



Transcending Genealogical Boundaries in *Vicious*: A Postcolonial Reading

Ayesha Areej

Bushra Naz

MPhil Scholar, Department of English Literature, IUB
Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, IUB

Abstract

Essentially relentless and hegemonic in nature and extent, settler colonialism regulates its continuity through the occupation, and exploitation of lands and possessions. Settler colonialism operates in terms of interlocking structures of oppression built-in race, wealth, etc., in tandem with a process of decolonization to operate to transcend this erasure by means of resistance in greater force. This conflict unsettles the native's genealogical relationship with history and culture and problematizes the issues of provenance. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, presents the imperial world as compartmentalized while Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism and Elimination of the Native* blurs the division of good and evil i.e. colonizer and the colonized, of this Manichaeic world by expounding how violence is a weapon of the colonizer, which according to Fanon, is later stolen by the colonized and the clash between them though leads to decolonization yet turns them into an obsession for each other that Schwab's *Vicious* complicates. I argue that the characters of V.E. Schwab's *Vicious* represent the compartments of the colonial world; Eli and Victor represent the colonizer while Serena and Sydney represent the colonized and their aggressive confrontation leads the novel's narrative towards decolonization yet renders them as Fanonian ghosts, in tandem questioning the credibility of the perceived good of the colonizer and enforced evil of the colonized.

Keywords: Fanon, Wolfe, decolonization, genocide, assimilation, settler colonialism

Introduction

Essentially relentless and hegemonic in nature and extent, settler colonialism regulates its continuity through occupation, exploitation of lands and possessions. Settler colonialism operates in terms of interlocking structures of oppression built in race, wealth etc., in tandem a process of decolonization too operates to transcend this erasure by means of resistance in greater force. This conflict unsettles the native's genealogical relationship with history and culture and problematizes the issues of provenance. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, presents the imperial world as compartmentalised while Wolfe's essay *Settler Colonialism and Elimination of the Native*, blurs the division of good and evil i.e. coloniser and the colonised, of this Manichaeic world by expounding how violence is a weapon of the coloniser, which according to Fanon, is later stolen by the colonised and the clash between them though leads to decolonisation yet turns them into obsession for each other. Wolfe argues that the elimination of indigenous natives was a structure rather than an event; it was carried out step by step, altering its nature as the need arose. He explains how indigeneity was eliminated through execution i.e. direct killing, removal i.e. displacement of the indigenous natives and assimilation i.e. merging them into the empire. Fanon's theory of violence and decolonisation complements Wolfe's logic of elimination and focuses on the



experience of the colonizer and colonised to see how both go through this crisis of provenance and origin. I argue that the characters of V.E. Schwab's *Vicious* represent the compartments of the colonial world; Eli and Victor represent the coloniser while Serena and Sydney represent the colonised and their aggressive confrontation leads the novel's narrative towards decolonisation yet renders them as Fanonian ghosts, in tandem questioning the credibility of the perceived good of the coloniser and enforced evil of the colonised. Keeping in mind the speculative features of the novel, it is possible to develop an imperialistic narrative revolving around racism and othering based on the actions and motives of the characters involved.

Literature Review

Ajayi (2018), carries out a hermeneutic study of literature to expound on the usage of the monster metaphor as a violent offender in various literary works, including *Vicious*, and points to its implications in psychotherapy and forensic science. He asserts that "because a 'good' person is unaware of the monster within him does not mean the monster does not exist" (Ajayi, 2018). He enforces that every human has a monster within and merely uses the violent offender as a tool for projection and in the process dehumanises him. The Violent offender is thus "no longer seen to be human because he has perpetrated what another considers outside the realm of humanness" (Ajayi, 2018). This suggests "that the metaphor monster allows for the violent offender's human dignity to be stripped off him" (Ajayi, 2018). This, Ajayi entails, has implications in the realm of psychotherapy as psychotherapists may also be subject to this impaired dichotomy of human and monster. He suggests that a better understanding of the metaphor monster may "challenge(s) 'black and white' thinking" (Ajayi, 2018) which unfairly suggests that "to be human is thus equated to being 'good'" (Ajayi, 2018) and aid both the psychotherapists and the violent offender in separating the evil part from the human and understanding that the monster is "universal, and an inherent aspect of our humanness" (Ajayi, 2018) ultimately brings the violent and the victim at a point of distinct identity to justify the conflict. The scope of this study is limited to a social scenario and the concepts of morality, bending away from a politic perspective, which I elaborate in this article with reference to *Vicious*.

On the contrary, considering *Vicious* as a fantasy literature, Maroua (2018), conducts a psychoanalytical reading of *Vicious* which states that the novel has no presence of good in either Eli or Victor rather theirs is a battle of "Evil versus Evil" (Maroua, 2018) in Freudian perspective of the formation of desire due to a sense of lack and loss. Victor's lack of a 'loved object' in the form of his parents' neglect leads to his jealousy towards Eli. While Eli's loss of his girlfriend and best friend creates a void in him that he desperately seeks to fill and the supposed responsibility given to him by God himself fits this emptied mould of his perfectly. She maintains that the battle between good and evil is "a fight with no victorious" (Maroua, 2018) thereby problematizing this Manichean division. Following this, Maroua (2018) argues that "it does not matter what are your beliefs, thoughts and ideologies, because at the end of the day, each and every one of us is harbouring a monster, a sleeping devil waiting to be awakened". Although this study mentions that in *Vicious* "superpowers lead to the destruction of the generated good in each and every character in the novel" (Maroua, 2018) and that a tendency towards violence is backed by "set of beliefs and desires which are normally presented as; taking control over a kingdom, a land, or even earth as



whole" as Maroua (2018) points to the possibility of a political lens, it bends its focus towards individual psychologies of the two main characters instead of observing it as a consequence of a structural, and historical phenomenon of political and power hegemony.

However, I suggest that this concept can be exploited in a political context by showcasing how the characters of *Vicious* divided into the coloniser and the colonised, end up losing sense of their origin and identity as their genealogy fades with their obsessive hatred towards once another decreasing the credibility of a Manichean division in an imperial context.

Methodology

Wolfe referring to the events that followed in the wake of the colonial settler's arrival on native land defines settler colonialism as "an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies" (2006). What commonly was popularised as an historical event is presented as a rational systematic structure aimed to achieve an imperially constructive end i.e. elimination of the native's right to land. According to Wolfe (2006) "settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory" which means keeping the native alive did more harm than good to the settlers as the natives had developed cultural ties to their land, making it a communal property rather than an individual one. For them "where they are is who they are" (Wolfe, 2006). This element opposed the desire of the settlers to utilize the native land as private property. Wolfe (2006) describes this contest for land as "contest(s) for life". In contrast, Wolfe (2006) describes the systematic growth of the African population for cheap labour used as a technique of assimilation as a better alternative to elimination through mass killings as "it does not involve such a disruptive affront to the rule of law that is ideologically central to the cohesion of settler colony". Wolfe describes this elimination as "an organizing principle" rather than "a one-off event" which makes it a continual process. Wolfe (2006) describes the settler coloniser's gradual takeover of the native's land in steps. Initially, this is carried out through frontier killings, or mass murder of the native backed by the excuse of it being a work of the outlaws. This points to outright extermination of the natives. The second step is removal, or displacement in regular terms, where the natives were forced to either annex themselves with the empire or leave their lands. The third step i.e. assimilation, acted as a direct consequence of the second step. Wolfe (2006) describes assimilation as "one of a range of strategies of elimination that become favoured in particular historical circumstances". Hence, when removal was no longer possible, the borders were dissolved, and the remaining natives were made a part of the empire through coercion, and missions.

This structural elimination of the colonised native is complemented by Fanon's theory of violence who sees violence as an instrument used by the coloniser to achieve his imperial goals but also to observe how this violence perpetrates resistance between them and the colonised. He presents the colonial world as "divided into compartments" (1968) of the coloniser and the colonised; a dichotomy reflecting Manicheism. Keeping this context in mind, in his theory of violence, Fanon asserts that violence is the instrument that reduces the native to "bestiary" (1968) and simultaneously awakens the suppressed human who then uses this violence to assert his humanity. This 'seesaw' relationship is at the crux of decolonisation. He describes the coloniser as



the bringer of violence to the colonised, as can be witnessed in Wolfe's study, but he, Fanon argues, becomes complacent and ignores the possibility of his own violence turned against him, as all the colonised native learns from a coloniser is the effective use of violent force to achieve a desired end. Fanon explicates this dichotomy in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.

There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect (Fanon, 1986).

Furthermore Fanon, like Wolfe, divides the colonised into categories i.e. the common native and the Elite native. Fanon's description of a "national bourgeoisie" also holds great significance in this study. Fanon defines a national bourgeoisie as an intermediary whose "duty" as Aghamelu and Ejike describe is "to ensure that colonial administration runs smoothly and effectively" (Aghamelu & Ejike, 2017). Fanon concludes with the increase in violence of the coloniser, the natives' "struggle for freedom" escalates and eventually both become each other's preoccupation. Obsessed with violence their actions and strategies problematize the question of their identities.

Discussion

Eli - The Eliminator

Eli Cardale, later known as Eli Ever, in Wolfe's concept, is an exterminator who represents the atrocities of frontier wars and other physical genocides carried out under imperialism (Wolfe, 2006). This method of extermination is also listed out as one of the possible ways to 'civilise' the American by Wilson as "the most effective and at the same time vastly the most economical solution of the problem" (Wilson, 1882). "These military tactics" Naz explains, "were justified as necessary based on the 'uncivilized' nature of the 'natives'" (Naz, 2022). This is what Eli's mind-set seems to be about EOs. Eli's philosophy, his ideals and his logic is also reminiscent of how a myriad of the elements such as the white man's burden, narcissism and the superiority complex, eurocentrism, racism and othering "allows the powerful states to revisit their civilization mission under human rights, moral disciplining, and social wellbeing of these poor nations" (Naz, 2021) thereby problematizing a Eurocentric Manichean division.

Eli is an ambitious and narcissistic individual who is described as "precocious, frighteningly charming, the kind of guy who got away with everything, thanks to his good genes and quick wits" by Victor, his best friend at their first encounter, on whom he had started to "grow" (15). Yet Victor's observations also describe him as "wrong" (16). He could catch "moment(s) when his roommate's face and his words, his look and his meaning, would not line up" (16). These fleeting instances fascinated Victor, much in the same way the native is taken in by the charm of the Coloniser at their first contact. To the native, the coloniser is a source of fascination and fear; something that Bhabha (1984) calls ambivalence that continues till decolonization occurs and "destabilizes the identity of both" (Naz, 2022).

During class, when Eli is to choose the topic for his thesis, he chooses to explore the existence of EOs (Extra Ordinaries). This "Dangerous, and hungry" (24) intention of his to 'discover' the existence of EOs which later turns into a genocide of the specie is reminiscent of "...the European sovereigns who laid claim to the territories of non-Christian (or, in later secularized versions, uncivilized) inhabitants of the rest of the world: justifications for this claim



were...the doctrine of discovery” (Wolfe, 2006) The significance that land held for the coloniser, in the context of the novel, the existence of EOs and the power associated with them did for Eli. For him, “EOness” (172) equalled a deterrent for his desire to dominate which stimulates him into carrying out a genocide of the specie. Thus, Eos “were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White, and otherwise eliminated “as the holders of the powers but as EOs (Wolfe, 2006).

It is shown early on in the novel that Eli's plan is heavily dependent on his belief in religion. As when Serena asks him, who gave him the right to play “judge and jury and executioner”, Eli's answer is “God” (189-190). In fact, he rationalises his massacre of the EOs as a purpose given to him by God himself, to purge the Earth of the unnaturalness that EOs are characterised with. This is a reflection of what Grewcock (2018) calls, ““civilising” native peoples through Christianity”. It reminds one piercingly of the White Man's Burden according to which, the Coloniser, the Christian, the better human, has a responsibility to help the barbarian, the monster, the EO, be a better, enlightened, and civilised being. Althusser (2014) further adds to this point by listing out the “Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)”, especially education and religion used to disseminate this ideology to the natives. A question may be raised in this context; 'what if the monster is unable to be civilised?' The answer would probably be, 'Then rid the world of him' and that is what Eli and the coloniser did as to them the native “is alleged unruly, uncontrollable, uncivilized, disordered, unachievable and evil” (Naz, 2022). Yet Ajayi (2018) disagrees with this view when he points to the universality of the monster and advocates that it is a part of “humanness”.

Eli prefers to call his killings "removals" because "It made the targets sound less like humans, which they weren't really" claiming that it is only a matter of "semantics" (174) ignoring how “renaming is central to the cadastral effacement/replacement” (Wolfe, 2006) and how the term changes meaning and purpose of his murderous spree. To the people, the media and himself, Eli Cardale is a hero. Yet one is not to forget that Eli himself is an EO, which presents a new perspective on his perceived heroism; if Eli has the same attributes as the EOs he is seeking to exterminate, does he deserve to live? Satre (1968) elaborates on this question by asking the coloniser, “Can he not here recognize his own cruelty turned against himself?” What right, then, does he have to judge them? A question which Sydney Clarke, an EO asks Eli, and the colonised, once awakened from their slumber, aware of their humanity as Fanon describes it, ask the coloniser. And which the coloniser is, to this day, unable to answer.

Eli seems to think that the privilege he has over others, his power of healing, is a gift from God because it is “reflexive” (134) i.e. cannot harm others. And that it has something to do with his nature-inherent superiority. Aghamelu and Ejike (2017) confirm this superiority complex of the coloniser that Eli mirrors here as: “Narcissism and Chauvinism permeate the consciousness of the settlers”. Yet Victor tries to break Eli's fixation with intrinsic superiority and reminds him time and again, it has nothing to do with "nature", "It's not about God. It's about us. The way we think" (105). This points to the reality of Eli's and the Coloniser's claims regarding their superiority; that it is not inherent but made up and that he “does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor” (Fanon, 1968). It is due to their imposition of their Eurocentric discourse and violent methods that the idea of 'We're built different' is instilled into the minds of the colonised and the coloniser himself. This superiority is based on the “ideas about what we” (Colonial West) do and what they” (Orient) cannot do or understand as the European thinker or man does” (Naz & Ahmad, 2022). It is to be noted that when Eli is confronted



several times by Victor about how God did not privilege him, he astutely answers "He did. He would. He had to." (160). Eli's mental state here is mirrored by that of Winston Churchill as described by Islam that it is "captured by such descriptors as 'racism' and 'religious bias'. What this recognition of 'false' cognition captures is the fact that the subjective and intangible feelings and beliefs held by people can affect the objective validity of an action undertaken with the influence of those beliefs." (Islam, 2019) Thus, Eli too, twists his own tendency towards violence into another gift given to him by God to make him strong enough to carry out his harsh mission. "A grim task" (125) as he calls it that he has to undertake despite how cruel and toll-taking it can be. A review by thequirkybooknerd.wordpress.com advocates this point:

Eli believes that he is doing right, that he is being heroic and fulfilling God's will, and it would be impossible for anyone working under that type of extreme delusion to see their own—or potentially someone else's—immorality (2016).

Barta (2008) also emphasises this point by stating, "the killing-whether officially sanctioned or not was understood as necessary to the establishment of the new economic and social order". Similarly for Eli, his 'cleansing' is approved by God, he "didn't feel like there was any evil in himself. If anything, he felt hands, strong and steady, guiding him when he pulled the trigger". In fact, to him, it "felt like faith" (168).

Eli calls his 'responsibility' a "mission" (173). A word that Liebersohn (2016) argues "was not just a metaphor for the process of bringing outsiders into a scientific and secular civilization, but referred to an actual ambition to make converts for Christianity", which points to the word having an ulterior motive. Eli also uses this word as a mitigating disguise for his genocide of the EOs. A reflection of the reasoning of the coloniser can be glimpsed in this particular narrative of Eli's. In various colonies, missionaries were sent to educate the native population. As being the privileged race, they had a responsibility to make the less privileged better, to free the native from the "thralldom of the tribe" (Wolfe, 2006). They used to call these institutions 'mission'. Apart from a religious motive, under the guise of educating the natives, they were exterminated physically and mentally.

Eli also explicitly dehumanises the EOs for "settler colonialism has (have) typically employed the organizing grammar of race" (Wolfe, 2006) which as Brown in her review recognises, is his want for dominance and an excuse for his killings (2018). Eli's narrative here exposes that "Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them" (Satre 1968). "Eli (He) called EOs shadows, shaped like the people who made them but grey inside", "hollow" (150) and "a devil wearing another's (Victor's) skin" (135). He does not see EOs as humans. Just as the Coloniser refuses to see the native as human. This dehumanisation allows him to justify his violent treatment of the EOs, as morals only apply to human and the EOs lie outside this boundary. Similarly, in the tongue of the Occident, the Orient is a barbarian; a monster that needs taming. The Coloniser looks down at the native as he would look down at an animal; sometimes weak, sometimes threatening; a tameable monster. Although Eli is also an EO, he forces himself to believe that he is "different" (150) and "stronger" (173) while other EOs are "wrong" (151). This leads him to create a binary system of Self versus other. When Serena, a normal EO, puts herself and Eli in the same category, Eli's reaction is one of annoyance as he rambles "Us. Us. Us. What on earth is (was) happening?" (197) Morrison (2017) sees this as the coloniser's desire to assert his normalcy, the he is not a beast like the native, in his case, like the EO. He doesn't want to be considered one of



the EOs, or an EO to be considered the same as him, as to him “such a mismatch would be perverse and unnatural” (Naz, 2022) which is unreasonable based on the fact that he after all is an EO. This points to his imperfect sense of self “for denial is always a retroactive process; a half acknowledgement of that Otherness which has left its traumatic mark” (Bhabha, 2003). Serena, on the other hand, calls this desire of Eli’s a “complex” of wanting to be “in control” as was the case with the Coloniser (224).

Similar to Wolfe’s conclusion of an ‘eliminator’, Eli’s desire of dominance through physical elimination is rendered futile as he is hindered by the law. In addition to this, his obsession with murdering EOs due to which “this imperious being, crazed by his absolute power and by the fear of losing it, no longer remembers clearly that he was once a man; he takes himself for a horsewhip or a gun” (Satre, 1968) is cut short when ‘decolonisation’ takes place due to the reaction of Sydney and Serena to his dehumanisation of them. He loses all the support of the police with Serena’s death and is locked up in a jail where he belonged. He too becomes a ghost of Fanon, in his aggression for he loses his sense of self and only views himself as a weapon of God.

Victor - The Assimilator

If one is to put Victor Vale in an imperial context, one would call him an assimilator. According to Wolfe, assimilation is a technique through which the native’s capabilities are exploited, his distinct identity is merged with that of the empire’s and his land is taken away, little by little. Assimilation was used in opposition to the straight forward killings that Eli also carries out. Although, theoretically it was advocated by the coloniser to be in the benefit of the colonised, yet Wolfe proves how practically it was not. According to him, assimilation in its subtle ways also leads to the elimination of the native (Wolfe, 2006). Grewcock (2018) adds to Wolfe’s point, by calling assimilation a “civilising policy” and stating, “Assimilation maintained the colonial practice of separate systems of regulation and control of Indigenous peoples”. These ideologies to ‘civilise’ the native, according to Althusser (2014) were “beneath the ruling ideology” and indeed they worked in the coloniser’s benefit. What they were actually doing, especially in settler colonies was to turn the native into a ‘dead’ object that they can later use in whatever way they and their people desired. They “came (come) to believe that the domestication of the “inferior races” will come about by the conditioning of their reflexes” (Satre, 1968). Similarly, Victor although seems to be on the EO’s side, yet from the very start his intentions have a exploitative tinge. When Eli discloses his intentions of exploring the existence of EOs, “Something small and dangerous takes (was taking) shape in Victor as Eli spoke. An idea. A way to twist Eli’s discovery into his, or at least, into theirs.” (38) In fact, it is on his instigation that Eli decides to ‘cross the line’ in the wake of his thesis. A review at publishers weekly describes, “Victor isn’t a particularly nice man, but he has enough conscience left to know that Eli needs to be stopped” (2013) Yet, much like Eli, a darker side, a “metallic glint”, in Eli’s words, to which he was “drawn”, can be glimpsed in him (161). This is complemented by his power to control, not ‘inflict’, pain which can be seen as a reflection of his true nature; controlling in an ultimately damaging way.

Victor, through his assimilatory tactics, succeeds in making Sydney believe that he is on her side, by calling her power a “gift” (135) and by asserting that he wants to protect her and the other EOs from Eli. Yet his thought process exposes the real reason for his appeal to “work together”, which is wanting to retain the “cooperation” of “the loyal guard and the impossible girl” (205-206) to achieve his personal ambitions of killing Eli. Thus, to him, “...his (my) friend is part of his (my) scheme..” (Fanon, 1968). In contrast, to Sydney, Victor becomes “safe” (273) as she



tells Mitch "I am not afraid of him". But Mitch's warning that "There are no good men in this game" (219), exposes he is merely the better of the two evils or perhaps even worse. As Brown recognises in her review that Victor's claim to be a protector of EOs is a mere "side dish" to his real purpose of enacting revenge and killing Eli (2018).

Although, Victor presents himself to the "law" protecting the EOs from Eli's "violence", it is clear that these two characters and their motives are "inexplicably linked" as law needs violence to prove its worth in a society "as regulator(s) of sovereign claim" (Miéville, 2006). Hence, Victor's blatant opposition to Eli, a cold blooded murderer to the EO specie, allows him to stand in good light. Eli's "loss becomes (is) his (my) gain" (177). In the same wake, assimilation being in opposition to the blatant genocide of the natives, is viewed as more humane; an attempt at saving the native as Wilson calls it "the only course the coloniser's (our) sense of duty and humanity could...entertain" (Wilson, 1882). Yet, as Wolfe exposes, it actually works in tandem to the physical genocide for their objectives ultimately align in favour of the Empire. As both Victor's deceptive "native voluntarism" and Eli's "murderous activities" are to exploit EOs for personal gain; be it revenge or mental satisfaction (Wolfe, 2006). Maroua (2018) advocates this connection by terming the conflict of Eli and Victor as "Evil versus Evil", blending the supposed boundary between the two "superheroes without empathy" (Dan, 2019).

Victor's exploitative and manipulative nature is further revealed when we are given a glimpse into his opinion regarding EOs, which unexpectedly is similar to that of Eli's. Contrary to his apparent 'saviour of the EOs' image, he calls them "damaged", "weapon" and "things that could be bent and twisted and broken and used" (230). This dehumanisation renders Victor in the same category as Eli. A review at amyjsnealice.com advocates this view by stating "Eli and Victor are both morally grey and questionable characters who have committed atrocious acts" (2019). Neville (1947) describes this mind-set of Victor as a form of imperialism where "no backsliding, changes or let-down behind Authority's back must be permitted...the end in view will justify the means employed". Like Eli, he sees EOs as the Other to his Self despite being an EO himself.

Victor's power to inflict subtle pain in the people around that "induce(s) a subconscious aversion to his presence." (226) is a complement to his role of elimination as it helps him have subconscious hold over the target of his gaze created by fear and powerlessness which. This is a "sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha, 1984). Victor's enticement of Dominic to help him through threats like "I'm giving you a choice," and "Go back inside and wait to die. Or go home and wait to die. Or stay with me and live." (251) is reflected in Wilson's view on how the coloniser's treatment of the native had left him "in a better condition than ever before to receive and profit by the assistance which our sense of duty should teach us to extend to him" (Wilson, 1882). In actuality, Victor merely exploits Dominic's needs and weakness to bend him into his very own 'weapon' as does the coloniser make a tool of the colonised in the guise of bettering his condition. This points to the Western Narrative of 'protection' according to which the native 'needs' the coloniser to survive. While in actuality, it is a technique to gain power through "political, intellectual and moral control" (Naz & Ahmad, 2022). This, according to Grewcock (2018) "strip(s) them [the natives] of their agency". In this imperialistic context, the native's naturally deficient self needs the civiliser's superior logic in order to live and he, too, is left with a similar choice: 'listen to the master, or die' or in Wolfe's words "have our settler world, but lose your



indigenous soul” (Wolfe, 2006). Hence in Victor’s narrative “Violence may not always be used, but it is always implicit” (Miéville, 2006).

Victor, although seemingly a saviour, also resembles “an imperialist intent on claiming, conquering, and colonizing another’s world” (Naz, 2022). He exploits the EOs gravely albeit his way is more implicit than Eli’s. In reality, Victor can be seen to be “completely possessed” (Fanon, 1968) by his desire to enact his vengeance on Eli. Yet this obsessive pursuit of his and the exploitation of EOs he carries out in its wake are rendered futile as he loses his life at Eli’s hands at the end. This is a reflection of how Fanon describes that Violence in an imperial world turns it wielders into “djinns” (Fanon, 1968) or ghosts; obsessed with each other without an end in sight till everything is lost; a narrative that flawlessly reflects Victor and Eli’s obsessive ambitions regarding each other and the EOs.

Eos - The Colonised Natives

EOs, in the strict context of the novel, are an altered form of human beings seen as an 'exotic' specie which reflects the situation of the natives in an imperial context. According to the findings of Eli's research, the EOs lose their "souls" and gain supernatural powers after going through Near Death Experience (NDE). This NDE analysed in its simplest form is the line where humans turn to monsters which, in an imperialistic context, represents the point where the native owners of the land, become the colonised. It is significant that the natives had always been humans, but were turned to something less than humanity but at the same time more the human; inhuman in all its senses, when the Coloniser arrived (Coates, 2017). Professor Lyne had also added to the research, by introducing some additional terms: "Post-Traumatic Death Disorder" (172) which refers to the strong connection of becoming an EO to extreme trauma which reflects the trauma that accompanies the state of being colonised. This trauma is not only physical but also mental, akin to death; the transition from one life to another, from the life of freedom to that of slavery. As in Fanon’s words, “Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together.” (Fanon, 1968) Another term is “Rebirth Principle, or the patients’ desire either to escape the life they had before, or to redefine themselves based on their ability.” (173) This mirrors the condition of the natives post colonisation and points to the ambivalence of “colonial mimicry” they face that Bhabha (1984, p.126) describes as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite”.

Despite having powers that normal people lack, EOs are discriminated against throughout the novel. They are despised as a race to an unimaginable extent. The plight of the EOs, hence can be categorised as racism and is reminiscent of the racism exerted on the natives of an imperial colony during and after its rule. Race, Coates (2017) argues is advocated as being “somehow a feature of the natural world and racism the predictable result of it” which benefits certain ethnic groups, especially those in power. In this light, the natives of a colony, who were a different race from 'white' were always inferior. The whites were “rich” in all its senses merely because “they (you) were (are) white” (Fanon, 1968) thereby “identifying the dependency of the poor nations upon the rich” (Naz, 2021). The Eurocentric belief that white is the standard advocated the ideology that white is natural, colour is not; if you want to be natural, be like the white and hence “the advance of civilization was a triumphant progress, morally justified and probably inevitable” (Barta, 2005). Yet complete merging was impossible. On this basis, the natives were dehumanised;



as are the EOs on the basis of their difference from the 'standard' human. Regarding this Fanon states:

When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. (Fanon, 1968, p.40)

Serena - Journey of the Elite Native to Enlightenment

Eli is a stout believer of the opinion that all EOs must die yet he retains Serena Clarke, who can control the police for him because of her power to control minds. Serena is the 'native intellectual' of Fanon, "who knows how to fabricate the colonized from a subject position to an agentive object" (Naz, 2022) and helps the coloniser gain trust of the internal and external forces of the colony. Her power complements her role to which Fanon provides a colonial context: "the agents of government" where agents are the police and the government is Eli, "speak the language of pure force". "The intermediary" that is Serena, "does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; she (he) shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet she (he) is the bringer of violence" (Fanon, 1968). But as the intellectual native is not a mere lifeless puppet, Serena also proves to be more than Eli's right-hand woman. Eli's self-made, self-righteous world is confronted by Serena, who despite being his accomplice puts forth bitter truths that are hard for him to swallow. These questions are applicable in the imperialistic context because a discriminated and colonised native would also present similar questions to the Coloniser. Thus, through the character of Serena, the novel presents a counter discourse to the imperial one that Eli imposes. She asks him essential questions, which the other EOs are not strong enough to ask, and the answers to which leave noticeable cracks in his 'perfect' reasoning. At one point when Eli claims that being an EO, she shouldn't exist, she counters by questioning "I'm dangerous. I shouldn't exist. But what gives you the right to kill me?" To this Eli's answer is "Because I can" (184). which is a suggestion towards him abusing his power to reach selfish ends. Clearly just because one can is not enough of a reason to kill someone. Yet this is the sole reason why most genocides were carried out, whether in a colonial context or outside it. Eli's straight forward answers and Serena's witty counters represent how ridiculous the coloniser's logic seems to the colonised native.

Although Serena realises her fallacy at the end of the novel, and decides to disobey Eli, the coloniser, she loses her life. From the point of contact with Eli, Serena's identity is stained to the point that she becomes a 'ghost' in Fanon's terms. Eli bends her opinion about EOs to his own and turns her into a puppet of his regime, which ultimately takes her life.

Sydney - Journey of the Exploited native to Decolonisation

Sydney is the representation of the colonised native in Fanon's terms. While Sydney is a young teenage girl, who was shot by Eli for being an EO. Yet she also counters Eli's allegations of "Your power is wrong, and it makes you a danger" by reminding him of the reality that "She's (I'm) not the one holding a gun" (125). Something, the ruling coloniser also needs to be reminded of as it is him who is holding the gun, who possess control and power over the native, not vice versa. After this incident, Sydney's life is turned upside down even though she was living quite normally before, even as an EO. This brings to the forefront the question "when do we stop being human?" (Margaret, 2019) and refers to the fact that it is merely Eli's perspective that turns EOs into monsters and, as Fanon argues, his actions that drive them to extreme measures. This stance of Eli mirrors the ideology of the coloniser that "allowed the savage, within culture itself, to be



isolated from civilized man” (Claude, 1963). The discrimination that Sydney faces as a young EO, can be seen from the changes she develops over time and is akin to the one faced by a native at the hands of the coloniser since the moment he is colonised. As according to Liebersohn (2016) “civilizing process at its most aggressive attempted to bring about a fundamental psychological transformation of peoples not yet integrated into modern European culture”. The trauma she faces at her first contact with Eli's world of imperial control and extermination, results in her ‘losing innocence’. As Victor observes “She’d been betrayed, shot, saved, healed, hurt, healed again, forced to resurrect two men, only to witness the reassassination of one of them.” and he admits that she had been dragged into all this by “Eli and then by Victor” (229). Yet nowhere does any of them feel responsible for Sydney’s ‘damaged’ life as the native “is not only physically and socio-economically colonized, but even their experiences as to colonial oppressions are obfuscated by imperious justifications (Naz & Ahmad, 2022). Wolfe stresses on focusing on the degrading effects of colonialism as imposed by both Eli and Victor instead of comparing them by stating “Disdaining unseemly comparative evaluations—“which is worse?”—between (to stay with the US case) Indian dispossession and Black slavery, we should delineate their mutuality”(Wolfe, 2013). As in addition to Eli’s murderous pursuit, Victor, had also played a part in taking the kid out of her through his “pragmatic execution, his promises and his threats” (229) till she becomes aggressive enough to cheerfully exclaim about Eli, “I hope he[Victor] hurts him... a lot”. (218) This transition of her from being exploited by violence to becoming violent is stated by Satre (1968) in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* that “The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When this rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self”.

Sydney also longs to “belong” (267), a desire persistent in the native whose land, identity and life have been stripped away. She is afraid of being left alone in a world where “she would be running or maybe she would be killed, too” (248); a world that would never accept her. In her own homeland, she would become a stranger; a refugee. Barta (2008) reflects these feelings of Sydney when she talks about the condition of aborigines in an imperialistic world, “Aborigines could hardly envisage a future in such a cataclysmic world”. Sydney not only mirrors the feeling of the natives under an exploitative and colonial regime but also presents a narrative of them finding “their lost self-respect, courage and their sense of self-worth” (Fashina, 1989) that leads to decolonisation. This is reflected in the fact that although Victor thinks Sydney “wasn’t normal” (230) yet till the end of the novel, she proves to be the most normal and humane character; just like Mitch who is a human. The similarities in Mitch and Sydney shatter the stereotypes both Eli and Victor have about EOs. Sydney has a soul, she is not “hollowed” (271) and just as much a human as Mitch is. Which is a strong reminder to the colonial world of the past and the neo-colonial world of today; the natives, the coloured, the powerless are just as much human as any other and “that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner” (Fanon, 1968). Which leads them to fight, improve and be better as Sydney does by confronting her sister Serena by telling her “I don’t feel broken...And even if I am, I can fix other people” (270). Sydney’s power of bringing the dead to life complements her role as the native, as although she is viewed as inferior, her power bestows her the self-worth that Fanon argues the native needs for successful liberation (Fanon, 1968). Although, Sydney had always been subversive to her sister, her standoff with her is reflected in Fanon’s (1968) words that he states about a native who finally stands up for himself and realises



that “my life is worth as much as the settler’s, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone”. At this confrontation by Sydney, Serena, whom Eli had managed to convince into helping him kill EOs, even her own sister, realizes “the falseness of Eli’s (his) theory” (Fanon, 1968) that “Maybe Eli was wrong and all EOs weren’t broken” (271). She witnesses that Sydney “wasn’t truly dead. This Sydney was alive in a way the other had never been. It shone through her skin” (271). This is where she begins to doubt Eli’s words which according to Fanon (1968) is the first step towards decolonisation. According to Fanon, it is very important for the colonised to realize his own humanity to be able to fight off the coloniser. Once the native realises he can have as much agency as the coloniser, that is when the process of decolonisation starts as does the countdown to Eli’s doom. Yet with Eli’s end, comes their own; Serena is burned and Sydney is scarred forever as “both oppressor and oppressed are subject to the same oppression, one is its agent and the other its object” (Naz, 2022).

Sydney’s unrelenting pursuit to break free of Eli’s destructive colonial regime, although is successful yet her identity as a human is altered forever and she becomes a ‘ghost’. The colonial world takes the lives of Serena and Victor, the people she cared for. Her ‘EOness’ has become a part of her identity as even at the end of the novel, Victor’s influence on her is undying. Although she questions the point of their feverish battle, she admits the inevitability of it as the moment of the coloniser’s arrival on native land, their clash becomes fate.

Conclusion

Colonisation and decolonisation are presented as processes bloodied by melancholy and violence by Wolfe and Fanon. Destruction, pain and futility is reflected in all four narratives which is complemented by the novel’s end where Eli ends up in jail while Victor is killed. On the other hand, Serena is burned and Sydney is a child with her innocence lost and scarred forever. This points as to how their obsessive aggression for each other turns them into ghosts, the difference between the colonizer and the colonized becomes fuzzy and shadowy, literally and metaphorically, thereby problematizing their identity, history and origin.

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