

**INVESTIGATING CONFLICT BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND
THE COMMUNITY IN AFRICAN FICTION: THE CASE OF
*NO LONGER AT EASE, ARROW OF GOD AND BITTERNESS***

By

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Grey Khondowe, 2021

DECLARATION

I, Grey Khondowe, declare that this dissertation is my own work, and has not previously been submitted at this or any other university. All citations and references have duly been acknowledged.

Signature:

Date.....

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation is approved as partial fulfilment for the award of a degree of Master of Arts in Literature by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction, namely *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, and *Bitterness* as primary texts. The main objectives were to investigate the nature and causes of conflict between the individual and the community. Focus was placed on how characters who portray their individuality are portrayed, and why they are portrayed in the manner they are, in the selected African novels. In addition, the study endeavoured to investigate how these individuals react to the way society responds to them. The study adopted the qualitative, desk research methodology, making use of three selected African novels: *No longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, and *Bitterness*. Secondary texts were also made use of. The study found that individuals who express their individuality are portrayed in a negative manner and presented as being antagonistic and social misfits because there is a great sense of community in African societies. The study further revealed that these characters are portrayed in such a negative manner because individuality is misunderstood to mean non conformism to societal values, and taken as being confrontational and counterproductive. Besides that, the study showed that these individuated characters who are alienated by their societies and communities tend to be resigned to their fate and the conflict ensued. Such characters, more often than not, end as tragic heroes. The research also revealed that individuated characters are usually highly intelligent and skilled, industrious individuals. Based on these research findings, individuality should be celebrated rather than condemned.

DEDICATION

To my deceased parents Mr and Mrs Khondowe

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The study of the individual and the community has drawn the attention of several scholars including health practitioners (Deborah Balk, 1994; K.V. Bailey¹ & A. Ferro-Luzzi, 1995), developmental psychologists (Kenneth I. Maton, 2008) and educationists (Elizabeth A. Schultz (1979), just to mention a few. In this study however, the focus will be on investigating conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction as portrayed in three African novels, namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964) by Chinua Achebe, and *Bitterness* (2005) by Malama Katulwende.

1.1 Background to the Study

To begin this investigation, it is important that key concepts, individual and community are made clear. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000: 765), defines the word individual as: "One distinct person or thing considered separately rather than as part of a group." This entails that the individual is a separate and different entity from the rest. The *Chambers Paperback Dictionary* (2007: 18) defines the word individual as: "distinctive, unusual person or thing with qualities that stands out from the rest." These two definitions are in line with Kemmelmeier (2002) who posits that: "individuals are obligated to realise and find the self and cultivate their own judgement regardless of social pressure encouraging conformity" (2002: 350). This entails that the individual is more concerned about his or her individual rights and freedom and less about the well being of the community. In the same breath, Matsumoto (2008) argues that: "individualistic cultures foster less conformity within groups because they do not rely as much on identification with groups for the effective function of either the group or the individual for survival" (2008: 7). What is clear from the foregoing is that the concept of the individual is all about the individual being free to express his or her individuality. The emphasis is on the freedom of the individual to pursue personal gratification, aspirations and dreams without fear of reprisal or sanctions from the society in which that particular individual lives.

As for community, Khoza (2005) states that: "it is a concept that views humanity in terms of collective existence, and intersubjectivity serving as the basis for supportiveness, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity" (2005: 266). This means that the community is

placed at the core of all human activity, which each individual contributing towards the common good. Stebbins (1987) defines the word community as “a social group with a common territorial base. Those in the group share interests and have a sense of belonging to the group” (1987: 534). This entails that members to a community are duty bound to behave in a certain manner that is acceptable to the rest of the community. Matsumoto (2008) shares that sentiment by arguing that “communalistic cultures foster a greater degree of conformity within their in-groups, and sanctions exist for non-conformity. A higher degree of conformity ensures that individuals are identified and bounded within their in-groups, allowing groups to function and for their needs to supersede individual ones” (2008:7). From the foregoing, it is evident that conformism is an integral part of belonging to a community. In other words, the community thrives on the basis of conformism. If the individuals living in a community do not conform to the societal norms and values, community as a concept cannot hold. In short, the community cannot function in the absence of conformism.

From the above definitions of the concepts individual and community, it is clear where the conflict is emanating from. On one hand we have the individual who is assertive about his individual rights and freedoms, and a non-conformist to societal norms and values. On the other we have the community that wants to impose on this individual a sense of community, marked by a set of rules and regulations. With none of the two parties willing to compromise, conflict ensues as a result.

It should be mentioned that the community being made reference to here should be understood to mean the African version of community. It is the inward-looking version of community in which the spirit of interdependence, oneness, togetherness, brotherhood, and cooperation is celebrated by people living in a given geographical area. The African version of community can be traced back to the concept of ‘Ubuntu’ or humanity which stands for the quality of being human. Ewosu and Hall (2019) argue that Ubuntu is an African philosophical and ethical concept “that looks at personhood or humanness where one’s humanness is expressed through one’s relations with others [. . .] and one’s identity causally and even metaphysically depends on a community” (2019: 96). An individual cannot make a community and to live in a community means not only to live with but also for others. It goes without saying that these are the hallmarks of what is meant by having a sense of community. It is all about the individual being viewed in the context of communal ties. This entails that communal relationships define the individual and as such individual rights and freedoms are

secondary in importance to the common good. In this study, that is the point of view from which the concept of community will be discussed.

The concept of the individual is deeply entrenched in the western culture and fiction and probably most pronounced in the United States of America. With the advent of romanticism, around the beginning of the 19th century, as Applebee et al (2000) argue, “Romantic artists, philosophers, and writers saw the limitation of rationalism, and celebrated instead the glories of the individual spirit, the emotions, and the imagination as basic elements of human nature” (2000:341).

Transcendentalism, a distinctively American dimension of the Romantic Movement, which derived in part from German romanticism, was based on the belief that transcendent forms of truth exist beyond reason and experience (2000: 341). Emerson cited in Applebee (2000), a renowned American author of the time, gave the philosophy of transcendentalism an American face when he said: “Every individual is capable of discovering the truth on his or her own through intuition” (2000: 341). With such kind of popular views by opinion makers of the time, the American environment became ripe for the spirit of individualism to flourish.

Another celebrated American author of all time Henry David Thoreau (2017) captures the spirit of the individual in his essay on *Civil Disobedience*. His main argument is that “the majority is not always right. The majority rule not because they are right but simply because they are physically the strongest” (2017: 8). He further argues that the individual is more important than the majority. He also contends that we should be free men first then subjects to a government or cultural and social system afterwards. What he means is that no political, cultural, social or economic system should be used as justification to deny the individual his liberties, because to do so would be the same as denying his or her very existence. Thoreau cited in Applebee (2000) concludes his argument by saying: “I was not born to be forced. I will breath after my own fashion” (2017: 8-9). What he means is that he was born a free man and he is determined to maintain it that way.

Thoreau (2017), in his analogy, makes a mind broadening and enlightening observation about soldiers, whom he says are not trained to think but obey commands. He describes them as robots: “a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity” (2017: 8). His reasoning is that soldiers suffer a loss of their humanity because they cease to think and function as men but machines. He takes his argument to a higher level by putting soldiers “at the same level with

wood, and earth and stones. Such command no more respect but consider them as men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs” (2017: 9). This entails that their worth as human beings is greatly diminished as they cannot make independent decisions on their own in their execution of duty but have to depend on orders from their superiors. He goes to great length to show that man is an independent being and should not be put in a yoke of slavery for the sake of the good of the community or society. There should be no ‘death’ of the individual for the sake of the survival of society. In other words, the community should not supercede the individual.

The biblical account in the book of Genesis gives us further insight on the same concept or point of view. God was more descriptive than He was prescriptive in talking to Adam. He gave him the power to distinguish between what was good and bad, right and wrong. In Genesis 2:16-17 (KJV) it is written: “From every tree of the garden you may freely eat. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die.” Thus, it can be seen that Adam was given a choice. It was entirely up to him to choose as an individual the path he wanted to tread. Indeed, as Thoreau (2017) observes, man was not born to be forced, but to breathe in his own fashion, regardless the consequences.

Yet another of American philosophers and scholars, Emerson cited in Applebee (2000), espousing much the same view on the individual as Thoreau (2017) says: “Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind” (2000: 364). What he is advocating for the individual is self-discovery of the goodness and pitfalls of life, as opposed to lectures about right and wrong. The individual should be encouraged, rather than censored, to go out there and enjoy life to the full. Emerson ends his thought by saying: “it is easy in the world to live life after the world’s opinions. [. . .] But the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps in perfect sweetness the independence of solitude” (2000: 364). Many are the times when an individual is overwhelmed by other people’s opinions and at times conflicting advice. In the myriad of confusion, the individual ends up making terrible mistakes to his or her own detriment. What Emerson is suggesting here is that in certain circumstances the best advice to give an individual is none at all. He is against the idea of too many prescriptions and restrictions about how life must be lived.

The spirit of celebrating individual rights and freedoms in American society has a historical background to it with romanticism and transcendentalism as propounded by Ralph Waldo Emerson cited in Applebee (2000), and others, being the guiding philosophies. The basis of this philosophy is the celebration of the self or the individual. It is also the belief that the community and its institutions corrupt the purity of the individual, and that people achieve their fullest potential when they are independent and self-reliant. Applebee (2000:340) quoting Emerson, says that transcendentalism promoted the spirit of rebellion from the established societal norms. He goes on to give an example of Henry David Thoreau (2017), of whom he says heartily accepted the motto “that government is best which governs least, and that good men must not obey the laws too well” (2000: 341). An inference can be made from his argument that what he is advocating for is less or no interference by government in the life of an individual. Applebee (2000: 341) remarks that: “If the original colonists had obeyed the laws, the American Revolution would never have occurred, and the country might never have existed” (2000: 340). What both authors and scholars- Emerson and Thoreau - are advocating for is less government in the life of the individual. In their view, too much government interference in the life of the individual is counterproductive and a recipe for discontentment and anarchy.

The American society is very loud about the rights and freedoms of the individual and so is the American fiction. It is replete with stories about the individual and the heroism attached to it. The spirit of Individuality is highly celebrated and applauded, as the following quotations from American literature will show. Perhaps Thoreau (2017), cited in Applebee (2000), puts it more aptly than any other American writer when he says: “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away” (2000: 336). What Henry means is that a man should be allowed to see and interpret the world through his own eyes and express individuality. Society is made out of individuals, first and foremost, and it is these individuals that come together to create a community or society. The argument is based on the premise that individuals should be given enough room to progress, prosper and flourish, and if that happens then a just, fair and prosperous society can be guaranteed.

Emerson cited in Applebee (2000), echoes Henry’s sentiments by saying that: “There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance and that imitation is suicide” (2000: 336). By extension, Emerson is making reference to imitation

as being equivalent to death. To live is to be an individual and to die is to aspire to be somebody else other than yourself. Garvey, cited in Martin (1986) echoes Emerson's thought by saying, "Man is the individual who is able to shape his own character, master his own will, direct his own life and shape his own ends" (1986: 24). What he means is that the onus is on the individual to aspire to do things for one's self which are unique and reflect individuality, and with the right attitude nothing is insurmountable. The biggest challenge that an individual has to overcome is that which comes from within.

What both Emerson and Garvey are espousing is a break away from tradition, to see and do things in a different way as one deems fit, even if at times it may mean being in conflict with the law and society. All the more reason Emerson cited in Applebee (2000) says: "Good men must not obey the law too well" (2000: 16). This entails that not every law is meant to be obeyed. He ends his argument by saying: "what have I to do with sacredness of traditions, I live wholly from within? What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think because there will always be those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it (2000: 16). This means that it is entirely upon an individual to set for one's self goals and once that is done to work towards achieving those goals regardless of people's opinions. That way peace of mind that comes with accomplishing one's desires can be achieved.

In expressing individuality, one is sure to be misunderstood but then Emerson cited in Applebee (2000) says: "To be great is to be misunderstood" (2000 :366). He makes reference to great men such as Jesus and Martin Luther King. He explains that Jesus was a great man; that explains why he was misunderstood and crucified. Martin Luther king was yet another great man; the American society misunderstood and assassinated him (2000: 366). Emerson is advancing the argument that the concept of individuality can and does at times lead to conflicts of interests. However, the individual must still stand up to what he or she believes in as long as it is wholesome and not injurious to society.

Other American authors of the period 1800 to 1850, and beyond such as Longfellow (1807 - 1882) Washington Irving, (1783 – 1859) as discussed in Applebee (2000), started to see "the limitation of reason and celebrated instead the glories of the individual spirit" (2000: 363). In his poem "A Psalm of Life", Longfellow (1892), for example, brings out the spirit of individuation by saying: "Be not like dumb, driven cattle! Be a hero in the strife. Lives of great men all remind us we can make departing, leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time" (1892: 2). The thrust of his argument is that individuals should live active, full lives,

rather than be like cattle or sheep passively being driven to the slaughter house. In the same poem, Longfellow also portends that the goal of life is not the grave but to leave footprints on the sands of time. An individual can only leave footprints on the sands of time, if he or she goes into uncharted territory, with individuality as the driving force.

Walt Whitman (1991) yet another of American great writers, celebrates individuality in his poem, "I Hear America Singing." He says: "I hear America singing the varied carols I hear. [. . .] Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else. Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs" (1991: 1-2). The message he is trying to put across is that of individuality. He talks about the liberal individual who is not hindered by society but expresses his or her individuality in various ways. In his poem, Whitman makes reference to the mechanic, the carpenter, the mason, the boatman, shoemaker and the wood cutter, a representation of different trades and skills. He says each of these people sing "what belongs to him or her and to none else (1991: 1-2). Yet again this is a clear case of the cause of the individual being promoted, each one minding his or her own business.

Through their literary works Longfellow and Whitman, and of course many other writers contributed to the maxim of "The American Dream" as it is known and cherished today. Adams (1931), the American writer and historian who coined the concept describes the American Dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to one's ability or achievement" (1931: 373). This entails that his vision was that of a just and fair society with equal opportunities for upward social mobility for all, regardless of race and creed, or any other discriminatory considerations. Longfellow and other like-minded American philosophers and scholars of his time would find systemic and institutionalised racism, especially against African Americans appalling and a betrayal to the concept of the American Dream. The recent murder of George Floyd, a black man, while in police custody, and many others of his race would attract from them condemnation, especially that the circumstances of the incident had racism written all over them. The American dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance. The spirit of individuality is part and parcel of the American Dream. The individual is encouraged to make choices that will permit him or her to achieve great things in life. It is all about the freedom to be different, to make decisions, to aspire for bigger and better things. It is also about the freedom to live one's life as one deems

fit and to uphold certain values, which may not necessarily be in conformity with the values of the wider society.

Individuality, as has been seen from the foregoing, is readily accepted and celebrated in the western world. The individual is given the leverage to express his or her individuality unconstrained by societal impediments. That is in sharp contrast to what obtains both in African fiction and society, as this study will reveal.

There is no gain saying the fact that the spirit of community is more widely celebrated in African fiction and society than is individuation. Wafula (2003:15) observes that the African society developed deliberate institutions and practices aimed at creating a highly communal and harmonious society. These institutions and systems that he was indirectly making reference to include the legal system based on the wisdom of the elders in solving disputes, the religious system deeply rooted in spiritism and an agrarian economy. At the core of this socio-economic stem was the community. The needs of the individual were subordinated to the general welfare of the community.

Onusha, cited in Wafula (2003: 15), says that the community was a massive system of social security under which all the members would fend for one another. An individual could be rich or poor but only to the extent his or her own community was. The community took care of the individual members, with each individual expected to contribute resources towards the common good. In such kind of a scenario, there was the 'death' of the individual, with communal solidarity being paramount.

A close observation of the speech patterns in a traditional African setting would reveal a phenomenon which reflects the spirit of the African society. There are greetings like "How are we?" And the answer to such a greeting could be, "We are not fine. We have a funeral in the village." The answer to such a greeting could also be, "We are very fine. Our wife gave birth to a baby boy yesterday." To someone from the western world, such kind of speech acts may be absurd. To the African who is well vested in African culture and tradition, it makes a lot of sense. It reflects the communalistic nature of the African society where misfortunes and happiness are shared by the whole community. When a man marries, he marries for the whole community. In the same vein, when a child is born, he or she belongs to the whole community. All the more reason the child is taught to address any elderly man as "father"

and woman as 'mother'. As this dissertation will show, there is such usage of language in Katulwende's novel *Bitterness* (2005).

It is also enlightening and mind broadening to observe that African communal values contributed to the birth and growth of modern African socialism. The concept and philosophy of Ujamaa, as espoused by the first Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, (1922 – 1999), draws its inspiration from the spirit of the African community. Nyerere (1968: 6-7) argues that Ujamaa, as a philosophy of life was meant to create a sense of community, and at the same time egalitarian society, with values extended not only to mutual support but also communal ownership of land. Nyerere wanted to achieve an agrarian revolution, by exploiting the communal cohesive ties. In his ideal society, both the rich and the poor were to be secure; nobody starved because he lacked personal wealth. He would depend on the wealth possessed by the community in which he lived which was regarded as a form of social security or provident fund to which all the members of the community contributed, and from which any member who was in good standing with the community could withdraw when faced with calamity.

Proverbs, based on symbolic and metaphorical language, are part and parcel of the fabric of society. They do not only reflect it but also contribute to its growth. In a sense there is a symbiotic relationship between proverbs and the culture that inspires them: They are informed by them, while at the same time acting as a mechanism through which society is regulated. With that kind of scenario, the sense of community in the African society can be seen in the numerous proverbs and wise saying that are meant to celebrate it. McKenna (1974:15) describes proverbs as a way in which society warns its members about the dangers of society. In coming up with such a description, he, in essence, is underlining the role these proverbs play in educating the members of a given society about the pitfalls of life ,and how to avoid them. His sentiments are echoed by Boateng (1983:6) who makes the assertion that proverbs are an indirect way of teaching. The same view is expressed by Mokitimi (1997:12), who argues that “proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, wisdom and philosophy,” meaning that proverbs serve as a depository of knowledge or source of inspiration in any given society. Constadius (2007: 7) concurs with the above scholars on the matter.

To illustrate the view that the community is more readily embraced than the individual in both African fiction and society, a few African proverbs and wise saying will suffice. For instance, the Tonga people of southern Zambia have a proverb which reflect the

communalistic nature of the African society. They say *Munwe omwe taupwayi njina*, meaning one finger cannot crush a louse. The Luvale people of north–western Zambia have a similar proverb: *Munwe umwe kawechi kutumbula jinako*, bearing the same English version, meaning that “You cannot pick up a louse with one finger”. This is symbolic language. A louse symbolises challenges that one encounters in life. For these challenges to be overcome, it takes unity of purpose, and collaboration. No challenge is insurmountable when people unite and work together as one with the same spirit. This and the other proverbs, form part and parcel of the fibre of the African society. They are not mere rhetoric but are actually put into practice as can be seen when challenges arise such as sickness or death. The members of the community immediately come together in numbers, and render support to the bereaved family.

Futhermore the Bemba say: *Amakanga ayengi yaipoka ku mbwa*, meaning many guinea fowls can rescue themselves from a dog. However, if one guinea fowl were to challenge a dog to a one-on-one fight, it would stand no chance of survival. It would be foolish, as a matter of fact for an individual guinea fowl to do that. In the same breath, the Luvale say: *kwatoku namukwenu, ukawove mulemana* which translates: “carve with your friend, alone you will hurt yourself.” The message in these proverbs is that one should not try to solve problems alone. He or she should instead seek advice and help from others. A Chewa version of the same proverb is: *Ciswe chimodzi sichiumba chulu* which means one ant cannot build an anthill. The message again is that an individual cannot achieve much. That can further be exemplified by yet another Bemba proverb which goes *Amano yafuma mwi fwasa, yaingila mu culu*, meaning wisdom or intelligence come out of little anthills, and enter the big one. The message is yet again that collective wisdom is supreme.

Kuzwayo (1998), shares a Nguni proverb which reads *Motho ke motho ka motho yo mongwe* (1998: 15), which when translated into English reads a human being is a human being only because of other human beings. This means that human beings complement each other in order to achieve their humanity. The Zulu people of South Africa, as observed by Gade (2012) say *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (2012: 487) which means much the same as the proverb advanced by Kuzwayo (1998). Both proverbs entail that one’s humanness is incomplete without the input of other human beings. The social interface between and among human beings living in a given society teaches them both directly and indirectly what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. However, in many cases the lessons are

learnt indirectly through the usage of proverbs in folktales and the lyrics in songs. The Shona people have a version of the same proverbs as the foregoing that says: *Munhu munhu panevamwe vanhu* which means a human being is only a human being because of other human beings. These wise saying emphasises the importance of the community in overcoming some of the challenges that are faced in life.

Thus, it should be observed that proverbs cannot be studied separately from the culture that inspired them, and the culture that inspired many African proverbs is the spirit of the community, characterised by reciprocity, brotherhood and solidarity. The same is also observed by Mbiti, (1970), who maintains that proverbs are in themselves communalistic in nature. No one individual can claim ownership to any one of these proverbs, but rather are a sum total of the collective wisdom of the people. They are handed down from one generation to the other in perpetuity, and the mere fact that they survive from generation to generation immaculately confirms the truthfulness of the message they seek to convey. The social and cultural environment that influences African fiction cannot be ignored but should be taken into account.

Much as there are so many proverbs and sayings to celebrate communal ties in the African society, individuality does exist. Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory of personality development which informs this study, argues that personality is formed through conflicts among three fundamental abstract structures of the mind. These are the Id, Ego and Superego (1923:1-4). The Id contains sexual and aggressive drives. It is 'the animal in man' that makes us seek pleasure and gratification regardless the consequences. The Ego, Freud goes on to explain, is the part of the mind responsible for dealing with reality, and ensures that the impulses of the Id are expressed in a socially acceptable manner. The superego is the morality principle that plays the critical moralising role. In individuals where the Id is more dominant, and the ego and superego suppressed, individuality tends to manifest more readily. This explains why certain characters are more individuated than others.

The bottom line is that this theory of personality development is universal. Wherever human beings are found, some are bound to express their individuality. That is because this theory is not region or culture specific. For this reason, my study argues that the individual who wants to express his individuality does exist both in African fiction and society. It is only that individuality is frowned upon and suppressed. However, suppression does not mean nonexistence.

History shows us that man has always been defiant in the face of oppressive and suppressive laws. The well documented narrative of the Jewish people in Hitler Nazi Germany immaculately evidence the nature of man, and his resolve not to succumb but fight repressive regimes. Anti-Semitism was rife taking both a racial and religious face. Rather than succumb or resign to their fate, when circumstances were hopeless in those ghastly concentration camps, the Jewish people never gave up their right to decide their own destiny. Stories of heroism abound. The so called Nuremberg Laws of 1935 as presented by Jantzen (1990: 656) meant to rape the Jewish people of their humanity, only succeeded in strengthening their resolve to fight back. Crimes against humanity were committed against a people whose only crime they had committed was that of being Jews. It literally became a criminal offense to be a Jew in Germany, and atrocities were perpetuated with impunity. However, the Nazi resolve to annihilate the Jews proved futile, as the latter were never wiped out entirely.

Carl Gustav Jung (1971) another psychologist who studied human behaviour, and came up with a field of study called analytical psychology lends credence to the argument that individuation is not region or culture specific. Jung came up with a theory of the collective unconscious and the concept of the archetypes. These archetypes are characterised by different and strange kind of behaviour. Jung referred to these archetypes as universal archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious” (1971: 15). The key word is ‘universal’ and so it would be erroneous to describe individuality as an American or western concept, but rather as a concept that is more pronounced in the western world, with America probably taking the lead.

As has been argued, characters who thrive to express their uniqueness do exist in the African context as evidenced by their presence in African fiction. That cannot be as a result of an accident but rather a reflection of the African society itself. Characters like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), are individuated leading to conflict between themselves and their societies. However, the community is still the overriding societal norm and is considered a common good. That as it may be, the supremacy of the community over the individual has its own draw backs. Lazy and improvident individuals like Unoka, in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958: 3) take advantage of the strong social cohesive ties in Umofia to reap as much as they can from their communal society, while contributing very little in return. Okonkwo, Unoka’s son wanted to be a binary opposite of his father; that is to be self-reliant and individualistic in his approach to life.

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Studies that have been carried out on the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction have largely presented a one-sided view in favour of the community as evidenced by work done by scholars like Mbiti (1975), Mnabi (2007) and Ulogu (2019). However, very little has been done to try and understand the conflict from the point of view of the individual. What has been taken is a simplistic point of view that individualistic tendencies are antagonistic and do not add any value to society. If this problem is not addressed perceptions about the individuated individuals will remain negative, to the detriment of society because these individuals are some of the most intelligent and innovative. The concern of this study is therefore to explore the conflict between the individual and the community as portrayed in the selected African novels. Put in question form, the question reads: What is the nature and cause of conflict between the individual and the community in the three selected novels namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Bitterness* (2005)?

1.3 Aim/Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the conflict between the individual and the community in three selected African novels namely; *No Longer at Ease*, (1960) *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness*, (2005). In addition, the study attempts to expose the various factors at play that tend to cause and exacerbate this conflict.

1.4 Objectives

The major objectives of the study are to:

- (i) Investigate the nature of the conflict between the individual and the community in the selected African novels.
- (ii) Interrogate the causes of the conflict between the individual and the community in the selected novels.
- (iii) Examine how characters who express their individuality react to the manner they are portrayed and treated by their communities in the selected novels.

1.5 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions

- (i) Why is there conflict between the individual and the community in the selected novels?

- (ii) How are the individuated characters portrayed in the selected texts?
- (iii) Why are the individuated characters portrayed in the manner they are in the three selected novels?
- (iv) How do the characters who express individuality perceive the manner in which they are portrayed in the three selected novels.
- (v) How does the community react to the way individuated characters behave in the three selected novels?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in literature on the conflict between the Individual and the community in African fiction, from the point of view of the individual. It is envisaged that there will be better understanding of individuated characters and why society should embrace them. It is also anticipated that once completed the study will impact positively on authors and would be authors in African fiction to portray the theme of individuality in a more positive light.

1.7.0 Theoretical Frame work

Conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction is mainly examined against the theoretical background of psychoanalysis as propounded by Sigmund Freud (1923) and analytical psychology as espoused by Carl Gustav Jung (1923) a Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist, as main theories. Cultural psychology as propounded by Wilhelm Wundt (1924) a German psychologist, will be the minor theory.

1.7.1 Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism (Psychoanalysis)

It is widely acknowledged that psychoanalysis as a field of study is a brain child of Sigmund Freud. The Freudian theory is the psychoanalytic theory of personality development whose main argument is that personality is formed through conflicts among three fundamental structures of the mind. These are the id, ego and superego (1923:1-4). The id is part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories. It operates at the unconscious level that governs behaviour, and according to the pleasure principle, it is the 'I' in each and every one of us that makes us seek pleasure and gratification regardless of the consequences. This part contains, according to Freud, the sexual and aggressive drives. Freud (1923:13.) argues that the ego is that part of the mind responsible for dealing with reality and ensures that the impulses of the id can be expressed in a socially acceptable manner. The

superego is the morality principle that plays the critical and moralising role. The ego and the superego operate at the conscious preconscious and unconscious levels.

Freud (1923) explains that the most crucial stage in the formation of human personality happens in childhood. He came up with the Oedipus complex, a psychoanalytic theory. This is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and feelings of jealousy and anger towards parent of the same sex with one. It occurs during the phallic stage of psychosexual development between three to six years (1923: 217).

For the sake of this study, these theories as explained above help us to understand human behaviour. The functioning of the Id, ego and superego, which are not physical areas within the brain, but rather conceptualisation of mental functions, help us to understand why in some characters or people drive for expressing individuality is more pronounced than it is in others. The starting point is that it is inherent in all humanity to pursue dreams and goals that are exclusively beneficial to our gratification, regardless the negative consequences that they may have on others. In some characters the id is predominant while in others it is the ego and or superego. In the former group of people, the spirit of individualism is more likely to manifest. This is the minority group in which the id is predominant. This is usually the cause of conflict because those human beings in whom the ego and superego tend to be dominant are in the majority. Those who express their individuality are viewed as outcasts whose behaviour is inappropriate and inconsistent with the norms and values of society. They are usually aggressive and do not shy away from trying new things. In the process they end up as heroes or tragic heroes, like in the case of Okonkwo, one of the most famous tragic heroes in African fiction whose sad story is narrated in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

With individuated characters, who express their lack of remorse or regret is due to the defence mechanism they employ. Freud contends that defence mechanisms such as denial and repression are brought into play by the unconscious mind to manipulate deny or distance reality. That is done in order to defend one's self against feelings of anxiety, and unacceptable impulses (1923:18). Again, these defence mechanisms are much stronger in characters who display individuality than in those who do not. It explains why such characters are resigned to their fate. They are capable of suppressing public opinion with impunity and go on living their lives in the manner they deem fit.

Yet another of Freud's key arguments in his psychoanalytic theory is that "Events in our childhood have a great influence in our adult life, in so far as shaping our personality is

concerned (1923: 19). His main thrust is that traumatic experiences in childhood can and do affect us in adult life when they manifest. This may result in one embracing individuality so as to compensate for an unhappy childhood.

Firdaus, the main character in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* (1975), fits this description. She suffers sexual molestation as a child and the trauma is too much for her to bare. She ends up expressing her individuality in a very strange manner by refusing to appeal her death sentence after murdering a man who raped her in adulthood. There is an element of social constructionism in her individualism because it is her own society that has driven her to those levels of despondence (1975: 99-102). The curious case of Shaka, the Zulu king, also suits this explanation of human behaviour. Born out of wedlock, and rejected by his own society, Shaka had a rough childhood. The traumatic experiences suffered in childhood during his formative years manifested in adulthood. He became a highly individualized, cruel character. But then it can be argued that the extremism displayed by Shaka was not of his own making; it was as a result of the failure by the community. Instead of love Shaka was given hatred and as a result, he learnt to hate and to fight during his childhood (Davies: 2000).

1.7.2 Analytical Psychology

As mentioned earlier, the branch of psychology known as Analytical Psychology was started by Carl Gustav Jung (1923) a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist of outstanding reputation. Initially, he was a scholar of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, but later differed with him on a number of important aspects in psychology. He ended up on his own and later founded a branch of psychology called Analytical Psychology. He is best known for his theory of the collective unconscious and the concept of the archetypes. Collective unconscious represents a form of the unconscious – memories and impulses on which the individual is not aware inherited in the structure of the brain and common to mankind (1923: 15).

What is of interest in as far as this study is concerned is that it can be established that some of the behaviour portrayed by characters in expressing their individuality which is completely foreign and unacceptable in a given society is not of their own making, and as such they can be absolved of blame. It has been argued that every human being has same level of madness. There are some impulses that come from the human mind that make people behave in strange ways. Jung referred to these as archetypes and these are “universal archaic patterns and

images that derive from the collective unconscious” (1971:37). These archetypes are characterised by different and strange kind of behaviour.

Freud and Jung, however, as it has been observed did not agree on a number of important concepts. Jung, to begin with disagreed with Freud’s focus on sexuality as a key motivating behavioural force. He also disagreed with Freud’s concept of the unconscious as being too narrow. Jung’s argument is more plausible because he widened his argument by looking at various areas of the mind that constitute the psyche. Jung also included the personal unconscious which contains an individual’s memories and ideas and the collective unconscious shared among all humanity. These shared concepts are the one Jung referred to as the archetypes. Jung posits that the personal unconscious emerges in our dreams (1953:30). However, on dreams Freud, did a more elaborate work than did Jung. In his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1997), Freud introduces his theory of the unconscious with respect to dream interpretation. He argues that dreams have meaning and that they can be interpreted. He also argues that a scientific method of dream interpretation is possible. In the cipher method, for example, he extrapolates that “the dream content and the social position of the dreamer” are taken into account in trying to come up with meaning for the dream (1997: 10-11). In the novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), there is a curious case involving the dream Obi’s mother, Hannah Okonkwo, had. Talking to her son about it she says:

I dreamt a bad dream, a very bad dream one night. I was lying on a bed spread with white cloth and I felt something creepy against my skin. I looked down on the bed and found that a swarm of white termites had eaten it up, and the mat and the white cloth. Yes, termites had eaten the bed right under me. In the afternoon your father came in with a letter from Joseph to tell us that you were going to marry an *Osu*. I saw the meaning of my death in that dream (Achebe, 1960: 122-123).

The interpretation of the dream can make for a good synopsis of events that followed afterwards. In the first place, the symbolism of termites is that of decay, destruction and death in many cultures. The dream foreshadows the death of the dreamer who in this case is Hannah, Obi’s mother. It is also a premonition of Obi’s ill-fated intended marriage with Clara as the marriage does not materialise. Clara is forced to carry an abortion, and shortly afterwards, Obi is implicated in corruption, leading to his own destruction. When Hannah’s

dream is put into context, one cannot help but see sense in Freud's argument that dreams, have meaning.

The white termites are a representation of the white man and all that he stands for, western culture and education, that Obi the protagonist is exposed to. He undergoes a transformation and begins to question African traditional values and beliefs that the collective wisdom of the people he previously had held as sacred. For example, he questions why some members of his society like Clara, the girl she intends to marry are, regarded outcasts or Osu, simply because they are believed to belong to some god and therefore, possessed by evil spirits. As far as Obi is concerned, the explanation given is not scientific and nonsensical. He says: "Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man Osu" (Achebe, 1960: 120). This goes to show that he was completely opposed to the whole concept, and he regarded it absurd.

In yet another of his publications, Freud (1917) still on the subject of dream interpretation, argues that "the dream is the way in which the psyche reacts to the stimuli acting upon in the sleeping condition" (1917: 48). This entails that a dream is not a somatic but a psychic phenomenon. That being the case, it follows that in some cases what preoccupies one's mind during the course of the day, or over a period of time can find expression in dreams. It also follows that as Freud argues, the starting point in dream interpretation is the dreamer himself or herself. Freud posits "the dreamer himself is to tell us the meaning of his dream" (1917: 40-45). With that as the starting point, the interpretation of a given dream becomes much easier. Getting back to the dream that Obi's mother, Hannah had, in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), she is the first one to make an attempt at the interpretation of the dream she had. She says, "I saw the meaning of my death in the dream" (Achebe, 1960: 123). She then makes a connection between the dream she had and her son's intention to marry a girl she vehemently disapproves of. With that invaluable insight she provides, the full interpretation of her dream becomes much easier.

Jung (1971) also argued that humans are not empty slates at birth but are born with shared memories and ideas we can all identify with regardless of the culture we are born into. Jung also propounded that we have a person – an identity which we wish to project to others. In trying to project this identity the individuation comes out.

Jung's view, which is down played by Freud, that humans are also motivated by the need to adapt to their environment also makes a lot of sense in as far as explaining human behaviour and this study is concerned. Understanding the environment, and especially the cultural environment in which an individual is born and lives, plays a cardinal role in trying to understand and explain human behaviour. What constitutes normal and acceptable behaviour in a given cultural setting may not be considered normal and acceptable in another culture.

1.7.3 Cultural Psychology

Probably, Wilhelm Wundt, a Germany psychologist did much more extensive work in trying to make a link between human behaviour and their environment. He came up with a branch of psychology called Cultural Psychology. Cultural Psychology, as propounded by Wundt “[. . .] focuses on the influence of culture on the people who grow in it, how they are influenced by it, and how they influence it (1924:15). In other words, Cultural Psychology attempts to explain the reasons an individual, or group of individuals in a particular cultural context act in certain ways.

With the foregoing in mind, the case of Unoka, one of the characters in Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) makes a very interesting case study. Unoka, Okonkwo's father, can best be described as a product of cultural engineering in the sense that his laziness and improvidence in his usage of resources can be attributed to the fact that he lived in a society where the community was paramount. Unoka was able to survive in spite of his laziness because he would always rely on others to provide for him. The narrator says he would always succeed in borrowing, and yet he would never pay back. It can be argued that Unoka was an expert in taking advantage of the communalistic nature of his society to cover up his own inadequacies. Individualistic minded characters like Okonkwo were able to observe that, and tried to exhibit individuation as a protest. The bottom line is that the community can and does give rise to individuality because its open to abuse.

Still on culture and its linkage to human behaviour, Geertz (1973) argues that, “culture is not just an ornament of human existence but the basis of its specificity that can be used to explain human behaviour” (1973: 46). It is clear from Geertz's argument that human beings do not live in a vacuum, but in certain cultural contexts that should not be overlooked in trying to explain human behaviour. Hourr and Gillet (1994) take the argument further by saying that an individual's behaviour can only be understood when we grasp the meanings that inform that person's activity, with context being central to the notion of meaning (1994: 36). Their

sentiments are echoed by Brunner (1986) who asserts that the human mind can be studied through its cultural products.

A deliberate attempt has been made to choose the literary criticism theories that are relevant to this research, and have a direct bearing on human behaviour. These are psychoanalysis, analytical psychology and cultural psychology. That is because the individual and the community, the two concepts the study will focus on, are both products of human behaviour. As such, it is envisaged that these theories will provide adequate platform, and basis on which the whole study is going to hinge.

1.8 Methodology

A qualitative desk research methodology will be employed in gathering and analysing the data. Three primary texts, namely Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964), and Katulwende's *Bitterness* (2005), will be investigated and relevant information to the research extracted and analysed. The three African novels have been carefully selected because of their richness and depth in terms of relevant content the whole research will focus on, bearing in mind that not all texts are suitable for use in achieving various objectives.

Although some literary scholars have done some work using these texts as literary tools, the present study seeks to use them using different theoretical and methodological angles to achieve a set of different objectives. None of the scholars, to the best of my knowledge, who carried out studies on these texts, used analytical psychology, psychoanalysis, and cultural psychology as literary theories in their analysis of these texts, to study conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction.

Hilberdick (2005: 30-31) argues that "There are big differences in the ways in which literary texts are studied and analysed because the same texts can be studied by different scholars using different theoretical approaches and modes" (2005: 30-31). This entails that what becomes of paramount importance is the specific dimension from which a given scholar wants to study these texts and the objectives to be achieved. With specific reference to Achebe's novels *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964), although it may appear that they have been overused by various scholars, the majority, by far, have studied these texts with a view to explaining and justifying the supremacy of the community in its dealings with the individual. I go into these texts with different objectives and theories from those of

other scholars. Mine is to endeavour to change the narrative about individuated characters and give them a voice of their own.

Literary texts tend to be ambiguous, or at least open to multiple interpretations, along multiple dimensions. These different interpretations of the same texts are rewarding because they tend to provoke new thinking and new studies, thus enriching further the board of knowledge. It must also be mentioned that in carrying out research, the scholar gathers what he considers the most appropriate literary tools that can help him best achieve the set objectives. This sentiment is shared by Lin (2009) who posits that the researcher should select appropriate literary tools that would help achieve the objectives (2009: 180). He further argues that literature materials chosen “should be good for abstracting, being beneficial for obtaining arguments and being conducive to the formation of research thoughts” (2009: 180). This means that the issues raised in these texts should be profound with far reaching consequences. The choices made by the Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) affect these individuals and their communities in great many ways with far reaching consequences.

For the sake of argument, if an individual were to decide to wear a yellow suit and a yellow pair of shoes he would also be considered as expressing his individuality. However, such an act would have no consequences or bearing on the rest of the members of the community and there would be no serious sustained conflict, if any. Many would merely dismiss such one as a comedian. This study, if it were to be based on such kind of individuality would not hold. It needed strong, highly individuated characters like Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) whose actions profoundly affected the rest of the members of his community.

This study, in some respects, is a response to the romanticisation of the community by scholars like, Mbiti (1984), Menkiti (1984), Ogbonna (2009), and Matsumoto (2008). It was my considered view that Achebe’s texts, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964), would best help me achieve my objectives. I wanted to prove a point that the demonisation and criminalisation of the individuated characters in some of these texts was not well thought out and erroneous in my view.

Futhermore, it is my considered view that literature review is not only for the express purpose of finding out what has already been done by other scholars on the subject and identifying the knowledge gap. It is also to critically examine the methodologies and the the literary tools

made use of by other scholars in arriving at various conclusions. The literature review allowed me to identify some of the literary tools the other scholars used and demonstrate using the same texts the folly of some of the conclusions they arrived at in their studies.

Additionally, secondary sources of information in form of a collection of African novels such as *The Tongue of the Dumb* (1989), *The River Between* (1965), and *A Wreath for Udomo* (2002) will also be made use of. That is intended to enrich the quality of the arguments that will be raised and provide adequate exemplification.

Psychoanalysis, analytical psychology and cultural psychology as propounded by Freud, Jung and Wundt respectively, are the literary theories that will inform this study.

1.9 Scope of the Study

Although there is an array of African novels in which there is conflict between the individual and the community, such as *A Wreath for Udomo* (2002), *The Tongue of the Dumb* (1989), and *Quills of Desire* (1998), this study will focus on three novels namely, *No Longer at Ease*, (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness*, (2005). The choice of these texts for discussion is based on the observation that they are captivating, as the authors thrive to portray conflict between the individual and community in African fiction. In addition, focusing on three novels, among many others, will allow for an in-depth analysis of the issues at hand.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction. It gives a detailed background to the individual and the community as they occur both in the western and African fiction and society. That is done with a view to having an in-depth understanding of the source of conflict between the two in African fiction. The introductory chapter also discusses the aim, objectives, and the significance of the study. It also provides the theoretical framework, explaining in detail the theories of Psychoanalysis, Analytical Psychology, and Cultural Psychology, and how they inform the study.

Chapter two provides the review of related literature. It reviews scholarly articles and studies that have already been carried out to find out what has already been done to find out what knowledge gap is there.

Chapter three gives the synopsis of the primary texts, namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005).

Chapters four provides the discussion and analysis of the primary texts namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005) in that order. In this chapter the source of the conflict between the individual and the community, and how the individuated characters are portrayed in these texts will be discussed. In essence, an attempt will be made to provide answers to the research questions. Chapter five provides summary of the findings and the general conclusion to the study.

1.11. Definition of Terms

(i) The Individual

For the sake of this dissertation the concept of the individual is that of a distinctive, character who exhibits uniqueness and is a non-conformist. He is assertive about his individual rights and freedoms.

(ii) The Community

In this study, the concept of community will be taken to mean a group of people who live in the same geographical area and are bound together by communal ties such as culture, traditions, reciprocity, solidarity and brotherhood.

(ii) Social/ Cultural Engineering

The attempt to change society and to deal with social/cultural problems according to particular beliefs and norms that obtain in a given society.

(iv) Archetype

In Jungian theory (1971), archetype is a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors and present in the collective unconscious. In other words, archetypes represent memories and impulses about which the individual is not aware of, inherited in the structure of the brain and common to mankind.

(v) Stereotype

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. A stereotype can also be understood to mean a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong.

(vi) Masculinity

Possession of qualities such as resilience, strength, vigor and robustness. These qualities are traditionally associated with men but can and do manifest in both males and females as well.

(vii) Culture

A total sum of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, goals and practices that characterise a given society and considered as normal, and acceptable way of doing things. Culture encompasses a lot of facets including language, religious practices and beliefs, cuisines and dress.

(ix) Romanticism

A philosophy of life that places emphasis on the rights and freedoms of the individual, and the belief that imagination is superior to rationalism. Under romanticism, social conventions are rejected, and freedom from rules embraced. The underlying principle is that the individual can achieve his or her greatest potential in life if left alone in isolation to discover the meaning of life and create his or her own reality.

(x) Conformism

The act or practice of adapting to social conventions, religious orthodoxy or established norms of society.

The next chapter will review the literature on the subject of conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study “Investigating Conflict Between the Individual and the Community in African Fiction: The Case of *No Longer At Ease*, *Arrow of God*, and *Bitterness*.” It provided the background information to the conflict between the individual and the community. It further provided the statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the study, the theoretical frameworks, limitation of the study, as well as the definition of terms used in the study. The next chapter, which is Chapter Two, reviews related literature with the goal of contextualising the current study in the pre-existing corpus.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided information on the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the aim and objectives of the study that would help the researcher to investigate conflict between the individual and the community in the selected novels. In the present chapter, a detailed review of related literature shall be presented with the aim of finding out what was already covered by other literary scholars on the individual as he relates to the community in African fiction, and eventually establish the gap that my study intends to fill up.

Several literary scholars have done invaluable work on the subject of conflict between the individual and the community both in African society and fiction. Their works, however, differ from this study in many respects, as shall be demonstrated in this literature review.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Taiwo (2016), in his article entitled, 'Against African Communalism,' questions the superiority of the community over the individual. His main thrust is that an individual has unique existence, and does not need the approval of society to authenticate that independent existence. He argues that, the assertion that the individual is only a person when he acts and presents himself as part of a group is problematic. On the contrary he is of the view that, "The individual is marked by his or her individuality ,something that sets the individual apart from other individuals ,and renders that individual unique in the community" (2016:86). What Taiwo means is that the individual has a life, an existence, away from the community, and should be free to pursue that individuality without fear of retribution. However, his sentiments are not shared by every scholar on the subject. For example, Mbiti (1975), in sharp contrast, is of the view that the individual owes his individuality to the

community he lives in. His argument that, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (1975: 18), gives us insight about his thoughts in so far as the position of the individual in the African society is concerned. Unlike Taiwo who believes in the supremacy of the individual, Mbiti is of the view that an individual has no existence apart from that which his community allows him.

Taiwo’s argument is more plausible than that of Mbiti, from the point of view of this study, in the sense that he questions the impeccability of the supremacy of the community over the individual. Taiwo raises valid arguments and points out some of the pitfalls of the concept of community. However, his paper is different from this study in that he makes a general commentary on the topic of discussion within the limited space of a journal article. He does not discuss and analyse fully the conflict involving the individual and the community. He also does not investigate the nature of individuated characters in a case study and examine the source of conflict between the individual and community, like what this study does. He simply advances an argument that the individual should not be a slave to communal values, but rather be independent and free, a view shared by this researcher as well. Nevertheless, Taiwo’s work provides valuable insight that help unravel some of the intricacies in the conflict between the individual and the community. It also provides a very good vantage point from which a comprehensive study can be embarked upon, like what this particular study endeavours to do.

Perhaps Ulogu (2019) sets the mood and the tone for most literary critics on African fiction with regard to the subject of the individual and community in African fiction and society. In his article entitled, ‘African Literature and the Changing World: The Antithetical Ideologies of Individualism and Communalism in Chinua Achebe’s Novels,’ he argues that African literature is “literature about the African society” (2019: 13). He contends that the African society, albeit its cultural diversity, is collective and communal in nature. To support his assertion, he cites Akwanya (2001), who apprises that, “African literature represents an African experience, with mode of imagination derived from the African background” (2019: 13). What Akwanya is trying to put across is that since the African society is communal in its outlook, African fiction cannot divert from that societal norm, hence the negative portrayal of characters who strive to express their individuality.

The sentiments expressed by these two scholars about African literature being about the African experience and society cannot be disputed. The African story is best told by the

Africans themselves who have lived experiences. But then, since we have individuated characters within the context of the African society, it follows that, that story would be incomplete if it does not include the narrative about these individuated individuals. The African experience comes in different dimensions and facets, and to deliberately ignore the part on individuality would be to mislead the outside world about the makings of the African fibre. This study will not fall into that ploy. What is in contention is the place of the individual in this otherwise highly communal African society. Ulogu (2019) is of the view that individuality is a hindrance to societal values and progress, a view that is not shared by this study. He is of the school of thought that since African ideology and philosophy is shrouded in the supremacy of the community, individualistic approach is counterproductive as it “threatens communal ethos, thereby putting pressure and chaos, and threatening peace and harmony” (2019; 13). A deduction can easily be made from Ulogu’s sentiments that he is against individuality. He takes a position without really going into the intricacies of the subject matter and find out why individuated characters behave in the manner they do.

With such an orientation, Ulogu (2019) fails to do justice to the subject matter. He, for example, gives prominence to the down fall of Okonkwo, the protagonist in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), while neglecting to acknowledge the many outstanding accomplishments the character made during his life time. Ulogu also overlooks the many occasions when Okonkwo was failed by his community. His lamentation about the inertia of his tribesmen to fight the white man who had invaded their land, and was desecrating their cultural beliefs and traditional practices with impunity gives evidence to the assertion that his community failed him on a number of important occasions. Okonkwo is heard lamenting the disintegration of the Ibo society with the advent of colonialism. He says: “Perhaps I have been away too long [. . .]. What is it that has happened to our people? Why have they lost the power to fight” (Achebe, 1958: 140). The narrative Ulogu gives currency to is that of Okonkwo as a failure because of his egocentricism as he puts it. He makes very little attempt, if any, to ponder the question at hand from the point of view of the individual. The title of his article could easily have been, ‘The Dark Side of Individuality in a Communal African Society: The Case of Achebe’s Novels,’ because in essence that is what he brings out.

Ulogu (2019), from the point of view of this study, erroneously describes Obi, the main character in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), as a product purely of his community. He holds that view because the man was sponsored by the community to go and pursue further studies in

England. Again, the literary critic ignores the fact that Obi, as an individual, was very intelligent and hardworking. He came out as the best student in the whole of his province, which merited his getting admitted to one of the universities overseas. As the narrator reveals “At the age of twelve or thirteen he had passed his Standard Six examination at the top of the whole province. [. . .] At the end of five years he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinctions in all eight subjects” (Achebe, 1960: 7). Was he not a brilliant scholar Obi would not have earned admission into university. In that case the issue of scholarship would not have arisen in the first place. To downplay that fact is a serious indictment on the part of Ulogu. He gets engrossed in celebrating the community, forgetting that community is made out of individuals first and foremost.

Ulogu (2019) seems to suggest that conflict, especially between the individual and the community is retrogressive and counterproductive. However, this researcher argues that conflict is good and as a matter of fact productive, especially if it ends in a resolution of one kind or the other. Carlsen and Gilbert (1985), argue that conflict is the fuel of any narrative be it in a short story or a novel. They argue that conflict “In real life sharpens our thinking and our actions. In a conflict people see a reflection of their own problems in their own lives and gain insight into themselves” (1985: 1-2). What this entails is that as the readers read various pieces of literature, they should be able to identify with some of the characters who are in different kinds of conflict, and draw insight and inspiration from how they manage to resolve those conflicts. In that case, this study is of the view that conflict is wholesome because it is from conflict that solutions to various problems are found, and that the absence of conflict does not necessarily mean that there is peace and harmony.

Mnabi (2007) is yet another literary scholar who did some work on the subject under discussion. In his paper, ‘The individual in African Communalism,’ he argues that, “By nature, a human being is a social being” (2007: 13). In trying to defend his argument, he underpins what he refers to as the “interdependent nature of human life” (2007:13). He marries this view with the argument that, “An individual human being is born into an existing human community, into a cultural society, and that an individual is never a pure isolated individual but is congenitally communitarian incapable of being, except in the complex relations of the community” (2007: 14). Mnabi’s view is shared by Watadza (2016), who argues that “without interacting with other members of the society, an individual cannot be

recognised as a complete person” (2016: 24). This entails that the humanity in a person is not as result of biological make up but is a social construct.

Based on Mnabi’s arguments, a deduction can easily be made about his view concerning the fate of an individual in a communalistic society. He is of the view that an individual owes his existence to the community. That is the reason why he argues that: “The community alone constitute the social context in which the individual could actualise his or her potentialities” (2007: 14). At this juncture there is a major rift with this study. The source of conflict is that of the fate of the individual in a communalistic society. The view of this study is that the community is comprised of distinct and independent individuals who come together for the common good. We have individuals first, then the community. It is only when these individuals follow their dreams and aspirations in life, and thrive and prosper that the community will see the benefits of pulling resources together.

Mnabi is more descriptive and less analytical in expressing his views on the individual and the community. He makes a correct observation that there is a continuous struggle between the two for supremacy. However, he does not investigate and analyse this conflict. Rather than give the individual a voice he ends up describing the communalistic nature of the African society and giving credence to that. In that kind of a scenario, Mnabi is merely trying to advance the view that an individual becomes but a mere appendage to the group, a view which is in contestation with this study.

To prove his hypothesis, he makes a careful selection of Igbo proverbs, all in support of the supremacy of the community over the individual. That is evidenced in his usage in his work of proverbs like, *Ummuna bu ike* meaning the relatives or community is one’s strength, and *Anaghi eleli, amala eleli* meaning one cannot neglect the community. His views about the primacy of commununitarianism are similar to those of Gyekye (2002: 93) who cites an Akan proverb which when translated into English reads, a person is not a palm tree to survive alone. Like many other literary scholars on the subject, Mnabi gives communitarianism undue prominence over the individual. He falls into the trap of glossing over the fate of the individual mainly because his point of departure in addressing this subject is that of regarding individuality as a product of egocentricism. Starting with a such a premise that this study regards faulty, although consistent with his objectives, his findings are faulty. From the point of view of this study, Mnabi does not go far enough in addressing the issues involved in so far as the conflict between the individual and the community is concerned.

Ogbonna (2009) did a detailed study on the subject of the individual and the community. His M.A dissertation titled, *Individual Freedom in African Communalism*, was aimed at finding out the extent of individual freedom in the Igbo communal African society of West Africa. His objective was formulated from the hypothesis that individuation is frowned upon in that society, which has collectivistic features. Bearing in mind that the Igbo society is a communalistic one, as attested to by other scholars who carried out similar work in that part of the world such as Ulogu (2019), Ogbonna's findings were consistent with what is already known about the Igbo people.

In his discussion, he gives examples from Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, (1958) to prove his assertion that the concept community is deeply entrenched among the Igbo people. He cites an incident in which the wife of Ogbuefi Udo, was killed in Mbaino, a neighboring village to Umofia, where the deceased hailed from (Achebe, 1958: 9). Ogbonna argues that the commotion that arose over this isolated murder incident evidence the fact that the sense of community is deep rooted among the Igbo people. His findings were that individuality has very little room for expression among the Igbo, and that the community is supreme.

Ogbonna's study is different from this particular one in that he does not investigate the source and nature of conflict between the individual and the community, which this study is all about. What Ogbonna (2009) and Olugu (2019) should have factored in, in their discourse on Chinua Achebe's novels is the fact that his narratological techniques changed with time to represent new thinking. On a comparative basis, *Things Fall Apart*, for example, published in 1958, is written with different artistic and stylistic narratological features from, *Antihills of the Savannah* published in 1997. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs the third person omniscient narrator's point of view. In *Antihills of the Savannah*, there is a major shift as the author employs the first-person narrative and combines that with an omniscient narrator to create a more appealing artistic piece of work. The story is told from the point of view of three characters, namely Chris Oriko, the protagonist, Ikem Osadi, editor of the National Gazette, and Beatrice Okoh, Chris's girlfriend, and senior secretary in the Ministry of Finance. Achebe produces a 'polyphonic novel' as coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse of the Novel* (1935).

There is a multiplicity of voices or points of view. By changing his narratological style, and bringing in a diversity of individual voices, the author gives the individual characters a voice, to tell their own stories from their own respective points of view. With such a narrotological

technic being employed, the prospective readership is given a mosaic of the world view as perceived by these individual characters, these are individuated characters who challenge the excesses of the Kagan regime. With urbanisation and globalisation taking root in Achebe's Nigeria, individuated characters who were being overshadowed by their communalistic society begin to emerge, and Achebe reflects that change in his writing. Even the female characters have found their voices, and can stand up to men and challenge them, something that would have been considered a taboo in the Nigeria of 1960. As such, Ulogu (2019), and Ogbonna (2009) fall short in their arguments in support of the concept of community because they fail to capture this important change.

In his paper entitled 'Mapping Expressive Differences Around the World: The Relationship Between Emotional Display Rules and Individualism Versus Collectivism,' Matsumoto (2008) makes a general commentary on the topic of the individual and the community. The main objective of his article is to document common trends around the world surrounding the individual as it relates to the community. His thesis statement is that for society to function normally it needs a regulatory framework so as to prevent social chaos and maintain social order (2008: 39). He argues that the creation of norms of behaviour reduces what he termed ambiguity of situations thereby maintaining social order. Here, what Matsumoto is advocating for is a value system with sanctions for those who flout the rules of that system. Without being overly explicit, it is clear that individuation is outside what he considers normal and acceptable behaviour. His proposition that collectivistic cultures, "foster interdependent selves and in-group goals, for the sake of communal cohesiveness and progress" (2008: 39), is revealing about his view on individualism. It is a considered view of this study that Matsumoto's topic was too wide for him to effectively deal with the subject matter, and achieve his objectives. His area of focus was too broad as he was trying to deal with trends on individuality in the whole world. He could have done much better had he focused on a specific community in a specific region.

It is really difficult to determine what his objectives were and whether those objectives were achieved. Coming up with world trends in the social sciences is not an easy undertaking because of cultural diversity. As can be seen, his work differs from my study in that it does not deal with the actual conflict between the individual and the community like what this study does. He meant his article to be a reflection of society in so far as the common trends on the matter are concerned. But then, heterogenic as the world societies are in terms of their

cultural practices, Matsumoto gave himself too daunting a task, and ended up making unfair generalisations. This is not to suggest that there are no valuable lessons that can be learnt from his article, but then employing a discourse that is text based or region specific would have made it much more worthwhile both for himself as the author, and for the would be readership. That would have given him more leverage to examine, analyse and synthesis the subject matter.

Schwerdt (1994), in her thesis titled, *Reconstructing Identity in Postcolonial African Fiction: Individualism and Community in the Novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, carried out extensive and very informative and educative work with regard to the individual and the community as they manifest in Ngugi wa Thiong's novels namely, *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Weep not Child* (1964). The main objective of her study was to examine the way in which Kenya's most significant writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, portrayed the impact of colonialism on the relationship between the individual and the community in colonial and postcolonial Kenya, his native country. Bearing in mind that no writer escapes the influence of cultural context, Schwerdt chose to examine Ngugi's texts from a socio-cultural perspective while at the same time taking into account the political disenchantment that influenced his writing. In essence, the focus of her study was to investigate how the communal structures and values were eroded by the advent of colonialism, giving rise to individuality, in an otherwise highly communal Gikuyu society of Kenya (1994: 4).

Schwerdt's work differs from this study in two important respects; the objectives of her study and the primary texts she used as literary tools to achieve those objectives. As has already been observed, the objective of her research was to investigate how colonialism disrupted the rich communal ties among the Gikuyu people of Kenya, giving rise to elements of individuality, whereas my research will focus on the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction with *No longer at Ease*, (1960) *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Bitterness*,(2005), as the main texts. She wanted to find out what the political, economic, social and cultural forces that came with the advent of colonialism were, and how these forces disrupted the communal structures and values in that country, with Ngugi wa Thiong 's historical novels as tools.

As a point of departure, Schwerdt (1994) concedes the communal nature of the African society in general, and the Kenyan society in particular, especially among the Gikuyu people, the setting of some of Ngugi's novels. She talks about a closely knit society with strong communal ties marked by interdependence, brotherhood and harmony (1994: 4). The good of the community was regarded supreme to that of the individual. Her sentiments are shared by Mazrui (1999), who advances an argument that the Kenyan people came together as a unified force to fight the common enemy, the colonialist. Without that unity of purpose, independence would have remained elusive (1999: 113-114). Individuals like Jomo Kenyatta (1877- 1978) and Dedan Kimathi (1920- 1957) had to sacrifice their individuality and rally the people together for the common good of society (1999: 165-166). However, as Schwerdt argues, colonialism succeeded in the first place because it was divisive in nature as it weakened the very fabric that held the people together.

This researcher argues that at the centre of every revolution there are individuals or groups of individuals that emerge as heroes and heroines. The same can be said for disasters and calamities, man-made or natural. It cannot be disputed that the community members have to work together as a united force for the common good. But then when challenges seem insurmountable, there are those individuated characters who summon beyond human-like courage, and rise to the occasion. In *The Grain of Wheat* (1967), we have Kihika, for example, who pays the ultimate price as he is hanged by the colonialists until pronounced dead. He is arrested and hanged for his political activism, ironically having been betrayed by Mugo, a member of his society. It can be argued that he was betrayed by his own society, and yet he was making sacrifices so that the people may be free from the yoke of colonialism. Even in his death Kihika is a hero.

In *The River Between* (1965), Waiyaki, the protagonist, is destined to be that hero who would rise up to the occasion and save the people during their hour of need. Chege, his father, told him in those prophetic words, "You are the last in our line. [. . .] Salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise. And his duty shall be to lead and save the people. A man must rise and save the people in their hour of need" (19-21). This goes to show that in every situation, the real heroes are not necessarily the community, but individuals within that community.

Schwerdt's findings were that colonialism broke the communal ties that ensured social cohesion, as can be observed in the novels that she reviewed and more so in *The River*

Between (1965), and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). She argues that colonialism was a disruptive force to the cohesion of the community giving rise to individuality. In that kind of scenario individuality is only but a by-product of colonialism. She argues that one of the ways the colonialists employed to create disunity among the people was through the western type of education. She maintains that the western type of education created educated elite who became alienated from their society. She points out characters like Waiyaki- hybridised individuals- who received the western type of education while at the same time trying to preserve the traditional and cultural values of the Gikuyu people, and in the end becoming alienated (1994:18). Such characters became exposed to a different value system, and the spirit of the community became less appealing. Colonialism, Schwerdt argues, imposed social and economic structures such as the western type of education, taxation and land appropriation that altered the lives of the colonised, forcing many into the labour market.

Christianity, a religion introduced by the colonialists, also brought division among the people, as Schwredt (1994) argues, giving rise to the individualistic outlook on life. Muthoni Joshua's daughter, is given as a good example of the divisive nature of christianity both at family and community level. Joshua himself was an ardent, and perhaps overzealous Christian. Schwerdt points out the fact that he expected all his children to follow his footsteps. However, Muthoni, his daughter rebelled and went through circumcision, which Joshua regarded a heathen practice. But then her rebellion ended in tragedy as she died from the wounds inflicted on her during circumcision. Joshua was quick to point out that his daughter's death was punishment from God for disobedience. The custodians of Gikuyu culture and tradition attributed her misfortune to her conversion to Christianity, which they said angered the gods of the land (1994:18).

Tshibangu (1999), in his article, 'Religion and Social Evolution,' brings out a similar argument about the conflict brought by Christianity as a religion among the Africans (501-505). He argues that this happened the African traditional religious practices and Christianity were not compatible. In bringing out this conflict between the individual and the community, Schwredt is trying to demonstrate the futility of expressing individuality in a highly communalistic society.

Schwredt (1994) in her thesis also discusses the role of the traditional rulers in the breaking down of communal ties and the rise of the concept of the individual. Ironically, these traditional rulers were supposed to be in the first-place custodians of the community. She

says “The colonialists made use of them to collect taxes among their subjects, and to hand over for punishment those who defaulted” (1994: 91). Under such circumstances, she maintains, the community could no longer hold. The people had to sell their livestock, and after they had been depleted, they were forced to move to urban areas to seek employment. Urbanisation further eroded the communal ties as the people became highly individuated.

As has been observed, Schwredt does not deal with the conflict between the individual and the community, but rather the colonial influences that brought about the rise of individuation in a largely communal society. She seems to suggest that individuality, as portrayed in Ngugi’s novels rose only because of the corrosive influence of colonialism. However, that view is problematic from the point of view of this study in the sense that individuation existed in African society as reflected in African folklore even before the advent of colonialism, and well before the African novel came into being. As Freud (1923), and Jung (1971), would argue, it is inherent in human beings to seek self-gratification, regardless the consequences.

Another literary scholar and researcher who did some work on the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction is Nebbou (2015). He published a paper with the title, ‘Individualism in both the African and the Western Novels.’ His hypothesis was that the western, novel from which the African novel emerged, reflects individuality as it is practiced in the western world, while the African novel projects the communalistic view of life. To prove his hypothesis he carried out a comparative study of three novels and a poem – two African and two western, namely, *The Interpreters* (1965), by Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966), as African novels, and Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), and Eliot’s poem *The Wasteland* (1922), as the western literature.

Nebbou (2015) begins by making an assertion that the two West African writers in Soyinka and Achebe were duty bound to express the communal nature of their society in their writings (2015: 3). He argues that in traditional African society the individual’s contributions to communal life and welfare were considered good because individuals were seen as part of a corporate whole. Any emotional passion for personal goals was seen as evil and hence suppressed. Nebbou gives an example of Odili’s father, one of the characters in Achebe’s, *A Man of the People*. (1966). He says he is presented as a skilful traditional medicine man from whom the whole community benefits. He concludes his argument by saying that in

traditional African societies, for a man to gain importance and respect from other members, the clan requires that he performs duties for them (2015: 4). Nebbou makes a contrast between Odili's father in African fiction who conforms to the communal values, and Edna in *The Awakening* (1899) an individualist, who runs away from home with her lover, Robert. Whereas Odili's father in African fiction is a conformist who has a communalistic view of life, Edna is not. She is a non-conformist and pursues her individual dream.

In the same vein Nebbou (2015) in reference to *A Man of the People* (1966), gives examples of characters like Odili, Max and the Minister of Finance who tried to express their individualism and taken as a threat to the whole nation. Nanga, the President addressed them as a "Miscreant gang. Snobbish intellectuals" (Achebe, 1966: 5). It is evident that he is not pleased by their attempt to express their individuality.

It is clear from the foregoing that Nebbou, just like many other researchers and scholars on the subject of the individual as he relates to the community in African fiction, has fallen into the folly of taking a simplistic view. And that is to say individuality is a foreign concept and does not add any value to society. He did not go far enough, for example to interrogate why president or chief Nanga, as he was fondly called, had a negative view about Odili, Max and especially the Minister of Finance, Dr. Makinde whom the narrator describes as a "first rate economist with a Ph.D in public finance" (Achebe, 1966: 3). He presented a workable economic recovery plan which the Prime Minister rejected for fear of losing the election which was imminent. Instead, He ordered the National Bank to print more money so as to appease the people in order for them to vote for him (Achebe, 1966: 3). The Prime Minister is presented as a man of the people, and Dr Makinde, the Minister of Finance, as an enemy of the people, who eventually loses his job. The whole nation is against him, and yet as an individual he has correctly analysed the unsound economic situation the country is in and what is to be done to solve the problem. Again, here we are presented with a clear case of an individual being in conflict with his society, with the individual being in the right. Nebbou (2015) does not bring out all these facts. He does not lay bare the intricacies that exacerbated the conflict between the individual and the community in that novel. From the onset Nebbou had already taken a pessimistic view about individuality, and so failed to do justice to the subject matter.

Ifedilichukwu (1999), in his book, *Literature as History: A Study of the Novels of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, focuses on the conflict that existed between African and

Western tradition. In that conflict a few characters emerged that expressed their individualism. Examples like Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, Okonkwo, Waiyaki and Muthoni found themselves at the crossroads between African and western culture. However, the mere fact that none of these had a happy ending, points to the negative portrayal of these characters, and the individualism they represented. The thrust of his argument is that an individual cannot thrive and prosper outside the communal fabric characterised by the interconnectedness that comes with family and communal ties. This view is similar to that of Mbiti (1970) who maintains that, "Each Individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, or cousin or brother in law, uncle or aunt or something else to everybody else" (1970: 136). This entails that every individual is connected in one way or the other to other individuals in a given community, and as such, his or her own well-being hinges on these other members of the community. Here, both Ifedilichukwu and Mbiti seem to suggest that all an individual needs to do to attain self-actualisation is merely to seek and work towards the wellness of the community in which that particular individual lives, then personal happiness and well-being would follow.

Ifedilichukwu (1999) does not dwell much on the spirit of the individual as expressed by some of these characters. On the contrary, he highlights the conflict as not being between the individual and the community, but rather being between the western and African culture (1999: 15).

Acevedo (2003) also did some detailed and highly informative and educative work on the same subject, in his Master's Degree thesis. The aim of his study was to find out the different attitudes and beliefs in so far as the individual and the community is concerned among people of different ethnic backgrounds. He carried out his research among university and college students in the United States of America, where he conducted a snap survey. His findings were that African Americans had a much greater sense of community than the Caucasian American. African Americans were also significantly lower on overall individuality when compared to Caucasian Americans (2003:1). Acevedo did not take into account many important variables such as the economic and social backgrounds of his respondents, which could have influenced them in terms of their preferences. His should have been a highly controlled social experiment, but in the absence of well-defined control measures, the outcomes of his research are questionable.

Acevedo's study did not focus on the conflict between the individual and the community, but rather on trying to interrogate, the prevalence of the two concepts among different ethnic groups. In essence, his study was of a statistical nature, more concerned with the issues of trends and prevalences, and not on the nature and causes of the actual conflict. For that reason, a knowledge gap still existed.

Apart from Acevedo's, Freeman (1997) also did important work on the subject. He published an article titled "Demographic Correlates of Individualism and Collectivism: A Study of Social Values in Sir Lanka". A sample of 438 Sir Lanka respondents from a wide variety of demographic contexts was selected. The aim of his study was to investigate their tendencies and preferences between individualism and collectivism. Freeman's findings were that the higher the socio-economic status, the higher the preference for individuality. There was also a strong correlation between urban dwellers and individuation (1997: 15). Again, Freeman's study does not deal with the issues that this study deals with. His study, just like that of Freeman (1997), was of a demographic nature, while on the contrary this study deals with the actual conflict between the individual and the community

2.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, it has to be emphasised that the above literature review was not exhaustive but rather representative of the common trends in African ideology and philosophy, with regard to the conflict between the individual and the community. The review focused on the objectives and findings of the studies done by the various literary scholars, with the purpose of finding out what has already been done, and what the knowledge gap is. What came out so strongly was the primacy of the community over the individual, with the latter being regarded counterproductive to the peace and harmony emanating from the former. The literature review yielded the communalistic nature of the African society as espoused by the different literary scholars, some of whom like Mbiti (1984) fierce proponents of the concept of community.

This study concedes that it would be an exercise in futility to deny that human beings by nature are social beings. They like to commune and identify with each other. However, the individual rights and freedom should not be abrogated. The individual should be given latitude to express his or her individuality because it is only when the individual prospers that society can reap full benefits from such a one. The individual rights and liberty should be

respected and guaranteed, provided that those rights are expressed in a manner that is within the paradigm of what is normal and acceptable, bearing in mind that what is normal and acceptable in one society may not necessarily be normal and acceptable in another.

Africa is not monogenic in terms of its cultural beliefs and practices, but heterogenic. Nevertheless, the underlying thread that runs across the continent, is that of the community as the overriding philosophy. Even when the fact that African culture is not unreceptive to globalisation is taken into account, and the acculturation that often comes with it, the concept and spirit of humanness or Ubuntu is unmistakable. That notwithstanding, individuality does exist. Most African literary scholars tend to downplay it, and romanticise the community. One need not go far but study the works of Mbiti (1975), Menkiti (1984), Ogbonna (2009), Ulogu (2018), and Matsumoto (2008), among many others. They present the community as a seamless, impeccable, and infallible social system. This study asserts that the concept of the community, just like the individual, is a product of social constructivism. As a social construct, it has its own flaws. It is only scholars like Taiwo (2016), and Gyekye (2002) that espouse a more balanced view. They posit the overbearing nature of the community on the individual.

This study postulates that the scholars and philosophers, whose works have been reviewed did not go far enough to examine, interrogate and analyse the subject matter at hand. They merely reflected, and reinforced the view about the supremacy of the community in African fiction and society. But then, literary criticism, if it is to be relevant should do more than just reflect popular trends; it should examine and analyse even what may appear on face value to be straightforward and given. Their omissions, whether advertently or inadvertently are too glaring to go unnoticed.

The African society is not one dimensional in nature. The assertion that the individual has no existence outside what his or her society gives him, and is a mere appendage to the group cannot go unchallenged. Individuality, no matter how less appealing it may be, should be given a voice. The argument advanced by Mbiti (1970), and reinforced by Menkiti (1984:172), that it is the community that prescribes who a person is, and who is not, is not shared by this study which maintains that the individual is an independent, and separate entity from the community.

As an aggregate, and as a final argument, to close the chapter, it is explicit that none of the scholars whose works have been reviewed had an express objective, like this study has, to interrogate the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction, especially from the point of view of characters who express individuality. The popular narrative is that of community, with individuation being relegated to the position of an alien concept, a product of egocentricism and colonialism, and a disruptive force which does not correlate with the aspirations of the collectivistic African societies. Individuated characters are very much part and parcel of both African fiction and society, and we can no longer afford to continue ignoring them. It is envisaged that that this study will help abridge the identified knowledge gap by providing new and original information, that will help shape contemporary thinking in African ideology and philosophy on the conflict between the individual and community in African fiction. The next chapter, Chapter Three, will provide a synopsis of the primary texts, namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005), in that order.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVELS

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, a synopsis of the primary texts, namely, *No Longer At Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005), shall be provided. This synopsis will be done without going into details of the conflict between the individual and the community as portrayed in the three selected novels, as that will be dealt with in chapter four which discusses and analysis the three texts.

3.1 No Longer at Ease

Chinua Achebe's second novel, *No Longer At Ease*, published in 1960, depicts Nigeria, at a time when colonialism has just been established in that country. During this period, there is a small but rapidly growing group of African elites that has been exposed to western type of education and is taking up important, senior positions in the civil service, in readiness for independence. Obi Okonkwo, the protagonist is one such Africans, with his university degree obtained from England. However, even at such an early stage, in the formative years of what would be independent Nigeria, signs of corruption are already evident among the Africans, making the vice a thematic issue that stands to destroy individuals like Obi, and the new nation when it is finally born.

The narrative opens in much the same manner as it closes; Obi the protagonist is in trouble, in court over corruption, a shameful dent on this otherwise brilliant and highly individuated character who earns himself a scholarship to go and study at a university overseas. His community sponsors him from their meagre resources to go and study law so that he could help them in their land disputes with their neighbours once he finishes his studies. However, he studies English instead. That is not well received by his people. They feel aggrieved, having been betrayed by one of their own. Even so, they decide to forgive him, citing proverbs such as, "anger against a brother is not felt in the bones but in the flesh" (Achebe, 1960: 3) meaning that however much a brother can wrong you there is a limit to the amount of anger you can express towards him.

On his return from England, having successfully completed his studies, Obi finds himself in perpetual conflict with his community. To start with he defaults in his instalments to settle the loan that was advanced to him for his studies. He asks for an extension which they reluctantly give him because as a senior civil servant they feel that he should be able to handle his finances in a much better way. The truth of the matter is that Obi does not earn as much as they think he does. He is actually facing financial challenges, and to keep up appearances, as expected of a man of his standing in society, he ends up over borrowing. He gets a mortgage for a car, more to impress his people, and less out of necessity. He struggles to provide for himself and his aging parents in the village. Complaints of him not being caring towards them begin to emerge. There is disillusionment on two fronts; Obi as an individual realises that the western education he acquired, and the white-collar job that he has as a senior civil servant are not enough to give him the economic freedom that he thought he would have. In the same

vein, his community realises that there is not much benefit that they are going to accrue from the man they sacrificed so much for.

As if to exacerbate the conflict, Obi falls in love with Clara, an *osu*, a woman deemed to be possessed by some evil spirits, and therefore an outcast. His whole community including his parents are against his plans to marry such a woman. The president of the Umuofia Progressive Union confronts him over the matter and makes it clear to him that such a move would be totally unacceptable. Obi is enraged because he feels that the choice of a girlfriend and a marriage partner is a private affair, and he has the right to decide who to marry.

But then, the choice of a marriage partner in his community is not a private matter. The community have a say, more so in the case of Obi because they feel that, having sponsored his studies, they are duty bound to see to it that the best comes out of him so that he could in a way pay back their trust and sacrifice on him. His mother is even more categorical over the issue; she threatens suicide should Obi decide to go ahead with his plans to marry Clara, an *osu*. Certainly there is conflict, and Obi's exposure to western type of education and his stay in England where he is exposed to the western culture does not help matters. He strongly feels it is nonsensical that a person can be declared an outcast possessed by evil spirits when there is no scientific way of proving such. However, the pressure brought to bear on him is immense and he drops the idea, albeit at a great cost both in terms of his finances as he has to secure an expensive abortion for Clara who is already heavily pregnant with his child, and also in terms of his emotional well-being. The death of his mother around the same time when he is already heartbroken drives him to near insanity levels.

At this juncture it should be mentioned that the involvement of family in the marriage process is consistent with the African belief that marriage is an alliance between families rather than between individuals, as is the case in the western world. It is also true that arranged marriages often happen for valid reasons and can be construed as a way of protecting young people from making bad choices. For example in Ghana, as reported by Baffour Takyi (2003) cited in Mutunda (2015), it is a duty of the parents of each party to ensure that their potential in-laws do not come from a family with any known serious disease (including lunacy and leprosy), are not known criminals or witches, do not engage in quarrelling, and are hardworking and respectful. The involvement of family also serves to ensure that the future couples are compatible in values, expectations and life styles. In spite of all this Obi strongly feels that his right to choose a marriage partner of his choice is being infringed upon.

As the novel comes to a close, Obi is in an agitated, pitiable state, nothing short of a tragic hero. In a sense western education has failed him because it does not bring with it sustainable social mobility, he hoped for but only serves to alienate him from his own people. His community has equally failed him as it has unrealistic expectations on a fresh university graduate who is still trying to settle down. His mother has died, and the pressure from his community has made him to abandon the idea of marrying Clara, a woman he loves so much. The novel reaches its climax with his involvement in corruption, and the subsequent loss of the case in court. Obi is in a state of confusion, the traumatic events in his life having been relentless. He is a man in need of a clinical psychologist.

3.2 *Arrow of God*

Chinua Achebe's third novel, *Arrow of God*, published in 1966, has a setting in rural, British Nigeria in the 1920s, in the southern part of the country, among the Igbo people. The white man's hold on the country is still in its infancy, and the African finds himself in a dilemma; whether to embrace some aspects of modernity, and western culture on one hand, or to hold on steadfast, and preserve the purity of the African, Igbo culture to be precise. This sets the stage for a dramatic interface between the western culture, with its trappings like the western type of education and Christianity, and the indigenous, religious and cultural practices, marked by the worship of the spirits of ancestors, with a multiplicity of gods. The Igbo traditional religion is polytheistic in nature as opposed to the monotheistic Christianity.

The protagonist is Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu. He is portrayed as a highly individuated character, at the crossroads between being a custodian of African cultural practices and traditional beliefs, on one hand, and the need to get exposed to western culture, or as he puts it, to learn the ways of the white man, on the other. He struggles to achieve this delicate balance, and more often than not, is a source of controversy and antagonism in his community.

The narrative opens with Ezeulu peering into the sky in search of the new moon, a task he has to perform every month in discharge of one of the functions of his office. Having sighted the new moon, he goes into his barn and takes out one yam from the sacred yams and eats it as a ritual. That foreshadows the main conflict, and the climax in the novel; both have something to do with the sacred yams, and Ezeulu's refusal to sanction the beginning of a new harvest with far reaching consequences, both for himself as an individual and his community.

Early in the narrative, war is imminent between Umuaro, his village, and Okperi, a neighbouring village, over a disputed piece of land (Achebe, 1964 :15). He sides with Okperi as the true owner of the piece of land in dispute. The majority of his community does not agree with him. They feel betrayed by one of their own, more so that Ezeulu is not an ordinary person, but their chief priest. He attracts upon himself, and his family ridicule and scorn with the narrative of his being a traitor running throughout the novel. The fact that Ezeulu tells the truth with regard to the true ownership of the piece of land in dispute is immaterial in so far as the people are concerned. They regard his action as the worst form of betrayal.

As it pans out, Ezeulu is disregarded: Umauro goes ahead to fight Okeperi in a war. Ezeulu is vindicated as the objectives of the war are not achieved, and Okperi takes over the disputed land. Even so, the issue is still unresolved: Ezeulu and a traitor, in the eyes of his people is one and the same.

Still unresolved as the issue of the land dispute is, Ezeulu, sends one of his sons, Oduche, to a missionary school where he is not only exposed to western type of education but also converts to Christianity, the white man's religion. In his wisdom, he wants him to learn the ways of the white man so that he can be keeping him abreast with any new white man's developments. Nevertheless, his community is not convinced. They are infuriated that their chief priest has allowed his son to follow the ways of the white man. As far as they are concerned, it is inconceivable that their chief priest should commit such an abomination (*Arrow*, 133). However, Ezeulu is unfazed. He does not need people's opinions to validate his action. Certainly, Ezeulu is headstrong, a highly individuated character, fashioned in his own style, and with very little regard for people's opinions.

As the narrative unfolds further, Oduche, the new Christian convert, becomes overzealous, and imprisons the royal python, a symbol of the people's religion in a box. There is a public outcry because the abomination that has been committed is unparalleled in the whole of Umuaro, and the blame is put squarely on Ezeulu. But then he is adamant, and is not in the least disturbed or perturbed by the turn of events. His language is unmeasured, provocative, and abusive, unfitting for a person of his standing in society.

As events unfold, Witherbottom the District Officer is incensed by Ezeulu's refusal to assume the position of Paramount Chief that he has given him. Wanting to save face, he orders his

arrest. Most of his community celebrate his arrest; they feel avenged of the many unresolved issues of the past, and especially the one to do with the disputed land, they lost to Okeperi, a neighbouring village. However, there is dramatic irony in the narrative in that the community is not aware that the very detention of Ezeulu that they are celebrating would later result in their own downfall. The festival of the New Yam is fast approaching, of which Ezeulu the Chief Priest, has the sole responsibility and privilege to preside over, and without which the harvest of the new yam cannot begin (*Arrow*,209). According to their religious practice, the Chief Priest can only call the New Yam Feast when there is only one yam left from the twelve sacred yams he has to eat, apparently from one harvest season to the next one. However, there are still three yams left from the last harvesting season, and yet the new yams are ready for harvesting. Upon being asked to call the New Yam Feast, Ezeulu refuses to do so and reminds the people about their custom concerning the calling of the New Yam Festival.

The irony in this development is that during the time when Ezeulu was in prison, he could not eat the sacred yams as scheduled to allow him finish them in good time for the Festival of the New Yams. The people celebrated his imprisonment without realising that they were in essence celebrating their own destruction. Ezeulu absolves himself of blame by saying that it was not up to him but the gods to decide.

As the hold-up is in full swing, with the people at the brink of starvation, the Christians make the best out of this sad state of affairs. They are told that if they make their thanks offering to the Christian God, they can still harvest their crop without fear of Ulu, and even without Ezeulu declaring the Feast of the New Yam (Achebe, 1964: 217). Many take that route, and do not suffer any repercussions from the African gods of the land. Both Ezeulu and the gods that he represents are declared redundant. There is a sudden realisation, and an awakening that the Christian God is the true God. As the story comes to a close, Ezeulu is crestfallen; his son, Obika has died in the confusion that ensues, and he can no longer hold his community to ransom, his powers as the Chief Priest of Ulu having been declared impotent. In trying to destroy his enemies, he destroys himself as well. He is the Arrow of God which is used to bring about Christianity, but at the same time, the same arrow kills him.

3.3 Bitterness

Malama Katulwende's novel, *Bitterness*, published in 2005, portrays a bitter conflict of interests between an individual, Besa, and his community. The conflict is on two fronts; African cultural values and modernity on one front, and university student politics against the regime in power after Zambia attained independence, on the other. The author ably depicts the kind of struggle young people have to undergo in their quest for survival in postcolonial Africa.

Most of the scenes take place at the University of Zambia, while a few take place in a rural setting in Mansa District of the Luapula Province. Like stated in the preamble, the novel is set in modern times in, in post-independence Zambia, and yet the colonial hangover is still evident. In some areas of the country, essential commodities like bread are still being sold through a window, so reminiscent of the colonial era. What Katulwende brings out so vividly is the disillusionment of the people after independence. With the advent of independence, hopes are so high that a new dawn has arrived, which will usher in a new dispensation where the rule of law is paramount and where the economic resources are shared equitably, ensuring economic prosperity for all. But then a few are actually heard grumbling that the colonial days were even much better. They soon realise that political independence does not necessarily come with economic independence.

The argument advanced by Katulwende is similar to that of Mzrui (1993), calling the independence of the African countries, 'independence of the flag' meaning that it is hollow and a sham, as it comes without economic independence both at individual and national level. There is widespread disillusionment. The same kind of suppression and oppression of the masses is not abated, but instead exacerbated. Freedom of assembly is still not guaranteed under the repressive Public Order Act that the new regime puts in place. Intolerance of opposing views is the order of the day, under this one-party participatory dictatorship which they call a democracy. Without meaningful opposition, the University of Zambia Students' Union act as a de facto opposition political party, with Besa the antagonist being one of the activists. However, the reaction by the regime is brutal.

Besa, the main character, is portrayed as an arrogant, highly individuated character, whose exposure to western type of education, and the modernity that comes with it has made him to loathe African culture and tradition. That can be seen in his choice of a girl of mixed blood as a marriage partner. His engagement and intended marriage to Shantie Peroni, a coloured girl is not well received by his people, especially his uncle who wants him to marry Chama, a

traditional, village girl. His opposition to Besa's marriage choice is that the girl he intends to marry is of mixed races, a coloured. He puts it categorically by saying, "How can you marry a woman whose tribe you don't know?" (Katulwende, 2005: 238), clearly referring to the fact that Shantee is of mixed blood. But then Besa is adamant. He says he does not love Chama, and will marry Shantiee instead, the woman he loves. There is no resolution to the conflict.

Besa successfully completes his studies at university, and joins the Ministry of Education as a teacher. Conditions of service in the ministry are pathetic, and he cannot even afford to give his mother a befitting burial upon her deaths. His community is able to observe that and begins even to doubt the value of education. As a matter of fact, at the time of his mother's demise, Besa is not even on the payroll as yet, despite having been in service for several months. He only manages to attend the funeral courtesy of his friends who help him financially. Living in a one roomed rented house without running water and sanitary facilities, his disillusionment is complete. He decides to resign as a teacher, and leave the country together with his fiancée. His own immediate community has failed him because it cannot allow him to express his individuality by choosing his own marriage partner. His country has equally failed him; there is no rule of law, and the authorities violate human rights with impunity. Besa's spirit cannot allow him to be an accomplice to injustice by being passive. Exile is the only attractive option for him.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, a synopsis of the primary texts in this study namely, *No longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005), has been provided. The next chapter will provide a detailed analysis and discussion of these texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the study presented the synopses of the three selected novels. This chapter gives an in-depth discussion and analysis of the primary texts namely *No Longer At Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God*, (1964) and *Bitterness* (2005). The main thrust of this chapter is to unveil the causes and nature of conflict between the individual and the community as they occur in the selected texts. In so doing answers will be provided to the research questions such as how and why the individuated characters are portrayed in the manner they are, and how these characters react. With specific examples from the texts, I will argue that the community is not as flawless as many proponents of this social construct such as Mbiti (1975), would have us believe. I will contend that the community, as a product of social engineering, has imperfect human beings at the core of it, and as such it has numerous inherent imperfections. A similar observation is made by Afolabi (2009) who bemoans what he terms, “the crippling effects” of communal violence in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2009: 24). This entails that communal values are not always wholesome and beneficial, because in the name of maintaining brotherhood and solidarity, some communities have engaged in senseless communal wars, resulting in needless loss of life and property. This kind of scenario where communities engage in bloody, senseless wars over pieces of land is obtaining in *Arrow of God* (1964) as shall be seen in the discussion.

In the same vein, I will maintain that the individuated characters are not necessarily a disruptive force to the well-being of any given community. They see things from a different point of view, and their energy should not be frowned upon but harnessed for the betterment of society. Human beings come in all forms, shapes and sizes. We cannot have everyone thinking and acting in the same manner like everyone else. There will always be those who choose to be different, and such individuals should be given the leverage to flourish and prosper in their individuality, provided that they express themselves within the realm of what is normal and acceptable, again taking into consideration the fact that what is normal and acceptable in one society may not necessarily be viewed the same way in another.

I will argue that the individuated characters in the selected texts are negatively portrayed, and this can be seen even from the onomastic perspective. The titles of the primary novels themselves are a premonition of sad and tragic endings. To start with, there is *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Achebe’s novel. When one is no longer at ease it means such a person is in

distress of one form or another. In this novel we have Obi the protagonist and character who expresses his individuality, being no longer at ease. As the novel comes to a close, Obi is not at ease because his imprisonment is imminent, having been arrested for engaging in corruption, and his case having been lost in court. He has also fallen out with his community on many respects as shall be seen.

Then we have *Arrow of God* (1964), by the same author. An arrow is a weapon which can be used to injure and or kill. In this novel the figurative arrow is something of a double edged sword. Ezeulu, the main character, is the arrow that God uses to punish the people and make them realise the need to turn away from paganism. In the same vein, that same arrow destroys the one who is wielding it in that by the time the narrative closes his position as the Chief Priest of Ulu is no longer attainable. Ezeulu has lost the favour of the gods and the power to protect himself from harm, let alone his own child who is killed by some unknown people, prompting him to ask, "Ulu, were you there when this happened to me?" (Achebe, 1964: 230). This means that he is disappointed that the god Ulu could not use his power to save his son. In the words of the narrator the god Ulu had chosen to strike Ezeulu down and cover him with mud (*Arrow*, 231). This again goes to show that Ezeulu is no longer the half man, half spirit being that he used to be. Apparently, the god, Ulu, has also lost his power, and is on his own way to destruction.

The third novel under discussion is *Bitterness* (2005), written by Katulwende. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000), the word bitterness is a noun which denotes feeling of anger and unhappiness because of one reason or the other. Besa, the protagonist, is bitter that his society does not agree with him on many important issues of life, including the choice of a marriage partner. Bitterness is a negative trait, as opposed to happiness, for example. When people are bitter it means there is something that has gone wrong, and they would like to have it corrected. Where there is bitterness there is acrimony and conflict. For that reason, bitterness cannot be said to be a positive trait, but a negative one.

Likewise, among the secondary texts consulted are novels like *Things Fall Apart* (1958), by Achebe, and *A Wreath for Udomo* (2003), by Abrahams. When things fall apart it means there is failure, and possible destruction, and true to that title, Okonkwo, the main character in that novel ends up as a tragic hero, things having fallen apart in his life. Yeboah and Owusu (2013: 40), make an interesting observation about Okonkwo by saying that he dies a

shameful death. In agreeing with them I would like to make a slight alteration to their thought; Okonkwo, is rather made to die a shameful death because Achebe, the author is trying to advance a communitarian agenda, and deliberately creates an individuated character in Okonkwo whom he makes to die a shameful death, having committed suicide. In the same vein, Abraham's novel, *A Wreath for Udomo* (2003) has a negative title from the point of view of this study. A wreath is put on the grave, and where there is a wreath there is death, mourning and sorrow. The symbolism of a wreath is that of the absence of life. Again the novel lives up to its title as Udomo, the protagonist, ends up dead, having been killed by the members of his community (*Wreath*, 266). Indeed, there is need for a wreath for Udomo.

Individuated characters can be found in any given society, the African society, communalistic as it is, inclusive. The Ibo society in Nigeria, the setting of Achebe's novels is highly communal in its approach and manner of doing things. Even so, we have characters like Obi in *No longer at Ease* (1960) and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) who are different, and are always eager to express their individuality. As Swerd (1994) correctly observes, "Although the binary opposition of communalism and individualism when applied to Africa and the west cannot be dismissed altogether, it is important to avoid characterising traditional African societies as uniformly communal, and western societies as strictly individualistic" (1994: 16). This entails that even among the highly communal African societies, there are characters who are highly individualistic with their own philosophy of life, and popular opinion fail to dissuade them from following their aspirations. Watt (1957) describes these characters as being "independent from other individuals and from traditional conventional thought (1957: 60). This means that these characters divert from the popular school of thought and crave for themselves a life that is different from that of the rest.

In agreement with Swerd (1994), Bell (2002: 64) argues that even in the highly communitarian African societies, we have individuals who express their individuality, and that these individuals should not be denied the right to express their uniqueness and creativity. What this entails is that denying individuals to express their individuality kills creativity, the basis upon which any given society thrives. Proponents of the communalistic nature of the African society such as Masolo (2010), who put emphasis on the group rather than the individual, on solidarity rather than isolation, tend to overlook the fact that society is made of individuals, first and foremost, and when these individuals thrive and excel, then society as a whole can also thrive. Let each individual express themselves, and enjoy the

fullness of life in as much as each individual has got different attributes and talents from the rest. This does not negate the benefits of the community, because these individuals can still come together for the common good of society.

Obi to start with is exposed to western education and a different value system where the rights and freedoms of the individual are respected. Being well versed in both the African cultural and traditional beliefs, and the western ideals or modernity, he seeks to get the best of the two worlds, as shall be seen in the discussion. He becomes a hybrid character, and that is to say he tries to remain steadfast to the African, Ibo culture he is born and brought up in, while at the same time holding on to modernity, with its trappings such as western education and respect for the individual rights and freedoms. Achebe, cited in Amneh & Shadi (2018), in his essay, 'Colonialist Criticism' criticises the theory that, "no matter how much the native was exposed to European influences he could never fully absorb them (2018). His argument is plausible because we see characters like Obi fully absorbing the western culture, but only becoming hybrid characters as a matter of choice, rather than design.

With the advent of colonialism, there is a fusion of cultures, western education and Christianity having been introduced on the African shores by the white man. We see the emergence of characters like Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), who become hybridised, with the later allowing his son Oduche to embrace Christianity. Bhabha (1994) defines hybridity as, "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation" (1994: 2). What this entails is that there is a new bride of humanity, in a figurative sense, which thrives to embrace in this context both the African and western cultures. However, such characters are not fully accepted by their own communities. They are alienated as the case is with Obi and Ezeulu in *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* respectively.

Examples from other texts include characters such as Waiyaki and Muthoni in *The River Between* (1965), and The Teacher in *The Tongue of the Dumb* (1989). There is intertextuality between Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* (1960), and Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965). Waiyaki, in Ngugi's novel, plays much the same role as Obi in *No Longer at Ease*. Both characters are encouraged to acquire western type of education and are envisaged by their communities to be the saviours of their people. Obi, on the occasion of his departure to England to study, is advised to go and get exposed to western education so that later he could use the knowledge he would acquire to save his people. He is told, "In times past Umuofia

would have required you to fight in her wars and bring human heads. Today we send you to bring knowledge” (Achebe, 1950: 9). This means that there is a realisation by the community that times have changed. Obi is also admonished to remain focussed on his studies while overseas. He is told, “I have heard of young men from other countries who went to the white man’s country, but instead of facing their studies they went for the sweet things of the flesh. Some even married white women. [. . .] A man who does that is lost to his people. He is like rain wasted in the forest (Achebe, 1960: 9).

This section of Achebe’s novel discussed in the previous chapter has some striking similarities with *The River Between* (1965) section in which Chege, one of the characters advises his son, Waiyaki to pursue western education. He says, “Salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise and his duty shall be to lead and save the people. Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the mission place. Learn the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vice. Be true to your people and the ancient rites” (Ngugi, 1965: 20). The intertextuality is evident. In both cases the two individuated characters are being encouraged to get exposed to western education and the modernity that comes with it. At the same time, they are being advised not to forsake the African cultural values and beliefs. Consciously or unconsciously, the two communities are encouraging hybridity.

What the Ibo society in case of Obi, and the Gikuyu society in case of Waiyaki are not aware of at this stage in the narrative is the fact that once exposed to western education and ideals, these characters would start questioning some of the time-tested African traditions and cultural practices and beliefs. They would lose part of their identity as Africans and embrace western values, as shall be seen in the case of Obi in *No Longer at Ease*. Fanon (1986: 10-11), makes a crude reference to this fact in his book *Black Skins White Masks*. He posits that as a result of the trauma of colonialism, the African becomes mutilated in terms of his cultural identity. This entails that the African loses his identity and can neither be accepted by the African society nor the western society that he aspires to be part of. He is left in a miserable state of alienation by both worlds.

Another example of a hybrid character is Muthoni in the *River Between* (1965) Joshua, her father is a convert to Christianity and an ardent follower to the same religion. His view of the world is that of binary opposites; good and evil, light and darkness. He sees circumcision as an evil, heathen practice that must be discarded, and with all who indulge in it destined for

hell. Christianity, as far as he is concerned is light, life and salvation; the African religion and its practices such as circumcision stands for darkness and death. He expects his two daughters to follow his footsteps without question. However, they both go against his wish. Muthoni, the older of the two, is the first one to rebel, and go contrary to the wishes of her father. She believes circumcision would transform her into a complete and real woman. She says: “I want to be circumcised [. . .]. I want to be a real girl, a real woman knowing all the ways of the hills and the ridges” (Ngugi, 1965: 26). This means that she wants to be pure in terms of the Gikuyu cultural practices and beliefs. At the same time she wants to maintain her faith as a Christian. She says, “mother and father are circumcised. Are they not Christians?” (Ngugi, 1965: 26). What Muthoni is yearning for is a fusion between the African cultural practices such as circumcision on one hand, and Christianity on the other. She follows the dictates of her heart and goes through the process, of circumcision, in spite of fierce opposition from Joshua, her father. After undergoing circumcision, a complication develops and for days on end she is bedridden. She never recovers from the wounds, and eventually dies. While on her death bed she says, “Waiyaki [. . .] Tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman beautiful in the tribe” (Ngugi, 1965: 53). This clearly shows that her spirit is not broken by the consequences of her action. She is convinced that she has achieved the best of the two worlds, the African and western one. She exhibits the highest level of individuation, unlike Obi who compromises with his community over the choice of a marriage partner when it mattered the most. Obi is very much unlike Muthoni in *The River Between* or Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* who is engaged in a bitter struggle with his community up to the very end.

The very fact that Muthoni ends up dead, as a result of her rebellion, and all of these individuated characters end up as tragic heroes points to their negative portrayal. None of them achieves positive results because of the communalistic nature of the African society, as shall be seen in the discussion. Achebe’s writing is heavily tilted in favour of the community, like the case is for most other authors such as Wole Soyika (1965) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1965). That is hardly surprising because as Akwanya (2001), argues, “African literature represents an African experience, with mode of imagination derived from an African background” (2001:13). This means that the African author is at his best when he writes about issues related to his own cultural, social, political and economic environment. The African social and cultural environment predominant is that of the premacy of the community. Akwanya’s (2001) sentiments are shared by Ngugi wa Thiong’o cited in Debrah, et al (2016), who argues that, “Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum: it is given

impetus, shape and direction, and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society” (2016: 4). This entails that the biographical facts of an author to a very large extent influences how and what that particular author chooses to write about. Had Africa never been colonised, for example, Achebe, and many authors of his generation, would most probably never have written about colonialism and its influence on the African society.

Likewise, Katulwende, (2005), writes about issues in post-colonial Zambia that the country grapples with. The setting of the novel is well after the attainment of independence, and the narrative has changed from the struggle of independence to disillusionment with the realisation that independence is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The masses have come to appreciate that the quest for social and economic emancipation is much more elusive than the fight for independence itself. At the centre of the discourse is Besa whose struggle for his individual rights and freedoms with his community, back home in the village and the regime in office through engagement in students’ political activism, is reflective of the numerous social and economic challenges the country is facing at large.

As a former student of the University of Zambia, Katulwende writes so passionately about politics at that institution. His biographical background, like the case should be with Achebe, should not be ignored. Both authors have, in a figurative sense, a heavy presence in their novels. I am at variance with Bathes (1967) who espouses a complete removal of the author once the writing process is done with. His view about ‘the death of the author’, although it resonates with some literary scholars, it is contested by many others who maintain that literary texts should be analysed from a multifaceted perspective which include what they are as pure forms of art or literary texts, and the authorial contexts that inspired them. The sense of community and the colonial discourse have a very heavy presence in the primary texts in this study as the case is in many other African novels. A critical analysis of these texts will reveal that writers like Achebe and Katulwende have a message they want to put across, and that is to say Africa had its own forms of philosophy, and civilisation defined by the Africans themselves, well before the advent of colonialism, with a social , political and economic system adequate for their needs. At the centre of that system is the community as a guiding philosophy.

With the foregoing in mind, it can be argued that African literature is protest literature in the sense that many African writers like Achebe want to contest the notion that the Europeans, on

arrival on the African continent found an uncivilised and unenlightened group of people called Africans. What Achebe seems to suggest like Swerdt (1994) is that colonialism was a disruptive force in that it broke up the cohesive communal ties, thus giving rise to individualism. This is what he means when he says, “Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and things have fallen apart” (Achebe, 1958: 141). This means that he views the coming of the white man and colonialism as having been a disruptive force to the African communal way of life.

That notion is correct but only to the extent that colonialism gave impetus to individuality and not that the concept started with the arrival of the colonialists in Africa. Individuated characters were already in African communities well before the arrival of the white man. In African folklore we see these individuated characters who are more often than not, portrayed positively as heroes and heroines. However, in the African novel, these individuated characters are portrayed negatively. In many cases they end up dead like in the case of Muthoni in *The River Between* (1965), Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1960), and Wiza in *Quills of Desire* (1998). If not, they are put to shame, reduced to caricatures, their humanity having been taken away from them, like in the case of Obi in *No Longer At Ease* (1960), Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), and Besa in *Bitterness* (2005). My observation is that there is lack of a hero in the African novel, unlike in the western novel. What we have is a tragic hero, and that must be corrected.

In *The Tongue of the Dumb* (1989), we have a similar, individuated and hybrid character in The Teacher. He is exposed to western education and converts to Christianity. What makes his case even more peculiar is that he is an alien doing his work as a teacher in a community that has not fully come to appreciate the value of western education. They have equally not embraced Christianity. The teacher tries to fit in the community, but then he is made to feel unwanted. All sorts of accusations are labelled against him. On one occasion there is a funeral after the passing on of one of the most prominent members of the community. He attends the funeral merely to keep up appearances as he considers the funeral a pagan funeral, more so because of some negative sentiments that had been expressed about him. Lubinda, one of the main characters, had said, “Is this new man that you have allowed into this kingdom sick [. . .] He’s never been seen. What kind of a man is he who doesn’t mourn with others when they are in difficulties?” (Mulaisho, 1989: 20). It is evident that in this communal society attending funerals is considered a requirement if one is to be regarded as

being in good standing with his community. Anything to the contrary would attract sanctions including being neglected should you have a bereavement of your own. As they say in one of the proverbs in Nyanja, *Chaona munzako chapita, mumawa chilipaiwe*, meaning never laugh at a neighbour's misfortunes because these same misfortunes may one day fall on you. This actually is a reminder to the members of the community to help out a member who is facing challenges because in future any other person would also experience similar fate, and would require others to help him in the same manner

In the final analysis, how the general readership and other literary scholars choose to read any literary piece of work is entirely up to them. I have elected to read these texts as colonial and postcolonial texts because that is the main narrative they seek to share. In essence the three primary novels, including secondary ones such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *The River Between* (1965), and *The Tongue of the Dumb* (1989), are historical novels, that are intended to bring to the fore the colonial and postcolonial discourse that became prominent at a particular period of time in African history. They are not history textbooks but give invaluable insight into the history of colonialism in Africa. The focus will be on how characters who express individuality, namely Obi in *No Longer At Ease*, Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, and Besa in *Bitterness*, are portrayed in their highly communal societies. Focus will also be on the causes of conflict, and how these characters react to the way society portrays.

4.1 *No Longer at Ease*

Achebe's second novel, *No Longer at Ease*, published in 1960, on the eve of Nigeria's independence, fits the description of being both a colonial and a historical novel in many respects. Independence from British colonial rule is on the horizon, and the white colonialists, cognisant of that fact are preoccupied with preparing a cadre of indigenous Nigerians to take up the running of government as well as senior positions in the highest echelon of business in the private sector.

The novel opens in the same manner it closes; Obi, the protagonist, and around whom the whole narrative revolves, is in trouble, in court on a charge of corruption, having accepted a bribe to offer a scholarship to a candidate who does not meet the benchmarks for the award of such a scholarship. Already this presents a very interesting opening to the novel in the sense that Obi is a highly educated young man with a university degree obtained from a reputable institution in England. As a high-ranking civil servant, he is one of the most prominent

members especially in his African community, and educated elites like him are the ones anticipated to take up the running of government and the civil service once independence is attained. Early in the narrative, there is a negative portrayal of this individuated character in the sense that he is presented as a man without morals who easily succumbs to corruption despite being highly educated. Being educated as he is, Obi is duty bound to be a good example in his society by putting service above self. His society looks up to him to be an example of what it means to be educated. This negative portrayal is also observed by Okoko (2006), who argues that African western educated elites like Obi are seen by Achebe, “as lacking the morale courage or stand to assume the position being abdicated by Europeans” (2006: 7). What this entails is that the future of the Nigerian society is bleak in the sense that the educated young men like Obi who are expected to take over the running of government once independence from the colonialists is achieved do not have the capacity, and the morale fibre to do that as they are corrupt. As observed by Okoko (2006), in a way, Achebe foreshadows what is to happen in a postcolonial Nigeria, where corruption becomes endemic. In his subsequent novels such as *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Antihills of the Savannah* (1987), Achebe, through characters like Chief Nanga, in the former novel and Sam, in the later one, portrays a Nigeria that is corruption ridden, and suffering massive underdevelopment as a result. It is paradoxical in the sense that the so-called educated characters, who better understand the negative effects of corruption, are the ones involved in it the most. The common man, the man on the street so to speak, has no place to run to, and ends up in engaging in petty corruption as a means of survival.

Abrahams (2003), in his novel, *A Wreath for Udomo*, puts up a similar argument through one of his white characters who observes that the so called African educated elite are a let down to the continent of Africa, and given the instruments of power to preside over the affairs of their fellow Africans they would perform worse off than the white colonialists. He argues, “I am convinced that if power were handed to *these* people they would oppress and exploit their people with a ruthlessness that would make our so called oppression look like heaven” (2003: 55). This entails that some of the so called educated African elite exhibit negative characteristics that are more exploitative than even for those of the colonialists. This argument is true because the history of postcolonial Africa in many instances has been that of exploitation of the masses by their fellow Africans who are the few privileged elite in government. Achebe, in creating a character like Obi, who is highly educated, and yet engages in corruption, somehow gives a dress rehearsal of what is to obtain in postcolonial Nigeria in particular, and

Africa in general, with corruption becoming endemic, championed by the very people expected to guard against it. The lamentations of some Africans that the colonial days were even better than the postcolonial ones is not far-fetched.

In creating a character like Obi, who is highly educated and yet engages in corruption, Achebe is in essence indirectly asking pertinent questions about the quality and value of western education. Here is a man who is highly educated, and yet his behaviour is no any better than that of someone who has never been to school. Achebe is not only casting a dark shadow on the characters who are educated, and fail to live to the expectations of the community, but also pouring scorn on the very type of education that they receive, which is bookish in nature. Education is supposed to transform an individual who goes through it so that that individual begins to see service to humanity as being the essence of that very education.

The bottom line in this argument is that there is negative portrayal of characters like Obi who express their individuality. Obi is a man who is in conflict with his community because he fails to live up to its expectations. He proves to be a very big disappointment to both his Ibo, African community, and the small European community as colonialists represented by the likes of Mr Green, the head of the civil service.

The Ibo community to which Obi belongs is particularly more aggrieved because it has a sense of ownership over Obi, having contributed towards his education. That in itself is part of the problem because they do not *own* him as it were. Agreed, they do a tremendous job in giving him a scholarship, without which he would probably not achieve what he does in terms of his education. The cost of studying overseas is prohibitive. However, Obi as an individual is a very intelligent and hardworking young man. They ride on that to sponsor his education. Besides that he has to pay back, and pay back with interest. Having sponsored his education they want to control every aspect of his life, including how he is supposed to spend his money, and something very personal like his choice of a marriage partner. However, Obi is not an easy target; he is an individuated character who wants to express his individuality, but that becomes a source of serious conflict with his community.

Obi is a free man who feels that he should not be held in bondage or servitude. People in his community have no right to dictate to him how he should live his life, even if he were their own biological son. Obi is a free spirit who has his own choices and mistakes to make

without undue pressure coming from anyone. The best they can do as a community who mean well for this individual is to advise, offer guidance and counselling where it is needed. They should help him flourish and prosper, and not be a hindrance to his dreams and aspirations the way they certainly are. That way they can get the best out of him to the benefit of both the individual, and themselves as a community. Sentiments such as, “You are very young, a child of yesterday” (Achebe, 1960: 74), coming from prominent members of the community, and being representative of the general feeling, are misguided and ill advised, because they only serve to exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the conflict.

Obi is not just any other young man; he is a young man who has been exposed to western education. He knows something that they do not know, as the first one in his whole community to get a university degree, and given a chance he can teach them a thing or two. Here we have a case of modernity being cause of conflict. Therbon (1995) associates modernity “with words like, advance, development, emancipation and liberation” (1995: 4) His definition is in line with that of Lyon (1994: 19-21) who defines modernity as “being in opposition to and representing a break from tradition” (1994: 19-21). Obi’s exposure to western education exposes him to modern ways of thinking such as individual freedom. That result in conflict with his community. He finds restrictions being imposed on him as being old fashioned and a violation of his rights as an individual.

The so-called misbehaviour by Obi, in so far as his choice of a marriage partner is concerned, the details of which I shall discuss and present comprehensively later, should be contextualised. His is what one can refer to as ‘normal misbehaviour’ because it is within the realm of what is normal and acceptable. Obi does not propose to go contrary to the laws of nature, and marry a fellow man. His choice of marriage is Clara, a woman. The only crime that he has committed in his choice of marriage partner is that Clara is believed to be possessed by evil spirits of some description (Achebe, 1960: 75). His behaviour is not outrageous, especially that those purported evil spirits never manifest, as I shall argue later. The argument that the community advances as to why she is not marriage material is baseless, and wanting in many respects. The situation Obi finds himself in can be likened to that of a young man who is told by his parents that he cannot marry a certain woman because she belongs to certain tribe, and as such she cannot make a good wife. However, that kind of an argument is not plausible, and cannot hold because both good and bad women are found amongst any tribe.

The central theme that runs throughout the narrative is that of perpetual conflict between Obi, the protagonist, and the individuated character, and his community. He is portrayed as an arrogant, “a very foolish and self-willed, young man (*No Longer*, 5). The genesis of the conflict as it is presented in chapter one is that Obi goes contrary to the dictates of his community by studying English instead of law. The background information is that Obi is a very intelligent and resourceful, and yet a highly individuated character. The narrator describes him as follows:

At the age of twelve or thirteen he had passed his standard six examinations at the top of the whole province. Then he had won a scholarship to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria. At the end of the five years he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinctions in all eight subjects. He was in fact a village celebrity, and his name was often invoked at the mission school where he had once been a pupil (Achebe, 1960: 7).

This clearly shows that Obi is a very intelligent and hardworking young man, a genius. On the strength of his outstanding results, the Umofia community comes together in a true spirit of community to offer him a scholarship at a condition that he goes to England and study law. They want him to study law so that when he finishes his studies and becomes a lawyer, he can be representing them in their land disputes with the neighbouring villages. However, when Obi goes to England, he studies English instead. As expected, the community is infuriated by his decision. They feel betrayed because land issues are at the centre of their existence as a people. It must also be borne in mind that finding resources to send Obi to study overseas is not an easy undertaking for them. Most of them are extremely poor, as subsistence farmers trying to eke a living out of subsistence farming.

To put the conflict between Obi and his community into perspective over his decision to study English and not law, views by other scholars on the significance of land to communities in Africa, especially living in rural settings, will help shade light. Land in Africa is never just a commodity or a means of subsistence. To the African, the question of land is a very emotive issue and more often than not, when African communities engage in warfare it is because of land. The Afrocentric view of land debunks the idea of a mere commodity for the sake of food production or economic survival. While encompassing that, it goes beyond to include even the religious aspect through the spirits of the dead who are buried on it.

Watadza (2016), makes a similar observation by arguing that: “There is a strong religious and cultural connection between Africans and their land” (2016: 71). This entails that the importance of land to an African goes beyond the economic value. It defines who a people are by giving them an identity. Handy (1939) echoes this sentiment when he argues that in Africa land has spiritual and emotional value (1939: 114-123), which means that the importance of land to an African transcends the mere economic value. This explains why in a rural setting of Africa, it is very difficult to convince a villager to sale his piece of land, even at a good price. In *The River Between* (1965), the narrator says, “And Murungu had told them: ‘this land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till. You and your posterity” (Ngugi, 1965: 2). This entails that land is not viewed as a commodity to be bought and sold: it is an inheritance providing a connection between the dead who are buried there and the living. It is in this context that Obi’s choice to study English and not law, to help his community in their land disputes, should be looked at.

Watadza (2016) argues that, “Traditional African societies practice their religion through natural phenomena such as land, trees or forests, animals, water bodies and mountains” (2016: 71). This again underscores the importance of land to an African. Taranga, cited in Watadza (2016: 71), adds his voice by arguing that most African communities regard land as sacred because it bears the remains of the ancestors particularly in the form of the graves for the chiefs. That view, coupled with that of Watadza (ibid) clearly shows the strong connection between land, religion and African culture. When looked at in that context Obi’s choice to study English instead of law as prescribed by his community, so that he could help them in their land disputes, is a very serious source of conflict and should not be downplayed.

Apart from the religious and the cultural connections that land has to the Ibo people, it has to be borne in mind that most of the members of his community eke an existence out of an agrarian economy, and any disturbance in land distribution would spell doom for them. Their disappointment with Obi over his choice of field of study is understandable, and a serious source of conflict and acrimony.

Their decision that Obi should study law to put him in good stead to represent them in their land disputes is well thought out and well-intended. However, there is communication breakdown because Obi, in his naivety does not understand why his community would like him to study law. Miller (1966) cited in Littlejohn & Foss (2011) defines communication as “those situations in which a source transmits a message to a receiver with conscious intent to

affect the latter's behaviours" (2011: 14). This entails flow of information to create understanding. Prior to his leaving for studies overseas, no attempt is made to explain to him why they want him to study law. That led to misunderstanding between the individual and the community. With effective communication the conflict could have been averted.

Justifiable as the consternation of the community over Obi's choice of a career is, individualists like Nozick (1974), with whom I share the same views, would still maintain that Obi as an individual is still in the right in following his heart desires and study what he wants. His main thrust is that individual rights "should not be pushed aside for the sake of any idea of a general good" (1974: 169). This means that the good of the community should not be achieved at the expense of the good of the individual. Nozick's views are shared by Emerson (2000) who posits that, "Whoso be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (2000: 364). This means that goodness must not be forced on an individual, but he must discover for himself what that goodness is all about. This entails that Obi is right in having his own idea about goodness which is contrary to that of his community. Their land disputes are theirs to sort out.

The coming together of the Umuofia community to offer a scholarship to one of their own, to go and study overseas shows the spirit of community at its best. The spirit of togetherness, solidarity, and oneness is very much evident in this act. It portrays the beauty of the African communities, and this is a deliberate response by Achebe to some western writers who want to portray Africans as savages and senseless people. Gogoi (2017), making a similar observation posits that, "Achebe wants to portray a positive image about African communitarianism, endeavours to restore the beauty and the value of the African past" (2017: 52). This is explicit in the way he makes the Umuofia community come together as one, not only to sponsor Obi in his studies overseas but also to help him out by providing a lawyer when he is in court on a corruption charge. The narrator puts it aptly by saying, "The fox must be chased away first; after that the hen might be warned against wandering into the bush" (Achebe, 1960: 5). This entails that the community is going to stand by one of their own and not abandon him, come what may. Achebe endeavours to bring out the humanity of Africans, contrary to assertions and insinuations in western literature and by some literary critics such as Coetzee and Roux (2002: 109), who doubt their humanity merely because of their black skin. This entails that the two scholars look down on Africans as a selfish and

backward people, not capable of thinking about tomorrow. Achebe proves them wrong through his fiction because the Umuofians in giving Obi a scholarship were thinking about tomorrow, so to speak.

In the same vein, in trying to promote the community, Achebe pours scorn and ridicule on individuality. He does that through the usage of a number of proverbs, and by ensuring that characters like Obi in *No Longer at Ease* do not succeed in life, but end up as failures. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), his first novel, somehow sets the tone through the usage of a number of proverbs meant to discourage individuality while at the same time promoting the spirit of community Uchendu, Okonkwo's uncle, on the occasion of a feast to mark his return to his father's land following his banishment for seven years, says, "We don't pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs his itching flunk against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him" (*Things Fall*, 132). This underscores the value of the community. The wise saying can be interpreted to mean there is strength in numbers, and brings out very vividly the argument by Senghor (1964: 28), that the Negro African society is highly collectivistic, and is a communion of souls. This view is also seen in the following Lunda proverb: *mutondu walema ukwiti mafu*, meaning that the strength or value of a tree lies in the leaves. This entails that Africans derive their strength from working together rather than individually.

At the same occasion, another member of the clan rises to speak in a vote of thanks to Okonkwo, for having thrown a large feast. He says:

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. [. . .] I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship (Achebe, 1968: 133- 134).

There is no denying the truth or wisdom in the above statement. What this study is in contention with is the wholesale condemnation and negative portrayal of individuality. Appealing as the concept of community may be, it has its own drawbacks in the sense that some lazy individuals like Unoka in the same novel hide in and survive at the expense of the other members of the community. Unoka, Okonkwo's father is presented as being an irresponsible and improvident drunkard and yet he has it easy because his community is

always coming to his aid. That is not a good thing because it promotes laziness among some members of the community (Achebe, 1958: 3-4).

Following the loss of his corruption case, members of the community quickly call for an emergency meeting to try and find ways and means of helping Obi by raising some financial resources. A few of the members of the Umofia Progressive Union are heard grumbling that they had already spent way too much on this ungrateful individual. “Now we are being called together again to find more money for him. What does he do with his big salary? My own opinion is that we have already done too much for him” (Achebe, 1960 4). This shows that some members are becoming more and more frustrated with lack of progress, and the continuous spending on an individual. Again, this is revealing in that their support to Obi is conditional. He has to pay back in a big way or risk the wrath of the community.

It has to be reiterated that Achebe brings out the communal nature of the Ibo and African society as a way of dissuading individuality. Already it can be seen that the chances of success of individuals like Obi who want to express their individuality are very minimal, if any. It is evident that Achebe is toying the line of the community, and he wants to carry the potential reader of his novel with him. In that respect, he finds himself in conflict with this study, and this researcher who is of the school of thought that the individual is not a hindrance to the social, political and economic progress of any given community. In being different from the rest of the members of his community, Obi has not committed any crime, and should not be apologetic.

Obi’s involvement in corruption must also be contextualised. There is no gain saying that it is wrong for him to engage in an act of corruption as its effects are detrimental to the well-being of society. However, the fact that he accepts a pittance as inducement means that his intention is simply to help a tribesman who is in need, and not to enrich himself. As a matter of fact, Obi does not ask for a bribe or inducement but a very small amount of money is freely offered him as a token of appreciation. The man who offers him twenty pounds actually says, “This is just small kola [. . .] We will make good friends” (Achebe, 1960: 152). When what Obi does is looked at from the Ibo community point of view, he can be exonerated. He simply helps a brother, a tribesman who is in need. This entails that Obi does not commit a crime, in so far as Ibo communitarian ethos are concerned. He does what is expected of him under the given circumstances. Had he chosen to do otherwise; his community would have alienated him even further with sentiments like ‘he is not a person’ gaining currency.

As argued by scholars like Mbiti (1970), it is the community that moulds a human being into a person and determines who a person is and who is not. The pressure that is being exerted on Obi to engage in corruption by his community is overwhelming and in the end he succumbs. Like has been said, a man can only be as good or as bad as his own community makes him to be. From the western point of view, what Obi does is corruption; from the African point of view, what he does is simply helping a brother in need. What that means is that here we experience a clash of different value systems—the African and western one. This is the reality that Achebe would like us to come to terms with. The situation Obi finds himself in is allegorical in the sense that while it serves to humiliate an individual, it is also representative of the traumatic experience the whole Ibo community finds itself in. Just overnight what is normal and acceptable behaviour is criminalised. The African institutions of social cohesion are being frowned upon by the white man. Again, this is what Achebe refers to when he says that the white man “has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (Achebe, 1958:141). This entails that colonialism, with its foreign value systems was a disruptive force to the wellbeing of the community. Individuated characters like Obi are presented as living sacrifices as they are negatively portrayed in the process of trying to advance a narrative of protest against colonial rule.

To advance the argument further that what Obi does, in accepting a bribe in return for a scholarship is from the Ibo point of view reciprocity, and not corruption, one has to consider his community’s reaction to his corruption case. It is evident that Obi is a man in conflict with his community over this case. However, the nature of the conflict is not necessarily that he engages in corruption but the manner of doing it. One of the members of the community says in response, “It is all lack of experience. [. . .] He should not have accepted the money himself. What others do is to tell you to go and hand it to their houseboy. Obi tried to do what everyone else does without finding out how it was done” (Achebe, 1960: 5). This means that Obi is in conflict with his community not necessarily for engaging in corruption but for not consulting the elders on how to go about it. Receiving a bribe is equivalent to receiving a token of appreciation among these people, and they do not see anything wrong with it as long as it is done in the right way. When one of the colonial administrators, Mr Green says, “The African is corrupt through and through” (Achebe, 1960: 3) he is speaking from a point of ignorance because he does not understand how the Ibo view what he refers to as corruption, and is trying to impose on them a value system that belongs elsewhere.

Again, the popular view that corruption is a necessary evil among the Ibo people as portrayed in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) can be deduced from the words of The President of The Umuofia Progressive Union at a meeting to chart the way forward, following the loss of Obi's case in court. The president expressed disappointment that a man of Obi's standing in society was going to court for twenty pounds. The narrator says, "The president said it was a thing of shame for a man in the senior service to go to court for twenty pounds. He repeated twenty pounds, spitting it out" (Achebe, 1960: 5). This entails that in so far as the president of the union is concerned, Obi is less guilty of engaging in corruption, and more so for accepting a small amount of money as a bribe. He continued to say, "I am against people reaping where they have not sown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one" (Achebe, 1960: 5). This again means that he is expressing disappointment, not on the fact that Obi accepts a bribe but the amount involved. It can be deduced from these words that corruption among the Ibo people is not viewed as being entirely evil. Contrast this with what Mr Justice William Galloway, a white Judge of the High Court of Lagos thinks about Obi's corruption case. He says, "I cannot understand how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this" (Achebe, 1960: 2). He is utterly disappointed and puts it to him in no uncertain terms that what he has done is totally unacceptable, and shameful. Here there is a discrepancy between the African and European's view of corruption.

Still in chapter one of the novel, we see strong communal ties being exhibited. There is an extensive usage of proverbs and idiomatic expressions such as, "An only palm fruit does not get lost in the fire" (Achebe, 1960: 6). The only palm fruit being made reference to is Obi. He is an only palm fruit in the sense that he is the first one in his community to get a university degree, and a senior post in the civil service. That is the reason why they are ready to fight for him until his corruption case is washed out in court. One of the elders says in a prayer, "Many towns have four or five of their sons in European posts. [. . .] Umuofia has only one. And now our enemies say that even that one is too many for us. But our ancestors will not agree to such a thing. [...] An only palm fruit does not get lost in the fire" (Achebe, 1960: 6).

The strong communal fibre among the Ibo can be detected in the usage of language in the above excerpt. There is the usage of the plural 'we' and 'our.' Obi is considered as 'our' son. This shows that he belongs to the whole community. As a matter of fact, his biological father, his mother having died, is conspicuously absent during the time when his corruption case is

being heard in court. However, that does not seem to be a problem because Obi has many 'fathers' in this highly communalistic Ibo community. He is regarded as the gem-stone of his community, a treasure to be defended and protected at all costs. He is an investment that cannot be allowed to go to waste, just like that, a culmination of the people's toil and sweat over a very long period of time. His success, as the first one to graduate from university in the whole community, is not taken lightly, but as a great achievement. On the contrary, it is celebrated as the success of the whole community. The occasion of his leaving for studies in England is nothing short of a celebration. There is a concourse of people that gather in his honour to bid him farewell, giving him pieces of advice and various gifts.

There is an element of foreshadowing in the narrative in that Obi is advised to be careful in his choice of a marriage partner, on the occasion of his departure to England for studies. He is admonished by Ikedi, one of the senior members of the Umuofia Progressive Union:

In times past, Umuofia would have required you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. But these were days of darkness from which we have been delivered by the blood of the lamb of God. Today we send you to bring knowledge. [. . .] I have heard of young men from other countries who went to the white man's country, but instead of facing their studies they went for the sweet things of the flesh. Some of them even married white women [. . .] A man who does that is lost to his people. He is like rain wasted in the forest (Achebe, 1960: 9).

Although Obi does not fall in love with a white woman, He meets and intends to marry Clara, an *osu*, a woman of doubtful ancestry believed to be possessed by evil spirits. His choice of a marriage partner becomes yet another source of serious conflict between an individual and his community.

The basic situation of the conflict over Obi's choice of a marriage partner is presented in chapter one where we have a crude reference to Clara, Obi's girlfriend as a useless girl. One of the members of the Umuofia Progressive Union says, "But instead of being grateful he insults us because of a useless girl" (Achebe, 1960: 4). This means that the community does not approve of his choice of girlfriend, and marriage partner. The situation worsens with heightening of tensions in chapter eight when the President of the Umuofia Progressive Union confronts Obi over the issue. He tells him in his face, "I have heard that you are moving around with a girl of doubtful ancestry and even thinking of marrying her" (Achebe,

1960: 75). This entails that as far as the president is concerned Obi's choice of a marriage partner is ill conceived and an abomination. As expected, Obi does not take kindly to these sentiments. He is infuriated, and says: "This is preposterous! I could take you to court because of that. [...] Don't you dare interfere in my affairs again. And if this is what you meet about you may cut my two legs if you ever find them here again" (Achebe, 1960: 75). Obi strongly feels his right as an individual to choose a marriage partner is being infringed upon by his society. He feels this is a personal matter and no one has the right to tell him who, or who not to marry.

Obi feels that he is being taken advantage of because he owes the Umoufia Progressive Union in unsettled loan offered to him in form of a scholarship. Being cognisant of that fact, he withdraws his request for a grace period before he can start settling the loan (Achebe, 1960: 75). Irrational as that may appear to be as Obi is facing serious financial constraints, his action is supported by Gauthier (1992) who raises an argument that "the liberal individual is fully rational where rationality embraces both autonomy and the capacity to choose among possible actions" (1992: 154). What this entails is that rationality, in so far as the liberal or character who expresses individuality is concerned, should not be at the expense of the rights and freedoms of the individual. In other words, a character who expresses individuality would rather suffer the consequences of irrationality than lose his or her freedom. This is the situation Obi finds himself in. He withdraws his request for a grace period before he can start settling his scholarship not because his financial situation has improved but simply because accepting help would mean losing his freedom.

Elders are supposed to be repositories of knowledge and wisdom. The President of the Umuofia Progressive union, by virtue of his age, and position is expected to be above board and behave in a manner befitting of his status. The manner in which he confronts Obi over Clara, as a choice of a marriage partner leaves much to be desired. He brings out an issue of a personal nature in a public meeting. What is expected of him is to call him aside and discuss with him privately. The way he does it is meant not to give guidance and counselling but to ridicule, embarrass and demean. Obi is justified in answering back rudely the way he does because the person of the president has lost respect. In the Shona language there is a proverb which says, *gudo guru petamuswe kuti vapwere vagokuremekenza*, which when translated into English means 'big baboon folds your tail so that the young ones can respect you.' The interpretation of this proverb is that when elders respect themselves and behave

appropriately, the young ones would in turn recognise their seniority and give them due respect. In this case, an elderly person in the president of the union fails to behave well, and is deserving of the backlash he gets. Obi is not a child. He has come of age, and has a right as a young man to meet, fall in love and marry a woman of his choice. However, even in a personal matter like who to marry, in a communitarian society such as his, the community has a say, and social sanctions are imposed on those who do not want to heed advice.

It has been said that when a man is facing adversity and the whole world seems to have rejected him, home is the only place where he can find some solace, love and peace. Obi seems to be very much alive to that fact because shortly afterwards, following his fall out with the members of the Umuofia Progressive Union, he heads home to see his parents in the village. His father, who apparently had heard the news of his intention to marry Clara, is the first one to confront him over the issue. He puts it to him candidly, “You cannot marry the girl. [...] I said you cannot marry the girl” (Achebe, 1960: 120). Obi is disappointed and quickly reminds his father that he is a Christian. But then he would not hear of it. He maintains, “We are Christians but that is not the reason to marry an *osu*” (Achebe, 1960: 120). This entails that in spite of being a Christian he is not willing to give up some heathen practices.

Obi tries to appeal to the conscience of his father by reminding him that he is a Christian and should live by the Christian values that he prophesies to believe in. He says: “The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free. [...] Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man *osu*, a thing given to idols and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children and his children’s children for ever. But have we not seen the light of the gospel” (Achebe, 1960: 120).

There is truth in what Obi is saying because one cannot claim to be a Christian if one does not live by biblical principles and Christian values. Obi’s father’s insistence that his son could not marry an *osu* despite his being a Christian is revealing about many Christian converts. They still remain with a strong inclination towards African cultural and traditional beliefs. For countless centuries their forefathers had always practiced African religions, with cultural and traditional practices as well as rituals attached to them. These have been handed down from one generation to the other. Such practices cannot be forgotten so easily. The question of *osu* is one such cultural practice that many characters in *No Longer At Ease* find difficult to discard even after converting to Christianity. Obi’s father in some respect can be

compared to Miriam, Joshua's wife in *The River Between* (1965). The narrator, speaking of Miriam's Christianity says, "one could still tell by her eyes that this was a religion learnt and accepted; inside the Gikuyu woman was sleeping" (Ngugi, 1965: 34). This means that although Miriam became a Christian convert she still held strong to many African cultural and traditional beliefs and practices. Obi's father fits this description; he wants to be a Christian and at the same time finds it difficult to completely do away with some African traditional practices and beliefs. He cannot allow his son to marry an *osu*. Thus, he tells him:

My son [...] I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think [. . .] *Osu* is like leprosy in the eyes of our people. I beg of you my son not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. [. . .] It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that my son. We are Christians but we cannot marry our own daughters (Achebe, 1960: 121).

These are passionate words of appeal from a father to his son. He is more experienced in life and he really knows what he is talking about. However, Obi, is not in the least convinced. He is resolved to go ahead and marry Clara, the love of his life. The conflict remains unresolved and Obi becomes more and more alienated over the issue.

Having failed to convince his father over his intention to marry Clara, an *osu*, Obi realises that his best chance lies with his mother. In his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Sigmund Freud, whose theory of Psychoanalysis informs this study, puts forward his theory of the Oedipus Complex in which he puts forth the psychosexual stages of development. His main argument is that there is a child's strong feeling of a sexual nature for his or her opposite sex parents, and jealousy and anger toward his or her same sex parent. With that in mind, it is hardly surprising that Obi has a very strong bond of attachment with his mother. He approaches her over the issue of his intention to marry Clara, his girlfriend, in the hope that she would be more sympathetic. However, even she is vehemently opposed to the idea. If anything, she is even more daring. She says, "If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait long. But if you do this thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head because I shall kill myself" (Achebe, 1960: 123).

If Obi had had any hope of support it appears that it is at this stage that he realises the futility of his efforts. This must have shaken him to the core because the guilty of losing a mother in suicide because of one's actions is probably one of the worst experiences in life. By the time he speaks to his friend Christopher about the issue, it is clear that Obi has lost the conviction to carry on with his intention. His friend is equally opposed. He tells him, "You may say that I am not broad minded but I don't think we have reached the stage where we can ignore all our customs. You may talk about education and so on, but I am not going to marry an *osu*" (Achebe, 1960: 130). At this juncture Obi's conviction, or what had remained of it, is completely wiped out. It dawns on him that he is fighting a losing battle and he drops the idea of marrying Clara.

However, there is a complication in that she is already pregnant with his child. He quickly secures a costly abortion, costly both in terms of finances and his emotional well-being. To make matters worse the abortion leaves Clara very sick, on the verge of death. Indeed, like Achebe says in his other novel, *Arrow of God* (1964), a man cannot win judgement against his clan (Achebe, 1964: 231). The argument by Avineri & De Shalt (1992) that "premises of individualism give rise to morally unsatisfactory consequences" (1992:1) find expression in the outcome of Obi's intention to Marry Clara. However, I would like to argue that it is not Obi but rather his community that gives rise to the negative consequences concerning the abortion undertaken by Clara. She and Obi had no choice but to secure the abortion because their community had refused to sanction their marriage. Had they accepted, this negative outcome would not have risen in the first place.

What is ironic about the turn of events in so far as this conflict is concerned is that in the first place it was the community which so much wanted Obi to go overseas and get western education. They even sponsored his studies through a scholarship they awarded him. He was told, "today we send you to bring knowledge. Remember that the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Achebe, 1960: 9). What they did not realise is that it was the same western education that they so much wanted him to be exposed to that would make him turn against some of the African cultural and traditional practices such as the concept of *osu*. Obi has gone through a process of transformation, thanks to the western education he is exposed to, as well as his stay in England. He is no longer the same Obi that left the village in Nigeria to go and study overseas in England. He has been exposed to a different social and cultural system, and the modernity that goes with western education. Now he is beginning to

challenge some of the traditions that bind people together, such as the concept of *osu* that he previously never questioned. His thinking is now science oriented, and some of the wisdom of the elders, like the reasons they advance as to why he cannot marry Clara have become nonsensical to him.

Obi should not be blamed for the transformation he has undergone. The essence of education is transformation; grain cannot go through a grinding mill and still come out as grain. Obi is now a hybrid character who wants to get the best of African culture and traditions on one hand, and modernity on the other. That is the reason why he is beginning to discard some of the African cultural practices. He is not at fault and he is not to blame. Had he gone to England to study at university and come back exactly the way he went with the same mind set it would have been a sheer waste of resources. The major problems is that on one hand the elders want the young to be exposed to western education and modernity, but on the other hand they do not want to learn new things from the same young ones. They feel because they are older, they are wiser, as one other Lunda proverb states: *chifwizhi hichabalikang'a mutuku* (shoulders are never higher than the head). However, old age does not necessarily mean wisdom, and that is what the case is with the concept of *osu*.

The whole concept of *osu* is based on a faulty premise and as such, it is illogical and needs to be deconstructed. Clara, Obi's fiancée, and the young woman being accused of being possessed by evil spirits, is a nurse working in one of the hospitals in Lagos, and attending to patients from all walks of life. There is no mention in the text of her purported evil spirits manifesting to the detriment of any one of the patients she attends to or herself. On the contrary what we are presented with is a beautiful, intelligent young lady who takes up nursing as a career. Not only does she execute her duties as a nurse diligently, benefitting members of the community, including the outspoken members of the Umoufia Progressive Union, but also proves to be a wife material, if the love and care she gives Obi, her intended husband, is anything to go by. For example, when Obi is in perpetual financial challenges, she does not forsake him because of that. Instead she offers him a helping hand as when she loans him fifty pounds (Achebe, 1960: 98). That goes to show that she is not in love with him because of material things. However, all this the elders of Umoufia deliberately ignore. They only concentrate on one unproven thing and that is she is an *osu*, and as such she cannot marry their son, Obi.

To make matters worse, she is made to undergo a painful, life threatening, abortion all because her community does not approve of her intentions to marry Obi, the love of her life. She very nearly dies as a result of that, and she is deeply traumatised by the whole experience (Achebe, 1960: 133-138). As if that is not enough, now they must accuse her of being responsible of Obi's failure to attend his mother's funeral when she dies. One of the members of the community says, "Do you know what medicine that *osu* woman may have put into his soup to turn his eyes and ears away from his people?" (Achebe, 19160: 145). This clearly shows that they believe that she has a hand in Obi's failure to attend his mother's funeral. The bottom line is that all their accusations against Clara are unreasonable, false and unfair. They are intended to dissuade Obi from marrying her.

Obi's final fall out with his community is to a very large extent connected to his precarious financial position. Again, ironically, it is his community that puts him in a desperate financial situation that he finds himself irretrievably entangled in. To start with, from the very first day that he is in employment, he finds himself heavily weighed down by a scholarship that he has to pay back. His salary is in the region of fifty pounds, twenty pounds of which has to go toward the settling of the loan every month. The young man is yet to settle. The loan scheme is defective both in its design and execution as it leaves the individual without much room to manoeuvre. The narrator says, "Take this matter of twenty pounds every month to his town union which in the final analysis was the root cause of all his troubles. Why had he not swallowed his pride and accepted the four months exemption which he had been allowed, albeit with a bad grace?" (Achebe, 1960: 75). This clearly shows that Obi's financial woes are directly connected to his having to settle the loan. The fact that he asks and is reluctantly granted a grace period of four months is immaterial, as he does not take it because of the president's negative sentiments about his relationship with Clara.

The president of The Umoufia Progressive Union also feels that Obi is very extravagant in his spending habits, and this view is shared by the majority. He says: "I have already said that we will give you four months. We can even give you one year. But are we doing you any good?" (Achebe, 1960: 75). This entails that he strongly feels that Obi does not merit that grace period. His sentiments, when analysed together with what he said later to the effect that Obi gets a lot of money as his salary, shows a man who is dissatisfied with the reasons Obi advances for a grace period before he starts settling his loan. Most of his community are under the illusion that Obi gets a lot of money, and he is extravagant, with sentiments like,

“what does he do with his big salary” (Achebe, 1960: 4), recurring so often. Their idea of a lot of money is relative. What the community may consider a lot of money may not necessarily be so. Obi is a senior man who has to maintain a certain standard of life. With the realisation that he is not in their class they start to feel jealousy against him, with remarks like, “What you get in one month is what some of your brothers here get in one year” (Achebe, 1960: 75). For the sake of setting the record straight, Obi is a highly educated man who has invested in himself and is deserving of what he earns. The comparison they are trying to make is an unfair one because society rewards labour according to the premium placed on the kind of labour one offers.

Obi, as a senior civil servant, with a university degree, is expected by his community to live a certain standard of life, with some level of affluence. His is a community with its priorities wrong. For example, they are obsessed with the idea that a man of Obi’s standing in society should drive. They make several innuendos to that effect, and Obi, in his naivety, gives in and buys a brand-new car on very unfavourable hire purchase terms, just one week after getting a job. He buys a car that he probably does not need and one that he certainly cannot afford because like stated earlier, about forty per cent of his salary every month goes towards the settling of the scholarship that he got from the union. He buys a car through a ruinous payment plan, simply because he wants to be seen to be doing well, what with all the pressure coming from his community.

In trying to keep up appearances, Obi plunges himself into very serious financial constraints which culminate in his total destruction. On the occasion of his first attendance of Umoufia Progressive Union meeting, he makes a grand arrival in his elegant brand-new car to the excitement of all present. They dance and clap in celebration (Achebe, 1960: 7). What they do not realise at this stage in the narrative is that, having prevailed over him to buy an expensive car, which he probably does not need, and definitely cannot afford, they contribute to the financial doldrums he is in from the onset, and in which he shall remain leading to his destruction. No one is there to advise the young man to take it easy and settle down first rather than dance to the gallery, and yet they exalt themselves as custodians of wisdom and good judgement. The president of the union refers to Obi as, “Very young. A child of yesterday” (Achebe, 1960: 74). However, this begs the question as to who is available to give sound advice to this young man.

It takes an outsider, in Mr Green, a white man, to observe that Obi is on a path of self-destruction. He advises him about the maintenance of his new car. He says, “You will do well to remember [. . .] that at this time every year you will be called upon to cough up forty pounds for your insurance. [. . .] It is of course none of my business really. But in a country where even the educated have not reached the level of thinking about tomorrow, one has a clear duty” (Achebe, 1960: 87). This entails that he has observed the lack of planning on the part of Obi for it is ill advised for a young man straight from university without a house, and a heavy responsibility in terms of settling his scholarship to buy a brand new car on unfavourable hire purchase terms within one week of being employed. One is left wondering where his community members are if it has to take an outsider in Mr Green to observe that.

From then onwards, Obi’s already precarious financial situation deteriorates rapidly, and goes completely out of control. Things happen in quick succession; His motor vehicle insurance is due, and his mother is taken ill. He sends thirty-five pounds for her treatment in a private hospital (Achebe, 1960: 89), leaving him without an option but to get a bank overdraft worth fifty pounds to settle his insurance bill (Achebe, 1960: 89-90). He tries some half-hearted measures to reduce on his expenditure such as cutting down his consumption of electricity, and missing meals but all in vein. If the members of his community had been bold enough, they would have told him to sale his car. That would have made a major difference but then they were preoccupied with seeing one of their own drive, albeit at too high a cost to be sustainable. As the narrator puts it, “having laboured in sweat and tears to enrol their kinsman among the shining elite they had to keep him there” (Achebe, 1960: 90). This entails that they would rather see him destroyed than admit that he is living a lavish life style he could ill afford and advise him accordingly.

Amidst all this, Obi breaks up with his girlfriend Clara, and has to secure for her an expensive abortion that leaves him even more financially crippled. His mother dies and he cannot even afford a decent funeral for her, attracting even more ridicule from his community. Worse still, he does not even attend the funeral and his people have no kind words for him. They feel he is an ingrate who deserves no sympathy whatsoever. It is not that Obi does not attend his mother’s funeral, but rather, Achebe, as the author, makes that choice for him so as to make him appear as if he is a very irresponsible young man. From what is known about him, it is uncharacteristic, and inconsistent that Obi does not attend his mother’s funeral, even with all the financial woes that he is going through. Obi on a couple of

occasions visits his mother to check on her welfare and provides money for her medication during the time he falls sick and is admitted to a private hospital. This speaks of a very responsible and caring young man. His not attending his mother's funeral is the choice Achebe makes as an author so as to portray him as an irresponsible young man. This is part of the negative portrayal of this character who expresses his individuality.

As the novel comes to a close, Obi is but a shell of his former self. He is a man who has undergone so many traumatic experiences and would make a very interesting candidate for one of Sigmund Freud's case studies in his theories of psychoanalysis. Clara, is no longer part of his life, his community having rejected his intentions to marry her for the reason that she is believed to be possessed by some evil spirits, the exact nature of which is scientifically improvable. His mother, whom he loved so dearly contrary to assertions that he never cared for her, has died, and he is not in good terms with his father over Clara. The university education that he thought would pay dividends has left him alienated by his own people because they strongly feel that he has abandon the African culture and tradition in preference to the western culture.

But then, as a black man even with his university degree obtained from one of the most prestigious universities in England, he cannot fully be accepted as one of the elites among the whites. He learns it the hard way when one evening two white teachers, teaching at a Roman Catholic Convent, whom he wanted to play tennis with, told him in his face that they were forbidden from mingling with Africans (Achebe, 1960: 108). This means that in trying to get the best of both the African and western ways of life he ends in a very unenviable position of getting none of them. He finds himself in no man's land, so to speak.

In the finale analysis, it has to be borne in mind that Obi is an individuated character who is very assertive about his individual rights and liberty. He is a man who has his Id, the part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives, dominant over his ego, which deals with reality, and the superego, the morality principle as propounded by Freud (1923: 13). This makes him to pursue the desires of his heart, such as his intention to marry a woman his whole community is opposed to, regardless the consequences. His community, in infringing on his rights as an individual destroys him. In destroying him they also destroy themselves because now they cannot get the benefits of investing in this individual. 'The only palm fruit' that they were trying so desperately to save from falling into the fire has been destroyed. Obi is no longer at ease.

4.2 *Arrow of God*

Achebe's third novel, *Arrow of God* (1964), published after *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and *No Longer at Ease* (1960), should as a matter of fact, have been published earlier than *No Longer at Ease* because it chronicles historical events in some part of Nigeria when the white man has just landed on the shores of the continent, and has not yet spread his tentacles. The African is beginning to awaken, and realise that the white man has come to stay, and that he is more powerful than he is. Christianity has just been introduced, and is slowly but steadily taking root, as evidenced by the number of African converts that continues to grow. However, at this stage in the narrative, the African religion, with its multiplicity of gods, is still by far the most predominant, needless to say. Western education has not yet been fully introduced and is at this stage still being offered by the missionaries, going side by side with the introduction of Christianity. Even so, both western education and Christianity are already proving to be major disruptive forces on this highly communal African society. This gives further credence to Swerdt (1994), who posits that colonialism as well as its makings was a major disruptive factor to the communalistic African society.

At the centre of Achebe's historical novel is Ezeulu, the half human and half spirit character, by virtue of being a religious leader, as the Chief Priest of Ulu. He is probably one of the most individuated characters in African fiction. He is a serious source of conflict in his Ibo community, and the conflict spills over to the small but growing white community. In Ezeulu, Achebe succeeds in creating a fictitious character that is more real than some of the human beings one would come across in real life, for he exudes a true spirit of independence of thought. He is a man who needs no one to validate his actions other than himself. Here is a man with a mind of his own, so unpredictable as to what his next move would be; he leaves many people stranded, in a figurative sense, in no man's land. That places him at the pinnacle of individuation. Just like the case is with Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Ezeulu is a man with a dominant Id that makes him to follow through the dictates of his heart, creating serious conflict with his community. His own community simply fails to understand him and move with him at the same pace. In the midst of a crises or conflict which in most cases he is at the centre of, being half human and half spirit as he is, as the Chief Priest of Ulu, he simply absolves himself of blame by saying that he is simply following the orders given him by the gods in the discharge of the duties of his office. That causes consternation and apprehension in the community leading to acrimony.

The novel opens with war imminent between the two villages namely Umuaro, to which Ezeulu belongs, and Okperi, a neighbouring village, over a piece of land, whose ownership is being disputed (Achebe, 1964: 15). As the chief priest of the six villages, Ezeulu is summoned by the elders to provide some kind of litigation and guidance as to who the true owner of the disputed land is. Ezeulu leaves his community in shock as he pronounces Okperi, and not Umuaro, his own village, as the true owner of the land in question. He says: “It was Okperi who gave us a piece of land to live in [. . .]. This is the story as I heard it from my father. If you choose to fight a man over a piece of farmland that belonged to him, I shall have no hand in it” (Achebe, 1964: 16). His verdict is that the piece of land in question belongs to Okperi, the neighbouring village, and not Umuaro, his own. Ezeulu is forthright in his verdict as he categorically says that he shall not take part in a senseless war.

We can trust that Ezeulu is telling the truth about the ownership of the disputed land because he says, “the greatest liar among men still speaks the truth to his own son” (Achebe, 1964: 99). Here Ezeulu is directly referring to his father as having told him the truth. Speaking to his son Nwafo, well after the incident had happened, he says, “A man does not speak a lie to his son. [...] To say my father told me is to swear the greatest oath” (Achebe, 1964: 94). Again, Ezeulu is saying the same message but using different words. Akuebue, his friend echoes the statement by saying, “A man can swear before the most dreaded deity on what his father told him” (Achebe, 1964: 99). The idea keeps on recurring, making it a motif. On the strength of these words that he repeats on a number of occasions we can believe Ezeulu that his father told him the truth about who the true owner of the disputed land is, and as such, his community are falsely accusing him of being a traitor. Ezeulu is right and his community wrong. However, Nwaka, the chief antagonist openly challenges the verdict.

Ezeulu finds himself in a predicament with regards the whole incident and the side he has to take. He has to make a choice between telling the truth and a lie as to who the true owner of the disputed land is. If he tells the truth and go against his community, he risks retribution. At a time when it is more appealing and less destructive to tell a lie than it is the truth, Ezeulu shows strength of character and goes against the expectations of his community. He spells it out in the most categorical manner by saying that the land in question belongs to Okperi and not Umuaro his own village. The community is polarised over the issue. He becomes a villain in the eyes of the majority of his people. He is vilified and all sorts of tantrums are thrown at him, including the accusation by Nwaka, his chief rival, that he is an overly ambitious man.

He says of Ezeulu, “The man who carries a deity is not a king. He is there to perform his god’s ritual and to carry sacrifice to him. But I have been watching this Ezeulu for many years. He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all” (Achebe, 1964: 28). However, like observed earlier, Ezeulu is unfazed.

Here Achebe presents us with a case where an individual and his community are in conflict. Menkiti (1984: 172), argues that the individual can only become a person because of the existence of the community, and the community in his view must take, “epistemic and ontological precedence over the individual.” In this case, he would argue that Ezeulu is maladjusted, and as such does not fit the description of a person. Menkiti’s sentiments are echoed by Masolo (2010: 231), who stresses on the importance of the group than the individual. I have issues with this kind of reasoning because it is not always that the community is right, and the individual wrong. The individual must not engage in illegalities for the sake of seeking to qualify as a person because the same people easily turn around when things go wrong and condemn that which they supported at first, leaving the individual in serious problems. To put it hypothetically, if Ezeulu goes by popular opinion for the sake of appeasing his community, and support their wrong cause, and should things go wrong, with sanctions coming from the gods, the self-same people would hold him responsible, and call for the stripping of his title as Chief Priest of Ulu.

As the narrative unfolds further, the two villages engage in a bloody war. Umuaro emerges victorious but then Ezeulu is vindicated because there is no clear cut winner as both sides suffer heavy casualties. Victory comes at so high a price that it is not distinguishable from defeat. Ezeulu is vindicated. There is needless loss of human life all because of communal sentiment. Here, Achebe presents the readership an extreme and negative sense of community. Two communities living in much the same geographical environment, who are essentially the same people in that they are all Ibo speaking, engage in a primitive, bloody war over a piece of land whose value cannot be equated to the priceless human life that is lost. It is outrageous to deny Ezeulu of his personhood or humanity, simply because he behaves contrary to the expectations of his community.

Apart from the economic collapse that is associated with war, the traumatic experiences suffered as a result of war are irreversible and indelible, especially on the children. They suffer permanent damage. Freud (1997: 18), in his psychoanalytic theory cited earlier, argues that events in our childhood have a great influence in our adult life. What this means is that

traumatic events experienced during the formative years in childhood manifest in adulthood, negatively affecting the personality of a given individual. For the two warring villages the war was over, and for the likes of Nwaka it was sweet victory to be celebrated. What he did not realise was that the children in the community who watched the events of the war suffered trauma, and were to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder well after the war had ended. All that should be factored in, in making an assessment of Ezeulu, and how great his anti-war sentiments are. What we have is negative portrayal of an individuated character who otherwise meant well for his community.

That as it may be, Ezeulu is a man who has been caught in a communal trap, and cannot escape. He finds himself so intricately entangled in the communal web that efforts to try and explain himself only result in further alienation. The more he tries to explain himself the less he succeeds in convincing his community that he means well. With such a scenario obtaining, the individual is demonised.

Even before the issue could be redressed, Ezeulu, is involved in yet another controversy with his decision to send one of his sons, Oduche, to a mission school “to learn the white man’s wisdom” (Achebe, 1964: 43). Again, there is serious conflict between Ezeulu as an individual and his community. Ezeulu is not an ordinary man but a symbol of the African religion as the Chief Priest of Ulu, with jurisdiction over the six villages that constitute the Ibo community. As the custodian of the people’s religion, he is least expected to send his son to a missionary school where he will convert to Christianity, the white man’s religion. His reasoning is that he wants to position himself in good stead in view of the changing world. Whereas most of his community are still under the illusion that the white man has merely sojourned in their land, and would soon be on his way out, Ezeulu has correctly calculated that he has come to stay. He argues:

The world is changing. [. . .] I do not like it but I am like the bird Eneke- nti-oba. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied, ‘Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing, and so I have learnt to fly without perching.’ I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place (Achebe, 1964: 47).

This clearly shows that he is awake to the changing times with the coming of the white man. He has correctly assessed the situation, and as it has been said, he knows that tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. He neatly sums up his view by saying: “My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow” (Achebe, 1964: 47). Indeed, Ezeulu is half spirit and half man and here he is exhibiting his prowess as a prophet. He wants to get the best of both the African culture and traditions, on one hand, and modernity with western education and Christianity as some of its hallmarks on the other. That is the reason why he says, “The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place” (Achebe, 1964: 47). This entails that to get the best out of a multifaceted, fast changing world one has to be exposed in a variety of ways. The world is not static; what is startling and fashionable today may not necessarily be so tomorrow. Some ways of doing things which were once considered startling and novel have since been replaced by new ones, and are now being considered things of the past. Ezeulu is alive to all that. That is the reason why he sends his son Oduche to a missionary school to be exposed to Christianity and western education.

Oduche does as he is instructed by his father; he attends school at a mission and becomes a convert to Christianity as expected. He makes steady progress in his education and newly found religion. However, in his naivety, he becomes overzealous as a new convert wanting to impress. He commits an abomination by imprisoning the sacred python in a wooden box as a way of demonstrating that he is becoming well-grounded in the Christian faith, against established tradition. This daring act is unparalleled in the whole of Umuofia. Ezeulu is roundly blamed by his community, with the likes of Nwaka and Ezidimili, the chief protagonists taking the lead. He cannot escape the blame because in the first place he is the one that allows his son to go to a mission school, despite being aware of the likely repercussions such as this one. However, in a true Ezeulian style, the man is defiant. He is not at all apologetic or remorseful as can be seen in his response to Ezidimili the priest of Edemili who wanted to find out what he would do about the sacrilege his son had committed, through a third party. His response is, “Go back and tell Ezidemili to eat shit. Do you hear me? Tell Ezidemili that Ezeulu says, he should go and fill his mouth with shit” (Achebe, 1964: 55). These are not charitable words, to say the least, and such words can only come from a man who is not remorseful, and certainly not apologetic.

At first glance, Ezeulu's response to Ezedimili's provocation, if at all it is, is disproportionate, and speaks of a man who is bitter, infuriated by something outside this incident. Throughout the narrative, the two are bitter rivals, Ezeulu as the protagonist, and Ezedimili, the antagonist, fighting for power and supremacy in Umuofia. Ezeulu as the chief Priest of Ulu, is the highest-ranking religious leader in the six villages of Umuofia (Achebe, 1964: 15). That does not seat well with Ezedimili who occupies a much subsidiary office as the priest of Idemili, and personal deity of Umuneora (Achebe, 1964: 41). The chief antagonist is not Ezedimili himself, but Nwaka, who holds the title of Uru which is the highest in the land. That notwithstanding, he is envious of Ezeulu's position because in a sense, Ezeulu occupies a much higher position than his because he is half human and half spirit, and is able to converse directly with the gods. However, it is Ezedimili who gives Nwaka the courage and fortification to fight Ezeulu. The narrator says, "Nwaka's drummer and praise-singer was none other than the priest of Idemili. This man was Nwaka's friend and mentor. It was he who fortified Nwaka and sent him forward" (Achebe, 1964: 41). This means that the two are in league in their hatred and opposition to Ezeulu. They are accomplices in plotting the downfall of Ezeulu. His response to Ezedimili, following a question about how he intended to clean up the abomination performed by his son is befitting, outrageous as it may sound at first.

Examples abound, starting with the land dispute incident between Umuaro and Okperi (Achebe, 1964: 16-25). Nwaka vehemently opposes Ezeulu over his verdict that the land belongs to Okperi. He takes every opportunity to oppose and humiliate Ezeulu. He succeeds in making the community lose confidence in their chief priest, and regard him a false prophet. Speaking about the ownership of the disputed land, the narrator says all the six villages supported Nwaka's view that the land in question belonged to Umuaro and not Okperi. Although in the end Ezeulu is vindicated, the damage has already been done on his persona. It is evident that Nwaka and Ezedimili collaborate in their clandestine activities to destroy Ezeulu by making him appear inadequate in the handling the duties of his office as the Chief Priest of Ulu. Ezeulu's response to Ezedimili that he should go and eat shit should be understood in that context.

However, Ezeulu cannot escape the wrath of his people over the sacrilege committed by his son, Oduche. Like stated earlier, he occupies a very high religious office and must be seen to be exemplary in his conduct. His sending of his son to a mission school is inconsistent with

the expectations of his office, and his community is outraged. Akuebe, Ezeulu's best friend puts it aptly when he says:

You forget one thing; that no man, however great, can win judgement against a clan. You may think you did in the land dispute but you are wrong. Umuaro will always say that you betrayed them before the white man. And they will say that you are betraying them again today by sending your son to join in desecrating the land (Achebe, 1964: 132).

Akuebe correctly captures the mood of his community in their conflict with Ezeulu. It is not a matter of being right or wrong but where one stands in the eyes of the people; whether with them or against them. Ezeulu is certainly not in good standing with the people. The fact that he is right is immaterial. That is why his attempt to exonerate himself is futile because the good of the community is more important than that of the individual. In a highly communitarian society like that of the Ibo, the setting of *Arrow of God*, group solidarity and well-being transcends the importance of the rights and privileges of the individual. This is the point that Taiwo (2016) brings up when he argues that one cannot think of human beings "without thinking about them as being in communion with one another" (216: 84). What this entails is that one's humanity is subject to communal values and principles outside the realm of which one ceases to be human in the eyes of the community.

Ezeulu is in a predicament. However, I am of the notion that an individual must not always succumb to the dictates of his community. I have issues with the notion that it is the community that creates and defines a human being in his totality. A close analysis of the latest conflict between Ezeulu and his people reveals that he is actually right, and his community wrong, once again, just like the case is in the land dispute. He should not be molested for sending his son to school to receive western education because times have changed.

Ezeulu is probably one of the most intelligent characters to come out of African fiction. He sends his son to a mission school, and in so doing he is aware about the transformative power of western education and Christianity. He knows that his son is going to be exposed to a different culture and he would come back and begin to challenge some of the African cultural and traditional practices. He is very much unlike the community in *No Longer at Ease* who want Obi to get a western education, and yet expect him to remain the same even after undergoing a process of transformation. That is why Ezeulu, when Oduche, his son, after

converting to Christianity imprisons the sacred python in a wooden box, as a way of saying he is now a transformed person and does no longer believe in the sacredness of the python but in Jesus, he does not overreact. His reaction is, "I have not killed anybody before and I will not start with my son" (Achebe, 1964: 61). This means that, while aware of the gravity of the offense committed by his son, he will not do anything outrageous against him. If anything, in some way, he is happy that this has happened because he says: "It is good for a misfortune to happen, so that we can know who our true friends are" (Achebe, 1964: 61). His choice of words is revealing about his true feelings concerning the incident. The people of Umuofia refer to it as an 'abomination' and a 'sacrilege' he simply calls it a 'misfortune.' This clearly shows that while admitting that his son is wrong, he strongly feels that the reaction of the community is not commensurate with the offense committed.

There is another interesting twist in the narrative; Ezeulu's good deeds are recognised by the white government official, Winterbottom, who appoints him Paramount Chief of Ulu. Prior to the appointment, he strikes friendship with the white man, the kind of which most of his community do not approve of. Friendship between the two is shrouded in suspicion, as it starts during the time of the land dispute between the two villages of Umnero and Okperi. Winterbottom comes in as an arbitrator, and the fact that Ezeulu sides with him concerning the true owner of the disputed land does not go down well with his community. The members of the community are aggrieved, because their very own Chief Priest sides with the white man, a foreigner. Nwaka, the senior elder says:

A man who brings anti-ridden faggots into his hut should expect the visit of lizards. But if Ezeulu is now telling us that he is tired of the white man's friendship our advice to him should be: You tied the knot you should also know how to undo it. You passed the shit that is smelling; you should carry it away.[. . .] Who was the white man's witness that year we fought for our land and lost? (Achebe, 1964: 145-146)

Nwaka's sentiments come in the wake of Ezeulu's announcement that he has been summoned by Winterbottom, and chief administrator of the white man's government. What he means is that Ezeulu has invited misfortune upon himself by befriending a white man, and should know how to deal with the problem alone, as an individual without having to involve the community. It is highly anticipated by Ezeulu's enemies who include Nwaka and Ezidemili that he is in trouble and the summon would spell doom for him. Nwaka says: "The white man is Ezeulu's friend and he has sent for him. What is so strange about that? Did not

our elders tell us that as soon as we shake hands with a leper he will want an embrace?" (Achebe, 1964: 145) This statement shows that he considers Ezeulu's friendship with Winterbottom, a white man, illicit and not wholesome at all. Again the interpretation of this figurative language about embracing a leper is that Ezeulu is solely responsible for his misfortune and he should deal with it alone like a man. It should be borne in mind that at this stage in the narrative it is not yet clear what the summon is all about. Nwaka is excited in the hope that this is the end of his bitter rival. He takes full advantage of the situation by reminding the people how the friendship between the two started so as to arouse their emotions against a man he has many other reasons to hate him for.

As the narrative unfolds further, Nwaka and the majority of the community who hate Ezeulu, are hugely disappointed, because contrary to their expectations that their enemy is in trouble, Ezeulu is appointed Paramount Chief to preside over the affairs of all the six villages. The whole community is caught off guard. However, again, in a true Ezeulian style, he declines to take up the appointment, catching everyone off guard for the second time, within a short space of time. Even making allowances for what they have come to know of Ezeulu, their Chief Priest, his decision to decline the appointment catches them completely unawares. They are left wandering as to what kind of a man Ezeulu is. Their quest to incriminate him over the appointment cannot materialise. However, Ezeulu's unpredictability is hardly surprising, to someone who has been following this character closely. Earlier on in the narrative, Ezeulu says about himself: "I have my own way and I shall follow it. I can see things where other men are blind. That is why I am known at the same time unknowable. [. . .] I have passed the stage of dancing to receive presents" (Achebe, 1964: 133).

Ezeulu is a very intelligent man. His intelligence is seen in his choice of words and actions. In declining the appointment as Paramount Chief he has correctly assessed the situation. He declines not because he is afraid of people's response, but because he knows that much as he would like to learn the ways of the white man, accepting an appointment from him would make him compromised. He wants to remain independent and serve his people with due diligence, without undue pressure coming from the white administration or the white man. Accepting an appointment means submitting to the appointing authority, and the chief priest Ezeulu knows that holding two positions from two different appointing authorities may result in conflict of interests, hence his refusal to take up the post.

Winterbottom, the head of the white man's government, is incensed with Ezeulu's perceived arrogance in turning down the appointment. He orders his arrest and detention. The majority of the community, including Ezidemili and Mwaka are excited at the news of the arrest, as they feel avenged. However, there is dramatic iron in the narrative in that they are not aware that Ezeulu's detention will result in their own destruction.

It has been said that a prophet is not honoured in his own community. Ezeulu is a great man who is seen in very negative light by people in his own community. There is a lot of misconception about him, making him be regarded a negative and disruptive energy. In the Bible, Mark 6 vs. 4 (KJV) it is written, "A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and among his relatives and his household." The interpretation of this biblical verse is that a man's accomplishments are less celebrated among his own people in his own community. Ezeulu is not respected among his own people. He is maligned simply because he is incorruptible, as demonstrated by his refusal to wrongly side with his community over the ownership of the disputed land. It takes a white man, Winterbottom, to recognise and appreciate the leadership qualities in him and he appoints him Paramount Chief. In making the appointment, Winterbottom says "I think I told you the story of the fetish priest who impressed me the most favourably by speaking in the land case between these people here in Umuaro. Well I have now decided to appoint him Paramount Chief of Umuaro" (Achebe, 1964: 108). This clearly entails that he has observed something positive in Ezeulu.

The last six chapters, chapters fourteen to nineteen see the novel reach its climax, and there is denouement. There is the final conflict with far reaching consequences between Ezeulu, the protagonist and his community. Like started earlier, Ezeulu is imprisoned by the white man for his refusal to take up the appointment as Paramount Chief of Ulu. The community is in a celebratory mood once again, because they feel avenged about the numerous wrongs they feel Ezeulu has done against them.

Nwaka, the chief antagonist, in particular, has no kind words for Ezeulu for refusing to take up the appointment as Paramount Chief of Ulu. He says, "The man is as proud as a lunatic. This proves what I have always told people that he inherited his mother's madness" (Achebe, 1964: 178). This speaks of a man who is excited about the prospects of destroying his arch-rival, for if indeed Ezeulu is a lunatic the position that he holds as the Chief Priest of Ulu is unattainable. However, the truth of the matter, from what is known about Nwaka, is that he is not really disappointed that Ezeulu has declined the appointment because earlier on in the text

he says the man is very ambitious and greedy because he wants everything to himself. Ezeulu can never be right in the eyes of Nwaka; if he declines the appointment like he does, he is a lunatic who has inherited his mother's madness. If he accepts to take up the post, he is a white man's stooge, a traitor who should never be trusted with the position of Chief Priest of Ulu. His disappointment is but just a smoke screen of his true feelings, and his true feelings are that a dead Ezeulu is more useful to him than a living one.

But then Ezeulu will have the final say in the matter. He is in prison for a total of thirty-two days, after which he is released. His spirit is still unbroken, and he is still as defiant as ever. He mocks the white man for being tired of the stand-off hence his release. The complication in the narrative is that Ezeulu, as the Chief Priest of Ulu, is supposed to call the ceremony of the New Yam festival, and without which a harvest of new yams cannot take place, according to tradition. But then, again according to tradition, he can only call the New Yam Festival when there is only one yam left from the last seven sacred yams that he must eat. He still has three remaining because the time when he was in prison he could not eat the sacred yams. He aptly says: "I need not speak in riddles. You all know what our custom is. I only call a festival when there is only one yam left from the last. Today I have three yams and so I know that the time has not yet come" (Achebe, 1964: 209). There is a serious stand off to which a solution must be found or the people will perish from hunger as they cannot harvest the new yams.

There is further evidence to suggest that Ezeulu is innocent and is not to blame for not calling the New Yam Festival. In Chapter sixteen he even considered reconciliation with his enemies like Nwaka and Ezedimili so that the crisis can be averted (Achebe, 1964: 192). However, there is a visitation from the god Ulu who warns him against reconciliation. Ulu says, "Who told you that this was your own fight? [. . .] Beware you do not come between me and my victim or you may receive blows not meant for you! [. . .] Go home and sleep and leave me to settle my quarrel with Idemili whose envy seeks to destroy me" (Achebe, 1964: 193). This means that the gods are involved in this fight and it is not entirely up to Ezeulu to decide. The god Ulu is in support of Ezeulu, and Idemili is on the side of Ezedimili. In that case, Ezeulu and Ezedimili the mortal beings involved in the conflict are but mere pawns in a game of chase. The bottom line then is that Ezeulu is not entirely to blame in not calling the New Yam Festival. It is the god Ulu who is holding back the festival so as to punish his fellow god Idemili, but in so doing it is the community that suffers. That is the reason why Ulu says: "Do

you not know what happens when two elephants fight?” (Achebe, 1964: 193) The meaning is that whenever such a fight occurs, it is the grass that suffers, and the grass here symbolises the community.

The situation is extremely difficult. The New Yam Festival should be called immediately because the new crop is ripe and must be harvested or else it will get destroyed. Onenyi, one of the elders makes a passionate appeal to Ezeulu to do something about the situation. He says, “I think that Ezeulu has spoken well. [...] We all know that custom and no one can say that Ezeulu has offended against it. But the harvest is ripe and must be gathered or it will be eaten by the sun and the weevils. [...] Therefore, you must find a way out, Ezeulu (Achebe, 1964: 209). This goes to show the extent of the desperation the people are in. However, Ezeulu does not seem to be overly concerned or to fully appreciate the level of predicament his community is in. In response he says, “You have spoken well. But what you ask me to do is not done. Those yams are not food and a man does not eat them because he is hungry. You are asking me to eat death” (Achebe, 1964: 210). Ezeulu, in making this statement, is trying to exonerate himself. He seems to suggest that he is not the one who came up with that tradition but he is merely carrying out the functions of his office as the Chief Priest of Ulu. Going contrary to that could easily mean death for him as he would have to face the wrath of the gods. That is the reason why he says, “you are asking me to eat death” (Achebe, 1964: 210). However, literary scholars like Mnabi (2007: 17) who are proponents of communitarianism would rather the individual is sacrificed for the benefit of the community. Ezeulu should put his individuality aside and make himself a living sacrifice for the sake of the survival of his community.

To some extent, it can be argued that Ezeulu has some scores to settle with his community, and although he knows the remedy to the stand-off, he is doing things deliberately because he wants to punish them for some wrongs, they did to him in the past. It cannot be denied that he is simply following custom and tradition by insisting that he can only call the New Yam Festival when there is only one yam left from the sacred seven. Nevertheless, if there is any one closest to the gods who can intercede for the people it is Ezeulu. The narrator says the man is half human and half spirit, which means that he has the power to speak directly to the gods so that the community may be saved.

The challenge is delivered to him fairly by Udeozo, one of the elders in the community who comes to see him over the issue. He tells Ezeulu, “go and eat those remaining yams today and

name the day of the next harvest. [. . .] I said go and eat those yams today and not tomorrow; and if Ulu says we have committed an abomination let it be on the heads of the ten of us here” (Achebe, 1964: 210). Again, this is a passionate appeal to Ezeulu to save the situation. In response, Ezeulu says, “I am the Chief Priest of Ulu and what I have told you is his will not mine. Do not forget that I too have yam fields. [...]. It could not be my wish to ruin all these people.[...] The gods sometimes use us as a whip” (Achebe, 1964: 210). Ezeulu is alive to the fact that his actions are detrimental to the well-being of the community. He knows he is whipping the people where it hurts the most. Famine is imminent. The Festival of the New Yam cannot be held and therefore the new crop cannot be harvested.

In the final stages of the novel, Ezeulu eats the last sacred yam and announces that the New Yam Festival would be held in twenty-eight days. By this time the community is already resigned to their fate. The announcement is not received with excitement as would normally be the case because the people are fed up of waiting. The small but growing African Christian community is told they can safely harvest their new yams even without Ezeulu, the Chief Priest calling the New Yam Festival. Many take that root and suffer no retribution from the gods, having been offered protection by the Christian God (Achebe, 1964: 222). With that happening many begin to doubt the powers of their gods and convert to Christianity. Ezeulu is declared redundant because many are no longer afraid of the powers of the god Ulu who fortifies him. Ezeulu’s charms have lost their potency, as his son, Obika is killed as a revenge for his delay in calling the New Yam Festival.

Ezeulu is disappointed that the god Ulu, his master has deserted him. He asks, “Ulu were you there when this happened to me?” (Achebe, 1964: 230) This shows his disappointment with his god. The narrator makes Ezeulu’s disappointment clear by asking why, “Ulu had chosen to deal thus with him, to strike him down then cover him with mud? What was his offense? Had he not divined the god’s will and obeyed it?” (Achebe, 1964: 231) This entails that Ezeulu is disappointed that his god has abandoned him. Without Ulu his god, Ezeulu is now an ordinary man, and no longer the half human, half spirit he was previously.

As the novel comes to a close, Ezeulu is in a pitiable state. The position of Chief Priest of Ulu that he holds is no longer attainable. His son Obika is dead, having been killed in mysterious circumstances. The whole community is in disarray because in trying to destroy an individual, they destroy themselves. The return of Winterbottom to Nigeria and Umuofia in particular, after his sick leave in England signifies the end of an era and the beginning of

another. Winterbottom is the symbol of the British administration in Umuofia. He is a representation of whatever the colonial government in that part of the world stands for. He has come back to an even more polarised Ibo society, and this time around he will even be more assertive and ensure that the British colonial government spreads its tentacles even wider in all the spheres of the life of the Ibo speaking people. The divisions among the people the white man seeks to dominate and control present him a wonderful opportunity to carry out his mandate, as prescribed to him back home in England even before he embarked on his mission.

All the communal ties that prior to the divisions within the Ibo community held the people together will now easily be broken down. To start with, now there will be no position of Chief Priest of Ulu because people have lost faith in this institution, following the molestation of the person who holds it, and also following the negativity that the community have come to associate it with. Still fresh in their minds will be the hunger and starvation that very nearly wiped out an entire community, caused by this office. Without the religious office of the Chief Priest of Ulu, there will be no New Yam Festival and people will be going to their fields to harvest the crop as and when it is ready. There will be no one to hold them to ransom over a crop that is their own, and for which they toil. Instead of worshipping the god Ulu, who has been exposed as a cruel god who has scores to settle with mortal beings, now their eyes have been opened because they have found a loving God who saved them from starvation by allowing them to harvest their yam crop even before the calling of the New Yam Festival, and offering them protection from the god Ulu's retribution.

The position of Uru, the highest position in the land that Nwaka occupies, will no longer be attainable. Instead there will be something of a District Commissioner or Governor of some description. All the symbols of the African religion will be frowned upon. The so-called royal python will no longer be held to be sacred but will be treated like any other snake, a serpent. It will be killed or probably taken to a zoo where people will watch it for the sake of amusement at a fee.

In the final analysis, the people of Umuofia are their own worst enemies leading to their destruction. Instead of pulling resources together to fight their common enemy, the white man who has invaded their land, they are busy fighting each other. Akuehue, Ezeulu's friend, lamenting the standoff concerning the calling of the New Yam Festival, and the infighting among the people of Umuaro village, observes, "It troubles me [. . .] because it

looks like the saying of our ancestors that when brothers fight to death a stranger inherits their father's estate'' (Achebe, 1964: 222). What he is referring to is the enmity between Ezeulu as an individual and his community, through characters like Nwaka and Ezidimili. The people are so preoccupied with trying to malign, injure and destroy each other at the expense of productivity and development. There is so much negative energy to the detriment of the community. The community, in trying to destroy the individual ends up destroying itself, and the individual, in trying to revenge also ends up being destroyed in the process. There is no winner at the end of the day.

4.3 Bitterness

Malama Katulwende's novel, *Bitterness*, published in 2005, provides an extra dimension to the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction, taking a break from Chinua Achebe's texts.

The setting is that of postcolonial Zambia, in the 1980s. There is an African government in place, and the excitement of attaining independence has long died down. It has now fully dawned on the masses that political independence is not the same as economic independence and that the latter cannot be achieved through slogans but requires careful thinking and planning as well as sacrifices by all, with the political authorities in power taking a leading role. Many are disillusioned that the economic prosperity they thought would come with independence has not been realised, and that if anything, they were even better off during the colonial days than they are now, as shall be seen. Economic emancipation remains a pipedream, a mirage to be envisaged but never attained. Only the political elite, and those who own the means of production are enjoying the so-called national cake, because only a select few can have access to it. Furthermore, there is deeply entrenched corruption and lack of respect of the rule of law.

Even when the nation is still in its infancy and experiencing teething problems, corruption is already systemic, threatening its very survival. The country is a mono economy, relying almost exclusively on copper exports. These are the issues that Besa, the protagonist, and the individuated character in the novel will find issues with. However, his environment is very hostile to such kind of independent thinking like his. It has to be borne in mind that at this stage the country, like the leaders of government would like everyone to believe, is a one party participatory democracy. This is very far from the truth because in essence, the country

is a one party dictatorship, with suppression and criminalisation of dissenting views. Katulwende's novel would not have seen the light of day in the 1980s because it is a highly political novel.

The central theme is that of conflict between an individual, Besa, and his community. Living in a community as he does, Besa is expected to relinquish his personal dreams, rights and freedoms to those of his community. However, he is such an individuated character that he cannot sacrifice his individuality. Just like the case is with Obi, and Ezeulu in *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* respectively, Besa is such an individuated character who pursues his dreams and aspirations without giving prominence to the good of his community. He too has a dominant Id, again resulting in serious conflict with his community. There is a major discrepancy between his philosophy of life and that of his community, especially after he becomes exposed to western education and ideas. That causes serious misunderstanding and conflict, which remains unresolved throughout the narrative.

Chapter one opens with Musunga Fyonse, pronouncing a curse on his son Besa, the protagonist for having departed from the African cultural and traditional practices. The main bone of contention is that Besa has fallen in love with a coloured girl, and he intends to marry her. That is objected to by his community and especially his father because he feels, Shantiee, Besa's fiancée, is of an unknown ethnic group, being of a mixed race, with a Zambian mother and an Italian father. In pronouncing the curse on his son, Musunga says, "If I have done wrong in my life [. . .], the worst was fathering you. I wish you hadn't been borne; then you wouldn't have known the ordour of this life. O spirits of my father, you who have since departed, take him away with you. I believe he will go. Courageously will he meet his dreadful end" (Katulwende, 2005: 93).

These are very strong words coming out of a father's mouth, wishing his own son death. Being of the Aushi tribe, and speaking a Bemba dialect, what Musunga should have in mind is a Bemba proverb which says, *Umwana kasembe, kala kukoma wabwela wakobeka*. Meaning a child is like an axe. It can fall on your feet and cut you but you still pick it up and carry it on your shoulder. The interpretation of this proverb is that one should not abandon one's child because of doing something wrong. All that is needed is to offer counsel and continue providing fatherly love to the child. What we see in Musunga is something contrary to this wise saying in his dealing with his son, Besa. He is essentially wishing his child death, and that is not right.

A curse from parents on their children is very binding. In the bible, in the book of Ephesians 6: 1-4, (KJV), it is written, “Children obey your parents in the lord for this is right. Honour your father and mother that it may be right with you and you may live long on earth.” This entails that a parental curse can have very devastating effects. Throughout the narrative, we do not see Besa prosper in his life. During his time as a student, he is arrested and tortured on some flimsy ground. After completing his studies, he is always in financial challenges. He quits his job as a teacher and starts living in a one roomed rented house in Chawama, a shanty township. As the novel comes to a close he is a man on the run, going into exile in the hope of bettering his fortunes. However, he still has a fatherly curse hanging on his head, and from the look of things, even in exile there is nothing good in store for him. Things are not right with him. It is Musunga, his father to blame for this sad scenario. In the same book of Ephesians 6: 4 (KJV), the bible is quick to admonish parents. It is written, “Fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” When the bible says children obey your parents, it does not give the parents the right to choose marriage partners for them. That is an abrogation of their rights and privileges. Besa has every right to choose who he wants to marry, and should not be forced into an arranged marriage. As shall be seen in the closing chapters, this is a major source of misunderstanding, which conflict Katulwende postpones to the very last chapters of his novel, having introduced it in passing in the opening chapter.

A comparative analysis would help put the curse of Musunga on his son Besa into perspective as to how heinous and thoughtless it is. The biblical account about King David recorded in 2 Samuel 15: 1-20 (NIV), who quarrelled with his son Absalom, for rebelling against him and actually plotting to oust him as king, and how he reacted, exposes Musunga as a cruel father. Absalom committed treason by plotting to dethrone his father leading to the death of thousands of people. King David had every right to react harshly and even put him to death. However, he instructed his army that was fighting him to thwart his rebellion not to kill him, but bring him back home alive. In his overzealousness, wanting to please to the king, one of his soldiers killed Absalom. When King David received the news about his son’s death he mourned him, as expected of a loving father. In the book of Samuel, it is written concerning how the king reacted to the news of his son’s death: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you- O Absalom, my son, my son!” 2 Samuel 18: 33 (NIV) This shows that King David was a very loving, and forgiving father. The gravity of the offense committed by his son, leading to the death of thousands of people

in a war which could have been avoided, demanded a brutal reprisal without sympathy on him. But being the loving father that he was King David was in distress over his son's death. Musunga, in sharp contrast is a very cruel, and unforgiving father who curses his son for choosing to disobey him and marry the woman he loves. He tells his son, Besa, "If I'd done some wrongs in my life, wrongs that darken and pain my heart, the worst was fathering you. I wish you hadn't been born" (Katulwende, 2005: 5). These words are too harsh to come from a father. The offense Besa commits is negligible compared to what Absalom did, and has no negative repercussions on the community.

Chapter two sees Musunga visit the shrine and mourn a past that has been desecrated by modernity. He laments a past that can no longer hold in the scheme of things. Ironically, he is very excited about his son's prospects of attaining western education up to university level, and yet he is averse to western ideals and values which include the very education that he so much wants his son to be exposed to. His inconsistencies are too glaring to go unnoticed. On one hand he wants his son to get exposed to western education; on the other he still wants him to cling to African cultural and traditional practices. The narrator says, "He was a man whose soul was found in the things and the ways of the past" (Katulwende, 2005: 5). This means that he is a conservative who fails to appreciate the dynamic nature of the world. He is not receptive, neither is he tolerant to new ideas and modern ways of doing things. From his utterances, we can deduce that Musunga is a man who is opposed to the application of science and technology as a way of explaining phenomena, and solving challenges. His belief in invoking the spirits of the dead as a way of solving challenges says it all.

In chapter three, Besa, the protagonist, is presented as a very hard working and intelligent young man who spends most of his time studying (Katulwende, 2005: 12). As a result, he is accepted at the University of Zambia to study in the School of Education. His uncle, Bwaale, in welcoming the news and in wishing him well as he departs for Lusaka for his studies, says, "My nephew Besa. See what you have done; do not destroy what you have started. In our clan you are the first child to be called to the place of higher learning. Other clans have sent children to university and they laugh at us" (Katulwende, 2005: 52). This goes to show that Besa's is an exceptional achievement, unprecedented in the whole community.

Chanda, a cousin to Besa, also gives a word of encouragement, and caution. He says to him, "Women's breasts may be sweet to touch but they are also fires that burn you little by little. Only those who hear live in the earth. I have nothing to give you but these words"

(Katulwende, 2005: 52). In saying these words, Chanda is trying to warn his cousin against womanising once he goes to university. In a way, this foreshadows what is to happen once Besa goes to university; he meets and proposes marriage to Shantee, a coloured girl that his whole community disapproves of, leading to one of the most serious conflicts in the novel. However, his falling in love with Shantee cannot be said to be womanising. She is the only woman that he gets involved in a relationship with while at university, and he ends up proposing marriage to her. On the basis of this, it can be argued that his morale standing in society is beyond reproach.

Musunga Fyonse, his father, is not to be out done in offering advice. He says, “times have now changed, for battles are no longer fought with spears, knives and shields, but with pencils, pens and paper. It is with the power of the pen, that both poverty and misery may be defeated” (Katulwende, 2005: 51). These are very wise words, coming from a very inconsistent man. He fails to appreciate that once his son, Besa, gets exposed to western education at such a high level, he would come back and challenge some of the African cultural and traditional practices such as arranged marriages. It is erroneous, as far as this study is concerned, to suggest that western education is good, but the transformation that it brings about in an individual who gets exposed to it is not.

While at The University of Zambia, Besa gets exposed to Marxism, and essentially becomes a Marxist by default rather than design, and anti-capitalist. This opens his eyes to the social and economic injustices in the Zambian society of his time, becoming radicalised in the process. He expresses his new awakening through students’ unionism becoming something of an institution against exploitation. Katulwende, through Besa, a character who expresses individuality, ably demonstrates the truth in Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1981) who argues that, “Literature looks at man’s struggle with his political, social, and economic environment, and is not mute when dealing with issues such as basic means of life, food, clothing and shelter” (1981: 7). This entails that literature is not in the peripheral but at the centre of human’s struggle for a better life. This is so because as Ngugi explains further, literature “does shape our attitudes to life, to the daily struggles. Besa, in the novel *Bitterness*, responds to the harsh economic and social realities that he has to deal with. He takes a stand against injustice, rather than allow himself to be a passive victim of his situation. This is what Ngugi means when he argues that “a product of a writers pen both reflects and also attempts to persuade us to take a certain attitude to that reality.” (ibid: 12). This means that Besa expresses his

individualism by refusing to be a mere hero worshipper like the majority of his community but boldly confronts the regime in power for the betterment of his whole community.

Sichone, one of Besa's friends and fellow student at The University of Zambia, voices out his concerns by saying: "The present regime does not represent an ideal type of democracy that upholds the liberties and freedoms of the people. It is characterised by censorship, the state of emergency, detention without trial, police roadblocks, mass fear and the use of the security forces" (Katulwende, 2005: 119). However, mere lamentations like these will not change the status quo. What is needed is a radicle to keep the government in check, and that is what Besa, the main character, provides through student unionism, and through being a fearless and ferocious writer of several political articles. It takes an individuated character like him to confront the regime and point out some of its pitfalls. The route Besa has taken is a lonely and dangerous one as it puts his life at risk. However, there will always be such characters in any given society who put their interests aside and sacrifice for the common good. The main drawback is that such characters are rarely appreciated by the very people they intend to serve. They are alienated by their own people as the case is with Besa, and accused of being antagonistic to the dreams and aspirations of the masses or the community.

As it has been observed earlier, Besa is an ill-fated child, if the circumstances of his birth are anything to go by. There is negative portrayal of this character mainly because he behaves contrary to the expectations of his community. He is presented to the reader as a sickling and a weakling who had a premature birth at seven months. His uncle, Bwaale, tells him to his face, more as a way of belittling him than anything else, that he was a premature baby. He says to him:

Let me tell you something about yourself. As far as I can remember death has always been at your feet. Of all the children in your house you have been the sickliest. I recall when you were born. [. . .] You came into this world too early- a little after seven moons- and we were all surprised since no woman in our clan had had too early a birth [...]. Our fears were that you would not live many days (Katulwende, 2005: 60).

One would wonder the motive of such kind of words to a mere boy, if not to demean him. This entails that they did not expect him to survive childhood. Bwaale goes on to tell Besa, "But the saddest time of all was when a strange sickness possessed you shortly after you had started crawling. [. . .] We all had a big fear that everything was about to end" (Katulwende,

2005: 60). In that case Besa is but something of a miracle child. In short what this means is that Besa had a very rough childhood. This is very negative portrayal of the individual as these are the choices that Katulwende as an author makes with regard to how he would like the reader to perceive the character. Besa had a difficult childhood and ends up with a troubled adulthood.

Psychologists have established that trauma in childhood can have negative impact on a person into adulthood causing feelings of depression and anxiety. Boccia, (2017), rightly argues that traumatic experiences in childhood can result in negative outcomes and dysfunction in adulthood, including mental health issues. In agreement with Boccia, (2017), Freud (1917), argues that traumatic experiences in childhood can negatively affect one's adult life, with deficiencies in social competences or inability to integrate. For the purposes of this study, what this entails is that Besa, the protagonist in the novel *Bitterness*, having been born prematurely, and having suffered chronic ailment in childhood, did not have his mental faculties fully developed, hence his being headstrong in his dealings with others. That cannot be said to be positive in the manner in which he is portrayed. He is presented as a problem child with a difficult childhood and a troubled adulthood, hence his falling out with his community.

With that kind of stigmatisation, any reader would treat the character Besa like someone who is temperamental, and who has to be approached with caution, and probably someone who is mentally retarded. In concluding his remarks about Besa's troubled childhood, Bwaale says, "Yours has been a troubled path, a passing through the night, a scream for help inside the storm, and a keeping of a fire in the rainy winds" (Katulwende, 2005: 62). This entails that Besa, in his life has not had it easy and has been a subject of one misfortune after another. These words are not words of encouragement to be said especially to a child who is still in his formative years. They tend to define and describe who Besa is as a person, a premonition of misfortune. What Bwaale is doing is effectively pronouncing a curse on the young man, as did his brother, Besa's father, and it is hardly surprising that Besa's life is littered with misfortune. This is the negative portrayal that is so clear in the presentation of these individuated characters that I argue against.

It can be argued that, having had a troubled childhood, Besa becomes even more determined to succeed in life. He fights injustice and becomes an advocate for individual rights and freedoms. In criticising the regime in power, Besa effectively takes sides with the down

trodden and the marginalised in society. His nature of individuation takes the form of a lone voice that speaks out against injustice. This is hardly surprising because literature is not neutral to the social and economic injustices in society. It voices out its concerns through artistic expression like novels and other literary genres as it is not divorced from the society that inspires it. This same observation is made by Eagleton (2005) who argues that, “Literature served the emancipation movement of the middle class as an instrument to gain self-esteem and to articulate its human demands against the absolutist state and a hierarchical society” (2005: 10). This means that literature does not shy away from ridiculing or bringing to shame the social and economic injustices that may characterise a given regime. In that respect, Besa should not be viewed as anti establishment. Through expressing his individuality, he fights for the common good, leading to his incarceration.

The transformation Besa undergoes after becoming a Marxist must be put into context so as to understand why he becomes vehemently opposed to the injustices perpetuated by the regime in power. Marxist ideology has it that man is the cause of his suffering through greedy which results in exploitation of one man by another, and as such he has all the solutions to his challenges. The result of that exploitation, as Peacock (1982:20) explains, is the emergence of classes that we see in society, with the masses at the mercy of a few who are the ruling class, and those who control the means of production. To remedy the lopsided situation, Marxism advocate for a classless society as a panacea to the economic and social ills. What this entails is that the Marxists are vehemently opposed to capitalism because in a capitalist society like ours the first sign of exploitation is the presence of classes, with apparently those who work the least but have the capital or means of production, getting the most. Besa begins to observe the social and economic injustices in his society and stands up to the authorities. Being the individuated character that he is, his conscience cannot allow him to be an accomplice by being passive.

By virtue of being a sympathiser of Marxism, Besa becomes a compromised Christian. Karl Max, the father of Marxism, cited in Mckinnon (2005) wrote, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heatless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (2005: 15-20). Opium is a narcotic drug, a depressant used in health institutions as a painkiller in cases where severe pain is experienced. With that in mind, the interpretation of Karl Marx’s statement is that religion is an illusion that is used to make the poor, and the marginalised in society, passively accept their poor living conditions and

exploitation with the hope of a better life in heaven. This kind of reasoning is what Marx does not agree with. He would rather people fight injustice, and live a better life today than sometime in the unknown future. All that kind of reasoning contributes in making Besa the changed person that he becomes.

One need not be a disciple of Karl Marx to see the sense in what he is saying especially when one looks at the state of the Christian church at the moment. There is misinterpretation, and misrepresentation of bible verses like Mathews 6: 19-21 (NIV) which reads, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break up and steal. But store up for yourself treasures in heaven”. Many of the clergy have misunderstood this verse, some of them deliberately, to mean that it is alright for a Christian to live in poverty for he will enjoy in heaven, while they enjoy good lives themselves right here on earth through the exploitation of their congregants. There is capitalism even within the Christian church, with some of the clergy using the pulpit to enrich themselves through deliberate misinterpretation of bible verses and exploitation of the congregants. In such kind of a scenario, crime is inevitable because capitalism is criminogenic: It causes crime in the sense that where people are exploited, they find a way to survive, however that may be.

Such kind of interpretation of some bible verses as discussed in the previous chapter is not appealing to many who do not even know where their next meal is going to come from, and who have literally nothing worth stealing. Not only is this bible verse misunderstood, but also used to exploit the people by trying to justify poverty and injustice. We cannot run away from the fact that we are living in a material world, a capitalist world where not having can mean the difference between life and death, and in death even Christianity cannot be practiced. The struggle to survive this harsh economic world is real, and should not be belittled. In the final analysis, to be a good Christian one should have something. In the real strict sense, poverty and Christianity are not bedfellows for it is written in Acts 20: 35 (NIV), that, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” And you cannot give what you do not have. This entails that the material world cannot be completely be divorced from Christianity. For the sake of this study, it is important to understand all this so as to appreciate the transformation Besa, the character who expresses individuality in *Bitterness* (2005), undergoes, having been exposed to Marxism through western education. That is the reason why he stands up to the excesses of the regime in power, putting his life at risk in the process.

Martin Luther King jr. cited in Applebee (2000: 301) argues that, “To accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system; thereby the oppressed become as evil as the oppressor. Non-cooperation with evil is much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.” This effectively means that every well-meaning individual has a moral obligation to fight injustice. In that regard, Besa, even in expressing his individuality stands out as having a sense of community. He refuses to passively accept injustice perpetrated by the regime in power during the Zambia of his time.

Besa is awakened to all that by his exposure to Marxism. That is contrary to his mother’s desire that he becomes a dedicated Christian living on biblical principles and Christian values. His father, Musunga, who is a custodian of the African traditional religion as a keeper of the shrine, cannot comprehend what has become of his son. To say he is disappointed is an understatement. His disappointment is complete, and wishes him nothing but death, as evidenced by the curse he pronounces on him. However, in retrospect, Besa is not to blame in the sense that it is the system of education that he was exposed to that made him become what he is. He cannot be found culpable because he has been exposed to an education that has trained him to verify and question matters, rather than be a passive recipient of information. All that is needed is someone knowledgeable enough to take him on, at an intellectual level, and give him the correct interpretation of some of these seemingly controversial bible verses. In the absence of that, he is not to blame.

From chapter eight to twelve, we are presented with Besa’s life and activities while at The University of Zambia. He meets and falls in love with Shantiee, a coloured girl and later proposes marriage to her by way of engagement. It is in these chapters that the conflict between Besa and his community, especially his parents is heightened, creating something of a climax in the narrative. Something of a climax because one major weakness of Katulwende’s novel is that it has no well-defined climax. There is no moment in the entire novel when emotions can be said to be at their highest. Probably, if Besa and Shantiee had gotten married at a colourful wedding, with something dramatic happening during the wedding ceremony, with Musunga, or Bwaali, appearing from nowhere to stop or attempt to stop the wedding and the marriage, that would have made for a very good climax.

That aside, Shantiee is presented as a very beautiful and intelligent young lady. Her love affair with Besa speaks of a woman who is so responsible, loving and caring. She is nothing short of marriage material because her conduct, throughout the narrative, is that of a woman

who is admirable, a marriage material, so to speak. A few examples from the novel will serve to illustrate the point. To start with, Shantiee and Besa her are worlds apart in terms of their economic backgrounds. She comes from a very rich family and he is a villager with his parents eking an existence from subsistence farming out of an exhausted soil. Speaking about his parents, Shantiee says: “My parents are very successful people and perhaps we may learn something from their lives” (Katulwende, 2005: 272). She goes on to say that her father is a successful business man with four subsidiary companies, having invested in mining, transportation, agriculture, hotels and petroleum. This clearly shows that Shantiee comes from a very rich family, even by world standards. The same cannot be said of Besa whose parents are subsistence farmers, barely surviving. His father and mother could easily work as domestic servants for Shantiee’s parents, and that speaks volumes of the differences in fortunes between the two families. It cannot be said that Shantiee is in love with Besa for the sake of money. Hers is genuine love. If anything, there is evidence in the text to show that she is very supportive of Besa financially. One such occasion is when Besa is taken ill and she buys him food stuffs which otherwise he could not afford.

Probably the most explicit example about Shantiee’s unconditional love is what she says about the poor economic background of Besa which shows that she does not care whether he is poor or rich. She says:

Whether Besa is poor or rich is of no consequence to me. He has always been poor anyway but I have nonetheless loved him ever since we met. What difference would it make to me now if he were staying in a shack? All I care about is him He doesn’t have to prove anything because I already know what he is capable of. This is why I love him. I don’t care about his money or material things from him. I have everything I need (Katulwende, 2005: 251).

Her sentiments follow Washaama’s revelation to him that his friend Besa is living in squalor in some shanty compound in Lusaka. Shantiee’s sentiments should be contrasted with what Washaama says about the village girls one of whom Besa’s parents and extended family members wanted him to marry, in an arranged marriage. He tells Besa, “Those girls from our village are not interested in you because they really love you but because of your education. They believe that with your qualifications they “ll have a good life and that is why they will not hesitate to marry you” (Katulwende, 2005: 218). This entails that Besa has made a good choice as an individual in proposing to marry Shantiee, and not Chama the village girl his community wants him to marry. The reasons for Besa’s choice are not far to seek. Apart from

the genuine loves that Shantiee expresses towards him, Besa wants someone who is an intellectual like himself. A woman who can challenge him and inspire him to greater heights. This important observation is made by Washaama, Besa's closest friend. He tells Besa, "Your wife will be your companion for life, and you owe it to yourself to choose someone who will be compatible with you spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. Shantiee is all of these things: she is very beautiful, intelligent, educated, generous, patient and understanding" (Katulwende, 2005: 219). This entails that he too has made a correct assessment of the situation, and has concluded that Shantiee is the right marriage partner for Besa.

In most cases one would expect a very beautiful and well-educated girl like Shantiee to be very proud and not want to associate with the likes of Besa, a poor villager. She is also not expected to want to be associated with work such as cooking and cleaning around, unless as a hobby, because his parents are so rich that they can easily afford to employ even five house helps if they needed them. However, she is so down to earth as can be seen from her sentiments. She tells Besa: "You and I could start almost anywhere. I'll cook for us, I'll make the beds, I'll scrub the floor, and I'll do anything to make a home for us. I want us to do something for our own from small beginnings so that, after some years, we'll look back and say: "This is where our dreams began" (Katulwende, 2005: 272).

This means that in spite of coming from a very rich family, she is a very humble person who understands what it means to be living. She wants to take a leaf from her parents who started from very humble beginnings. She is really a rare find, a young woman with the true heart of a lady. Besa, in falling in love with her, and proposing to marry her cannot be said to have erred in judgement. It is very surprising that Besa's community is totally against his intention to marry such a good woman. Their basis of opposition is that she is of mixed blood. That argument cannot hold because it fails to point out the specific things that make them think she is not a good woman. Their argument would be more plausible were she of a questionable personality. If anything, it would be expected that Shantiee's parents are the ones to reject Besa as a suitor of their daughter because even after graduating from university he cannot even take care of himself, living in a one roomed house in one of the most unfashionable suburbs of Lusaka city. I cannot even begin to imagine Shantiee with such well to do parents, and highly educated, living in subhuman conditions in a one roomed, rented house without electricity, running water and sanitary facilities. It defies common sense and reasoning, and so it should be Shantiee's parents rejecting Besa as a marriage partner for their daughter, and

not the other way round. This love story between the two is larger than life, sounding almost like one of those Shakespearian stories like Romeo and Juliet.

Apart from that, Shantiee has more innovative ideas than Besa has, having been brought up by parents with entrepreneurial minds, lifting themselves from abject poverty to creating an economic empire of their own. In trying to advise her boyfriend Besa who has completed his university education and is working for the government but not yet on payroll she says:

“We are very young, intelligent and healthy [. . .]. Why don’t you build your own schools and make your own money instead of waiting for someone to put you on their payroll system? Do we really need to run around with all the skills we now have? (Katulwende, 2005: 273)

The forgoing entails that she is alive to the need of university graduates to not only expect to be employed, working in some office, but also to be innovative and start businesses of their own. This is yet another attribute that Shantiee has and it is incomprehensible that Besa’s parents and relatives are opposed to his intention to marry her. One may argue that going into business is not an easy undertaking as it requires careful planning and enough capital which many youths do not have access to. However, everything starts with an idea. Once the idea is muted with a bankable business proposal, and determination one can succeed even where many have failed.

All that notwithstanding, Shantiee is rejected by Besa’s family and community as his marriage partner. In chapter thirteen we see Besa on a war path with especially his uncle Bwaale over the issue. Besa says: “My parents and some of my relatives particularly my uncle and aunt are opposed to my engagement to Shantiee. They would rather I marry from my tribe and they have already chosen someone for me” (Katulwende, 2005: 218). This entails that as far as they are concerned Shantiee is not the right marriage partner for Besa. What is of concern is the fact they are insisting that he should marry someone from their tribe. That is tribalism and the vice has destroyed many African countries. It has been said that the family is the building block for the community, and many communities build a nation. With tribalism deeply entrenched at family level, it will spill over to the community and eventually the whole nation is engulfed in it. What it means, by and large, is that, even when it comes to employment opportunities, those assigned to do the head hunt would want to employ someone based on tribe and not merit. The same would apply to the awarding of contracts to undertake various projects of economic value to the nation. The end result is poor service delivery and economic collapse.

Tribalism does spill over into the political arena. Leaders are voted into office not because they are capable of delivering on their campaign promises, but because they hail from a certain region or a certain tribe. The end result is that we end up having leaders in government who do not have the capacity to execute their duties to the expectations of the people that elected them into office. They are preoccupied with remaining in power; in a large sense, they are in power in order to remain in power, and not to serve the people. Tribalism is indeed a cancer that has to be rooted out at all costs. I have gone into all these details to establish that Besa's community is at fault in insisting that he should marry someone from the same tribe as theirs. The argument that the community is always right is wrong because at times, and many are those times, the community makes irrational decisions, and this is one such decision. In response to his uncle who wants to know what tribe Shantee is, Besa puts it plainly and says: "I don't care about tribes" (Katulwende, 2005: 238). This response tells the reader how Besa could no longer tolerate his individual rights being trumped upon.

The issue of arranged marriages is one that also needs proper scrutiny. While it is sensible that one's family members and community should have a say on one's choice of marriage partner, the final decision should squarely rest on the would-be bride or bridegroom. General advice can and should be given as to the choice of a marriage partner to someone who has attained marriageable age, and intends to marry so as to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with choosing a marriage partner. However, it is my considered view that arranged marriages like the one Besa's community want him to enter into is not the best of options available. When all the marriage festivities such as weddings are done and dusted, the real marriage begins. This entails that marriage is between two people, in a strict sense. It is not the community but the individual who should choose for himself who he wants to marry. If the two are not compatible with each other, then the marriage cannot be sustained. In this case, Besa is in love with Shantiee and the two know a lot about each other and are genuinely in love. Chama is a total stranger to Besa, save for the fact that they come from the same village. They have nothing in common apart from that fact.

Chama, the community's preferred marriage partner for Besa is of questionable character and cannot make a good wife. Maliya, Besa's sister, makes a revealing observation about her. She says: "I suspect they'll force you to marry her. But don't make that mistake. Chama has a boyfriend and she is not a virgin! They don't understand anything" (Katulwende, 2005: 235).

This says a lot about Chama as a possible marriage partner to Besa. She is not trustworthy and probably there is a lot that is not known about her which makes her a questionable character. Shantee on the other hand is more trustworthy, making her a better choice. In this regard the wisdom of the community is questionable. Unlike his community, Besa has made a right choice. The community has made an error in judgement. Bwaale, Besa's uncle, speaks very highly of Chama. He says: "After thinking about it we decided that of all the three daughters Mulonda has, Chama was the best choice. She is a virgin; she is cultured and she is generous" (Katulwende, 2005: 236). Between Bwaale, and Maliya, Besa's younger sister, we can trust the latter and not the former because she is young and naive, and in her naivety, has no hidden agenda, unlike the former who certainly has vested interests.

Bwaale, in his overzealousness, goes ahead and pays dowry for Chama, the girl that he wants Besa to marry, even without consulting him over the matter (Katulwende, 2005: 236). He and the other members of the family goes ahead with the marriage arrangements to the extent of paying dowry without informing Besa. In this case his opinion about the matter is completely disregarded, but then there can be no marriage without the one to marry being consulted, as marriage is a very personal matter. Should Besa give in and accept Chama as his wife, in future should the two experience marital problems, he can easily turn around and say he was not interested in the marriage in the first place. That is why it is cardinal to allow the young man choose for himself whoever he wants to marry without being coerced.

The situation Besa finds himself in is what Gyekye, cited in Matolino (2008:77) finds problematic because he is a proponent of individual rights and freedoms. His argument is that much as the individual is a social being, he should be given the freedom to make individual choices, and that an individual cannot, or rather should not, be defined entirely by the community which he is born into. This simply means that, Gyekye would rather have Besa marry the woman he loves, rather than impose on him a marriage partner. He espouses what he terms 'moderate communitarianism' which simply put seeks to get the best out of both the individual and the community. He argues that it is possible for an individual to enjoy his individual rights and freedoms while at the same time contributing to the common good. This argument is shared by this researcher in that Besa's intention to marry Shantee, contrary to the wishes of his clan, does not necessarily make him incapable of contributing to its well-being.

Besa is a man who knows what he wants in life and is not going to be swayed by public opinion. His reply to the enticement to marry Chama and not Shantiee is candid. He says: “Uncle, I thank you for choosing this woman for me. I thank you very much for the trouble you took on your shoulders. On the other hand, don’t you want me to marry the woman I love? Why can’t I marry the woman of my choice?” (Katulwende, 2005: 237) This means that he is adamant and will do as he pleases. However, Bwaale is not convinced because he is already decided that Chama, and not Shantiee is the right marriage partner for Besa; he says:

My nephew, I don’t know what has fallen upon your head so that you should refuse to see the wisdom in what we are saying, we who raised and educated you. A child who is well cultured must be slow to speech when talking to elders, and he must do as they say since fire surrounded by elders does not burn. Could it be that you are now so educated that you may spit on the breast that fed you? Are were suddenly without sense- and you, a child who was born only yesterday have become wise and deaf to what we are saying? (Katulwende, 2005: 238)

Bwaale’s sentiments are those devoid of reasoning but only meant to intimidate and manipulate. He is suggesting that Besa must do as he says without questioning because he is young, and according to him there is nothing that he knows. There is differences in perceptions as a result of age differences or modernity. Bwaale and the community have overstepped their boundaries to the extent that they want to control every aspect of Besa’s life.

We see the same kind of lack of broad mindedness exhibited in *Bitterness* (2005), in *No Longer at Ease* (1960). In that novel, the chairman for the Umoufia Progressive Union, speaking to Obi, the protagonist and individuated character says, “But there are two words I should like to drop before you. You are very young, a child of yesterday. You know book but book stands by itself and experience stands by itself. So I am not afraid to talk to you” (Achebe, 1960: 74). By mentioning the age factor, both Bwaale and The Chairman of the Umoufia Progressive Union are in a way admitting their own inadequacies and limitations. What they are saying should make sense on its own, and not because they are old. In that respect, both Besa and Obi are right in challenging wisdom based on age only, and not on the facts on the ground. One does not necessarily have to be wrong because one is young, or be right based on age alone, and not any other considerations. There is an element of truth in what both elderly men are saying but not the whole truth.

Besa is not to be dissuaded on his choice of a marriage partner. He maintains that he shall marry Shantiee, in spite of the fierce opposition coming from his community. He rejoins:

Look, perhaps I made some cultural mistakes like not consulting you about her in the beginning, yet the truth is that Shantiee is the girl I shall marry. She is the right woman for me. How can I reject the woman I have known for almost four and half years and contract a marriage with someone I scarcely know? How can I forsake the woman I love and call myself a man? You must also accept that I hold freedom in my hands. I may be your child but you must let me lead the kind of life I choose. I am responsible for myself and no one will stop me from choosing. I shall create my own life and bear the consequences (Katulwende, 2005: 240).

This shows that Besa is a man with his own mind and is resolved to do that which he wants, and feels is right. However, in a communitarian society such as his, popular opinion on the matter is that he is in the wrong, and so the issue remains unresolved. A similar view is expressed by Ansah & Mensah (2018) who argue that “the community is morally supreme- whenever there is conflict between the interests of the individual and those of the community the interests of the community come first” (2018: 62). This entails that Besa, right as he may be is fighting a losing battle. Bwaale is aggrieved and feels insulted by whom he calls “a mere child whose life I have witnessed grow with my own eyes” (Katulwende, 2005: 240). This entails that he thinks Besa, as a young person has no right to oppose him, being the elderly, and wise person that he thinks he is, for it is believed as the Lunda say *chifwinji hachabadikanga mutuku* meaning a shoulder is never higher than the head.

Earlier on in the narrative, Besa’s mother dies, and since he has not yet started receiving his salary, he cannot afford a decent burial for her. If anything, it is his friend Washaama who gives him money for transportation to attend her funeral in the village (Katulwende, 2005: 228). However, again, there is negative portrayal of this individuated character. The narrative that gains currency is that Besa is such a tight- fisted young man that he cannot even spend on his mother’s funeral. He is made to appear an irresponsible person who does not even care about the welfare of his parents, let alone the death of his mother. Bwaale again is at it. He says, “Already there are words in this village about this house. People are wondering, ‘What has this child done for his relatives ever since he started work?’ His mother dies- and he lets her be buried like a dog in a cheap coffin” (Katulwende, 2005: 240). What Bwaale is not aware of, or deliberately chooses to ignore, is that Besa has just started working and is not

even on the payroll as yet. As far as he and the rest of the community are concerned, Besa is an ingrate, an extravagant, irresponsible young man, who has a well-paying job.

Again, just like it is in *No Longer at Ease*, we see the community in *Bitterness* having a wrong perception about what western education is all about. Their thinking is that someone with a university degree is a highly paid individual, who will come back and solve all their financial challenges. To them education is not about service, but the amassing of wealth. Father of Mweni, for example, tells Musunga, Besa's father on the occasion of his being accepted to study at the university that, educated people who have been to university, "are offered big jobs with big salaries akin to what any white man gets. They are also offered cars, large houses, servants, watchmen and other attractions" (Katulwende, 2005: 14). His sentiments speak of a man who is out of touch with reality. He is living in utopia. In his excitement, he goes on to say: "I swear father of Besa will throw away all his old clothes when Besa completes his education" (Katulwende, 2005: 14). Perhaps father of Mweni should not be overly blamed for expressing such sentiments. He is speaking out of ignorance. He and the rest of the community have it all wrong. This is a question of communication breakdown between the individual and the community. They are putting too much pressure on a young man who has just started work, and is still trying to settle down.

The truth of the matter is that Besa fails to give his mother a befitting burial because he has no means to do that, and not out of lack of regard. From what is known about him he loved his mother dearly, and there is no way that he can forsake her now that she is dead. Her death lives him in untold sorrow and grief. In mourning her he says, "O mother, you can't leave while I haven't done anything for you! How can you do this to me?" (Katulwende, 2005: 228) This shows that Besa is crestfallen, broken both in his heart and spirit. To suggest that he does not give her a decent send-off because he is stingy is inconsistent with what is known about him in the novel.

One other thing that sets Besa apart from his community is on the question of witchcraft. They believe in witchcraft whereas he does not, and this is part of the transformation that western education has brought on him. To start with, his mother's death is attributed to the work of witches by the majority of the community. For example, Mpundu Chanda, Besa's grandfather, in a speech at the funeral says: "I am saying that this death is not natural. A magic spell was cast on our daughter and she died because of it. The day before her fall

mother of Besa recounted a dream in which she was struck by lightning. [. . .] We too are children of elders” (Katulwende, 2005: 231).

This means that he strongly believes her death is the work of witchcraft, and as such divination to ferret who the culprit is must be done, and revenge taken. Besa is not of that school of thought and that can be seen both in his words and deeds following the death of his mother. He mourns her in peace and with dignity, without having to accuse anyone as being the cause of the death.

Following his acceptance to study at the University of Zambia, Besa is fortified against witches and evil spirits by his uncle Bwaale, which again shows that witchcraft or rather the belief in witchcraft is deeply entrenched in the community. He says: “You see my nephew; people’s hearts are not alike. There are those who are filled with hearts and wishes of destroying children of their friends, and those will not rest until their evil intentions are fulfilled” (Katulwende, 2005: 60). What he is insinuating is that witchcraft is rife in the community. He goes on to fortify him against the vice. At this stage in his life, Besa has not yet been exposed to western education at university level. That is why he readily accepts to be fortified, as it were. However, after undergoing a transformation that comes about as a result of being exposed to western education, his perception about issues such as the existence of witchcraft has changed.

Besa, in a way, finds himself a social misfit who goes contrary to establish traditions. In a typical African community, no one dies a natural death. Death is more often attributed to some invisible enemy who has a hand in it. This is one bad side of communal sentiment. It is not always positive and wholesome. Belief in the existence of whichcraft is part of expressing solidarity against a common enemy who in this case is a witch who must be located and revenge done against him or her. Many are the times when a suspected witch is identified through divination and brutally murdered by the members of a given community. Such heinous crimes are committed under the guise of promoting the well-being of the community. Bongmba (2001:22) argues that the belief in the existence of witchcraft is deeply rooted in the minds of most African communities. The negative side about this is that one must share in such beliefs if he or she is to be accepted as being a full member of the community. In agreement with Bongmba (2001) argument, Mbiti (1991) observes that, “belief in the function and dangers of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft is deeply rooted in the African life, and in spite of modern religions like Christianity and Islam, it is very difficult to eradicate

this belief” (1991: 165). Mbiti’s sentiments are timely because even amongst the most ardent Christians, and the educated elite, belief in the existence of witchcraft and the need for protection is common place.

Lumwe (2017), in a similar observation as the foregoing posits that, “Most Africans need no special orientation to believe that witchcraft exists, which means that witchcraft cannot be separated from the life of an African” (2017: 85). What this means is that in a communalistic society, belief in the existence of witchcraft is a shared value, and anyone who seems not to share in such beliefs is ridiculed and at times becomes a subject of suspicion for practicing the vice. It is not my intention to go into the merits or demerits of these arguments because that is beyond the scope of this study. I have discussed these issues so that Besa’s position in the wake of the death of his mother, and the narrative that she was bewitched can be understood. He is at variance with his community in so far as this issue is concerned. Already he is a man in conflict with his community because he does not believe his mother’s cause of death is as a result of witchcraft. Bwaale, his uncle, will be quick to point out to him that he is a child of yesterday, and that there is nothing he knows when it comes to such issues. Like stated earlier, the difference in beliefs can be attributed in part to the fact that he has been exposed to western education. Besa now believes that in the absence of empirical evidence, witchcraft cannot be proved.

As the novel comes to a close, Besa the antagonist and the character who expresses individuality in the novel, is in a deplorable state of alienation, disillusionment and outright rejection by his own society. He is in a pitiable state and one cannot help but feel sorry for him. To start with, he is disillusioned that the western education he thought would herald upward social mobility has not materialised. He excels as a student at The University of Zambia and graduate with a Degree in Education. He gets employed as a teacher in the Ministry of Education, but then he is not put on the payroll due to the slow, and tedious bureaucratic system in place, which in essence points at the poor service delivery that the citizenry have come to associate the government with. Due to the love of his country and the need to serve humanity, he exhibits very high levels of perseverance and resilience, for some time. However, the harsh economic realities of city life force him to resign his position as a teacher.

The circumstances leading to his resignation had been fermenting for quite some time. Even as a university degree holder, he lives in abject poverty, in a one-roomed- rented- house, in

one of the most unfashionable townships of Lusaka. The house, or however one may want to describe it, has no sanitary facilities or running water, the very basic requirements of any building that befits the description of a house. He frequently has to borrow from money lenders at exorbitant interest rates, further compounding his already precarious situation. On one occasion, he fails to pay back and has his furniture taken away from him, including his mattress which he puts on the floor, since he cannot even afford a bed, leaving him having to sleep on a reed mat (Katulwende, 2005: 263). This entails that his social and economic situation is not commensurate to his level of education. The situation speaks of a society that has its priorities wrong.

The woman money lender who grabs his furniture for failing to settle a debt actually observes the subhuman standards in which Besa lives and expresses doubt whether he is the university graduate he claims to be. She says: “He can’t be a graduate. Where did you ever see a university graduate who lives in a small room and goes to a money lender for Kalooba?” (Katulwende, 2005: 263) This goes to show that Besa is indeed living by far below the expectations of the community, considering his level of education. What this entails is that Besa’s social and economic disillusionment transcends him as an individual but is felt by the whole community. Again, there is negative portrayal of an individual that expresses individuality. He is presented as a bad example who fails to utilise his high level of education to better himself.

From the look of things, Besa is deliberately not put on the pay roll as a result of his outspokenness against the state. That can easily be attributed to his political activism at the time he was a student at The University of Zambia. He proves to be a fearless, outspoken critic of the regime in office, leading to his incarceration. Even after his release, there is every reason to believe that the state police keep a close eye on him as a way of trying to track him down because he is considered a threat by the powers that be. His being left out of the payroll, it can be argued, is a deliberate ploy to cower him into submission, and break his spirit. The argument stems from the fact that at this point in time in the history of the country, there are very few university graduates, and the government can ill afford to train them at such a high cost only to frustrate them into resignations. Making allowances for their inefficiencies, the government is very efficient when it comes to tracking down, and at times eliminating dissenting voices using the state police and other such tools of oppression and suppression. This pushes him into destitution, and desperation. As the novel comes to a

close, Besa is seriously contemplating to go into exile, which if he does, would render him both a political and economic refuge in the diaspora, a situation that favours the regime so well. They would not like to have amidst the citizens an individuated character such as Besa for fear that his ideas may germinate and infiltrate the masses leading to a revolution.

Again, as the novel comes to a close, Besa is a very disappointed man that his intention to marry Shantiee, the love of his life has been rejected by his community, including his own family. However, he is resigned to his fate and intends to go ahead with the marriage in spite of fierce opposition coming from the community. That puts him in a very awkward position because should he later on encounter marital challenges with his wife, he will have nowhere to run to for counsel. The community would simply point out to him that they had foreseen such, hence their opposition to the marriage in the first place, and he will have no answer. No matter the level of individuation, as human beings, we all need some kind of acceptance from the people around us. Besa, has been rejected, and with rejection comes a feeling of worthlessness that is so devastating to the psychological and emotional well-being of an individual.

The narrative comes to a close with Besa having lost his mother, exacerbating his already fragile psychological and emotional well-being. The trauma that comes with losing a loved one should not be underestimated. Coming so close to the other compounding factors, this is the final blow which leaves him so drained in all spheres, be it psychologically, physically and emotionally.

Besa's mother is also another character who expresses her individuality. She defies her husband and community by taking her son Besa when he became critically ill, as opposed to taking him to a which doctor as they expected (Katulwende, 2005: 61). The baby is treated with westesrn medicine and fully recovers, once again proving that the community is not always right.

Shortly after this incident, she converts to Christianity, again in defiance of especially her husband who is an elder in the African church, as keeper of the holy shrines. She tells her husband that she does not believe in the ancestral spirits because they are dead. She says: "Our ancestors are dead. They cannot lead us. We need something stronger than ourselves to show us the way. We need Yesu Klistu [. . .] Worshiping skulls of our ancestors will lead us

nowhere” (Katulwende, 2005: 71). This means she is now a transformed person who no longer believes in the power of the spirits of the dead leading to conflict with his community.

In the final analysis, Katulwende, through his novel presents the readership with yet again a classic example of conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction. As the case is with the other two primary texts in this study, namely *No Longer At Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964). Contrary to the assertion that the concept of the individual is a disruptive force to the community, he is a highly intelligent man who contributes positively to the growth of his community. In *Besa*, Kutulwende succeeds in portraying a loud-mouthed, bitter, character who is always arguing with his friends and foes alike, and has no regard even for the wisdom of the elders. However, at the end of the narrative he has nothing to show of it, and as Achebe correctly observes, “no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan” (Achebe, 1964: 232). This entails that, from the onset *Besa*, and some other such characters are bound to fail, regardless their efforts to succeed. What is brought out in *Bitterness*, just like the situation is in the other texts, is the paramountcy of the community, and the folly of expressing individuality in the African context. However, there is need to give space to heroes in African fiction, and not only tragic heroes, as the case is at the moment.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, a detailed discussion and analysis of the primary texts in this study, namely, *No Longer At Ease*, (1960) *Arrow Of God* (1964) and *Bitterness*, (2005) have been presented with a view to bringing out conflict between the individual and the community in these texts. As has been observed, the nature of individuated characters is such that they are nonconformists who pursue their dreams and aspirations without taking into consideration popular opinion in their communities against their behaviour. This has created serious conflict in all the three texts with far reaching consequences because the communities in which these individuals live have a sense of community where the individual rights and freedoms are secondary in importance to the good of the community.

Contrary to assertions and findings of other scholars such as Mbiti (1970), individuated characters such as Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), and Besa in *Bitternes* (2005), have proved to be highly intelligent and industrious characters who would otherwise have contributed positively to the development of their communities. The

fact that these individuated characters end as tragic heroes is not of their own making but of the communities they live in, which have unrealistic and at times unattainable expectations. The communities spend so much resources trying to destroy the individual and, in the process, destroy both themselves and the individual. In that sense, their destruction is self inflicted.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

Having discussed the findings in the previous chapter, I now turn to the final chapter, where here a summary of findings emanating from the analysis is given. This chapter also proceeds to draw a general conclusion of the entire study.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings are based on the objectives that were set for the study, and these are shown as follows:

Objective One (1): To investigate the nature of conflict between the Individual and the community in selected African novels.

The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2000: 765) defines the nature of a thing or phenomena as “the basic qualities or characteristics of that thing.” This entails the salient traits of a given thing. In this study, the nature of the conflict between the Individual and the community was such that an individual on one hand was in conflict with the community on the other. There was antagonism between the two forces, with the individual trying to be as assertive as possible, and follow his dreams and aspirations, while the society tried to censor this individual, becoming a stumbling block in the process. Of the two antagonistic forces none of them was willing to compromise: the individual felt that his rights and liberties were being infringed upon, the community on the other hand felt duty bound to protect the common good. With none willing to compromise, a conflict of interests ensued, and was

exacerbated by the nature of individuated characters who strongly felt that compromise was a sign of weakness. To an individuated character, compromise is evil. The liberal individual is an autonomous being who is not willing to sacrifice his autonomy for the sake of the good of the community. This is in line with Freud's theory of psychoanalysis where some individuals have the ego being predominant over the id and the superego, as discussed earlier.

As observed in the discussion, we saw the individual in direct conflict with his community. Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) was in perpetual conflict with his community over the choices he made. He suffered stiff opposition on his quest to be assertive and follow his heart desires. His choice of course of study and even something personal such as a choice of marriage partner were vehemently opposed to. Even the way he used to spend his money raised conflict. But then Obi was a person with his own life to live, separate from the aspirations of the community. However, in trying to express his individuality he drew the wrath of the community. Eventually, this individuated character was alienated and ended up as a tragic hero.

A similar scenario obtained with regards to Ezeulu the individuated character in *Arrow of God* (1964). He found himself in sustained conflict with his community, again over the choices he made. Every decision he made was in bad faith and taste in so far as the community was concerned, ranging from his siding with Okperi a neighbouring village in the land dispute to the sending of his child Oduche to a mission school to get exposed to western education, and convert to Christianity. The final and most brutal fall out happened with Ezeulu's decision to hold the community at ransom by refusing to call the New Yam Festival when it was due. Definitely the community had a genuine cause to complain but only to the extent that they were looking at issues from a communalistic point of view. Ezeulu had very good reasons for making the choices he made if only his community could make an effort to try and understand him and appreciate his arguments.

Again, in *Bitterness* (2005), Besa, a liberal individual, was in conflict with his community. On one hand this character strongly felt that he had the right to decide his own destiny, while on the other hand there was the community with their communitarian outlook on life. The stage was set and well poised. None was willing to compromise and the whole narrative was reduced to one big conflict between an individual and the community.

All in all, the nature of the conflict between the individual and community was such that the individual was pitted against his community in a fight for supremacy. It was a question of the individual versus the people; individual rights and freedoms against the community good.

Objective Two (2): To interrogate the causes of the conflict between the individual and the community.

i) Western Education

As discussed in chapter four, western education proved to be a disruptive force to communal values. Once certain individuals were exposed to this type of education, they began to question and challenge African traditional and cultural practices, which they openly embraced prior to their exposure to western ideals and values. We saw this in Obi, for example, in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and Besa in *Bitterness* (2005). Obi to start with, got exposed to western education at university level. He underwent a transformation and came back to challenge some Ibo cultural and traditional practices such as the concept of *osu*. He strongly felt that the idea was unscientific and belonged to the dark ages. However, his community which did not have the privilege to get the exposure he had did not see the issue from that perspective, hence the conflict.

Obi's exposure to western ideals such as the individual rights and freedoms during his studies and stay in England made him a changed person. He began to be assertive about his rights such as the right to marry a woman of his choice. He began to detest intrusion into his private life and being the individuated character that he was, he could not allow that to continue, thus leading to conflict with his community.

In the same vein and measure, the transformative power of western education had an impact on Besa, the individuated character in *Bitterness* (2005). He got exposed to Marxism at university and began to question some of the injustices of the regime in power. That put him on a collusion path with the government authorities, leading to his arrest. Besa also challenged some of the cultural and traditional practices such as arranged marriages.

ii) Christianity

The advent of Christianity was yet another cause of conflict between the individual and the community. There was conflict between Christian religious practices and beliefs on one hand, and African cultural and religious practices on the other. The white man came with Christianity and some became converted to the new religion. However, for thousands of years the Africans had been practising their own African religions characterised by spiritism, and the worship of the dead ancestors. Converts to the new religion such as Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and Oduche, Ezeulu's son, in *Arrow of God* (1964) began to challenge some traditional and religious beliefs such as the concept of *osu*, and the holding of the royal python to be sacred, as has been discussed. They began to challenge some of these African religious practices and labelled them pagan practices leading to conflict with their communities.

Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), for example, was in serious conflict with his father over his choice of a marriage partner, Clara, a woman believed to be possessed by some evil spirits. To resolve the issue, he tried to appeal to him using Christian values and beliefs. He told him, "I don't think it matters. We are Christians. [. . .] The bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free" (Achebe, 1960: 120). However, his father still maintained that the African cultural and traditional practice regarding the concept of *osu* should still be respected, regardless of the fact that he had converted to Christianity. This is a clear case of conflict arising from differences between Christianity and the African traditional religion.

Similarly, part of the conflict in *Arrow of God* (1964) arose because of antagonism between Christianity and the African religion that was being practised by the Ibo people. Ezeulu, the main character, allowed his son Oduche to convert to Christianity, a move that was heavily criticised by the majority of the community. The criticism steamed from the fact that Ezeulu, as a very high ranking African religious leader was expected to be exemplary in his behaviour, and not allow his son to become a Christian convert. In his overzealousness, Oduche ended up committing a sacrilege, as discussed earlier.

Likewise, in *Bitterness* (2005) there was conflict between Besa's mother and her husband Musunga Fyonse, a custodian of the people's African religion, arising from their different religious persuasions. She converted to Christianity and confronted his husband to abandon the African religion and become a Christian as well. She told him, "We need God and Yesu Klistu. [. . .] Worshipping skulls of your ancestors will lead us nowhere" (Katulwende, 2005:

71). Certainly, religion was at the core of that conflict. Musunga even contemplated divorcing his wife just because of that difference in religious persuasion.

From the discussion above, it can safely be said that there is evidence that Christianity was a source of conflict in African societies as reflected in African literature. Christianity was a disruptive and divisive force to the communalistic African society. Africans had their own religions which bound the people together. Some of the individuated characters in this study converted to the new religion leading to conflict between themselves and their communities.

iii) The Generation Gap

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000), the generation gap refers to “differences in attitudes or behaviour between young and old people that causes a lack of understanding.” This means that the young and the old tend to see issues from different perspectives leading to conflict. In two of the three primary texts there is evidence of conflict that arose from differences in perceptions due to age differences. *Obi in No Longer at Ease* and *Besa in Bitterness* were both young men. On the contrary, the people who were in conflict with these individuated characters were elderly people, well advanced in years and experience in life. They were conservatives while the young men and women embraced modernity, which as discussed in chapter four according to Therbon (1995: 4) is associated with words like “progress, advance, development, emancipation and liberation.”

In *No Longer at Ease*, (1960), the president of the Umoufia Progressive Union told Obi, “You are very young, a child of yesterday. You know book but book stands by itself and experience stands by itself” (Achebe, 1960: 74). Because the president of the union was advanced in years he felt that Obi, as a young man had to listen to his advice and take it without question or objection. In essence, what he was saying was that Obi knew very little simply because he was young and as such was likely to make error of judgement, and should therefore have taken advice from an elderly person like himself to avoid some pitfalls of life. On the contrary Obi was more concerned about his liberty.

A similar kind of conflict was obtaining in *Bitterness*, (2005), where age difference was taken as a factor, with the old thinking that they were better placed to give counsel to the young ones. Bwaale, Besa's uncle in trying to persuade him to marry Chama in an arranged

marriage, and not Shantiee, told him, “ A child who is well cultured must be slow to speech when talking to his elders and he must do as they say since fire surrounded by elders does not burn. [. . .] Are we suddenly without sense and you a child, born only yesterday have become wise and deaf to what we are saying?” (Katulwende, 2005: 238) Again, just like the case was in *No Longer at Ease*, (1960), it was evident that Bwaale felt that being older he was right because he belonged to a different generation from that of Besa.

iv)The Nature of Individuated Characters

The study revealed that the nature of individuated characters themselves was on its own a source of conflict. Individuated characters tended to be assertive and unwilling to compromise even when doing so seemed to be the right thing to do. They insisted on having their way and viewed compromise as a weakness on their part, making some members of the community describe them as being arrogant and strong headed. But their stance created real problems and conflict especially living in communities that valued communal ties. They looked at issues from the individualistic point of view with their own goals and aspirations being paramount to those of their communities. Societal intrusion into their private lives was considered exploitative and unwarranted. Anything other than what benefited them directly was viewed as inimical to their personal development.

As observed by Gauthier (1992), “the liberal individual has her own independent concept of the good” (1992: 154). This means that if they are to consider anything as being good it should be the kind of good that they appreciate themselves and recognise as such. According to Freud (1924), in his theory of Psychoanalysis certain individuals have their Id-the pleasure principle dominant over the Ego, which deals with reality, and the superego, the morality principle, as discussed earlier. Individuated characters fall in this group of individuals. They are more concerned about their own good and less about the good of the community. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are anti-social. They can and do participate in communal activities but only if those activities are mutually beneficial to both the individual and the community. In *No Longer at Ease* (1960), for example, Obi used to participate in the activities of the Umoufia Progressive Union. However, the moment he realised that the union was being dictatorial and wanted to infringe upon his rights to marry a

woman of his choice he stopped attending union meetings. He could no longer contribute to a cause which was not beneficial to him and in fact inimical to his well-being (Achebe, 1960: 75).

Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) was an individuated character who was very assertive and an independent thinker. As the study showed he was a man who did not shy away from confrontations and would go to great length to ensure that he expressed his individuality. He never wanted to concede as having been in the wrong, and his community right. The incident in which his son Oduche committed an abomination by putting the sacred python in a wooden box gives testimony to that. He and his son were definitely in the wrong and he should have been remorseful. However, Ezeulu never did that. Instead he was as defiant as ever as evidenced by his reply to Ezidemili who wanted to find out what he would do to correct the situation (Achebe, 1964: 54). Ezeulu was definitely in the wrong but for him to admit that fact and apologise would have, from his point of view, been a sign of cowardice and weakness. The conflict could have been ameliorated had he been magnanimous enough to do so.

As has been seen, the nature of the individuated characters themselves whereby they did not want to compromise and concede even when doing so would have been the easy way out tended to fuel conflict.

v) Lack of Effective Communication

That effective communication is a bedrock of all human development cannot be over emphasised. This sentiment is shared by scholars such as Littlejohn & Foss (2011). This research has revealed that in all the three primary texts, lack of effective communication exacerbated the conflict between the individual and the community. Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), for example, was not told why his community wanted him to study law. He also did not make an effort to explain why he chose to study English and not law. Without effective communication, the individual ended up in conflict with his community over the choice of a career. That could have been averted had there been effective communication.

Again, in the same novel, members of Obi's community thought that he was highly paid but extravagant, hence his always being in financial challenges. He ended up buying a very expensive car which he could ill afford, for the sake of keeping up appearances. His financial situation deteriorated even further as maintenance of the car proved to be too costly for him.

By the time his mother died he could not afford to give her a befitting burial, let alone attend the funeral. Needless to say, the community was outraged by that. However, the bottom line is that there was lack of communication. Obi should have explained to them that much as they expected him to drive, he could not afford a car, just yet. He should have clearly explained to them his real financial standing, and what he could, and could not do to avoid very high, unfulfilled expectations. In the end he got himself entangled in a corruption case, leading to his arrest and conviction. All that could have been avoided with better communication.

The situation in *Bitterness* (2005), was much the same. Besa, the protagonist, failed to give his mother a befitting burial on the occasion of her death just like the case was with Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), because he did not have the means, and not because he was an irresponsible young man. He had just started working and had not yet been put on the payroll. However, his family members back home were not aware about that. No attempt from himself or the community was made to find out exactly what was happening. In the absence of that, conflict resulted.

In *Arrow of God* (1964), a similar scenario was evident. Ezeulu, sent his son to a mission school so that he could get exposed to western education and convert to Christianity. He wanted him to get exposed to the ways of the white man, so that in turn he could also learn a thing or two. He knew that the white man had come to stay, and that to effectively deal with him he had to be exposed to his ways such as Christianity and system of government. His intentions were good and well thought out. However, his community did not understand all that. In their ignorance, they blamed him for his actions. Had there been effective communication over the issue it could have been amicably resolved without acrimony.

vi) Conflict over Choice of Marriage Partner

As revealed in the discussion in chapter four, conflict occasioned by the choice of a marriage partner also came out strongly as one of the major causes of conflict between the individual and the community. In two of the three primary texts in this study, namely *No longer at Ease* (1960), and *Bitterness* (2005), disagreements over the choice of marriage partner were thematic issues. While the individual felt he had every right to marry any woman of his choice, and that marriage is a private issue between a man and a woman, the community felt that it had a role to play in guiding the young men who had become of age and wanted to

marry. *Obi in No Longer at Ease* (1960), faced stiff opposition from his community in his intention to marry Clara, a woman they considered unfit. They put up a fierce resistance, and in the end he had no choice but to give in to their demands. Besa suffered the same fate with his intention to marry Shantiee whom his people rejected. In spite of sustained opposition to his intention, Besa was determined to go ahead and marry the woman of his choice, leading to conflict.

vii) Conflict between the African Cultural and Traditional Practices and the Western Culture

The various causes of conflict between the individual and the community in the African texts that have been discussed in this study can be summed up as resulting from the clash between the African cultural and traditional practices on one hand and the western culture on the other. There is a very wide spectrum of these factors, as has been discussed. These include the very fact that Africa is predominantly has a communal outlook in its orientation about life, whereas the western world is highly individualistic in its approach.

Aspects of the African culture that some individuated characters found problematic include the thorny issue of arranged marriages that Besa in *Bitterness* (2005), refused to yield to, and the question of *osu*, in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), as was discussed.

Objective Three (3): To examine how characters who express individuality react to the manner they are portrayed in the selected novels

i) Unwilling to Compromise

It has been seen that individuated characters are not willing to compromise and give in to the demands of their respective communities inspite of negative repercussions they suffer as a result. Obi in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), as discussed in chapter four, stopped attending Umuofia Progressive Union meetings because he felt that doing so was no longer consistent with his personal goals and ambitions. That followed sustained opposition to the choices that he made such as his intention to marry Clara, a woman his community had rejected.

Similar, Ezeulu, in *Arrow of God* (1964), was not willing to show remorse over his decision to allow his son Oduche to convert to Christianity and get exposed to western education, contrary to the expectations of his office as Chief Priest of Ulu. Despite the backlash that he suffered, he remained steadfast to his conviction that he had made the right decision. Furthermore, the standoff that happened over his decision not to call the New Yam Festival,

when the whole community was on the brink of starvation as a result, speaks of a highly individuated character. The protest against his decision was enormous, and it even resulted in his loss of his son. However, Ezeulu was not moved. He remained adamant.

In *Bitterness* (2005), The protagonist, and individuated character in that novel, also exhibited remarkable resistance in the face of immense opposition to the choices he made. His intention to marry Shantie was vehemently opposed to by especially his father and uncle, Bwaale. Again, he did not compromise. He was ready to suffer the repercussions.

All these three highly individuated characters were not willing to sacrifice their individual rights and freedoms because they were characters with a dominant *Idi*, as propounded by Freud in his Psychoanalytic theory of personality development, which made them seek personal gratification regardless of the consequences. Their attitude was that of what is to be must be.

ii) Compromise

The discussion has also revealed a sense of compromise from individuated characters. Obi, In *No Longer at Ease* (1960), made a compromise regarding his intention to marry Clara, his girlfriend because his community was opposed to the idea. However, the compromise was done at great expense to his personal well-being rendering it counterproductive. That was an extremely rare occasion when Obi made a compromise on any of his decisions, or when his *Id* was suppressed. In that respect, he was very much unlike Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) who never compromised on any of his decisions.

5.2 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The main concern in this study was to interrogate and analyse the conflict between the individual and the community in African fiction as portrayed in some selected African novels, namely *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *Bitterness* (2005). That has been done bearing in mind that these literary texts, and others made use of as secondary texts, are a reflection of the African society where the community is supreme and individuation frowned upon. This has been an attempt to relook at the whole conflict especially from the point of view of the individual. I have deliberately chosen to do so because more often than not the individual rights and freedoms are regarded secondary to the

welfare of the community, in African fiction and society. This I have argued against and endeavoured to provide evidence that the individual is not a disruptive force.

In refuting the simplistic view that individuation is a foreign concept, and in advancing the argument that it is merely a concept more deeply entrenched in the western societies, this researcher has made use of thoughts by scholars like Avineri & De Shalt (1992) who argue that “both communitarian and individualist theories begin with the image of the individual” (1992: 3). This entails that the individual, whether in a predominantly communalistic society such as Africa or the highly individualistic western society, is the starting point in this discourse of who is supreme between the two.

Chapter one, laid the foundation of the study by among many other things defining the key concepts in this study which include the terms individual and community. It also, as stated earlier, refuted the assertion that the concept of the individual is a western one, but rather a concept more pronounced in the western world. More importantly, the study, while conceding to the argument that the sense of community is more prevalent, as attested to by the fact that there are more proverbs and wise sayings in African fiction and society that promote it, and much less on individuality, it advanced the argument that individuation is also a common feature. This aspect of African fiction must not be ignored but should be given just as much prominence because it is only when the individual rights and freedoms are guaranteed that an inclusive, just and fair society can be achieved.

The main aim of the study was to investigate the conflict between the individual and community in selected African novels, namely *Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1960), and *Bitterness* (2005). The overall research problem stemmed from the assumption that that characters who express individuality in African fiction are negatively portrayed. The study endeavoured to prove this hypothesis starting from the very fact that all the primary texts in this study had negative titles from the point of view of this study, and that all of the characters in these texts ended up as tragic heroes.

Still in chapter one, the researcher presented the theoretical framework on which the whole study hinged. The study was based on Psychoanalysis as propounded by Sigmund Freud (1923) and Analytical Psychology as espoused by Carl Gustav Jung (1923), a Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist, as the main theories. The study also made use of Cultural Psychology as propounded by Wilhelm Wundt (1924), as the minor theory. The choice of

this theoretical framework was made bearing in mind that both the individual and the community are elements of human behaviour.

In chapter two, the researcher presented literature review which revealed that most scholars who carried out research on the topic of the conflict between the individual and the community merely reinforced the view that the community is supreme. That can be seen in the works carried out by numerous scholars such as Mbiti (1975), Menkiti (1984), Ulogu (2018), and Ogbonna (2009), to mention but a few. The romanticisation of the community and the downplaying of individuation is evident in their work. They did not go far enough to examine, interrogate and analyse the subject matter, especially from the point of view of the individual. They were quick to highlight the perceived disruption brought about by these individuated characters without trying to analyse at length why these characters behave in the manner they do, and try and study the psychology of individuated characters, hence the knowledge gap which this study sought to abridge by trying to get inside the mind of the individuated character.

In chapter three, I provided a synopsis of the primary texts. What came out so prominently is the conflict between the individuals and the community. The narrative was much the same in all the three texts. On one hand we had the individuated character who was a non conformist and would do anything in his power to ensure that his individual rights and freedoms were protected. On the other hand, we had the community members who strongly felt that the community and not the individual was supreme, and as such the individual must relinquish his individual rights and freedoms for the common good.

Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), and Besa in *Bitterness* (2005), were all engaged in perpetual conflict in their respective communities in a bitter struggle for supremacy, with the individual coming out worse of. Whereas the individual wanted to be left alone to his own devices and do as he pleased, the community was prescriptive and dictatorial and argued in favour of the politics of the common good. The conflict was real and sustained throughout the various narratives involving these characters, with far reaching repercussions for both the individual and the community, as was observed.

Chapter four provided an in-depth analysis and discussion of the primary texts selected for this study, with the secondary texts being consulted to provide additional information and evidence. What came out so vividly was the negative portrayal of the individuated characters.

Characters like Obi, Ezeulu and Besa all ended up as tragic heroes. They all suffered ridicule and molestation for choosing a path of life that was contrary to the aspirations of those of their communities. Like earlier mentioned, all of them ended as tragic heroes.

In the same chapter, chapter four, I discussed the causes of the conflict between the individual and the community with western education, Christianity, characteristics of the individuated characters, and the communal orientation of the African societies coming out as some of the overriding factors. Western education in particular, as also observed by other scholars like Swerdt (1994), exacerbated the conflict.

In the finale analysis, individuation is part and parcel of the African society as reflected in selected African fiction. Individuated characters provide an exciting dimension to the narrative as they have proved to be some of the most intelligent and innovative characters African fiction has to offer. A positive portrayal of these characters will help change the narrative about them.

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