

Paradigms of Heroism, Hubris and Hamartia in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart has elements of valour (heroism) and weakness (hubris) and tragic flaw (hamartia) are exemplified within the narration and technique communicated to the audience. The themes of heroism, hubris and hamartia were examined through textual analysis of the prose-work, and a reliance on Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo's Archetypes of Heroism and Aristotle's concepts of tragic-hero, hubris and hamartia. Okonkwo, the main character, is highly dignified and full of pride and valour. His heroism and downfall evolve from traits of hubris and hamartia that makes him fallible. Thus, there is sufficient substantiation of heroism, hubris and hamartia paradigms, portrayed in human traits, communal affective ties, communal disillusionment and social relationships/disenchantment in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart through Okonkwo, the novel's protagonist.

Keywords: heroism, hubris, hamartia, Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe

Introduction

In Africa, people have engaged in individual or communal sanguinary activities within their various enclaves. Furthermore, within each African society stemmed the idea of co-existence or communal subsistence, which involves communication as reflected in interactions between individuals, quest for personal survival, family sustenance and protection and societal protection. There was also the wild consciousness of a supreme being and deities that must be worshiped. These are some of the reasons that heroes evolve(d) or are created in Africa (Grotelueschen, 2017).

Therefore, it could be said that within the social inter-activities, the archetypal human hero evolved through deeds that could be attributed to fate, environmental situations, and social influences. The typical African systematically imbibes traits that are typical of a hero. It is systematic in the sense that assuming that tragic-hero status by an individual could be deliberate, by chance, inadvertent, or bestowed. Conversely, as argued by Idowu (1996), these same social interactions among members of the community, and between communities (inter and intra relationships), no doubt, brought about conflicts that evolved in which, through fate or destiny, a person undergo certain experiences and transformation that

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portrays valour or the downfall of the person, who, in drama or literature, is described as the tragic hero.

The idea of the tragic hero in Africa could, at times, be the idea of human inclination towards the established interactions or intercessions with their pantheons. This connotes the idea of the role-model concept in which gods in the community or ethno-tribal pantheon, like it was in the Greek and Roman classical era, interfere in the lives of the people. These divinities, at times, manipulate the destinies of people. In other instances, a prominent or powerful individual in the society could assume the tragic-hero model, based on trivialities or what could be referred to as inconsequential matters. Instances of such abound. An exemplar is Sango, the god of fire, lightning and thunder in the Yoruba (Western Nigeria) pantheon. Sango was a very brave and powerful king, who, according to history, was the third *Alaafin* (imperial ruler) of Oyo Empire. He reigned for seven years, and this period was marked by incessant campaigns and countless battles, more because of excessive supernatural power. The end of his reign resulted from his inadvertent destruction of his palace by thunderbolt generated by him. His excessive power gave way to hubris. However, he was thereafter venerated, deified and worshiped (Aremu, 2007).

A typical African could act out a life with a proclivity towards a larger than life personality, and, thereafter, the person is considered as a demigod. The individual has certain unusual characteristic traits, of which he or she may not even have control over, and, this, in effect, makes the person to appear as if he or she has been programmed to attain that tragic-hero status. In such instances, fame, power, wealth, influence, and followership come into play, and hubris may likely come into play as an after-effect and it is important in actualizing this status. The above aligns with the views of Anyokwu (2008), who, in defining a hero, explain that an individual is named a hero of a particular occurrence, and such a person must have interceded in some grave circumstances in a bizarre manner and not conforming to the normal, while putting his or her life at risk. This is why Anyokwu believes that such a character realizes such status through taints of the supernatural and is seen as being close to the gods.

Hubris and hamartia are usually associated with tragic-heroes because their towering and near-supercilious status often makes them to live a life that is ruled by emotions, sentiments, obsession, boldness, non-conformity, retribution, overconfidence, and so on. Moreover, fear, avarice, hedonism, anxiety, exploitation, and other factors dictate the existence of a tragic-hero (Cudjoe, Grant & Otchere, 2011).

Thus, this study believes that these are circumstances that may be played out with the backing of a member of (or the collaborative agreement of all the

members of the pantheon). This further explains why, in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, a reference to '*chi*' (personal god) agreeing with a person's life situations is often made by Achebe because it is believed that if a person's *chi* is weak or asleep, such a person may be a failure in his or her life. Achebe had written about Okonkwo the protagonist in the novel:

But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm-kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself. Anyone one who knew his grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say he had been lucky. If a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his *chi* says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his *chi* agreed. And not only his *chi* but his clan too...(p. 19).

Hence, as robust as the concepts of *hubris* and *hamartia* in tragic heroes are in literary and communication studies, it appears that not many studies have been carried out on African literature, considering the fact that this has always been an intrinsic part of African life. Thus, with the above elucidations, the question is: How has Achebe portrayed hubris and hamartia in the *Things Fall Apart* text?

Objective of Study

The objective of this study is to examine how the issue of heroism, hubris and hamartia are communicated in literature vis-à-vis Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. These three key elements, that is, heroism, hubris and hamartia are crucial, more importantly because African literature draws its resources from the continent's experiences, exigencies, and situations through the pre-historic, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. These are periods replete in socio-economic and political activities that Africans and others have tapped in to build a robust reservoir of literature, essential for study.

Relationship Between Heroism, Hubris and Hamartia

Human individual traits are expressed in personal and social relationships, such as romantic relationships, family relationships, community relationships, and friendships. According to Knapp (2018), this suggests a subset of interpersonal communication that focuses on the exchange and interpretation of messages within close relationships. This includes all types of messages and interactions, shared between two people in a close relationship, which could be vital relational messages or mundane everyday interactions, among others. Therefore, human relationships, the words and feelings they communicate, help to portray collective individual traits and weaknesses.

However, Heroism is a virtue or quality of a character, while hubris is usually perceived as an attribute of a character that leads to personal downfall of the

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person, rather than that of a community who may suffer consequences from the wrongful act that stemmed from the flaw or weakness of the heroic character. Hamartia is a literary device that reflects a character's tragic or fatal flaw, or mistake in judgment, that ultimately leads to downfall. Thus, Heroism relates to the individual, especially about how such person has displayed human qualities that revolve around great bravery or courage. Aristotle succinctly introduced the term in the *Poetics* in describing the tragic hero as a man of noble rank and nature whose adversity or misfortune did not evolve from villainy, but by some "error of judgment" known as Hamartia (Aristotle, 1974); (Britannica, 2021). Thus, this defect later came to be interpreted as a moral flaw, such as can be ascribed to Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*.

The hero is greatly admired by many people, but Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo (2011) caution that people should be careful in quickly adding 'courage' as part of the attributes of a hero. They had observed from a study by Rate, Clark, Lindsay, & Sternberg (2007) that existing researches on the subject used the terms courage and heroism synonymously, due to the affinity of the two words. According to Olsen & LaRowe, n.d., (1913), in the *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, this idea stems from the fact that older dictionaries "were at pains to decompose these ideas". Thus, Franco et al. explained that "courage was seen as necessary but insufficient to meet this archaic standard of heroism."

Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* explains that hubris relates to actions and pronouncements that bring ignominy to the victim and he stresses that retaliation is not hubris, but revenge. Hubris falls within the context of the shame culture of ancient Greece, in which people's actions were directed by circumventing shame and seeking honour, and did not fit into the culture of inner guilt (Britannica, 2021).

Hubris often signify a loss of contact with reality and an overestimation of a person or character's capability, deeds, successes or potentials, particularly when the person demonstrating the hubristic tendency is in a position of authority. Hubris could either mean extreme arrogance, pride or self-confidence that may push a character to offend the god(s), flout the laws of the land, commit an abomination, or to embark on an unusual enterprise (Cudjoe, Grant & Otchere, 2011).

It was argued that the Greeks had a word for error (hamartia), but not for sin, especially as Hesiod (7th century BC) and Aeschylus (5th century BC) used hubris to portray wrongful action against the divine order. Hence, literary critics these days frequently seek to find in hubris the "tragic flaw" (hamartia) of the heroes of Greek tragedy. Hubris could also be seen as a result of a flaw (Hamartia) or extreme weakness in a character that leads to downfall.

This study believes that the environment within which heroic exploits, hubris and hamartia take place can be situated within a psychological context, and this may suggest the human nature, and help to define a person's needs, desires, values, personality, etc.

According to Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011), "heroism represents the ideal of citizens transforming civic virtue into highest form of civic action, accepting either physical peril or social sacrifice." In film and literature, tragic heroes are like gods that are worshipped by mortals (Grogan, 2014), and such heroes often believe that they are destined to be so. Such personalities, according to Grogan, are, no doubt, human beings who are fallible to human flaws, and it is not that they are supernatural or that they obtain divine protection, but they, nonetheless, assume the position of tragic hero as a result of arrogance "that manifests itself in his attempt at play-acting what he believes to be the human experience, but from a 'lofty' place."

The explanation that could be ascribed to the above elucidations is that a tragic hero assumes that esteemed height basically as a result of inner, supernatural and physical strengths that could be tainted by human flaw (hamartia). Such character could, thus, be described as possessing hubristic tendencies. Despite these explications, Aristotle had explained that for a person to be a tragic hero, it is essential that such individual must be a good person that should possess dignity and personal quality in the society (Cudjoe, Grant & Otchere, 2011). He adds that it is also important for a tragic hero to suffer a downfall through no fault of his, and such fault stems from a weakness or flaw (hamartia) in the character of the person. Thus, Zimbardo exemplifies the above by stating that "true heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic." He adds that "it is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost."

As in the case of Okonkwo (Achebe, 1958), it is believed that the character could be faulted for his weaknesses. Okonkwo is a character that has been motivated by self-realization and that is aware of his self-worth and status in his clan. He dreaded his father's failure and was hard-working. He was a virtuous man, a fearless warrior, and very impatient of cowardly men, and anything that could affect the old order in his world. This became his undoing.

Nonetheless, Anyokwu (2009), referring to Miller (2002), buttressed Aristotle's notion by stressing that Aristotle's conception of the hero is that of a character who is a noble man and who has "the tragic flaw of hubris" and is destroyed by divine intervention.

Zimbardo, however, highlights four attributes of heroic action, which may help answer the above questions. To Zimbardo, heroic action must be:

- i. Engage in voluntarily;

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- ii. Conducted in service to one or more people or the community as a whole;
- iii. Involving a risk to physical comfort, social stature, or quality of life; and
- iv. Initiated without the expectation of material gain.

This study, thus, believe that the above attributes of Zimbargo succinctly captures the larger idea of a tragic hero who is a person of distinguished courage or ability and nobility that is well admired for his or her bravery and exemplary qualities. Such character is idealized, flawless, and appears faultless for having superior qualities in any area of human endeavour and is distinguished from others within his environment for his outstanding strength and resilience.

It should be noted that scores of studies have been carried on the subject matter (heroism and hubris), and more have also been carried out on this world acclaimed masterpiece (*Things Fall Apart*) by Achebe. Hence, because of the nature and status of this novel, studies cannot be exhaustive and this particular one becomes an addition to the existing ones.

Communication of Elements of Heroism, Hubris and Hamartia in the Okonkwo Character

In *Things Fall Apart*, it was made clear in the back-cover comment by *The Observer* that “the story is the tragedy of Okonkwo, an important man in the Igbo tribe in the days when white men were first appearing on the scene...” It was stated further that there were series of events by which Okonkwo, “through his pride and his fears becomes exiled from his tribe and returns, only to be forced into the ignominy of suicide to escape the result of the rash courage against the white man...” (Heinemann, 1986 edition). This aptly indicates heroism, hubris and taints of hamartia in this character.

Indeed, *Things Fall Apart* is a tragedy within the African context, distinct from the Greek and Roman Classical context or the European Renaissance or the Western milieu. Although Neil Mc Ewan (1983:30), in Foley (2001), had pointed out that Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* has all the trappings of the Greek classical tragedy because the author “appear highlighting aspects of Ibo culture which would recall ancient Greece to a European reader.” Thus, Neil Mc Ewan (1983:30) drew attention to words like “wrestling matches, and social status achieved by prowess at games, public debate, sacrifice of cocks, Oracular counsel, personal and household gods.” Other references recall Graeco-Roman antiquity, such as priestess, goddess, oracle, hostage, shrine, and abomination in the religious context. But it takes an Igbo, nay an African, to understand that these are not traditions or values peculiar to the Greek or Roman classical period alone, but are generally typical of the African existence, even to date. Thus, there is a need to be

careful in arriving at conclusions when making comparisons of African literature and those of other cultures. The heroic typology of Achebe's Okonkwo falls within the typical African classical circumstance that incorporates the Igbo worldview, distinct from the Greek or Roman, nay European mode of heroism.

Nevertheless, on close examination, it is observed that in the novel, Achebe portrayed heroism in Okonkwo through the following identified qualities or virtues:

- i. Strength—refers to inner and physical strength of character.
- ii. Wealth—self-development through hardwork and determination.
- iii. Self-worth—has a feeling of confidence in himself that he is a good and useful person.
- iv. Self-esteem—he is happy with his own character and abilities.
- v. Self-actualization—the fact of using his skills and abilities and achieving as much as he could possibly achieve.
- vi. Self-opinionation—believes that his own opinions are always right, refusing to listen to those of others.
- vii. Valor—a fearless warrior.

Moreover, Achebe reflects hubris in the Okonkwo character in the following ways:

- i. Intolerance and fear (he grew up fully aware of his father's failure in life. Thus, Okonkwo nurtures the fear of failure and is intolerant of weaklings and failures)
- ii. Easily irritated (almost killed his youngest wife over the comments she made during the Week of Peace)

However, Achebe highlights Hamartia through the Okonkwo character as:

- i. Imposed on him (the Ikemefuna issue)
- ii. Acquired by accident (inadvertent murder of another lad that leads to his exile)
- iii. Being his nature (his often display of anger and irritation. He swore vengeance and his eventual killing of the chief messenger)
- iv. By his flaw (intolerant of his people and the failure of his clan to reason and act along with him. This disappointment leads to his committing suicide)

Heroism, Hubris and Hamartia in *Things Fall Apart* and Textual Annotations

Okonkwo is indubitably a man of valor and of exemplary qualities within his Umuofia enclave. Okonkwo is a conservative who is absolutely disinclined towards great or unexpected social transformation or change, and who shows a predilection for traditional mode of life and values. It is also very important to state that the life of Unoka, his father, who was a weakling, a non-achiever, and a

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lazy and poor man by all standards, contributed a great deal to the heroic traits and the elements of hubris in his personality. Achebe says:

With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have a start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death. (1986, p13)

Therefore, one tends to be convinced that Okonkwo's tragedy, which portrays his heroism, hubris and the hamartia that are encapsulated in his character, evolved from fear of failure. Furthermore, he draws his heroic qualities considerably from his strength, courage, resilience, and conservatism. These are the qualities that are found in an archetypal African tragic hero, and, which Adade and Yeboah (2013) agree has a causal cultural aspect, in which "the tragic hero differs from culture to culture in modern society."

But Achebe's Umuofia clan and Okonkwo's heroic exploits does not belong to the contemporary, but, rather, they can be situated within the context of the dim past of the pre-colonial era in Africa "when the white men were first appearing on the scene," hence, Okonkwo's resilience and conservatism.

But the question often asked is: Is Achebe portraying his own worldview or that of the Igbo? Contrary to the opinion of Foley (2001), Achebe does not portray his personal worldview of life, but that of the Igbo tribe as it is in real. However, it must be noted that Achebe himself had claimed in an interview he granted Kalu Ogbaa (in Gikandi, 1991:31), cited in Foley (2001), that what played out in *Things Fall Apart* "is presenting a total world and a total life as it is lived in that world ..." Achebe added: "I am writing about my people in the past and in the present, and I have to create for them the world in which they live and move and have their being." Thus, the heroic representations in *Things Fall Apart* typify the Igbo worldview. Accordingly, whether Achebe's portrayal of Okonkwo's type of heroism bear a resemblance to that of the Aristotelian classical hero or the European literature hero does not matter. What is important to this study is that Achebe made the Okonkwo character to meet the requirements of a hero, as outlined by Franco, Blau, and Zimbargo (2011).

Moreover, it could be authoritatively stressed and asserted that it takes close co-existence and rapport with the Igbo people to understand their worldview, and not merely through an academic exertion or assumption. One could effortlessly misread *Things Fall Apart* for a true story. The life in *Things Fall Apart* portrays the true life of the Igbos, which Achebe has absolutely captured. Through his literary

works, Achebe appeared to be loyal to his tribe and people in his works till his demise in 2013.

Be that as it may, much has been written and said about the Okonkwo character by scholars around the world. Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* has generated ample controversies in academic discourses about his real or actual placement or position when analysing his character. Is he a tragic hero? Is he a man of ill-fate? Is his fate ordained by destiny? Is the misfortune of Okonkwo supported by the Igbo worldview, which *Things Fall Apart* espouses? Is Okonkwo's heroic status dictated by his inflexibility or conservatism? This study will seek for answer to these questions from Anyokwu (2009). Anyokwu had written that a "hero is set apart by his war-likeness, bravery and strength, both of body and mind."

Nevertheless, Achebe further indicated in page 3 Okonkwo's personal physical heroic attributes. He stressed that these traits lie on solid individual accomplishments. Even as a young man of just eighteen, he had begun to bring fame on himself and honour to his village when he threw Amalinze the cat. Okonkwo is described as tall and huge, having bushy eye brows and wide nose that made him to have a severe look. He walks on his heels as though he would pounce on somebody (he often did that), and had no patience with unsuccessful men.

No doubt, Okonkwo was a hero, but has a weakness (hubris), which is his anger. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the week of peace. It is stated that "Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife" whose name is Ojiugo. It is stated in page 21 that "Okonkwo bit his lips as anger welled up within him." Anger, an element of hubris, is responsible for this action by Okonkwo.

Another major flaw in Okonkwo's character is his intolerance of criticism and his penchant for beating women. After the week of peace incident that he beat Ojiugo, his third wife, we saw how he again almost marred the New Yam Festival by giving his second wife "a sound beating" for tampering with the leaves of a plant. His anger thus satisfied, he thereafter decided to go hunting and asked Ikemefuna to bring his old rusty gun. Achebe states that "although Okonkwo was a great man whose prowess was universally acknowledged, he was not a hunter." Not even a rat, which is the smallest of animals, had been killed with the gun. Of course, as typical of women, the battered woman made a derisive remark "about guns that never shot." Okonkwo was enraged and thus "ran madly into his room for the loaded gun, ran out again and aimed at her." There was a loud report from the gun. Okonkwo knew that he was bad at using a gun but pride actually made him to mishandle it, not once but twice.

Be that as it may, one needs to state that the text (*Things Fall Apart*) is one that is replete with paradigms of heroism, hubris and hamartia. Okonkwo, having

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established himself as one of the lords of the clan is not someone that should be side-lined in major decisions of the land. This awareness, no doubt, explains why he was the “proud and imperious emissary of war” when the wife of Ogbuefi Udo was killed by the people of Mbaino (pp. 8 & 9). Okonkwo was “treated with great honour and respect.” He has always been a party to the fate of the hapless Ikemefuna who lived and flourished in his household for three years, but, as indicated in page 43, had to be killed by Okonkwo simply because he “was afraid of being thought weak.” But Okonkwo had been warned earlier by the elderly Ezeudu not to be involved in the killing of the boy. Ezeudu had said: “That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death” (pp. 40 & 86). Here, we see an inter-play of hubris in Okonkwo that stemmed from his heroic traits. In literature, the fact of somebody being too proud leads such a person to bear his pride to the extent that he ignores warnings and even laws and this usually results in downfall or even death.

It is generally believed by literary critics that several of the very striking fictional characters in literary works are susceptible to hamartia. Their vulnerability enables an appreciation of the flaw or error in judgment that leads to tragedy for these protagonists. In *Things Fall Apart*, Hamartia allows the Okonkwo character to be amply endowed with involvedness, convolutions and intricacies that allows the audience to align with and which stimulates an appreciation of his great efforts.

Nevertheless, according to *Literary Device* (2021),

hamartia, as a literary device, can be interpreted in two ways. It can be an internal weakness or trait in a character such as greed, passion, hubris, etc. However, it can also refer to a mistake made by a character that is based not in a personal failure but on circumstances outside the protagonist's personality and control.

Thus, the internal weakness or trait in Okonkwo was exemplified in pages 88 to 89, with the killing of another youth by Okonkwo, which, thus, may tempt one to query whether it is indeed an act of heroism to be so-natured. One thing that must be underscored in these issues is that while the killing of Ikemefuna is considered as a deliberate act of hubris, due to his heroic mentality, this other incident is considered as inadvertent, a female crime. In this second killing of a sixteen year old boy, who ironically is the son of Ezeudu, the man that had warned Okonkwo not to be involved in the killing of Ikemefuna, it is easy to also attribute the killing to heroism because Okonkwo belongs to the highly revered *egwugwu* cultic class reserved for heroes or men of valour (pages 86 to 89). Okonkwo is not good at handling a gun, but he has a weakness: pride. He feels he must belong and must not be perceived as one who could not use a gun, hence this became his undoing. Afterwards, as a warrior and a revered member of his clan, he should be seen

to be connected or associated with things that are about men, power, war and blood. This particular incident is a most crucial and very challenging aspect of Okonkwo's life as it leads to his exile from Umuofia (page 88 to 89).

An important area of focus in the novel is the expression of grief by Okonkwo in page 143, which is very crucial in the examination of the subjects of heroism and hubris, as portrayed by Achebe. No doubt, the 'white men' had invaded the land and they entrenched their customs and traditions systematically on the people much to the chagrin of the elders of the land. Achebe shows Okonkwo's lamentation thus:

Worthy men are no more,' Okonkwo sighed as he remembered those days. 'Isike will never forget how we slaughtered them in that war. We killed twelve of their men and they killed only two of ours. Before the end of the fourth market week they were suing for peace. Those were the days when men were men. (p.143)

The above lamentation and nostalgia led to the incidents highlighted in pages 146 to 147 and are worthy of note. The community had been summoned to the village square for an emergency meeting and the place was filled to capacity. In the milieu, "there was a sudden stir in the crowd and every eye was turned in one direction" as the five court messengers appeared. It is stated that "Okonkwo was sitting on edge and he sprang to his feet as soon as he saw who it was. He confronted the head messenger, trembling with hate, unable to utter a word... In a flash Okonkwo drew his matchet" and he severed the head of the chief messenger.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the nature of the Okonkwo's flaw (Hamartia) is glaring and well-potrayed. Okonkwo's tragic actions are displayed calculatingly and intentionally, as when Okonkwo knowingly kills Ikemefuna and when he murdered the Chief Messenger. If Okonkwo committed this deed knowingly, then, it could be assumed that he committed it by choice. Okonkwo is under compulsion to extirpate the white-man from his land, which is an apparent aspect of hamartia from his excess virtue and fervor for exactness.

Apparently disappointed and dejected because of his conviction that Umuofia would not go to war, and that they had allowed the other messengers to escape, Okonkwo perceived that the people he relied upon for mass action had chickened out as a result of fear and "had broken into tumult instead of action." His woes are even compounded by the blame statement from his people querying: "Why did he do it?" The answer to that question could only be found in Okpewho (1979), cited in Anyokwu (2009), who had stated that "... the hero furiously craves for an opportunity to put his estimation of himself to the proof." Okonkwo was a loner in that action.

He had no option thereafter than to commit suicide. Thus, we see how Okonkwo swore vengeance in page 143, and was let down by his people in pages

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146 to 147, and how he hanged himself in page 148. All these are indications of the deep rooted traits of heroism and hubris. His heroic instincts called for vengeance and war against the white man and his stooges, while the hubris in him leads to his downfall and death. The fear of being thought of as weak leads him to these eclipsing incidents.

Okonkwo's format of death displays a tragedy within tragedy in the sense that in Africa persons who commit suicide, especially by hanging, are not accorded a normal and befitting burial. Here, we see Obierika in pages 148 telling the District Commissioner that "perhaps your men can help us", referring to getting Okonkwo's body down from the tree. In page 149, Obierika expatiated that only strangers can carry out such task. A man of Okonkwo's qualities and virtues should not have deserved such an end, at an unripe age. This lends credence to Onyeukwu (2013) who states that "Okonkwo exhibited hubris, had a tragic flaw, and fell from position of greatness."

Findings

Thus, from the study, it is evident that Okonkwo was a man of valour, immense strength and physical disposition towards issues or matters of the clan. However, these virtues became the undoing of the Okonkwo character, which Achebe portrayed in five ways. These are:

- i. Hubris and Hamartia are interwoven and do not reflect a character's general weakness. Thus, while hubris is human weakness, hamartia is a particular character trait, flaw, or vice that leads to the character's grave adversity or fall as is the case with Okonkwo.
- ii. Pride that evolved from his strength (page 3), wealth (page 10), fame (page 3), self-discovery/self-worth/self-consciousness (page 12 to 16), and valour (page 6).
- iii. (ii) Negligence by ignoring warnings. This is portrayed by Achebe through the forewarning of Ezeudu in page 40 to Okonkwo that he should not have a hand in Ikemefuna's death.
- iv. Ignoring of laws. This is indicated in two ways: the white man's laws as pointed out in page 146 when Okonkwo breathed defiance against the entrenchment of the white man's way of life and authority in the clan. Such insubordination or rebelliousness led to the killing of the chief messenger. Secondly, Okonkwo ignored the law of reasoning by not calculating the consequence of defiance and murder of the chief messenger, even though he knew that the consequences could be grave. In pages 99 to 101, we saw the fate that befell Abame for the killing of the white man, and in pages

138 to 141, the church was destroyed and Okonkwo and five others were arrested, detained and fined by the colonizers. These are ample indicators to Okonkwo that a breach of the white man's authority and law could have grave consequences, yet he disregarded all these.

- v. Downfall of Okonkwo that was exemplified by the refusal or the inability of his clans men to rally round and support him in extirpating the white man and his authority and religion from the land. Thus, when he killed the chief messenger, he did not get the necessary support that he should have gotten from his people, even though he had been doubtful about this. Achebe vividly illustrated this idea in pages 146 and 147, where it was stated that Okonkwo knew that Umuofia would not go to war.
- vi. The death of Okonkwo. This resulted from his heroism and excessive hubris. Having been disappointed by his people, through their inactivity, after the killing of the chief messenger, he had no option than to opt out of the frustrating situation by committing suicide. In Okonkwo's thinking, a hero should be a hero at all times, and a hero should not be subjected to the humiliation of an enemy (the white man), thus, the suicide option (page 148). A hero has to die fighting, rather than be arrested, tortured and killed or be humiliated by the enemy.

In summation, this study shows that heroism and hubris are communicated by the author through human traits, communal affective ties, communal disillusionment and social relationships/disenchantment.

Conclusion

This study has been able to point out archetypes of Heroism and highlighted ample hubris as peculiar to Okonkwo in the *Things Fall Apart* text. They have served as indices through which the paradigms of heroism and hubris are communicated by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*.

Hamartia and hubris are closely related and well-matched with the hero and tragic flaw, which results in the downfall of a protagonist in a tragedy. Furthermore, hamartia is understood to be an error or fault that is based on external influences, rather than a character's individual shortcomings.

From the foregoing, it is instructive to state that there is ample substantiation and paradigms of heroism and hubris in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo is the major character in the story and remains the vehicle through which the author rendered the heroism, hubris and Hamartia. No doubt, the text enjoyed a high level of literary cum artistic attention given by the author, and this has added

to the exponential release of the various steams of passions and excitements that made up *Things Fall Apart*.

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