



Travesty between Milton's *paradise lost book one* and Chinua Achebe's *things fall apart*.

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Abstract:

A comparison between a novel and a poem is a rare attempt. In many respects *Things Fall Apart* resembles *Paradise Lost*. There are many analogies, similarities, echoes between the two. Both the volumes have epic qualities in common like lengthiness, innumerable characters, legends, Invocation, long and dangerous journeys, Athletics, suspense, Homeric similes Vs oral traditions, colonialism, fate of man, long speeches, and swarms of Locust. The works deal with clash between the colonizer and the colonized. The natives of Africa are compared to fallen angles. Thus *Things Fall Apart* became a model for *Paradise Lost Book- I*.

Keywords: Analogy, Ivcation, Quasi-divine, cosmic sonorous, Lieutenant.

Introduction:

The term epic is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or the human race. The hero is figure of great nation or even cosmic importance. The setting of the poem is ample in scale, and may be worldwide or even larger. The scope of *Paradise Lost* is entire universe for it takes place in heaven, earth, in hell, and in cosmic space between. *Paradise Lost* includes the revolt in Heaven by the rebel angles against God. An epic is a ceremonial performance and is narrated in a ceremonial style which is deliberately distanced from ordinary speech and is proportioned to the grandeur and formality of the heroic subject and architecture. Hence Milton's grand style, syntax and his sonorous list of names and wide ranging allusions and his imitations of Homeric epic similes and epitethets. There are also widely used epic

conventions or formulas in the choice of ordering of episodes in the heroic plot; prominent among them are these features as exemplified in *Paradise Lost*. The narration begins by stating his argument, or epic theme invokes a muse or guiding spirit to inspire him in this great undertaking. The narrative opens with the fallen angels in hell gathering their scattered forces and determining on revenge. Thus Milton's epic, although its action focuses on the temptation and fall of man, there are catalogues of some of principal characters introduced in formal details as in Milton's description of the procession of fallen angels in book-I of *Paradise Lost*. These characters are often given set speeches that reveal their diverse temperaments and moral attitudes.

Thus the term epic is often applied, by extension to narratives which differ in many respects from their model but manifest the epic spirit and grandeur in the scale, the scope, and the profound human importance of their subjects.



Paradise Lost :

The poet first states briefly the theme of the poem – man’s disobedience and loss of Paradise to the machinations of Satan who, revolting from God, had been expelled from heaven with all his followers. The epic starts by plunging, according to convention, into the midst of things presenting Satan with his angels now fallen into hell-described as a place of utter darkness. They are all lying on a burning lake. Satan first recovers and calls upon his principal lieutenant Beelzebub. They confer on their miserable flight and awaken all the legions. Their important leaders are named, being identified with heathen gods Satan addresses them and comforts them with the hope of yet regaining heaven but he also tells them of a new world, and a new kind of creature to be created according to an ancient prophecy. To find out the truth of their prophecy, and what to do thereafter, he decides to summon a full council. Pandemonium is suddenly and miraculously built. The infernal spirits sit in council.

Things Fall Apart :

Okonkwo popularly known as ‘Roaring Flame’ and ‘Flaming Fire’ was the leader of nine villages. At the age of eighteen years he defeated ‘Amalinze the Cat’. A great warrior and great wrestler in Umofia beats his newly wedded wife for she goes to neighbour’s house to comb her hair. And Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezulu’s son when his gun explodes. He commits these two mistakes during ‘peace week’ and he was banished from Igbo society to suffer punishment for seven years in MBaino. By the time he returns to Umofia, Umofia was colonized by the British, a new government, court, English education, law and order and

new religion was established. He wanted to chase the British away but they grow into community. Okonkwo like an odd man out strives hard to save the community and in this process kills one of the British and kills himself. He commits suicide for two reasons, one is, his own son Nwoye joins the British and second reason being he does not want others to kill him. Thus the novel is a tragedy.

Invocation :-

Invocation can be seen in Milton’s prayer to Holyspirit.

Sing heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heaven’s and earth
Rose out of chaos; Or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa’s brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song’
That with no middle flight intend to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou of spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou knowst; thou from the
Wast present, and with mighty wings first
outspread
Dove- like satst brooding on the vast abyss
And mads’t it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence;
And justify the ways of God to men. (Paradise Lost
1-26)

Many years ago when Okonkwo was still a boy, his father, Unoka, had



gone to consult Agbala. The priestess in those days was a woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared. Unoka stood before her and began his story. "Every year", he said sadly,

"Before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ikejioku, the gods of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear. I weed-

"Hold your peace!" screamed the priestess, her voice terrible as it echoed through the dark void.

"You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You, Unoka are known in all the clan for the weakness of your matchet and your hoe. When your neighbors go out with their axe to cut down Virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms; but whereas you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man." *Things Fall Apart* (p.16)

1. Satan and Beelzebub resemble Okonkwo and Oberika in power, greatness, closeness and courage, pride and sense of revenge.

"Courage never to submit or yield." (*Paradise Lost* 108)

An Umofian man does not refuse a call (*Things Fall Apart* 174)

Okonkwo can be compared to Satan

"In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tower, his form yet not lost
All original brightness, nor appeared.
Less than archangel ruined.
But his face deep scars of thunder had
intrenched and care,
But his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage and considerable pride
Waiting revenge and cruel his eye but
Cast signs of remorse and passion to behold."
(*Paradise Lost* 598)

"Okonkwo was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a fierce look. He breathed heavily, and it was said, that when he slept his wives and children in their out-houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody." (*Things Fall Apart* 1,2)

2. The Homicide and Infanticide can be seen in both the volumes;

"First Moloch, horrid king besmeared with
blood

Of Human sacrifice, and parents tears,
Though for the noise of drums and trimbrels
loud.

Their children's cries unheard, that passed.

To his grim idol (*Paradise Lost* 395)

'Ye thence his lustful orgies he enlarged

Even to that hill of scandal, by the grove

Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate;

Till good Josiah drove their thence to hell". (*Paradise Lost* 418)

The man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised matchet, Okonkwo looked



away. He heard the blow. Pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemifuna cry, father, they have killed me ! as he ran towards him. Okonkwo drew his machet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak. (*Things Fall Apart* p 55)

“Satan’s weapons can be compared to weapons of Umofians. (Satan)

He scarce had ceased when the superior fiend was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield.

Ethereal temper, massy, large and round

Behind him cast; the broad circumference

Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb.

Through the optic glass the Tuscan artist views

At evening from the top of Fesole,

Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,

Rivers or mountains in her spotly globe.

His spear; to equal which the tallest pine

Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the most

Of great ammiral, were but a wand,”(*Paradise Lost* 294)

3. For two days after the destruction of the church nothing happened. Everyman in Umofia went about armed with a gun or machet. (*Things Fall Apart* 173)

“Though field be lost all is not lost

Unconquerable will, study of revenge, Immortal hate.” (*Paradise Lost* 107)

“A man’s place was not always be there, waiting for him, as soon as he left he left someone else rose and filled it. The clan was like a lizard. If it lost its tail it soon grew another. Okonkwo knew that he had lost his place among the nine marked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost his chance to lead his war like clan against the new religion, which he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have

taken titles in the clan. But some of the losses were irreparable.” (*Things Fall Apart*. 155)

In both *Paradise Lost* and *Things Fall Apart* there is a reference to Locusts.

“As when the Potent rod,

Of Amram’s son in Egypt’s evil day

Waved round the coast, up called a pitchy cloud

Of Locusts warping on the eastern wind,

That over the realm of impious Pharaoh hung

Like right, and darkened all the land of Nile.”

(*Paradise Lost* 343)

In chapter seven of *Things Fall Apart* we can see the mention of Locusts.

“And then the locusts came. It had not happened for many long years. The elders said Locusts came once in a generation reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another life time. They went back to their caves in a distant land, when they were guarded by a race of stunted men and after another life time these men opened the caves again and the locusts came to Umofia. They came in the cold Harmattan season after harvests had been gathered and ate up all the wild grass in the fields. And then quite suddenly a shadow fell on the world and sun seemed hidden, behind a thick cloud. But almost immediately a shout of joy broke out in all directions and Umofia which had dozed in the noon-day haze, broke into life and activity. ‘Locusts are descending’, was joyful chanted everywhere and men, women and children left their work or their play and ran into the open to see the Umofian sight. The Locusts had not come here for many, many years and only the old people had seen them before”.



At first a small swarm came . They were the harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly moving mass like a boundless sheet of black-cloud drifting towards Umofia. Soon it covered half of the sky and the solid mass was broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star. It was a tremendous sight full of power and beauty.

Every one was now talking excitedly and praying that the locusts should camp in Umofia for the night. For although Locusts had not visited Umofia for many years, everybody knew by instincts that they were very good to eat. And at last the locusts did descend. They settled on every tree and very blade of grass they settled on roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them and whole country became the brown earth-colour of the vast hungry swarm.

Many people went out with baskets trying to catch them, but elders counselled patience till night fall and they were right. Locusts settled in the bushes for the night and their wings became wet with dew. Then all Umofia turned out in spite of cold Harmattan and every one filled the bags and pots with Locusts. And next morning they roasted in clay-pots and then spread in the sun until they became dry and brittle. And for many days this rare food was eaten with solid-palm oil." (*Things Fall Apart*.51)

Satan's speech is compared to the speech of Okike.

"O Myriads of immortal spirits, O powers matchless

But with the almighty and that strife
Was not inglorious though the event was dire
As this place testifies and this dire change

Hateful to utler; but power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the depth of
Knowledge past or present could have feared
How such united force of gods how such
As stood like these could ever know repulse?
That all these puissant legions, whose exile
Hath emptied heaven, shall fail to re-assend
Self- raised and reposes their native seat?
Henceforth his might we know and know our
own
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New war, provoked, our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile".
(*Paradise Lost* p no.646)

The first man to speak to Umofia that morning was Okike, one of the six men who had been imprisoned. Okike was a great man and great orator. Okike sprang to his feet and also saluted his clansman four times and then he began to speak.

"You all know why we are here, when we ought to be building our barns or mending our huts, we should be putting our compounds in order. My father used to say to me: 'Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad day light, then know that something is after its life'. 'This is a great gathering. No clan can boast of great numbers of great valour. But are we all here? I ask you. Are all the sons of Umofia with us here? A deep murmur swept through the crowd. They are not. They have broken the clan and gone their several ways. We, who are here this morning, have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stronger to soil their father-land. If we fight the stranger we shall hit our brothers and perhaps shed the blood. But we must do it. Our fathers



never dreamt of such a thing. They never killed their brothers. But a white man never came to them. So we must do what our fathers have never done. We must root out this evil. We must root them out too, and we must do it now". (*Things Fall Apart* 183)

Pandemonium which means the "House of All Demons" can be compared to "Evil Forest" which is now house of Ekwugwus.

"A solemn council forthwith to be held

At Pandemonium, the high capital

O Satan and Peers; their summons called

From every band and squared regiment

By place or choice the worthiest; they anon

With hundreds and with thousands troopings
came

Attended. All access was thronged, the gates

And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
Thick swarmed both on the ground and in the
air

Brushed with the hiss of rustling wings.

Swarmed and were straightened: till the
signal

Behold a wonder! They but now who seemed

In Bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,

Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow
room

Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race

Beyond, Indian mount or Fairy elves.

Reduced their shapes immense, and at were
large,

Though without number still, amidst the hall

Of all that infernal court": (*Paradise Lost*
755-762, 768-769, 776-781)

"The next day all the marked Ekwugwus of Umofia assembled in the marketplace. They came from all quarters of the clan

and even from the neighboring villages. It was a terrible gathering. The eerie voices of countless spirits and bells that clattered behind some of them and the clash of matchets as they ran forward and backwards and saluted one another, sent tremors of fear into every heart. For the first time in living memory the scared bull-roarer was heard in broad day-light. The band of Ekwugwus moved like a furious-whirlwind- to Enoch's compound and with matchet and fire reduced it to a desolate heap. Discordant bells clanged, matchets clashed and the air was full of dust and weird sounds." (*Things Fall Apart* 168-170)

Thus while Invoking the Muse, Milton calls the spirit, which was present from the beginning and with mighty wings outspread sat dove-like brooding over abyss. As leaders both Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* they possess all qualities necessary for leadership. In describing Pandemonium Milton excelled all glories of human architecture. Human sacrifices in both '*Paradise Lost*' and *Things Fall Apart* prove to be futile. Milton admired Galileo because Galileo was a great rebel. Fallen angels are compared to Locusts that darkened the land of Nile. The speeches in both the works reveal greater form of Oratory. The speeches give us glimpse of the characters. They are the speeches of leader who loves his followers and is beloved by them.

References:

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