

AN EXAMINATION OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN ACHEBE'S FICTION

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Commenting on the nature of art Achebe observes:

Art is not something which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. It is something which ordinary people not only can understand and use but even take part in making.(Rowell. 86)

Achebe sees art as a societal responsibility, the collective voice of the country. They have utilized language as a weapon in the Eurocentric realm of post-colonial literature. These authors are attempting to carve out their own niche in the literary landscape by using their own local culture and heritage in all of its richness, beauty, and purity. "Black is Beautiful" is a catchphrase used by African musicians to express the goals, triumphs, and failings of their people, as well as their hopes for the future.

For Achebe, the imperialist rhetoric that denigrated African culture is a constant theme in all of his works. 'He has come to symbolize a colonial voice inscribed in Third World writing's antiimperialist vocabulary,' says TRS Sharma. (Sharma.125) For him, it's important to assist individuals overcome their sentiments of inferiority because of their ethnic origins, and also to help his culture "reclaim its self-belief and remove the complexes that have accumulated over time due to racism and discrimination." It's still early in the day on the first day of the creation week.

Even in the trendsetting Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, he was able to "Africanize English Language" via the use of Igbo phrases and terms. As Anjali Roy and VineyKirpal observe:

The Igbo voice of the novels perceives and re-creates this experience in the language of myth and legend. Oral forms, including myth and legend, draw heavily on the repertoire of communal, traditional formula.(Roy. 112)

By recollecting indigenous culture of Africa, Achebe tries to acknowledge the existence of other non-Eurocentric culture and histories as against Western master narratives. Biodun Jeyifo suggests that:

Things Fall Apart can be read at two levels. First as a grand narrative of the colonial encounter and secondly as counter narrative and fragmentary stories of decentered identities of the subaltern groups.

(Panduragan. 65)

Things Fall Apart serves as a springboard for many of Achebe's subsequent writings. Igbo community disintegration due to the colonial encounter, identity politics and representation, leadership challenges, and the repercussions of a rising divide between political elites and their constituents are among the issues addressed here. In *The Trouble with Nigeria*, a pre-election booklet published in 1983, Achebe expressed his displeasure with the post-colonial political elite's reluctance to bear responsibilities. He categorically states "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership." This attack on the graft in high places set the tone for Achebe's fifth novel *Anthills of Savannah*. According to Panduragan:

The novel received critical attention for its skilful combination of sophisticated literary devices and oral narratives traditions. Achebe once again displays his supremacy in the use of proverbs and storytelling techniques. (Panduragan. 24)

The intricate plot of the novel revolves around a coup that takes place in the fictional state of Republic of Kangan, which is highly identifiable with Nigeria during the 1980s. The story is told from the perspectives of its three primary characters: Chris Oriko, who is the commissioner for information; Ikem Osodi, who is the editor of the National Gazette; and Beatrice, who is a senior secretary at the ministry of finance. The novel presents an argument against the successful application of democratic principles to the operation of the modern African nation state. In addition to this, it discusses topics related to ethnonationalism, such as tribalism and ethnic politics. Achebe makes an effort to address the issue of how the elite have become estranged from the general population. As Elleke Bochmer points out:

Achebe is more attuned to the issues of gender and the novel's formal of a "new- life affirming sisterhood" signifies a new concept of ruler ship and a new moment in Achebe's work.

(Pandurangan. 24)

Achebe's use of inter textuality and reference to his own fiction and the other literary works serve to construct an alternative tradition to that modern politics and oppression. In this work Achebe reestablishes the strength and significance of African traditions and myth as a source of worth and stability for future. By evoking the myth of the Almighty Achebe highlights the empowerment of women. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Idemili is regarded as the God of water and here she is referred as a water Goddess. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* women are "inferior" and excluded from politics yet in this book Beatrice is allocated an equal place and active involvement in the political issue. Achebe's use of inter textuality and reference to his own fiction and the other literary works serve to construct an alternative tradition to that modern politics and oppression. In this work Achebe reestablishes the strength and significance of African traditions and myth as a source of worth and stability for future. By evoking the myth of the Almighty Achebe highlights the empowerment of women. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* Idemili is regarded as the God of water and here she is referred as a water Goddess. In

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* women are "inferior" and excluded from politics yet in this book Beatrice is allocated an equal place and active involvement in the political issue. It is Beatrice "who takes on the challenge of bringing together as many broken pieces of this tragic history as she can." (Anthill.82)

Legendary Abazon, where people had to flee their homes owing to acute starvation, is referenced by Ikem. People in a disenfranchised present might send the elders who are being held in captivity to the government, asking for aid with a "yam and a knife." This is a recurring theme in his work. (Anthill.33) Because of Achebe's belief in the strength of Igbo oral tradition and culture, he used "archetypal tales" to illustrate his points. Story telling is the chief concern of Achebe as the writer. As he says:

Story gives me the sense of connectedness, of being a part of things that are eternal like rivers, the mountain and the sky, and creation myths about man and the world. The story

has always been with us, it is a very old thing: it is not new; it may take new forms, but it is the same old story. (Rowell. 19)

A rich tapestry of stories is woven together by Achebe's penchant for storytelling in a variety of media, including myth, poetry, lectures, journalism, and personal diaries. While the novel's idea that the Earth belongs to everyone, not the privileged, is reflected in its narrative approach. The novel begins with the detached ironic prose as, “

ONE

First witness- Christopher Oriko

“YOU'RE WASTING EVERYBODY'S TIME, Mr. Commissioner for information.”(Anthill.1)

And ends with a simple muddled sentence spoken in Pidgin by Elewa as it establishes the theme of the novel within the complex structure of narrative technique.

“BB weting be dis now? Even myself I no de cry like dat!”

(Anthill.)

Beatrice, the third narrator, is a female voice that symbolises Achebe's vision of the future world, alongside Chris and Ikem. She not only serves as the novel's focal focus, but it also serves as a moral compass. He claims that "Beatrice is a more trustworthy source than Ikem or Chris, notwithstanding her flaws." It is (Ikegami. 501) "Baptism and Westernized schooling have cut her off from her indigenous origins. ' Due to her upbringing, she has little knowledge of the folklore and customs of her people. As a result, she lost touch with her identity. We say 'barely' because she did have a faint feeling of being two persons at once, which was more intense at important times. (Anthills.105)

As the narrative progresses, Beatrice learns more about herself and discovers her potential as a storyteller and a priestess. When it comes to knowing the future, she has the ability to connect the dots between the past and the present, allowing her to see the links between the two. As she relates her memories, she makes frequent use of the past to help her feel more connected to that

time period. She has the ability to take the shattered parts of history and put together a brand new picture.

A new hybrid is created by Beatrice at the naming ceremony of Elewa and Ikem's kid by adapting an old ritual to modern times and therefore welcoming the future. Because of the meaning of "may the route never shut," Beatrice gives the infant the name Amachina, which translates as "may it never close." The term is also a metaphor for free exchange of ideas and information.

The center of the novel is occupied by the poor and oppressed of the Kangan. The poor and oppressed who socially and politically at the margins of the society are placed at the center of the novel. The novel takes gradual shift of positions from the privileged to the oppressed, beginning with Chris and the dictator who has yam and knife, going on to Ikem who has privilege but not the power and who stands in authority of the dictator. The story moves to Beatrice further marginalized even though she has privilege of education. Two other women Elewa and Agatha represent the women's marginalized status. Through the orchestration of different perspectives and also different languages (standard English, Pidgin English, Igbo words) we can glean author's perspective. The author is to be found at the center of organization where all levels intersect. The different levels are to varying degrees distant from this authorial center. (Bakhtin. 131)

A major part of the elder's discourse comments on the art and importance of storytelling. For him the story is chief among his fellows as it is the only story which can continue beyond the war and the warier. It is the story that saves the culture and tradition, helps us to understand past and connect us with present.

It is the story not the others, that saves our progeny from

blundering like blind beggars into spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort, without it we are blind.

Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we own the story: rather it is the story that owns us and directs us. It is the thing that makes us different from cattle. (*Anthill*. 124)

The elders continue their lecture by discussing the difficulties that the people of Abazon confront and the need of battle. Storytelling in literature is not only a creative activity, but an active representation of the everyday battle to exist, as shown by the tortoise and leopard narrative. The last chapter brings together a wide range of views and viewpoints. It is not the narrative of Chris, Iken, or the tyrant, but rather the storey of the average people who stay at the end to recount their tales of a nation's history. Like the anthills of the savannah, the stories of the ordinary people are essential. Achebe underlines his belief in various narratives by replacing the big storey that is a Western cultural product with the smaller narratives about little people. "From the pre-history of Novelistic Discourse," by Bakhtin, describes the novel's style as the combination of high and low idioms. They claim he participates in the storey, but with practically little language of his own, and that the author is "omnipresent" throughout the narrative. There are a number of languages that are intertwined in the novel's linguistic structure. A central point of language (a linguistic ideological core) exists despite the fact that the work is written in several different languages. No matter what level of language a book is written in, the author (as the one who created the overall storey) can only be discovered in the hub of organisation, where all levels meet. The authorial centre is a distance away from the various levels. For example, (Bakhtin. 131)

Beatrice is granted the honour of sharing the tales of her ancestors. Breaking down the old hierarchies, Achebe builds the new social order where power is held by the impoverished and downtrodden using storytelling tactics. By establishing the power of individuals via the book's meta narrative structure, the novel deconstructs the established concept of power and the political framework that is associated with it. An African future is paved in the narrative. Robin Ikegami is correct in pointing out:

In the book, Achebe's previous works' feeling of nostalgia is gone. While acknowledging the past, moving ahead is the goal, the emphasis is on the future.

(Ikegami. 545)

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