned missionaries bent on taking his homeland. Achebe recognizes the nuance in cultural dynamics and ensured that by crafting his narrative he was not creating fixed subaltern figures and authority figures. Achebe demonstrates the way in which Okonkwo moved throughout a subaltern spectrum from his rise out of poverty, to his fall within the clan, to his eventual ascendance back through the ranks, to the eventual demise of his clan at the hands of the missionaries who opened the door for imperial military control. It is important to understand this nuance, and to understand native people through their nuances rather than

a static rendering of them as subaltern, helpless, or complacent in the loss of their identity, land, and culture.

Often in missionary narratives such as the ones described in Chapter One, the natives who missionaries minister to are seen strictly in terms of their circumstances which are understood and dictated through the voice of the missionary narrator. If a missionary told the story of Okonkwo, it would be the story of a subaltern man, living in a subaltern community. The status of subaltern would be assigned to him not because of the circumstances of his life or his relations to other clansman, but because of his relation to Western communities. The greatness and flaws of Okonkwo would be easily glossed over and an image of a savage who brutalizes his wife and children, potentially due to his life of perceived poverty would be transmitted to readers, rather than the very human story of his life. Someone the missionaries would see only as a destitute, brute from the claimed dark land was described very differently by Achebe:

When Unoka (Okonkwo's father) died he had taken no title at all, and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder that Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders (8).

Clearly in relation to his own people, Okonkwo is in no way subaltern. Though his circumstances shift throughout the novel, his position of power and authority never truly diminishes. Much of the scholarship that discusses this novel emphasizes the duality of

Okonkwo, the way in which he is both honorable and fallible which creates a complex character who is considered one of Achebe's greatest (For example, see Mkende, Ijem, Agbo and Ilyas). I certainly agree with discussions about character complexity but feel that a key point in relation to his subaltern status is missed. Okonkwo cannot be reduced to the subaltern status that a missionary narrative would place him in because of the complexity of character that Achebe created. R. Hunt Davis highlights the tendency of many scholars to understand Africa and its people only in relation to their colonized past and to see them only in their subaltern state. He references Gordon A. Craig in his textbook on modern Europe:

One of the keys to the understanding of the problems of the new African nations of the twentieth century is the briefness of the period which intervened between the end of their isolation from the modern world and their admission to statehood. As late as the 1800s, most of Africa was still uncharted and free from alien penetration. Then, with a rush that is still astonishing to recall, the white men arrived and within twenty years had carved all of Africa into dependencies of their home governments. The traumatic effects of the impact of an advanced industrial civilization upon a primitive tribal society are still having repercussions today. (qtd in Davis 407-408)

Davis uses this example to emphasize the way in which Craig focuses only on the trauma inflicted on the native communities and how they were unequipped to manage the movement from primitive to modern. Davis criticizes this understanding as far too shallow an understanding of the complexities of colonization and the imperial ideologies inflicted on native communities, as I argue, perpetuated by missionaries (Davis 383).

Now that I have laid some foundation for Achebe's account of Okonkwo's life which serves to counter-balance the descriptions of native peoples given by Elliot in *A Chance to Die*, Davis in *Kisses from Katie*, and Livingstone in *Missionary Travels and*

Researches in South Africa which almost always depict them as subaltern in relation to their white benefactors, I will take us into the final section of Achebe's novel that, essentially, unravels the heroic, though at times, unflattering narrative of Okonkwo's life and introduces the missionaries into the life of the clan. The first introduction of missionaries into Okonkwo's life starts in Chapter Fifteen. Okonkwo is still living in exile in the village of his mother following his banishment from his own village after accidentally killing a member of his clan. This portion of the story is significant because it highlights the Igbo clan's dedication to law and tradition, which I will discuss later in the chapter. The first story of missionary interaction with an Igbo clan does not actually solidify that the white man who entered the village was, in fact, a missionary. Obierika tells the story to Okonkwo and the elder Uchendu that a white man on an iron horse entered the neighboring clan of Abame. When Uchendu hears this, he suggests that a white man must be an albino, and Obierika corrects him by simply saying, "He was not an albino, he was quite different" implying that these clansmen were not overly familiar with white men (Achebe 138). Obierika suggests that the clansmen of Abame killed the white man on the iron horse due to their elders consulting the oracle and rendering the verdict that the white man would destroy their clan (138). This oracle driven act of violence then gave the white governing authorities outside of the clan territory proper cause to wipe out the village, just as the oracles had predicted. They waited for market day, snuck into the village, started shooting, and killed every member of the tribe with the exception of some elderly and children who had stayed home from the market that day (139).

At the conclusion of this telling, the elder Uchendu is outraged by the behavior of the tribe at Abame, suggesting that they acted foolishly in their treatment of the white man:

Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about the man?... Mother Kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went and brought back a duckling. 'You have done very well' said mother Kite to her daughter, 'but tell me, what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away?' 'It said nothing' replied the young kite. 'It just walked away' 'You must return the duckling,' said Mother Kite. 'There's something ominous behind the silence.' And so Daughter Kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead. 'What did the mother of this chick do?' asked the old kite. 'It cried and raved and cursed me,' said the young kite. 'Then we can eat the chick,' said her mother. 'There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts.' (140)

I utilize this particularly long passage as it is an example of Achebe's use of African proverb throughout the novel. This particular narrative technique, again, demonstrates Achebe's emphasis on giving credence to the voice and story of Okonkwo and the clan rather than only detailing the trauma of the colonization. Achebe offers perspective on the events that transpired through the perspective of a respected elder who communicates his insight through a proverb. Jonathan Essuman argues that Achebe's use of the proverb not only in this novel but in others as well allows Achebe to tell the story of trauma without losing the unique culture of the people for whom he speaks. Essuman utilizes a passage from Bernth Lindfors to convey the importance of the use of proverb by Achebe

In *A Man of the People*, as in Achebe's other novels proverbs are used to sound and reiterate major themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict and to focus on the values of the society Achebe is portraying. By studying the proverbs in a novel, we gain insight into the moral issues with which the actions of characters can be measured and evaluated. Proverbs help us to understand and interpret Achebe's novels. It is this last talent that enables him to convince his readers that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy

of great depth and value, and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. (qtd. in Essuman 97)

Essuman continues throughout his article “A Pragma-Stylistic Approach to Analyzing Proverbs: A Review of Some Selected Proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*” to suggest that Achebe used such a narrative technique to highlight the distinct cultural identity of the Igbo people and to ensure that their values are not lost in the telling of their colonization. I also focus on this use of proverb by this distinguished elder as it highlights the point that I make throughout this project: that missionaries do not shout, they do not enter lands with weapons drawn and intentions clear. They enter with an ominous silence, under the pretext of helping those who they perceive to be subaltern, when they have no actual understanding of the cultures they are entering. There is an assumption that missionary work is generally benevolent and helps serve the purpose of civilizing the people they are serving, but Essuman and Lindfors remind us that civilizing is not necessary, that the people these missionaries hope to bring into the “light” of Western culture, religion, and civilization have rich and unique cultures of their own free of any benevolence from missionaries.

Okonkwo's own tribe had experienced this quiet entrance much as the Abame tribe did. However, his tribe had learned some from the mistakes of the Abame people. Okonkwo's tribe allowed the missionaries who entered their land to come peacefully. After the lengthy period of exile, Okonkwo returned to his home where he learned that missionaries had already come, established their church, and were slowly winning converts. The leaders of the clan were sorrowful about this development, but feared the fate of Abame, and listened to the warnings of Uchendu. These leaders were convinced

that this strange religion preached by these missionaries could not last, and that the people would recognize that the only converts they were winning were the people who the clan had cast off, known as *Efulefu*, or “worthless, empty men” (143). Okonkwo had experienced his own introduction to the missionaries in his mother’s village of Mbanta. The missionary entered the village peacefully, accompanied by four non-Igbo black men and one Igbo man who claimed to be their brother, but who’s language was harsh to their ears, and who’s interpretations were often comically incorrect. The white missionary informs the group gathered around him that he plans to live among them and rid them of their belief in false idols. Again, the members of the clan find this concept comical:

‘If we leave our gods and follow your god,’ asked another man, ‘who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?’ ‘Your gods are not alive and cannot do you any harm,’ replied the white man. ‘They are pieces of wood and stone.’ When this was interpreted to the men of Mbanta they broke into derisive laughter. These men must be mad, they said to themselves. How else could they say that Ani and Amadiora were harmless? And Idemili and Ogwugwu too? (146)

This theme of abandonment of idols and replacing them with worship of the Evangelical Christian god alone is one that can be found throughout most missionary narratives. Amy Carmichael was encouraged to allow those who she brought to Christ to continue their idol worship in an attempt to bring more converts; an idea which repulsed her. This refusal, this strictly monotheistic approach to missionary work is partially what makes Evangelical missionary work so potent. Not only do these missionaries introduce a new god who brings along a new set of practices and expectations for morality, but the acceptance of this new god demands the forsaking of all other gods; there can be no compromise. This lack of compromise further demonstrates the missionary lack of

understanding of the communities they are entering and supposedly helping. They understand the native gods only as pieces of wood or trinkets, rather than seeking to understand the vital roles that such gods play in the communities they have submersed themselves in.

The introduction continues with the missionaries requesting a plot of land on which to build their church in Mbanta. Again, the members of the village did not desire to outright deny them this request but had no interest in the missionaries being in their clan. Therefore, the idea was had to allow the missionaries to build their church in the Evil Forest, a place where clan members who died of transmittable diseases such as smallpox and leprosy were buried, where evil medicine men were banished, and cursed twins cast away. The clansmen were assured that no one would be reckless enough to accept such a plot of land and would refuse, but to their surprise, the missionaries accepted and began construction of their church (148-149). To everyone's great surprise, the white men did not die, which convinced some members of the community that their power must be greater than that of their own gods.

By living in the evil forest, with no understanding of the implications, they set themselves apart as spiritually powerful. They are able to live in the evil forest without suffering any harm. The clansmen of Mbanta do not perceive this as powerful and benevolent; it is a malevolent power. Through this simple breakage of cultural boundaries, a foothold was gained in the community. The missionaries had not actually benefitted the community in any way; they had not offered any tangible assistance or improvement to living conditions but had only served to buck the long held beliefs and traditions of the community, convincing the highly spiritual clansmen of their supposed

superior power. This portion of the story highlights two critical points for my argument. First, the treatment of the missionaries by the clansmen in allowing them some land, but offering them forbidden and dangerous land, demonstrates the way in which missionaries are capable of entering communities without being perceived as a threat. Even after the deaths at the Abame tribe, the people of Mbanta were willing to allow these missionaries some portion of land. As the story continues, Okonkwo will raise an alarm with this behavior, but it shows how the native inhabitants did not perceive themselves as subaltern in relation to these missionaries. The missionaries are perceived as ignorant, naïve, almost to the point of comical. This perception allows the missionaries to establish themselves within the community and slowly pull away converts. Second, this introduction demonstrates missionary disregard for tradition. While the argument could certainly be made that they were simply making the most of what was offered to them, taking and inhabiting land that was traditionally understood to be evil, the missionaries knowingly disregarded the tradition of the Mbanta tribe. They claim to hear the people of the tribe, but do not understand them, do not respect their customs, and will denigrate their beliefs in an attempt to win souls for their cause.

I have mostly highlighted cultural differences between the clansmen and the missionaries, which might not seem so devastating; differences are not always harmful, and thus far the only tangible damage inflicted between the two started because of native aggression; the wiping out of Abame could be considered deserved, a just punishment for their murdering of the missionary who infiltrated them. This is a significant portion of the point; this argument draws together the notion that missionary infiltration can very well lead to violence, which can lead to the more serious consequences that I discuss.

Additionally, this conflict between the two highlights my point on morality. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, disagreements on universal morality can easily arise in the introduction of missionary and native peoples. This difference is particularly stark between a missionary and a native community more so than a simple explorer or tourist because the missionary enters the native land with the expressed intention of changing their standards of morality. The missionaries' mission is to change the culture they infiltrate; conflict is inevitable.

Due to the events that had transpired in Abame, the missionary church in Mbanta eventually developed its own system of government within its plot of land in the Evil Forest. In the seat of government, the church carried out its own law and order outside of the clan's influence. There were rumors that a clan member had been put to death without any input from the clan, but the assumption was made that if the church killed an efulefu, or worthless man, no action was needed (Achebe 154). Following these rumors, the clan begins to hear about the python that was killed, which I referenced in the introduction. It is at this junction that Okonkwo decides that the missionaries have gone too far, that action must be taken against them. He is ignored by his fellow clansmen who still hope to find some way to create unity between themselves and the missionaries, and he is disgusted by what he perceives to be the womanly behavior of the Mbanta tribe, believing that his home tribe Umuofia would not allow the Christians to behave in such a way. Okonkwo raised the alarm that I raise. As he prepares to leave Mbanta, he prepares a great feast and again warns his mother's clan:

I have only a short while to live, and so have Uchendu and Unachukwu and Emefo. But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice.

And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan. (167)

This passage, again, highlights the potential damage of Evangelical missionary work.

While many argue that going into perceived subaltern communities and offering a new religious practice that is viewed as strictly beneficial is an act of benevolence and grace, this speech demonstrates that the value systems of each community are difficult to reconcile from Okonkwo's perspective. What complicates this perspective is that not all of the clansmen were in agreement about this incompatibility between the missionary faith and their own way of life. Divisions existed in the group as some accepted the message of salvation from the missionaries, but this division further emphasizes Okonkwo's fear, that they were separating the clan and did not hold to the same belief that togetherness was essential. To the missionaries, Christianity brings salvation and morality; to the elders of the tribe, Christianity brings severed bonds of kinship. The difference is irreconcilable and must be recognized. It is largely irrelevant what the missionary's intention is when they enter these communities with their irreconcilable messages. Whether truly benevolent or fully aware of their colonial harm, the damage that Christian ideology inflicts upon communities that are simply not compatible with it is clear in Achebe's account. The isolating of community members, the exclusivity of god worship, and other ideological disparities make the introduction harmful no matter how pure an intention may be. This criticism highlights the importance of Okonkwo's narrative position, and the authority Achebe grants him to criticize the missionaries who

have infiltrated his home. Without such accounts, the understanding of the missionary introduction would exist only in service to the missionary agenda.

In the concluding section of the novel, Okonkwo finally returns from his exile to Umuofia where he is pained to see that missionaries have also taken a place there. In Umuofia, Okonkwo is particularly distressed to see that the missionaries have moved on from only converting the outcasts of society and have successfully led astray some prominent members of the clan. Again, the “trophy of faith” motif sneaks into the missionary agenda when Okonkwo learns that it is these distinguished members who are given the first sacraments of Holy Communion, indicating that the missionaries understood what they had accomplished by converting these men (Achebe 174). What is most concerning is that the missionaries have established a system of government that functions outside of the church leadership’s control. This portion of the novel is most critical to my argument that states missionaries serve as the introduction for imperial control. Missionaries lay the groundwork and make the transition from tribal to imperial rule more subtle, thus reducing resistance. Okonkwo begs the elders to go to war with these missionaries and their government, he pleads for resistance, but elder Obierika responds:

It is already too late... our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government. If we should try to drive out the white men in Umuofia we should find it easy. There are only two of them. But what of our own people who are following their way and have been given power? They would go to Umuru and bring the soldiers, and we would be like Abame (176)

Obierika recognizes that the missionaries have utilized their religious power to cripple the native system of government. The missionaries created a sizable rift in the community

which weakened the military power and prevented the clan from reclaiming their own authority. As more and more clan members succumbed to the religion of the missionaries, they fell under the white government that was protecting the missionaries and opened their own people up to imperial control. The signs of this control come quickly:

‘What happened to that piece of land in dispute?’ asked Okonkwo. ‘The white man’s court decided that it should belong to Nnama’s family, who had given much money to the white man’s messengers and interpreter’ ‘Does the white man understand our customs about land’ ‘How can he when he does not speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad, and that our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were fooled by his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (176)

Again, the disparity between cultural morality. Okonkwo highlights the way in which the missionaries have their own laws and morality which are in opposition with the morality laws of the clan, which allows readers to understand the two cultures are different rather than one superior to the other, or in line with the missionary narratives that would paint missionary morality as the light and clan morality as the dark.

Despite the above mentioned conflicts, the missionaries who were originally introduced to the clan actually preached a mission of compromise and worked diligently to work within the bounds of clan law as best as they could. This is a common tactic used by imperial powers: to install compassionate, compromising missionaries at the start of the introduction. This reduces the threat and pacifies the native population to the white presence. This first missionary leader, Mr. Brown, is eventually replaced by Reverend

James Smith, a teacher of fire and brimstone, who would not hesitate to initiate imperial power in order to facilitate colonial rule:

Mr. Brown's successor was the Reverend James Smith, and he was a different kind of man. He condemned openly Mr. Brown's policy of compromise and accommodation. He saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness. He spoke in his sermons about sheep and goats and about wheat and tares. He believed in slaying the prophets of Baal. (185)

This new missionary makes changes in the community that Mr. Brown had built. He no longer allows any idol worship and begins to openly encourage his congregation of followers to be bolder in their rejection of clan practices and traditions. This stirring leads to the fiery Enoch defiling an ancestral spirit during a celebration to honor the earth deity. Enoch removed the mask of a *Egwugwu* which is the masked embodiment of the ancestors who had been committed to mother earth. According to clan tradition, to remove such a mask is to murder the embodied spirit. According to clan law, this infringement requires retribution. The *Egwugwu* destroy Enoch's home and reduce Mr. Smith's church to ashes. They are careful not to harm the missionary and offer him a position of peace if he is willing to leave his church and live quietly among them, attending privately to his faith, but he refuses. These actions ultimately give the white governing authority the necessary cause to inflict violence upon clan leaders and seize control of the area. The escalation is swift. Leaders of the clan are summoned to the commissioner's office where they are ambushed, imprisoned, and mistreated. Once released they are told that they are now under the rule of a Queen, who they do not know. The leaders gather together to discuss starting a war, and when a messenger from the commissioner attempts to stop their meeting, Okonkwo kills him. This final act of

violence seals Okonkwo's fate and he realizes that the dignity and honor of his people has been lost. Okonkwo takes his own life, his clan is reduced to a subaltern, colonized state, and the commissioner adds the story about cutting Okonkwo out of the tree to a chapter of a book he plans to write entitled *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. Achebe ends the novel with this shift in perspective to allow the commissioner to reveal his own understanding of Okonkwo and his clan and offer another demonstration of the importance of narrative authority. For the commissioner, the entire life and story of Okonkwo and his clan is reduced to nothing more than a minimal anecdote that calls for colonial intervention in controlling what he sees as violent, primitive, natives.

Now that we have a clear picture of how missionary introductions can impact native communities from the perspective of an author telling the story of a native community, we will shift to missionary introductions from the perspective of the missionaries themselves. This may seem like a repeat of Chapter One, but where this account differs is a key point. The works discussed in Chapter One are works which seek to benefit the missionaries and their work by generating interest in their mission with the expressed desire that such interest will generate financial assistance and continue the supposedly benevolent work of winning lost souls into the fold of god's light. This chapter will move away from those traditional missionary narratives and examine a missionary narrative from an alternative perspective. *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver tells the story of a missionary family who have inserted themselves into the Congo during the period in which the Congolese government was attempting to free itself from the Belgian government. While this story does not detail a virgin encounter between native peoples and missionaries, it does detail a virgin introduction of white missionaries

from Georgia attempting to make sense of the world in which they insert themselves. What is unique and important about this novel is that the actual missionary, Nathan Price, is the only member of the family who is not given a voice at any point in the story. The story is told through the voices of his four daughters and his wife, none of whom would be in the Congo serving as missionaries if not for their connection to Nathan. With this novel, I will explore missionary life when it is described from an alternate white Western point of view that does not seem to hold to the strict narrative tropes that are discussed in Chapter One. It is important to note that I am not implying that Kingsolver's account of missionary life is by default more accurate or genuine than Davis, Elliot, or Livingstone. What I do argue is that in order to understand the impact of missionary introductions on native communities, it is important to understand the introduction from multiple angles and traditional missionary narratives do not offer much in the attempt to create a full picture of missionary impact on native communities.

This particular novel relies heavily on narrative. The story is told through a seemingly random series of accounts by the four girls, Adah, Leah, Rachel, and Ruth May, with the occasional account from their mother, Orleanna. Each of the girls give their account with a unique voice and perspective that allows the reader to connect deeply with each girl, to truly understand her personality. Orleanna breaks this mold with her seemingly flat aspect that gives the reader little insight into how Orleanna feels or what she thinks. Readers are given some understanding of Orleanna through the accounts from the girls, but each girl offers a different understanding of their mother, making it difficult to determine what exactly makes Orleanna who she is. What Orleanna's accounts do serve to accomplish is further background information about the family, and some

understanding of who Nathan is and why he chose to take his family to the Congo. This distinction is important to note as it highlights Kingsolver's differentiation between the practical and the sensational. The accounts from the girls give us what it feels like, or the sensation of being a missionary introduced to native people who you do not understand. Orleanna gives us the practical understanding of who missionaries are, what makes them the way that they are, and what motivates a missionary family to sacrifice the perceived comforts of their homes to bring their messages to people who did not ask for them.

To give chronological accounts of events that occur throughout the novel would not be helpful as each event is detailed differently by each narrator. Instead, I will explore each narrative voice in an attempt to provide a cohesive understanding of each experience from each narrator. The way Kingsolver frames the narrative from multiple perspectives helps solidify the fluid nature of truth in accounts. I am careful not to state that accounts from either missionaries or subaltern communities are more true, accurate, or genuine as such descriptors are not in line with what I suggest. Kingsolver's telling truly cements that point as it highlights the shifts in narrative dependent upon who is doing the telling.

Leah Price is the second oldest of the four sisters and of all the sisters, Leah is closest to her father Nathan, and is most committed to Evangelical practices and the missionary life. Leah is excited to move to the Congo and hopes to see god work in the lives of the native people they encounter there. Despite Leah's close relationship with her father, she admits her understanding that he wishes she were a boy. Leah understands that her father believes that God gave him so many daughters as a test of his courage and patience (Kingsolver 82). Leah sees everything around her as some sort of lesson from god, some opportunity to prove her faithfulness not only to her father and his mission, but

to god directly. She fully believes that god inspired her father with his mission and that the work they are performing is holy and ordained.

Leah attempts to spend as much time with her father as possible as they endeavor to build themselves into the community they have penetrated. A significant critique that Leah's father has of the community they are in is the way in which they keep no gardens. Nathan believes the lord helps those who help themselves and that with his assistance, the people of the Congo can pull themselves out of poverty by learning to help themselves:

‘Leah’ he inquired at last, ‘Why do you think the Lord gave us seeds to grow, instead of having our dinner just spring up out there on the ground like a bunch of field rocks?’ Now *that* was an arresting picture. While I was considering it, he took up the hoe blade that had crossed the Atlantic in our mother’s purse and shoved it into a long pole he’d whittled to fit its socket. Why *did* the Lord give us seeds? Well, they were sure easier to stuff into our pockets than whole vegetables would have been, but I doubted if God took any real interest in travel difficulties ... I believe in God with all my might, but have been thinking lately that most of the details seem pretty much beneath His dignity... I confessed I did not know the answer ... ‘Because Leah, the Lord helps those that help themselves’. (37)

With this passage, Leah demonstrates her understanding that Nathan believes the poverty that he sees in the Congo is not the result of colonization by the Belgian government, systemic racial inequality, or lack of access to opportunity, but instead, he recognizes the poverty that he perceives to be the direct result of the native people of the Congo not helping themselves to the bounty that, he believes, god freely provides. As Leah and her father attempt to cultivate the ground for this garden that will supposedly teach the native people how to provide for themselves, Leah becomes aware of their hired servant, Mama Tataba. Mama Tataba questions their efforts, informing Nathan that he has built his garden in direct proximity to a tree that “bites” and that they must make hills for their

seeds (41). Leah and her father ignore Mama Tataba; Nathan dismisses her, “He assured me that Mama Tataba hadn’t meant to ruin our demonstration garden. There was such a thing as native customs, he said. We would need the patience of Job. ‘She’s only trying to help in her way’” (41). This dismissal is met by Nathan breaking into a furious rash all over his body that temporarily blinds him, causes pus to ooze from his flesh, and allows his garden seeds to be washed away in a rainstorm that wiped out the flat plain.

Nathan finally succumbs and allows his garden to be grown in hills, but he cannot understand why Mama Tataba continues to discourage his efforts to grow his garden. Leah perceives this as a testimony that people in the Congo need the light of god even more so than she thought. If Mama Tataba does not want to provide food for her family, how can she be chosen of god? Yet, after months of attempting to grow vegetables, the pair is confronted with the differences that they have neglected to reconcile: there are no pollinators designed to pollinate the specific crops they were attempting to grow in the Congo. Nathan had not realized that his plants were not compatible with growing conditions in the Congo:

We sat together looking through the crooked stick fence at the great variety of spurned blossoms in my father’s garden. I felt so many different things right then... we had worked so hard, and for what? I felt confusion and dread. I sensed that the sun was going down on many things I believed in. (80)

Leah has always been able to make sense of her life and her surroundings through the lens that her father provides which is rooted in Scripture and God’s plan for their lives. Her experience in the Congo begins to reshape that understanding, forcing her to consider that some aspects of life do not fit neatly into the world view that has been created for her throughout her life. Leah demonstrates the common missionary attitude discussed in

Chapter One in the way that she situates her entire understanding of the world and everyone in it around her own Western, Christian beliefs. She cannot comprehend how the differences in culture does not inherently indicate that her beliefs are right, or true and the alternate beliefs harmful. Yet, unlike Eliot or Davis, she is open to new understandings and slowly shifts her perspectives on the culture around her.

As the novel continues, and she experiences more of Killangian culture, she slowly moves further and further away from her trust in her father and his mission. She begins to question god's plan for her life, and the Western treatment of the people in the Congo. Eventually, she marries a Congolese man, departs from her religious convictions, and lives in relative poverty with the children she bears. Leah went into missionary work in the Congo fully believing in the mission, that they were there to save native peoples from their dark and evil ways, but what she eventually accepts is the cultural nuance, the damage of colonialism, and the futility of attempting to teach groups of people how to live a life with your own sense of morality and ideology imposed upon them. I do not necessarily offer Leah up as a prime example for how missionaries should behave, or excuse her from her colonial behavior based solely on her eventual marriage to a Congolese man, but instead I offer her as an interior lens into the workings of the missionary family. She was seemingly the closest to Nathan Price and shared his faith and conviction, however, even she was eventually able to recognize the harm and made attempts to correct her actions.

From Leah we move to the youngest of the four Price sisters: Ruth May. It is through Ruth May that we get some of the most transparent narrative of the family's time in Kilanga. Though all of the girls are young, Ruth May is the only one who demonstrates

a very childlike nature. Ruth May has no interest in bringing the people of Africa to salvation; she has very little understanding of what such salvation is or means. She struggles to find a position in the family in which she feels important or heard. She finds herself the most successful in being able to integrate with the children of the village as she is the only one of the sisters who does not appear to have an established ideology in regard to her role as a missionary in this place. Perhaps the most important narrative piece we gain from Ruth May is the way in which she has very few opinions herself that she expresses, but instead her narrative is used to parrot the beliefs of her family's ideology:

God says the Africans are the Tribes of Ham. Ham was the worst one of Noah's three boys. Everybody comes down on their family tree from just those three, because god made a big flood and drowned out the sinners. But Shem, Ham, and Japheth got on the boat, so they were A-okay. Ham was the youngest one, like me, and he was bad. Sometimes I am bad too. After they all got off the ark and let the animals go is when it happened. Ham found his father Noah laying around pig naked drunk one day and though that was funny as all get-out. The other two brothers covered Noah up with a blanket, but Ham busted his britches laughing. When Noah woke up he got to hear the whole story from the tattletale brothers. So Noah cursed all Ham's children to be slaves for ever and ever. That's how come them turn out dark. (Kingsolver 21)

With this narrative, it is clear that this idea does not originate with Ruth May. She did not formulate the idea that African people are cursed because of their lineage, nor is it obvious that she particularly believes this account, but her telling of this story offers us insight into the ideology behind her family's mission. This idea that African people are cursed builds upon the idea that Leah wrestles with, that African people do not know how to help themselves, to build the narrative understanding of the missionary perspective about who they are supposedly helping and why. Ruth May allows us to pierce through

the missionary narrative tropes that paint missionaries as strictly benevolent and the native people they encounter as ready and willing participants in the receiving of god's love and salvation. According to Ruth May's understanding of their mission, the people they are living among are cursed, destined to the poverty that they experience, which reflects Eliot's telling of Carmichael's relationship with the dark skinned girls who were destined for lives of poverty and promiscuity if not rescued by missionary intervention. Ruth May is a critical example of the power of missionary indoctrination. As the youngest and most childlike, she is most willing to accept and repeat what she hears from her family. What makes Ruth May's acceptance of the ideology of her family so dangerous is the fact that she so easily integrates into the Kilangan community. She is the youngest, and therefore, the least threatening. She easily makes friends despite the harmful ideologies that she ascribes to. Her indoctrination is thorough, and she is a powerful tool of the missionary, imperial apparatus.

The next narrator I will discuss is Adah Price. Adah is Leah's twin sister, and though they are identical, Leah does not share in Adah's suffering. Adah suffered a fetal mishap that, by her description, left half of her brain dried up like a prune, and half of her body to drag. Adah does not speak and does most of her communication through her twin sister, Leah. Adah is, by far, the most critical of the four sisters in regard to their father's mission. She has no relationship with her father, viewing herself as a burden and him as a loon. Her relationship is most contentious with him over the idea of a woman's place. Both Adah and Leah are considered gifted, but Adah knows that Leah's only real plan for life is to get married and make babies. Adah reads books backwards and forwards, she is gifted in math, and possesses an incredible memory. Yet, her father sees no benefit to her

intelligence, “‘Sending a girl to college is like pouring water in your shoes’ he loves to say, as often as possible. ‘It’s hard to say which is worse, seeing it run out and waste the water, or seeing it hold in and wreck the shoes’” (56). Adah recognizes her position within the group of women who her father devalues. In his article “The Poisonwood Bible’s Multicultural Graft: American Literature During the Contemporary Christian Resurgence,” Christopher Douglass explores the reception of *The Poisonwood Bible* and some of its key points. He highlights the hierarchy within the Price family that Adah feels even more acutely than the other women in the family,

This Christianity is an exercise in male power and familial hierarchy, which Kingsolver portrays as the danger of male tyranny inherent in the biblical admonition that wives obey their husbands (Eph. 5:22). Kingsolver’s second and related critique is that this conservative theology of hierarchy and submission – rather than an alternative progressive one of liberation – is toxic in the colonial and neocolonial setting, when invoked, as Belgium and then the US do, to justify paternalism and domination. (Douglass 136)

Kingsolver utilizes Adah’s account to highlight this paternal domination in the way Adah is kept from education due to her hierarchical position within the family, which is additionally compounded due to her disability. This attitude reflects back to Nathan’s understanding of the people he is attempting to minister to in the way that he views them as inherently less able than himself or his white/Christian peers. When he determines that they live in poverty because they are not capable of growing crops for themselves or expresses through Ruth May that the dark skinned natives are inherently cursed due to their lineage. He sees himself as the ordained by god patriarchal authority whose responsibility is to shed light on those who are ordained by god to be submissive. His

understanding of the position of women and the natives he encounters is hopelessly bound.

From Adah's narrative, we get a strictly critical view of the missionary and his work. Adah is able to draw attention to her father's lack of awareness as Adah watches as her mother quietly cooks and provides food for many of the hungry members of the community, and then scoffs at her father's pomp in providing a feast to them. She is bewildered by her father's plan to fill the bellies and then the souls, forgetting that his wife has already accomplished the first step (47). Her critique of her father's mission is what, perhaps, sets her up to be the most content among the native population. She revels in the fact that her, by Western standards, beautiful sister Rachel is considered some sort of freak to the Kilangan people and that her deformity seems to go largely ignored, "Here bodily damage is more or less considered to be a by-product of living, not a disgrace. In the way of the body and other people's judgement I enjoy a benign approval in Kilanga that I have never, ever known in Bethlehem, Georgia" (72). Adah is able to recognize alternative ideologies between her Western family and Western understanding and the natives of Kilanga who she resides with. Her father bemoans the way in which the Kilangan people do not recognize the illness and deformity of their bodies, believing them to be blind to god's curses, but Adah, who is eventually spoken for by her mother, recognizes that they simply value the body differently, that deformity or pain is not a sign of sin or punishment, but just a part of life. Adah is disturbed by the way in which her father talks of destiny, curses, and the sins of the native people, "According to my Baptist Sunday school teachers, a child is denied entrance to heaven merely for being born in the Congo rather than say, North Georgia, where she could attend church regularly. This is

the sticking point in my own little lame march to salvation: admission to heaven is gained by the luck of the draw” (171). Adah cannot accept this ideology and highlights much of the imperial mindset that missionaries take with them when encountering native peoples. By allowing the perspective of a young, non-able-bodied, white, female to be shown, Kingsolver grants us access to a disruption in the narrative tropes that focus on the physical qualities of the native people being ministered to. Livingstone is fascinated by the able bodies of the black men he encounters, Eliot indicates that Carmichael was partial to particular bodies but from Adah’s perspective, the importance of the body is challenged in understanding the native’s experience. To the missionary, the natives they encounter are subaltern merely by the circumstances of their birth including the ableness of their bodies but Adah’s position challenges this notion.

Finally, the last of the four sisters is Rachel Price. Rachel is the oldest and though she is not directly critical of her father and his mission, she is the most critical of the family’s involvement in his mission. I find this distinction important to note because Adah is critical of her father’s beliefs and mission, but Rachel is critical of missionary activity as a whole, and she offers us an understanding of the often absurd nature of missionary work. Adah supplies us with the actual results of what happens when someone who knows nothing about the Congo tries to teach people in the Congo how to live. In contrast, Rachel provides the account of missionary work stripped of any nobility or higher purpose. While Adah encourages us to better understand the natives her family works with, Rachel encourages us to recognize the absurdity of moving one’s life away from comfort and familiarity to willingly accept poverty and suffering. Rachel provides a materialist perspective of missionary work that offers an alternative perspective on

missionaries such as Davis who claim joy in their material suffering as it is an opportunity from god. Obviously, there is some distinction between Rachel and Davis as Davis actively chose her position as a missionary, whereas Rachel was thrust into her position by no choice of her own. But it is important to note that from Davis' understanding, everyone and everything is in a particular place according to god's infallible plan. This logic would put Rachel in the Congo for a specific, ordained by god purpose and according to Davis' rhetoric, Rachel should find joy in her material suffering. Rachel disrupts this notion with her extreme distaste for the sights, sounds, and smells of the Congo. She does not experience the joy that Davis finds and disrupts the notion that subjecting oneself to suffering for the purpose of fulfilling god's plan leads to acceptance and joy in suffering.

Rachel is constantly in trouble for wanting to wear pink nail polish and earrings. According to her father, such things are for prostitutes. Rachel is considered beautiful in Georgia but resents the way she is not allowed to polish her beauty with superficial adornments such as nail polish or jewelry. She is furious when the family makes her leave behind her pretty dresses, makeup, hair products, and other items that help her feel beautiful. When they arrive in Kilanga she openly complains about the smell of native bodies, the smell of native breathe (Kingsolver 22). She hates the food they are offered by the people they are introduced to, she hates the hut they are given, she hates that she is missing high school and all that comes with it. Rachel is unapologetic in her distaste for her circumstances, "We aren't all that accustomed to the African race to begin with, since back home they keep to their own parts of town. But here, of course, with everyplace being their part of town. Plus, these men in the pageant were just carrying it to the hilt. I

didn't see there was any need for them to be so *African* about it" (45). She is frustrated by the fact that the people who welcome her and her family to their home do not adjust their behaviors to make this missionary family more comfortable. Rachel breaks the benevolent wall of the missionary narrative when she longs for the time when she will be able to return to the states, "I would tell someday with a laugh and a toss of my hair, when Africa was far away and make believe like the people in history books. The tragedies that happened to Africans were not mine. We were different, not just because we were white and had our vaccinations, but because we were simply a much, much luckier kind of person" (367). Unlike the missionary narratives discussed in Chapter One, Rachel does not attempt to convince readers that she is thankful for the opportunity to suffer; she has no interest in forcing herself to love the native people she encounters, their traditions, or suffering. Rachel is a Western teenager thrust into a missionary mission where she carries with her all of her Western ideology and gives a glimpse of how difficult adaptation can be. Rachel sees herself as inherently luckier than the people she is ministering to, but not in the way that Davis believes herself lucky to be called by god to participate in suffering for his cause.

The final narrator of *The Poisonwood Bible* is Orleanna Price, the mother of the four girls, and the wife of Nathan. As stated previously, Orleanna's narrative is unlike that of the four girls not only in her more practical telling of the story, but because unlike her four daughters, she is not restricted in her telling of the time spent in the Congo. Orleanna gives past accounts of the family's history and offers insight into Nathan and his motivations that the girls are not privy to. The narrative offered by the girls is strictly reactionary. We see them responding to their circumstances and making meaning of

events as they unfold. For Orleanna, the narrative is much different. We do not hear her voice in the same way, nor do we get a true sense of her feelings from her account, but her narrative offers a significant grounding of the narrative arc that allows the readers to create a clearer picture of this family and the impact of their missionary work.

The novel begins with Orleanna's narrative, but no context is provided. She describes a mother with her daughters walking through the jungle forest; the mother attempts to keep the daughters safe, but ultimately is unable to do so (5). In this first narrative she laments her role, her inability to save her children, her complicity in her husband's behavior:

Maybe I'll confess the truth, that I rode in with the horsemen and beheld the apocalypse, but still I'll insist I was only a captive witness. What is the conqueror's wife, if not a conquest herself? For that matter, what is he? When he rides in to vanquish the untouched tribes, don't you think they fall down with desire before those sky colored eyes? And itch for a turn with those horses and those guns? That's what we yell back at history, always, always. It wasn't just me; there were crimes strewn six ways to Sunday, and I had my own mouths to feed. I didn't know. And I had no life of my own. (9)

With this opening narrative that is told from the future, back home in Georgia, Orleanna admits that she did not stand with her husband. She recognizes the imperial harm that he imposed on the people of Kilanga, and she is ashamed of her involvement. She recognizes her own subservience to her husband and desperately wishes she could have been blessed with different circumstances. When her narrative shifts to her time in Africa, she expresses deep frustration with her husband and his inability to recognize that the rules of their home simply do not apply to the people of Kilanga. Nathan grows increasingly frustrated with the fact that none of the native people will accept a baptism. Orleanna learns that they do not wish to be baptized because children were often eaten in

the river that Nathan is asking them to enter. She recognizes that they believe Nathan to be asking them to sacrifice their children to the alligators, not receive eternal salvation. But Nathan refuses to hear her, she is constantly silenced, and she longs to leave Africa and go back to being a normal housewife. In her third narrative, she offers background on the family. She tells of how she met Nathan at a tent revival where he seemed more intent on saving her soul than courting her. After they were married, he was drafted and injured. His entire company was killed, and he abandoned his post. This sense of cowardice changed him drastically and is what Orleanna believes led to his radical belief that he must save the souls of people in Africa. Throughout the novel she is silenced and abused by Nathan. She recognizes her place as a silent, subservient, second to Nathan, but greatly desires to free her family from the circumstance he has placed them in. She lives with the ever growing dread that she will lose her family if they do not leave. When she finally musters the courage to leave Nathan, following the death of Ruth May and the violent uprisings in the Congo due to independence being won, leaders being assassinated, and entire infrastructures collapsing, she is left seemingly simple minded. She speaks little, choosing only to garden. She mourns her inability to get the smell of Africa out of her nose, highlighting how the trauma of imposed imperialism can, in fact, go both ways. This point is made with no intention to extend sympathy to colonizers, but to draw attention to the universal harm.

Orleanna's narrative illuminates the missionary narrative trope that suggests that missionaries are in some way special or chosen by god. To Orleanna, her husband is not special or chosen and his actions are inherently harmful to her, the family, and the people

they were supposedly helping. Studying religious thought in Central Africa in his book

Invisible Agents, Gordon emphasizes this idea of missionary harm:

There is a widely held misconception that Christianity in Africa inspired peace, while colonialism caused trauma and violence. According to this idea, the violence and disruption caused by Christianity and Christian missionary were due to their role as agents of colonialism; the missionaries were not “true” Christians. To the contrary, as in other periods in the history of Christianity, Christian spiritual beliefs engage with violent histories, and sometimes inspired violence. Christian spirits could be violent agents. (Gordon 61)

Orleanna recognized this link between missionaries and violence particularly when she understood the fear her husband inspired in the people by suggesting they send their children into the river full of alligators in order to be baptized. Nathan served as an agent of violence who benefited the colonial apparatus. By studying Nathan through Orleanna’s perspective rather than his own, we are offered insight into an insider’s view of the trauma inflicted by missionary activity. Orleanna recognizes the harm that her husband inflicts and is able to step outside of her own involvement in the mission to criticize the behavior. This is a significant break from the missionary narratives discussed in Chapter One such as Davis’ autobiography that painted herself only as beneficial, benevolent, and as described by Gordon, a perceived agent of peace.

By giving us the perspective of the girls and their mother who all offer different perspectives on the missionary experience, Kingsolver allows us an alternate perspective on missionary work that serves to break from the missionary narrative tropes discussed in Chapter One. Additionally, Kingsolver creates characters to give us these perspectives who inhabit subaltern positions themselves: all women who are largely ignored by their missionary father, who are now members of a community that pity rather than respect

them. These narrators demonstrate the fluctuating nature of subalternity and the importance of narrative position in the telling of a story. Had Kingsolver given the narrative authority to Nathan Price, the story would have been entirely different and likely would not have highlighted the harm that Nathan was inflicting on both the community and his own family.

Examining *Thing Fall Apart* and *The Poisonwood Bible* in tandem again goes back to the point I have attempted to make, that I do not suggest missionaries are all inherently bad, that their motives are disingenuous, or that the morality of the communities they attempt to change are necessarily better. I put these alternative narrative voices together for discussion in order to highlight the impact of alternative narrators. I want to suggest that there is a tremendous degree of value in removing the monopoly of narrative authority from the dominant groups and allowing the subaltern narrators to offer their own perspectives of their experiences and the experiences of those around them. I do not suggest that allowing subaltern narrators to exist goes against Spivak's argument that even when the subaltern speaks, they are not properly heard or understood, but I do suggest that missionary colonial harm and continued imperial indoctrination cannot be understood or stopped until the subaltern groups who are impacted by this harm are given narrative space.

Chapter Three: Missionary Impact: Missionary Education and How it Reshapes Cultural and Traditional Expectations

So far, we have explored the way in which missionary narratives are carefully crafted in order to serve an imperial purpose, the ways in which missionary introductions can disrupt and harm communities and lead to physical seizure of native spaces and explored the incompatible culture of colonizer and colonized. Most of this discussion has focused on the beginning stages of colonization, introduction, and creation of spaces for missionaries. Livingstone was one of the first missionaries on the African continent, Carmichael created a unique missionary space with her compound, Achebe speaks directly of communities completely untouched by white colonist, and Kingsolver places the Price family in a previously colonized space, but in a village largely unfamiliar with the impacts of colonization. In this final chapter I will switch focus and discuss a novel that explores the long term impact of colonization assisted by missionary work on communities. This chapter will examine how individual members of colonized communities seek to find space for themselves within their communities and how individual members of communities struggle to find spaces for themselves while negotiating the expectations of Indigenous and imperial white communities and hierarchies.

Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga is a novel that tells the story of a young woman who experiences the impacts of colonization not primarily through direct contact with white colonizers, but through her indoctrinated family. The novel chronicles her move from adolescence to adulthood while she attempts to find her place within the

community of her family, her home, and the society the white colonists have created. She struggles through the shifting basis of subalternity and superiority as she moves from status to status and truly highlights the heterogenous nature of a subaltern state. The novel is narrated by the young girl, Tambu, which makes it easy for readers to assume that she therefore possesses some level of narrative authority. I will explore how her position as the narrator does not necessarily rescue her from the pitfalls of the subaltern's narrative and demonstrate how Tambu is an example of Spivak's notion that even when supposedly given a voice through narrative control, the subaltern cannot speak. Tambu's position will shed further light on the harm that missionaries inflict on native spaces by exploring the education systems created and left by them and how infrastructure built by missionaries serves as a permanent beacon of their imperialism.

The complexities of this novel are almost overwhelming. A tremendous degree of scholarship exists discussing the work. Scholars have discussed the gender inequality and feminism that Dangarembga weaves throughout the story. The majority of scholars approach the novel through close textual analysis and explore the ways gender relates to poverty and education (For example, see Shaw, Saliba, Hill, and Mabura). These critics, among other topics, discuss the way Dangarembga portrays the coming of age movement of Tambu throughout the novel and how her movement from childhood into adolescence portrays many of the challenges that young women in such subaltern communities face and how the challenges are out of balance in relation to the men in her community. While I will discuss the concept of gender, I will discuss it in a way that I believe has been severely neglected. I do not want to discuss gender strictly in terms of how many communities don't grant the same opportunities to their women and men, but I will

explore how missionary ideology has impacted the gender inequality that Tambu recognizes. I certainly do not suggest that missionaries introduced sexist tendencies or directly encourage the unfair treatment between genders, but I will highlight the way missionary ideology impacts the expectations for success and disrupts established social orders and serves to add additional layers of subalternity to the communities in which it operates.

The novel begins with Tambu recounting the death of her older brother. She is unabashed in admitting that she does not mourn for him, she feels no sadness in his death, and no guilt for her lack of sadness (Dangarembga 1). She is conscious that this sentiment might make the readers believe she is cold or uncaring, but she addresses this potential feeling by giving the readers an understanding of her position before the death of her brother. For Tambu, the position of narrator would not be possible if not for the death of her brother:

I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling. For it is not that at all. I feel many things these days, much more than I was able to feel in the days when I was young and my brother died, and there are reasons for this more than the mere consequence of age. Therefore I shall not apologise but begin by recalling the facts as I remember them that led up to my brother's death, the events that put me in a position to write this account (1)

Dangarembga starts the novel this way, by giving Tambu the space to directly acknowledge that her position of narrator and the events that she narrates would not be possible if her brother were still alive. She would not have access to the education that she receives, she would not be taken to live with her uncle and his family, and I would suggest, most importantly, she would not possess the relative narrative authority and be

able to tell her story which helps to highlight the impact of missionary indoctrination in subaltern groups. These three key points are what I will discuss in most detail throughout this chapter as they highlight some of the missionary impacts on native communities that I find most alarming.

Tambu recounts her time as a young child living in her family's small village, hoping to someday escape, earn a complete education, and better herself just as her now dead older brother was allowed to. She is embittered by the fact that her father allowed her brother to travel to the missionary school once he finished his primary education, but because she is a girl, she is not given the same opportunity. Her education will span only from the age of seven, which she notes is the age at which the white people believed the African mind was developed enough to begin learning, to twelve, at which point she would go back to learning to feed her future family, be married, and start the process of reproduction (15). Tambu has a very strong sense of position while living with her family. She is told constantly by her parents that she is less valuable than her brother because of her gender, but she is convinced that if given the opportunity she can make something of herself. She is aware of her status of subaltern, but with the position granted Tambu by Dangarembga's use of first person retrospective narrator, she is able to criticize her parents from a removed position and challenge the judgments that have been placed upon her as she contends for the status that she desires. She despises the laziness of her father and the acceptance of her mother. She has developed the idea that if she works hard enough, she can make something important of herself outside of the traditional role of wife and mother. This idea comes from the stories about her uncle. Her grandmother tells her these stories about how her uncle continued his education at the white missionary

school, was an excellent student, and was eventually selected by the missionary school for a scholarship for college. Her grandmother demonstrates her own indoctrination and further cements the importance of story by planting the seeds of imperial ideology in Tambu through the stories of her uncle. He was a hard worker, smart, and willing to comply with the missionary code of living. Her grandmother tells the story as if her uncle were in some way special, but Tambu acknowledges that if he had in any way refused the generosity of the missionaries, they would have found some other “good black” to bestow their benevolence upon (18). This type of language is used throughout the novel to describe Babamukuru as a good candidate for the opportunities the missionaries gave to him. The missionaries see him as intelligent but not so intelligent that he presents a threat to them. He is an individual who can not only be indoctrinated himself, but he will carry that indoctrination back to his family and further the indoctrination of his own family and community. For the missionaries, the goal is to continuously cultivate “good blacks” who will have “good black children” who can conform and adhere to missionary ideology. This conformity is essential for their mission because it allows them to further their cause and shed supposed light on the perceived dark space without additional work. They can reshape the ideology of the communities they work in with leaders from that community and eventually change the entire social structure of the communities in which they are involved.

The looming presence of the white community is palpable throughout the entire novel, but Tambu rarely discusses actual interactions. Her most significant firsthand interaction with a white character occurs in Chapter Two when she decides that a good way to raise money for her school fees is to grow corn to sell in her community. Her

Sunday school teacher tells her that this is an excellent plan, but that she must sell the corn in town to the white people, as they will pay higher fees. What Tambu does not know until the teacher actually takes her to town and she attempts to sell her hard earned crop, is that this teacher knows how the white people in town operate; they will not buy Tambu's corn because they want or need it, they will buy it because they pity her. She attempts to sell the corn to a white woman named Doris, who scolds her teacher for forcing her to work rather than allowing her to go to school. The teacher, Mr. Matimba, lies to Doris and tells her that Tambu is an orphan, which prompts Doris to donate ten pounds, more than enough to pay for Tambu's school fees for years (26-27). The only white characters who are directly mentioned or interacted with are teachers of some sort, or Doris, who scolds Tambu for attempting to pay for her education through her work. Again, Tambu's position as narrator is critical. We are only allowed access to white characters in situations that discuss education. Tambu's perspective of the white characters, and particularly the missionaries, is primarily positive and highlights her own indoctrination. And I would suggest that Tambu's fixation with the white characters who care only about her education indicates the effectiveness of the missionary indoctrination through education that Thomas J. Davis and Azubike Kalu-Nwivu explore in their article "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa's Colonial Legacy." They indicate that education becomes of the highest importance in maintaining imperial control in that it is the simplest way to ensure desired ideologies are implanted in communities. I discussed earlier in the chapter the way the missionaries sent Tambu's uncle to school because he was a smart man. I would suggest that this schooling was a means of protecting the white community from smart

black men, rather than protecting smart black men from a lack of education. Davis and Kalu-Nwivu indicate that education is not benevolent or emphasized for the benefit of the groups receiving the education. Rather, education benefits the colonial power that seeks to homogenize the groups they control.

Though this point about her uncle being no more significant than any other “good black” is made almost as an afterthought for Tambu, it is critical for an understanding of the structures set up by the benevolent white missionaries who gave her uncle his scholarship. This attitude is one that grows pervasively in colonized spaces. Natives are taught that they are less than their white counterparts and that the only way that they can truly find success is to accept the benevolence bestowed on them by the symbols of white authority. What they are not told, but that Tambu hints at, is this benevolence is not for the strict benefit of those receiving the education; it is to maintain the imperial systems of control within previously and currently colonized spaces. This point is further emphasized by Homi Bhabha and his discussions of what he calls mimicry or the concept of “almost the same, but not quite.” Bhabha presents the idea that colonial mimicry is one of the most efficient tactics used by colonizers in order to indoctrinate and maintain imperial control. The basic concept of mimicry that Bhabha theorizes is that colonizers give subaltern communities the opportunity, through their benevolent work, to appear as if they are of the dominant society without actually allowing them a position in dominant society. This mimicry is often unsettling for the colonizer as they begin to see themselves in the believed to be “savages” who they have indoctrinated. This mirroring upset the notions of cemented identity for both the colonized and the colonizer. The colonized are given the tools to behave like their oppressors but are denied access to the positions of

power their oppressors hold. Bhabha argues that this mimicry is never allowed to grow to full fruition. Subaltern, colonized groups are allowed to behave like white people, but they will never be white people. This concept of mimicry contributes to the multi-layered nature of subalternity within colonized spaces. Tambu's uncle is almost white, but not quite. He is educated, intelligent, and in a position of high status and authority. However, he is not white, he has no authority in the context of the white, Western society which has given him access to his education, and he is isolated from his own family. A new layer of subalternity is introduced by separating the educated colonized people from the uneducated colonized people. Tambu refers to her cousin, who is Babamukuru's daughter, and was educated while living with her parents in England, Nyasha as Anglicized which Bhabha distinguishes from being English (Bhabha 130). Because of her Anglicized status, Nyasha does not fit in with her native family or the white girls she encounters. Nyasha is disruptive to both sides of her identity. Her mimicry isolates her from her home community but does not allow her access to the same position as a similarly educated white girl. The missionary educators claim to bring light to dark places, to offer benevolent ministry to communities that are in desperate need, but ultimately create tragic rifts in identity and disrupt accepted notions of separation between white Western colonizers and those they colonize.

Tambu narrates a visit from this uncle and his family. When they arrive, Tambu feels terribly out of place. She is unsure of what her position within the family is or should be. She retreats to the kitchen to cook so that she can feel some degree of importance or place. She is excited to see her cousin Nyasha and learn about her time in England with her family. She resents her cousin Chido and her brother Nhamo as they are

both far along in their English education and now behave as if their native language and traditions are beneath them. While visiting, Nyasha indicates a desire to dance, but her mother scolds her, implying that such behavior is below them. Tambu's sense of displacement is heightened as she attempts to communicate with Nyasha but finds that she has nothing that relates to Nyasha's experience. They are as if from two completely different places (40-45). To Tambu it seems as if her cousins and brother are behaving strangely and out of place, that they have lost their sense of identity and must re-learn how to fit within their community, but her uncle makes it clear that it is not her cousins and brother who must alter their behavior, but that his success has placed the family into a subaltern position which only education can raise them out of:

There was not much time to discuss all the things that had needed to be discussed but had had to wait while he was away, so Babamukuru and his brothers and sisters talked together far into the night and the early hours of morning. Babamukuru was concerned about the way in which the family was developing, pointing out that as an individual he had done what he could for the family's status by obtaining a Master's Degree; that he hoped his children would do as much again, if not more; that he was pleased that he was in a position to provide his children with a fine start in that direction. His branch of the family was able to hold its head high in whatever company it found itself, but, he accurately indicated, the same could not be said for all the other branches (Dangarembga 44)

Within Tambu's home community, there is a hierarchy that dictates where each member stands. The education of Babamukuru derails that hierarchy by creating a status outside of the traditional culture, created by white education. Babamukuru's education does not directly impact the village itself; he is not better equipped for daily life in the village because of his education, but his education grants him access to outside community wealth that he can then distribute to his home community. This distribution of wealth, on its face, seems beneficial, but is it possible that such a disruption of hierarchy has actually

served to move various members of the community from positions of respect into the position of the subaltern? The lack of education in the community automatically separates them from Babamukuru and his family. These interactions demonstrate the effectiveness of the missionary tactic of indoctrination of entire communities through benevolence bestowed on a cultivatable member.

Here I will appear to deviate slightly from my discussion of missionary impact to a discussion of gender relations in subaltern placement, but it is important. Tambu realizes that her position of subalternity is not restricted to her poverty, or her being brown, but that being a woman adds another layer to her subalternity. Spivak addresses this same notion when she indicates that the British articulation of the moral justification for colonial intervention in India was “white men saving brown women from brown men” and suggests that this idea continues to be cultivated due to the lack of female perspective. The intentions, wants, and needs of women are silenced and distorted because the only narrative that is expressed comes through the male understanding (Spivak 90). Anne McClintock takes up a related argument in “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’” where she primarily argues that societies cannot be “post-colonial” while colonial practices, such as missionary work, continue. McClintock draws attention to a critical point that many scholars seem hesitant to outright say, how religious ideology impacts the position of women:

The blame for women’s continuing plight cannot be laid only at the door of colonialism, or footnoted and forgotten as a passing ‘neo-colonial’ dilemma. The continuing weight of male economic self-interest and the varied undertows of patriarchal Christianity, Confucianism, and Islamic fundamentalism continue to legitimize women’s barred access to the corridors of political and economic power, their persistent educational disadvantage, the bad infinity of the domestic

double day, unequal childcare, gendered malnutrition, sexual violence, genital mutilation, and domestic battery. (McClintock 92)

McClintock directly addresses the way religious discourse allows for the maintenance of women's economic, legal, and educationally disadvantaged status. McClintock is careful to highlight that religious discourse or colonialism is not directly responsible for the lower positions of women, but that such ideologies encourage the continuance of such gendered inequalities while adding additional layers of complexity to the lives of these women. This notion stresses the nuance of a subaltern status and the way it can be impacted by age, gender, socio-economic status, education and encourages an understanding of the temporal aspect of subalternity. McClintock emphasizes the way these problems are not restricted to the past or a single factor, but that they continue into the present as a result of complex social hierarchies that are demonstrated so poignantly by Tambu's experience with her family.

This notion about perspective and how members of the family appear from different vantage points is further highlighted by Tambu's relationship with her aunt Maiguru. While it may seem that this story of her uncle's success would not necessarily apply to her due to her gender, Tambu knows that not only is her uncle educated and successful, but that he is married to a black woman who has traveled to England and back with him. Before she moves in with her, Tambu admires Maiguru and sees her as a perfect example of how women can achieve more desirable positions of status. As Tambu gets to know her aunt, she learns that she also holds a master's degree and Tambu initially sees in her the potential to be something much greater than her mother and searches for a way to emulate her. As she grows older and gains more experience, she recognizes that

even her educated aunt is not in a desirable position. She recognizes herself as subaltern and sees her aunt as not. Yet, as she experiences more of her aunt's life, she recognizes that her aunt holds a complicated position of authority. While Maiguru is educated and therefore holds a significantly higher status than Tambu's mother or the other women from Tambu's village, she is never shown the same respect or admiration as Babamukuru for her educational achievements. She is respected within the family as a good wife and mother, but nothing more. Additionally, her relationship with Babamukuru is one fraught with tension and turmoil. She is submissive and fearful of Babamukuru, she rarely questions him and when she does the consequences are grave. Her aunt Maiguru's experience highlights the gender disparity in education and, again, indicates the importance of Tambu's position as the narrator who is able to see past the façade of Maiguru's status as educated. Tambu has a notion of her aunt as an example of what she can accomplish as a woman, but as she lives with her and the rest of the family, she is given access to further understanding of her aunt's subaltern position. Maiguru is educated just like her husband, but her education does not remove her from her position of subalternity within the family. The gendered hierarchy takes precedence over her status as educated.

This emphasis on women's subalternity is again furthered through Tambu's relationship with her cousin Nyasha. Nyasha challenges Tambu's perspective of her aunt and uncle by highlighting their indoctrination and assimilation. For Tambu, initially, the position of subalternity is one dimensional, but Nyasha challenges this perception by drawing Tambu's attention to the multiple layers of subalternity that are impacted by race, gender, class, and education. Tambu's time living with her uncle's family was

difficult not only as she learned to navigate school and what is considered a more civilized society, but because of Nyasha. Nyasha is willful and difficult; she talks back to her mother, she disobeys her father, she smokes cigarettes. What is most odd to Tambu about Nyasha is the way in which Nyasha is unable to make friends at school. She is teased for behaving white, for being loose, and for having an odd accent. Tambu had spent so much time at home feeling that she was inferior to her cousin, but now shifts from inferiority to superiority. She is an excellent student, well-liked by her classmates, and amiable with her aunt and uncle. She, despite her narrator position, cannot understand Nyasha. She sees colonialism and its impact on the culture around her, but she does not feel it as Nyasha does. For Tambu, colonialism has offered her an opportunity to be educated, to better herself, to be more than her mother. To Nyasha, colonialism has created a space in which she cannot belong. She is too white and Anglicized to fit within the context of her home culture, but she is too black and native to fit within the context of the white communities in England. Nyasha receives no sympathy from her father, “Babamukuru was a good African. And it was generally believed that good Africans bred good African children who also thought about nothing except serving their communities” (Dangarembga 107). Nyasha was expected to be the good African daughter of her good African father. She was not allowed a space to exist as she needed. Her perspective was different than Tambu’s. Again, we are only able to understand Nyasha through Tambu’s narrative position. Tambu is frustrated with Nyasha and largely disapproves of her behavior, but there are moments where Nyasha is able to challenge Tambu’s thinking about each of their positions. Nyasha scolds Tambu for assimilating with the white teachers, and for seeing Babamukuru as if he were a god. They hold different positions of

subalternity and therefore respond to the events they encounter very differently; Tambu had come from an impoverished village and had found upward mobility. Nyasha was born and lived in the space Tambu hoped to occupy, but for Nyasha this position was still subaltern. Tambu begins to realize this as the novel continues:

And I feeling bad for her and thinking how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her the victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimized at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew my maize. The victimization I saw was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education, or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. (116)

This particular passage brings up the point that I addressed in the introduction to this chapter. Tambu becomes fixated on the idea of gender being a primary factor in determining one's position as subaltern or not; she states, "You had to admit that Nyasha had no tact. You had to admit she was altogether too volatile and strong-willed. You couldn't ignore the fact that she had no respect for Babamukuru when she ought to have had lots of it. But what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness" (116). While this point is important, Dangarembga uses the novel to highlight many of the challenges of "femaleness," it demonstrates how Tambu only sees the partial picture. She sees Nyasha's behavior only in relation to her femaleness and the judgement that she receives because of it. She does not recognize the missionary indoctrination of Babamukuru that is then failed in its passing to Nyasha. She sees the harm that Babamukuru's indoctrination has inflicted on Nyasha but cannot recognize its source. She does not recognize the way the missionary education has influenced her family's understanding of their own status.

Tambu's relationship with her uncle and understanding of her cousin Nyasha demonstrate the way she cannot see the indoctrination of her family, and as the novel progresses it becomes clear that even what she can see, she cannot convey. Tambu and her uncle's family return to her homestead to visit her family where her inability to speak as a subaltern member of the family becomes glaringly apparent. While there, her uncle insists that her parents be married in an official Christian ceremony. Babamukuru insists that the family is sinful because they have been living together and building a family together without an official marriage. In Tambu's culture, such a ceremony is not necessary, but according to missionary ideology, their tradition is wrong. Babamukuru insists that if they are ever to rise out of their poverty and become a fully successful family, they must adopt the Christian ways taught to him by the missionaries. This idea has thoroughly permeated the family. Tambu's grandmother tries to help explain the role of missionaries:

The whites on the mission were a special kind of white person, special in the way that my grandmother had explained to me, for they were holy. They had come not to take but to give. They were about god's business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come and lighten our darkness. It was a big sacrifice that the missionaries made. It was a sacrifice that made us grateful to them, a sacrifice that made them superior not only to us but to those other Whites as well who were here for adventure and to help themselves to our emeralds. The missionaries' self-denial and brotherly love did not go unrewarded. We treated them like minor deities. With the self-satisfied dignity that came naturally to white people in those days, they accepted this improving disguise. (Dangaremba 103)

This passage directly addresses the missionary impact on the community and articulates the concept that I have been discussing throughout the paper. What is different in this passage than previous chapters, again, is the establishment, the understanding, the

knowledge of the missionaries. For Okonkwo, the missionaries are unknown. They seem harmless if not silly. But for Tambu and her family, the missionaries have been able to thoroughly establish themselves in communities to the degree that their status is superior not only to the natives, but to other white people, effectively protecting them from scrutiny. This passage demonstrates the effect of the missionary narratives discussed in Chapter One. The missionaries who are in Tambu's orbit have thoroughly and completely sold their narratives; they are sacrificial and strictly benevolent. Her family has colonized themselves by repeating this story. Again, Tambu hints at some disillusionment by acknowledging that they are in disguise, but she is unable to draw the connection to their impact on her direct community. She is confused as to why the marriage between her parents feels so wrong; she cannot articulate the way in which the missionary morality that has been accepted and is now being disseminated by her family feels at odds with her culture and traditions. This is the critical aspect of Tambu's telling of her and her family's story. She knows that what she feels is not right and that what is being imposed upon her and her family feels at odds with her own sense of tradition and morality, but she is unable to articulate, to explain, which draws back to Spivak's notion that the subaltern cannot speak. She is given the narrator position but is still unable to speak about the trauma that she experiences in a way that demonstrates a clear sense of place, identity, and meaning. This same inability to speak is expressed through Nyasha's frustration as she actively confronts her indoctrinated parents and challenges their assimilation but is shut down due to her femaleness. Nyasha eventually experiences a thorough breakdown as she attempts to find her place to speak but is continually shut down. The dissemination of Christian, missionary taught ideology coming from within Tambu's own community to

alter her perspective on her own culture and traditions has silenced both her and Nyasha. It demonstrates how deep the harm can run. Not only has her family been reduced to a subaltern state through the actual colonization of their homeland, but the imperial ideology gifted to the people by the missionaries has permeated the community to the degree that missionaries no longer have to reach rural communities. They are able to take gifted individuals from their homes, educate them in missionary doctrine, and then return them to their communities where they shame their families into submission to missionary ideology. This submission then continues to ease governmental control and the dominant authorities are able to maintain order through religious morality.

Conclusion

This project seeks to gain greater understanding of how missionary narratives impact our understanding of the non-Western groups who the missionaries infiltrate and indoctrinate. I have utilized a close textual analysis of various genres of text in order to highlight powerful influence that narrative wields in understanding a people, their cultures, and traditions. Narrative authority works to place individuals in positions of superiority and inferiority and highlights the complex nature of subalternity. My use of the term narrative authority is not a one dimensional term in that it should not be confused as simple control over the actual telling of the story and should not be confused with the concept of narrative perspective. Narrative perspective offers readers an understanding of the author's bias or point of view when creating the story and the narrator's telling of the story. Narrative perspective offers context to the writing but can easily be subverted by the author as they may be aware of presumed understandings of their own biases. Narrative authority takes the idea of narrative perspective significantly further and asks the questions: who is doing the telling, who are they telling, what is the purpose of their telling, and what is the result of their telling. Narrative authority steps outside of the bounds of bias and viewpoint to dig deeper into cause and effect. Questions about narrative authority are questions that are concerned with the damage that can be inflicted by narratives. The auto-biography and the biography, I argue, are preferential genres of the missionary narrative as they create a perception of truth through their reliance on the tendency to disregard alternative evidence when presented with first or secondhand accounts. I use the novel as a foil to the auto-biography and biography in the same way that Said argues the novel is able to immerse itself within the systems of power

and serve as representations of those power dynamics. Critics must be careful to avoid the understanding that there is a divide between politics and culture, and Said argues that the novel disintegrates that line by giving space to the various voices who wish to contend with those power dynamics. The novel is able to give space to the subaltern narrators and protagonists who, otherwise, would have no space in the missionary controlled narrative to convey their experiences a chance to challenge the missionary narrative depictions of their lives and experiences.

Throughout this project, I have attempted to maintain the position that I am not strictly anti-missionary, that it is not my intention to smear the reputation of those who seek to do good through their service to subaltern communities. I am fully aware and hope to have expressed the understanding that intention cannot be known and therefore cannot be judged. I do not propose ill intention on the part of the missionaries who I have discussed specifically as authors of missionary narratives or players in narratives from members of the Native communities who the missionaries have penetrated. However, I hope that my careful treading of words and avoidance of judgment and assumption of intention has in no way dampened the seriousness of the offense I draw attention to. Missionary work is colonial work. Missionary work perpetuates imperial ideology. Missionary work is harmful. Intention, purpose, goals, or results do not change these facts, as demonstrated by the novels, auto-biographies, and biographies examined.

Cultural exchange can be beneficial. Globalization can lead to progressive ideas, unity of groups, and modernization of society. But such exchange cannot achieve these desirable results when the power dynamics between groups are uneven, and one or more groups hold to an idea of moral superiority to the other or others. This is, again, where

this concept of narrative authority, who is doing the telling, who they do the telling to, and for what purpose do they do the telling, is so critical.

As I proposed in the introduction, simply removing the narrative control from missionaries and shifting it to the subaltern does not solve the complex issues of subaltern speech. For example, the novels I have assembled in this project give readers access to a subaltern perspective, but even Tambu's position as the literal narrator did not allow for her to move herself out of each position of subalternity that she existed in. The same applies to Okonkwo, who despite commanding the protagonist position throughout the entire telling of his story by Achebe still loses the control over his family, clan, and ultimately his life and chooses to end his life rather than live it in the state of subalternity as the account written by the commissioner for his book will ultimately strip Okonkwo of control of his story. I highlight these two examples, in particular, because they are the two examples that demonstrate the way simply giving subaltern characters narrative voice does not mitigate the harm done by missionaries who usher in colonization and perpetuate imperialism through their use of narrative authority. These subaltern speakers even though given some platform to speak still are unable to contend with the uneven power dynamics that dictate positions beyond the text. Just as Spivak contends that merely allowing the subaltern to speak does not solve the problems caused by colonization and imperial control, I do not contend that reading these novels which seek to disrupt the dominant narratives is adequate for fully understanding the subaltern experience or remedying the colonial harm. Such novels serve as a foil for the dominant narratives, but ultimately, the damage continues to be inflicted into the present day as missionaries continue to work in subaltern places.

Missionary work continues into the present and shows no signs of stopping. Every year thousands of young people from churches and schools across the “first world” gather together to embark on mission trips. These trips are inspired and encouraged by long term missionaries, much like Carmichael and Davis, who encourage believers back home to either give financially or join them in the work for god. These trips often include some level of physical service, such as digging wells, building schools, or responding to disasters. What sets these trips apart from traditional humanitarian aid that would do similar work is the way in which these trips do not stop with physical service, but include indoctrination through education, spiritual counseling, and testimony. Often, the schools that are built by such missionary groups are then run by long term missionaries who use such spaces to give students an Evangelical, Western education and serve, primarily, to indoctrinate students with imperialist ideology and further solidify the imperial grip. Additionally, such trips generally impact the young people who embark on them in ways that reflect strong patterns of commonality. The majority of young people who partake of missionary activity return reporting feelings of gratitude, experiences of humility, and increased awareness of their own place of superiority (Imtiaz 9). Such missionaries are appalled by the conditions the people they are helping live in and are overwhelmed by how blessed they are. While this can be an uplifting experience for the missionary and may encourage them to move away from materialism or grant them a greater sense of gratitude in life, it holds dangerous repercussions for the communities they supposedly helped. This focus on how the trip changed the missionary’s life rather than exploring how they may have changed the subaltern community’s life so obviously indicates the imperial nature of such trips and creates a marketable economy for subaltern people.

Missionaries cannot partake in these life changing trips if there is no one to help. Additionally, these feelings of gratitude relate back to the sentiments express in *The Poisonwood Bible* by Rachel when she suggests that she and her family are simply luckier sorts of people. These trips offer no insight into the power structures that maintain subalternity, or institutional systems that perpetuate poverty, they merely offer the missionaries a chance to feel as if they have done something good in a place where they are held up as benevolent, almost god-like figures as suggested by *Nervous Conditions* and perpetuate the colonial ideology that suggests the native communities exist in states of poverty not because of colonial impact but because of their lack of religious morality as peddled by the imperial apparatus.

In addition, scholars who discuss missionaries as colonists tend to only examine past missionaries and the ways they took financial advantage of the groups they were supposedly helping. For instance, Timothy Larson discusses conflicts between missionaries and anthropologists of the twentieth century and indicates that anthropologist of the time wrote scathing reviews of missionaries and viewed them only as naïve and opportunistic. While I certainly agree with many of the points such anthropologists make, I suggest that exploring such missionaries is not as useful an exercise, for every group can be forgiven its bad traits. The argument can still be made by missionaries that any harm they inflict is outweighed by the good that they perform. To suggest that many missionaries of the past utilized their missionary exploits simply for the purpose of land accumulation or financial gain is a fairly obvious point, a point which many missionaries such as Carmichael are quick to discredit. To Carmichael, the understanding of missionaries that the anthropologists described is an understanding of a

majority of “bad” missionaries who have tainted the reputation of the true believers such as herself. Carmichael argued that the Church of England had grown too soft in its expectations of missionary conduct, leading to the general understanding that most missionaries were opportunists. Carmichael believed such perceptions could only be righted by strict adherence to Biblical ideology. Evangelical misconduct is not a new phenomenon or one that will end any time soon. There will always be available financial gain in religious work. While I do not point this out to excuse such behavior, I simply imply that scholars who believe drawing attention to such bad habits is sufficient are significantly missing a far more critical point that relates to the system of missionary work as a whole and the way in which particular aspects of missionary work do not encompass the whole narrative.

The various novels, biographies and auto-biographies examined throughout this work are mere snippets of how missionaries serve the imperial apparatus. To fully expand on every possible angle of missionary harm would require much more space than this project could possibly allow. One point that I would hope is implied but I cannot neglect to at minimum gloss is the complexity of native interactions with and responses to missionary contact. Chapter Two addressed this question from a sort of sideways angle in that I highlighted the ways missionaries are so skilled at presenting themselves as non-threatening, but to further explain I utilize Steve J. Stern’s discussion of historical narratives of colonization in which he points out that the dominant view of natives paints them as objects on which harm is inflicted, victims who have no role to play outside of their victimhood. Stern goes on to explain the limitations of this approach:

This one-dimensionality simplifies the process of moral denunciation and defence. But it evades the historical fact that in myriad of ways Amerindians engaged – assisted, resisted, appropriated, subverted, redeployed – European colonial projects, utopias, and relationships. This history of engagement made it impossible for Europeans to act simply as moral villains and heroes, free to shape a blank social slate in accord with inner will, impulse, or conscience. The Europeans acted as seekers of wealth, status and souls caught up in complex struggles for control with indigenous peoples and amongst themselves. (Stern 23)

Stern reminds us that even though harm was and continues to be inflicted on subaltern groups, they should not be viewed as docile, helpless, or accepting. The missionary narratives that I have discussed work hard to portray them as such. Davis, in particular, highlights the helplessness of those she is helping, as if they would never be capable of surviving without her intervention. This is not the case, as Achebe so perfectly demonstrates through Okonkwo's resistance. Okonkwo's resistance again draws us back to the importance of varied perspective and the significance of narrative authority. His resistance allows for a greater understanding of the native experience in relation to the missionary interaction while still demonstrating that ultimately the subaltern cannot speak or be heard in a meaningful way.

I certainly make no claim of originality for making the missionary/imperial connection. Countless scholars have examined the link between imperial ideology, colonialism, and missionary activity. Additionally, I do not suggest that ending missionary activity is the solution for the end of imperial subjugation and remedy for harms inflicted. I do suggest that current missionary work continues colonial harm and imperial ideology indoctrination. I suggest that for the process of healing to begin, missionary work cannot continue and that by ignoring these missionary narrative tropes that have continued, mostly unchecked, into present day missionaries are free to continue

inflicting damage. The missionary narrative is a powerful tool that has largely been neglected in postcolonial study. The tropes I have pointed out throughout this project are tropes that are easily utilized for subjugation through indoctrination and for shielding the missionaries who engage in such activity by portraying them strictly as benevolent. By challenging these representations, scholars and artists can contribute to this necessary change by identifying areas for missionaries to reform. I encourage postcolonial or decolonial scholars to examine these narratives across these various genres to find a deeper understanding of the harm inflicted and to challenge these narratives, recognize the patterns across time and place that continue into the present, hold those in positions of narrative authority accountable, and create platforms upon which the subaltern narrative can not only be heard but understood.

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