



Thinker's Journal

Maiden Issue



10th
Anniversary Edition
Volume 1
NO. 2
Sept., 2019

A Publication of The Faculty of Arts,
Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

Thinkers Journal
thinkersjournal.in.net

A PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU.

VOL. 1. NO. 2, Sept. 2019.

ISSN: Maiden Issue

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

Printed by:

ARISE AND SHINE PRINTING PRESS

08067561837, 08066671534

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Rina Okonkwo

Editor

Dr. Innocent-Franklyn Ezconwuka

Secretary

Rev. Fr. Dr. Anaetetus Ogbunkwu

Members

Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony-Uche Nwachukwu

Prof. Micheal Ezugu

Rev. Fr. Prof. Nicholas Omenka

Ven. Prof. Obasi-Kene

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke: Vice Chancellor, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

Prof. Romanus Egudu: Dean Emeritus, Faculty of Arts, GO-Uni. Enugu.

Prof. Obasi Igwe: University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Prof. Augustine Igwe: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Prof. Alvan Ikoku Nwamara: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Prof. U.C. Anyanwu: University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Prof. Oliver Uche: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Prof. Richard Okafor: Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

Prof. Augustine Imo: Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Rev. Msgnr. Prof. Kingsley Nzomiwu: C. Odimegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam.

FOLKLORE AS THE MATRIX OF GREAT LITERATURES: A STUDY OF THE AFRICAN NOVEL

Prof. Michael Amadihe Ezugu

Dept. of English and Literary Studies

Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria.

Abstract

*Folklore, oral literature or the oral narrative tradition is not merely a genre of the arts; it is a way of life. Such writers like Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, Achebe, Amadi, Nwapa, Armah, to African modernists, and feminist writers like Kole Omotoso and Zaynab Alkali, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie take their inspirations from folklore - - that inexhaustible spring of culture and tradition. Folklore as a protean element in life and literature pervades all aspects of human endeavor especially in traditional societies where it fulfils an indispensable function by expressing, enhancing and codifying belief and safeguarding morality. From the days of Homer to the present, folklore has always fascinated the common man, the artist, the writer, and the thinker. This paper posits that if European writers find folklore inevitable in their works, African writers should find it even more fundamental, for folklore provides a structural organizing principle of literary form. It is the matrix of great literatures; it often provides a central controlling image even when it may not be visible on the surface in some sophisticated or seemingly mythoclastic works of literature like Kole Omotoso's **Memories of Our Recent Boom** and Chimamanda N. Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus**.*

INTRODUCTION

Among the Igbo of Nigeria, there is a proverb which states that "looking at a King's mouth, one may have the feeling that he (the King) never sucked his mother's breast"; that the King was never a baby! This is preposterous for no one ever becomes an adult without once being a baby. That is life, and so, are many great literatures of the world. They are full of elements taken over from folklore and considering their present state of sophistication and metamorphosis one may not realize that they have their origins in folklore, oral tradition or oral literature..

Folklore itself is a protean genre made up of myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, folkpics, praises or panegyrics, lyrics, songs and chants, historical prose narratives, oratorios, oral ritual, folk dramas, puns, and all other forms of oral prose narratives. Alan Dundes's enumerative definition of Folklore or oral literature is so encompassing that it would be near impossible to put folklore into a neat schema. For Dundes, folklore or oral literature/oral tradition in addition to the above mentioned sub-genres, includes charms, blessings, curses, oaths, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, greetings, and leave taking formulas, folk drama, folk dance, folk art, folk belief or superstition, ballads, ... festivals and special days, customs, among others (3)

All the above could be said to be the remains of ancient, medieval and other premodern traditions. They are folklore, the matrix of many great literatures.

FOLKLORE IN GREAT LITERATURES OF THE WORLD

Oral tradition or oral literature is, as it were, a contradiction in terms, for "literature" itself is something written. Since oral tradition, oral literature, or folklore is hardly written; this terminology sounds rhetorical or at best obsolete. But as it is the "lettered" concept of literature, oral literature becomes a cultural given word whose very specialized meaning is forgotten.

Folklore, a term coined by William John Thoms in 1846 in his letter to **The Athenaeum** using the pseudonym Ambrose Merton had long been known as "*popular antiquities*." Since then the **Folklore Society of London** through **Maria Leach's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend (1950) 2 vols.** have continued to establish the relationship between folklore and sophisticated literature. It is therefore, very important to mention that literature is full of elements taken over from folklore. A good knowledge of the formulas and conventions of folklore would often aid one's understanding and appreciation of great literatures. For example, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are folklore in origin and content, but have been refined to become what have been published today as great epic poems. In the two texts, it is not difficult to identify the folkloric elements in their plots and the overriding influences of the supernatural: gods and goddesses taking sides with and against themselves and certain

mortals. The oracular pronouncements about the births and destinies of Paris and Achilles say it all. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and *Gods Are Not To Blame* are even more remarkable and folkloric in presentation.

When one reads the oldest surviving Old English epic poem, **Beowulf**, and considers the folkloric elements and the **traditional Anglo-Saxon** sentiments expressed about Beowulf's remarkable victory over Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon, one realizes the influence of folklore (especially legend) in shaping that pre-Christian saga. In spite of the highly sophisticated nature of **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**, it is interesting to recognize the folklore analogues it contains. These go to confirm that it was basically conceived as folklore before it was later put into print. The same thing could also be said about Geoffrey Chaucer's **Canterbury Tales** made up of the tales of some of the following pilgrims: the Nun's Priest, the Squire, the Knight, the Man of Law, the Franklin, the Friar, the Miller, the Reeve, the Shipman, the Manciple, the Merchant, the Wife of Bath, and above all the Pardoner's powerful **exemplum** of the three arrogant young men in search of death and who eventually destroy themselves in a bid to possess the hidden loot (bags of gold).

Shakespeare's works follow the same trend if one refers to folkloric elements drawn from the **folk beliefs** alive in Warwickshire of his boyhood days. Refer to his use of witches and ghosts in **Macbeth** and **Hamlet**; the folk play in **Hamlet** and in his comedies; the Robin Hood plot of **Two Gentlemen of Verona**; the folksongs of **Hamlet's Ophelia** and her use of "the idiom of the folk" in her references to flowers and the love-test in **King Lear**. In **Julius Caesar** one sees the influence of the ghost of Caesar drawing the conspirators to their untimely deaths. A more detailed analysis of Shakespeare's plays would surely prove that folklore has had tremendous influences in all his plays. Even Charles Dickens the great Victorian satirist who is so much interested in condemning contemporary maladies of his time draws a lot from folklore. Read **A Christmas Carol** and have a feel of the influence the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Future, and one will be amazed at the tremendous change in Ebenezer Scrooge's miserliness to unexpected philanthropy. Through these ghosts, Scrooge's dead colleague Jacob Marley helps

Scrooge to achieve salvation which, he (Marley) has been denied because of his usual insensitivity to social problems when he was alive and working with Scrooge.

If one extends his survey to such modern twentieth century novels like James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Finnegans Wake* (1939), one comes across folkloric, historic, and mythical elements subsumed in the relationships of human characters in the novels. The analysis could go on and on even to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) where "the further you get to the past, the more you approach the present; it inevitably seems more and more incredible" (Sanders, 659). But it is not.

FOLKLORE IN THE AFRICAN NOVEL

According to some modern philosophers, notably Nietzsche, all stories, even scientific theories and religious teachings are myths (*The Dictionary of Cultural Literary*, 28) and myths fall into the realm of folklore or the oral tradition from where most celebrated writers, Africans inclusive, draw their inspirations. Let us look at Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, anchored on the myth of *Ani*, the Earth-goddess and on the concept of *Chi*, Fate or Destiny in Igbo cosmology. *Ani* the Earth-goddess is the guardian of morality, the goddess outraged by the murder of Ogbuefi Udo's wife and the eventual killing of the ill-fated Ikemefuna by Okonkwo, his adopted father - - a crime tantamount to murdering one's own natural son.

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe uses the myth of *Ulu*, the upstart god of security giving rise, as it were, to the battle of the pantheon between *Ulu*, *Idemili*, *Ogwugwu*, *Eru*, and *Udo* whose influences have been relegated to subordinate status especially during important traditional outings in *Umuaro*. *Ezeulu's* revenge mania precipitates the crisis that overthrows *Ulu*, destroys the Chief Priest himself and ironically hands over the rich agricultural harvest of *Umuaro* to the foreign God of the Christian religion. In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, one sees two great men - - *Okonkwo* and *Ezeulu* - - who said "yes" but their "Chis" (personal gods) said "nay". Like all Achebe's heroes, they destroy themselves because they refuse to understand that the old order has changed, yielding place to the new. Besides myths, Achebe also

uses story-telling, proverbs and other forms of folklore to teach children societal values.

When one reads Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* one sees the supernatural powers of wily gods who, as it were, draw unsuspecting human beings (*Emenike*, *Madume*, and *Ekwueme*) to their untimely ends for marrying or intending to marry *Ihuoma*. All the young men who love or wish to marry *Ihuoma*, the beautiful *femme fatale* who could be likened to Arnold's "The Forsaken Mermaid" or Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" are murdered by the Sea King - - *Ihuoma's* spirit husband - - without the victims or *Ihuoma* herself knowing. In the end, *Ihuoma* remains to blossom as the eponymous "Concubine" of the novel never to be married or called "wife" by any mortal. Water spirits, being of special interest to riverine folks, Elechi Amadi exploits the myth of the Mermaid and the Sea King in *The Concubine*, through *Ihuoma*, a nonpareil, an epitome of all that is desirable in womanhood, becomes in African literature one of those rare mythic personages: a goddess and a human in one flesh. Like Helen of Troy, *Ihuoma* is ambivalent, ageless, archetypal, a primordial image, the eternally feminine that every woman both longs and fears to be. That is the beauty of folklore exploited in written literature.

In *The Slave*, Amadi explores the myths of the gentle but relentless Earth-goddess, *Ali* (or *Ani*) and the terrible, violent, and unsparing *Amadioha*, the Thunderbolt *Ali* and *Amadioha* are spirits that could be likened to the Greek Furies - - the avengers of crimes which offend against the ties of Kinship and as such, play a large part in the story of *Orestes*. In the end, the stigmatized *Olumati*, an orphan, in spite of his successes against countless social odds, hopelessly abandons his family inheritance and his wealth at *Aliji* and seeks the protection of dreaded god, *Amadioha* at *Isiali*, thereby becoming "the slave" of the novel's title. Once more one could see folklore in operation - through story-telling, myth, and legends of the people, claiming both the father and his son.

The inimitable novelist and poet Laureate, Wole Soyinka approaches folklore in a more comprehensive way. He writes in his *Myth, Literature, and the African World* that

Man exists, . . . in a comprehensive world of myth, history, and mores; in such a total context, the African world, like any other "world" is unique. It possesses, however, in common with other cultures, the virtues of complementarity (xix).

In keeping with the above mission statement, Soyinka's works teem with myths, culture, tradition, and mores. In his *The Interpreters*, Soyinka draws on Yoruba religion and mythology for materials with which he elaborates and elucidates his characters who he uses on Kola's huge canvas as models of gods and goddesses they represent (Obiechina, 111). His characters are grouped into "the interpreters", "the interpreted" and the "neutrals: with them he explores the themes of corruption, hypocrisy, and cynicism - - giving the greatest emphasis to the interpreters. In the words of Obiechina, Soyinka interpret(s) men through the gods and represents the gods through men as a way of stating concretely this perception of the universe as a continuum (Obiechina, 112).

One can rightly conclude that with *The Interpreters* Soyinka has paid the greatest tribute to Yoruba pantheon and folklore, especially through the myth of Ogun.

It is, however, in his *Season of Anomy*, a novel that dwells allegorically on the social, moral, and political crisis in Nigeria between the East and the North - - a crisis which culminated in a bloody thirty months Nigerian - Biafra Civil War of 1967 -1970 - - that Soyinka employs the classical Western myth of Orpheus and Eurydice *Season of Anomy* is a mythopoeic quest novel which involves an archetypal journey in three stages that correspond to the 'rites de passage' first described by Joseph Campbell in his *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* as "departure (separation), initiation, and return."

These three stages are analogous to the Biafran experiences during the Civil War and suit the outlines of the classical Orphic myth as well as follow recognizable archetypal patterns. Soyinka, however, succeeds in making some alterations to the traditional conclusion of the analogous myth by making it possible for Ofeyi (Orpheus) to recover Iriyise (Eurydice), albeit, in a comatose state and bring her back to Aiyero - - a

self-reliant community. Simply put, *Season of Anomy*, explores the evil consequences of ethnicity, greed, and lust for power by power-drunk chieftains. In this novel, history becomes myth - - a visionary reconstruction of the past for purposes of social direction (Soyinka, *Myth, Literature . . .* 106), while stories and incidents during the Biafran - Nigeria Civil War provide the backdrop for the entire plot of the novel.

Here, one leaves the shores of Nigeria, temporarily, to direct attention to Ghana and to Ayi Kwei Armah of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* fame. Though Armah's interest in mythologies abound in his *Fragments, Why Are We So Blest? Two Thousand Seasons*, and *The Healers*, It is his satirical and scatological language that interest many readers and critics. Since Armah, like Achebe, Amadi, and Soyinka is fundamentally a mythopoeist, attention is focused on the folkloric and mythological elements in his *Fragments* and his *Two Thousand Seasons* only. In all works of Armah, folk stories and anecdotes lend power to his creative ingenuity.

His *Fragments* in a different way re-presents the themes of *The Beautiful Ones* using the benefit of the author's personal experience of the extended family. The setting is still Ghana: though not Takoradi but Kaneshie, Accra. *The man of The Beautiful Ones* is still the hero of *Fragments*, for Onipa (that is Baako Onipa) is the Akan word for "Man" while Baako means "lonely one". Here, the vulgar, corrupt, and despicable politician, Honourable Minister, *Koomson* turns out to be *Brempong*, the Akan word for "an important person." In *Fragments* Baako Onipa becomes the mythic Prometheus, a gem of intelligence in a brute universe, one who dines with the Olympian gods, steals a spark of divine fire and conveys it to the earth to revolutionize the lot of mankind, but he is ironically caught and chained to the rocky peak of Caucasus Mountain (an equivalent Ghanaian Asylum), where he is supposed to purge himself of his guilt: idealism instead of materialism.

Like Prometheus, Baako brings back "education" from the USA (equivalent of fire for humans) to Ghanaians for their general good, but he is not appreciated because he fails to be a transmission belt for cargo (material wealth) (*Fragments* 224). The idealistic Baako travels back to Ghana, not with goods, but with "what's in a head" (270 - 271) with

which he hopes to revolutionize Ghanavision Corporation and educate the nation. Not even the members of the extended family (except his grandmother, Naana, and Juan his Puerto Rican lover) accord Baako much regard because of their materialistic quest for money. He antagonizes himself with the “gods” of Ghanavision Corporation for which he resigns his appointment; he disappoints the hopes of the extended family and consequently draws their anger and that of the society against himself. Consequently Baako is bundled into the Acute Ward of the Lunatic Asylum. The new child named after Baako dies for being exposed too early for monetary gains thereby proving to the extended family the enormity of their cargo cult mentality and the inviolability of African traditional mores and myths. Through this Armah hints at the dichotomy between the base material and spiritual world of the novel, *Fragments*; 191).

In Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* one comes face to face with folklore and the Quest Myth of Anoa, a mythic analogue of the Biblical Myth of the Promised Land, Canaan as the “Organizing design” (to borrow Frye’s terminology) from his *Anatomy of Criticism* 140) of Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*. In literature, the themes, the characters, and stories that one encounters belong to one big interlocking family and there is a single mythical story. (Frye, *The Educated Imagination*). The myth of Anoa, as Armah has it, is rooted in the core of the African psyche; hence the “we” of the communal plural voice of the narrator.

Two Thousand Seasons is a good example of a novel without “lone heroes”, but “the people of the way”, “the we”, the entire black race who have wasted one thousand years wandering amazed along alien ways, another one thousand spent finding paths to the living way (xv). It is Armah’s appropriate response to the unacceptable but pre-existing mythic interpretation of African past or the White/European Myth of Africa. It is a counter-myth, which labels “white or whiteness” as enslavement, death, predation, aridity, destruction or absence of life. *Two Thousand Seasons*, is pan-Africanist in vision and resolve to rid Africa of her oppressors and exploiters. It is a visionary reconstruction of the past for purposes of a social direction (*Soyinka Myth* . . . 106). Okpewho states in his “Myth and Modern Fiction: that “*Two*

Thousand Seasons is a racial epic . . . Armah’s debt to the oral tradition from which the narrative genre of the epic ultimately derives”. It is Armah’s greatest debt to oral tradition and to Africa’s mythical ancestor and homeland, Anoa.

It is stating the very obvious to go into Camara Laye’s *The African Child*, *The Radiance of the King* and *The Guardian of the Word* or such other works like Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, and his other works that are full of folkloric narratives for which these two authors are known. Their works are folklore and mythology incarnate. The same statement could also be made when we discuss Niane’s *Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali*, and Mofolo’s *Chaka the Zulu* – great epics – full of folkloric, supernatural stories that stagger the imagination of readers.

One may look into the East African novels of Ngugi wa Thiong’o and in particular his *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* only. These are novels anchored on folklore, mythology, and history. His other novels like *Weep Not Child*, *The River between*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Secret Lives*, and *Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, though folkloric, are not included for the purpose of this paper. It may be of interest to remember that the “Land Question” is very central in the works of Wa Thiong’o and that he has taken a decision, not long ago, to write no longer in English but in his own local language: Gikuyu, from which translators give us the English editions of his works. His earlier works have always dwelt on colonialism, while his later works like *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* emphasize neo-colonialism or what one could term “colonialism in a new cloak”. In the words of Oginga Odinga it is “*Not yet Uhuru*”, not only for Kenya but for all Africa.

In both novels - - *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* - - the white men’s influence disappears. In place of the white men, black overloads, people who “had not fought in the battle for freedom, the betrayers of the Mau Mau cause”, people like *Gataanguru and his fellow traitors* have taken over New Kenya from the peasants. Capitalist neo-colonial economic superstructure is now in place. To bring the issues nearer home, Old Ilmorog gives place to New Ilmorog. *Mwathis’s hut* and others of its type that symbolize the traditional order are razed and replaced with religious and commercial institutions of exploitation. The

In the same *Mine Boy*, one hear Leah sing a popular folk song, she enjoys:

*Mother it's raining/And I'm getting wet/
It's cold and lonely/And I am getting wet
Mother it's raining/and I', getting wet (12)*

As Leah explains to Xumo, it is the mocking song of a conceited and boastful young man who goes on telling the girls how wonderful he is until the trap of the girls forces him into a marathon five miles race probably through the rain. Other issues like subhuman treatments of the blacks and Abrahams' conclusion in *Mine Boy* become myth and counter-myth of the South African situation. Mr. Paddy O'Shea, the Red One in solidarity with Xuma, a black South African takes a stand that prophetically foreshadows the demise or final eclipse of the apartheid regime. O'Shea in support of the blacks against his fellow whites explodes:

"I am a man first, Zuma, he said. Then he turned to the other mine boys and shouted: Zuma is right! They pay you a little! They don't care you risk your lives! Why is it so! Is not the blood of a black man red like that of a white man? Does not a black feel too? Does not a black man love life too? I am with you! Let them fix up the place first!" (183).

The result is that O'Shea goes to jail for taking sides with blacks who refuse to go back into the collapsing mine that has just killed two blacks.

Before long, history vindicates Zuma, O'Shea, and the novelist Peter Abrahams. The blacks in South Africa eventually achieve independence and equality with their erstwhile white oppressors, thereby ending the apartheid regime and building a mystique of unity in a once polarized society of blacks and whites. Another South African novelist, Alex la Guma in *The Stone Country* reinforces the same theme of fellow feeling or unity by specifically developing a metaphor of South Africa as a prison in which the prisoner and the jailer are bound to each other by Hegelian chains. George Adams – the major character – in spite of the harsh inhuman treatments meted to him and other prisoners in "the stone country" succeeds in uniting his colleagues

folkloric story of *Petals of Blood* is told in retrospect by Munira in the course of the questions and answers over the death of the three capitalists: Chui, Kimeria, and Mzigo while in *Devil on the Cross*, the self-confessed thieves and robbers tell their own stories with relish, each trying to outdo the others.

Through story-telling these enemies of the people achieve their own total incrimination and self-condemnation (86-89). As a means of paying homage to folklore, Wa Thiong'o employs several traditional songs to castigate the perverted neo-colonialist values of Kenya as well as celebrate the healthy and authentic traditional values of the African past images of the worm-eaten flower of *Petals of Blood*, New Imorog, the Bible, the Brewery, the Cultural Centre, and Abdulla's stump become powerful symbols employed to bring home to readers the extent of degradation of African values in various ways. As the blurb of *Devil On The Cross* has it, "the ancient rhythms of traditional story-telling are used in counterpoint to written styles . . ." In spite of the apartheid policy of South African colonial government against which the South African novels have been dwelling on, there are still ample evidences there that folklore is the matrix of their literature. Literature we know is an aesthetic creation of the human imagination (Chase, 78) which cannot be divorced from history, for history is myth and myth is history. Both of them tell only of that which really happened though in very different manners. This is really what is presented in such South African novels like Peter Abrahams *Mine Boy*, which is a distilled history, myth, and folklore of South Africa. Johnnes tells Xuma:

"The compound is in Langlaagte. . . All the mine boys must live in compounds . . . They are not of the city, they come from the farms and some are from the land of the Portuguese and others are from Rhodesia. The white man fetched them. And those that are fetched must live in the compounds. It is the law here" (34).

This is South Africa of the apartheid era, where mine workers must leave their homelands and families behind and be concentrated in camps for easier and more effective control and deployment in mine supervised and owned by the white colonists.

for he realizes: "What a waste; here they got us fighting each other like dogs" (74). La Guma's stories of bloody contests with forces of oppression, rooms smelling of decay, urine and sweat and full of roaches, fleas, bugs, and lice etc., confirm the novel's folkloric and metaphoric quality. His symbols or condensation of meanings are mythic; they reveal as well as conceal; in fact they form the base from where the novels discussed, drawn their inspirations.

AFRICAN MODERNIST NOVELISTS AND FEMINISTS

In addition to our acclaimed novelists like Achebe, Amadi, Soyinka, Armah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, there are other novelists like Ben Okri and Kole Omotoso as well as the feminist novelists like Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, and Buchi Emecheta Okri with *The Famished Road* (1991) and *Infinite Riches* (1998) has attracted a lot of interest among critics because of the folkloric and mythic implications of these novels. In *The Famished Road*, Okri draws from Africa's rich oral tradition in the way he makes creative use of myths and symbols. Through his major character "Lazarus", conveniently shortened to Azoro, the Abiku child, who keeps dying and being born until he decides on the fifth birth to stay, Okri employs an allegory of the Nigerian nation that refuses to disintegrate even after her fifth experiment at unity.

The folkloric and mythic implication of the novel is earlier stated at the beginning when Okri observes:

"In the beginning there was a river. The river become a road and the road branched out to the whole World. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry" (3).

And hence, "the famished road" is folkloric/mythical time, the fabled time of the beginning or what Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane* calls "illo tempore", or primordial time: the magic realism of the novel. The Mighty Green Road Symbol in *The Famished Road* and other African traditional symbols like the Abiku and the Old-Man-Child, Dad, Mum, the Photographer, the Politicians, and Madam Koto and the stories about them, x-ray the uncertain and ever-present crises of the Nigerian nation. Okri says it all: "no adequate preparations were made to sustain its (Nigeria's) momentous birth" (487). All in all, *The Famished Road* blends the oral tradition of the folklore and the

novel form into a powerful ghost story, the type popularized by Amos Tutuola of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* fame. A reading of *The Famished Road* is a nightmarish journey into the ghostly, supernatural world of folklore.

Going by the titles of Kole Omotoso's novels like *To Borrow A Wandering Leaf* and *Memories of our Recent Boom*, one may likely conclude that such modernist titles have nothing to do with folklore and tradition. But it is not true. Both of them have their roots in the folkloric and cultural repertoire of the people. In *To Borrow A Wandering Leaf*, we watch and hear the old Woman speak in a folkloric manner reminiscent of incantatory tone of traditional prayer:

"Okoro soup, okro bubbling soup listen to me. Salt is plenty in the world, and Salt I bring to you. Accept and taste salt in my mouth."

"Oro soup, drawing okro harken to me.

Oil is plenty, we swim in it.

*Oil I bring to you. Freshen us with
The memory of oil and nourish us."*

*She thrice touched the boiling pot with
The bottle of palm oil..."*

In addition to the above passages bordering on spiritual experience, steeped in mystery, prayer, magic and esoteric communication with supernatural forces, Omotoso makes use of lots of proverbs, riddles, puzzles, puns, anecdotes, and statements that confirm the Yoruba folkloric basis of his novel.

In his *Memories of Our Recent Boom*, Omotoso opens with the folkloric, mythic phrase "In the beginning ..." after which he launches into the folkloric story of the left handed blockhead and primary school drop-out, "Aburo" and his brother "Seven", the Abiku Child:

"The first child after Abiku came and died seven times seven days after his birth. By some freak of native, the three others after this all died days after their births which were multiples of seven Six times seven days Five times seven days. Four times seven days... They called him seven, without any long consideration. That he did not die was a miracle for them" (2).

In spite of the seeming modernist title and plot of the novel, such folkloric and mythic ideas like incantation feature prominently in the novel. Aburo's and Seven's Mama whose smashed leg is rotting away does not want her life to be saved by amputating her leg. She hates reincarnating in her next life as a one-legged child. We are told that "She would rather die than have any part of her cut up in her lifetime" (98). For the Mama "One ought to go back to the ancestors as complete as one left them, so that in coming back one comes whole" (184).

Towards the end of the novel, one is told the story of the London-trained Structural Engineer, "Seven" Omomeje Alaka and his flamboyant traditional chieftaincy ceremony at home. Ironically, Chief Seven Omomeje ("Meje") Alaka and his elder brother Aburo Alaka are locked in a legal tussle over the paternity of Banke's son, Akin, who "Seven" has earlier instructed should be aborted. As if by a *Deus ex machina*, both Chief Seven Meje Alaka and Banke (Akin's mother) tragically perish in auto head-on collision. The letter left behind by Banke saying that "Akin does not belong to either of you. He is the natural child of neither of you" (meaning Meje and Aburo) 226 confirms the popular folk truism that only the mother knows the natural father of her child. It also denies the two brothers the ownership of Akin, the controversial son. But the point remains: why should Meje claim a child he has refused to own and even has instructed that he be aborted? On another ground, Aburo married Banke traditionally; therefore Akin is his child. That is tradition and tradition dies hard. If Banke had been married to another man very far away from the Alaka family, will Chief Meje Alaka have laid claims in court for the child he has rejected and sanctioned his abortion?

WOMEN (FEMINIST) NOVELISTS

Women are part of the same tradition that produces folklore. That recent feminist canon which appears to react against the tradition that defines the position of women in the traditional African Society does not annul the fact that both men and women writers draw from the same inexhaustible spring of folklore and tradition. Even when critics dub female writers like Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, Buchi Emecheta, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche "feminists" one still discovers that they

also use folkloric, mythic elements in their novels. If one read Nwapa's *Efuru*, one realizes that she has even paid greater homage to folklore and tradition in her novels than many male novelists. Her heroine Efuru knows that she cannot have children of her own and has no grudge against bringing in another woman, a co-wife. According to her:

What is wrong in his marrying a second wife? It is only a bad woman who wants her husband all to her herself. I don't object to his marrying a second wife, but I do object to being relegated to the background. I want to keep my position as the first wife, for it is my right" (53).

That is the traditionalist African stand: a man is polygamist by nature and every wife realizes that a household that has no child of their own is a misnomer and is heading towards extinction. That Adizua, abandons Efuru is an act of gross irresponsibility. That Efuru eventually leaves Adizua's family homestead is approved by tradition. She marries another lover, Gilbert Eniberi, who also deserts Efuru because of her childlessness. The child factor is very strong in traditional African society. It makes or mars marriage. Mythically, Efuru is "married" to the woman of the lake who gives abundant wealth to her devotees but no children. There is hardly anything really feminist according to European concept in *Efuru*.

It is, however, in Nwapa's *Idu* that the feminist canon can be invoked. *Idu* and *Efuru* could be termed reversals of the myth of the man of the families being the prime movers; opinion moulders in their own right. The same tradition also recognizes "women-husbands" who could stand on their own and "marry" other women to ensure the continuity of the clan. Such women traditionally are not appendages to men. Catherine Acholonu in her *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* (1995) tells us that "gender in Africa is not a biological concept but a social construct" (iii). Women-husbands are sometimes married, unmarried or widowed and are accorded most of the rights of men in the family (Acholonu, 38). They, however, do not, and cannot take fellow women to bed; other men they choose, do it for them. And if this is the case, a self-sufficient woman like Nwapa's *Idu* can refuse to be taken over by her dead husband's brother as a new wife. She remains for her dead husband and takes care of her two children. It is traditional

and cultural. It is practiced among the Igbo of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan, and the Lovedu of Transvaal (Acholonu, 39).

In Zaynab Alkali's novel, *The Virtuous Woman*, one encounters a folkloric heroine explored in the novel tradition. Nana Ai, a young from Zuma who survives a fatal accident that claims the lives of her parents and siblings is brought up by her grandfather, Bala Sani. In spite of her obvious physical deformity her intelligence, natural beauty, and virtue get her united in marriage with Bello, a man she loves and who loves her. It is a famous folkloric theme of the virtuous girl winning the heart of her knight-errant and living happily after with him. It is also a favourite Biblical quotation: which Alkali uses in the novel:

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of her spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs, 31, 10-12).

The Koran equally has a passage of equivalent message for all.

When one reads Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, a novel that is ironically full of the sorrows of motherhood, one empathizes with the heroine, Nnu-Ego who marries several men, loses many children, but eventually succeeds in having children she raises at a terrible cost to herself, only to be abandoned by these children; some of them overseas, while the girls among them married off. Out of lack of care, she dies heartbroken at the roadside, but gets a befitting second burial at last by her children. Nnu Ego dutifully fulfils her role in society as a mother and fails to get corresponding love and care from her children. In her words: **"I do not know how to be anything but a mother"**. The tradition which compels a man to inherit his dead brother's wives and children robs Nnu Ego of her husband Nnaife's belongings. She dies a victim of the society she has contributed so much to build.

Chiamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a modernist family novel by a feminist writer whose work has generated a lot of interest among readers and critics. The heroine Kambili with her gift of incisive observation of details guides one through the life of the family of Eugene Achike. In spite of fanatical Catholic life of Eugene, and the

fact that Chimamanda is a woman, one still discovers that *Purple Hibiscus* is rich in folklore and tradition, which Eugene reacts against. Papa-Nnukwu (Eugene's father) is a real traditionalist who will not eat a morsel without asking **"Ani, the god of the land to eat with me"** (65). He offers his food to his ancestors (65) before tasting it and pours libation before he drinks his palm wine. For these, his son Eugene bans his children Kambili and Jaja from visiting their grandfather, because he worships idols. Worse still Eugene does not take good care of Papa-Nnukwu and subjects him (his own father) to living and dying in the same old mud thatched house of his early days. Eugene Achike in an attempt to condemn traditional practices like watching the masquerades (86) which he terms Devilish Folkore (85) turns *Purple Hibiscus* into a powerful organ for propagating folklore, culture and tradition through folk story telling (157) and interacting with friends, relations, and even those we do not agree with in society.

The life of Eugene Achike deserves special study. This man offers to build a house, buy a car and hire a driver for his father, Papa-Nnukwu as soon as the old man throws away his **Chi** and converts to the Catholic Church. Since the old man insists on "not throwing away his **Chi** (61), Eugene never greets, never visits his father nor allows his father to set foot in his (Eugene's) opulent palatial building in the village. Papa-Nnukwu comments appropriately:

"Nekenem, look at me. My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Abba, and yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries" (83).

With this type of man (Eugene), it is not surprising that his wife, Beatrice, like him, goes to another devilish extreme of poisoning her husband. In her words::

"I stand putting, the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka.. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor." (290).

With all the above, one could rightly conclude that the devilish ritual practices which Eugene feels that his father Papa-Nnukwu indulges in because he refuses to convert to Christianity, are the real occupation of Eugene Achike and his wife Beatrice.

CONCLUSION

Folklore by its native as a collection of certain practices is the inexhaustible spring of culture and tradition through which literature presents ideas, experiences, news, traditions, histories, narratives, and other practices that are natural to traditional folks. Since all human beings have their origins in certain cultural settings which directly or indirectly influence to some extent their ideology, psychology, art, belief, history, and way of life, it is difficult not to find these ideologies in the human write ups. No matter how sophisticated a work of art is, there are often aspects of folklore and tradition that invest works with internal value and strength. They may not be visible on the surface. Probe deeper, one would surely find them there, overtly or covertly. It may be necessary to conclude that no literature, irrespective of its sophistication or modernism, can stand the test of time or satisfy readers and critics, if it draws its resources from the people's folklore, mythology, culture, and tradition. It is only by so doing that the folklore, culture and tradition of Africa can be handed over to generations yet unborn and that is the function of literature in the service of humanity.

Works Cited

- Abraham's Peter. *Mine Boy*. London Heinemann, 1946
- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London Herienemann. 1958
Arrow of God. London: Heinemann. 1964
- Acholonu, Catherine. *Motherism: the Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos, Nigeria: Parafina, 2003
- Amadi, Elech. *The Concubine*. London: Heinemann, 1966.
----- *The Slave*. London: Heinemann, 1978
- Anonymous. *Beowulf*. (Trans Michael Alexander) Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1973.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann, 1968.
----- *Fragments*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
----- *Why Are We So Blest?* London: Heinemann, 1972.
----- *Two Thousand Seasons*. Nairobi: East African publishing House, 1973.
----- *The Healers*. Nairobi: East African publishing Hous, 1978.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: pantheon Books, 1961.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Prologue to the Canterbury*.
- Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*
- Charles Dickens. *The Public Readings*, Oxford: Clarendon. Press. 1975.
- Dundes, Alan. *The Study of Folklore*. New Jersey: Prentice – hall Inc. 1965.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: A Harvest Book. 1959.
- Emecheta, Buchi. *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: Allison and Busby, 1979.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Joyce, James. *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harriondsworth: Oenguin, 1969.
- Laye, Camara. *The African Child*. Paris: Andre Deutsch, 1951.

- Leach, Maria, (ed.) *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (2 vols.) New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1949.
- Mofolo, Thomas. *Chaka the Zulu*. London: Heinemann, 1981.
- Nwapa, Flora. *Efuru*. London: Heinemann, 1976.
- Idu, London: Heinemann, 1970.
- Niane, D.T. (Trans) *Sundiata. An Epic of Old Mail*. Harlow: Longman, 1965.
- Obiechina, E.N. *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Okri, Ben. *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1991.
- *The Landscapes Within*. Essex: Longman, 1981.
- Omotoso, Kole. *Memories of Our recent Boom*.
- *To Borrow a Wandering Leaf*. Akure: Fagbemigbe, 1978.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1981.
- Shakespeare, William
- *Hamlet*
- *Macbeth*
- *Julius Caesar*
- *King Lear*
- Norton & Company, 1997
- *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.
- Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. 1977.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature, and the African World*. Cambridge University Press. 1979.
- *The Interpreters*. London: Heinemann. 1973.
- *Seasons of Anomy*. London: Rex Collings, 1973.
- Tutuola, Amos. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Ibadan: Spectrum, Books 1994
- } Complete Works.
The Norton
- Shakespeare:
New York: WW.

CONTRIBUTORS:

**Entrepreneurship Re-Defined In 21st Century Nigerian Economy:
The Innoson Group In History, 1970 – 2018**
Ezeonwuka Innocent Franklyn .O Ph.D, Mhns, Nwoye Obiageli

The Christian Doctrine Of The Trinity And Social Behaviour
Rev. Fr. Anthony Uche Nwachukwu, Phd,

Neglect Of History: The Case Of Electioneering In Nigeria, 1964 – 2015
Ani, Uchenna S. Ph.D., Mhns, Ezeonwuka Innocent-Franklyn O. Ph.D., Mhns

**Go Naija! Up Naija! Naija For Life! Examining The Nigerian State And
It's Emergent 'Naija Culture'.**
Ikenna Arthur Amanchukwu

Folklore As The Matrix Of Great Literatures: A Study Of The African Novel
Prof. Michael Amadihe Ezugu

**A Comparative Linguistic Analysis Of Cultural Nuances In Richard Corbet's Poem
'To My Son' And Wole Soyinka's Poem 'Dedication'**
Udaba, Regina Obiageli Ph.D, Mrs. Gertrude Nnenna Ezeh

Insecurity And The Nigerian State: The Case Of Herder's-Farmer's Conflict, 2010-2018.
Festus Chimezie Ajeli

Terrorism In Nigeria: Impact On, And Implications Of Women's Involvement
Ekenze Odinaka Samson B.A., M.A.

Countering The Threat Of International Terrorism
Chidume, C. G. PhD, Nwosumba, V.C. PhD, Aro, G. C.

**Transitivity Analysis Of Selected Speeches Of Some Private And Public
University Vice-Chancellors In Nigeria**
Chidozie Goodnews Chiamaka

**Insecurity And Nigeria's Bid For Permanent Seat At The
United Nations Security Council: An Assessment**
Ojiego, Chinemerem Winifred

Employee Performance In Nigeria's Local Government System: An Overview
Nwambuko, Temple Chukwukadibia; Ph.D.; Fcpa;
Martin Onwudinjo Ugada; Jp; Fcai; Fcpa; Fiica; Enekwe, Chinedu Innocent; Ph.D.;

**Women And Agriculture In A Challenging Economy:
Focus On Umu-Owelle Clan, 1966-1975.**
Ezedinachi, Edith Ifeoma (Phd), Ezinwa Vincent Chi (PhD)

Highway Banditry In Contemporary Nigeria: An Expository Study
Ezinwa Vincent Chi (Ph.D), Ezedinachi Edith Ifeoma (Ph.D)

Political Ideas Of Samir Amin And The Third World Nations
Moses Johnson Agbo, Abdulsalam Mohammed Rilwan

Intrusion Of Multi-National Entities Into Governance In Third-World Countries
Ugochukwu Samuel Osioma

Click: thinkersjournal.in.net




Arise & Shine
PRINTING PRESS
ariseandshineprintingpress@gmail.com
08067561837, 08066671534