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**THE CONCEPT OF THE SELF AND THE OTHER: A
POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF SIDDHARTH KARA'S COBALT
RED: HOW THE BLOOD OF CONGO POWERS OUR LIVES**



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Abstract

This thesis explores the postcolonial notion of Self and Other in the Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives, by Siddharth Kara. The study considers the text as a narrative non-fiction to be a part of English literature as a discourse system, as it relies on testimony, description of the setting, symbolism, recollection of history and moral statement to represent the current cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The research fills a gap in the field of postcolonial studies, which has had little literary focus on extractive capitalism and critical mineral economies. The study examines the concept of representation, dehumanization, ambivalence, and subaltern voice, through a qualitative close reading of the texts, drawing on the work of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The analysis reveals that Kara represents the powerful Other, a global technological world, multinational corporations, and the consumers of technology, whereas the Congolese miners, children, women, displaced families, and mining communities are marginalized as Other. The study reveals the reliance on invisible labour, poisonous environments, physical pain and past exploitation for modern advancement, clean energy and digital comfort. It also asserts that Cobalt Red breaks with moral distance, as the ordinary lives of consumers are intermingled with Congolese suffering, but that it poses questions of mediation, as the voice of the oppressed is heard in an outside voice. Cobalt Red is an important postcolonial work that demonstrates colonial power structures' continuity in twenty-first century extractive capitalism, the thesis argues. Thus it extends the scope of postcolonial criticism into the world of narrative non-fiction, to bring the latter into contemporary discussions of representation.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Self and Other, Othering, Representation, Extractive Capitalism, Subaltern Voice, Dehumanization..

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores Siddharth Kara's Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives (2023) using the postcolonial lens of the concept of Self and Other. This text is selected because of its contribution in introducing a new extractive crisis in the field of literary and cultural studies. Cobalt is typically mentioned in political economy, business ethics, environmental science and human rights discourses; however, Kara's text is worthy of consideration as a story which stages facts in terms of scenes, voices, spatial mobility, personal experiences, history, and moral coercion. The book not only informs us of the situation in Congolese mines, it constructs a portrait of the Congo, Congolese, and the world, which relies on Congo. In this study, Cobalt Red is instead considered a "cultural text" to "make visible" the postcolonial relations of power, as they are posited in the narrative and questioned.

The continuing effects of empire are the subject of postcolonial literary studies. They explore the impact of colonialism on the identities, institutions, language, culture and economies that continue to influence them even in times of formal independence. Colonialism has not just affected politics, but it has also influenced classifications, designating some people as advanced; others as backward; some spaces as valuable; others as available; some lives as protected; others as vulnerable. Icaza, R. (2018). The 'other' is the other as the central part of this historical arrangement, as the main part of the binary of the Self and the Other. Glick Schiller, N. (2012). The Self is the dominant position that is authoritative, rational, progressive and legitimates its moral. Konings, M. (2015). The Other is the subject (or community) that has been made peripheral, dependent, exploited, voiceless of the subject community or community of subjects. This divide is still emerging in the current global system, especially as wealth remains extremely concentrated at the top and harm remains concentrated in the traditionally colonised places, as has been pointed out recently.

The theory of representation that is presented in Edward Said's story is very much supported in this study. Said's definition of power is imperialism and its accompanying power to define the Other. Kennedy, V. (2013). It is not only armies or administrations who rule the colonized world, but it is the dominant centre which makes it knowable, describable, classifiable and interpretable. Even if Said's work tends to be read as "of the East", his understanding of representation is relevant to thinking about Africa, particularly when it is constantly talked about in terms of its lack, violence, dependence and availability of resources. It's here that Said's theory of representation comes in that helps to explain the depiction of the Congo by Cobalt Red and the representation of Africa in general. It also reveals how, in the process, Kara challenges the enduring systems which have seen African lands primarily as a source of wealth for others, and not as places that are lived in, and have a history, and rights.

The concept of the "damaged body" of Frantz Fanon can also be used for the investigation as throughout the investigation, Kara constantly mentions the damaged body. Fanon demonstrates the colonial body's stigmatization through the body of the colonized, and its material and psychological vulnerability. Ureña, C. (2019). In Cobalt Red, the bodies of miners and children are memories – the price of global battery economy. It's not just a fact, people get tired and ill and get injured and get hungry and get poisoned and get frightened. The framework of Fanon could be applied to analysing the corporeal corporeality of Otherness through this study. They are marginalised as an economically poor subject and they are in a place where they are forced to become an extraction machine and a proof of dehumanisation.

The ambivalence, stereotype of Homi K. Bhabha creates an additional level to the relationship of the Self and the Other. The Other is Otherness that is needed for the colonial discourse to be colonial discourse. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). Colonial discourse is an attempt to "fix" the Other in the repetition of images, while also needing the Other to be an Other. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). This results in an unstable relation. The Congolese miners have been purged as social actors, but remain as a resource in the cobalt economy. The Congo is on the edge of being forgotten worldwide but at the centre of digital and green technologies. This is a contradiction which is relevant to this present study. It displays the Other not as the Other in the modern world. The Other is more often than not the condition which makes modernity possible for the Self. The researcher can reflect on this dependency in his reading practice, as a way of demonstrating it, and as something other than victim or beneficiary, using Bhabha's method.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's focus on subaltern speech is also apropos as Cobalt Red is very much testimony-driven. Kara's movie is a record of the voices and experiences of the miners, families, doctors, activists, guides, and community that was impacted. The voices shatter the stillness that often lurks in the world that surrounds the mining industry. However, questions of what kind of readers read these voices arises in postcolonial criticism. Representations by an author are further complicated because he is representing the pain of an oppressed group of people to a global community. Invisibility can be challenged in the text but the narrator at the same time can be situated in an interpretive position of power. Spivak's work does help with this study in its consideration of the idea of Congolese subjects being perceived as thinking, speaking subjects or perhaps as the subjects of suffering.

1.1 Statement of the Research

While postcolonial studies have long explored the binary of Self and Other in colonial literature, recent global capitalist narrative non-fiction rarely has been analyzed as another version of coloniality. Siddharth Kara's Cobalt Red uncovers the exploitation of Congolese cobalt miners in the international cobalt market, but the literary and post-colonial aspects of the book have not received much attention. Current research largely focuses on human rights, ethical sourcing and supply-chain accountability, while neglecting the voices, witness, metaphors and representations. The current study fills in that gap by examining the ways in which the text works to define the Self (global consumers and corporations) and the Other (miners in Congo) in the present.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the representation of Congolese miners and communities as the "Other" in Cobalt Red, with a particular focus on how narratives of extraction, labor, and bodily suffering contribute to processes of Othering within contemporary global discourse.

2. To analyze the construction of the global consumer, corporate, and technological world as the “Self,” investigating how ideas of progress, modernity, and ethical innovation are discursively produced and morally legitimized in the text.

1.3 Research Questions

3. How are Congolese miners and local communities represented as the “Other” in *Cobalt Red*, and what narrative strategies are employed to depict their labor, suffering, and marginalization?

4. In what ways does the text construct the global consumer, corporate, and technological world as the “Self,” particularly through discourses of progress, development, innovation, and ethical responsibility?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important, because it moves beyond the traditional literary form of postcolonialism to the contemporary narrative non-fiction work that chronicles extractive capitalism. *Cobalt Red* is read as a cultural text that not only is integral to the global understanding of the Congo and cobalt mining, but also that of the lives of communities on the margins of technological progress. The research demonstrates that there are two competing Selves, the global consumer and corporation and the more powerful discourses of progress, and that these are represented as Selves, in contrast to the Other that is Congolese miners. The study is also a much needed contribution to the field of English studies. The existing debate on *Cobalt Red* has been largely confined to human rights and ethical sourcing, environmental damage, and supply chain accountability. While all these methods are useful, they tend to ignore aspects of the voice of the narrator and the witness, metaphor, the audience's stance, and the ethics of the representation. This work thus reveals the literary techniques used to create and disseminate information about the Congo. Moreover, the study helps current postcolonial criticism and works out of the question of whether Kara's witnessing undermines the binary of the Self and Other or, in part, reproduces it through narration of authority. It also demonstrates the relevance of English literary studies of contemporary global contexts to pressing issues like neocolonial capitalism, environmental injustice, and global responsibility.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

The focus of the present study will be *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives* (2023) by Siddharth Kara and proceed to analyze it based on the postcolonial notion of Self and Other. It is centered on the representation of Congolese miners, children, women, displaced communities, global consumers, corporations and extractive power. The study does not include any economic, empirical, environmental or policy-based investigation of the cobalt mining, but is limited to literary analysis based on close reading. This research does not aim to present a historical account of colonization, although it's a colonial history that is mentioned. Nor does it test the facts of Kara's account nor propose effective changes. The focus of the discussion remains limited to the voices of the narrative, representing, the discourse, the testimony, and the construction of the Self and the Other in the selected text.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Postcolonialism is a significant theoretical framework in literary and cultural studies as it deals with the political, cultural, psychological and economic implications of colonialism. It is not just an inquiry into the post-colonial era, but it is an inquiry into the ways in which the colonial structure of representation, identity, knowledge, labour, land and power continues to be present. Nayar, P. K. (2010). Postcolonial critics contend that colonialism could not have been restricted to the condition of being an occupier of territory. Ypi, L. (2013). It also produced a system of meaning which made the coloniser the civilised, rational, modern and superior and the colonised the backward, silent, irrational, primitive, and dependent. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). It was a system of representation which gave rise to a basic dichotomy: the Self and the Other. Heller, A. (2018). This ongoing logic of colonial power is the subject of the present study, as it traces the exploitation of miners in the Congo in the context of the global supply chain for cobalt, in Siddharth Kara's *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives*.

Imperial discourse is a way of building up the non-Western world as the Other to control, interpret and dominate it, Edward Said argues. Said, E. W. (2023). In *Orientalism*, he describes Western creation of knowledge about the East and its justification of its political and cultural superiority. Said, E. W. (2023). Said's original interest is in the Middle East and Asia, but his notions are applicable to postcolonial Africa as well. African nations have been depicted in many images of poverty, violence, darkness, lack and dependency. Nothias, T. (2014). Such images are not just a depiction of Africa, but a kind of Africa in the Western

imagination. Recent scholarship also shows that these colonial patterns are also at work in the present globalization, with the African space often being referred to as a “resource frontier” rather than a rich social space. Luning, S. (2018). It's important to Cobalt Red because the DRC is depicted as the source of the modern world's cobalt.

Frantz Fanon speaks about the psychological trauma of colonialism and colonial hierarchy and its effect on the body. Bhabha, H. K. (2015). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he discusses the colonized subject's view of himself through the eyes of the colonizer. The colonized body is demarked as a body that is inferior and is made into an object that can be used, feared or controlled. Coetzee, A., & Du Toit, L. (2018). With its focus on the impact of colonialism on land and labour, as well as dignity and selfhood, Fanon's analysis is particularly relevant to postcolonial studies. Drabinski, J. (2019). His theory is useful to comprehend how the Cobalt miners in the Congo have become labouring bodies in the global economy. Fuchs, C. (2018). Their humanity is put on the back burner as their importance lies in the mineral they harvest. Rankin, W. J. (2011). The people who are harmed when they are involved in the process of mining for cobalt are not as visible in the world market as is the cobalt. Panella, C., & De Putter, T. (2022).

The postcolonial theory is developed by Homi K. Bhabha in his work that contains ambivalence, stereotype, mimicry and hybridity. Bhabha, H. K. (2012). Bhabha says the colonial discourse is an attempt to secure identity of the colonised; the securing of identity is not a stable process. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). The stereotype reveals the knowability of the Other and the repeatability of the Other, and it also has to do with anxiety. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). The colonized is deemed to be inferior, yet feared and needed. The very ambivalence is significant for the analysis of postcolonial texts as it reveals that self - other relationship is not straightforward. Vieira, M. A. (2018). The Other is pushed to the margins while the Self is at the centre, as rich as it is in the Other. Hooks, B. (2015). Cobalt Red tells the stories of the miners from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are forced to the sidelines of Western news but who are essential to the technological world in which we live. This ambivalence of neocolonial power has its roots in the contradiction. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak adds an ethical component to a postcolonial theory in her well-known question, “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak, G. C. (2025). For Spivak, the subaltern is not just a poor person, but is a subject whose voice is structurally impeded by systems of knowledge and power. Riach, G. (2017). Where oppressed people are represented in discourse, the voices of these are mediated by intellectuals, institutions, and representatives of the elite. Dutta, M. J. (2012). The concept is relevant to the current study as Cobalt Red relies on the testimony, witnessing and narration of Congolese suffering by an external author. Kara tries to shed light and show the injustice on those who are unable to be heard on the global supply chains. But a postcolonial reading should also involve questions regarding the ways in which these voices are chosen, translated, arranged and presented to the reader. Bassnett, S., & Trivedi, H. (2012).

The idea of the Self and the Other is an important one in postcolonial literary studies, as it helps to understand the process of the construction of identity through difference and power. Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2013). The Self is typically the prevailing group that perceives itself as the “normal,” “civilized,” “rational” and “superior” group. Kelsen, H. (2014). The Other is the marginalized group which is referred to as abnormal, backward, dependent and inferior. This binary was justified in colonial discourse and it is the basis of conquest and domination. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). The colonizer was seen as an agent of reason, progress and civilization; the colonized as a passive object and a subject who had to be controlled and disciplined. The Self and Other framework is applied to the relationship between the global technological power and Congolese mining communities in Cobalt Red in the present study.

Silence is part of the Other. Tsalach, C. (2013). The Other has been and continues to be involved in history in the form of a labouring body, image, or statistic but not as a speaking subject. Bhabha, H. K. (2021). In dominant systems, the subaltern voice is filtered as it is in the subaltern system, and cannot speak easily. Spivak, G. C. (2023). Suffering narratives can make the suffering subject visible, but they are subject to rules of visibility, which are determined by someone else. This is significant in Cobalt Red as Kara captures the voices and experiences of the miners, children, women and families of the Congo. These testimonies are key to the moral aspect and strength of the book. But a postcolonial reading should explore the question of whether the miners are treated as being full subjects or primarily as evidence of global sin.

Another binary that is associated with the Self and Other binary is moral distance. Lupton, D. (2015).

Today in the global economy, the suffering Other is a physical or emotional distance from the Self. Pedwell, C. (2012). Individuals enjoy mobile telephones, laptops, rechargeable batteries and electric automobiles without bothering to contemplate the laborious and violent nature of the minerals inside them. Mills, M. P. (2021). This is a separation which enables the consumer to be innocent. Berry, L. L., Danaher, T. S., Aksoy, L., & Keiningham, T. L. (2020). Cobalt Red's innocence is marred by its fusion of everyday technology and Congolese blood, poverty and death. Co's name implies that it is not a pure mineral, it is a tainted mineral. Thus the book defies the sense of separation between Self and Other, revealing the close relationship between the two, through the process of consuming and extracting.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research's theoretical paradigm is the postcolonial theory. The notion of Othering by Edward Said will be employed to look at the way the powerful Self creates and manipulates the Other, who is marginalized. The concepts of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and stereotype developed by Homi K. Bhabha will aid in the understanding of the conflictual relation between the powerful world and the exploited Congolese subjects. The notions of colonial psychology, inferiority and dehumanization of Frantz Fanon will be used to analyze the psychological, social and physical consequences of exploitation on the colonized people.

Edward Said is a keystone scholar of postcolonial studies. His pioneering work, *Orientalism* (1978), redefined the field of colonial discourse by showing how systems of knowledge, representation and power are inter-dependent and how they help to build cultural hierarchies. Mufti, A. R. (2010). Said criticizes the colonial domination not just in terms of military conquest and political control, but also by the production of knowledge on colonized people. Ballantyne, T. (2008). The West built up a collection of representations, assumptions and stereotypes of non-Western societies which argued the need for imperial intervention and the superiority of the Europeans. Hobson, J. M. (2007). The process of this made the colonized world into an object of study, administration and control.

Cobalt Red, by Siddhartha Kara, reveals the price paid by humans to copper mines, and the University of Chicago Press harvesting of Congolese work. The story illustrates the need for technology globally and the extraction of resources from communities that continue to be disenfranchised. Mawere, J., & Mukonza, R. M. (2025). In this way, this relationship can be seen as an updated version of the Self and Other binary. The technologically advanced world is the Self, and Congo is the Other, who is dependent on their resources, laborers and their suffering to keep the world moving.

A crucial part of Said's theory is the connection between knowledge and power. Foucault, M. (2020). Narratives of development, sustainability, and technological advancements are created by contemporary corporations, governments, international organizations, and media, and affect public perception. Doh, J. P., & Guay, T. R. (2006). The narratives typically highlight the advantages of cobalt in renewable energy, and downplay the human impacts of its extraction. In the process of discussion, exploitation is rendered "natural" and invisible to the public eye. Said's conceptualization allows this research to examine how these types of knowledge help to sustain unequal relationships between the global North and South.

Homi K. Bhabha is one of the key postcolonial theorists due to his analysis of the complexities, contradictions and instabilities of colonial discourse. Bhabha, H. K. (2023). Edward Said focuses on the dichotomy in colonialism between colonizer and colonised, whereas Bhabha believes that it is not a fixed dichotomy, but an unstable one. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). Colonial authority is constantly trying to define and control the colonized subject, while at the same time being reliant on the very subjects of its domination. Balandier, G. (2020). Consequently, colonial discourse remains contradictory, in doubt and ambivalent. The ideas of ambivalence, stereotype, fixity, mimicry and hybridity offered by Bhabha are of significant value to understanding the processes of identity construction and negotiation in colonial and postcolonial situations. Khyati, P. (2024).

It is, therefore, important to extend the Self and Other dichotomy used in this study through Homi K. Bhabha's theory of ambivalence, of stereotype and of fixity. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). His projects expose the paradoxes and ambivalences of order and image-making in systems of domination and representation. Dubois, D., & Prade, H. (2009). Bhabha foregrounds the malleability of the colonial discourse, thus providing a more nuanced analysis of the construction, negotiation and contestation of identities. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). By applying them to Cobalt Red, his theories help to analyze the representation of Congolese miners in the global discourses of extraction and development. They also shed light on the dialectics of visibility and

marginalization, of victimhood and agency, of recognition and containment within which the postcolonial experiences of today take shape.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a prominent postcolonial theorist, especially in the field of representation, marginalisation and the politics of knowledge. Morton, S. (2003). The themes of her work are continuative and extension of the previous postcolonial debates, that follows the people who have been left out of the political arena and beyond the category of cultural and intellectual representation. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin. (2013). In her groundbreaking essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) poses questions about voice, agency and representation of the margins within dominant power structures. Spivak, G. C. (2023). Her theory has special significance when applied to the studies of suppressed groups since it asks the researcher to reflect on who's talking, who is talking for, and whose knowledge is acknowledged as legitimate. Giroux, H. A. (2004).

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism serves as the basis of understanding the construction and upkeep of the dichotomy of Self and Other through discourse. El Aidi, A., & Yechouti, Y. (2017). His writing shows how systems of representation are important in legitimizing a form of domination by portraying the marginalized societies as inferior, unstable, and dependent. Williams, M. S. (2000). Homi K. Bhabha adds to this relationship by introducing the notions of ambivalence, stereotype and fixity, which allow for the detection of the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse and the instability of colonial identities. Bhabha, H. K. (2013). Likewise, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's idea of subalternity puts into focus problems of voice, agency, and representation, highlighting the challenges of the marginalized groups to make themselves audible in the main set-up of knowledge and power. Thakur, P. (2025).

4. DATA ANALYSIS: CONSTRUCTING SELF AND OTHER IN COBALT RED

"What has happened here must not be seen. There can be no record or evidence, only the haunting memories of those who stood at this place where hope was lost" (Kara, 2023, p. 9).

The opening of Kara's story is disturbing as she and her companions are prevented by soldiers from getting into the mining area, due to a tunnel collapse at Kamilombe. The postcolonial condition of silencing and exclusion is immediately set up at the beginning. The villagers are in urgent need to get in touch with their relatives, but the soldiers do not allow them to do so. The statement, "What has happened here must not be seen", is one of the key concepts of the book. (Kara, 2023, p. 9). The use of the word "violence" implies that the "violence of cobalt mining" isn't a coincidence but is strategically concealed. In postcolonial terms the Other is not only exploited but they are also not allowed to be visible. The suffering of the marginalized people is unseen, unrecorded, and undocumented and this helps the powerful system to survive.

The first picture of the text is the image of a child's body that is in the dirt. Kara welcomes the viewer with a scene of death and sadness—a little girl, who appears dead, covered in dust. The Congolese Other is first manifested in the body of the child. Not through a name, a history, a family or a dream, it is introduced through death. As this is important because colonial and neocolonial systems tend to marginalize the colonized subject to the status of a suffering and working body that suffers and dies. The child is introduced as an 'exposure' to the cost of the rechargeable economy. The child is introduced as the 'human cost' of the rechargeable economy. The black colonial body is robbed of its dignity and made into an object in a violent system, Fanonian style. Here the child is not just a victim of a mishap, he is a witness to an international system which values cobalt more than Congolese life.

"I catch sight of a body in the dirt. It is a child, lying motionless within a storm of dust and despair" (Kara, 2023, p. 9).

The color red of the land becomes symbolic as well. Kara thinks of the red soil as blood spilled on the ground, not the colour of the soil. The moral and symbolic significance of this title Cobalt Red is given by this statement. Cobalt is not a simple mineral, it's a mineral that's identified by blood. It is a text of suffering of converting the industrial material. Violence seems to resonate in the land. The sample data analysis is an interpretation of the title, *Fireflies in the Mist*, as a symbol of natural light and historical confusion. Like Cobalt Red, this text stamps Kara's text as a postcolonial text of blood, extraction, and hidden violence. Red is a colour and it's the history of death and exploitation.

Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives sets up the framework of the study: blood and power. The Congo is a reference to blood and "our lives" is a reference to the consumers of phones, tablets, laptops and electric vehicles. This grammatical division creates an inter-dependency between the

exploited Other and benefiting Self. The power is harnessed from the Congolese miners – the global Self benefits from the blood. The reader can't be separated from this relationship by Kara. A possessive pronoun, “our,” is used and includes the reader in the system of benefit. The title consequently transforms the consumer into a rather involved subject and implies that no longer is the illusion handed that modern technology is innocent. The Self is not other than the Other, and is fueled by the Other's suffering.

“Foreign powers have penetrated every inch of this nation to extract its rich supplies of ivory, palm oil, diamonds, timber, rubber ... and to make slaves of its people” (Kara, 2023, p. 10).

The first chapter then outspreads the relation between colonialism and extraction to the existing exploitation of postcolonial spaces, a process that is already evident in many other frameworks. The first chapter further extends the connection between colonial exploitation and the current postcolonial extraction, which is already going on at many other sites. “No country has been 'more severely exploited,'” says Kara, than the Congo, which has been invaded by foreign powers to exploit its resources, including ivory, palm oil, diamonds, timber, rubber and now cobalt. (Kara, 2023, p. 10). It is crucial that there is a historical listing of resources, as this will not allow the reader to view cobalt mining in isolation. Resources are each a distinct era of the globe's want. During the colonial days there was violence over rubber and ivory, now it's cobalt's turn for a scramble. The same is true in regard to the relationship, though the structure has been altered that is, the foreign desire comes in and takes away its wealth and leaves it in the state of suffering.

The text critiques the morality of the Self of modernity. The text attacks the “moral superiority” of the Self of modernity. Kara writes that the exploitation of the poorest people by the rich and powerful invalidates the “moral foundation of contemporary civilization” (Kara, 2023, p. 11). In the name of the modern Self, civilized, ethical and progressive, this sentence directly attacks the image of the modern Self. Colonial narrative was constructed in such a fashion that the West was perceived as a bearer of civilization. In the current text, it is the same Self that manifest itself in human rights policies, in the responsibility for climate change and in technological advancements. Kara reveals the inauthenticity of this moral identity in two ways: in the image of those who “eke out a subhuman existence” at the bottom of the global economy, and in its refusal to recognize that while capitalism is the driving force in these lives, it is ultimately the lives of workers that are at stake. (Kara, 2023, p. 11). The civilized Self is therefore constructed on the basis that other is dehumanized.

“No company wants to concede that the rechargeable batteries used to power smartphones, tablets, laptops, and electric vehicles contain cobalt mined by peasants and children in hazardous conditions” (Kara, 2023, p. 11).

When Kara talks about corporate statements, her binary Self and Other is realised. Large businesses announce their human rights policies, child labour policies, ‘no child labour’ clauses, ethical sourcing policies and responsible supply chains. Large businesses make statements about human rights, zero tolerance for child labour, no child labour, ethical sourcing, and responsible supply chains. These are the words of the world Self. They are well-spoken, well-versed in legal matters, and sure of their morals. But, there are some things about the field observations that Kara made that run counter to this. He never, in his entire time in the Congo, saw anything like what he read in public statements in the form of commitments by a company. (Kara, 2023, p. 12). Such a contrast will be important for data analysis as it reflects the difference between discourse and reality. Here is the Self, and there is the Other, who lives in the reality of suffering.

“Our daily lives are powered by a human and environmental catastrophe in the Congo” (Kara, 2023, p. 12).

The linkage between everyday life and catastrophe is a statement of the main thesis of the book. The statement puts the reader's life in the same universe as that of the Congolese miner, and draws a direct connection between the two. This line is a straight hit at moral distance. It's not just because the mine is remote that the consumer should be blameless. The device is rechargeable and turns into a connection between Self and Other. In this world, the Self lives and the Congolese other suffers. This way, the text becomes an act of ethical confrontation, and the act of reading an act of ethics. The reader can't help but notice the hidden link between consumption and exploitation.

Kara also reveals the hidden exploitation of language. He disapproves of the use of the word ‘artisanal miners’ as it could imply skilled, nice or traditional workers, when in reality the miners work in unsafe conditions with primitive tools. (Kara, 2023, p. 14). This comes under the discursive masking. The term artisanal desensitises the brutality of the work and it looks less violent. Said's language is a means of creating knowledge about the

Other. If the miner is deemed to be artisanal, the rest of the world might visualize a small and harmless local activity, instead of a deadly labour system in connection with the profit of a multinational. Hence, Kara's analysis is able to reveal the language of normalizing exploitation.

"The most advanced consumer electronic devices and electric vehicles in the world rely on a substance that is excavated by the blistered hands of peasants using picks, shovels, and rebar" (Kara, 2023, p. 15).

The sadistic frame of the text is accentuated by the description of cheap labour and devalued life by Kara. This articulation is one of the strongest ones for the Self and Other divide. Cobalt is a commodity with a value in the world market, but the life that mined it is given little value. The sentence also suggests the transformation of human lives into calculating. The Congolese miner is a cost, risk or a replaceable unit of the system. Fanon's idea of the dehumanization of the colonized body is appropriate in that the colonized body is not considered a complete human being, but rather a working machine.

Also in the introduction a question around the questioning of testimony and subaltern voice is raised. Kara tells the reader he heard the stories of the people who lived in and worked in the mining provinces, and some told their own stories, some the stories of the dead. (Kara, 2023, p. 15). This is important since the Other is portrayed as a victim, a silent one. An attempt is made to speak the voices of the miners, women, children, parents, doctors, activists, officials and local guides. Their representation of speech, however, is still expressed in the form of Kara's story. Now Spivak's question about whether or not the subaltern can speak is relevant. The Congolese speak, but their speech is communicated to the global reader by an outsider who chooses, translates, arranges and interprets Congolese speech.

Kara knows that it's risky to talk. Many miners and family members were hesitant to talk to him because there was a fear of reprisals, he writes. This terror shows that silence was not a natural state, it is a state brought about by power. The Other is not silent, there's nothing to say. The Other is muted; it is possible to do punishment with speech. The army, mining companies, political elites and economic middlemen set the climate where there is a danger in telling the truth. This demonstrates that there is a literary and political representation in Cobalt Red. The truth of cobalt mining is hard to tell, because it's a system that lives on lies.

"Every one of these descriptions equally conveys conditions in the cobalt mining provinces today" (Kara, 2023, p. 17).

The history of the Congo is used in the text to substantiate the argument that it is neocolonial today. Kara quotes earlier writings of Leopold's Congo as "hell on earth" and a "system of oppression," and makes this argument for the cobalt provinces today. (Kara, 2023, pp. 16–17). The continuity is very noticeable. The names of rulers, companies and resources have been changed but the Congolese people continue to suffer for the wealth of others. Kara's image of children seeking out cobalt resonates with colonial history, a theme that is pervasive throughout the novel. Throughout the novel, colonial history is a theme, especially with Kara comparing children who scrounge for cobalt to workers under Leopold. The key is that nothing has changed, but that the powerful Self- versus the exploited Other is still alive.

Patrice Lumumba is being employed as an anti-image of the neocolonial order. Kara says that Lumumba envisioned a society of Congolese where they would have a say in their own destiny, and where the nation's resources would come to benefit the masses. (Kara, 2023, p. 17). This vision is of a future Congolese post-colonial Self that is independent, dignified and self-determining. But Kara tells the story of the vision which was rejected by foreign powers and neocolonial interests. Assassinating Lumumba is a symbol of the loss of Congolese agency. Lumumba's suppressed vision offers a glimpse of the Congo's nonhelplessness in the context of Self and Other. It's been forced to rely on outside influence as well as teamwork.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study has examined Siddharth Kara's Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives using the lens of the concept of 'Self and Other' in postcolonial context. The chosen text is examined as an example of a contemporary narrative non-fiction text aimed at revealing the hidden reality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in relation to the extraction of cobalt. The book is known as a work of human rights investigation, but this study has approached it as a cultural and literary text, as it has been narrated, told in testimony, symbolized, described, referenced to history, and addressed as a moral text. The focus of this research has been to investigate the representation of the powerful Self in the global technological world and the representation of the marginalised Other in the context of the global cobalt economy – Congolese miners, children, women, displaced families and affected communities.

The study has clearly established that Cobalt Red is closely linked to postcolonial literary concerns since it shows the continuity of the colonial power in the contemporary form of economy. As evidenced in the text, colonialism is not gone, it is simply remediated through global capitalism, multinational corporations, supply chains, resource extraction and consumer culture. During the colonial era, the Congo was invaded by foreigners looking for ivory, rubber, copper, diamonds and more. Cobalt is one of the most sought after minerals in the modern era, due to its association with rechargeable batteries, digital gadgets and EVs. Resource has been altered, mode of exploitation is similar. The Congolese land is still seen as a source from which value can be extracted, the lives of its people are still not protected and their lives are still undervalued.

The research also demonstrated that Kara's text creates a good binary opposition between the Self (the universal) and the Other (the Congolese). The global Self manifests as multinational corporations, battery producers, technology consumers, EV industries and consumers enjoying modern convenience. This Self is in the advanced, progressive, ethical and future-oriented state of Self. Communicates in the language of clean energy, sustainability, innovation and responsible sourcing. On the other side, the Congolese Other is the miner in the dangerous pit, the children carrying sacks of mineral, the women washing minerals in water contaminated by the mineral dust, the families forced from ancestral land and the communities living in the shadow of the mineral dust, and the economic despoilation of the enterprise. This opposition allows the binary of Self and Other to be seen in an extractive modernity.

The study has also revealed that Homi K. Bhabha's notion of ambivalence is evident in the global Self and Congolese Other's interaction. The Congolese miners are invisibly social, but vitally material. The Congo is all but forgotten in the world today, and cobalt mined from its earth is at the heart of much of today's technology. This will make it an unstable relationship. The Other is denied the comfort, safety and recognition while the Self becomes possible through the labour and resources of the Other. In such a technologically oriented world, people are the very ones that are left behind. The contradiction is exposed by Kara's text, as it reveals the suffering that underlies a secure present denied to people who make up the future of clean technology.

Ultimately, Cobalt Red is a strong text that sheds light on the impact of contemporary technology on human life, and calls into doubt the ethical principles of world progress. In this paper, the concept of Self and Other has been used to demonstrate the dynamic of unequal relationships between consumers, corporations, and Congolese mining communities in the narrative of one woman, Kara. It has also demonstrated the text's ability of calling the reader to take responsibility for actions beyond geographical boundaries. The Congo is not only depicted as a distant and under-researched mining area, but as a crucial but oppressed territory at the heart of the global technological system. This research thus establishes the value of Kara's work in the field of postcolonial literary research, as it introduces the hidden violence of extractive capitalism to the literary interpretation, ethical reflection and critical responsibility.

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