

What Actually ‘Falls Apart’ in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*?

Suhair Fuaad Hajo

English Department, University Putra Malaysia

Email: suhair.fuaad@garmian.edu.krd

Abstract

A first reading of the novel reveals the fact that what fall apart in *Things Fall Apart* are Igbo’s cultures and traditions. Accordingly a lot of readings have been done on the novel with almost similar disclosures; considering it as a postcolonial novel and as Achebe’s response to the white racism embedded in European literature, which presented Africa as a primitive and socially retrograde nation. Hence, reading *Things Fall Apart* from a new and distinct perspective with the aid of trances from reader response criticism, this study aims to answer the question of; what really falls apart (in *Things Fall Apart*) and how? Through a close and transactional reading of the novel this study demonstrates that Igbo’s culture and religion didn’t fall apart but changed and in fact, what falls apart in *Things Fall Apart* is Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel. By studying and comparing his conducts, before and after killing Ikemefona it reveals that his mortal sin parts him beyond the limits of his cultural conventions, in the process of gaining his individual purposes, which later leads to his downfall.

Keywords: reader-response criticism, transactional analysis, curse, colonizer.

"Man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all". (Aristotle)

Introduction:

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is an established figure in the canon of African and world literature. He is considered as one of the founders of Nigerian literature and the most influential African writer of his generation. Through his writings, he familiarizes readers throughout the world artistic usages of language and form, in addition to accurate insider descriptions of contemporary African life and history. Besides Achebe's literary contributions, his advocating of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa aided remodeling our conception of African history, culture, and place in world affairs. He published his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. It is acknowledged as a classical text and is taught and read everywhere in the English-speaking world. It has been translated into at least

forty-five languages and several million copies have been sold. *Things Fall Apart* earned Achebe a foremost literary prize a year after its publication.

Things Fall Apart has raised many disputes and made Achebe a controversial author. Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart* portrays the world of a man whom his own rules come into a direct strike with the values and rituals of his nation's established culture. What actually 'falls apart' in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*? What actually 'falls apart' in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*? What actually 'falls apart' in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*? Most readings of *Things Fall Apart* approach the text, rather appropriately, as a postcolonial novel for its accurate portrayal of recounting what kind of Africa the imperialists came upon on their first entrance. In addition, Achebe himself has an intension for introducing this novel, in Killam's words "Things Fall Apart counteracts the racist images of Africa found in such fiction as Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." (3) Moreover, Clifford emphasizes Achebe's aim in introducing the story of his novel as disputing and relocating the accounts of 'colonialist writers' which "meant for Achebe the appropriation of ethnographic modes of representation to prove that the communities of his African past were neither "primitive" nor "without history" (Clifford 10). Thus, it is viewed as a response to the white racism rooted in European writings which presented Africa as a primitive and socially regressive. Further, Achebe intends to prove that what seems awkward and grotesque for the European is of meaning for Umuofians and Africa.

Reading (*Things Fall Apart*) with the grain shows that the things that fall apart with the arrival of the colonizer to Umuofian society; as asserted by many critics like Mishra, are the Ibo's society, culture, religion and unity (2). While Nnoromele states that with the invasion of their land "Umuofia's integrated, organic community was irreparably fractured. Their gods were blasphemed and their hero disabled." (40) Adding that their traditions were dishonored and devastated. The Umuofians were separated or 'put asunder'. So far, all the previous responses to the text are making sense, however we can raise more meanings. A close and against the grain reading of *Things Fall Apart*, as the text's indeterminacy invites us to project, this study seeks to uncover a further perception and meaning in the text. This study seeks to demonstrate that nothing falls apart in Umuofia, except Okonkwo in regard to his pride and illusions. While their culture is changed and transformed but hasn't fallen apart.

Yet, many studies have attached Okonkwo's fall to his obstinate firm, rigid, and self-interested personality. Others, among them Wasserman and Purdon, perceive that Okonkwo is a sort of selfish character that put Ibo culture and belief at risk (327). While

Nnoromele affirms that it is not just one particular reason or incident that enforced Okonkwo to commit suicide. Killing himself is a representative of “an ultimate expression of the compound effects of his own experiences in his unflinching desire to become a hero” (48). Of course these interpretations seem sensible to countering the aim at Okonkwo’s suicide. Yet to claim that they are the only cause for his catastrophe, according to this research, is too narrow. Hence, disagreeing with the common outlooks, with the aid of trances from reader-response criticism, this research aims at demonstrating that what leads to Okonkwo’s destruction is a curse. Okonkwo is blighted for committing destructive sins as he is moving against the rules of the clan and nature as well. In effect the idea of being cursed is something essential to the story; however it has been disregarded and not dealt with in detail.

Reader-response Criticism

With the beginning of the New Criticism the weight in literary analysis transferred once more to the literary text. New Critics assumed, reading the text thoroughly will disclose its meaning. Bressler, in introducing I.A. Richards (one of the New Criticism’s pioneers) ideas concerning reader’s responses to a literary text, argues that the literary work itself includes what is necessary to explore its sense and implication. What is needed in textual analysis is mastering the particular language and the appropriate procedures to expose it. In his *Practical Criticism* (1929) Richards recognizes that a reader “brings to the text a vast array of ideas amassed through life’s experiences, including previous literary experiences, and applies such information to the text.” (Bressler 78) Accordingly these “life experiences” afford a sort of “reality check” to the reader, either confirming or opposing the reality of the knowledges as embodied in the text. Tyson asserts that the authority of the text in exploring various meanings emphasized “by New Critics, while also bringing the reader’s response into the limelight.” (175) Consequently the reader is not anymore the ‘passive’ recipient of information nonetheless is as an alternative ‘an active’ contributor in the process of generating the literary work’s meaning (Bressler 78).

Reader-response criticism, like many schools of criticism which have developed lately, is a term representing a range of analytical stances. Reader- response criticism, unlike the New Criticism’s concept of “text and text alone” which signifies that the meaning of a text is found within the text itself, focuses on the experience of the reader to the literary work. For this approach reader’s response to the text is as important as the text itself; readers lend a hand in the process of creating various meanings to the literary text. To approach a text, readers bring into the analyzing process their world experiences (including other reading’s experiences). Readers bring to, the reading process, their

'forestructure' that embraces "memories, beliefs, values, and any other quality call the individual unique." (Bressler, 89) Thus in the course of making sense of the literary text, the reader's forestructural component 'interact', 'transact', or intermingle creating the definite meaning.

Louise M. Rosenblatt, nonetheless, in her *Literature as Exploration* (1938) emphasizes that both reader and text should interact together in the process of reading, any literary work, so that multiple meanings of the same work would be created. She calls this process of interaction "Transactional reader-response theory". She also asserts that reader throughout reading the text, it functions as a 'stimulus' to which readers counter in their own peculiar manner. Tyson stresses that during reading sensations, suggestions, and memories follow, and these reactions affect the reader's sense of creating meaning as they move through the text (173). Rosenblatt differentiates between two modes of reading (analysing) a literary text; 'efferent' mode and 'aesthetic' mode. In the efferent mode readers emphasis on the facts provided in the work. While in the aesthetic mode we undergo a subjective interact with the text that draws our focuses on the expressive details of its words and style, besides it encourages us to create meanings. Moreover, it is emphasized that without aesthetic stance there can be no transaction between the literary work and reader to explore.

Accordingly this study will employ an efferent and aesthetic approach to generate a new meaning to the text, *Things Fall Apart*, as it will shift back and forth along them. With efferent stance there will be a focus on the factual elements that are provided in the text only. While with aesthetic mode the focus will be on the literary devices that the text contain like its language, theme unity and experiencing the reader's past experience with similar texts, as comparing *Things Fall Apart* to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* which this study explores at some extends.

In a similar view Wolfgang Iser classifies the knowledge presented in each text into two types: "determinate and indeterminate meaning". Tyson defines them in an elaborated manner:

Determinate meaning refers to what might be called the facts of the text, certain events in the plot or physical descriptions clearly provided by the words on the page. In contrast, indeterminate meaning, or indeterminacy, refers to "gaps" in the text—such as actions that are not clearly explained or that seem to have multiple explanations— which allow or even invite readers to create their own interpretations. (174)

What is noteworthy here is that Rosenblatt's efferent method rest totally on determinate meaning, whereas her aesthetic tactic depends on both determinate and indeterminate meaning. In *Things Fall Apart* though the author provides some significant part

concerning the plot, physical description of major characters like Okonkwo and others, and details of certain events are provided as well, yet there are still gaps need to be filled. For instance, Okonkwo's participation in executing Ikemofona left unexplained, the idea of what exactly falls apart and even why things change for Okonkwo and how are ambiguous. Thus, through determinate and indeterminate meaning of the text this study seeks to explore new various meanings of the text.

Analysis

What is worth noting is the fact that, Achebe portrays twofold images of the white men's arrival to Umuofia. On the one hand, he reveals an impartial attitude towards the colonizer's presence and the futility of any sort of resistance. For instance when the head villagers discuss the incident of killing a white man, in Abame, one of them comments that: "Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about the man?" (Achebe, 140) indicating that they have no intention to react aggressively against the missionaries. In addition, Achebe states that they built hospital, school, directed people to learn in order to be able to govern themselves. Furthermore, throughout the dialogue between Mr. Brown and an Umuofian, called Akunna, Achebe draws attention to white man's respect for Ibo's religion: "Neither of them succeeded in converting the other but they learned more about their different beliefs" (Achebe, 179). In another occasion, there is an observation by Obierika through which reflects the harmful side of their arrival: "[the white man] has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe, 176). Yet, the twofold sight of the novel encourages us to read it from a singular perspective.

Obviously, Achebe doesn't introduce the prologue of the European missionaries as a dreadful event. Instead there are some humorous aspects, like the interpreter's humorous manner of talking and the resident's friendliness manner with the missionaries. Umuofia's form is shown as flexible; in the way that they didn't respond brutally to the European missionaries like the village of Abame. Moreover, even before the missionaries' arrival, many of Umuofianas were questioning some of their culture's practicing customs. Still there is no particular evidence, in the text, that indicates the missionaries' brutality in imposing Christianity on the villagers. Apparently it is different; as Obierika explains it saying: "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceable with his religion." (Achebe, 125)

Likewise, Achebe exposes a dual attitude in narrating Things Fall Apart which confounds the task of placing the novel into a definite approach. On the one hand, his mode of describing Ibo's culture and society gives the reader a sense of Achebe's

adherence to the traditions and cultures of his ancestors. He obviously, gives vivid images about the clan as a coherent social structure with firm meanings and values. For example, Umuofia's daily lifestyle such as making food and sacrifices, marriage and death services, wrestling matches (power), and the nature of the relationship among Umoufians ; all are depicted in thrilling details. On the other hand, there is a portrayal of the flaws and unfavorable practices of Ibo's culture; for instance, the habit of throwing away newborn twins, killing innocent victims like Ikemefuna, beating the wife which is a common habit among Umuofian's men and banishing clan's member for unintentional mistakes...etc. Achebe exposes, through his characters' words in the novel, their distressing feelings towards the intolerable oral rules:

Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely led into greater complexities. He remembered his wife's twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime had they committed? (Achebe, 125)

Certain Igbo's customs, even before the colonizer's arrival, were dubious for the young and elderly as well, like Obierika and Nwoye. Lovesey perceives Obierika and Nwoye as the representatives of the "clan's flexibility" for their unlike response to the changes, as Obierika explains: "The clan was like a lizard; if it lost its tail it soon grew another" (171). Lovesey adds that being suspicious and faithful, simultaneously, to the tribe's customs create an internal and external conflict for its members. For example, Obierika inwardly feels uncomfortable about Okonkwo's casting out, yet he was among those who burn his compound (130). Hence, the root of a cultural upheaval is almost there long before the colonizer's entrance. It is obvious that *Things Fall Apart* dramatizes reader-response criticism of analyzing as seeking meanings and it reproduces within the plot reader's experiences while analyzing it.

So far As the text doesn't supply or present the sort of indisputable evidence we need to decide if their culture falls apart or changes. Tyson states that in consistent with 'transactional theorists', various readers arise various satisfactory explanations as the literary work admits for a variety of appropriate implications, "that is, a range of meanings for which textual support is available." (174) Normally, not all the given meanings of the same text are acceptable, because there is an actual concerned text, in this concern is *Things Fall Apart*, to which readers should identify to validate or adapt their responses, as explained above. It is observed that even the author's definite intention for writing *Things Fall Apart*, and any sort of descriptions the author provides later are merely a further meaning of the text, that "must be submitted for evaluation to the text-as-blueprint just as all other readings are" (Tyson, 175). In an essay, Novelist as

Teacher (1965), Achebe defines his own observation of his task as a foremost African author:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels [Things Fall Apart] did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (Achebe, 72).

Hence, even though Achebe himself, in various occasions, asserts that his intention is to introduce the history of his people and how it has fallen apart can be considered as a further meaning of the text, Things Fall Apart. In addition, the impossibility of the text's objectivity which is asserted by many transactional critics and the key elements of interpreting, the text provide, encourage us to argue that when the colonizer introduced their beliefs many of Umofia's beliefs and customs have changed but not fall apart. The new faith and values lead to struggles inside the clan; due to the various attitudes to cultural, religious, and familial issues. From a modern point of view there is not a fixed culture; Tyson in her Critical Theory Today argues that:

[C]ulture is a process, not a product; it is a lived experience, not a fixed definition. More precisely, a culture is a collection of interactive cultures, each of which is growing and changing, each of which is constituted at any given moment in time by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, occupation, and similar factors that contribute to the experience of its members (Tyson, 296).

Therefore, we can say that culture is a dynamic experience and not fixed, the Umofians seem to be aware of this fact and put up with the change; for evidence they refused to join Okonkwo when he killed the court messenger. In view of that, it is argued that Okonkwo represents the embodiment of Igbo culture and his destruction portrays the end of it (Sarma, 69). Nevertheless, Obierika labels Okonkwo, after his death, as "one of the greatest men in Umofia." (Achebe, 208) Wright argues that in Umofia this greatness means someone "who is most unlike his community but who, through his great strength and his ability to do more than it has ever asked of him, and set examples it does not require, belatedly becomes its representative" (Wright, 79). However, it is awkward to agree to such limitation of meaning, since Okonkwo deviated from the agreed norms of Igbo's traditions more than once. Considering what are said earlier Obierika can be regarded as the embodiment of Igbo's culture and society more than Okonkwo. Obierika is more logical than Okonkwo in his observations; he doesn't cross the limitation of his cultural conventions, although he has been questioning them. Albeit he doesn't accept the idea of being colonized, yet he doesn't resist violently. His flexibility leads to his survival just like the culture that he embodied.

Okonkwo endeavors to achieve his own personal aims even if it thwarts others. Throughout the novel there are many references to Okonkwo's efforts to appear as more masculine as he could; to be different from his 'agbala' (feminine) father, Unoka. His father lived in poverty and passed away shamefully; due to his mildness, laziness, and over debts. Therefore, Okonkwo adheres to some of his clan's practices that serve his purposes and ignores the rest. To prove his over masculinity, he overstresses any behavior that denotes his manhood. For instance, he is very strict with his household, becomes a warrior, wrestler, and the only man in the clan who brings the heads of men in intertribal wars. Besides, he is a self-made man who began from nothing yet has achieved a lot. Thus, the question will be what really falls apart and how?

For Achebe Okonkwo represents the embodiment of his culture, as a result Okonkwo's character cannot be studied far from his cultural background. Therefore, this paper will choose an account from Umuofia's tradition to examine Okonkwo's falling in the light of Umuofia's cultural outline. According to Umuofia's ritual in burying the dead, the one-handed spirit calls out to the corpse: "If your death was the death of nature, go in peace. But if a man caused it, do not allow him a moment's rest." (Achebe, 123) Based on the above account, this paper attempts at examining and associating the consequences of killing Ikemefuna to Okonkwo's fall and ruin.

Ikemefuna is the innocent child given to Umuofia as reparation from a rival village. He lived in Okonkwo's house for three years, Okonkwo was fond of him and he took care of him as his adopted son; Ikemefuna also regarded and called him father. Ikemefuna entirely absorbed in the family, especially with Nwoye, they were so close to the extent that he could change Nwoye into a more masculine boy (as he is regarded a feminine boy by Okonkwo). All of a sudden, Okonkwo is informed that the Oracle ordered the men to kill the boy. Unexpectedly, Okonkwo takes part in the murder and he is the one who ends Ikemefuna's life, Achebe describes the unpleasant incident as: "He heard Ikemefuna cry, "My father, they have killed me!" as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak." (43)

From an 'efferent' mode of analyzing, Okonkwo's offense represents a violation to the nature's law as, a factual element provided in the text, Obierika refers to it, an abomination and a moral desecration "for which the goddess wipes out whole families" (67). If it is considered as a law holding, yet Okonkwo is not supposed to have a hand in executing Ikemefuna. Nnoromele claims that since the boy called him father and Okonkwo regarded him as a member of his family, his crime becomes worst. According to Umuofia's culture "the gods or goddesses demanded anyone for sacrifice, the family

must be excluded because the Umuofia people believed that the emotional attachment the family might have for that individual would interfere with the process or the obligation to execute the demands of the Oracle.” (Nnoromele, 46) Okonkwo utterly obsessed with fear of being compared to his feminine father and dreams of being one of the elders with many titles. As a result he blindly commits his offense and turns into a cursed man. From this point a chain of disturbing consequences get into Okonkwo’s life and things begin falling apart.

Aesthetically the palm-wine and kola nut in African literature are symbols of deep connections and mutual respect between the members of family and the whole clan too. Thus from an aesthetic stance, the drop of “The pot [of palm-wine carried by Ikemefuna] fell and broke in the sand” (Achebe, 43), during his murder, symbolizes the downfall of the bond between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye’s. His feelings towards his father utterly changed; he begins disregarding Okonkwo’s authority. Achebe describes Nwoye’s condition: “As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. He did not cry. He just hung limp”. (61) Nwoye who has been questioning the deadly rituals and beliefs of his community connects this incident with the weeping of the deserted twins in the evil forest; part of cultural obligation in Umofia. By the arrival of the colonizer, he willingly converts to the new belief by joining the church school. As a result, Nwoye takes up and joins what Okonkwo wants to tear down.

Inasmuch as it is tough to kill a boy called you father; Okonkwo’s condition after killing the young boy declines. He becomes quite depressed, neither able to sleep nor eat for two days, Ikemefuna’s image fastened in his mind (Achebe, 63). Okonkwo is aware of his deterioration and overtly admits it while addressing himself: “when you become a shivering old woman”. Moreover he adds:

[Y]ou, who are known in all nine villages for your valor in war? How can a man who has killed five men in battle fall to pieces because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed”. (65)

To serve the call of his ethnic group, as a warrior during tribal wars, he slaughtered the enemies and brought their heads home, but he killed Ikemefuna out of adherence to his self-interest, to clear the way for his fame; that is to say due to his internal war. The result is not as he expected but definitely the opposite since he lost part of his masculinity; a state he has evaded all his life.

Ever since, Okonkwo has deprived from having peaceful days. Shortly his favorite child, Ezinma fell into a fatal sickness with almost no chance of surviving. Days and nights

have passed, Okonkwo and Ekwefi (Okonkwo's second wife) have prayed for her recovery. Soon after a slight retrieval, Chielo (the priestess of Agbala) leads the sickly Ezinma to Agbala, the goddess of the Oracle of Hills and Caves. Ekwefi lonely and fearlessly "immediately" follows them in the darkness through the nine villages, whereas Okonkwo appears, with his machete in hand, too late. Nyame in a study on the Things Fall Apart questions Okonkwo's courage in comparison to his wife's and her quick decision to pursue Chielo. It appears that Okonkwo's manliness, in this setting, is violated because "he has already been on several futile trips to Chielo's shrine." (Nyame, 17) Davies also gives a clear account, on the same setting, of Okonkwo's deterioration commenting that "machete, the symbol of his male aggression, is of no use at all in this context" (Davies, 247). Thus, Okonkwo, the hero and great wrestler of Umofia and the nine villages, who throws the Amalinze the Cat, his heroism can no further serve him. It seems that Okonkwo, the father, is no longer able to protect his family (in conformity with the social expectation of his role); he was cursed and collapsed.

As the text encourages us to provoke additional meaning throughout transacting our past reading experiences of various literary texts, it can be inferred that Okonkwo's impotent condition generates a world resembles that of the Ancient Mariner's tale, in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner written by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1797-78. The Mariner's journey, in Coleridge's poem, starts with an agreeable luck [like Okonkwo's fame]. Then the ship is driven to the wrong direction by a storm. In time, an albatross emerges and leads them out to the right way. The albatross role can be compared to Ikemefuna who represent a peacemaker, as he was given to the clan for this purpose; and indicated in several occasion in the novel, for instance he defends Nwoye's younger sister from her parent's anger, bridges the gap between Okonkwo and his son, also is able to change Nwoye's to a more masculine boy. Yet, the Mariner and Okonkwo dreadfully shoot the innocent creatures and bring about misfortune. Nyame argues that not only Okonkwo's emasculation is gone the wrong way yet there are more "for him a loss of authority and a deeper disillusionment about his position within the clan that he is later on to experience" (Nyame, 17).

Furthermore, when the ancestral spirit calls on Ezeudu's corpse, at Ezeudu's memorial service, to trouble anyone who might have caused his death; Okonkwo commits a female crime, according to Igbo culture, even though it was not deliberate. Yet, he and his family are driven into exile to his mother's village, Mbanta for seven years. After the departure, Umofia's men set his compound on fire and kill his animals as part of ritual act to clean the clan and the land from the abomination he has created. Okonkwo's

feeling of separating from his home and people is well described by Nnoromele: “Okonkwo saw this sojourn to Mbanta as a training experience in the wilderness” (47). He has to commence a new life and fame, if he had the power to, for the exile sets his end. Once more, the comparison between Okonkwo and the Mariner is very obvious, just like Okonkwo who cast off by his people for the evil that he created, when the sailors blame the Mariner for the torment of their thirst. In anger, the crew forces the Mariner to wear the dead albatross about his neck, perhaps to illustrate the burden he must suffer from killing it, or as a sign of regret: “Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks / Had I from old and young! / Instead of the cross, the albatross / About my neck was hung” (136-139). Okonkwo losses his hope of gaining the highest title in Umofia and his fortune, which became black ashes.

The white men make their appearance in the country while Okonkwo is in exile. They come to Mbanta, and Okonkwo has to face a new enemy or threat which is external and strong. People begin to adapt the new religion, particularly those who were marginalized by the clan, they found shelter and position in the new society. The young people also find their way into the new belief; as it answers their questions concerning some unfair conventional practices in Ibo’s customs. It is during this period of time Nwoye converts into Christianity. Achebe describes Nwoye’s feelings in an enthralling style calling it “The poetry of the new religion”. It seems that this new religion answering his inquiries about Ikemefuna’s murder as well as the newborn twins. It comforts him “like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate”. Okonkwo advises his kinship in Mbanta to confront the Christians and drive them out. But it seems that they disregard him and they only ignore the missionaries, as an alternative. Therefore, Okonkwo angrily states that Mbanta is a ‘womanly’ clan.

Okonkwo returns to his clan and finds that the missionaries have found their way to Umofia as well and constrained converts. The Umofians never gave Okonwo the champion’s welcome he hopped. He found it completely different “Okonkwo’s return to his native land was not as memorable as he had wished” (Achebe, 129). Among the converts are men of high status and titles besides the outcasts and the low-births which increased okonkwo’s disturbance. The church for Okonkwo represents a threat, as it doesn’t accept the religious excuses of murdering Ikemefuna. Likewise, with the spread of the new belief his ancestral accounts will be ignored. Furthermore, it weakens the cultural significance of his achievements; the titles and supremacy will be useless as there won’t be lower classes. He decides to fight since the “men unaccountably become soft like women” (Achebe, 129) but Obierika tells him that “It is already too late. . . . Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the strangers. They have joined his

religion and they help to uphold his government. . . . How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us?" (Achebe, 124) Okonkwo feels lost; his dreams are shattering in front of him he cannot adapt or accept seeing others converting into the new belief. Actually, he is so averse to changing.

It is obvious that Okonkwo is striving to adhere to the clan's traditions. However, he is virtually the only character, in the novel, that strays from their established customs, regardless of the many words of warning. He is described as the man that doesn't "stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess" (Ibid, 30); he is following his own obstinate will, not the custom. He didn't kill Ikemefuma because he wants to follow the condemned structure of the clan, but to avoid giving the impression of weakness like his father. Throughout the novel, Achebe comments that Okonkwo is "a man of action, a man of war... In Umuofia's war he was the first to bring home a human head" (8). What distinguishes him from the other members of his clan is the fact that his actions always precede his words. Once more, Okonkwo violates the tribe's laws when he causes (another) 'abomination' by battering his youngest wife, Ojiugo, for not preparing his meal before combing her hair, during the week of peace, in which beating or quarrelling is forbidden. Ezeani, the priest of Ani, the earth goddess, reproaches him saying "You have committed a great evil ... the evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. ..., and we shall all perish" (Achebe, 30). Okonkwo determines to hide his fear through confirming his own authority over his wives. Anyokwu expounds that anger is the only way for Okonkwo to express his anxiety, and "'anger' being short of 'danger' by a letter 'd' undercuts Okonkwo's 'greatness' or 'heroic' stature as he becomes slave to it." (14)

Okonkwo is ill-treated by the European missionaries, thus when the clan holds a wide-meeting, he furiously kills one of the court messengers with two strokes of his machete. Just before killing the man Okonkwo told Obierika that he will not listen to the orator's talk and he will fight alone. He did so; for no one supported him, on the contrary, they allowed the other messengers to escape. Achebe comments that Okonkwo knew that Umofia will not fight any more, yet he heard some of them wandering "why did he do it" (Achebe, 205). His last hope in Umofia's men is fall apart, thus he committed suicide and ended his own life.

Even his end is considered as 'abomination'. Some characters in the novel consider his suicide as an 'offense against the Earth', while others regarded "his body is evil". As a final point, according to Igbo custom they don't bury him, Greenberg renders it as "shameful; to see it as heroic is already to impose, retrospectively, a narrative form...his effort to avoid a particular fate leads him into—indeed constitutes the very fulfillment

of—that very fate.” (15) Thus, his death is utterly like his father’s though he considerably tried to avoid. His egocentricity and inflexibility renders him an uncommon plagued man in contrast to the rest of the clan members who appear to be more flexible.

Conclusion

So far, as the earlier analysis illustrate, the process of promoting a new meaning of *Things Fall Apart* reveals to us what little power the literary texts have to accomplish their projected objectives. Albeit the novel has its own independent agreed meaning, which denotes that what falls apart in *Umuofia* is their whole cultural structure, still cannot contend with this paper’s projected meanings. Experiencing the indeterminacy of *Things Fall Apart* invites readers to project their views and theories onto it. The ability of producing new meanings of the novel is expressly underlined, equally in the text’s subject matter and in the analysis process the novel promotes.

Therefore, this study through a transactional analysis and a close reading of the text concludes that Igbo’s culture hasn’t fallen apart but changed. What actually falls apart in *Things Fall Apart* is Okonkwo. His fatal mistake, according to his culture (the murder’s sole) which renders him a plagued and doomed man. It appears that Ikemefuna’s ghost doesn’t leave Okonkwo at rest since then, as ordered to the corps “do not allow him a moment’s rest” (Achebe, 123). He at moments exceeds beyond the limits of his cultural norms in the fear of losing his value and statue in which depend on the cultural standards. Consequently, he lost his connection with his son, his wealth, statue, and dreams yet he kept on following his own rules in life and ended with his suicide. And as a good transaction of analytical response to the novel advocates, this theory of reading, at least in terms of *Things Fall Apart*, seems relatively accurate.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York : Anchor, 1959.
- Anyokwu, Christopher. "Fifty Years on: Problematizing the Heroic Ideal in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*." *California Linguistic Notes* Volume XXXIV (2009): 1-27. web.
- Bressler, Charles E. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. New jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.
- Carol, Boyce Davies. "Motherhood in the Works of Male and Female Igbo Writers: Achebe Emecheta, Nwpa and Nzekwu." *Graves, Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams. Ngambika : studies of women in African literature*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1986. 241-256.

Clifford, James. "Partial Truths." Marcus, James Clifford and George. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 1-26.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner. New York: Dover Publications, 1970.

Greenberg, Jonathan. "'The Base Indian' or 'The Base Judean'?: 'Othello' and the Metaphor of the Palimpsest in Salman Rushdie's 'The Moor's Last Sigh'." Modern Language Studies (1999): 93-107.

Kerfoot, Douglas Killam and Alicia L. Student Encyclopedia of African Literature. London: Greenwood, 2008. print.

Killam, G. D. The Writings of Chinua Achebe. New York: Africana, 1969.

Lovese, Oliver. "Making Use of the Past in Things Fall Apart ." Bloom, Harold. Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. ew York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010. 115-39.

Mishra, Jitendra Kumar. "The Falling Apart of Things in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart." Lapis Lazuli –An International Literary Journal Vol.II.I (2012): 1-10.

Nnoromele, Patrick C. "The Plight of A Hero in Achebe's Things Fall Apart." College Literature (2000): 146-155.

Osei-Nyame, Kwadwo. "Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in Things Fall Apart." Research in African Literatures (1999): 148-164.

Sarma, S. Krishna. "Okonkwo and His Chi." Rao, A. Ramakrishna Rao and C.R. Visweswara. Indian Response to African Writing. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1993.

Tyson, Lois. Critical Theory Today : A User-Friendly Guide 2nd. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Wasserman, Liam Purdon and Julian. "If the Shoe Fits: Teaching Beowulf with Achebe's Things Fall Apart." Sandra Ward Lott, Maureen S. G. Hawkins and Norman McMillan. Global Perspectives on Teaching Literature: Shared Visions and Distinctive Visions. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993. 311-334.

Wright, Derek. "Things standing together : a retrospect on Things fall apart." Petersen, Kirsten Holst and Anna Rutherford. Chinua Achebe : a celebration. Oxford : Heinemann, 1991.