

Rewriting Africa: Achebe's Response to Colonial Narratives and Cultural Evival

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Abstract

This paper examines the issue of cultural resistance in the wake of 'Afrocentrism' in Chinua Achebe's selected fictional works. It investigates the cultural pattern and power discourse of colonial narratives upon indigenous minds. The cultural revival as manifested in the various art forms including literature culminated into the European renaissance, which opened up new vistas in different spheres of life including science and technology. The scientific and artistic work of people like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michaelangelo and writers like Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio pioneered new modes of thinking and took inspiration from the philosophers of greco-roman age." Religio Medici"(1643) written by Sir Thomas Browne appeared during an era of social and religious upheaval when men could be executed for expressing their religious beliefs, emphasizes a reconciliation of traditional opposites and he tried to make unorthodox religious speculations. This book presents a tactful, idiosyncratic expression of a spiritual life shaped by Christian doctrine, medieval and classical thinking, and the explosion of knowledge occurring in the seventeenth century.

Keywords

Cultural Resistance, Rejuvenation, Colonialism, Hegemony

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Introduction

The various developments and advancements in learning owe their origins in their rich traditions which were long forgotten during the Dark ages of Europe. The Hebrew Scriptures, for example, were a cultural means with which to create Jewish identity and then hold on to that identity in the face of Roman oppression. The stories of Jesus and Mohammed served similar functions. The modern theory of cultural resistance, however, was first articulated in the mid nineteenth century by Matthew Arnold. Cultural resistance in postcolonial literature refers to the ways in which writers and artists from formerly colonized countries engage with and challenge the traditional hegemony of society with diplomacy imposed by the colonial powers. Being the form of literary and artistic expression it seeks to reclaim, assert, and celebrate the indigenous cultures and identities that were marginalized or oppressed during the colonial era. Chinua Achebe, draws heavily on the oral tradition of the Igbo people. He tries to illuminate community values in both the content and the form of storytelling, pens down a similar grudge against the colonizer in his book 'Things Fall Apart' (1958)- "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won over our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart ." (Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart.1958) Postcolonial literature emerged in the aftermath of colonial rule as writers from countries that had been colonized by European powers began to tell their own stories, voices, and experiences. These writers often employ various literary techniques and strategies to resist and subvert the dominant narratives and ideologies of the colonizers. Cultural resistance is the practice of using meanings and symbols, to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process. The practice is as old as history. Postcolonial writers often challenge and revise the dominant historical accounts constructed by the colonial powers. They aim to reclaim and reinterpret their own histories from their own perspectives, highlighting the agency and contributions of marginalized groups. Many postcolonial writers employ linguistic strategies to resist colonial influence. They may incorporate local dialects, vernaculars, or indigenous languages into their works, challenging the dominance of the colonial language and expressing the distinct cultural identities of their communities. Postcolonial literature often explores the blending of cultures, religions, and traditions, highlighting the complexity and diversity of postcolonial societies. This hybridity challenges the notion of a singular, homogenous cultural identity imposed by colonial powers: Chinua Achebe like other writers of his age challenges and subverts the stereotypes and caricatures that were perpetuated by the colonizers through literary text. The books written by Achebe present multidimensional and complex characters who defy the narrow representations imposed by colonial narratives and are significantly dismantling

the power dominion of western ideology. Though scholars have paid attention to the notion of rootlessness and rootedness including the native's struggle with the language, in Chinua Achebe's writings one can observe his sense of resistance as well as rejuvenation when the author discussed the Igbo tribe. His portrayal of Igbo culture, traditions, and societal complexities challenged Eurocentric stereotypes prevalent in colonial-era literature. The glorious past had been subjugated and needed further resistance. This study explores fictional (Things Fall Apart etc.) and non-fictional works, to engage the issue of rootlessness and vice versa. The selected works are basically chosen to justify the relevance of the topic under study. Cultural resistance depicted in the texts under study, formulates the process of displacement and conversion as an illusion of better life. The selected texts for the research show the fragmented native becoming 'other' and a collapsed African folklore. Language has become a powerful weapon in neocolonialism, hence the traditional roots are revamped. Post colonial theory is a viable framework to explore the psychological impact of imperialism and its resistance in African nations encountering hegemonic binaries of power games. The aim of this study is to dismantle the process of power narratives in African realities as represented in 'Things Fall Apart' and other seminal works. This paper deals with the critical insight into various European models imposed on African indigenous and their struggle with culture and Language. The writings of Chinua Achebe and similar other authors have played a seminal role in bringing about the ideas related to cultural resistance and rejuvenation. Much has been discussed on the theme of rootlessness. The African postcolonial literature will hegemonize Afrocentrism over Eurocentrism in the light of linguistic imperialism, power discourse of occidental hierarchy and the pattern of colonialism. There is an intricate similarity between Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, *A Man of the People*, and other non-fictional works investigates the pattern of colonization and the trauma of the 'other', the native felt segregated and is willing to shed the old tradition for the sake of new hence pave way for exploring the margins of modern culture. Review of literature This literary survey tries to make a comparative analysis in the light of works written by Chinua Achebe and some other similar authors in the context of acculturation, assimilation, Deculturation, cultural Imperialism and cultural resistance. The selected works of this author and related works on this theme of cultural resistance attempted a justification of this study. The Western influence on modern African literature has occasioned its hybrid nature. This interaction which produced the vexed incidences of slave trade and colonialism, has unarguably foregrounded its dialogic peculiarity. Expectedly, modern African creative environment became an arena for African writers to correct misconceptions on Africa and Africans, a form of reaction to the jaundiced views of their western 'arm-chair' critics. Thus African literature emerged as a veritable instrument required for the documentation of the lives, cries, and lamentations on the

injustices meted out to Africa during her inglorious past. African writers are as spread as the the countries within Africa but the most prominent ones are Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Peter Abrahams, Christopher Okigbo, Okot P'Bitek, Leopold Sedar Senghor, amongst others. These writers were products of colonial education but have used literature and culture to subvert colonial and post- colonial notions about Africa. It also used the sophistication of African civilization and value alongside classical literatures of the west. African literature challenged the superiority of colonial narratives about Africa by providing alternatives. It also challenged corrupt post-colonial governments in their homelands. Brar and Singh (2011) agree with the above notion of African literature but posit that while other forms of literature existed in oral forms in Africa, the Modern African novel is the hybridization of African oral storytelling tradition and structured European novel form. Brar and Singh (2011) accurately include Amos Tutola, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Nadine Gordimer, Elechi Amadi, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and These scholars also posited that the role of African literature was to locate African cultural identity despite European intrusion. The exploration of ancient roots along with the modern one significantly studies indigenous culture based on native culture solely. Another speculation may be based on the self identity of the native that accumulates a bond with the culture. A feeling of humanity standing with pride and deep faith energized the digging past. Today's world has seen a rise in immigrants. It promotes multiculturalism, hybrid culture and the diversity constituted identity crisis and unmasked the struggle of colonized people to seek identity. Achebe's writings traced his opinion on culture, current politics and aftereffects of postcolonialism. His views are collected in various books or lectures delivered on occasions such Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975), Hopes and Impediments (1988), Home and Exile (2000), The Education of a British-Protected Child (2009), and the autobiographical There Was a Country: A Personal History of by asserting a cultural pride and by evolving a literary language from the depths of African culture. It created cultural parallels in order to posit d that the role of African literature was to locate African cultural identity despite European intrusion. The exploration of ancient roots along with the modern one significantly studies indigenous culture based on native culture solely. Another speculation may be based on the self identity of the native that accumulates a bond with the culture. A feeling of humanity standing with pride and deep faith energized the digging past. Today's world has seen a rise in immigrants. It promotes multiculturalism, hybrid culture and the diversity constituted identity crisis and unmasked the struggle of colonized people to seek identity. Achebe's writings traced his opinion on culture, current politics and aftereffects of postcolonialism. His views are collected in various books or lectures delivered on occasions such Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975), Hopes and Impediments (1988), Home and Exile (2000), The Education of a British-Protected

Child (2009), and the autobiographical *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012). Such works earned him a reputation as one of Africa's most articulate social critics. Achebe started cultural resistance with a strong grudge against the African colonizers. He argues that African substantiality is highly pretentious to arrange a grapple of the binaries of imperialism and colonialism: the first one is a ceaseless resistance over the other. The neo-colonialism impacted both the political and economic demands of the elite class. Chinua Achebe's debut novel 'Things Fall Apart' to his later publications are a profound exploration of postcolonial Africa, blending traditional storytelling with a critical examination of colonial legacies. *Things Fall Apart* is a poignant portrayal of the Igbo society's disintegration under colonial rule, challenging Eurocentric perspectives and presenting the complexities of African culture. *No Longer at Ease* (1960) delves into the moral struggles faced by individuals in postcolonial Nigeria. The protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, is caught between tradition and modernity, and the narrative explores themes of corruption, cultural conflict, and personal responsibility. "Arrow of God" (1964): Achebe's exploration of the clash between traditional religious beliefs and the incursion of Christianity reflects the broader tensions within Nigerian society. The novel paints a complex picture of the impact of colonialism on cultural and spiritual practices. "A Man of the People" (1966): Written just before the Nigerian Civil War, this satirical novel critiques political corruption and abuse of power in postcolonial Africa. Achebe's keen observations and biting humor reveal the intricacies of political dynamics in the newly independent nations. "Anthills of the Savannah" (1987): Achebe's last novel examines the political turmoil in a fictional African nation. The narrative probes into the consequences of political upheaval and the ethical challenges faced by those in power. The novel provides a nuanced commentary on postcolonial governance. *Essays and Critiques*: Achebe's critical essays, including "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" challenge Eurocentric perspectives on Africa. His literary criticism contributes significantly to the discourse on postcolonial literature and the representation of Africa in Western literary traditions.

Chinua Achebe's works collectively serve as a bridge between African oral traditions and contemporary literature. His narratives provide a rich tapestry of cultural, political, and social landscapes, making them essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of postcolonial identity and the resilience of African cultures. This study has reviewed the influence of other sources on Achebe such as "The Empire Writes Back" as a theoretical account of a wide range of postcolonial texts and their relationship with bigger issues of postcolonial culture. The writers debate on the relationships within postcolonial works, study the mighty forces acting on words in the postcolonial text, and prove how these texts constitute a radical critique of Eurocentric notions of language and literature. Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks" has also been influential in inspiring

discussions on racial identity, colonialism, and the impact of racism on mental health. Fanon's another masterpiece "The Wretched of the Earth" (French: *Les Damnés de la Terre* 1961) in which the author lay out a psychiatric and psychological inspection of the brutal mental consequences of colonization on a person and a country, and established the paranormal social cultural, and political inference to settle a communal maneuver to decolonize the country the way forward is anticolonialism. Through assessment of chauvinism and of imperialism, Fanon implied discussion of individuals and societal psyche, an analysis of linguistic motif (vocabulary) which is applied to imperial formation containing both colonizer and colonized, to analyze the traumatic pattern of the native's mind he change the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor, and view the cognitive role of active resistance to get involved in a revolution. "The Location of Culture" is another such work by Homi K. Bhabha discusses the complications of racial identity in terms of orientalism and globalization. Bhabha provokes the idea of a fixed, essentialized notion of culture and argues for a more fluid and hybrid understanding. He examines how cultural identities are constructed, negotiated, and contested in the interplay of power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. In his theory of Third Space: Bhabha introduces the concept of which refers to an in-between space where cultural identities emerge and are continuously renegotiated. It is a space of hybridity and ambiguity that disrupts binary oppositions, such as colonizer/colonized or self/other. Other literary works such as *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson, *Orientalism and culture & Imperialism* by Edward Said frame theoretical background to this study.

Culture is rooted in a time and place. It defines how people relate to nature and their physical environment, to the earth and to the cosmos, and express their attitude to and beliefs in other forms of life. Looking at the world today, one sees many countries, nations, peoples, customs, languages, and a multiplicity of apparently unsolvable conflicts and problems. Hence the experiences of national liberation and even the internal social struggles of many nations might be shaped in a similar way by the fact of their being aimed against the practices of a common enemy. These global economic and political processes invariably give rise to cultural links. These links feature everyday existence of culture and its components. Culture is something abstract, we need sufficient reason to define culture. In philosophical terms "The very word culture meant 'place tilled' in Middle English, and the same word goes back to Latin *colere*, 'to inhabit, care for, till, worship' and *cultus*, 'A cult, especially a religious one.' To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensive to cultivate it—to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly" (Edward S. Caesy). On the other hand The Cambridge English Dictionary states that culture is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time. Apart from these definitions culture is a product of peoples'

history, which reflects that history and embodies a whole set of values by which people view themselves and their place in time and space. It helps to shape a society and evolve the life of the humans with ultimate cultural values. The glorious present of every civilization is made up of values, belief systems, rules, norms, morals, language, organizations, and institutions. These values associate culture with nation as its embodiment, the two forms idealist and material culture are related to the nation to a greater extent as both help to shape a nation's identity. But ideal forms of culture tend to be more humanistic. According to Marx, it is in the realm of material culture that a minority is able to maintain unjust power over the majority. The components of culture are so complex that a literary obligation is felt to resolve the issue through cultural rejuvenation.

Conclusion

In this research paper an attempt is made to analyze Chinua Achebe's struggle with the occidental hierarchies. Though scholars have paid attention to the notion of rootlessness and rootedness including their cultural consciousness. Yet it would be still more profitable to analyze the author in terms of cultural resistance which has been a central theme of most of his fictional as well as prose narratives. The origins of colonialism and imperialism can be traced back to various historical factors and development. The Age of Discovery, beginning in the late 15th century, witnessed European nations exploring and venturing into unknown territories. Explorers like Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, and Ferdinand Magellan set sail to find new trade routes and resources, driven by the desire for wealth and power. Concurrently, advancements in navigation, shipbuilding, and weaponry, such as the development of the compass, astrolabe, and improved sailing vessels, facilitated long-distance voyages. This enabled European powers to navigate the globe with greater ease and reach distant lands. The economic system of mercantilism played a significant role in driving colonialism and imperialism. European powers sought to establish colonies to secure valuable resources, establish trade routes, and create markets for their manufactured goods. This approach aimed at maximizing their wealth and economic dominance. Culture is an embodiment of language, which is a thought provoking process, particularly language has become the question to be discussed in post colonial literature. The occident used language as a weapon to conquer the world. post-colonial intellect and authors feature the modern practice of striking the colonizer's languages among the people, and forbid the indigenous to recall or revamp their glorious linguistic tradition. They view this application as a fragment of the standardized persecution of imperialism in anticolonial societies, and they speculate its consequences on the psychological, physical, and cultural well-being of colonized peoples. Some post-colonial theorists advocate for, if not a complete abandonment of the English language, at least a conscious and pronounced preference for indigenous languages as a literary or scholarly medium. Communication between human beings propels the evolution

of a culture, he argues, but language also carries the histories, values, and aesthetics of a culture along with it. Achebe's writings sharply exposed the truth that imperialists were still in control of the African economy, society and politics, though in indirect ways. And he believed that revolution led by peasants and the working class would bring hope to Africa. This research aims at the concept of Cultural resistance in post colonial literature. The expected conclusion(s) will be related to the strife between the rootedness and rootlessness. Much has been written on the concept of rootlessness, identity crisis, isolation, and alienation, but the rootedness; the coming back to the cultural roots will be the main focus of this research on the theme of cultural rejuvenation. Ngugi's denouncement of the colonizer's language indicates that the way forward is cultural rejuvenation.

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