

Prose Literature as a Means of Expressing African Culture a Study of Chinua Achebes Things Fall Apart

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ABSTRACT

This study examines prose literature as a means of expressing, African culture as presented in Buchi Emecheta's "The joys of motherhood and Chinua Achebe's Things fall apart respectively. The researcher looked at the history of African culture in Nigeria. A number of critical essays in which some of the realities that portray African culture were reviewed. It came to lime light that there is African culture among Africans as opposed to the notion being portrayed to the outside world by the Europeans. The conclusion is that these works, Things fall apart and The joys of motherhood continue to be a demonstration to show that there is an African culture. This is the main outlook of the novels in this research.

INTRODUCTION

According to Fatokun (1992: 15), literature present situations, interactions and oppositions. It suggest a wide range of values and attitudes. To understand a people and their culture, one may have to turn to its oral and written narratives, it prose, drama and poetry. Literature is a mirror that reflects a society's image and time. Any good piece of writing be it prose, drama or poetry can be regarded as an authentic mirror image. Literature does not hand down value judgments. Rather, it leaves the readers or audience to make their own evaluation.

It is the entire attitude, perception and specific traits of civilization that confer to a people and its place in the world. Makpu (1996:56) opined that, culture is the particular system of art, though and custom literature is a vehicle of culture. Culture is a social heritage which is handed down from one generation to the next. For someone to be socialized and become a useful member of his/her society, he/she must understand the culture of the society. Culture seeps through both socialization and education because socialization and education are part and parcel of culture. It is the whole way of life of a people, the social heritage of a society. The specific traits in culture referred to are articulate speech, institutions; code of ethics, etiquette, ideologies, stereotypes, intellectual productions, artifacts and technologies. Historical literature has opened man's eye to what has happened in the past in many nations, and what is happening now, and how man has been battling with his environment (i.e. physical problems such as war, corruption, political instability, religious crises and oppression among others).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature results from conscious act of men in society. On one hand, the very act of writing implies a social relationship and on the other hand, literature is a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity, which encompasses in words and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming.

Achebe represents a particular reality: a modern African whose rich variety of ethnic and cultural and cultural identity(s) is complicated by the impact of European colonialism (from "the Novelist as a "teacher "collected in Morning yet on creation day (1975:20) as quoted in web page of Cora Agatucci). His works are meant to challenge stereotypes of Africans as primitive savages, and present the complexities of African society with their alternative sets of traditions, ideas, values, norms and behaviours. He thus has a mission to enlighten both African and European readers alike, to reinstate that sense of pride in the African cultures and therefore helping his society (African) to regain its glory and also belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement.

Statement of the Problem

As our world is gradually becoming a global village, exposure to Western education, religion, cultures, ideologies and a host of others have changed the life of the contemporary African.

He is completely lost to his roots as he abandons his most important traditional African cultural ways of life for the European (western) ways of life. This problem of how literature can be a means of portraying African cultures and traditions is what the researcher wants to look into.

METHODOLOGY

The method of analysis will be library based because it is a re-interpretation of the primary texts and other selected novels and books. Literature has three (3) basic forms which are prose, poetry and drama. For the purpose of this research, we will delve into prose since most of our examples will be taken from prose texts. What then is prose? Prose is one of the genres (branches) of literature. Literature itself is a body of written works related by subject matter, by language or place of origin, or by dominant cultural standards. (Onyeashie, 2008:30). Literally translated, the word prose means acquaintance with letters" (from Latin littera: 12) in western culture, the most basic literary types are poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction. Prose refers to the free flowing long narrative that may take the form of fiction or non-fiction and often occurs as novels, biographies, short-stories and essays. Fictional prose are imaginative works that do not really happen but have the possibility of occurring and so are presented as real happening or factual events. On the other hand, non-fictional works are the real history or record of events that happened to somebody, (Ethis, 2000: 3).

The novel is a full and authenticated genre by which human experience is recreated. Its defined by the Oxford Dictionary of the seventh (7) edition as "a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and acts are representative of the real life of past and present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity". More authoritatively, the novel according to Eustace Palmer "is a coherent, unified, fictitious prose narrative with a beginning, middle and an end" (studies on the English novel, 1986: 1).

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The short-story

This is a prose narrative that is brief in nature. The short story also has many characteristics of a novel including characters, setting and plot. However, due to length constraints, these characteristic devices generally may not be fully developed or as complex as those development for a full length novel.

According to to the book literary terms by Karl Beskon and Arthur Ganiz, "American writers since Poe, who first theorized on the structure and purpose of the short story have paid considerable attention to the form"(p. 257). The written "protocol" regarding standard might be that the short story could be read in one sitting. There are many authors well known for the short story including Edgar Allan Poe, Shenwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway.

The Nature and Concept of African Literature

African literature comprises of African oral tradition and written tradition. African literature is that body of work written by writers throughout the world about the milieu, essence, thematic and psychic particularly of the African

continent. The background of African literature would be located in the political and social events which form the history and conventions of the pre-colonial era. As in all literature, African literature has derived from and is given impetus to this event and pre-existing forms. The socio-political aspect or dimension of African literature includes slavery, colonization, independence and neo-colonialism. In literature, negritude has its greatest voice in Leopold Sedar Senghor and the art form which took most of its idea in poetry. Some of the prominent poets of negritude include Senghor, David Diop, Birago Dilop in "Viaticum". This negritude was the systematic reaction against cultural imperialism used by the francophone people. The colonial encounter has other encounters and other manifestation in the literature of Africa. It gave rise to a literature of political statement of which African writers repudiated their assumption of European governors and sought to resent or assert the African will. Some examples of these are, Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart*, T.M Aluko's *One man one matchet* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the king's horseman*.

Colonialism persisted larger in our sister African country – South Africa. In this zone, white occupation gave rise to what was called Apartheid – a policy which makes it mandatory for the whites to love differently from blacks. In this system, the black man is seen as below human and qualified for in-human treatment. Apartheid is based on the theory of the superiority of the white race over others. In view of the South African whites therefore, the white race should not be contaminated by black blood. After colonialism, we have emergent African nations and people have thought that independence would usher in a good life. So in all colonized nations, several bodies fought for freedom from colonial rule. In some nation, such as Nigeria and Ghana, the struggle although hard, was not bloody. In some others like Kenya, Namibia, Angola, Algeria, Zimbabwe, independence came true through the barrel of the gun. In many African nations, the expectations of Africa did not come true because of corrupt rulership or leadership. Therefore, it is difficult to find literature that celebrates independence per say. What one finds are works which depicts expectation or disappointment of the latter. These are usually part of the fourth epoch in the history of Africa. This stage is the neo-colonialist stage.

Modern African Literature has gained recognition worldwide with such classics as Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart*; Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep not child* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the king's horseman*. This recognition was reinforced by Soyinka's winning of the Nobel prize for literature in 1986. Modern African Literature is written in indigenous African languages and in European languages used in Africa. Written African literature is very new compared to the indigenous oral tradition of literature which has been there and is still very much alive. While there are literary works in Yoruba, Hausa, Zulu and Sotho among others, this literature in African indigenous languages is hardly known outside its specific linguistic frontiers. Writers such as Mazisi, Kunene, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and the late Okot P. Bitek first wrote some of their works in African language before translating them into English. Most African writers, however, write in English, French and Portuguese. There is the Eurocentric temptation to see modern African Literature written in these European languages as an

extension of European literature. However, after modern imperialism, language alone cannot be the sole definer of a people's literature.

Defining African literature, Abiola Irele writes:

The term "Africa" appears to correspond to a geographical notion but we know that, in practical terms, it also takes in those areas of collective awareness that have been determined by ethnic, historical and sociological factors; all these factors, as they affect and express themselves in our literature, marking off for it is a broad area of reference. Within this area of reference then, and related to certain aspect that are intrinsic to the literature, the problem of defining involves as well a consideration of aesthetic modes in their intimate correlation to the cultural and social structure which determine and define the expressive schemes of African people and societies (1981:10).

African Culture

The ability of human beings to create and sustain culture makes human beings unique among all the creatures of the animal kingdom. Every society of men possesses its own distinctive culture, so that the member of one society behave differently in "some significant respect from the members of any other society. Thus we observe that a Nigerian dresses differently from a Kenya and even within the Nigerian society as a whole. An Igbo man dresses in a different way from an Ogoni man. These differences in behavior can be explained on the basis of cultural variability. This is just a single instance of a culture pattern. Culture is however, more than a collection of mere isolated bits of behavior. It is the integrated sum total of learned behavioural traits which are manifest and shared by the members of society.

Finally, it should be remarked that culture is not a static thing, it is an active process, it accumulates and it becomes diffused. Through increasing contact with other societies, the culture of any particular society changes.

No society is wholly homogenous. Differentiation exists based on such factors as socio-economic status, sex and age. There are distinct patterns of behavior for male and female, youth and adult. Some of which are biologically founded and others not. Social differentiation between married and single persons is worldwide and all societies have their religious specialists. Regional differences also exist in society. For instance, people living in urban areas in the society exhibit some behavioural pattern different from that observed by those in the rural area. This means that there are internal sub-groups in every society. Each of these groups has its own members, such groups will therefore share common values and norms peculiar to each group. Such patterns of behavior peculiar to these groups will therefore constitute sub-cultures. Again, we can speak of the Nigerian culture; it is obvious that there are many ethnic or tribal groups that make up the Nigerian society. The creative expressions of African peoples are complex blend of many media each of which offers a unique perspective and which together communicate everything from the mundane to the sublime. The collection of the library of congress are particularly strong in information about art, handicrafts, music, dance, film, oral and written literature and others aspect of the humanities that enrich in each African community. And

which have influences on societies wherever peoples of African descent have settled.

Literature: an Expression of African Culture

In the traditional literary studies, culture is considered as the background to literature. Therefore, when a writer writes, no matter where he comes from, the writing reflects a particular background. This is made more obvious by the fact that an artist's work, irrespective of where he is from, is influenced by the historical issues of the term. The African man has always followed strictly to the traditional norms and culture of his society and this is reflected in his writings (even in this post-modern age, the modern African writers delved into traditional concepts and culture to help define his works as African). Thus, traditional norms and culture are infused into their writing. This identifies the work of an African writer, making it different from the works of other writers from other parts of the world.

Chinua Achebe is one of the most well-known contemporary writers from Africa. His first novel, *Things fall apart*, deals with the clash of cultures and the violent transitions in life and values brought about by the onset of British colonialism in Nigeria at the end of the nineteenth century. Published in 1958, just before Nigeria gained her independence, the novel recounts the life and activities of the village her, Okonkwo and describes the arrival of white missionaries in Nigeria and its impact on traditional Igbo society during the late 1800s.

Things fall apart interposes western linguistic forms and literary traditions with Igbo words and phrases, proverbs, tales, and other elements of African oral and communal story telling traditions in order to record and preserve African oral traditions as well as to subvert the colonialist language and culture. After situating the novel in its historical and literary context, students will identify the text's linguistic and literary techniques and analyze the relationship of oral elements to the meanings and messages of the novel.

Again, Emecheta's *The joys of motherhood* is a detailed, psychologically advanced and culturally relevant book. In her novel, she displays an intuitive feel for the characters, their motivations and influences. A great deal of information is presented on Igbo culture and custom. Her ideas regarding Igbo societal norms are apparent in her treatment of her books: indeed, *The joys of motherhood* is in particular set up in a very definitive manner not only with the title but also, with the naming of the chapters. For instance, there is a chapter in the book entitled "A man is never ugly". This is enlightening with regard to the attitude displayed towards women, a woman's importance and relevance in society are demonstrated solely through their motherhood and consequent conformity. *The joys of motherhood* has some frankly sexual passages which may exclude their use in the high school classroom; however, she has a highly insightful, intelligently written work that can be of great benefits in and out of the classroom, and is well worth the time spent studying.

The value of literature

Literature is so much part of our everyday life that we take it for granted. The ordinary man hardly bothers to find out the value of literature or what function it plays in his everyday life. It becomes pertinent to ask what, for instance, would happen to our culture and tradition if literature ceased to exist. Why, in the first place did the traditional culture develop literature to the extent that today the modern culture is the rich inheritor of both oral and written forms of literature? What is it that literature does to the African society that makes some of them very proud of their literacy achievements and so committed to the continued promotion of their national literatures? In other words what are functions of literature?

Literature has served as a subtle means of education right from the earliest times when folktales were used to entertain and teach morals and social norms as well as explain why certain phenomena are the way they are. The storyteller after telling an entertaining story would end with "..... that is why people die" or "... That a why it is not good to be jealous of others". In modern literature, the writer concentrates solely on telling the story but allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. Which is often induced, by the manner of solely telling the story and the experiences of the main character and other characters in the story. Anyone who has read Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* for instance would see that the writer does not directly condemn the inflexibility of character and the refusal to accept change as part and parcel of human life. This is out rightly suggested in the behavior and tragic end of the main character, Okonkwo. This is because his friends, Obierika and other villagers end well because they accept the inheritable change brought by the white man and know when to stop resisting the changes. Literature is labeled an ESCAPE LITERATURE when it is for entertainment. This type of literature provides little or no insight into human behavior and its true nature. It is also called IMPERATIVE LITERATURE when it provides insight into human life and behavior.

African culture as portrayed in things fall apart (Igbo culture).

Things fall apart by Chinua Achebe presents an abounding insight into the way of life of the Igbo's and their culture, including their traditional customs and religious practices. The first part of the novel especially spans these areas, providing in-depth aspects of the different cultural practices of the Umuofians and their rich Igbo culture. Various aspects, such as religion, marriage, funerals, various family life styles and sex discriminations are just some of the different categories in the rich traditional values of these African tribes and people. The novel, *Things fall apart* is traditionally set in Umuofia, an Igbo traditional village with a set of rich cultural beliefs that shapes and sustain it. Before the culture of Christianity, Umuofia a traditional village had a typical traditional village culture handed down by word of mouth, and intimate personal continuation from one generation to another generation.

Umuofia is a traditional community. The understanding of culture and the human relationship as described in Achebe's *Things fall apart* depends on these words "traditional "and "community"(Obiechina, E. p. 25) an element of traditional culture, which needs so much attention here is the central ideological

relevance of supernatural and magical powers as a defining element in peoples attitude beliefs and customs. Even in the matter of declaration and prosecution of war, no people could move from one place to another without the support and the active participation of their gods as seen in these excerpts from

Things fall apart:

Ümuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and in magic, and its priest and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country. Its most potent war medicine was as old as clean itself. Nobody knows how old. But on one point there was general agreement the active principal in that had been an old woman with one leg, in fact the medicine itself was called "Ägadi-nwayi" or old woman. It had its shrine in the center of Umuofia in a cleared spot. And if anybody was so foolhardy as to pas the shrine after dusk he was sure to see the old woman hopping about" (p. 8-9).

There is hardly any important human experience, which is not linked to the supernatural and a people's sense of religion and religious piety. Achebe in his work portrays how these things are part and parcel of the ideological structure of the traditional society and so vital to a proper interpretation of experience in the traditional social context. And so then, one can say that the idea of the precolonial traditional society was a heaven of peace, had an atmosphere for peaceful co-existence, a state of egalitarian self-satisfaction and idyllic bliss. The traditional culture worked seriously towards the maintenance of internal social harmony and good external relations. Thus, we are fully aware of the traditional communal spirit and in the interplay of political and judicial forces in the life of Umoufia (Obiechena, E. p 15-16).

In the novel, Okonkwo broke the "Week of Peace" by beating up Ojiugo his third wife contrary to custom. In the evening, the priest of the Earth-goddess visited Okonkwo for punitive measures for his conduct and for sacrifice of expiation. Notice that Okonkwo's taboo in society begins with the refusal of the kolanut he gave to Ezeani. The latter snapped at this normal present of welcome:

Take away your kolanut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors.

Okonkwo tries to explain or defend his action but Ezeani ruled out and reminded Okonkwo of the gravity or enormity of his misdeed:

The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth-goddess, whom you have insulted, may refuse to give us her increase and we shall all perish. This is the fear that made the village society keep this "Week of Peace". To atone for his misconduct, Okonkwo must do something to appease the goddess of the earth: and these were his orders:

You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. (Things fall apart p. 28).

African Culture as Portrayed in Things Fall Apart (Igbo Culture)

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Hardly any significant human experience exists that is unconnected to the paranormal, a people's sense of religion, and their level of religious piety. Achebe illustrates in his writing how these elements are essential to understanding experience within the traditional social framework and are a fundamental component of the ideological framework of traditional society. And so then, one can say that the idea of the precolonial traditional society was a heaven of peace, had an atmosphere for peaceful co-existence, a state of egalitarian self-satisfaction and idyllisc bliss. The tradidional culture worked seriously towards the maintenance of internal social harmony and good external relations. Thus, we are fully aware of the traditional communal spirit and in the interplay of political and judicial forces in the life of Umoufia (Obiechena, E. p 15-16).

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Achebe's Literary Techniques and Style

Before the publication of Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* in 1958, public awareness in West Africa was confined chiefly to white writers such as Doris Lessing, Alan Paton, or Nadine Gordimer. Thus Achebe's first novel, written in English, although he is himself a Nigerian of the Igbo tribe, was a notable event. More of note was the fact that it was a very good novel and has become over the years probably the most widely read and talked about African novel, overshadowing the efforts of other West African novelists as well as those of East and South Africa. Its reputation began high and has remained so, stimulating critical analysis in hundreds of articles, many books, and dissertations. Its story describes whatever one may expect from its Yeatsian title, the life of a traditional Igbo rural village and the rise of one of its gifted leaders, Okonkwo before colonization and then the consequences for the village and the hero as they confront the beginnings of the novel, more or less related but not sequential; *No longer at ease* (1950), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Man of the people* (1966), though all respected, have not matched its success. Achebe's fiction established firmly that there is an African prose literature – poetry had probably been well known since Senghor in the 1940s – even when written in English. His first novel has been "As big a factor in the formation of a young West African's picture of his past, and of his relation to it, as any of the still rather distorted teachings of the pulpit and the primary school", and of course he has influenced his fellow writers just as significantly in finding their own subject matter and voice.

When beginning Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things fall apart*, readers are often struck by the simple mode of narrative and equally simple prose style, which critics have seen as Achebe's desire to achieve an "English... coloured to reflect the African verbal style with stresses and emphasis that would be eccentric and unexpected in British or American speech". He reshapes English in order to suit his readers and brings out their interest in the novel. It does not take much to notice that there's something interesting about the way and manner in which *Things fall apart* is being written.

Although Achebe writes in English, he captures the cadence of the Igbo people, particularly noticeable in the book's dialogue. In the narration, Achebe keeps it simple, direct to the point, and centered on nature. His goal is to use language to depict how the Igbo view their world. You will also see a bunch of Igbo words and phrases that pop up here and there in the novel. Examples of these Igbo words are "chi" – personal god, *isa-ifi* – confession before marriage by the bride to the entire public, *ochu-murder* "Ogbanje" (Iyi-uwa) – changeling, "Egwugwu" – masquerade amongst others. In addition to the cadence and

content choice, Achebe also uses a ton of proverbs – which is indicative of the Igbo traditional oral culture – as well as lots of tiny stories shared by people and well known in certain villages, used to discuss everything. These stories are how the people communicate with one another, they are used to explain acts of nature, traditions, history, why people act in a certain way. Keeping all that in mind, let's take a look at this interaction, a few paragraphs into chapter 12.

“Some of the women cooked the yams and the cassava, and the others prepared vegetable soup. Young men pounded the foo-foo or split firewood. The children made endless trips to the stream”

“The market in Umuike is a wonderful place”, said the young man who had been sent by Obierika to buy the giant goat. “There are so many people in it that if you throw up a grain of sand, it would not find a way to fall to earth again”. It is the result of great medicine”, said Obierika. “The people of Umuike wanted their market to grow. So they made a powerful medicine”. “And so everybody comes” said another man, “Honest men and thieves. They can steal your cloth from off your waist in the market. We have got sparse description, an Igbo word (foo-foo), some cadenced dialogue, a mini-story about medicine to explain why the Umuike market is so crowded, and men finishing each other's thought and explanations.

Chinua Achebe uses as many proverbs and allegories as possible in portraying the rich African cultural heritage of the Igbo people. Examples of these many proverbs and allegories used in the novel are: “A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm”, “A toad does not jump in the day time for nothing”, and “Eneke, the bird, said that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching” amongst others.

Also, in the novel, Achebe employs Igbo proverbs in *Things fall apart* to achieve great effects. Early in *Things fall apart*, Achebe tells us that:

Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten, (TFA p. 5).

The pith of the above quotation is of course “The palm-oil with which words are eaten”. The saying is interestingly figurative for palm-oil lubricates, softens and gives beauty to food. Also it produces an effective conclusive tag to his final statement to Okoye who has come to recover the “two hundred cowries” learnt to Unoka two years ago: “I shall pay my big debts first”. To show the Igbo takes delight and its games especially in the dry season, Achebe observes:

When the moon is shining the cripple bedtimes hungry for a walk (things fall apart p. 10).

The ritual of kolanut breaking at once furnishes us with a good example of Igbo good neighbourliness and fellowship as well as their strong sense of justice. The rich Nwakibe, in breaking the customary kola to welcome Okonkwo in his house says among other things:

Let the kite perch and let the Egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break, Things fall apart (p. 17-18).

And Okonkwo in presenting a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibe to solicit the latter to assist him with some seed yams for share-cropping has this to say:

As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness (Things fall apart p. 18).

Nwakibe is a great man in the social context. And Okonkwo by presenting him with a cock and palm-wine in order to ask him for some favour, believes that what he does is paying due respect to the great man as a means of paving the way for its own future greatness. Thus, through the numerous proverbs employed in the novel, Achebe succeeds in giving accurate setting to his book. The novel is a masterpiece of African literature written in English. The vehicle of expression, English is even almost forgotten when one is deeply involved with the novel's rich cultural content. The proverbs are African, more essentially, intrinsically Nigerian and primarily Igbo.

Okonkwo's anxiety over Nwoye, his eldest son, started very early, Okonkwo detects in the young son, signs of resemblance to his grandfather Unoka, who is acknowledged to be weak and a failure in life. For Okonkwo, Ezinma should have been a boy because "she has the right spirit" and resembles her father. The mature and realist Obierika dismisses Okonkwo's apprehensions in curt remark:

You worry yourself for nothing. The children are still very young.

But Okonkwo is not convinced, rather he comes in with a proverbial rejoinder to refute Obierika's wise counsel:

A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches, Things fall apart p.60).

The narrative style of Achebe in Things fall apart

In the novel, we see Okonkwo the protagonist of the novel as a wealthy and respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, a lower Nigerian village that is part of a consortium of nine connected villages. He is haunted by the actions of Unoka, his cowardly and spend thrift father, who died in misery and disrepute, leaving many village debts unsettled. In response, Okonkwo became a clan's man, warrior, farmer and family provider extra-ordinary. He has a twelve year old son named Nwoye whom he finds lazy, Okonkwo worries that Nwoye will end up a failure like Unoka. In a settlement with a neighbouring village name Mbaino, Umuofia wins a virgin and a fifteen year old boy. Okonkwo takes charge of the boy named Ikemefuna and finds an ideal son in him. Nwoye likewise forms a strong attachment to the new comer. The virgin at once replaces Ogbuefi Udo's murdered wife and we hear of her no more.

Despite his fondness for Ikemefuna and despite the fact that the boy begins to call him father, Okonkwo does not let himself show any affection for him. During the "Week of Peace", Okonkwo accuses his youngest wife, Ojiugo of negligence. He severely beats her, breaking the peace of the sacred week. He makes some sacrifices because he desecrated the week of peace which does not

allow any violence of any kind. In order for peace to reign in his family, he makes some sacrifices both in cash and in kind which was made up of "one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries" which must be brought to the shrine of Ani early the next morning as stated by Ezeani – the chief priest of Ani. He makes these sacrifices to allow his repentance because he has shocked his community irreparably.

The English language is used to reveal the literary element and richness of the text. The language of fiction is prosaic and the text can be classified under the tragic genre. In fiction, the words of T.S. Eliot are fore-grounded. He opines that an individual's emotions can be equated with something in the outer world. To this end, the twin forces of emotion and social fact or reality contribute to Achebe's literary creativity in his texts. The yardsticks for analyzing the literary elements in the novels are plot, characterization, diction, style and narrative technique.

Characterization in the text is believable. There are round characters and flat characters. Okonkwo is a round character who does not change or adapt to the vagaries of the plot while other characters remain flat. Diction in the texts is simple and words are used economically. The plot in *Things fall apart* is linear and also simple, events follow one another in a sequential fashion while in other texts, the plot is more complex. The story begins with a reminiscence or flashback and then returns to the present.

The style adopted by Achebe includes cushioning in *Things fall apart* but excludes it in other texts. This is probably because the author explains some of the Igbo words and terms in his first novel. *Things fall apart* does not bother to reiterate virtually the same words in his other texts. This is probably also, why the tone of conversation among the characters in other texts is more forceful and mature than it is in *Things fall apart*. Never the less, his texts are written in conversational style with features of everyday conversation such as ellipsis and exclamations. The writer also employs songs and poetry to reveal the typically oral community depicted. The narrative technique adopted is the eye of God or omniscient narrative in which the narrator knows all and sees all that is happening. This views the story from a removed stance and from an observer's perspective, leaving the readers to judge or make their subjective conclusions from the stories told. The narrative made is quite graphic and descriptive. For instance, it is possible in *Things fall apart* to imaginarily picture the incidents such as the wrestling match presented in chapter six, the burial ceremony and purification rites in chapter eight, the mode of judgment via the "egwugwu" trial in chapter ten and punishment exemplified through Okonkwo's banishment in chapter thirteen. As part of the literary richness of the texts, we would consider the use of tropes and their examples in the texts. Figures of speech include simile, paradox, irony, onomatopoeia, proverbs, idioms, hyperbole, personification and metaphor.

Smile: This is seen in his texts. For example in *Things fall apart*, it can be found in page 3: "Amalinze was a wily craftsman but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water", page 16. "It was like pouring grains of cob into a bag full of holes", page 34. "It was as if water had been poured on the tightened skin of a drum"

Paradox: Paradoxically, the protagonist, Okonkwo is seen to go against and defile everything he believes in he lives and dies defying the same tradition and custom that he had previously upheld: first with the “female crime he commits leading to his banishment and second with his committing a shameful suicide which desecrates the land and opposes the beliefs of his people.

Irony: Ironically, Okonkwo’s fear of failure leads him to failure.

Onomatopoeia: These rhythmic sounds help to buttress the people’s morality. They can be found in *Things fall apart* in page 7 and 62 respectively. “Gome, gome, gome becomes the follow metal” and page 84: “Go-di-di-go-di-go, Di-go-go-di-go. It was the ekwe talking to the clan”.

Rhythmic movements and utterances which are a form of incantation are also in pages 72 and 73 viz: “Agbala do-o-o-o... Agbala o -o-o-o...” Proverbs: According to Achebe in *Things fall apart* (p. 5), proverbs are “the palm oil with which words are eaten”. Therefore, the importance of proverbs to the Igbo community cannot be over-emphasized. Proverbs are found in *Things fall apart* for example in page 6: “our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them”. If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings”. Page 14.... A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness” and page 19, “... those palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble”. The author exercises his literary cum poetic license by introducing several idiomatic expressions to capture incidents. This enables a free flow of thought and an informal presentation of the stories. Phrasal expressions such as “the clouds have gathered”, “add fuel to fire”, “all ears”, “up in the air”, “early birds”, “at the crack of dawn”, “dry up”, “cross fingers” among others are used in the text. The structures of the idioms are phrases ranging from adjectival phrases to main phrases, prepositional” phrases and adverbial phrases.

Hyperbole: Hyperbole expressions are present in the texts but a typical example is found in page 16 in *Things fall apart*, thus: “that year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibe was the worst year in living memory. Nothing happened at the proper time...”.

Personification: Personified expressions are seen in his text. Examples in *Things fall apart* include page 7. “The night was very quiet Silence returned to the world”, page 17 “That year the harvest was sad....., under the load of despair”, and page 87: “The crime was of two kinds male and female”.

Metaphor: In *things fall apart*, typical metaphorical expressions abound in the book, it can be seen in page 24: “Yam the king of crops”, page 47: Ndulue and Ozoemena had “one mind” and page 109: “living fire begets cold, impotent ash”. In page 52, “the white man’s skin is directly compared with that of lepers”.

Conclusion

Things fall apart is written in the realistic tradition. The imaginative values in the text having been expressed through folklore, myth and other traditional verbal art modes, credible light has been thrown on African history. The aspects of culture discussed reveal the prevalence of cultural norms in Africa. A look at these practices highlights the fact that the novel can be defined as truly African.

Aspects of Culture in the Joys of Motherhood

Like many African authors, *The joys of motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta portrays a number of cultural beliefs and practices. Even though she could be said to be a product of two different cultures, being initially from a culture that sees the female as a subordinate, and being exposed to western values, she manages to portray a good representation of the Igbo culture and tradition in the novel. Therefore, she could be said to be loyal to her African values even if she appears to criticize them sometimes. The novel, *The Joys of motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta details the experiences of the woman Nnu Ego: an Igbo woman, Ego is hampered by traditions concerning women, sexuality and motherhood. The story begins with Ego's mother Ona, who was described by Nwokocha Agbadi as "a priceless jewel" and her tense sexual and psychological relationship with Ego's father, Nwokocha Agbadi. Ego is born to her mother not long after the death of a slave girl who was forcibly killed and buried with one of Agbadi's wives and swore she would revisit Agbadi's family as his own daughter. After Ego sickened as a baby, she was taken to an oracle who foretold that Ego's body was inhabited by the first of the former slave girl. Ego's life was marred by the first of the presence of the slave girl's chi, or ghost ever after and mental illness plagued Ego all through her life. Nnu Ego was married young to a man she loved, however the marriage fell apart when Ego remained barren. Ego returned to her father's house only to be married off again shortly after to a man she found physically repugnant. However, she had seven children by him before her death at forty-five, alone and mentally ill.

The novel, *The joys of motherhood* is a detailed, psychologically achieved, and culturally relevant book. Emecheta's novel displays an intuitive feel for the characters, their motivations and custom. Emecheta's ideas regarding Igbo societal norms are apparent in her treatment of her books. Indeed, *The joys of motherhood* in particular is set up in a very definitive manner, not only with the title but also with the naming of the chapters. For instance, there is a chapter in the book titled "A man is never ugly". This is enlightening with regard to the attitude, displayed towards woman, as seen in the protagonist of the book. As a partial result of this attitude, a woman's importance and relevance in society are demonstrated solely through their motherhood and consequent conformity. *The joys of motherhood* has some frankly sexual passages which are very useful and of a great benefit both within and outside the classroom and is well worth the time spent studying.

Emecheta also points out this kind of disrespectful behavior which affected Nnu Ego's first marriage. Nnu Ego's failure to produce children especially male children in her first marriage cause her husband's family to look for another wife who can bear children especially male children. Amaokwu, Nnu

Ego's first husband disrespects Nnu Ego when the new wife arrives. Emecheta displays Ibuza culture in which an old wife moves out of her position for the new wife to occupy.

Emecheta reports: "She was not surprised when Amaokwu told her casually one evening that she would have to move to a nearby hut kept for older wives, because his people had found him a new wife". This disrespects causes Nnu Ego so much pain that she expresses her fears to her father: "father my position as senior woman of the house has been taken by a younger woman" (p. 33).

Emecheta in *The joys of motherhood* expresses how multiple wives affect families adversely. It brings discomfort to families because the family may not have enough to cater for a big family. Nnu Ego's husband, Nnaife, causes discomfort to his family with his quest for more wives. He agrees to marry his late brother's wives, when they can barely feed and send their children to school. Nnu Ego says:

Oh! Nnaife, how are you going to cope? All these children and all these wives. He she stopped, as the truth hit her like a heavy blow. She almost staggered as it sank in... where would Nnaife get money from? Oh! God... she ran out, leaving her baby on the bed (p. 115).

According to Ibuza culture, a woman should be happy when her husband brings another wife home. Emecheta portrays this in the character of Nnu Ego when she pretends to be happy to see a new wife. Emecheta reports: "She tried desperately to control her feelings; to put on a pleasant face, to be the sophisticated Ibuza wife and welcome another woman into her home but she could not" (p. 119). Emecheta describes Nnaife as one, who is supposed to care for his family, but keeps getting more wives and abandoned his children to his wife Nnu Ego to care for. Nnu Ego does not fail to express her feelings about the new wife. "for once Nnu Ego did not bother to hide her disapproval. He refused to share a room with this new girl and all their children Where are we going to put them all? She screamed at her husband and the new girl", (p.184). the presence of multiple wives in a family creates room for jealousy and conflict among wives. Nnu Ego fears for her children due to the presence of the new wife. She goes to seek help from a "Dibia" who advises her: "The child is right, you must protect your sons against the jealousy of the younger wife. If you bring me two hens and a yard of white cloth, I shall prepare charms for your sons to wear (p. 129). Men only think of themselves not their families before they choose wives. In their culture, marrying many wives shows a man's wealth, strength and capacities.

Emecheta's Literary Technique and Style

The joys of motherhood explores the psychological depths of one woman, Nnu Ego, struggling to maintain her traditional values while in a modern, westernized and industrialized urban setting. It seems as though Nnu Ego is opposed from every side, even though the people opposing her claim appear to be upholding her values. We are also able to observe how western values an

urban African city undermine her husband's manhood with direct consequences for Nnu Ego.

In the novel, Emecheta displays an intuitive feel for the characters, their motivations and influences. A great deal of information is presented on Igbo culture and custom. While the information is dense and much of the information will be new to high school and college age readers, Emecheta manages to make her material absorbing enough that if given enough over the course of a semester students should be able to make a detailed study of this book. The yardsticks for analyzing the literary elements in the novels are plot, diction, style, characterization and narrative techniques.

Characterization in the text is believable, that is to say that the characters are realistic. There are round characters and flat ones. Nnu Ego is a round character whom the plot revolves round and who does not change or adapt to the vagaries of the plot while other characters remain flat. Diction in the text is simple and words are used economically. The plot in the joys of motherhood is linear and also simple; follow one another in a sequential fashion while in other texts, the plot is more complex. The story begins with a reminiscence or flashback and then returns to the present. The plot follows the entire life of one person, Nnu Ego. We read about her conflicts, joys, sorrows and thoughts in the narrative that follows. However, there is one chapter that veers out of her perspective in order to tell the story of how her parents conceived her.

That chapter is important, even though it wildly out of touch with the rest of the point of view, because it allows us to intimately observe life in Iboza on a typical compound. It also establishes the link between Nnu Ego and her "chi", the slave woman who was killed at the time Nnu Ego was conceived. The novel, the joys of motherhood explores the psychological depths of one woman, Nnu Ego, struggling to maintain her traditional values while living in a modern, westernized and industrial urban setting.

The tone of the joys of motherhood is sympathetic to the main character, Nnu Ego, demonstrating how a young woman who desires nothing more than to be a good wife and mother, is cut short by modern society trends. We see how she wants the best for her children but her selflessness is ultimately her undoing. Her family takes advantage of her, and her husband Nnaife blames her when things go wrong. We are able to resist feeling sorry for Nnu Ego for two reasons. First, although the tone is sympathetic, Nnu Ego herself never sinks into self-pity. Second, although Nnu Ego herself realizes that she has lived a life of slavery, she has her revenge after her death. The joys of motherhood writing style can be contrasted with another prominent Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe. Achebe's sentences are soaked with idioms and rich cultural details, while Buchi Emecheta's style is simpler, letting the plot and characters inform the readers about cultural information and the character's feelings. Here is an excerpt from the novel:

"I shall be going to the island this morning. The ship arrived last night and I want to find out if I can get some cartons of cigarettes on the black market from the sailors". Nnaife was wide awake now, staring at the ceiling of their one room home. This aspect of his wife's trade was illegal and could

land her in trouble if she was caught. But what was he to do? Ask her to stay?" (chapter 8, p. 67-70)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This work is an authentic representation of the cultural reality typical of the African society (especially the Igbo society). Things fall apart and The joys of motherhood have been examined from the cultural aspects and Emecheta have been able to prove in their novels that prose literature is an effective medium of expressing African culture as well as redeeming the African image, that both novels do not aspire to become replicas of western novels and at the same time fully endorse the African world view, the same way any western novel express western philosophies is very remarkable.

Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta have also demonstrated through their novels that the medium of literature in the form of the novel and prose has a function far more formidable than entertainment. When the situation of life itself becomes a hell, an enemy to a people's progress, when the roots of a people's being is questioned and their image mercilessly painted by "outsiders who weep more than the bereaved", political and economic as well as religious and cultural approaches are made in order to ameliorate the situation. But certainly, only the writer has that special power of imagination to create orderliness in the midst of chaos. Therefore, fiction becomes a powerful instrument for nationalism. So, the writer uses his art to teach and most importantly to correct and redirect impressions. This is not to say that art is propaganda, but that art is an indestructed mechanism for checking damaging propaganda,

Recommendations

For any further promotion of African culture and tradition, the following recommendations are to be put in practice:

- i) There should be enough exploitation of proverbs, riddles, folklores and songs to polish the prose work thereby enhancing the African culture and tradition.
- ii) Consideration of the existing beliefs, norms, values and customs of African countries while writing a prose work
- iii) Promoting the rich African cultural heritage by writing more works on it

ADVANCED RESEARCH

In writing this article the researcher realizes that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, writing, and form of presentation considering the limited knowledge and abilities of the researchers themselves. Therefore, for the perfection of the article, the researcher expects constructive criticism and suggestions from various parties.

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