



DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AND ITS SANCTION IN ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN*

Abigail Obiageli Eruaga

**Abstract**

Chinua Achebe and Okey Ndibe, two Nigerian Igbo novelists, tailor their creative impulse in the promotion of their society's system of communal rather than individual existence in their conviction that writers have the obligation of promoting and preserving their society's beliefs, justice system, fairness and humanity. This concept is graphically portrayed in their respective novels: *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrows of Rain* (2000) as the reader witnesses the exaction of sanctions on the erring protagonists whose actions and behaviours often times contravene the beliefs and expectations of their societies. This essay adopts Irving Zietlin's concept of crime and punishment and argues that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* are etched on this principle. Consequently, because the protagonists are conversant with their societies' operational codes of conduct which they deliberately contravene in their relationships and interactions with other characters, they inevitably elicit the sanction emanating from such acts of commissions and omissions.

**Keywords:** crime, punishment, violation, justice, Zietlin

---

Abigail Obiageli Eruaga is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin. She has a research interest in African and African-American Literature, Law and Literature, Feminist and Gender Studies, and Literary Theory and Criticism.

## Introduction

Every writer is a product of a given society whose values and ethics s/he endeavours to promote, maintain and preserve. Artists do not create in a vacuum because their imaginations are fertilised by the daily occurrences in the environment where they dwell and derive their being. Moreover, African writers perceive themselves as social crusaders since they seek the good of their society in order to make it better. Although familiar with aesthetics which they bring to bear on their art, these writers do not pursue this at the expense of their responsibility as the moral guides of their society. As Akachi Ezeigbo points out, the “agenda” of most writers is to “humanise their dehumanised societies” (20) since “their obligation” as Emmanuel Ngora observes, “includes not only to draw attention of the reader to the evils, injustice and abnormalities of [individuals and] the existing social order but also to point the way to a new and more humane society” (201).

The African society, like most societies of the world, is communal and gregarious in nature but as a result of the decadent nature of man, there is often the temptation for the strong to lord it over the weak in very sharp oppressive and suppressive manners. To forestall such abuse, the African society has entrenched control mechanisms encapsulated in the standards of behaviour expected from every member of the society. A breach of these spells punishment for the offender. The imposition of punishment on deviant behaviour has positive implications for both the offender and the society. Associating punishment with the Aristotelian concept of ‘catharsis’, George Ota notes that it “affords the offender/criminal the opportunity of self-redemption through repentance” (2). For the society, the sociological scholar, Irving Zietlin observes: punishment “enables the community to [...] heal the wounds inflicted upon it by the offender; restore its moral integrity; and reaffirm its most fundamental values” (304).

These submissions suggest that aberrant conducts are repudiated by a good percentage of the community whose conscience is assaulted by the offensive act and that to restore the values and morality of the injured society, sanction must be meted to the offender. Second, Zietlin’s submissions presuppose that the offender is a direct beneficiary of the punishment as it has the advantage of transforming him/her positively. African creative writers tilt their work in this direction of upholding the values of their society by applauding what is commendable and upbraiding what is condemnable. This is wrought in their reward of characters that exhibit praiseworthy attitudes and in the punishment of those who display despicable acts and behaviour. This paper argues that Chinua Achebe and Okey Ndibe, two Nigerian novelists of Igbo extraction, wield the stick against the heroes of their respective novels: *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrows of Rain* (henceforth *TFA* and *AR*) for manifesting deviant behaviours. These novels have attracted critical evaluations from scholars which will be reviewed shortly. However, such critical efforts have not interrogated the texts from the perspective embarked upon in this paper.

## Irving Zietlin’s Concept of Crime and Punishment

‘Crime and punishment,’ a product of mythic ideation, are as old as human history. The fact that this concept is etched in almost all fields of study such as Myth, Ethics, Religion, Humanities, Law and others, underscores its relevance to human

existence. For instance, the principles of crime and punishment are also contained in the Holy Books. The Biblical pronouncement "punishment...chases evil from the heart" (Proverbs 20:30) which also coheres with the Quranic precept "whoever works evil will be requited accordingly" (Chapter 4:123), support such an assertion. These two examples from the Holy Books demonstrate that punishment is a necessary demand for crime. The concept of crime and punishment has elicited several definitions among which is Emile David Durkheim's, the above two definitions and more, but the one by Irving Zietlin is relevant to this essay because of its exhaustive analysis of the concept. This Sociological icon defines crime as "acts that are universally disapproved of by members of the society in question, [it is] an act which antagonizes the powerful and well-defined sentiments of a collectivity." He goes on to define punishment as "...first and foremost a passionate reaction against the offender...a form of vengeance which may appear socially useless and unnecessarily cruel" (304). Irving equally identifies the values of punishment when he avers that: "By means of punishment society heals the wounds inflicted upon it by the offender; it restores its moral integrity and reaffirms its most fundamental values" (304).

From this postulation, crime is seen to be repudiated by a good percentage of the society whose sensibility is assaulted by the criminal act. Consequently, to restore the values and morality of the injured members of society, punishment has to be meted to the offender/criminal. Punishment, is therefore, a response to crime. Human beings are social beings with a high preponderance for interaction and if there are no checks to curtail the excesses of the stronger ones the weak will perpetually remain at their mercy. Consequently, most societies of the world, such as the ones in this paper, evolve their standards of behaviour with checks and balances to discourage individual excesses and encourage cordial and peaceful co-existence. It thus becomes imperative to sanction those who vaunt themselves against such societal provisions in order to force them to submit to their society. Moreover, the sanctions imposed on the deviants/offenders such as the two protagonists - Okonkwo and Ogburn - are useful in "healing the wounds inflicted" on Umuofia/Madia societies as well as "reaffirming [their] fundamental values" in line with Zietlin's submission.

### **Critical Opinions on the Novels**

As mentioned above, these works have elicited some comments from critics and scholars. In the view of Nnadozie Inyama, Achebe in *TFA* as in his other novels and with regard to the protagonists, reveals "a gradual evolution of the image of the father/protector-figure a homestead dictator, through an autocratic clan/father-figure, to a national tyrant" (217). Kester Echenim contends that Okonkwo's "excessive reactions not only attract condemnation from his kinsmen, but constitute a fundamental infringement on the solidarity between man and the gods". He enumerates some of such excesses to include his transgression of the week of peace and assassination of Ikemefuna, both acts of which he stresses to be such that jeopardise "not only the individual but also the harmonious existence with the gods" (4).

Charles Nnolim, on his part notes that Okonkwo's failure and tragedy arise from his lack of respect for the mores of his people and avers that such act of disloyalty is punished through the community's "variously recognised sanctions" (170). He

submits that “For Okonkwo ..., the ethics of traditional loyalties dictated that the people had control over their leaders and rulers through recognised sanctions” (170) and concludes that he/Okonkwo (the hero) ends tragically as a result of the fact that “he is not a leader of his people whose mores he breaks, whose wise counsel he does not seek, whose caution he squanders” (170, 171). Ademola Dasyilva notes that Umuofia community recognises and tolerates Okonkwo’s choleric nature but maintains that they do not however, hesitate to punish the hero when he so deserves. He submits that when Okonkwo “over reaches his bounds and breaks some religious and social taboos, he is made to pay dearly for it” (143).

Making reference to the hero’s unnatural and disrespectful attitude to his father, Unoka, as standing in opposition to the worldview of Umuofia society, Kofi Awoonor identifies this as the cause of the hero’s downfall. He notes that Okonkwo’s intolerance of failure and contempt for lesser men marks his dealings with his own father, a behaviour which men in Umuofia find “unnatural” (20). This observation does not however accord Umuofians their full credit because though they are not contemptuous of lesser men like Okonkwo, they do not approve of failures either. Unoka’s laziness, which culminates in his habitual indebtedness, is a source of embarrassment not only to his son Okonkwo but also to the entire Umuofia society (TFA, 4, 9, 10, 13). Thus, when Okonkwo manifests signs of industry, unlike his father, Nwakibie the wealthy farmer, elder and titled Umuofian encourages him by lending him eight hundred yam seeds (6, 16). Damian Opata’s justification of Okonkwo’s killing of Ikemefuna on the grounds that he is only obeying a sacred injunction is however not tenable, for though the injunction may have issued from the gods, it does not in any way stipulate that Okonkwo must be the person to carry out the act.

The following are some critical comments on the second novel, *Arrows of Rain* (AR). Niyi Akingbe undertakes a semiotic interrogation of the novel in which he links the destiny of the central character, Ogugua, with post-colonial Nigeria where Ogugua’s introspection, he contends, “empowers him to narrate the military preoccupation, torture and repression leading to the narrator’s alienation” (3). Akingbe’s thesis centres on the extent of damage wrought on a nation and its citizens by military rule. He further submits that repressive military rule could “repress the citizenry, fragment and damage the psyche of an individual” (4). In another article: “Rallying against Dehumanisation:...”, Akingbe also maintains that the “narratives of the protagonist and some other characters in AR are all intertwined and interjected into one another to indict the military in its torture and violence” (161).

Abigail Eruaga examines the writer’s resort to the Igbo oral traditional elements as veritable keys in the interpretation of the novel. She argues that the theme and incidents in the novel are “decipherable from the myths, proverbs, superstitions and legends employed by the author in the text” (82). In a book review, Wumi Raji identifies a nexus between this novel and Oguine’s *The Squatter’s Tale* and contends that both novels examine the implications of Nigeria’s “developments of the nineties.” He concludes that both novels are concerned with the socio-political identities in Nigeria advanced in Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*. Priscilla’s Review, an online website, opines that *Arrows of Rain* tackles the “pain and sorrow of not only individuals facing the truth of who they really are but also of a nation on the verge of collapse.” In a similar vein, Obi Nweze sees AR as a novel which deploys “fascinating

satirical allegory to reveal in gory details the terrible effect of military rule in a disguised African state." *The Kirkus Review*, another online book review, accuses Major Isa Palat Bello, the dictator head of state in *AR*, and his cohorts of being "stand-ins for various real-life dictators and their 21st-century atrocities in post-colonial Africa" (9)

### **The Fate of the Deviant Protagonists**

The central characters of *TFA* and *AR* exhibit similar deviant attitudes which spell their catastrophic end. Both protagonists, for example, disobey the wise and well-intentioned counsels of the elders of their communities who are the repositories of wisdom in such societies. Second, they both abdicate their paternal responsibilities towards their sons when it matters most, thereby invoking the wrath of supernatural forces against themselves. Moreover, these two heroes' lives are defined by excesses which either deter them from carrying out noble and self-redemptive actions or induce them into aberrant acts, thus pitting themselves against their societies' values, mores, and rules of conduct and thereby invoking sanctions upon themselves. Finally, the individualities of both characters are couched in irony.

Umuofia, Achebe's fictional universe in *TFA* is a traditional society which celebrates success and places immense premium on industry. It recognises the place of the deities, ancestors and elders, and accords great respect to the counsels and injunctions of these human and supernatural personalities all of whom intermingle in the same universe. The community has codes of conduct by which its members operate while its infringement attracts appropriate sanctions against the offender irrespective of his/her class, clan and socio-economic status. At the centre of the narrative is Okonkwo, son of Unoka the loafer-debtor that dies with a catalogue of indebtedness trailing his memory (*TFA* 6). At an early age, Okonkwo had resolved never to don his father's garb of laziness, squalor and wretchedness. The narrative voice reveals that much to the reader: "... Okonkwo was ruled by one passion- to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved [...] he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life ..." (10, 13). But in spite of such evident disadvantage of lack of inheritance from his father, he is determined to lay the foundations of "a prosperous future" (13). As a result of such dream, he plunges himself into achieving this ambition with all the strength he can muster. To carry out his resolve, he turns to Ichie Nwakibie, a wealthy farmer and titled Umuofian to lend him some yam seeds for the planting season. Impressed by his manifest exhibition of industry which is in contradistinction to Unoka's flagrant laziness, his benefactor doubles his request from four hundred to eight hundred yam seeds, an incident that positively alters Okonkwo's social status and transfers him to the class of aspiring wealthy men of Umuofia (16).

From this time, Okonkwo's material fortune becomes a point of reference among his clansmen. He acquires titles in line with the values of his society, thus metamorphosing from "great poverty and misfortune to be [come] one of the lords of the clan" (19). He combines his physical prowess with this avant-garde material prosperity and his success graph begins to assume an upward progression. However, his success unfortunately gets the better of him as he soon begins to exhibit pride and disrespect for his less fortunate kinsmen and his society's laid down standard of behaviour. He equally disregards the admonitions of the society's elders, and his

kinsmen are struck by his "brusqueness in dealing with less successful men", whom he refers to as *agbala* (women) because they have no titles: "Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit," the authorial intrusion betrays (19). This act in itself is a clear case of deviance because after having been pushed up fortune's ladder through another's magnanimity, Okonkwo is expected to reciprocate such a gesture by showing gratitude and humility and by mentoring other unfortunate but aspiring kinsmen. Nnolim's observation of him becomes very apt: "Okonkwo kowtows to neither man nor the gods ... he breaks the mores of his people, shuns their wise counsel and squanders their caution. A hero who lacks humility may be patriotic but his was patriotism of the iconoclast, of the foolhardy" (171).

Okonkwo breaches the sacred Week of Peace in Umuofia, a time set apart by the earth goddess for the observance of peace for the attraction of abundant crop yield for the community and its people. This is a period when all fightings, beatings and bickerings cease and a man is restrained from beating his wife even if he "finds her lover on top of her" (22). Such a solemn period becomes the time when Okonkwo elects to beat Ojiugo, one of his wives who returns home late from plaiting her hair having made no proper arrangement for the household's dinner. He is said to "beat her very heavily," and

In his anger he had forgotten that it was the week of peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week. *But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess.... It was unheard of to beat somebody during the sacred week* (21, emphasis added).

Evident from the above is the fact that though Okonkwo may have forgotten what time and season it is in his community, there is an indication that he would not have acted differently even if he had remembered. This position is buttressed by the fact that his two wives remind him that wife battery is one of the forbidden acts during the sacred week and by his insistence on concluding the beating since not even the "fear of a goddess" is enough to restrain him. Consequently, he becomes the first and only Umuofian to break the sacred week there having been no antecedent as such act "was unheard of." This deviant attitude marks him off as an arrogant rebel of his society's norm and as a man that defers to neither gods nor men. It is no surprise therefore that Ezeani, the custodian priest of the earth goddess, visits him to exact some sanctions. He tells Okonkwo:

You have committed a great evil....*The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish:* His tone now changed from anger to command. You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. He rose and left the hut. Okonkwo did as the priest said ... inwardly, he was repentant. *But he was not the man to go about telling his neighbours that he was in error* (22, emphasis added).

It could be gleaned from this excerpt that whereas Umuofia is a gregarious and communal society which pursues the common good of the entire clan, Okonkwo stands out as an individualistic and self-centred person that is not only proud but also indulges in deviant acts that upset the harmonious existence of the community. For

antagonising the well-defined sentiment of Umuofia collectivity through this aberrant behaviour, punishment is therefore meted to him in order to heal the wound inflicted on the people, restore their moral integrity and reaffirm their fundamental values.

In furtherance of his offensive tendencies to his society's norms and values, Okonkwo commits a moral crime in the killing of his foster son, Ikemefuna, a boy who has come to be known as a member of his household and who also "calls him father." Though a doomed lad kept in his custody till such a time that the oracle will pronounce proper for his death, there grows a deep bond between him and Ikemefuna, a bond so deep as to surpass the one between him and Nwoye his biological son (37-40). The pronouncement of Ikemefuna's fate by the Oracle of the Hills and Caves is conveyed to Okonkwo by Ezeudu, "the oldest man in this quarter of Umuofia" and repertoire of the clan's wisdom. However, Ezeudu warns him in advance not to take part in the killing of the lad even though he is a titled man and elder in Umuofia: "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death", he sternly warns him (40).

Despite Ezeudu's well-intentioned counsel, Okonkwo not only bears a hand in Ikemefuna's death but actually turns out to be the one whose fist and machet "cut down" the lad for fear of "being thought weak" (43). By so doing, he betrays the trust and affection of a child who "could hardly imagine that Okonkwo was not his real father", a son who "had never been fond of his real father", the way he had been of him (42). To underscore the depth of Ikemefuna's trust in Okonkwo's protection as his father and the gravity of the latter's betrayal of such trust and abdication of filial duty, Ikemefuna is said to run to him for protection when he feels threatened by one of the killers. The incident is thus relayed:

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his machet, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry, '*My father, they have killed me!*' as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak. (43, emphasis added)

Okonkwo's action here corresponds with Antonio's betrayal of Julius Caesar, the eponymous hero of Shakespeare's drama. Such betrayal of a filial bond and affection is tantamount to a serious crime against nature. Nature, no doubt, endorses and gives attention to Ikemefuna's cry which is ignored by Okonkwo, and comes to exact vengeance on Ikemefuna's behalf the way Abel's blood cried to God for vengeance on his murder by his brother, Esau (Genesis 4:10). No wonder when Okonkwo returns from the murder incident, he loses his peace and appetite and is traumatised by insomnia, thereby seeking courage and elusive happiness in drink:

Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He drank palm-wine from morning till night and his eyes were red and fierce....He did not sleep at night. He tried not to think about Ikemefuna, but the more he tried the more he thought about him....Now and then a cold shiver descended on his head and spread down his body. (44)

Obierika, Okonkwo's friend and fellow elder and a titled man who chooses to stay away from the incident, is full of blame for him. "If I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done...is the kind of action for which the goddess

wipes out whole families ... if the oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it."(46-7) Obierika's speech foreshadows what becomes the swift downward slide of Okonkwo's fortunes and heroism from the time of the killing of Ikemefuna. Nonetheless the supernatural forces that visit misfortunes on him spare his innocent family and take on the direct committer of the crime, because shortly after this incident, his heroic graph begins to crash. To prove that the law of Karma/natural justice is at work against him, on the burial day of Ezeudu, the elder who had earlier warned him not to take part in Ikemefuna's death, Okonkwo's "old rusty gun" which had refused to shoot when he had pressed the trigger against his taunting wife (27-28), for no explicable reason explodes. A piece of iron from the gun "pierced the heart" of the deceased's sixteen-year-old son (86). This, by Umuofia norm, is regarded as a "crime against the earth goddess" and attracts seven years banishment of the offender and his household (87).

The burning of Okonkwo's house and the slaughtering of his animals with an imposition of seven years exile are part of the "cleansing of the land which he had polluted with the blood of a clansman" as well as the "justice of the earth goddess" (87). Okonkwo's heroic history not only declines but collapses during the period of his exile at Mbanta and after his return to Umuofia. It is disappointingly instructive that "Umuofia did not appear to have taken any notice of the warrior's return" (129) as Okonkwo, the *Ebubedike* of Umuofia and warrior par excellence, is relegated by the same community that had sung his praise. The gods seemingly deride his prowess. Once he goes on exile, he realises to his discomfort that he "had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan" (121). Unlike the Greek tragic hero, Okonkwo refuses to be redeemed or ennobled through what he suffers nor does he purge his excesses and flaws through his experience, as would a Greek tragic hero (Dasyuva, 38).

On his return, still smarting from the treatment he received at the British District Officer's court in the company of five other Umuofia elders, he vows to exact his pound of flesh. Consequently, again, he goes against the will of his community and beheads the District Officer's messenger. On realising that his clansmen refuse to identify with his rash action, he decides to hang himself, thus denying himself a proper burial according to the custom of his people. To underscore his individualism and rebellious attitude against his society, through a disguised authorial intrusion relayed to the reader in Okonkwo's own voice, the reader is told: "If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well But [if] they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself...if they listen to him [Egonwanne] I shall leave them and plan my own revenge" (141). True to his word, Okonkwo the individualist and rebel "leaves" his clansmen as he alone ends in the disastrous way he does, untouched and unburied by his society on account of his death by hanging which is an abomination in Umuofia, thus, warranting only strangers to bear his body as corroborated by Obierika's plea to the District Commissioner: "This is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers," he explains to the British D.C..

Okonkwo struggles in vain to avoid the fate of his father Unoka as both of them are eventually not buried by their community. It is evident that though Okonkwo "said yes very strongly" and his *chi* "also "agreed" (19), he later reneges from such an implied contract between him and his *chi* by his many rebellious actions against his

clan and its deities. Being a society where the gods and the people maintain a harmonious co-existence, an offense against the community becomes an offense against the gods. Expectedly, Okonkwo's *chi* has to withdraw his approval from a recalcitrant "child" and allow him to go the way of his failure father. Consequently, Okonkwo fulfills the three elements that contribute to the rise and fall of a tragic hero. These include: the society, supernatural forces and personal weakness, (flaw or hubris) (Dasylva, 38).

Ogugua, the hero in *AR*, embodies similar attitudes as Okonkwo though in varying degree. The society of *AR* is a modern one and Madia is a disguise for Nigeria, a post-colonial nation under the yoke of repressive military rule. Madia has two groups of population, the elderly and the youth. The former are the repositories of wisdom, decorum, discipline, morality and sanity while the latter are engulfed in the corrupt influence of the military junta. Among the sagacious citizens of Madia are the father and the grandmother of the narrator, (Ogugua) and Pa Matthew Ileka Ata, an eighty-three-year old and the father of Honourable Reuben Ata, Minister for Social Issues under Major Isa Palat Bello's regime (*AR*, 117, 116). Madia appears to be in dire need of a deliverer from the oppressive and repressive shackles of the military rule and Ogugua, a graduate, journalist and descendant of fearless orators and speakers, is saddled with that role. Coming from a family of artists, his paternal clairvoyant grandmother always reminds him of his role:

You must always remember that you come from a line of speakers. Your grandfather was the town crier ... your own father ... went to the white man's country and learned to become a new voice ... Remember, ...a story never forgives silence ...The odour that makes a man want to run away from himself carries death. (*AR*, 97,55, 59)

Like Okonkwo, Ogugua disobeys the wise and well-meaning counsel of an elder. Again like Okonkwo he is obsessed by a stifling fear of the government of the day and this restrains him from championing freedom crusades through his newspaper columns and editorial comments. Ogugua is too awe-stricken to pen "corrective or condemnatory editorial that can change the status quo," (Eruaga, 84) even after having once benefitted from such campaign carried out by Ashiki, a fellow journalist in a foreign newspaper, an act that compelled Major Bello to spare Ogugua's life against his earlier decision to "waste it." Aware of the fact that "memory outlasts power's viciousness" (*AR* 248), one expects Ogugua to swing into action rather than abdicate his duty through silence and through disguising as a lunatic and pitching his abode among the elements at the Bar Beach. Ogugua by this attitude of abdicating vital national and societal obligations squanders his clairvoyant grandmother's investment in constantly educating him and steeling him for this all-important assignment through her repeated reminders that "a story does not forgive silence" and that "memory outlasts power's viciousness."

By such repeated irresponsible and irresponsible acts, Ogugua proves to be a self-centred hero just like Okonkwo. Moreover, instead of using his privileged closeness to Honourable Reuben Ata to subtly achieve the needed social change, it becomes for Ogugua, an avenue to unwind at night parties rather than an opportunity to correct the gross corruption, embezzlement and abuse of power evident in every sector of the Madian state. The first time he is introduced among the circle of ministers by Honourable Ata, Chief James Amanka, Madia's External Affairs Minister berates

him for an editorial in which he had launched a subtle attack on the Minister but then Mr. Ata intervenes by explaining: "He's here as a friendly force," and another Minister, Professor Yaw enthuses: "He's a young man.... He was obviously misled. We must forgive him" (113). Amidst all this, Ogugua does not protest; he is too tongue-tied for a social crusader because this hero-narrator can only explain: "I shook with rage, but my tongue stayed cold" (113). He definitely does not take up the challenge of his grandmother who warns him that "a story does not forgive silence".

The most grievous of his crimes is seen in his failure to save Iyese, his lover and their son Femi, from molestation and murder by Major Bello, coupled with his denial of Femi's paternity when it matters most. Iyese, a product of a failed marriage, relocates to Langa, a fictional name for Lagos, for prostitution. In Langa, she and Ogugua strike a romantic relationship that results in pregnancy. Through sheer military force, Major Isa Palat Bello forces himself on Iyese, turning her into a mistress whenever his wife is out of town or indisposed. On information that she is carrying another man's (Ogugua's) baby, Major Bello negotiates with her, again using force to claim the paternity of the baby if it turns out to be a boy, having begotten seven female children.

Iyese rejects the repugnant proposal and repeatedly sends letters to Ogugua who deserts her out of fear of Major Bello. She eventually gives birth to a baby boy and still informs her lover, opting to name the baby as Ogugua Junior after his father. On the fateful day when he eventually summons the courage to visit Iyese, he arrives to behold the brutalised dead body of Iyese, who was killed by Major Bello and the baby with a deep cut on his leg in his pool of blood. Bello has carried out his threat because Iyese dared to deny him the paternity of the baby boy after much entreaty. Ogugua abandons mother and child and scampers into safety. Violet, Iyese's friend, summons courage and takes Ogugua Junior to an orphanage while Iyese's lifeless body is deposited in a mortuary.

Baby Ogugua Jnr. is adopted by John and Margaret Adero a physician/teacher couple respectively who rename the baby Femi Adero. Femi's adoption is shortly followed with the arrival of the couple's own biological children. For a long time, Femi, his four siblings and parents, dwell in harmony but after some years, a fight with his troublesome sister, Eda, who calls him "Bastard! Son of the gutter ... Bastard picked up from the latrine!" (235), opens the can of worms and sets him in search of his roots. His attempts at uncovering his true paternity both from his adoptive parents and a sorceress fail. His fiancée, Sheri who had earlier sworn that not even his unknown parentage would separate them, soon writes him to state that her parents, "are adamantly opposed to a suitor for me whose biological roots are uncertain" because she is their only child (AR 230).

At this time, Ogugua is already in prison for his evidence in court that Major Bello is a rapist and murderer and that he and other military men bring prostitutes to the Bar Beach in military trucks, where they rape and kill them afterwards under the cover of the night (AR 55-60). Femi, (his son, now a journalist), with the assistance of Ashiki and Mandi offer to help get him out of prison by smuggling his written evidence to the media. It is from Ogugua's life history, which he documented as evidence and handed over to Femi, that the latter is able to unravel the mystery surrounding his paternity. This prompts him to return to his biological father Ogugua

in the cell for corroboration. What Femi desperately needs is just to know the man that sired him even if such a person is an imbecile, in order to: know his root; stop people's taunting remarks; and desist from calling himself a "bird" while he actually is a "butterfly" in the manner of Ola Rotimi's Odewale.

Once again, Ogugua's silence against which his grandmother repeatedly warns him, gets the better of him. He squanders such a rare opportunity for self-redemption and succour to the aches he had inflicted on his son whom he had abandoned and who should be like a found treasure to him now. The dialogue between the two is as annoying as it is tear-provoking. The reader feels some measure of anger against this irresponsible, duty-abdicating and pretentious father:

Handing the sheets of paper back to me, Bukuru avoided my eyes. A fit of anger stirred inside me. 'What kind of man would abandon his child?'

He coughed lightly, but did not speak [...] 'You're certain Iyese's son was removed to the Langa Orphanage?' 'Yes', he answered [...] that's what Violet told me.' 'Isn't Ogugua an Igbo name? I queried [...] "Why do you ask?" My adoptive mother said I had an Igbo name when they adopted me [...] " [...] you wrote about a gash in the baby's right leg. I carry the scar of such a wound" 'A coincidence', he said, still evading me [...] "Could you be my father?" He leaned against the wall and shut his eyes. Silence. That familiar cap-out. Silence again! (AR, 241-2)

This callous betrayal which is reminiscent of Ikemefuna's by Okonkwo in *TFA* attracts the intervention of supernatural forces that deal with Ogugua/Bukuru for this abdication of filial duty. He loses his peace of mind, and is haunted by the ghosts of such dead people like Iyese, his father, his paternal grandmother and others whose love, affection, counsel and memory he betrays. Eventually, unable to cope with the load of guilt, he opts to take his own life as can be gleaned from the suicide note captioned FINAL SILENCE which he addresses to his son, Femi:

Dear Femi,

I had wanted some time to reflect on our last painful meeting. But soon after your departure a powerful silence engulfed me [...] it displayed before me array of dead things: people betrayed, hopes dashed, dreams unfulfilled, roads forsaken, paths not taken [...] whose ghost was it visiting me, I wondered, on this dark day? My father, perhaps [...] speak, I whispered to the ghost: "If you are not my father [...] are you my grandmother [...] or my mother? Or Iyese, returning to reproach me for a desertion of so long ago? [...] Femi, I began to think about you. I felt a tightening in my chest and interpreted it as grief. But grief was at once too complicated and too simple a word for the tearing I felt inside of me [...] 'Could you be my father?' That was the question you asked me. I evaded it, but I should have given a simple answer: yes. I am the man who abandoned you on a rainy day in a room where blood flowed from your wounded leg' [...] I live with the shame of that abdication in this cell. I am here by many years ago I fooled myself that the counterfeit coin of silence was good enough to buy peace of mind [...] 'Could you be my father? Henceforth, that question will haunt every breath I draw. (AR 244, 245, 246).

It could be seen from this suicide note that more than anything else, Ogugua's continued silence in the face of trouble where he should have spoken up or his indifference to other people's plight, is borne out of deep fear and self-centredness. He is selfish and self-seeking. Consequently, he is paid back in his own coin. He elects

the same medium of silence to annihilate himself when the ghosts of all his betrayed relatives and acquaintances haunt him.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been demonstrated that abdication of duty, denial of offspring, rebellion against society's values and flagrant disregard for the counsel of elders who embody the wisdom in the fictional worlds of *TFA* and *AR* by Okonkwo and Ougugua, the protagonists of the respective novels, is tantamount to deviant behaviours which contravene the moral values of their societies and for which reason these heroes attract punishment. These central characters' fortunes do not only decline but they are also sanctioned for infringing on their societies' pattern of behaviour (in the case of Okonkwo). Ultimately, they have to pay the supreme price when it becomes apparent that they are unwilling to submit to their communities by the cultivation of noble qualities. Okonkwo returns to Umuofia after his seven years' exile still the same rash, selfish and individualistic personality he was before the exile. It is not surprising that he dies leaving his Umuofia society as he met it. Ougugua commits suicide for rejecting the counsel of his progenitors and the opportunity of his encounter with his long abandoned son as an occasion for self-redemption. In both cases, supernatural forces intervene on the victims' behalf to mete punishment to the heroes. For Okonkwo, it is excessive actions occasioned by rashness and recalcitrance, and for Ougugua, it is excessive silence and inaction brought about by intense fear of the tyrannical military Head of State. Both novelists are writers that promote the cultures, mores, yearnings, beliefs and aspirations of their societies.

### Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, 1958.
- Akingbe, Niyi. "Defying Armies: Protesting Military Oppression in *Arrows of Rain*." *California Linguistic Notes*, vol. xxxv, No. 2, Spring, 2010, pp. 1-12. 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Rallying against Dehumanisation: Repudiating Military Brutality in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*." *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2013, 158-76.
- Awoonor, Kofi. in Ojinmah Umelo: *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives*. Spectrum, 1991. Print.
- Dasyilva, Ademola. *Studies in Drama*. Stirling – Horden, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Toward a New Taxonomy of the Hero in the African Novel." Ph.D Thesis, Dept of English, U of Ibadan, 1994.
- Echenim, Kester. "Cultural Hero in the Novels of Chinua Achebe". *The Nigerian Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 8, 1996, pp. 1-13.
- Eruaga, Abigail O. "Oral Traditional Elements in Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*." *JONSILLS: Journal of New Studies in Languages and Literary Studies*, vol. 14, Sept. 2012, pp. 81-88.
- Ezeigbo, Akachi. *Artistic Creativity: Literature in the Service of Society*. Inaugural Lecture. U of Lagos Press, 2008.
- Inyama, Nnadozie F. "From Homestead Dictator to National Tyrant: Evolution of the Father/Protector Image in Achebe's Novels." *Eagle on Iroko: Selected Papers from Chinua Achebe International Symposium 1990*, edited by Edith Ihekweazu et al., Heinemann, pp. 216-223.

- Isola, Akinwumi. Foreword. *Blazing the Path: Fifty Years of Thing Fall Apart*, edited by Chima Anyadike and Kehinde A. Ayoola, Heinemann, 2012, pp. \*\*\*
- Kirkus Review. *Arrows of Rain* by Okey Ndibe. 18 May 2015 [www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/okey-ndibe/arrows-of..](http://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/okey-ndibe/arrows-of..)
- Macionis, J., and L. Gerber. *Sociology. 7<sup>th</sup> Canadia. Editio*, Pearson, 2011.
- Ndibe, Okey. *Arrows of Rain*. Heinemann, 2000.
- Ngara, Emmanuel. *Ideology and Forms in African Poetry: Implication for Communication*. James Currey, 1990.
- Nnolim, Charles. "The Artist in Search of the Right Leadership: Achebe as a Social Critic": *Eagle on Iroko: Selected Papers from Chinua Achebe International Symposium 1990*, edited by Edith Ihekweazu et al., Heinemann, 1990, pp. 170-77.
- Nweze, Obi. *Arrows of Rain* by Okey Ndibe: a Review. 24 Apr. 2013, [sahara-reporters.com/2013/04/24/arrows-rain-okey-ndibe-%Ez80%93-review.web](http://sahara-reporters.com/2013/04/24/arrows-rain-okey-ndibe-%Ez80%93-review.web).
- Opata, Damian. "Eternal Sacred Order versus Conventional Wisdom: A Consideration of Moral Culpability in the Killing of Ikemefuna in *Things Fall Apart*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol.18, no.1, 1987, pp. 71-79.
- Outa, George. Kenya: Works of Literature ICC Drama. 26 Jan. 2012 [anafrica.com/stories/201202030777.html](http://anafrica.com/stories/201202030777.html).
- Priscilla's Reviews. 25 Feb. 2013, [ijustreadthis.word/press.com](http://ijustreadthis.word/press.com).
- Raji, Wumi. "Identity and Narrativity in a Post-Colonial Context: Okey Ndibe: *Arrows of Rain*.(Book review). 25 Feb. 2013, [business.highbcam.com/21Q6/article-IGI-137493107/identity-and-narrativity-pbstcolonial-context-okey](http://business.highbcam.com/21Q6/article-IGI-137493107/identity-and-narrativity-pbstcolonial-context-okey).
- Zeitlin, Irving M. *The Social Condition of Humanity: An Introduction to Sociology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., OUP, 1991.