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HEROISM AND LOSS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET (1601) AND CHINUA
ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* (1958)

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We dedicate this humble work to all the people who know us well and have encouraged us to achieve our goals, succeed in our studies and conduct this research.

To:

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Abstract

Our task in this dissertation is to expose two fundamental themes namely: Heroism and Loss in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, focusing on their main characters. To do that, we referred to Aristotle's theory of Tragedy as explained in his *Poetics*. Our work is based on the comparison between Hamlet and Okonkwo in order to highlight the differences and the similarities between them despite they are written in different eras and places. In fact, both are considered as heroic characters who have a respective status in their societies at the beginning. Hamlet is seen as an intellectual prince during the Renaissance Era and Okonkwo is portrayed as a strong wrestler and leader in the Igbo society. Besides, both Hamlet and Okonkwo have a tragic flaw that led to their death and fall. At the end of the stories, both witnessed their loss that is caused by their excess of fame and power. Finally, the two works are studied through a tragic perspective regarding plot or events both the protagonists witnessed.

Key words:

Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy, Hamlet, Things Fall Apart, Heroism, Loss, Literary Affinities

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I- GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Considering literature as a mirror of a life and making a comparison between masterpieces is of a special prominence. This is why this dissertation brings together two famous and influential authors in the different world literatures, who are namely William Shakespeare and Chinua Achebe, to undertake a comparison between two of their respective works: *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (1601) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Both works bear many affinities as well as differences. Therefore, it can be impossible to understand the author's writings without studying their social contexts and biographies.

When Shakespeare staged *Hamlet* a new era in the timeline of England made its appearance, the Renaissance. Shakespeare represents a portrayal of the existing social and cultural attitudes of the Renaissance society. His plays reflected the Elizabethan world; Salinger L.G argues that "Shakespeare's plays are the monuments of a remarkable age"¹. Besides, Queen Elizabeth's interest and love of arts gave artists a great consideration which led to the full flowering of English literature. The spirit of exploration and adventure fed the imagination of writers and paved the way for the flourishing of literature.

The Elizabethan reign was considered to be a brilliant era, not just in literature, but also in all aspects of life. Elizabeth ruled the country for 45 years. Although her parliament made pressure on her to marry and name a successor, she died without leaving an heir, so the English crown went to her relative James I of Scotland who had a claim over England². He became King James I of England. This change in leadership meant that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was in a period of uncertainty. "It was not that Hamlet is Shakespeare's greatest tragedy or most perfect work of art; it was that Hamlet most brings home to us at once the sense of the soul's infinity and the sense of the doom which not only circumscribes that infinity but appears to be its offspring"³. In this tragedy, character and fate have an influence on the outcome. The entire legacy of Shakespeare is "a probing, questioning inquiry into the intractable issues of the self and of the other, the individual and the community, and the very purpose of life that is to be or not to be"⁴.

As we have mentioned above, the two works exhibit affinities and differences through their plots and timeline; this drives us to study both of their world sides since *Hamlet* embodies the Renaissance era and *Things Fall Apart* represents a post-colonial discourse.

Chinua Achebe is an African post-colonial writer who has been called "the father of modern African literature"⁵. *Things Fall Apart* is a significant work which expresses a particular understanding of social and colonial events. It was published in the period of anti-colonial struggle, just before the Nigerian independence. Achebe intended his novel for audiences outside Africa, because he wanted to build a direct bridge that links his African writing-tone with his endeavor to show that Africa has also a cultural heritage. For that, the context of writing indicates the end of the White colonization. Therefore, it is a period of celebration and glory.

In our reading of *Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart*, we have noticed that the two works exhibit similarities and differences in their representation of heroism and loss as two main themes underlying the construction of plot and the resemblant portrayal of the main characters. Shakespeare and Achebe present the story of their protagonists to be such heroic characters who have specific values that bring them praise by their respective communities in the beginning of their life. Both Hamlet and Okonkwo are plagued by a tragic flaw causing their loss and demise at the end. Both stories are tragic, and the events are built around the figures whose very action is followed by an excess of ambition and fame. What makes the two characters' heroic? What are the elements of loss in their characters and behaviors? And how do those elements lead to their tragedies? These are the research questions addressed in this dissertation.

1-REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* have been highly acclaimed and have received much criticism by well-known critics and scholars all around the world in relation to Heroism and Fall. On one hand, A.C Bradley, for example, a specialist of Shakespeare, argues in his *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, and Macbeth* (1904) that "we feel how strange it is that strength and weakness should be so mingled in one soul, and that this soul should be doomed to such misery and apparent failure"⁶.

This quotation shows that *The tragedy of Hamlet* evokes inside the mind of the reader the feeling of pity and wrath, because of the tragic end that Hamlet has witnessed. T.S. Eliot, in *Hamlet and His Problems* (1919) insists on the evaluation of the play rather than its interpretation. He calls it the Mona Lisa of literature as well as an "artistic failure"⁷. On the other hand, Eliot asserts that:

In several ways the play is puzzling, and disquieting as is none of the others. Of all the plays it is the longest and is possibly the one on which Shakespeare spent most pains; and yet he has left in it superfluous and inconsistent scenes which even hasty revision should have noticed. The versification is variable [...] is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother". But Hamlet, "is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible because it is in excess of the facts as they appear"⁸.

In *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935), John Dover Wilson writes: "*Hamlet* is a tragedy, the tragedy of genius caught fast in the toils of circumstances and unable to fling free. Shakespeare unfolds to us the full horror of Hamlet's situation gradually adding one load after another to the burden he has to bear until we feel that he must sink beneath it"⁹. In this quotation, John Dover Wilson evokes the significance of each part of the complex action, against the background of the Elizabethan era.

Another influential critic of Shakespeare's work is Paul Cantor (2004) who, in his short text called *Shakespeare Hamlet*, he writes that:

Hamlet's mind is open to all the competing models of heroism available in the Renaissance. He can admire martial virtue and is haunted by thoughts of the grandeur of classical antiquity, but at the same time he is

acutely aware of how Christianity has altered the terms of heroic action and called into question traditional ideas of heroism.¹⁰

Paul Cantor depicted Hamlet as a man torn between ancient and Christian conceptions of heroism. For him, the character of Hamlet exists exactly where these two worlds meet.

Similarly, to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been the subject of many studies since its publication in 1958. It has attracted much critical commentaries both by African scholars and non-African critics. Africa was crushed mainly under the European powers and greed until the middle of the 20th century. In this light, different literary works were written to express the harsh circumstances that the whole continent endured under the colonial control. Eventually, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi WaThiong'o's *Weep Not Child* (1964) and Alan Paton's *Cry The Beloved Country* (1948), can be best examples of weeping literatures¹¹. Hence, the writers highlight the early losses in Africa, blaming the white man for everything happened in Africa.

Simon Gikandi analyses *Things Fall Apart* in his book *Reading Chinua Achebe* (1991). He declares that the novel is dominated by real and historical events and argues that the opening of *Things Fall Apart* can be read as an imaginary response to the problems of cultural identity, which has haunted Igbo culture. Indeed, Achebe provides a description of Okonkwo's power and his link to his Umuofia community that gives him a high status. He evokes this to show that Umuofia has origins and history¹². Furthermore, Gikandi argues that Achebe uses Okonkwo, a unique character, to reflect Igbo culture, because he has extraordinary capacity for fight represented here by his wrestling power. Gikandi says:

Now, it is true that [...] Achebe seems to eschew judgments: in fact, his representations here and elsewhere are intended to naturalize Okonkwo's situation, to show him and his village in terms which have often been described as universal. Thus, while many other novelists might be tempted to highlight Okonkwo and his culture.¹³

In the book *Modern Critical Interpretation in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (2010), Harold bloom collects some essays that deal with *Things Fall Apart*. He describes the novel to be a

historical one, set in the British colony of Nigeria. Hence, he asserts that *Things Fall Apart* portrays the Nigerian history under the enterprise of colonialism. Bloom refers to Okonkwo's tragic death to be an aesthetic tragedy set by Achebe since it stands as a sign of refusing change ¹⁴.

In *The African Novel* (2009), F. Irele Abiola reads *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of its dialogue with the English novel and writes:

The novels of Henry Rider Haggard and Joyce Cary, and in particular Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*, come readily to mind here. It is in this regard that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* came to assume an innovative significance, as regards theme and reference as well as narrative idiom, almost immediately upon its publication in 1958¹⁵.

From that fact, Achebe achieved canonization with his first novel, recovering the last half of the twentieth century. He succeeds to portray his love for Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Lame Maatla Kenalemang, in her dissertation *An Analysis of Pre- and Post- Colonial Igbo Society of Things Fall Apart* (2013), aims at analyzing the effects of European colonization on the Igbo culture. She focuses on revealing how the sudden arrival of the white men to Umuofia creates great changes in political structures and institutions. The Europeans started their missionary activities by introducing their culture and religion that are later imposed on Igbo people.

In *Things Fall Apart*, "Achebe argues, that both perfections and imperfections of their culture and traditions that made them different from western cultures"¹⁶. In other words, *Things Fall Apart* according to him is purposefully describing the cultural heritage of the Igbo society, which endures colonial oppressions that brought changes.

In the light of the above review, we can consider that *Things Fall Apart* portrays how the African people fight for their identity during colonialism and this through the portrayal of Okonkwo's real life and deeds that bring him fame and power despite the fact that it leads to his own demise.

As for William Shakespeare who highlights the impact of the Elizabethan era on the Europeans as wealth and power conducts people to commit crimes and seek for revenge. It is shown in Hamlet's eventual life under the influence of fame and power even though it also leads to his own demise. By this we deduce that both novels share the same actions and notions of life even if steeped in different

cultures and eras. These actions and notions are reflected in themes of heroism and loss, represented in the main character's mental state and behavior.

2- ISSUE AND WORKING HYPOTHESIS:

It follows from the review of literature devoted to William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* that the two works have received a great deal of criticism. The critics and researchers explored the meanings of each of *Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart* and focused on aspects as tragedy, colonialism, and culture. Yet, despite the great number of studies carried on the two works to be investigated, and according to the best of our knowledge, there is no comparative study to have dealt with the issues of our major themes namely, Heroism and Loss in both works. For this reason, we have undertaken the task of examining the two works in relation to their contexts from a tragic perspective.

Our intention in this research is to deal with Shakespeare's dramatization of the Renaissance ideas and Achebe's restoring of the African Culture by dramatizing the theme of heroism. It is important to show how Shakespeare portrayed Hamlet as the embodiment of Renaissance and medieval heroism. Likewise, Achebe shows how Okonkwo is a traditional hero, whose values of achievements and heroism are strongly anti-colonial. Therefore, *Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart* lend themselves to a comparative study with a focus on the theme of heroism, and how this theme bears to both the tragic genre of the two works, and their respective contexts. Linked to this theme is the one of loss which confers a tragic end to both plots, as both of Hamlet and Okonkwo witness a change of fortune which completely isolates them from the rest of their respective communities and leads them to demise.

3-DISSERTATION OUTLINE:

To achieve our aim, we have exposed our theme in general, in the section of Method and Materials, we have mentioned the biographies of the authors and explained our method and then we summarized both the play and the novel. In the Results section, we will explore our findings. In the

Discussion section, that we are going to divide into two parts we are going to present heroism according to Aristotle and analyze both works *the tragedy of Hamlet* (1601) by William Shakespeare and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe relying on Aristotle's Poetics.

Second, the next part is devoted to highlight loss in both protagonists and the plot from a tragic point of view referring to Aristotle's *Poetics*. In our conclusion, we will end up by showing what we have reached as the final resolution to our problematic and issue.

II-METHODS AND MATERIALS:

1- Methods:

The purpose of this section is to explore the theory that we think is relevant to our study of the two works. Therefore, we focus on the important characteristics and definitions of Aristotle's theory of tragedy that are developed in his book *Poetics*. We intend to look for key theoretical elements which will help us to analyze the affinities and differences between William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

a. Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy: Poetics

To check our hypotheses and analyze the above-mentioned issue, we decided to follow and borrow some concepts from the theoretical aspects of Aristotle's Poetics because both *Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart* are tragedies, and their plots are made of tragic events to show Heroism and loss through the protagonists. In order to achieve our aim, we need first to expose the meaning of each concept apart. Aristotle defines tragedy as:

An imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play in the form of action, not of a narrative, through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.¹⁸

According to Aristotle, tragedy has six main elements: plot, characters, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle. Among the six, we focus only on the two important components that Aristotle calls plot and characters. According to him, "The plot is the source and the soul of tragedy; character is second"¹⁹. In facts, plot is the main element that constitutes and underlies the principle of tragedy. It is the structure and the arrangement of the tragic events.

Hence, by plot Aristotle means: ‘A whole is that which has a beginning, middle and an end’²⁰. Aristotle is talking about an ordered structure. In the beginning, everything goes in the right way but there is a rising action that brings the problematic into its climax in the middle; and at the end, the situation falls into a tragic end. In addition, some plots are simple, others complex because of the serious issue, Aristotle explain:

By a simple action I mean one which is, in the sense defined, continuous, and unified, and in which the change of fortune comes about without reversal or recognition. By complex, I mean one in which the change of fortune involves reversal or recognition or both ²¹[...] A perfect tragedy should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. Aristotle used Oedipus as a perfect example of tragic hero²².

According to him, the structure of an ideal tragic plot structure must be complex and full of high pity and fear. Aristotle considers that the complex plot is the best one for a well-made tragedy, because it contains three elements. “Reversal” is defined to be the change by which the action goes round to its opposite. He says that the actions are reversed from good to bad. “Recognition” referred to a change from ignorance to knowledge. The actions happen throughout a time which makes someone awaken from his ignorance to awareness. “Suffering” is an action that involves destruction or pain like death, extreme agony in full view ²³.

The complexities of the incidents are succeeding one after another, and this represents the middle part of the complex plot according to Aristotle. Therefore, Hamlet’s desire for revenge along with the grief of his father’s death is led to kill innocent people. Likewise, Okonkwo’s personality begins as brave and heroic shifts ends into a coward and weak. In this way, Achebe refers to him as he was “deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart”²⁴.

b. Aristotle’s Concept of Ideal Tragic Hero:

As it is already mentioned, the second main element of tragedy is characters. The protagonist in tragedy is called a ‘tragic hero’. As Aristotle defines him:

A person who is not outstanding in moral excellence or justice; on the other hand, the change to bad fortune which he undergoes is not due to any moral defect or depravity, but to an error of some kind. He is one of those people who are held in great esteem and enjoy great good fortune, like Oedipus, Thyestes, and distinguished men from that kind of family²⁵.

The tragic hero is a literary character who makes a judgment error that inevitably leads to his own destruction. This hero must arouse the feeling of pity and fear in the audiences or the readers because pity and fear are the main objectives of tragedy. Aristotle believes in *Poetics* that if a gentleman moves from prosperity to adversity, we take pity on him but we do not feel fear, as the example of Hamlet and Okonkwo. Therefore, the change in fate of the character is due to his errors, and this is what Aristotle calls “**Hamartia**”²⁶. In fact, The Greek concept refers to the tragic flaw or error made in ignorance or through misjudgment that experiences a dramatic reversal. Thus, it is the change from his **hubris** or pride to bad fortune.

The Tragedy of Hamlet and Things Fall Apart are two works that match with Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. Both protagonists are regarded as “tragic heroes”; they share the same concepts of Aristotle’s tragic theory. In both works, Hamlet and Okonkwo endure their objectives at any cost. Even though they lose everything, both characters are considered tragic heroes. They have completed their missions in life even if it was death to themselves or to others.

2-Materials:

a. Biography of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is a well-known English poet, playwright and actor. He was born on April 26, 1564, at Stratford-upon-Avon, England. He was popular for his mastery of the poetical and literary forms as well as his capacity to represent the different aspects of the human nature. He wrote approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and a variety of other poems²⁷. He is among the greatest in the English language and in Western literature. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Shakespeare has explored various popular themes among which, we can mention madness, love, and death. Included in his famous tragedies- *Hamlet* (1600-1601), *Othello* (1603-1604), *King Lear* (1605-1606) and *Macbeth* (1606)²⁸. These plays capture the complete range of human emotion, fate and conflict based on character's flaw. Since madness during the Renaissance era was a popular subject, Shakespeare wrote about it because of his audience. Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616.

b. Summary of *The Tragedy of Hamlet* 1601:

Hamlet is a tragedy set in ancient Denmark during the Elizabethan era. It presents an impressive assemblage of intellectual ideas, ethical system, social norms, and literary conventions of the Renaissance, as evolved from the classical period through the medieval era. Hamlet's central focus is on the moral struggle of his main character, the prince Hamlet. However, his request consists of grief, revenge, and pride concerning his father's death. In fact, Shakespeare's protagonist holds an elevated position in his society, being a thoughtful, contemplative, and intellectual man.

It is a play telling a story of a young man on an average of 30 years old, living in Denmark the son of Hamlet the first. Young Hamlet loses his father being murdered by his own uncle called Claudius. The latter takes advantage of his brother's death, he marries his wife. Consequently, Hamlet gone mad and insane as he found himself as an orphan adding to that the throne of the castle is taken from him.

Because of the eventual events, Hamlet developed delusions as he saw a ghost and believed it is his father's. The ghost illustrated his father's murder scene and commands him to avenge him. In his path of doing so, he makes many errors of judgment that sinks all of him and the neighboring persons. Though Hamlet considered on further reflection to seek evidence since at first, he could not believe the ghost's suggestions. Consequently, he attempts several investigations, the outcome of this latter leads him to act completely insane and induced him commit several crimes including Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who because of Hamlet's strange behavior Claudius hired them to spy on him. Once Hamlet discovered the affair, he planned to kill his uncle despite the poor prospect. Hamlet assumed to avenge his father's death atrociously so, when he gets the chance to kill his uncle

he abandoned since Claudius was praying at that moment. Hamlet believed that may save his soul from the guilt while he wanted him to suffer and be placed in hell.

In another attempt, while Hamlet was talking to his mother, he heard noise behind the curtains and without any hesitation he speared there thinking it would be Claudius but unfortunately, so he kills Ophelia's father. Consequently, Ophelia could not afford the grief and while she was collecting flowers she drowns in a stream. Laertes Ophelia's brother was apprised of Hamlet's part in his father and sister's deaths; so, he challenged him to a facing match with the presence of Claudius who, later convinced Laertes to switch from the traditionally blunted sword to one sharpened tipped with deadly poison. Claudius also added poison to Hamlet's drink for extra security.

As far as the battle began things quickly gone wrong. Both Laertes and Hamlet became wounded by the same poisoned blade. Gertrude, as a witness thought her son approached victory; she accidentally drunk from the poisoned cup. Therefore, Hamlet Saw his mother dying, by anger he knifes and kills Claudius saying to follow his mother and both of Claudius and Hamlet dies. Thus, Fortinbras brake into the castle at the current moment to see the end of the chaos; he found all of them laying down died so he took the throne.

c- Biography of Chinua Achebe:

Chinua Achebe, in full Albert Chinua lumogu Achebe, was born in November 16, 1930, he was raised in the large village of Ogidi, in Eastern Nigeria²⁹. He graduated from Ibadan University studying medicine and literature in 1953. He published his first novel; *Things Fall Apart* (1958) that has been translated into 30 languages³⁰. He has published novels, short stories, essays, and children's books. Many of his novels deal with the social and political problems facing his country. Of his novels, *Arrow of God* (1964) won the New Statesman- Jock Campbell Award, and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) was a finalist for the 1987 Booker Prize (Chinua Achebe, 1958)³¹.

He was one of the founders of a Nigerian literary movement that drew upon the traditional oral culture of its indigenous peoples³². In 1958, he published *Things Fall Apart* as a response to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) novel, that treat Africa as a primitive and cultureless foil

for Europe³³. Achebe's choice of language was thus political. He composes his work in the language of the colonizer which is one of the characteristics of postcolonial writers. He died on March 21, 2013, in Boston, United States³⁴.

d- Summary of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:1985

Things Fall Apart is a story about the African society during the colonial period. It describes how African people deal with the change of many aspects in their society including laws, traditions, and religion. Achebe worked to create a clearer picture of the cultural values and attitudes of the African people. The story centers on Okonkwo's life as the protagonist who suffers from many problems caused by Colonialism. However, his main issue is the fear to become like his father, Unoka, who is described as a lazy, unsuccessful person therefore he is referred to as *Agbala* or a failure as a result he dies in a shameful death and left numerous debts.

Unoka is strongly abhorred and hated by Okonkwo; he works hard just to break down his father's weakness. He does not want to be a failure like him. He shows himself as a different person from his father. Okonkwo is a powerful leader and respected warrior within the Igbo community. His first personal fame was at the age of eighteen; defeating Amalinze the Cat, the strongest fighter who has won for nine years in a wrestling contest.

Okonkwo is motivated to gain titles and wealth despite his father's failure, so he started to open fields and plant yams. Although it was a difficult time to farm, he could prove his success. He has three wives and many children who have their own houses. He gains several titles and becomes a respected person in his clan. Okonkwo dominates and organizes his family in a severe way; even he does not tolerate any mistake his family made. For instance, whenever he feels his son Nwoye is a weak and failed to do something, he uses violence to change his behavior.

As the novel develops, Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son, after Ezeudu's funeral. Okonkwo and his family exiled from Umuofia for seven years. They are sent to his mother's village Mbanta. During this period of exile, Colonialism enters to Umuofia. The white missionaries build a church in the land part of the Evil Forest given by the village leader.

When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, he is sad from the new state of his clan and considers the white's change as the enemy. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, also joined the Christianity with many others that make Okonkwo feel disappointed. Therefore, he does not hesitate for repressing the white man's church in Umuofia. Okonkwo realizes that his clan will never go to war, and everything has fallen apart for him. By the end of the last chapter, Okonkwo chooses to commit suicide by hanging himself which is considered as a sinful act. He preferred to die and not to live under the colonizer's domination. The customs: after Okonkwo's suicide, his body will not be touched. It is seen as an evil and indignation for the land in the Igbo culture.

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Results:

This dissertation is a comparative study between William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (1601) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Its aim is to study the similarities and differences between the chosen works. To reach our aim, we relied on Aristotle's theory of Tragedy which is developed in his *Poetics*. The First chapter deals with the issue of heroism and the second one discusses the issue of loss in the same works.

This research allowed us to discover that the two novels deal with the same issues which characterize the Renaissance and the Post-colonial literatures: heroism and loss. We have come also to discover that even though the two novels are produced by two writers belonging to different backgrounds (western and African) and in different historical periods (European Renaissance and African anti-colonial struggles), the two discourses have affinities in the representation of characters and the way they face the different situations. At the end of both works, the main characters suffer a gradual loss in their honor, male power, and the sense of duty.

Indeed, both Shakespeare and Achebe deal with the excess of ambition for power and reputation through their protagonists who achieve heroism in their different societies. Both Hamlet and Okonkwo pass through tragic events and circumstances. This led to their fall and loss. Their tragedies are evident in the close relationship between Heroism and loss in both, William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (1601) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

IV-Discussion:

Chapter I: The Representation of heroism in William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:

This chapter of the research deals with the representation of heroism in *Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart* through the study of the main characters referring to Aristotle's theory. It focuses on the great actions of Hamlet and Okonkwo over their societies in order to attain their right place and image of fame and power. The two characters reflect many social norms presented in the Elizabethan era and the Igbo society. Indeed, their personalities represent many of the same values of people of the time while *Things Fall Apart*, has been central to the clash between the colonial government and the traditional culture of the indigenous Igbo people. Likewise, *Hamlet* reflects its society mirroring the monarchial form of government during the Renaissance era.

By heroism we mean all the qualities and the impressive actions of a hero or heroine as bravery, nobility, valor, etc....¹. Heroism is a concept that is simple at its surface. A straightforward definition that is at first satisfying is to act in a pro-social manner despite personal risk. However, this surface masks several subtle, interrelated paradoxes that arguably make heroism one of the most complex human behaviors to study. Further, it seems likely that the contradictory nature of heroism is precisely what makes it compelling ².

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka states that: there are two basic tendencies in man's nature that build his personality first, a tendency of fight and prove his will then, a tendency to defeat without any will to gain his aims. The former is grounded in a desire to introduce changes into one's own life and the surrounding world, while the latter is grounded in a desire to preserve what one has achieved ³

A man fights heroically and defends his actions on which he joins the highest price, mainly values, and more, great ones. Heroism requires, therefore, recognition of values and conscious decision to take on highest risk in the fight for the realization or defense of

them; it must be the case that only one's heroic deed can secure both the victory and the significance of value. Fight and defense here reach their climax. Heroism becomes an idea of human dignity as well as the existence of mankind ⁴.

A- Heroism in *The Tragedy of Hamlet*:

The Shakespeare tragedy requires tragic heroes to be great, heroic and in high position. Aristotle states, "A hero is one of those people who are held in great esteem and enjoy good fortune, like Oedipus, Thyestes, and distinguished men from that kind of family"⁵. In most classical traditions, Hamlet would occupy the role of the hero since he is the protagonist of the play and a man who belongs to the elite and upper class. Aristotle thinks it is most tragic that these people in high status end in bad fortune.

As Hankiss summarized Hamlet's picture: at first a hero who wins over the world and himself, then a fragile young man who takes refuge in daydreams and melancholy, then a loveable and weak character that is too sophisticated both morally and emotionally, then a symbol of melancholy and Weltschmerz ⁶

a. Heroism of Hamlet:

There are many traits that make from Hamlet a hero such as the status; since Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark, he was in line for the throne while his father dies. Therefore, being a Prince exposed Hamlet's life to the public's eye incidentally; so many people in Denmark like and respect Hamlet⁷. His heroism in his attentive attention and his valiant heroic determination is to live by principle rather than by passion since he is a man of thought. He lives and dies by his wisdom because he is not only a man of actions.⁸ Therefore, Hamlet strands in the middle of a court full of corruption, faced with his father's death and his mother's almost immediate remarriage.⁹ Thus, he somehow comes out as a hero in the reader's minds as he has to face, both internal and external conflicts which consist of his moral scruples and the act of revenge.

Being a hero does not evade Hamlet to undertake abnormal actions, this lead him commit some errors such as when he was sent to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, where he sentences them to death by changing a death sentence to say their names instead of his own since he suspects them of playing him for a while: Why do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me¹⁰.

Besides, Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius instead of Claudius. Consequently, he becomes a threat to society and causes suffering to others through violating laws¹¹. These errors lastly mentioned includes Ophelia's madness which consists about her father's death, in which case Hamlet was the killer. This madness led Ophelia to commit suicide. This caused pain to Laertes who lost his father and sister, though he challenges Hamlet to fight with him, but in the process, Laertes got killed. Hamlet also causes Claudius to suffer because he teases him with the guilt of what he has done through the production the theatre group performed.¹²

Thereby, through Claudius's punishment Hamlet saved his own principles, and brings to justice his father's murderer. Hamlet's delay in revenge is flawed by emotion and the situation he faces¹³ due to his hesitation he gets angry on human reason and action¹⁴, which disabled him to accomplish his goal. Either, Rosencrantz's, Guildenstern's and Polonius' death and suffering are caused by Hamlet's actions, making him responsible for the crime.

b. Hamlet's Courage and Bravery :

Since Hamlet is the protagonist of the play, it is on his complexity that all the actions focus, being a popular and good-looking, smart and courageous in his behaviors and some confrontations in the tragedy. Hamlet, as a person, is noted and admired for courage, outstanding achievements and nobility. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge claims: "Hamlet is brave and not afraid of death"¹⁵.

Hamlet is a daring person since he is not afraid to follow the Ghost. However, he dares not to kill Claudius when the moment comes even though he knows that Claudius feels threatened by him and will do anything to prevent him from making his secret known. As well, he dares to talk to Gertrude in a rude way as he knows that she is too weak and too much of a loving mother to turn against him, further he dares to talk to Ophelia in a mad way, as a part of the plot he also takes the risk of going to England accompanied by Guildenstern and Rosencrantz while he had a guess as regards the purpose of the voyage. Eventually, he kills Polonius, noting that this is not bravery, rather foolishness. ¹⁶

Hamlet's courage is shown through the mission of revenge instructed by his late father's ghost. Young Hamlet not only accepts it, but also expands the mission to include purifying the whole court. Hamlet believes that his mission is not only to kill Claudius, but to kill corruption as well. Though, he does not consciously announce his goal to root out the corruption in the court, it can be seen through his reactions after killing Polonius and manipulating the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. His reaction upon realizing that he kills Polonius is not one of utter shock or one of regret; instead, Hamlet proclaims farewell to the wretched, rash, intruding fool ¹⁷

Hamlet's courage is not only shown in his mission of revenge; it is conveyed in other incidences in the play like not being afraid to follow the ghost in the fourth scene of the first act. Hamlet clearly knows about the dangers of following the ghost, as it can be a devil in disguise and easily takes Hamlet's life. However, Hamlet senses that the ghost might be his late father's spirit and therefore disregards his companions' warnings and follows it. This act shows his courage as he quells any fears that he may have and pursues the ghost in hopes that it may answer the question of his presence, even if it may cost him his life.

Another event in the play in which Hamlet's bravery is clearly shown is when he accepts Laertes' dual challenge. Even when Horatio warns him against taking the challenge

due to possible acts of trickery by Claudius, Hamlet dismisses it because he believes that 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends'; ¹⁸. This clearly shows his courage, as he can accept death, something that takes bravery and wisdom. Another aspect of Hamlet that brands him the hero of this play is his nobility. Before his father's death, Hamlet is a very intelligent man, sophisticated and cultured. However, one of his flaws was his lack of maturity dealing with death.

After his father's death, he changes but remains noble in essence. He is noble enough to give Claudius the benefit of the doubt, even after the ghost has revealed the truth to him. It is shown through the fact that he is willing to wait a few months until he can catch the conscience of the king¹⁹. His nobility also does not allow him to embarrass anybody in public. In private, he will speak his mind fully, as shown when he yells such atrocities as get thee to a nunnery ²⁰Ophelia in the nunnery scene. Another example of Hamlet speaking his mind in private is when he accuses the queen of living in the rank sweat of a seamed bed, Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love over the nastysty²¹ in the bedroom scene.

Hamlet courage and bravery played a major role on his heroic statue since he is a daring person, he is not afraid of taking actions, as before behaving he always think twice. These traits allowed him to establish a certain respect and resilience toward his family and friends, even his society. For example, as far as the ghost suggested him the mission of revenge, he set up a wise plan to fool his uncle so that he would report by himself. Thereupon, Claudius felt threatened and acted suspiciously. As well as, the case of Ophelia and Gertrude, where Hamlet allowed himself to face them in a rude and severe way.

B- Heroism in *Things Fall Apart*:

The cultural and traditional beliefs of the Igbo community show the standards of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a process of heroism with a finer description of the African social ideals in the Igbo tribe. The issue of heroism investigated here has diverse meanings.

It indicates among other things status in society, titles, respect...etc. Indeed, "Achebe" indicates the role of man in Igbo society, as a powerful and popular in the village of Umuofia much celebrated and admired for his manly prowess and heroism. Okonkwo represents this standard in his tribe before the invasion of the British colonialism.

a. Power and Reputation:

At the beginning of the novel, Achebe portrays Okonkwo as the famous person in his clan. He presents the first title that he has won as an act of courage and bravery in a confrontation. Accordingly, his defeat of Amalinze, *'The Cat'* stands as an embodiment of courage and success, which happens to be the highest ideal of Igbo culture. Achebe says:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements as a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat'. Amalinze was the greatest wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino [...]; Okonkwo's fame "had grown like a bushfire in the Harmattan"²².

From the above quotation, we can understand that Okonkwo's position as a pillar of strength, identify his honorable identity. His achievement grows fast and is considered unstoppable. He has won his reputation as a warrior and a wrestler becoming one of the lords of the clan. This suggests that it prominent to show power in the Igbo society. If there are big fighters, there are powerful men, and no one will argue this fact. As Achebe says: "Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands, he could eat with king"²³

It is Okonkwo's achievements that have enabled him to take part in his society. The lines quoted above show that he enjoys a high status from an early age among the elderly who can only achieve high positions in old age. He is still young but has attained great fame despite his poor family backgrounds. The elders of the Igbo society invite him to take part in the important meetings of the village. He eats and drinks with the adults of his homeland,

because of his worth, fame and position. During that time, a man's position is judged in society by his achievements, not by years of age.

Okonkwo believes in power, determination, and self-confidence as tools of resistance that made him a great leader in his own society, he gains his people's respect. He is a man of power; he makes his fortune by the sweat of his brow. He rises to a high position through hard work and sincerity of serious efforts. At first, he starts by asking help from Nwakibie; a wealthy man to get yam seeds to be seen in his farm. Even when he gets the seeds, he still needs to work hard because the year when Okonkwo start farming was the worst year. This shows that he is a hardworking, as mentioned in the novel. Achebe states that:

He had sown four hundred seeds when the rain dried up and the heat returned. He watched the sky all day for signs of rain clouds and lay awake all night. In the morning he went back to his farm and saw the with erring tendrils. He had tried to protect them from the smoldering earth by making rings of thick sisal leaves around them. But by the end of the day the sisal rings were burned dry and gray. He changed them every day and prayed that the rain might fall in the night. But the drought continued for eight market weeks and the yams were killed ²⁴.

Okonkwo can achieve many things through his rise. He has been amazingly noticed that it has come in a short period. He is a self-made man who began from nothing yet has achieved a lot; "a farmer who is rich and has two barns full of yams who has just married his third wife"²⁵. During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cockcrow until the chickens went to roost²⁶. He is a strong man and rarely feels fatigue. But his wives and young children are not as strong. He can work from early morning to evening and he rarely feels fatigue as his routine in farm. Okonkwo surpasses his faulty background and reaches a great success. He wants to prove that he is unlike his father; he changes his life to be successful person. Okonkwo who is motivated to become a hero was not afraid of the forces that surrounded him"²⁷. He is grown upward from an ordinary birth and poverty to a status of influence to stand apart and differentiate himself from common people.

Okonkwo did not have the head in life which many youths usually tend to have [...] He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But despite these disadvantages; he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed, he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death²⁸.

From the quotation above, we can understand what drive Okonkwo's main motivation to be such an important figure in his society. All his efforts are resulted from his hatred toward his father and Okonkwo's unconscious mind to avoid becoming like him. Among the Igbo people, a man is judged by his worth not by his father's. Unoka is judged by people as an *Agbala*; which means a man or woman without titles.

From the beginning, Okonkwo achieves his success through hard work, he says yes; so, his chi; referring to God and clan agreed. He has no patience with unsuccessful men. Okonkwo's fear of failure probably is the basic cause of his downfall at the end. Unfortunately, Okonkwo has not a good relation neither with his father nor with his own son because he seems so much like Unoka. Okonkwo associate's manliness with aggression and feels that anger is the only emotion that he should display for this reason.

Achebe describes Okonkwo as a Bad-tempered person. He tends to do more action than talk as he furiously beat someone when he gets angry rather than talk first and says what he thought, or he feels. This is briefly said by the narrator in the novel that: "and he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fist"²⁹

Okonkwo beats his wives for no reason and threatens to kill them from time to time. Even though Okonkwo is polygamous, he is not demonstrative in his expressions of love and affection for his wives, children, kinsmen or friends. His clan believes in the view that demonstration of delicate feeling is a sign of weakness, unless it is the emotion of anger, since the only thing worth demonstrating was strength. He is not good at talking with people.

He prefers to talk with his power and fist as it is easier to him. Here is the difference between him and his friend Obierika who is much a man of thoughts than actions.

b. The Heroism of Okonkwo:

A hero must unite between physical skills and high intellectual ability. A hero must be impervious to emotions. This served as a constant reminder of the degree to which the title “hero” is a social construction (Rankin & Eagly, 2008) that may or may not accurately reflect the actual merits of an individual’s actions³⁰. The narrator tells us that Okonkwo expresses no emotion other than anger. He is impassive about the harsh realities of life because this is the life of a leader. Obierika says:

What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out the whole families [...] 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.³¹

The quotation above indicates that Okonkwo is obliged to accomplish a sacrifice in order to appease *Ani*, the Earth goddess for breaking the religious views of the clan on several occasions. For instance, he beats his wife Ojugo aggressively in the sacred week. For this offense, Okonkwo is commanded to make amends: he must take a goat, a hen, some cloth, and a hundred cowries to the earth goddess. He also kills accidentally a clansman what leads him to be punished and exiled to his motherland Mbanta for seven years. He is obliged to restart again a new life there. Achebe states: “Okonkwo’s gun exploded, and a piece of iron had pierced the boy’s heart [...] it was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed must flee from the land”.³²

Chinua Achebe captures how Colonization can affect tradition and how Imperialism and European influence can change culture in Africa. During Okonkwo’s exaltation, there are many changes taking place. After the coming of the white man and Christianity position have grown stronger. Therefore, Umuofia and Mbanta have greatly changed and lost their

culture. Okonkwo comes with a strong determination to free his people and his son Nwoye who has converted to the new rules of the new life. People lost the power to fight. Okonkwo knows that he lost his place and realizes the end of his tribe.

Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had left the other messenger's escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices asking; "why did he do it". He wiped his machete on the stand and went away.³³

Okonkwo's return from exile is a persistent reference to his Nationalism. At the end, he tries to regain his dignity and earlier identity, but it is too late, so, as a great man, Okonkwo cannot face the reality even to escape from it. His people ignore him as they are only interested in the white religion and government. He could not adapt or survive with this new culture; he takes a decision to commit suicide by hanging himself. Achebe writes: "that man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself, and now he will be buried like a dog..."³⁴

As a result, Okonkwo's is represented as a disappointment to the Umuofia people. It is unambiguously imprinted in their minds that there had been an irreversible break with the past. Umuofia would never again be what it was. Farnood Jahangiri (2015) affirms that Okonkwo is the conventional hero in the tragedies and is a hero with whom the readers sympathize, and his end is the result of his own pride he represents his clan with all its positive and negative aspects³⁵. He is victimized by his own ideas of masculinity and manhood.

End Notes:

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Chapter II: The Representation of Loss in William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:

In this chapter, we continue our analysis in terms of affinities, which appear in the themes of heroism and loss through the study of the characters of both of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It is important to note that we focus on the protagonists whether they fit or not to the characteristics of Aristotle's Tragedy. As we have already mentioned in the previous chapter, both writers present the image of fame and heroism and the way the main characters are facing difficulties that impose on them certain aggressive reactions. Hamlet and Okonkwo experience a serious loss of power and respect, and such a fall affects the whole Western and African nations.

Loss as a concept is defined in Merriam Webster Dictionary to be the act of destroying and ruining. It is the harm or privation resulting from losing or being separated from someone or something¹. In fact, a loss occurs when an event is perceived to be negative by individuals involved, and it results in long-term changes in one's social situations, relationships, or way of viewing the world. Death is the event most often thought of as a loss, but there are many others².

A. The Representation of Loss in *Hamlet* 1601:

The theme of loss is depicted in *Hamlet* throughout the play. He portrays the underlying theme of madness and loss of his father that triggers his insanity and quickly starts to stray further from reality causing him to ponder suicide and seek revenge. It is evident that Hamlet loses his mind in the play because he loses the throne. His father's murder and his mother's ultimate remarriage led his uncle Claudius to take his place. As a result, Hamlet decides to take revenge for his father due to the grief he feels for him. Within the play, Hamlet does not only lose everything worthy, but also loses himself. First he loses his father being murdered, and the grief he felt for him drives him to lose his mind resulting, in the hallucinations he gets assuming a ghost talking to him in order to avenge his father's murder. Then, it comes Loss of his two special women in his life, first his mother being

married to his uncle and his beloved one Ophelia who committed suicide. All of these were components that lead to his demise.³

a. Hamlet's Loss of Father and Throne:

Hamlet's first loss consists in the suspicious death of his beloved and respected father in a sudden way. Even King Claudius, supports the young Hamlet in his serious mourning. It is shown in the first act as Claudius talks of Hamlet's behavior:

"Tis sweet and commendable in your nature [...] but to persevere in obstinate condolment are a course of impious stubbornness. Is unmanly grief".⁴

Hamlet is heartbroken at the loss of his father, which was reflected in his outlook on life. He regards Denmark as a prison and speaks to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of having bad dreams. Therefore, Hamlet expresses his pain due love and loss.⁵ Consequently, just after King Hamlet's death, young Hamlet goes in a self-depression. Because of the Queen's support and her remarriage, the throne goes to Claudius, what pushes Hamlet to go beyond his mind. There's a line where Hamlet alludes to this process in the fifth act: He that hath killed my king and whor'd my mother, popped in between th' election and my hopes, Thrown out his angle for my proper life"⁶

The quotation above suggests that the marriage is approved by a combination of King Hamlet's will, Gertrude's support, and with the opinion of the gathered nobility led Claudius to assume the throne over Prince Hamlet.

b. Hamlet's Inability to cope:

Most of the conflict comes from Hamlet's internal struggle of deciding whether he should trust the words and appearance of his father's ghost. Though, he seeks proof. This comes to show Hamlet's inability to trust the ghost because he does not believe the existence of his father's ghost is possible; he believes that the apparition might be a devil trying to lure him in committing an unjustified act, and he needs to rely on Claudius's reaction to the play and validate his trust with the Ghost. Therefore, he decides to organize a play with different

sequence of events the ghost tells him about his father's murder scene to depend on Claudius's reaction to help him validate those words. As Hamlet says:

I'll have these players play something like the murder of my father before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks. I'll tent him to the quick. If he does blench, I know my course.⁷

In the passage above, Hamlet explains that he will have the players play something of what the ghost claimed about pouring poison in his ear "like the murder of my father" and then he will observe his reaction for any suspicious signs. If Claudius does indeed react in an apprehensive manner, then Hamlet will know that he can trust the ghost's words, otherwise he will stay hesitant of doing the deed.⁸

c. Hamlet's loss of mind:

Loss applies to Hamlet, after his father murder, the envy to revenge increased in his soul which caused his flaw by mixing things and acting unconsciously. Although Hamlet's seeks for revenge and rebellion, the continuation of loss during his life was one of the most aspects of his downfall.

It is made abundantly clear that Hamlet is going mad since the beginning of the play when he allegedly saw his father's ghost then, his madness increased to the point where he cannot distinguish between appearance and reality. Although in the beginning, Hamlet planned to act insane, so that he can confirm the ghost's claims about Claudius being the one to murder his father, King Hamlet; it ends with him going crazy and eventually led to his death therefore his tragic flaw.⁹

Hamlet's tragic flaw which, according to Merriam Webster dictionary, means: a flaw in character that brings about the downfall of the hero of a tragedy¹⁰; is his tendency to over think scenarios and decisions, while procrastinating any real action, which leads in part to his eventual murder. According to Aristotle's rules, the hero's downfall is partially his own fault. Their downfall comes from a brief mishap in judgment¹¹. This is immediately verified with the story of Hamlet, while he chooses not to kill Claudius since he believes

him to be praying and cleansing himself of sin. So, Hamlet chose not to commit the deed. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying, and now I'll do't, and so he goes to heaven?¹²

d. Hamlet's loss of the beloved ones:

The loss of loved ones can be overwhelming and painful in mourning. Thus, the effects of loss are expressed through the practice of grief. Hamlet presents deep love and affection for Ophelia prior to his father's murder. Hamlet's undeniable love for Ophelia is often tested throughout his grieving period by the unfortunate actions of the people surrounding him. In some of the opening scenes, the reader starts to see how Hamlet's mental state begins to dwindle by saying: Thine evermore, dearest lady whilst this machine is to him¹³.

Prior to Hamlet's unstable behavior, regardless of his status as Prince, he truly had the notion of marrying her. Hamlet begins to question Laertes' love by asking him things like would you cry or fight or starve or even die buried in this grave with her. Thus, Hamlet was ready to do all these latter for Ophelia. Hamlet's mishap of judgment leads to his own death and exceeded to the crimes he did by seeing his own mother die after having been poisoned by Claudius, whose poison was intended for Hamlet. Also seeing Ophelia being placed into her grave, shows regret and sadness for Hamlet because he realizes the actions that blinded his mind and ultimately caused the loss of his true love. till I have caught her once more in mine arms: Leaps into the grave¹⁴

The loss of two loved ones and losing his own life accumulates Hamlet's mistakes though he found himself lost so he starts asking himself if he even has to pursue his revenge mission or just let it down. While trying to revenge his father's murder, he even loses his own soul as he also died at the end of the play as Shakespeare tells "O I die Horatio"¹⁵

Nevertheless, Hamlet, as a character is just as guilty of **hubris** which, according to Merriam Webster dictionary, is an exaggerated pride or self-confidence¹⁶ that fed his inability to act. His adamancy that his uncle pays for his father's death regardless of the casualties highlights his pride as his downfall which is literally called Hamartia. According to Aristotle, the term describes the error of judgment which ultimately brings about the tragic hero's downfall¹⁷. That pride has paralyzed him that it became a reason for his failure to act, prevents any viable, adult, or honorable reaction until he has lost almost all grips on sanity. Due to his lack of action, Hamlet in this play is bound by flaws and events in his life that lead him to his fatal doom. He is consumed by a specific tragic flaw which leads to the death of his loved ones and himself.

Hamlet is not responsible for the events which complicate the plot, his continuous awareness and doubt delays him in performing the needed. So far, Hamlet is endangering his freedom and his life but his failure here is the cause of all the Hamartia and it is usually translated as "tragic flaw" and much often the character's Hamartia involves hubris. His madness, his impulsive behavior and most importantly, his indecisiveness or 'change of mind' can be considered as his Hamartia or tragic flaws.¹⁸ The latter results to different undesirable consequences, Hamlet has proven that Claudius is the real murderer of his father, as Shakespeare says:

“ O vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I? ay sure, this is most brave,
That I, the son of the dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven, and hell”¹⁹

However, when he had the chance to kill Claudius, he could not afford it to not fall in the deed since he wanted him to suffer in hell and not reach heaven, he wanted him to get an awful death. Shakespeare states: “so am I reveng’d: that would be scann’d, a villain kills my father, and for that I hid sole son, do this same villain send to heaven”²⁰.

As a result, we deduce that Hamlet states a tragic flaw as a conflict between his good and bad side which make him suffer and ends in death. This tragic flaw also brings suffer to him when he thinks too much to decide to continue on living or to commit suicide, he finds himself lost in his own soul. In the case of Hamlet, he had lost his natural state and makes way for the bad in him to take over of his actions when he is no longer guided by his reason and intellect anymore.

B. Loss in *Things Fall Apart*:

Things Fall Apart is the definitive tragic model about the dissolution of the African Igbo culture by English Imperialism. It is about the tragic fall of the protagonist, Okonkwo, and the Igbo culture at the same time. At the beginning of the novel, Okonkwo is pictured as a heroic and influential leader within the Igbo community of Umuofia in Eastern Nigeria. He first earns personal fame and distinction and brings honor to his village. Then at the end, he faces many trials and tribulations because of the white man's encroachment of Igbo land. Therefore, he is doomed by his inflexibility and hubris and the fear of failure leads to his downfall.

In the light of loss, Achebe suggests many reasons leading to this tragedy. He also attempts to analyze the different cultural elements, such as language, culture, and religion in Igbo society and how they change because of the colonizer's domination. He makes a clear socio-cultural awareness for his readers about changing life in the Umuofia society. The novel narrates every important aspect of African society including the struggles of the Igbo people. One important problem in this novel is about the colonialism that creates some conflicts related to identity and tradition. It indicates how the simple villagers cannot escape the presence of colonialists and finally the Umuofia with all their complexity and integrity fall down.

At the end of the novel, Achebe exhibits how change should not rule someone's life. Okonkwo does not only lose his tribe, his family, and his religion; but he also loses himself along the way. Aristotle states that "Man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but,

when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all"²¹. Change was inevitable, and Okonkwo is afraid of it. He is not ready to accept, and to live within the rules of white men. After the loss of most of the important things in Igbo culture, it does not make sense to him to stay alive. Colonialism affected Umuofia in many ways making the Igbo culture disappear, and Okonkwo's death at the end represents the death of the Igbo culture as well. Achebe says:

Seven years was a long time to be away from one's clan. A man's place was not always there, waiting for him. As soon as he left, someone else rose and filled it. The clan was like a lizard, if it lost its tail, it soon grew another.²²

a. Loss of Identity: Fall of Traditions:

Things Fall Apart significantly reflects the colonial effects on indigenous society. Before the advent of colonial power, the people of Umuofia lived in community, in an organic society of economic, religious, and cultural stability. Achebe argues, in an interview with Kwame Appiah that: "It is of course true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African"²³. However, it does not mean that Africans do not need to consider their history while rehabilitating a new identity and much more regaining dignity as Achebe strongly discusses as follows:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.²⁴

During Okonkwo's exile, a profound change comes over the region of Umuofia. The white men began to penetrate communities with new ideas, a new religion, and a new

government. Consequently, the natives are very much influenced by this change. The new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people's eyes and minds²⁵. This shows the strong influence the colonizer had on the natives. Moreover, the missionaries change and manipulate religion in order to fit their needs. They break the Igbo rituals by spreading Christianity through missionaries and teaching to make the natives forget about their religion. Thus, the prospect of change affects many characters among them Okonkwo's son Nwoye, who follows the white men's religion and became "one of them"²⁶.

The new religion causes a split between the Umuofian people. After seeing Nwoye with missionaries, Obierika asks him: "How is your father?" Nwoye replied: "I don't know. He is not my father"²⁷. In the light of this quotation, we notice how Christianity creates hatred between Umuofia's community members. As the numbers of converts grow, a great division begins to appear between those siding with the British and those remaining faithful to their own religion. In addition to Nwoye, Akunna negotiates with Mr. Brown and even gave his son to be taught the white man's education²⁸. However, Okonkwo resists the new political and religious orders; he does not accept what is brought by the white man. For him, he would not be manly if he consents to join and tolerate the British colonizer. However, with their arrival, everything falls apart.

To highlight Okonkwo's failure, the authors indicate that he becomes an individual fighter in Umuofia. His success and failure repose on his ability to make an appropriate synthesis of the three values that make up his personality: male power, honor, and sense of duty. In fact, Okonkwo lives in a society, in which male power is at the center of traditional beliefs but after the coming of the colonizer, the society becomes destroyed. In this sense, Césaire states: "But colonial rule turns the social stability into instability and disintegration. The title of the novel itself signifies this claim- things are no longer in order; Colonialism has disordered them"²⁹.

Through the quotation above, we understand that colonialism destroyed Igbo social structure that was organic and well-formed. The British came with the idea of destroying the native's traditions in order to replace them by their own so as to fit their needs. The new system imposed on the Africans greatly influenced their values, their way of living, their system of production and all this influenced their relationships. Okonkwo says, when speaking about the colonizer, that:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart³⁰.

This quote refers to what the whites introduced in Africa such as churches, schools; The natives considered these institutions as a source of their community's destruction. Again, what is worth mentioning is that the confrontation between the British colonizer and the Igbo was at first at the level of religion, Christianity against the Igbo religion. Physical force was not the first mode of interaction used when the colonizer arrived in Mbanta or Umuofia. Their priority was not to kill, but to convert. "They came as missionaries and built their church there"³¹. Achebe states that "Christians had grown in number and were now a small community of men, women and children, self-assured and confident"³². Consequently, all was broken. Césaire states:

I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out³³.

So, Césaire conveys the idea that the Nigerian tribal culture was destroyed by the colonizer. The colonizer manipulated the spirit; his aim was to conquer the mind as well as the land. In other words, he tried to pacify people; to address their mind. This task was made by religious schools at the beginning (missionaries) but, soon these religious institutions were replaced by schools. At the end of the novel, one of the elders of the Umuofian community says to the Igbo people:

An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master: "I fear for you; I fear for the clan"³⁴ .

Thus, Igbo religion and traditions were replaced by Christianity to an extent that the natives began to forget about their ancestors and take side with the missionaries. Achebe states that the British colonizer reached "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger"³⁵. In short, many of the Igbo people were so influenced by the white colonizer that they denied their traditions and history.

b. Okonkwo's Fall:

Okonkwo's pride is evident in *Things Fall Apart* as it contributes to his actions that lead to exile and eventually suicide. At the beginning of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is treated with great honor and respect but by the end he has no pleasure in life at all. This shows how much power; pride have over Okonkwo to the point that he cannot bear living any longer. Killam in his book, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe* [1969], states that "Okonkwo was one of the greatest men in his time, the embodiment of the Igbo values, and the man who better than symbolizes his race"³⁶.

Obviously, Okonkwo's Hamartia is his fear of being called as weak and his refusal to be called as compatible in any way as he looks down on kindness. Hence, he prefers to portray masculinity and manly strength. This tragic flaw of him started to develop since he had given up his father, Unoka who lives in a life full of debts and cannot take a good care of his own family. Nevertheless, Okonkwo's masculinity is driven by his fear of being called weak and this makes it a tragic flaw. According to Anyokwu (2009), "There is nothing more despicable than fear. The spirit of fear is the ruling passion of a coward, and a coward can never be a hero"³⁷.

This tragic flaw causes Okonkwo to make a bigger error in judgment when he kills Ikemefuna due to his inability. He does not admit that he cares and loves him even more than his own son and to avoid himself being called as a coward. Although Ogbuefi Ezeudu comes to warn him to not interfere and lay his hand on Ikemefuna, Okonkwo still goes against the command of God (Friesen, 2006, p. 2)³⁸. Hence, this shows that his tragic flaw had caused him to murder his beloved adopted son. Another example of Okonkwo's tragic flaw is when he cannot control his anger and beat his second wife, Ekwefi for a small mistake; cutting Okonkwo's banana leaves to wrap some food³⁹.

Once he returns from exile, he realizes that the Christians have begun to change the traditions of his home and he does not know how to restart. He questions his people, saying: "What is it that has happened to our people? Why have they lost the power to fight?"⁴⁰ Okonkwo will never accept what the colonizer must bring into Umuofia. He refuses to change his identity. Unfortunately, his return is not what Okonkwo had expected. Okonkwo discovers his new situation in Umuofia, where everything has changed radically: "It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen"⁴¹.

After everything Okonkwo has done to have an outstanding reputation, he has ruined all of it by taking his life. Even his banishment did not truly tarnish his name but because suicide is an abomination in Umuofia his clansmen will not remember him fondly. Just as the village does not remember Unoka fondly, Okonkwo has followed in his father's footsteps once again without realizing that he is making himself out to be his father's son. The main action of tragedy is the fall of a hero internally and externally. Externally, he goes on the hero falls from both power and respect; and internally he falls from peace of mind. Some of epic heroes fit this feature.

Aristotle was the mind behind the concept of tragic hero. A tragic hero is a hero who falls from good fortune to bad, it corresponds to the failure in action that evokes pity⁴². This

fall must be caused not by ill luck but at the fault of the tragic hero himself. As for Okonkwo then, the conflict that he is facing gives him no choice except to commit suicide. He makes the decision solely to protect his clan as he thinks that his clan would remember their national culture in facing colonization and his bravery to commit suicide, rather than leaving his life to the hand of the white men and become a prisoner of the other. Hence, his *hubris* brings him to a tragic end and makes him a tragic hero.

The downfall of the tragic hero is the culmination of all the events in the story come together. It is meant to evoke pity or fear in the audience. The hero's downfall is his own fault because of his own free choice, but his misfortune is not wholly deserved. The downfall is seen as a waste of human potential and is due to excessive pride. Coming back into the village of Umuofia, Okonkwo believes that he will "return with a flourish and regain the seven years wasted"⁴³. This shows that his motivation has come back from when it was lost during his exile. He believes that his village will let him pick up where he left off, but he is gravely mistaken.

In conclusion, all of Okonkwo's features make him a tragic hero. Everything he does make him out to be a tragic hero. The struggle to keep the Igbo traditions alive is reflected in Okonkwo's resistance of change by keeping the values in high regard. Following the violence in which he kills a European messenger who tries to stop a meeting among clan elders, he realizes that he is no longer with his society. No one applauds his actions, and he sees that he is the only one who wishes to go to war with the Europeans. This novel shows Okonkwo's tragic flaw of fear, of weakness, and failure.

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V. GENERAL CONCLUSION:

Our choice of conducting the current research upon analyzing William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) seeks to understand how the two writers discuss the issues of Heroism and Loss in their representation of their protagonists who look like Aristotelian tragic heroes. No doubt, both Hamlet and Okonkwo are similar characters because they meet at two levels: heroism and loss.

Both of Hamlet and Okonkwo are on top of their world, proud and ambitious, powerful people. For them achieving heroism is very decisive since they have such a prestigious position in their communities. They both react by using their mental and physical strength. Hamlet, as the prince of Denmark, is respected and loved by people and Okonkwo who is represented as respectable leader of the Igbo community.

In both stories the reader can see a change in each of Hamlet and Okonkwo's status. Certain events lead to the fall of these once respectable men. Their failure leads to lose their respect, and place in their communities. Hamlet finds himself at odds with his country as he enters in apparent madness to revenge. Okonkwo finds himself alone between the white men and their rules; he is betrayed by his people and his tribe will not go to war.

As much as the two characters share many similarities in terms of heroic character, they also have many differences. We start by the main different point which is action. Indeed, Hamlet is pained by his procrastination; he is a man of thought whereas Okonkwo suffers from a need to heighten his reputation. However, Hamlet overanalyzes, Okonkwo within his aggressive masculinity, does not think at all. Okonkwo completely disregards the consequences of his actions, while Hamlet examines and reexamines its potential costs. These facts lead to feel pity and fear toward the heroes because of the approaching ordeal. Finally, we can say that both Okonkwo and Hamlet move themselves tragic heroes, since both die as a result of their heroic actions.

By conducting this research, we conclude that although *The Tragedy of Hamlet* and *Things Fall Apart* come from two different cultural and geographical boundaries they can meet consequently because they share a similar tragic vision linked to the complex relationships between men of value and their society in a period of trouble. In *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, the trouble is represented by the murder of the King and the usurpation of the throne of Denmark. In *Things Fall Apart*, the turmoil is caused by the intrusion of a foreign culture and religion brought to the heart of Africa by the white man. In the two cases, a struggle ensues leading to the tragic loss of valorous people who once made the grandeur of their communities.

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