

To Study the Socio-Political Disintegration and Reclaiming the Cultural Memories in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and A Man of the People

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the textual interweaving of the cultural memory discourse carried out by postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, Bapsi Sidhwa in *The Pakistani Bride* and *Ice-Candy-Man*, and Rohinton Mistry in *Such a Long Journey* and *Family Matters*. This kind of critical attention on these postcolonial works abolishes the silence imposed on different voices as well as erasure of their memory. These mnemonic paradigms Lachmann in her article "Cultural Memory and the Role of Literature" calls the "mnemotechnical", "the encyclopedic" and "the diegetic". Here the researcher is concerned with the various aspects of literature as a memorial medium through which societies recollect the past. All the selected authors have their cultures which help to form an identity with other cultures. Interaction with other culture helps to form an identity with other cultures such as Asian, African and also Western. As Glissant says we live in a 'fragmented diversity' and the cultural interaction helps to bring them together on a few common levels. It is this perception of cultural memory that the researcher has noticed in the study of these selected novels by following the new understanding of historical processes.

Keyword: Postcolonial, Asian, African. Historical, Memorial

INTRODUCTION

When one considers the many emotional and personal uncertainties experienced by immigrants, it becomes evident that, most importantly, exile also endangers memory and remembering. Forcibly removed from their country with the intention of wiping out a whole culture in Germany, the exiles endured a devastating sense of loss and upheaval that clashed with the need to remember and reflect in order to maintain the continuity of individual and collective identities. "How people are scattered everywhere," is a quote from one of Benjamin's letters that is used as the subtitle for his address book. It shows how cultural memory mechanisms respond to crises and challenges to continuities. In Benjamin's address book, we can find over seventy names and addresses of fellow expatriates. Among them are his divorced wife Dora, with whom he finds shelter, and Bertolt Brecht in Skovsbostrand, with no less than five listed addresses. This is relevant not only to Benjamin's life in exile, where he had to try to maintain at least some of his former social contacts, but also to present-day recollection or historical accounts of this exile. Along with a string of female identities that remain a mystery, he clings to the Moscow address of his beloved Asja Lacis. Also mentioned are French colleagues Pierre Klossowski and Georges Bataille, who would later save Benjamin's inheritance by concealing it at the Bibliothèque Nationale. In the end, postcards from exiled intellectuals like Hannah Arendt, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, and Siegfried Kracauer are included, painting a nearly comprehensive picture of the intellectual life of the Weimar Republic. Publishing a personal memory aid in this way helps keep a particular cultural period alive in people's minds.

Finally, the fact that Walter Benjamin is the owner of the address book is the one thing that makes this publication seem like it would be good for showing the issues and concerns of cultural memory studies. Benjamin is remembered in our memories of the National Socialism and WWII eras not only because of his early death and exile, but also because he was a key figure in the early 20th-century literary movement that laid the groundwork for the theory of cultural memory. In his varied and dispersed comments on memory's cultural importance, he offers several theoretical frameworks that relate to the above finding, namely, that efforts to recall always respond to crises of historical continuity within the process of tradition. Consequently, the goals and organisation of this introduction are shaped by the pertinent issues that are highlighted in the tiny address book. To set the stage for cultural memory studies, this introductory piece will work from a broad theory of culture to define memory and remembering.

Therefore, the meaning of "memory" as it pertains to groups rather than individuals has to be defined. Part one, "The History and Topics of Cultural Memory Studies," will address this topic by re-creating the theoretical framework that allows us to talk about collective, societal, or cultural memory. This section introduces the most influential cultural memory theorists, including Sigmund Freud, Jan Assmann, Maurice Halbwachs, and Friedrich Nietzsche, and outlines their work in elucidating transmission mechanisms and traditional concepts: How does one's memories factor into attempts to portray cultural settings? In relation to the comprehension of politics, art, society, etc., how is its purpose established?

This question pertains to the altered subject area and the different epistemological interests of cultural history studies in the humanities and the natural sciences. If, on the other hand, these aspects cannot be explained using psychological and neurobiological theories—despite the widespread use of metaphors from these fields—because cultures depend on social practices of communication and transmission rather than the operations of an individual biological brain, then the question becomes even more complex. Theories concerning cognitive and biological settings that have been experimentally validated—that is, that attempt to describe the world as it is—are the basis of psychological and neurobiological accounts of memory structures and processes. Since these explanations and hypotheses are subject to change over scientific history, it is evident that this claim is both relativistic and historical. Nevertheless, it is certain that these theories will perpetually assert their ability to provide a universally applicable characterization of memory and remembering.

Significance Of The Study

Peasant culture and communal memory have both been wiped out by industrialization this century. Within the decolonization and democratization movement, there is a basic loss of historical objectivity and memory. As a result, reviving our cultural traditions is much sought after. Not only do members of historically oppressed groups want to unearth their hidden histories, but so do members of traditionally dominant groups, minority groups, researchers, and intellectuals from all walks of life.

There is a high level of interest in learning about one's family tree. Genealogical history is also on the rise. With memory shifting from a societal to an individual level, the need to recall and safeguard one's identity has never been greater. Remembering the strength of internal compulsion is essential when we go from a general to a private context. Each person should take on the role of "memory individual" to the extent that their memory is not perceived collectively. He needs to refresh his memories. The psychologization of memory, according to Nora, "has thus given every individual the sense that his or her salvation ultimately depends on the repayment of an impossible debt."

According to Nora, There is a huge paradox around the preservation and loss of memory in contemporary memory research. There ought to be a balancing point between recuperation and disintegration, yet it often seems to be hanging by a thread instead. Alternatively, according to David Middleton and Steven D. Brown's "Experience and Memory: Imaginary Futures in the Past" article, we encounter various forms of remembering and forgetting in our daily lives, whether it's at home, at work, or in public or commercial organizations. These forms include language and text-based communication, objects, and place. Research in this area lays the groundwork for future studies in areas of social and psychological significance using lived experience. (Nonning and Erll 241)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sumaiya Tasnim (2019) It was only under Marxism that the literary use of "ideology" was considered an art form. Nevertheless, the significance and implications have been expanded upon as time has progressed. In this sense, "ideology" refers to a person's or group's collection of core values and beliefs that are directly tied to their worldview when it comes to knowledge. Ideology allows people to build communities by bringing together the many ideas and principles that people hold dear for their society. The 1977 publication of *Petals of Blood*, a book by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, caused a stir inside the government, leading to Thiong'o's detention and eventual incarceration for offences connected to his "literary political" history. As one would expect from a work of fiction, it covers a wide range of topics, the most important of which being the post-independence Kenyan scenario. In this article, I'd want to get into the book by drawing parallels to other ideologies, including Fanonian Marxism's views on classism, postcolonialism, and other related topics. Additional citations from Hegel and Homi K. Bhaba will be forthcoming. To fully understand Africa and Kenyan civilization, it is necessary to delve into their language, religion, and culture. We will analyse the book through the lens of its characters and the postcolonial principles that they represent. In order to discuss the author's beliefs, it is essential to examine the book via these ideas and how they appropriate and abrogate it. In order to defend the author's ideology in penning a groundbreaking work of art that is both historically significant and culturally relevant, it is necessary to examine the many facets of postcolonial African culture.

Rebecca Miller, Cedarville University (2014) In her 1967 book *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o reveals how post-colonial Kenya is still plagued by British institutions and practices. As native Kenyans fight for a new country and

governance in the wake of colonisation, this book delves into their plight. As missionaries impose European traditions and eradicate Kenyan indigenous values, this book reveals how the Christian Church is corrupt and how cultural imperialism is maintained. Marxist theory and the work of authors like Frantz Fanon, whose neo-colonialist theory sheds light on many post-colonial Kenyan occurrences, are evident in Ngugi's writing. When it comes to post-colonial states, Fanon emphasizes that they are still bound to colonial structures despite their independence since they hold on to the institutions of the country that colonized them. Because of this, the gap between the bourgeoisie and the lower classes remains wide, and classism lives on.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Noteworthy theories and concepts utilized in this research include "collective memory" by Maurice Halbwachs, "social memory" and the mediality of memory by Emile Durkheim and Aby Warburg, "sites of memory" by Pierre Nora, "cultural memory," "collective memory," and "communicative memory" by Jan and Aleida Assmann of Germany, "individual memory" and "collective memory" by Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti, and "a few prominent features and concerns of contemporary cultural memory studies" as explained by Jane Marie Law. According to Vita Fortunati and Lamberti, memory studies is a great tool for facilitating collaboration in the field.

The cultural-historical viewpoint has been defined for the purposes of this research. A crucial component of this research is the narrative practice, which integrates many cultural practices, symbols, systems, etc. This narrative paradigm is shown by analyzing the chosen literature. Several of the fields or subprojects outlined by Fortunati and Lamberti in their article "Cultural Memory: A European Perspective" are applied to the chosen novels for analysis, including "Bearing Witness" and "Memory and Places" among five others. Erlil and Nunning, pp. 133–137 (2007)

In creating and sustaining a national identity and culture, all of the chosen books serve as literary repositories of cultural memory. The deliberate formation of a national identity is another way of putting it. For any nation's culture to take shape, there must be numerous eyewitnesses, sources, traditions, and locations associated with the people, events, and circumstances that shaped it.

OBJECTIVE (S) /NEED OF STUDY

1. To study the Socio-Political Disintegration and Reclaiming the Cultural Memories in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*.
2. To study the Cultural Memory as a Critique of Colonialism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Things Fall Apart and *A Man of the People*, two books written by Chinua Achebe, are the focus of this thesis. Among postcolonial African authors, Achebe ranks high in both admiration and impact. Achebe's chosen works create distinct cultural recollections of Africa. Additionally, it shows that African authors are safeguarding their country's cultural heritage via their works. Some of the first examples of cross-cultural communication and conflict between European colonizers and Africa's indigenous peoples are shown in these books. Narratives play an essential role in the formation of communal memory and identity throughout the histories of colonialism and post-colonialism.

Everyone can see how the past has been influenced by others. Eyerman argues that history unfolds in the present. This is a crucial step in developing a shared understanding. via story and discourse, it becomes a part of the present via symbolic contact. It may take the form of tangible artefacts, like a faithful recreation of a town or city in a museum. Language and conversation allow for the "recounting, understanding and interpretation and transmission" of history, according to Eyerman. The tales and narratives that surround these conversations shape how they are told and how people respond to them.

According to Eyerman, When people gather at "sites of memory" to remember the past or a specific portion of it, the words and actions they use to commemorate the event are crucial. Unlike reflecting a fixed text or using political propaganda to strengthen their power position, such memorial is dynamic and ever-changing. Furthermore, the goal of power relationships is unrelated. In "Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War," Jay Winter posits that rituals have progressed through three distinct phases. Building a memorial is the first order of business. The second step is to establish a routine for the ritual by first basing it in the calendar. Thirdly, its role as active areas of memory might change or vanish. (Pages 70–71

in Erll and Nunning) The examples of many rituals in *Things Fall Apart* help to clarify this tendency. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is exemplary of the prevailing historical memory of Africa that advances the theory of building historical memory in order to maintain ideological control and cultural confinement.

Statutes formalize the actions that originate and exert their influence at the regional level. Such memorial services thrive in democracies, but not under totalitarian regimes. When it becomes ingrained in family life or becomes associated with public life, it may thrive even when national and family histories do not intersect. Members participating in the ritual of remembering and sharing those memories with loved ones find solace at these memorial locations. Thus, it seems to be an integral aspect of their own life, despite being born at a considerable distance from the incident. For instance, commemoration events are strengthened by the tales of the First World War that grandfathers tell their grandchildren about their childhood. Memories of the past are passed down across generations using this structure. Changes in commemorative forms occurred as a consequence of the severing of ties between public remembrance and private celebration. By providing reinforcements, this connection may be maintained. However, it loses all significance when taken out of social units. According to Erll and Nunning, section 71

The concept of cultural trauma provides a theoretical framework for analyzing Achebe's books through the lens of how collective identity is formed. "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory" by Eyerman notes that the concept of trauma-like memory exists in both individual and communal minds. Cultural trauma is defined by Alexander:

When a group's members experience a traumatic incident that changes their future selves in deep and permanent ways, imprints their memories forever, and makes an everlasting impression onto their collective consciousness. [Eyerman 160]
In contrast to traumas that affect the mind or body, this sort of cultural trauma affects the body. The infliction of a wound, whether psychological or physical, results in the experiencing of tremendous emotional suffering. Cultural trauma, according to Eyerman, "identifies to a profound loss of identity and meaning, a rupture in the social fabric, impacting a group of people who have accomplished some degree of cohesiveness," in contrast. [Eyerman 160]

No one, or no part of any given group or civilization, has to go through a traumatic event firsthand. Demonstrating a big 'cause' event is crucial. It takes time, a medium, and representation to absorb and establish the meaning of trauma. Public reflection and conversation help to explain and understand it. Eyerman argues that contemporary society—what Alexander terms "a meaning struggle" and a "trauma process"—is profoundly impacted by mass-mediated representation. Cultural trauma is defined formally by Neil Smelser.

According to Smelser, a collective memory is one that a relevant membership group publicly accepts and gives credence. This memory recalls an event or situation that is (a) negatively impacted, (b) portrayed as permanent, and (c) seen as a threat to the survival of the society or group in question or a violation of its core cultural assumptions. "Eyerman" (161)
In *Things Fall Apart*, a cultural trauma causes the Igbo people—and notably Okonkwo in particular—to feel threatened by or lose touch with their ancestral culture, which in turn leads to tensions between the indigenous Africans and the European colonizers. As one's objective shifts, the fight for survival in Africa takes on a new meaning.

The topic of cultural struggle has been presented by several African writers besides Achebe. A previous work by A. C. Jordan, *The Wrath of the Ancestors*, introduced it. According to Dan Izevbaye in "Chinua Achebe and the African Novel," Achebe's groundbreaking attitude and innovative style are what really make him remarkable. (Element 33) Postcolonial awareness, which begins on the eve of independence or perhaps earlier, and continues through the postcolonial scenario that highlights the Pan African urge, is another important contribution.

"Canon and Archive" by Aleida Assmann identifies religion, art, and history as the three pillars upon which active cultural memory rests. The word "canon" originates in religious history, says Assmann, and denotes a holy document or collection of works that cannot be altered or replaced. The canonical text serves as a timeless, unchanging reference for liturgical practice, interpretation, and veneration.

The Christian concept of "canonization" encompasses the sanctification of Christian martyrs, who are honoured not just in art and legend but also in calendars and the naming of children born on certain days after them. Aleida contends that this is one way in which the Christian church functions as a cultural memory institution. Artworks, liturgical rites and customs, architectural styles, and rituals all have a role in preserving cultural memory.

Among the many significant subfields of historical study, oral history stands out for its reliance on first-hand accounts passed down through generations rather than written records. Oral histories, in particular, have a very brief lifespan. Living

memories do not last beyond three generations or eighty years, even in an educated culture. Myths, dates, monuments, etc., emerge after that, with spaces between them created by floating gaps. The oral and written histories are significant sources for Achebe's works, as he has admitted. The books he wrote at this time of change were spot on.

In his works, Chinua Achebe explores traditional African culture and a changing Africa. The old world and the contemporary world are at odds in his writings. According to Dan Izevbaye, indigenous knowledge is firmly grounded in the ancient age, which is referred to as the Age of Wisdom. This keeps the tradition alive by passing on information from one generation to another. There are a lot of ways that people learn it, reuse it, and pass it on to the next generation, such as proverbs and other oral genres that are relevant to the topic. *Things Fall Apart* has a similar change.

Cultural memory frames have been researched by anthropologist Jan Vansina. He examined the ways in which African oral cultures depict their history and collaborated with them. Long periods of initiation, training, and examination are required to fully formalize and institutionalize the information about the tribes as stories, songs, dances, rituals, customs, symbols, etc., rather than making it part of ordinary speech. In addition, for it to be realized or revived, there must be certain times when people gather to celebrate or carry out various rites or acts in its honour. That is the essence of cultural memory. Cultural encoding and construction permeate even the most private memories and recollections in Achebe's work. Rather of concentrating on the community's awful destiny and material ruin, *Things Fall Apart* delves into Okonkwo's inner sorrow and psyche. His life story begins as a talented wrestler, an unstoppable youth, and a hero to many, but it ends with him taking his own life because he could not cope with the forced relocation and the loss of his people's cultural heritage. He is unable to save his people from disaster and does not stand up for their culture.

Human memory is employed as a "database" in oral societies, according to Jan Assmann's essay "Communicative and Cultural Memory." The level of specialization of these carriers is based on the demands placed on their memory and conveyed verbally.

According to Erll and Nunning (114–115) The knowledge of rituals that adhere to a precise "script," even if it is not written down, has been preserved via this technique. myriad myths among the Igbo people provide a snapshot of the myriad issues plaguing Nigeria before colonization. In *Things Fall Apart*, for example, we learn of the tortoise's tale and many more like it. Apparently, the only purpose of these animal tales is to provide entertainment. The Igbo people and the cultural ideals that have kept them going are revealed, and there is a very significant purpose beyond mere entertainment. These tales are a part of the rich oral tradition, cultural heritage, and social heritage of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

By seeing memory as both a symbolic activity and a group identity, the researcher in this study has shown a connection between the establishment of collective identities and collective memory. Truthfully, memory is neither a "mirror to nature" nor an impartial fact-absorber or preserver. It more accurately encodes and retains information that has already been received and understood using the terminology, ideas, schemata, and symbolic forms that are accessible. Recollection, whose decoding is an aspect of cultural and social operations, might modify the substance of such memories during this process.

One uses pictures and a vocabulary that may not be entirely their own when recalling such history and the past. As part of a particular culture, it is remembered via imaginative storytelling. All of our visual representations will vanish if we do not have access to these symbolic forms and methods of representation. Researchers that have issued this call to action recognise the continued relevance of trauma in the contemporary world and want to further our understanding of the phenomenon in order to develop future instruments.

As these areas develop farther into the future, it will be beneficial to think about how they may work together. Evidence on the muddled and indirect ways in which memories are handed down from one generation to another, as well as about the repression, obfuscation, and avoidance of memories, have been uncovered via trauma research. Interactions between northern and southern authors, artists, and activists, as well as fresh insights into the global distribution of trauma discourse, are shaping contemporary remembering of the past.

Trauma theory's understanding of witnessing, testimony, and memory, especially as they are mediated online, will probably remain important as many communities throughout the world seek justice and reparation after traumatic histories. By delving into the formation of memory and the ways in which various cultural forms and genres, such digital memory

cultures, mediate it, cultural memory studies enrich trauma studies. The field of trauma studies provides a family tree of trauma and its global transmissions.

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