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Author Incarnation: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

(1958) as an Autobiographical Novel

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Dedications

This work is dedicated to my family. Particularly to my mother for her unrestrained devotion and support. To her, I am forever indebted.

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Abstract

This academic research deals with a rather debate-raising postulation. In that it aims at unearthing the significance of the author's biographical intermediaries in interpreting his/her works of fiction. As such, the research implements a psychoanalytic reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* within analogical terms with his autobiographical work *There Was a Country* in light of Sigmund Freud's premise on the personality making constituents; id, ego, superego, and the human tendency to form an ego ideal. Furthermore, this dissertation scrutinizes Achebe's psychological engraving in *Things Fall Apart,* puts forward the author's possible sources of inspiration and unveils parallels in the lives of the author and Okonkwo, his protagonist in the aforementioned novel. Thus, forming a foundation for further queries anent Chinua Achebe's autobiographic tendency.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

It is a human tendency to venture the encryption of the living experience. From petroglyphs to the advent of language and the written word, mankind never ceased the temptation to immortalize the self and its environment. Literature forms an exemplary vehicle to conduct such an endeavor. For it not only conveys descriptive aspects anent a certain epoch, but permits unearthing the evolution of human cognition and its psychological complexity.

The rise of nationalism following the end of the Second World War saw the emergence of an anticolonial discourse. In that, writers, authors, and novelists sought to dismantle the colonial narrative and battle the notion of the white man's burden to edify the indigenous peoples of the world out of their primitiveness.

Within African terms, Chinua Achebe pioneered the latter desired attainment. He is up until this very day acclaimed as the father of African literature whose holy grail was not only to deflate the hegemonic literature of the imperialists, but also to tutor the peoples of Africa and the world through his resolute stories that would often convene a moral message. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a paragon of the latter notion. It is the author's first published novel and the one through which he became an astonishing figure of world literature.

An anthropological scrutiny suggests that *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a preeminent umbrella of the Igbo culture, polytheism, superstitions, and traditions. It takes place in the fictional Igbo village of Umuofia, and depicts the downfall of a previously eulogised leader of the clan named Okonkwo following the arrival of the white missionaries. It is noteworthy, in this context, that Chinua Achebe himself was born and raised in Igboland,

British Nigeria at a time of a civilizational and religious confrontation; this begs the following questions:

- Is Chinua Achebe autobiographical in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)?

- Is the author psychologically engraved in what he writes?

- If so, what are the psychological implications of Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)?

Since human beings are evidently creatures of a psychological making, the author's creative urge seemingly resonates within his/her psyche. Perhaps then, one can say that the literary work is an all-encompassing umbrella of its creator's personality. As such, one can say that the previous questions entail a psychoanalytic reading of the author's biographical characteristics and key-defining events analogically with those he depicts in the novel. The aim here is to identify certain patterns of behaviour that may in turn reveal the author's core issues and anxieties. These, if they were to be detected in the novel, may be conclusively indicative of the author's unconscious autobiographical tendency.

This research makes use of Psychoanalysis as a literary theory and implements Sigmund Freud's premise on the components of the human personality, notably, id, ego and superego, and discusses the formation of an ego ideal driven by a childhood's quest for wish fulfilment. It further exhibits the ongoing debate betwixt the author-based interpretation of literature and the advocacy of a reader-based one, giving specific reference to Roland Barthes' (1968) essay titled *The Death of the Author*.

Additionally, the study is dissected through two chapters; the first one clues the readers in contextually and confers the aforementioned notions theoretically. Whereas the second chapter, induces a summary of the novel in question and an analysis of the Igbo culture. It further attempts a Psychoanalytical reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall*

Apart (1958) in regards to his autobiographical work *There Was a Country* (2012). And explores parallels in the lives of the author and his protagonist.

Chapter One:

Context and Author's Literary Implication

Content of Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

Anti-authorial literary interpretation is a predominant approach in world literature. As such, most critics approbate a reader-based elucidation of literature in light of Roland Barthes (1968) influential essay titled *The Death of the Author* which postulates the notion that we, as readers, make our own meanings. Hence, the author is of no significance.

However, it could be argued that the previous premise disregards any true meaning that the text might have been intended to convey, since each reader will have its own interpretation of the same text. Similarly, psychoanalytic literary theory ought to restore authorial integrity since it is, above all, concerned with human behaviour.

1.2. Nigeria's Ethnic Tensions

Ever since its independence, Nigeria has endured the fierce consequences of ethnic and religious feuds that date back to the colonial period. Indeed, Nigeria's multiethnicity has ensued vicious competitiveness at the political sphere that would intermittently stem bloody altercations; endangering the country's unanimous nationhood. By and large, the issue is one of political and economic dominance that transpired in post-colonial Nigeria between the Christian majority in the South and its Muslim counterparts in the North.

British imperialism in Nigeria is partly accountable for the current laceration amongst the nation's religious and ethnic groups; for it ensured the establishment of identity politics as means to gain political leverages and access to economic resources on the basis of ethno-religious differentiation (Ochonu, 2014). The latter notion was to a great extent carried out by a divide and rule policy that institutionalized religion and ethnicity as indicators of indigenous identity. A paragon of this is the imperial presence's attempt to propagate the idea that Southerners were more accustomed to the white man's knowledge and intellectually superior to its Northern counterparts.

Corrupt and incompetent leadership post-independence and its failure to see through the equitable distribution of resources further infused the simmering ethno-religious tensions and made religious discourse in politics more appealing to those who seek firm economic anchorage at the expense of others. And perhaps the pinnacle of such tensions is the upcoming Civil War (1967-1970) that would see through the sheer growth of religious animosity.

Nigeria today sits at a duality of political influence. Muslim populated North has been divided into three geopolitical blocs and several states, and reaches for the Islamic world for solidarity and influence. The South, on the other hand, remains largely Christian and has also been divided into several states and three geopolitical blocs that seek the West for sociopolitical influence (Ochonu, 2014). It is noteworthy that both, North and South, hold minorities that regard the majority as its oppressors.

1.3. The Biafran War

The independence movement following the end of the Second World War saw Nigeria granted autonomy from the British rule starting from October 1, 1960. Fueled by ethnic distrust and the bloodstained coup and counter-coup, the most populace country in Africa plunged into a ferocious civil war in its first decade of sovereignty. The war was most detrimental to the nation's post-independence identity and had traumatic effects, for it not only saw the deaths of nearly Three million people but muddied the country's national spirit and forever smeared future generations.

The Nigerian civil war, also known as the Biafran war, marks a paragon of colonial failure; British imperialism in Nigeria "neglected to lay the foundation for nation-states from the various cultural and territorial entities they had forcibly amalgamated into

convenient colonial holdings" (Kobo, 2020, para. 3), and its divide and rule policy certainly did not do any favors to the nation's multiethnic complexion.

The conflict bolted in January, 1966 when an assemble of military personnel, largely Igbos, orchestrated a coup d'état that would overthrow Nigeria's first democratic government, see the killings of top military officers, public officials, and politicians including statesman Sir Ahmadu Bello and the country's Prime Minister Sir Tafawu Balewa. This act was allegedly infused by the corruption of the hitherto authority, ethnic discrimination in distributing economic resources, and the claim that the Northern Region was about to declare political hegemony over the rest of the federation (Kobo, 2020). The power eventually fell into the hands of General Johnson Aguysi Ironsi, an Igbo, and commander of the Nigerian Army.

An Igbo being instated as an Acting Head of State, the exoneration of coup Machiavellians, as well as the neutralization of top Northern officials raised some serious questions regarding the intuition of the Southeastern seizures of power. The coup, then, grew into an attempt at Igbo ascendancy, or it seemingly did. Hence, the countercoup of July 1966. The latter was conducted by Northern military officers and saw far more casualties then its precedent, most of them from the Igbo ethnic group. Following the assassination of General Johnson Ironsi, a supposed unifying government was established under the leadership of General (then Lieutenant Colonel) Yakubu Gowon (Kobo, 2020).

In the midst of the new government's inability to stop the genocides against the Igbos, Biafra (Igbo majority) announced its secession from the Nigerian federation; instigating the Biafran War 1967. It is noteworthy that the war ended three years later with the surrender of Biafra due to a tremendous power imbalance in favor of the Nigerian federation.

1.4. Nigerian Literature

Imperial powers, setting foot on the African shores, ushered a systematic narrative that labeled Africa and its peoples as primitive and illiterate. They laid claim that natives had neither history nor artistic spirit prior to colonialism. It goes without saying that British colonial establishment in Nigeria was not an exception. Nevertheless, ground evidence deems the latter notion dubious in the least.

The truth is that Nigeria's commitment to arts and literature far preceded the British presence and its 1882 injunction that mandated English language teaching in Nigerian schools. This is particularly to refer to the Nigerian oratory tradition, folktales, legends and myths which mark the touchstone of the country's literary contribution, though tracking their roots is a rather exigent task due to the secrecy of its practitioners, as was the custom (Arayela, 2013).

In the midst of a western controlled narrative, Nigerian intellectuals saw a necessity to record their own history and culture. Hence, the birth of Nigerian literature in its written form and the monumental growth it aspired across a century of African history with Isaac B. Thomas' (late 1800's) *Itan Segilola Eleyinjuege* being the first piece of written literature in the country. Consequently, Nigerian writers post-independence sought to dismantle the colonial narrative and manifest political upheavals, wars, and internal conflicts their people had to endure, in their writings (Arayela, 2013).

The University College, Ibadan (1948) played a significant role in institutionalizing the English language and the body of literature that followed. For it is the home university of the very first Nigerian writers in English language; notably, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. The former is a 1986 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and the latter is the

most credited figure of African literature and his debut novel entitled *Things Fall Apart* (1958) remains till this very day a benchmark against colonial discourse.

1.5. Psychoanalytic Literary Theory

Psychology and literature entwine in purpose in the sense that both pursue understanding the profound development of their subjects whether real or fictional. This understanding is attained once the latter's repressed fears, guilty desires, emotions, and conflicts, are unveiled. As such, an interdisciplinary relationship arises under the terms that each contribute to the development of the other. This is to refer to Psychoanalysis, particularly, as an approach to literary criticism.

The ensuing aim of psychoanalysis is identifying one's psychological dysfunctions and provide assistance in overcoming them by analyzing destructive patterns of human behaviour (Tyson, 2006). Evidently, psychoanalytic literary theory similarly bestows a profound understanding of literary texts, since they are over and above concerned with human behaviour.

As far as literary texts are concerned, when it comes to psychoanalysis the author's psyche comes into play; critics when adopting a psychoanalytic approach tend to diagnose the author's anxieties, unconscious desires and fears with the implication that the analysis of one character would likely disclose a fragment of the former's psychological being. Hence, the literary work is an exhibition of the author's persona.

Sigmund Freud's (1900) hypotheses on human psychology are central pertaining to psychoanalytic literary theory. Freud likens psychology to literature claiming that they both share decisive elements of decoding. This is to relate to the dream-thoughts whose analysis, according to Freud, involves undertaking a process of interpretation that is similar to that of literary texts. It is an endeavor that necessitate deciphering literary-like vehicles

that convey meaning beyond the apparent language structure. Such vehicles bear significance symbolically and incorporate metaphors and similes among other literary devices.

It is, then, evident that undertaking a psychoanalytic reading of a given literary text requires tracing the author's own childhood traumas, fears, conflicts, and suppressed wishes through a close examination of the characters' behaviour and fathom out how these behaviours are projected unto the author's life relying on biographical facets. It is noteworthy that this implementation of the psychological materials of the author is, oftentimes, not deliberate and acted out unconsciously in the text (Tyson, 2006).

Hence, the author's intention is not at question here, it is rather what he/she never intended to communicate that is sought in psychoanalytic criticism. For "The unconscious material has been distorted by the censoring conscious mind" (Meiliana, 2020, p. 45).

Moreover, our psychological disorders influence our behaviour in ways that make us unaware of their existence. These form, persistently, the motivating forces of human behaviour. Freud highlights this power of the unconscious claiming that it is the not knowing of the existence of the psychological problems, or knowing but not realizing when they are dominating our conduct that gives them so much control over us (Tyson, 2006).

The unconscious accumulates our fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts since childhood. These are oftentimes overbearing and we tend to get overwhelmed by them. Thus, we find asylum in repression. The latter in this sense means the exclusion of unpleasant and unhappy psychological events from our conscious entity. However, these conflicted feelings are not eliminated altogether but rather they seize control over our current experiences and are acted out unconsciously in disguise and in self-defeating ways

(Tyson, 2006). Not being able to acknowledge them, makes the chances of ever bridling them unlikely. Consequently, the unconscious could be defined as "a dynamic entity that engages us at the deepest level of our being" (Tyson, 2006, p. 13).

Psychoanalytic theory pays close attention to one's role in his/her own family, for it is there where the origins of the unconscious take roots. It is the way one perceives and reacts to his/her family role that will determine the future psychological motivations of their patterns of behaviour. Only by recognizing these psychological motivations can they hope to begin to change the resulting patterns of behaviour.

A common ramification of the ways in which one perceives their family role is Oedipal complex, which is according to Lois Tyson (2006) a "dysfunctional bond with a parent of the opposite sex that we do not outgrow in adulthood and that does not allow us to develop mature relationships with our peers" (pp. 26-27). According to Freud, Oedipal complex is a decisive element in the growth of the child, and begins, substantially, when the latter ascertains that it is not the central focus of its mother (Tyson, 2006). Freud further asserts that this complex is inescapable and influences all our behaviour as adults and, patently, what we write (Meiliana, 2020).

Additionally, the unconscious represses and fights back through defenses which are layers that restrain us from recognizing or changing our destructive behaviours. In other words, these defenses are the processes by which the repressed stays repressed "in order to prevent knowing what we feel we cannot handle" (Tyson, 2006, p. 15). Defenses include among others: displacement and regression. The latter is a temporary return to a psychological state not just by re-imagining it, but rather by reliving it. The former is an attempt that one takes to displace their anger on someone or something less threatening than the actual thing or person that enraged them in the first place. It should be mentioned that regression is regarded as a useful therapeutic tool in modern psychoanalysis, since it

allows the alteration of the effects of the wounding experience by reliving it, which is the only way it can be truly grasped (Tyson, 2006).

Once defenses are broken down, anxiety takes over. The latter is a crucial human experience, particularly, in a psychoanalytic context for the reason that it divulges one's core issues which may be a fear of betrayal, lack of self-esteem, insecurity… etc. What is most important is that these core issues are not temporary. They stay with us for a lifetime and unless addressed effectively they determine our behaviour in distinctive ways of which we are usually unaware, in view of the fact that these core issues are in play when we are most anxious (Tyson, 2006).

To encapsulate, access to one's unconscious is attained through one's creativity and dreams. Our defenses keep us in the dark regarding our unconscious experience. Thus comes the importance of psychotherapy which makes use of psychoanalysis to identify our anxieties in a process that involves a resurfacing of the repressed. This will in turn uncover our core issues (Tyson, 2006). As such, a psychoanalytic reading of literary texts entails laying bare evidence of a re-enactment of some of the author's painful, frightening or guilty experiences that he/she wants to keep repressed.

1.5.1 Id, Ego, and Superego

Sigmund Freud's influential work on the structural model of the human psyche infers that one's personality is shaped on the basis of an intertwined correspondence betwixt three core dispositions. As such, Freud identifies the id, ego, and superego (Nurhidayati, 2010). Psychoanalysis undertakes a close examination of these three in an attempt to locate any dysfunctional pattern of behaviour (Tyson, 2006). Evidently, Psychoanalytic literary criticism similarly bears attentive scrutiny of the actions put forward by literary characters using Freud's aforementioned structures of personality.

Id, ego, and superego are essential structures of the human mind and, ideally, work in harmony in order to generate a balanced personality. In addition, the latter is founded on the basis of an amalgam of innate pleasures and desires, societal rules, and individual morality. It is worth mentioning that our culture lay the ground rules of proper conduct and the definitions of normal and abnormal behavior. For psychoanalysis, however, the issue is not one of morality, but rather it is one of destructive versus non-destructive behaviour (Tyson, 2006).

According to Freud, the id takes roots in the unconscious and consists of innate cravings—such as the desire for nourishment—that require immediate emancipation regardless of the society's consent. These needs, unless met, spawn anxiety and frustration. The id is particularly salient during infancy, since it grants the child its basic needs (Tyson, 2006). Although the id lingers with us for a lifetime, its impulses are momentary but not circumstantial, for it seeks instant compliance which is, oftentimes, beyond the rational.

The id is the only personality component a child has. It is compelling and does not take no for an answer. Hence, it is the parents' role to identify the child's basic needs and assert that they are realistically fulfilled as they see fit. Otherwise, the child's aggressive tendency peeks—includes perpetual crying, for instance—and remains consistent until its desires are met, since the other personality components are yet to develop (Meiliana, 2020).

While the id is based on the pleasure principle, the ego is based on the reality principle. Our ego, then, is able to recognize other people's exigencies and desires. It further acknowledges that the instinctive quest for gratification might not be in our best interests. As such, its function is to see that our necessities are covered, giving the absolute consideration to the contemporary situation (Tyson, 2006). Hence, the ego follows rationality rather than blind wish fulfillment. It is noteworthy that the ego comes to being

starting from the child's third year of life when it erupts as an autonomous entity, separate from its mother. This refers to Jacques Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis, for he suggests that during infancy the child's sense of unity with its mother is its first and most important experience that lasts until its acquirement of language. Thus, its immersion into the Symbolic Order (Tyson, 2006). It is, then, fair to say that the ego "regulates the instinctual drives of the id so that they may be released in non-destructive behavioral patterns" (Ginting, 2021, p. 300).

It is rather complex to determine whether the ego is operating consciously or unconsciously in specific instances. Nevertheless, it can be said that the ego takes on a double-sided operation that is partly unconscious, though it "comprises what we ordinarily think of as the conscious mind" (Ginting, 2021, p. 300).

What is most interesting is that the ego, unlike the id, is altruistic and possesses the aptness of learning; a paragon of this is the child's ability to learn from its mistakes, particularly those that are driven by an id urge such as the impulse to touch a burning flame (Ginting, 2021).

We can speculate at this point that the ego's role is to conserve the balance between the purely impulsive id and the stern morality of the superego. The latter acts for our conscious processes and domineers our senses of right and wrong that we initially absorb from our parents in childhood, as we seek to satisfy them by seeing them through. Under exemplary conditions, the ego is the strongest personality component for it pursues pleasing the id taking into consideration the immediate reality of the current circumstances, assuring that the superego is not to be discountenanced. Or else, both id, and superego will push for dominance at the expense of the other (McLeod, 2019).

The superego intends to suppress the instinctive desires of the id in the unconscious. The aim is to overpower fantasies, cravings, and inclinations that are deemed unacceptable by society. Furthermore, if we were take the superego out of the personality equation, so to speak, the resulting individual would be completely selfish due to the lack of morality, and will seek satisfying id desires, though realistically, but by whatever means necessary, even if it means tormenting others.

We are all born amoral and resort only to what is pleasurable. As we grow up we tend to adopt our parents' moral merits of what is right and what is wrong. These moral merits will then intensify as we start interacting with our society resulting inner self-restraint, known as the superego. The latter guides the ego and operates at three levels; conscious, preconscious, and unconscious (Morris & Maisto, 2003).

The superego stands in direct opposition to the id, and forces the ego to reenact id desires in a socially accepted comportment. In adulthood, none of the previously mentioned personality structures act autonomously and a change in one implies a change in the others. The ego, in this sense, is the outcome of the quarrel between the id and the superego. Tyson (2006) argues that this relationship betwixt id ego and superego unearth our personality and is in the same way indicative of our culture.

1.5.2 The Ego Ideal

Childhood is of a major significance in molding one's ego ideal. The latter, according to Freud, is a conscious ideal of the inner image that relates to what one wants to be rather than what one should be. The child, seeking to satisfy the caregiving figure—be it its parents or educators—renounces its infantile narcissism, only to develop, later on, an ideal ego in the form of a nostalgic keenness to its repressed childhood wishes. Freud (1914)

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accordingly denotes a liaison between narcissism and repression claiming that for one to become a narcissist, he/she is likely to have endured much restraints in childhood.

It is of a particular interest that the difference between the ideal ego and our actual ego is that the former measures and judges the latter. Freud asserts this notion as he writes in regards to the psychology of repression that "one man has set up an ideal in himself by which he measures his actual ego" (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016, p. 215).

Following its abandonment of narcissistic childhood desires, an ego ideal arises. The latter is the child's quest for wish fulfillment that he/she seeks in adulthood. In other words, the ego ideal is the core belief in the possibility of achieving the repressed wishes and the ideal image of the self, one had in childhood. As such, the adult would day-dream about attaining an image of self-perfection and excellence. Creative writers, Freud posits, would even implement it in their creative works, in search for wish gratification and self-immortalization (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016)

Freudian psychoanalysis adduces the notion that the ego ideal is acted out consciously. In this respect, authors and creative writers deliberately imply their ideals in their literary works rather than merely day-dreaming and fantasizing about them. It is noteworthy that Freud views literary works as the products of infantile wishes. This is not to suggest that the ego ideal is a conscious process and the ideal ego is an unconscious one, but rather it is plainly to say that the ego ideal is most likely a conscious pursuit of lost childhood dreams that are evoked by past unpleasant experiences (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016).

Ego ideal and ideal ego are seemingly used interchangeably by Freud. Nevertheless, the distinction is made on the basis that the latter is the recipient of the sense of completeness, self-regard or self-love one's ego enjoys in infancy and later seems to be forever lost. Whereas the former is a dynamic notion that works towards reacquiring one's

infantile excellence and perfection. Further distinction could be made owing to the fact that the ideal ego is omnipotent; such omnipotence is relatively relived through daydreaming, since one controls the rendering of its own fantasies. In the case of the ego ideal, on the other hand, the ego could solely regain its self-esteem by adhering to the decrees of the superego that, in turn, align with those of the parents (Mellor, 2019).

Jacques Lacan takes a rather different approach in distinguishing the ideal ego from the ego ideal. Lacan asserts that the child grasps its ideal ego by literally seeing an image of itself in a mirror. This relates to the Imaginary Order that emerges during infancy and reveals one's ego in comparison to the chaos of outside reality. The ego ideal, however, relates to the previously mentioned Symbolic Order in which the subject sees itself "from a vantage idealized point to see his normal life as limited and useless" (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016, p. 216).

1.6. The Author in Literary Interpretation

Modern literary theory propounds an anti-authorial approach to literary interpretation claiming that the author is not the sole master of the meaning of its own text. This very ownership of the text, some literary critics regard, is a rather zany postulation. The argument is that the author is dependent in its claim of originality, for texts and discourses are merely the recirculation of preceding words and utterances from distinct texts and speeches. Consequently, the author becomes "a liminal character of minor importance to literary criticism, and, if not completely dead, then at least a ghost haunting the limits of the literary work of art" (Nielsen, 2019, p. 1).

Nonetheless, the previous notion is rather destabilizing to the typical way we perceive literature, for it entails that the reader knows the intentions of the author better than the author himself and further posits that a text can have any meaning the reader chooses to

assign to it (Kirsch, 2015). In this sense, it could be argued that reading the text in the first place becomes nonsensical, since we make our own meanings. Moreover, the anti-authorial approach has inflicted a sardonic effect in contrast to its intended one; made the author a recurrent subject of literary interpretation that haunts author-critics (Nielsen, 2019). Authorial integrity finds foreground in psychoanalytic theory. The latter asserts that the literary work is a manifestation of the personality of its creator. Literary works, in this respect, become an all-encompassing umbrella of the author's psyche.

1.6.1 Death of the Author

Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of The Author" was written in 1967 and first appeared in 1968. Barthes at the time had started criticizing Structuralism and sought to dismantle the political and economic authority that he regarded the author to be part of, since the latter was merely the product of literature and the classical tradition in France. Hitherto, the essay is still considered a stance against the authority of formalism and a touchstone of reader-response criticism. Consequently, this short essay infused the development of poststructuralist literary theory in the 1970s and 1980s influencing both English departments and well-established thinkers such as the likes of Jacques Derrida ("Interesting Literature," n.d.).

The contemporary traditional view perceives the author like a father who conceives a text just like he conceives a child. Thus, he anteriorly precedes the novel, poem, or play which he, then, nourishes and creates (Barthes, 1968, p.145). "The Death of The Author" compels its readers to interpret literature in a new light that aims to plummet the recurrent stance of the author as a creative being. It is noteworthy that this was not to disregard originality all together, but merely to shift the focus from the author to the language, and more precisely to the readers. For it is through the latter that meaning is found in works of literature.

By and large, Barthes (1968) points the impracticability of assigning the literary voice to a single specific entity; the author. As he claims that literature itself is the invention of a special voice that consists of a multitude of unidentifiable voices. Barthes (1968) goes on to suggest that literature is the body where all "identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." (p.142). Simply put, Barthes'(1968) point is that we cannot possibly know the origin of this literary voice. For he claims that writing is "the destruction of every voice" (p.142). As such, writing, far from being a creative urge, is a void in which we cannot pin point with absolute certainty who is writing or speaking.

Furthermore, another observation Barthes brings to light in "The Death of The Author" is that the literary image to be found at the time is tyrannical and author-centered. In this respect, if the work and the author are to be confounded, "the classical system of reading controls the interpretation to the authority of a single voice, that of the creator" (Willette, 2013, para. 1).

In concluding his above mentioned short essay, Barthes alludes to a certain myth that needs to be toppled. For he writes: "We know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." (1968, p.148). The latter, being capitalized, is perhaps to make parallel with an all authoritative higher entity, closest to a God. "This myth, he states earlier, is a modern one, engendering the figure of the 'Author-God' with its biographically endorsed single message, and whose divinity restricts the text" (Todd, 2017, p. 1).

From a Marxist perspective, the author is a modern invention of capitalist ideology that prioritized the author at the expense of the reader, for the former was part of a wider system of ownership, property and privilege which falls within the continuity of the capitalist stress on control through authority. In this sense, Van Gogh, for instance, is a purely capitalist invention suitable for selling art. This obsession with "The Author" can be

traced back to the Renaissance as it is also part of the Enlightenment stress on individuality in a quest for expertise and uniqueness. Thus, interpretation of works of art are to be sought in the person of the creator, his tastes, his history, and his passions (Willette, 2013).

As far as Barthes is concerned, this pursuit of a definitive origin or source of the literary text is a fruitless endeavor. As such, "The Death of The Author" is Barthes' venture to manifest the prevailing intellectual stance that was being written and would be expressed among that group of thinkers who were attending the seminars of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) in Paris; "If the subject is dissolved into language, then so too is the fiction of the author or the independent creator of a work of art" (Willette, 2013, para. 2).

Barthes (1968) had mentioned numerous times that it was the nineteenth century poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) among others such as the likes of Valéry and Proust who rejected the notion of the ownership of language, for they understood that it is the language that speaks, not the author. It is evident, then, that the aforementioned figures attempted apostacy of their own status as authors (Todd, 2017). Similarly, according to Barthes (1968), Mallarmé "was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner" (p. 143). Hence comes Mallarmé's (1897) emphasis on the materiality of language and the performative nature of reading giving reference to the importance of the gaps between the words, for they are versification requisites. And of a crucial significance when it comes to maintaining the metrical and the lyrical structure of the text. It should be mentioned that the latter notion forms the ground rule for Barthes later concept of "intertextuality." Which is a meaning-making technique that uses past texts as means to interpret the present text either by alluding to them one way or another, or by directly quoting them.

Moreover, Mallarmé called for the language to be allowed to speak which makes his approach in accordance to that of de Man's. The latter called for the pursuit of the true present that is found in the language rather than the author whom, unless disregarded, will act as a meaning-restricting agent (Todd, 2017).

Barthes (1968) writes in accordance, "The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and *after*" (p.145). This begs an alternative; Bathers proposes the modern *scriptor* whom "is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate" (p.145).

The argument is that "Barthes' scriptor, modern as proposed, claims to have achieved the eternal present, and has therefore escaped the modern, eternal friction between the before and the after. Barthes' scriptor escapes all temporality; the text, therefore, does as well" (Todd, 2017, p.3). Therefore, the withdrawal of the author transforms both, the modern text and time in the sense that writer and text become simultaneous and the former enters his/her own death when writing begins (Willette, 2013).

Barthes further links his modern *scriptor* to "a pure gesture of inscription" which "traces a field without origin" (p.146). As such, Barthes does not seem to invoke any anteriority, for his writing eliminates any putative point of origin with the single term, eternally. Which entails a temporal transcendence (Todd, 2017).

It is, then, perspicuous to make the distinction betwixt "The Author" and the writer or as Barthes labels it, *scriptor*; "the author's only tool is language itself and therefore trapped in language, authorship is never personal and the author is secondary to language. Compared to the strong pseudo "presence" of the Author, writing is neuter or "zero

degree" or "white" and composite or plural, a site of the loss of the subject and of identity" (Willette, 2013, para. 6). Barthes writes in regards to the previously mentioned loss of identity, "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space…the negative where all identity is lost" (p.142).

Barthes relies on Surrealism to form a strong case against the centralization of the author as he states that "surrealism… contributed to the desacralization of the image of the Author" (p.144). This is embodied in the notion of automatic writing which attributes priority to the hand over the head. As such, the Surrealist belief in collective writing forms an assertion of the deindividualization and depersonalization of the author. In the same vein, this automatism hints at the Romantic spontaneity of powerful emotions and resides in accordance with T.S. Eliot's collective experience (Issa, 2005).

Appropriately, it is fair to say that Barthes's conception of the author makes way for the notion that authorship is a craft in which the author's role is reduced to a mere "medium" far from being autonomous. This notion coincides with Eliot's (1982) views on the role of the poet. To him, the latter is a passive vehicle that makes poetry possible which hints at the poets depersonalization or impersonality. Eliot (1982) strongly demonstrates this as he writes, "The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum" whose role is to "digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (p.40). As such, Eliot suggests that the mind of the poet operates as a catalyst in the sense that "The emotions and feelings are sulphur and oxygen. The poet's mind is necessary for new combinations of emotions and experiences to take place, but it itself does not undergo any change during the process of poetic combination." (Devika, 2016).

The death of the author can be regarded as one of the immediate consequences of linguistic studies. The latter teaches language autonomy in the sense that words are only explainable through other words according to the concept of differentiability which entails

the author's inability to control the processes of language. Similarly, structuralism and its study of the relationships between the different elements of the text concludes that "Literature, like language, is self-contained and self-regulated to the extent that there is no role or position for the author" (Issa, 2005, p. 6).

Barthes found strong basis for his claim regarding the unoriginality of the author in terms of language, in intertextuality. The latter refers to the interrelationship betwixt texts and works of literature, for it is a subtle interplay of writing and rewriting (Willette, 2013). That is to say that the author is not the prime source of his writings. To put it simply, the suggestion made here is that any given work of literature regardless of its supposed author is nothing but the mere dialogue between multiple texts or writings. In other words, writing is where this multiplicity of writings is collected (Willette, 2013). For Barthes, then, texts' origins are untraceable and undoubtedly been read; he writes, "they [texts] are quotations without inverted commas (Barthes, 1977a: 160)" (Allen, 2000, p.69). And goes on to suggest that the text "reads without the inscription of the father" (Barthes, 1968, p.146).

"The Death of The Author" predated the cotemporary Postmodern theory which assumed that the point Barthes was alluding to is that the author does not exist or that he aims at the eradication of the artist. On the contrary, Barthes himself resurrects the author in "The Pleasure of The Text" (1971) which indicates that his intentions were far from ending the role of the author; "Barthes wanted only to extend the meaning and interpretation of the work of art to include the interaction of other texts and the responses of the reader" (Willette, 2013, para. 4). Barthes writes as he concludes his essay: "that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (p.148). This suggests that Barthes "waited until this point to introduce the reader because he is aware that the death of the author cannot stand on its own" (Todd, 2017, p.5). It is, then, evident that the myth to be overthrown includes

both, the author, and the reader; for he writes: "To give writing its future it is necessary to overthrow the myth" (p.148). This entails that "the future of writing, then, is not found in the one-sided toppling of the Author-God; the second figure of the reader must be present, and the myth of its exclusion must be overthrown." (Todd, 2017, p. 5).

1.6.2 Resurrection of the Author

The 1960s saw a widespread embrace of the notion that disregarded the author as the one to seek in the meaning-making quest in terms of literary interpretation. It is, then, not a surprise that when Roland Barthes' (1968) short essay "The Death of The Author" was published received praise and was highly regarded as the continuity of the recurrent downplay of the author's biographical factors from the literary elucidation equation. However, it has been claimed that there are both, contextual and internal evidence in Barthes' previously mentioned short essay that suggest that the latter was staggeringly misunderstood and is being indicted for the very thing it is trying to condemn.

In his "Roland Barthes's Resurrection of The Author and Redemption of Biography," J. C. Carlier (2000) asserts that most critics are conclusively wrong and have taken Barthes' "jeu d'esprit" quite literally. He further acclaims this misunderstanding mainly to the forsaken tradition of "satirical polemics" (p. 386). In this light, the suggestion here is to read Barthes' essay as a satire which attempt is to defend traditional authorship and proffer esteem to biography rather than promoting the idea that there is no point in seeking literary interpretation through authorial intent.

The method of satire is a traditional one in which "the satirist exaggerates and carries to an absurd extreme the idea which he wishes to mock" (Carlier & Watts, 2000, p. 388). Barthes' satire according to Carlier (2000) becomes apparent through the characteristics assigned to the former's supposed narrator. The latter is diagnosed with dementia despite

its seamless "plausible guise." This dementia, according to Carlier, is manifested when Barthes reveals his narrator as a "deranged atheist" who challenges the literary authority and might as well challenge the ultimate author, God, for he denies reason itself (p. 388). This is evident when Barthes (1968) states that "to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases - reason, science, law" (p. 147).

Perhaps the most direct technique of satire Barthes (1968) implements in his short essay is conscious self-contradiction, for a narrowed scope of scrutiny would reveal that Barthes enacts counterstatements several times throughout his composition. Barthes (1968) at first glance seems to be dismissal of "the personal agency of the author" (Carlier & Watts, 2000, p. 389) as he writes that "it is language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes, p. 143), but, then, he goes on to give reference to Mallarmé, Valéry and Proust, and their role in toppling authorial originality. Readers of the essay had they been indifferent of the aforementioned authors, they would not have been able to digest this doubtless role, Barthes (1968) is referring to, which adheres to the authorial creative urge.

Carlier (2000) further claims that the very notion that language is the one which speaks, not the author has no logical grounds as he asserts that it would be as sensible to say that "thought thinks, not the thinker, or that food eats, not the diner, or that work works, and not the worker" (p. 390). Additionally, another contradiction is brought up to light; if as Barthes states that the author is incapable of originality and that texts are merely the reformulation of repeated discourse, it then follows that Barthes apparent claims in his essay "are automatically denied any purchase on reality. He resembles those Aeolists who, in Swift's *Tale of a Tub* argue that words are wind, that learning is words, and that learning (including their own) is therefore wind" (Carlier & Watts, 2000, p. 390).

Furthermore, the assertion that "The Death of The Author" is a satirical attack on the anti-biographical modern critics finds roots on the basis of contextual evidence. Carlier

argues that if Barthes had solemnly believed in the views he carries out in his essay, he would not have signed it as "Roland Barthes" for this "action would have contradicted not only the claim that the traditional concept of authorship is nonsensical, but also the related claim that the producer of the work is not the author but the reader" (Carlier & Watts, 2000, p. 390). It is noteworthy that Barthes not only signed "The Death of The Author" but also claimed the copyright of the work. And the fact that he later wrote an autobiographical work entitled "Barthes par Barthes" (1975) should further infuse the ironical conception of the essay (p. 391).

From a Psychoanalytic perspective, the author need not be brought back to life for the reason that he/she had never died to begin with. In a 1950 article titled "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," Sigmund Freud states that the motive behind creative writing is the urge to satisfy unfulfilled dreams and suppressed wishes since one's childhood (p. 425). In this sense, literary works are merely the products of the author's infantile wishes. Hence, authorial background as well as biographical ingredients add in the least to the meaning-making process in literary interpretation.

Freud's assistant, Otto Rank (1932) similarly contends that art and evidently works of literature are the author's manifestation of both, their inner psychological struggle, and their will for immortality. Additionally, Rank believes that the artist has aims beyond the aesthetics; and that once the artist's aims exceed the aesthetic circle, art becomes a reenactment of its creator's personality (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). As such, Rank alludes to the connection between the work of art and its creator, thus, insuring the relevance of the author's biographic elements in literary interpretation. Last but not least, since Rank asserts that the artistic work is the artist's display of his/her own will for immortality, it then follows that in literary context the work itself becomes an adjacent step towards achieving that immortality. This suggests that the action of literary production is a

conscious one. Hence, authors deliberately create works that are individually subjective in an attempt to satisfy their creative impulse.

It cannot be determined beyond reasonable doubt that Barthes is satirical in "The Death of The Author." It can be said, nevertheless, that the issue is not about who is to land the killing blow, the author or the reader, but about the aim one seeks from a work of literature. Perhaps a better suited approach is to let the reader decide whether he/she wants to kill the author, despite the latter's ability of making it extremely challenging for the former to undertake such an endeavor. In short, literature is a struggle which beauty resides in this very struggle between the author and the reader (Todd, 2017). However, a confrontational approach to literary interpretation is all but a fruit-bearing one.

1.7. Conclusion

Transparent reading of literature calls for the reader to be the decision maker anent the significance of authorial background in literary interpretation. In addition, the author's creative urgency, just like dreams and fantasies, allows access to his/her unconscious processes.

As such, psychoanalytic literary theory seeks, in part, identifying instances of re-enactments of some of the author's repressed desires, fears, conflicts, painful experiences… Etc. Freud posits that there are three components to our personality; notably, id ego and superego. The latter judges and guides the ego which, in turn, borderlines the id and the superego in an attempt to prevent the two extremes from gaining hegemony over our behaviour. Intrinsically, the ego ideal is a nostalgic determination to re-live the childhood's experience of being the parents' center of attention, in a lifetime of wish-fulfillment endeavour. Last but not least, Freudian psychoanalysis postulates the creative writer's deliberate literary implementation of his ideals.

Chapter Two:

Achebe and Author

Incarnate

Content of Chapter Two

2.1 Introduction

Human beings are creatures of a psychological complexity. As such, if we were to regard the literary work as an all-encompassing umbrella of its creator's personality, then a psychoanalytic approach to the author's biographical factors in comparison to those he depicts in the literary work in question, should bring to light patterns of behaviour through which the author manifests his core issues and anxieties. Thus, the aim here is to track the author's psychological implication in what he/she writes.

2.2. *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Chinua Achebe's highly credited novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) takes place in Igbo land, Nigeria. From a postcolonial perspective, the novel depicts the events just before the arrival of the white man and the Christian missionaries, and sheds light on how their presence set in motion a systematic process of dehumanization to be inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of Africa. Moreover, an anthropological scrutiny suggests that the novel is a preeminent umbrella of the Igbo culture, polytheism, superstitions, and traditions.

This fiction by Chinua Achebe is set in the Igbo tribe of Umuofia; 'un ensemble' of nine villages, and follows Okonkwo, son of Unoka. The latter lives and dies impoverished by his own idleness, and the former grows in angst of becoming an image of his father. Throughout his life, Okonkwo repels his father and implements hard work in seeking wealth and fame to dispel the misfortunes inherited from Unoka's reputation as an "agbala" or a "woman"; terms used in Igbo tribes to refer to idle men who fail to be acclaimed any titles their entire life (Achebe, 1958).

One particular event places Okonkwo at the summit of Igbo society and establishes him as a prominent name across the nine villages is when he throws Amalinze the Cat at

the young age of eighteen in a much anticipated wrestling contest, bringing honour and merit to his village. He, then, goes on to manifest great wealth and success as a cropper, builds his home, becomes husband to three wives, father to ten children and, evidently, leader of his clan (Achebe, 1958).

Nwoye, Okonkwo's eldest son, worries his father greatly for he sees in him a spitting image of his grandfather, Unoka. Consequently, Okonkwo at some point becomes convinced that his son is effeminate beyond repair and, therefore, deserving of his father's cruel criticism. However, this soon changes when Ikemefuna is introduced to Okonkwo's life. The former is a boy from another village whom is temporarily placed under Okonkwo's custody following an accidental murder. Ikemefuna is endorsed at Okonkwo's household and is seen as a positive influence on Nwoye who develops a more masculine attitude. It is worth mentioning that Okonkwo continues to exhibit unaffectionate strict demeanor to his children and Ikemefuna, despite him growing great fondness of the latter that is hitherto perceived as an older brother to Nwoye (Achebe, 1958).

Each year, a week before planting the yams, the village honours The Week of Peace. This week is sacred in Igbo society and as the name entails it is a time for peace. As such, quarrels, violent encounters, and even expletives are forbidden in an attempt to pay tribute to the earth goddess and call on her blessings on the upcoming harvest. Nevertheless, Okonkwo, this time round, disturbs the peace as he severely beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo for merely leaving her hut without preparing dinner. Despite his attempt to make amends and show repentance, Okonkwo's reputation as a leader of the clan has been irredeemably lacerated (Achebe, 1958).

Ikemefuna has stayed three years with Okonkwo's family, and now calls him "father". Things start to fall apart when Ogbuefi Ezeudu, an acclaimed village elder, informs Okonkwo that the Oracle has decided that the boy must be done away with. Much to

Nwoye's displeasure, Okonkwo lies and tells his family that Ikemefuna is going to be reinstated home. Subsequently, Okonkwo and other men with sheathed machetes seemingly accompany the boy on a walk back home. Just when Ikemefuna wonders about the long awaited reunion with his mother, the men make their attempt to take his life. The boy, dreaded, runs to his "father" who, out of contempt for vulnerability, lands the killing blow disregarding Ezeudu's counsel not to take part in the boy's death (Achebe, 1958).

Ikemefuna's death saddens Okonkwo deeply, but he chooses not to show any remorse for the purpose of not appearing weak before his clansmen. He, as such, minimizes his interactions with Nwoye who now knows for certain that his friend has succumbed. Adding to Okonkwo's agony, Ezinma, his daughter, falls acutely ill and he now thinks that the gods have bestowed him with a curse for killing Ikemefuna. Even so, he manages to get hold of some healing herbs that help in Ezinma's rather delicate remedy (Achebe, 1958).

Ogbuefi Ezeudu's demise further burdens Okonkwo, for it prompts back his culpability in taking Ikemefuna's life and disobeying the Oracle's injunction. As the custom goes, the entombment of renowned tribesmen sees collective discharge of firearms as homage to the recently lamented fellows. And Ezeudu's funeral was not an exception. Okonkwo's calamity, however, is that he fortuitously shoots and kills Ezeudu's sixteen year old son, at his father's funeral; an abomination against the earth goddess (Achebe, 1958).

Thence, Okonkwo and his family are put into seven years of exile for atonement. Okonkwo is now an outcast and he plumps for Mbanta, his mother's natal village, to take his exile. Shortly after the departure of Okonkwo's household, Ogbuefi Ezeudu's descents take to annihilate the former's establishments including his animals in an attempt to cleanse the village from his transgression (Achebe, 1958).

At Mbanta, Okonkwo though embittered, takes to the life at his motherland. With the help of Uchendu, his uncle, he settles in a new compound of huts and starts a new farm of yams. Back at Umuofia, Obierika, Okonkwo's dear companion and a distinguished man of Umuofia, takes upon himself the burden of Okonkwo's abandoned fields of yam and pledges to personally yield the selling revenues to Okonkwo at his residency in Mbanta. In fact, it is Obierika who first notifies Okonkwo of the arrival of the white man when he delivers the troubling news of the latter's annihilation of a village named Abame (Achebe, 1958).

Okonkwo, hitherto, knows that the advent of the man on the iron horse (referring to bicycles) is inevitable. Indeed, promptly after Obierika's latest visit, six missionaries travel to Mbanta. Their leader is Mr. Brown, a white Christian missionary whose holy grail is the conversion of the nine villages (Achebe, 1958). Mr. Brown preaches kindly, he is respectful and tolerant of the Igbo traditions and do not intend to restore to violence. The latter addresses the villagers through a translator named Mr. Kiaga; he informs them that their polytheism is erroneous and that they should seek spiritual asylum in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The villagers, on the other hand, do not see sense in the amalgamation of the Holy Trinity into one God, though they often incline to tolerate Mr. Brown's preaching (Achebe, 1958).

Upon his return to Umuofia, Okonkwo does not receive the welcoming ceremony he anticipates. He notes that a great deal has changed since his departure to Mbanta. He sees that the church is now the most powerful body in Umuofia. And much to his disbelief, most fellow clansmen are willingly following the church's judicial system (Achebe, 1958).

Things escalate when Mr. Brown, due to a severe illness, is replaced by the not so tolerant Rev. James Smith. The latter is instated as the new head of the Christian church. He is strict and has no room for accommodations. The new fervid converts see the

installment of Rev. James Smith convenient to the implementation of a rather more rigorous approach to the alteration of the Igbo's religious assembly (Achebe, 1958). As such, an enthusiastic early Umuofia convert named Enoch ghastly rips the mask of an egwugwu, ancestral spirit of the clan, revealing its face during the annual ceremony devoted to the earth deity. In response, Enoch's compound and Rev. James Smith's church get scorched (Achebe, 1958).

Infuriated upon hearing of the church's burning, the District Commissioner plots against the leaders of Umuofia and traps them into a meeting where they are handcuffed and thrown into jail which sees them gruesomely abused. Following to the prisoners' release, a clansmen meeting is held during which five court messengers attempt to disrupt the gathering. Okonkwo strikes and kills one of the messengers in anticipation that his clansmen would join in the fight, but much to his surprise the other messengers are allowed to escape. At this very moment Okonkwo realizes that he no longer possesses the commanding voice he once had as a leader of the clan (Achebe, 1958).

In a grave acrimony and upon the realization that the nine villages would eventually succumb to the Christian God and the European rule, Okonkwo hangs himself at his compound. And in fact, it is Obierika who leads the commissioner to Okonkwo's body. As such, Okonkwo violates Igbo traditions for the very last time, as it is an irredeemable sin to take one's own life.

2.3. Chinua Achebe

British Nigeria saw the birth of Chinua Achebe in 1930. He was born into an Igbo tribe, one of the country's three major ethnic groups. Raised in Ogidi, Southeastern Nigeria, Achebe was a bare witness of the advocacy of the Anglican Church's missionaries of which his town was a main nidus. This would eventually be of a momentous influence

on a significant part of his body of work as a writer and a novelist. As such, he grappled with the hitherto prevailing narrative that colonialism was a necessary westernization process, for the most part of his writing career.

At the young age of twenty eight, Chinua Achebe skyrocketed to the summit of the literary world following the publication of his dazzling accomplishment, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In it, he debunked the imperialist notion that the indigenous peoples of Africa had no pre-colonial civilization and that it is, therefore, the white man's burden to edify Africa out of its primitiveness. Achebe, as such, introduced a benchmark for anticolonial discourse and became credited as the father of African literature.

It is noteworthy that Achebe's parents were among the earliest converts to Christianity. They diligently joined in the efforts to proliferate conversions to the Christian faith across Nigeria. In his autobiographical work *There Was a Country* (2012), Achebe states that both of his parents were Christian students. His mother was educated by the legendary missionary, Miss Edith Warner; the rarest of occasions, particularly for a woman. His father, on the other hand, was a catechist and worked as a teacher at St. Philip, a church he helped build from its foundations. Both of Achebe's parents traveled the land to spread the gospel and "were among the first of their people to successfully integrate traditional values with the education and new religion brought by Europeans." (Achebe, 2012, p. 16).

Furthermore, Achebe's father, Isaiah Okafo Achebe, lost both of his parents (civil war refugees) early on in his life and was raised by his maternal uncle, Udoh. According to Achebe (2012), his father's childhood in Igboland witnessed an era of great cultural economic and religious upheaval. Uncle Udoh was a clan leader and, in fact, it was his compound that received the first party of English clergy in his town. However, he one day asked the clergy to move to a public place due to their dismal singing, but he did not discourage his nephew (Achebe's father) from associating with the singers. The new

arrivals and their religion expanded across the country and Igboland by way of an "irresistible tonic of evangelism and education." (Achebe, 2012, p. 16). It was not long, then, until Isaiah Achebe renounced the traditional ways and converted to what seemed to be, from a societal perspective at least, a white man's religion.

It is aforementioned that Chinua Achebe's parents were early converts to Christianity and absorbed a Christian-centered education. Presumably then, Achebe's family was an underprivileged one and belonged to a low social stratum because it is undeniably evident from *Things Fall Apart* (1958) that the fact of a worthy man joining Christianity came much later and was not a tendency in the first years that followed the arrival of the white missionaries (Alowes, 2019).

Despite embracing the European ways, Isaiah Achebe and uncle Udoh kept a relationship that was based on a shared adoration. In *There Was a Country* (2012), Achebe gives account of his father's attempt to convert his maternal uncle. The latter was a reverenced man of Igboland and held three titles. Achebe finds his great uncle's response to his father's conversion attempt rather interesting for he said: "what shall I do to these [his titles]?" Achebe says that his great uncle "had essentially asked what do I do to who I am? What do I do to history?" (p. 21).

This kind of relationship was rather instructive to Chinua Achebe's writing career giving to the fact that he grew up in a society of interreligious conflicts and one had to be on one side or the other. Intrinsically, one can see perceptibly that religious dichotomy is a common theme in his literary production. Interestingly, Achebe (2012) admits that he had inherited his argumentative abilities from both, his father and his great uncle. The latter was known for his emphatic tendency; a propensity manifested by Chinua Achebe time and time again throughout his career. Whereas the former sought and found answers to his

problems in Christianity, nonetheless, Achebe does not adhere to the notion that this approach is a self-sufficient one.

Achebe early on in his childhood experienced ambivalence anent religion. This stemmed particularly from a double-sided exposure to religion. On the one hand, his parents were devoted practitioners of Christianity and pledged to help the religion in its advancements across the country. On the other hand, polytheism was still active outside his home and many relatives of his, content in their ways, did not convert up until that point including his great uncle Udoh whom he deeply cherished. Curious in his nature, young Achebe would often sneak off in the evenings to sit with his heathen relatives, particularly his great uncle whose conversations were much enriching and cultivating. In this regard Achebe writes that he found the traditional religion "far more artistically satisfying" (Achebe, 2012, p. 21) than the self-righteous strain of the Christian faith he was taught, but he had to supress this adherence in order to satisfy his parents who were church people. As an adult, he admits that he would intermittently go back and forth regarding religion; he particularly struggles with "the certitude of Christianity… not its accuracy… but the desolation, the acerbity of its meaning, the lack of options for the outsider, the other." (Achebe, 2012, p. 22). Achebe's artistic career exhibits similar equivocation. His *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, could be viewed as a clear demonstration of his oblique state regarding religion, for he deliberately mingles between the two conflicting worldviews in his depiction of both sides' favourable and unfavourable factors alike.

Achebe's strife for knowledge is a clear outcome of his parents' devotion to the Christian faith. During his childhood years, his parents would often read passages from the Bible out loud and encourage their kids to memorize them. Achebe, like his father, was a recipient of providence's beneficiation; his family would occasionally sponsor a bright child from an underprivileged background in order to remind themselves that they once

were beneficiaries of the Christian education. Moreover, His father read aplenty and invigorated his children to read. In fact, it was through his father that Achebe was first introduced to William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1605) and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).

Achebe owes his initiation into the world of proverbial magnificence of the Igbo culture to his mother, Janet Achebe. He rather enjoyed her splendour as a storyteller of the ancient Igbo traditions. This experience, Achebe writes, forms a solid ground as to why he decided later in his career to write children's books. To him then, it is of a little wonder that he, in turn, became a storyteller. For stories took a whole new world of meaning and importance once they conveyed a moral message (Achebe, 2012).

It is, as such, evident that Chinua Achebe acclaims his parents, Christianity and Christian education for his achieved literary stance, despite his previously mentioned struggle with religion. He consequently writes that "it is from these two [his parents] outstanding and courageous individuals that… I got our deep love for education and pursuit of knowledge." (pp. 16, 17). To further exemplify this notion, Achebe regards the British as his educators, for he is "a prime beneficiary of the education that the missionaries made a major component of their enterprise." (p. 22).

Following secondary school success, Achebe was awarded what was called a "major scholarship" (p. 33) and was admitted to the newly founded University College at Ibadan where he initially studied Medicine; a year later he changed to English, History and Theology. According to him, one needed not to worry where to go next following graduation. For the British educational system was so efficient that soon after graduation, graduates were absorbed into civil service, academia, business, or industry. As such, Achebe graduated in 1953 and was hired at the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (where he met his wife) the following year. Promotions came in rapidly and within a short period of

time he became the controller of the NBS, Eastern region. Subsequently, he moved to Lagos and took a job at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) where he prepared scripts. This refined his adroitness for writing realistic dialogue, a skill he "gradually tapped into when writing" his "novels." (p. 39).

It was in the recent years to follow that Achebe realized that one had to take it upon himself to tell the story of Africa and, patently, that of Nigeria. For the white man could not tell it as it is. In reality, it was Prof. James Welch that helped Achebe come to the latter discernment as he said that "we [European educators] can only teach what we know" (Achebe, 2012, p. 39) and they, admittedly, did not know Africa and its story. Thus, came *Things Fall Apart* and the body of literary excellence that followed.

It is worth mentioning that in 1966, Chinua Achebe published his *A Man of the People* where he predicted the upcoming military coup. An event that jeopardized the author's life and put a target over his head amidst the rising suspicions that he had something to do with the coup. Reasonably, he had to flee in an attempt to ensure the safety of his family as "the only valid basis for existence is one that gives security to you and your people" (Achebe, 2012, p. 72).

Notably, the Biafra war (1967-1970) is one event that Achebe never really recovered from. He was a sympathizer and a lead advocate of the independence of Biafra. What is interesting is that in view of his surging political interest, Achebe got into an entanglement with Aminu Kano, a verified notorious genocidaire. In face of the backlash, Achebe never retreated or spoke of his political ally's genocides against his own people. Achebe even went on and dedicated his famous *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983) to none-other than Aminu Kano (Alowes, 2019).

2.4. Igbo Culture as Depicted in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

It is undoubtful that Chinua Achebe's first published novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), forms an optimum demonstration of the Igbo culture and traditions. Arguably, the novel caters for anthropology as much as it does literature. In this sense, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) provides an insider's authentic frame of reference as he paints a vivid manifestation of the Igbo's pre-colonial civilization.

In *Things Fall Apart*, we see that Igboland prior to the arrival of the white man saw the implementation of a self-governing system of laws that were carried out in the fictional village of Umuofia through the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves, a religious and judicial entity whose powers are not to be questioned. The Oracle ordained in matters that went from marriage settlements up until ruling out whether a matter qualifies going to war or not. According to Achebe (1987), this self-governance was just; though ruling out in favour of taking Ikemefuna's life does not seem so much of a justice, but it could be argued that it was only to steer clear of tribal war and bloodshed. Additionally, it is factually evident that the village had an all-inclusive form of democracy rather than an exclusive one (Achebe, 1958). This we see on multiple occasions throughout the novel, for whenever a meeting was convened everyone had the right to join in and give his say. Nonetheless, that is mostly his say, not hers.

Religion is of a crucial significance in Igbo society. The novel gives account of the Igbo's pre-colonial religious practices: they were polytheists and exhibited idolatry to multiple gods including Agbala, the god of the future; Chukwu, the supreme god; and Ani, the earth goddess. One could have an excellent relationship with one god and not the other (Achebe, 1958). People of Umuofia would often proffer tributes to these deities in exchange for their goodwill. The Week of Peace, for instance, is an offering for the earth goddess to call on her blessings for next year's harvest (Achebe, 1958). It is noteworthy

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that one could even have a Chi, a personal god that could be either benevolent or problematic, depending on the individual's affluence (Achebe, 1958). As such, Okonkwo is a paragon of being at a strife with one's own Chi. For we see him, oftentimes, blaming his Chi for his misfortunes as when he is exiled from Umuofia or when his eldest son, Nwoye, becomes rebellious and joins the white Christian missionaries.

Okonkwo's exile begs the question of atonement and repentance in Igbo tribal community. Time and time again we see Okonkwo, a leader of the clan, having to walk down a path of atonement or perform what is closest to a hecatomb in order to cleanse his soul of its sins. These acts of repentance, then, are not merely meant to severely punish transgressions, but rather they are order-sustaining means that all Umuofians answer to.

Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* lets his readers know, early on, that the Igbo society he depicts is a meritocratic one (Obiego, 2020). This becomes conspicuous when we learn that poverty in this tribal civilization is not inherited, but befitting. Simply put, Unoka's indolence appropriates his misfortunes and does not stop his son, Okonkwo, from becoming a widely idealized man and a leader of his clan at a certain point in his life. The reason for this is that Okonkwo is a man who has shown merit ever since his adolescence; it should be no surprise, therefore, that Okonkwo gradually loses his people's approbation when he starts showing one deficiency after the other, be it violating the Week of Peace, killing Ikemefuna, or putting a fellow tribesman down literally and figuratively (Achebe, 1958).

The novel delineates a rather interesting correspondence between meritocracy and capitalism with the implication that the former is attained through the latter. Achebe demonstrates this notion through Unoka who was an irresponsible indebted man who could not indemnify, and because of that ended up being known as an "agbala" (Achebe, 1958). In other words, Unoka became unworthy of merit due to his inability to fulfill capitalistic

commitments. Moreover, cowries are wealth in Umuofia. These were used among Igbo people as an exchange for goods and services. And the more one had cowries, the more wealthy and affluent he was (Rhoads, 1993). Titles similarly bestowed their holders with honour and merit, but what is interesting is that they were used as means to redistribute the wealth in Igboland (Rhoads, 1993). As such, a Umuofian could hold up to four titles in his life and needs to manifest more wealth than ever each time he wants to claim a new title. This wealth is demonstrated by paying the initiation fees to other men that already hold the title they wish to attain (Achebe, 1958).

As previously alluded to, Umuofia is a patriarchal society where women have little to no influence and are predominantly possessions that their husbands literally buy. For each bride has price, depending on her family's prestige and merit (Achebe, 1958). Consequently, when Okonkwo beats his youngest wife Ojiugo nearly to death during the Week of Peace, it is not the act of beating the wife that requires atonement but rather it is the fact that he has infringed the sacredness of the Week of Peace. Under such terms, one can deduce that wife beating is a rather common credence in tribal Igboland. Furthermore, an underachieving Umuofian man is effeminate and labeled as an "agbala"; that is what is expected of women, to underachieve. Almost everything is gendered in Umuofia. Women are bound to see their husbands' wishes through and are restricted to the role of educating the children through storytelling. Their sons, however, are expected to be attached to their mothers barely through the years prior to their adolescence. Otherwise, they are not manly.

As opposed to their female contemporaries, Umuofian men are expected to have masculine attributes. These are basically antithetical to everything a woman stands for. In a quest for a high societal stance, men should be warriors who find honour in taking another man's life (in the event of a tribal war). They should be hard workers, safety-providers and

decision-makers. They should be strict, unaffectionate, and be able to keep their women in line (Achebe, 1958).

The novel also gives a glimpse at the Igbo's father-son relationship. Typically, fathers have a predestined future for their sons. We see this notion evident in Okonkwo's interaction with his eldest son, Nwoye, who exhibits similar character attributes to those of his grandfather Unoka. This causes his father great displeasure, for it not only endangers his reputation as a leader of the clan but also puts everything he built at risk in view of the fact that it is the eldest son's place to bare the torch of his father's legacy (Achebe, 1958). Another kind of father-son relationship is depicted in the novel. In that we see that Okonkwo loathes his father for his idleness and ill-considering demeanor, which shows how deeply engraved are the notions of masculine attitude. In that even a son is to see his father as unworthy of merit.

The Igbo culture is undoubtedly a colourful one. This does not merely refer to the typical African drum beating, for Achebe depicts a rather prosperous community that yearns for art, poetry, and music. Lastly, Achebe introduces us to the thinking men of Umuofia who dared to question the hitherto norms and brought change to long-lasting old wives' tales (Achebe, 1958). These were the true leaders of Umuofia. For, unlike Okonkwo, they had the ability to rationalize not only their actions but also those of the clan. A paragon of this is Okonkwo's fidus Achates, Obierika. We see this plainly in the latter's tendency to ponder in deep thoughts regarding the issues of the clan and the old traditions. As such, we see him in utter ambivalence anent Okonkwo's banishment and the twin-killing tradition (Achebe, 1958).

2.5. Chinua Achebe's Incarnation in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Chinua Achebe lived a conflicting Childhood. On the one hand, his parents were early converts to the new arrivals' Christian faith; they were staunch followers and emboldened their children accordingly (Achebe, 2012). On the other hand, he bore witness the traditional ways of his people, the Igbos, in which he had some of his closest relatives including his highly acclaimed great uncle, Udoh (Achebe, 2012).

His parents' submission to the European ways was unseasonable. For as aforementioned it came at a time when their society was polytheist in its (though retreating) majority. Therefore, Achebe was in a rather coarse situation where he needed to undertake an antithetical endeavour. As such, he had no choice but to battle the urge (we tend to have as kids) to satisfy his parents in order to cope with his pagan relatives and society (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). In fact, a vigilant scrutiny of Chinua Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart* would reveal, in part, that the author had transferred his childhood's antithesis to this creative work, through his rather ambivalent representation of the Igbo traditional ways and those of the newly arrived missionaries. It could be then said that the latter notion is indicative of the view that the novel in question is a psychological (or egocentric) one (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016).

Sigmund Freud (1908) suggests that the egocentric writer would "split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes" (p. 150). Consequently, the latter notion necessitates an investigative approach to the author's biographical factors that might have had an influence on his mental life in comparison to his depicted characters or "several heroes" (Freud, 1908, p. 150). This, similarly, entails an examination of possible sources of inspiration on which the author might displace his anger, conflicts, or repressed childhood wishes. It is worth mentioning that they, nonetheless, might turn out to be mere sources of inspiration.

In *There Was a Country* (2012), Achebe writes that he had deeply cherished story time as a kid. He further states that his mother's story telling technique made stories take "a whole new world of meaning and importance," since they "always resolute in their moral message" (p. 18). As such, one can say that Achebe is rather interestingly expressing a Nwoye-like fondness of his mother's stories and company. A fact that made the formerly mentioned character labelled as effeminate and a constant subject to Okonkwo's (his father) ferocious criticism (Achebe, 1958). In this sense, Okonkwo is representative of the author's sheer anxiety about not being perceived as someone of a masculine attitude. It then follows that Nwoye in this case is Achebe's displacement of his ego. Or rather merely a part of it.

Accordingly, Achebe (2012) delineates that his father was of assistance in conducting Sunday service at St. Philip's church and that he used to proudly accompany him "carrying his bag for him" (p. 20). Similarly, Okonkwo's way of exhibiting fondness towards Ikemefuna is by allowing the latter carry his stool and accompany him to the communal ancestral feasts (Achebe, 1958). Ikemefuna in this sense is yet another part of Achebe's ego incarnate; this is arguably derived from the author's conflicting emotions as a child growing amidst a civilizational clash (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). And the fact that Ikemefuna's death was at the hands of Okonkwo himself further infuses the previously alluded notion that the latter is a symbolic embodiment of the author's self-image in a seemingly antagonizing society.

Interestingly, Achebe (2012) gives account of headmaster Okongwu, who apart from the obvious resemblance between his name and that of the protagonist, shares similar character attributes and, arguably, tragic fate. Okongwu, just like Okonkwo, had a reputation of being "a pillar of the Igbo community for his time." (Achebe, 2012, p. 24). He was a strict disciplinarian who would send "chills down the spines of all pupils

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throughout the Eastern Region" (Achebe, 2012, p. 23). Okongwu was a man of wealth and would often sponsor bright kids, such as the likes of his nephew (whom he was deeply fond of), to finish their studies abroad. Following his nephew's PhD success he suddenly fell ill and died, an event that Okongwu did not seem to ever recover from (Achebe, 2012). This could be, possibly, compared to Ikemefuna's death and the racking consequences it had on Okonkwo, but this is not of matter her. The actual matter is that it is indicative of the previous notion that *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is an egocentric novel.

2.5.1. Chinua Achebe's Ego Ideal

Achebe's ego ideal is the motivating factor for his body of creative literary production (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). This means that Achebe writes to satisfy his ego ideal that takes roots in the repressed wishes of childhood. In fact, Achebe (2012) himself writes that he, as a kid, had to repress his interest in "the sophistication of the Igbo phenomenological thought" (pp. 25-26) and the traditional religion in order to please his parents who were devout practitioners of Christianity and sought to spread the word of the gospel across British Nigeria.

It is aforementioned that young Achebe grew up in an environment that saw a clash between two civilizations in terms of language, culture, and religion (Achebe, 2012). In such an environment there were sides and Achebe (2012) writes that one had to be on one side or the other. This entails the presence of two contradicting ideals in which each side had to adhere to one ideal and not the other (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). Achebe's upbringing saw him caught up in this antipathy. For he (despite showing tenderness towards the traditional ways) and his family manifested piety of the Christian faith and helped in its advancement in the country (Achebe, 2012). Their pagan society, however, was contradictory to their ways and "considered anyone who abandons its traditions, rules, and religion as an outcast or even a devil" (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016, p. 219).

As a result, Achebe developed a hesitancy as to which ideal he belonged. This hesitancy, as will be demonstrated, can be traced in his ambivalence in depicting the two ideals in his creative works as a writer (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016); explicitly in his *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Furthermore, Achebe unconsciously reveals this ambivalence in his autobiographical work *There Was a Country* (2012). On the one hand, he writes that Christianity spread in Nigeria by means of a "potent, irresistible tonic of evangelism and education" (p. 16) and that his Christian parents wholeheartedly embraced strangers from thousands of miles away with different customs and beliefs (Achebe, 2012) which may entail a reluctance as to whether the traditional ways would concede such tolerance. He further states that he regards the British as his educators for he was "a prime beneficiary of the education that the missionaries made a major component of their enterprise" (Achebe, 2012, p. 22).

On the other hand, Achebe (2012) expresses his scepticism anent the true intentions of the missionaries, for their European counterparts, who also arrived on boats, were the ones to deliver the indigenous peoples of Africa to transatlantic slave trade. He additionally affirms that he finds the Igbo traditional ways "far more artistically satisfying" than "the doctrinaire, self-righteous strain of the Christian faith I [Achebe] was taught" (Achebe, 2012, pp. 20-21). Hence, one can say that Achebe's way of coping with his society's religious dichotomy is by means of literature in which he (whether deliberately or not) mingles between the two worldviews (or ideals), exemplifying his oblique state regarding religion.

As such, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) marks a paragon of Achebe's rather hesitant portrayal of his society's quite contradicting worldviews. In the latter novel the author tries to satisfy both of the parties that have had significant influence on him during his upbringing as an Igbo and a son of early Christian converts (Neimneh & Abussamen,

2016). In *Things Fall Apart* (1958)*,* Achebe gives reference to the thinking men of Umuofia, such as the likes of Obierika. These are the men that often pondered in deep thoughts and brought change to long lasting old wives' tales. The claim here is that Achebe through the previous notion seeks to appeal to the patriarchal aspect of his society by depicting thinking men rather than a woman, his mother. Though this may come across as overwhelmingly speculative it is, nonetheless, worthy of consideration.

In *There Was a Country* (2012), Achebe gives account of his mother stating that she was "the strong, silent type" that would "often quietly" escape "into the inner casements of her mind, where she engaged in deep, reflective thought." (p. 18). Achebe's mother knew how to bring barriers down and was able to bring about change "without being overbearing or intimidating" (Achebe, 2012, p. 19). The Kola nut incident is of a particular significance in this case. This refers to the instance where Achebe's mother picked sacred Kola nuts from their branch, a taboo in Igbo tribal community, and a deeply rooted one. For they were supposed to be collected by men after they fall from their branches (Achebe, 2012). Achebe (2012) further states that his mother on that day "had won a battle for Christianity, women's rights, and freedom." (p. 19). It is noteworthy that the previous notion cannot be verified beyond reasonable doubt, but one can still see the relevance.

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* (1958) in English, claiming that it is "the language that is capable of carrying his African experience" (Achebe, 1993, p. 434). This according to Neimneh and Abussamen (2016) is the author's attempt to satisfy his British educators. And the fact that Achebe (1958) censures English through one of his characters claiming that it is the language spoken through the noise, further infuses his ambivalent state (Neimneh, Abussamen, 2016). Accordingly, Achebe's (1958) depiction of the tolerance of his people and that of the missionaries varies between the favourable and the unfavourable in an attempt to satisfy both parties. As such, he paints the Igbos of Umuofia as accepting

of people from different backgrounds because "what is good in one place is bad in another" (Achebe, 1958, p. 50). But then they offer the missionaries a land in the evil forest which inhabitant will perish in a matter of four days according to their beliefs (Achebe, 1958). The fact remains that nothing happens to them after the four days have passed, which hints at the notion that the Christian faith is of superior status than that of the Igbos (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016).

Moreover, we see in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) that the missionaries led by Mr. Brown initially approach the Igbo traditions and customs by means of goodwill and benevolence. But then again we learn that Mr. Brown was just an exception rather than the rule. For following his departure, The new head of the Christian church Rev. James Smith restored to more rigorous means in an attempt to break through the Igbos religious body. Similarly, Achebe (1958) states that Christianity is a religion that values education for it strives to edify the indigenous people of Umuofia. It is, as such, a "harmless" creed (p. 106). Alternately, Achebe (1958) then goes on to suggest that Christianity is a religion of materialism and appeals to its followers by means of "gifts of singlets of towels" (p. 122). Such ambivalence is a recurrent theme is Achebe's writings and is indicative of the author's "conflicting ideals" of his childhood that he later sought to satisfy in his creative works (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016).

As previously illustrated in the first chapter, an ego ideal is the self's urge to perceive itself as it should ideally be, not as it actually is. The claim here is that Chinua Achebe driven by the conflicting ideals of his childhood, has created an ego ideal for himself and manifested it in his creative works (Neimneh & Abussamen, 2016). We know from *There Was a Country* (2012) that Achebe wrote out of a moral obligation due to the absence of an African voice. In other words, he idealizes himself as the African voice and wrote for the purpose to dictate the norms and educate his people. This was his ego ideal (Neimneh &

Abussamen, 2016). *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is an epitome of the latter notion, for it bears an alerting thrust to his people as he warns against the dangers of not being able to adapt to change. In actuality, Achebe's appeal to becoming the African voice can be traced throughout his career. Following graduation, Achebe worked as a teacher, then was hired at the NBS and the NBC, up until the point where he became a professor of English and an internationally acclaimed writer (Achebe, 2012). The point is that all of the previous professions require decree and a commanding voice. Hence, Achebe's ego ideal.

2.5.2. Parallelism between Chinua Achebe and Okonkwo

Jimanze Ego-Alowes writes in a 2019 article that Chinua Achebe's scholars, readers, and researchers have missed out on the fact that Achebe was autobiographical in most of his writings. It is previously mentioned that *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a psychological novel. Hence, drawing an analogy betwixt the author and the protagonist would further assert the latter notion. The way to go about this is to highlight Achebe's and Okonkwo's key-defining moments of their lives (Alowes, 2019).

Unoka, Okonkwo's father, was not a leader of the clan; he was a man of lowliness, for he lived and died impoverished by his own idleness in a community where a man's merit valued more than his actual life (Achebe, 1958). Achebe (2012) similarly writes that his father, Isaiah Achebe was an early convert to Christianity. This, according to Alowes (2019), indicates that Achebe's father, just like Okonkwo's, belonged to a low social stratum, because the fact of meritorious man joining Christianity came much later. In actuality, Achebe (2012) himself asserts the notion that his father, like Okonkwo's, was not a leader of the clan; he states that it was of no surprise that his father was among the first to submit to the new word of God, since he did not have much endurance of "commotions" and "barbarities" (p. 21) in comparison to uncle Udoh who was indeed a leader for he was

a man of prosperity who would not throw all of his achievements (titles) away just because a white man from afar said so (Achebe, 2012).

Furthermore, Achebe and his family experienced similar displacement to that of Okonkwo's. Following the publication of his *A Man of the People* (1966) (in which he predicted the incoming military coup), Achebe and his family had to take to their heels in an attempt to flee the army's persecution (Achebe, 2012). This can be compared to Okonkwo's banishment to Mbanta after he had committed the great sin of killing a fellow tribesman (Achebe, 1958). Nevertheless, the fact remains that this is completely coincidental if we were to bare attentive scrutiny to the specific timeframe of the events. In that, *A Man of the People* (1966) was published after *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

Both men, Achebe and Okonkwo, are known of being not too conceding to advice (Alowes, 2019). As such, Okonkwo disregards Ezeudu's and Obierika's counsel not to take part in Ikemefuna's death and kills the boy himself (Achebe, 1958). Similarly, Achebe in face of the backlash that followed his political entanglement with genocidaire Aminu Kano, goes on to dedicate his later work entitled *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), funnily enough, to the infamous Aminu Kano (Alowes, 2019).

Achebe experienced Okonkwo-like embitterment late in his life (Alowes, 2019). We know at this point that *Things Fall Apart* (1958) concludes with its protagonist committing suicide following his assertion that he had lost his commanding voice and that his beloved Umuofia would eventually succumb to the European ways. Achebe (2012) bestows his readers with a kindred acrimony to that of Okonkwo; he expresses his disappointment in the deplorable state of post-independence Nigeria claiming that the country has become an international laughingstock. He further comes to realize the perfidy of the imperialist powers stating that the hitherto state of the country is nothing but the mere result of colonial tampering (Achebe, 2012).

Lastly, one could argue that Okonkwo hangs himself because "the only valid basis for existence is one that gives security to you and your people" (Achebe, 2012, p. 72) and that *There Was a Country* (2012) is Achebe's note of his literary suicide, for the latter work remains his last (Alowes, 2019).

2.6. Conclusion

Chinua Achebe is indeed psychologically engraved in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), for he displaces parts of his ego through Nwoye and Ikemefuna. Whereas Okonkwo, his protagonist, is perhaps a symbolic embodiment of the author's precipitous anxiety.

The novel resolute ending supports Achebe's claim of an African voice through which he seeks educating his people and dictating the norms of proper societal behaviour. This is indicative that Achebe has formed an ego ideal of himself through which he aims to satisfy his childhood's sense of excellence he once received from being his parents' centre of attention. Additionally, the civilizational and religious confrontation of Achebe's childhood puts forward an ambivalent representation of both of those ideals. This, as previously demonstrated, can be detected throughout the novel and the author's life.

The drawn analogy between the author's autobiography and the novel suggests possible sources of inspiration and parallels in the lives of Achebe and the novel's protagonist, which bears fruitful foundation for the author's autobiographical tendency.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

In the midst of a predominant anti-authorial approach of literary interpretation, this research suggests an objective one; neither the author nor the reader lands the killing blow. As such, for the sake of sustaining a transparent reading of literature, it is the reader that should be the one to decide whether he/she wants to keep the author alive or not.

Access to one's unconscious is attained through his/her fantasies, dreams, and more importantly creative urgency. Psychoanalysis is a useful therapeutic tool that aims at identifying one's anxieties in a process that involves a resurfacing of the repressed. It then follows that a psychoanalytic reading of literature entails laying bare-evidence of re-enactments of the author's desires, conflicts, or painful experiences that he/she wants to keep repressed.

One's personality comprises three major components; id, ego, and superego. As children, we tend to be amoral and seek only what serves our immediate pleasures; thus the id. Post toddlerhood we develop the ego. This is mainly the child's attempt to re-enact his parents' morals as it learns to exhibit its desires in a socially accepted comportment. The superego, on the other hand, serves our extreme urge of self-restraint, that intensifies as we start to interact with our society. It is noteworthy that the superego judges and guides our ego. So one can say that the ego is the result of the quarrel betwixt the id and the superego. For the latter two stand in complete opposition. Intrinsically, human beings tend to develop an ego ideal of themselves out of repressed childhood wishes. It is an urgency to perceive the self as it should be not as it is in a quest for the sense of excellency and completeness one had in childhood. Freudian psychoanalysis adduces the notion that the ego ideal is acted out consciously; in this respect, one can say that authors and creative writers deliberately imply their ideals in their literary works.

Sigmund Freud's notion on the egocentric writer (or the autobiographical) implies an investigative approach to the author's influential biographical factors and possible sources of inspiration in analogy to the characters-defining elements he depicts in his/her writing.

As such, the appliance of the latter endeavour on Chinua Achebe's debut novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and his late autobiographical work *There Was a Country* (2012) revealed that the author is indeed psychologically engraved in this particular novel. For he displays parts of his ego through Nwoye and Ikemefuna and exhibits the conflicting dichotomy of his childhood through his protagonist, Okonkwo, and the ambivalent representation of his childhood's incompatible tandem ideals. Driven by these, the research finds that Achebe had created an ego ideal of himself and manifested it in the novel in question, for one can trace Achebe's moral obligation to write in the resolute, though tragic, ending of *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Furthermore, the research puts forward possible sources of inspiration; notably, headmaster Okongwu and Achebe's mother. And explores similarities between the author and his protagonist, which further infuses the author's autobiographical tendency.

One can say that parallelism in the lives of the author and the protagonist, the ambivalent representation of the author's confrontational ideals of childhood as well as the author's ego ideal are all suggestive of the notion that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is in the least a psychological novel if not an autobiographical one. Nonetheless, In order to verify the latter notion, one must encompass the entirety of the author's literary production in a quest for an autobiographic tendency.

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Summary

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث الأكاديمي للكشف عن أهمية السيرة الذاتية للمؤلف تشينوا أتشيبي في تفسير أعماله الأدبية. يقدم البحث دراسة نفسية تحليلية لرواية "*أشياء تتداعى*" ويقارنها مع السيرة الذاتية للمؤلف وفقا لنظرية سيغموند فرويد حول المكونات الأساسية لشخصية الإنسان و الأنا المثالية. الأطروحة تقترح أيضا مصادر الإلهام المحتملة للمؤلف و تكشف عن أوجه التشابه بين حياة المؤلف الشخصية وبين أوكونكو، بطل الرواية التي تم تحليلها.

Résumé

Cette recherche universitaire traite d'un postulat plutôt controversé. Dans cette optique, elle vise à metre en évidence la signification des intermédiaires biographiques de l'auteur dans l'interprétation de ses œuvres de fiction. À ce titre, la recherche met en œuvre une lecture psychanalytique de l'ouvrage de Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* en termes analogiques avec son travail autobiographique *There Was a Country* à la lumière des prémisses de Sigmund Freud sur les constituants de la personnalité; id, ego, superego, et la tendance humaine à former un idéal de l'ego. En outre, cette thèse examine l'empreinte psychologique d'Achebe dans *Things Fall Apart,* et met en avant les sources possibles d'inspiration de l'auteur et dévoile des parallèles dans la vie de l'auteur et Okonkwo, son protagoniste dans le roman susmentionné. Ainsi, formant une base pour d'autres requêtes concernant la tendance autobiographique de Chinua Achebe.