

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature is studied for various reasons. It covers all aspects of human life. It is all-embracing and encapsulating. It contains artistic truth, which is better than historical truth. An artistic truth applies to every situation of life while historical truth appeals to a specific situation of life.

A quality of Akachi Ezeigbo which makes her fiction not just reading matter is her ability to knit life experiences into art. There is an effort to make the incidents as realistic as possible not just in context but in form and style. Prominent among her choice of techniques is foreshadowing and the use of the third person omniscient narrator.

A writer is a “righter” righting the societal “wrongs”. This is another way of saying that a writer is a watchdog to the society. He comments upon social happenings with the aim of improving them. This argument can be used to nullify the “art-for-art-sake” philosophy of literature. Art – for – art – sake perception opines that literature should be on its own aesthetics and not be mixed up with politics. In reality, literature cannot really be separated from human experience from the political, social, religious and cultural realm.

Literature is essentially a creative art. Hence, originality and creativity are the key words. Most of the ideas in 1 are either totally imagined (fiction) or partially imagined. Partial imagination is interplay of fact and art known as faction.

The generally accepted notion is that literature mirrors the society. But literature, as can be deduced from the present ideological trends does not stop at mirroring the society. It does more than mirror the society. It does not just give us the picture of our lives alone but goes further to suggest ways of improving ourselves. Literature is th private and public awareness given to both the individual and the society respectively through the exposure of the hidden or open truths that people seem to be ignorant of. Literature aims at affecting a change in the societal status quo.

Omotayo Oloruntoba -Oju (1999) cited in Ibrahim B.F. & Akande F.F, States that;

The term. literature may be used to refer to any material in written form or any other material whose features lend them to literary appreciation or appraisal... the term in a specialized sense refers to works of art in any of the established literary genres, prose, poetry and drama..

One would have expected Oloruntoba – Oju to have recognized the un-established and un-written genre (material as well in her definition of literature in order to make such a definition comprehensive enough.

According to Terry Eagleton (1983) Cited in Akande and Ibrahim (1997),

Literature is a liberating force, freeing us from the inherent shackles placed upon us by the society. Literary criticism is therefore born out of it struggle against a loss of culture and its feature becomes defined as struggle against the foreseen bourgeois stat and it's has no predetermined future.

All definitions of literature hang on essentially what literature looks like, what it aims at doing or what it is for or why it is the way it is or what it should be used for. Literature as a discipline is a spoken or written medium which uses languages, plot, character and setting to give us a picture of what our life looks like. Literature draws its strength from actual life. It deals with human life with all its complexities and difficulties. Literature deals with the Joys, Sorrows, Poverty, Plenty and above all death to which man is subjected and which is man's enemy.

The Literature of a particular community can be defined as the sum total of all works of imagination either in

oral or written form, in prose or in verse .which have helped to reflect and project the life and culture of that community in the three important areas of narrative fiction, drama and poetry. Literature, like all other art forms draws on human experience and tries to reflect the same and communicate it back to man in an ordered or artistic form. This is because the human condition is the reality known to most men and women and it is this reality that literary artists depend on for their writings.

Literature may deal with particular and contemporary events and issues or with attitudes and behavior in contemporary and particular situations. For example, Achebe's A Man of the People (1966) deals with politics and politicians in the early years of Nigerian independence. A very remarkable way of showing the despicable, ruthless and selfish politician of the period is found in the portraiture of Chief Nanga. Also in Nigeria, the events of the civil war of 1967 — 1970 are made memorable in for example:

Akachi-Adimora's The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002). These writing are varied accounts of the Nigerian civil war, a contemporary event and through them unborn generations will be aware, even if not of the full factual details of the war of at least the basic perceptions of the war.

Literature enlarges ones experience. Some texts will lend themselves to easy understanding simply because of the reader's actual experience. Hence, all definitions of literature boil down to and emphasize its nature, form and utility. These days, unlike in the past when the literature of a people is said to be the unwritten records of those set of people, the word literature is used to refer to a collection of historical, geographical and academic records such as personal essays, speeches, biographies and letters.

Nigerian writers generally appear to be more interested in recreating in the reader's mind, a whole traditional way of life, bringing out varying degrees a man's realities, by making use of frequent allusions to their people's customs 'and tradition. They bring on record communal activities such as festivals, ceremonies, ritual practices, beliefs, occupations and the co-existing nature typical of all Africans.

Hence, these writers have their foundations in the cultural heritage of their respective ethnic groups. Ernest Emenyonu (1972) rightly puts it thus:

In a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria, it is imperative that the culture and life-ways of the component units should be given full airing so that national sentiments could be built upon the foundation of understanding. In the same vein, Emmanuel Obiechina (1975) reasserts that "it is only by incorporating Nigerian tradition in our writings that make them Nigerian".

Finally, literature is a portrait of man and his environment held up for him to see by the artist, so that he can have profound reflections about his world view and general existence. Critics of literature must understand it's interdisciplinary nature for an intensive and extensive comprehension. Literature should contain ideology and also reflect the human mind. This is the meeting point between creativity and criticism.

1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS:

a)

Facts can be defined as concrete reality or actual reality or actual presentation of events that have historical record. The reality could be social, economics or politics. The rise of facts in the novel was necessitated when there came the need for the actual documentation of events that occurred in the life of the people in a society or the society itself. Example are autobiographies, Biographies, documentary. All these give the actual events as they occurred and are recorded down through an element of creative imagination.

A writer like Adimora-Ezeigbo has shown in her trilogy an attempt to understand her society and relate with it in the context of a global historiography that shaped the works of pioneer writers and which as has been

stated, is still unfolding. In simple terms then, the span of Nigerian literary history is still too short to evaluate the performance of writers on the basis of 'generation'. The task of periodizing, and indeed, of writing a comprehensive and reliable account of Nigerian literature is rightly that of a future generation of critics for whom compilations of the nature attempted here would function as data. Facts are real issues discussed in Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's works like: feminism/gender issues, *The Orature of the Igbo's and the Aesthetics of facts and fiction*. Akachi Adimora. — Ezeigbo in her *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996) emphasized on the issue of feminism. In *The Last of the Strong Ones*(1996) Adimora — Ezeigbo continues what Chinua Achebe had begun more than forty years (40) before with his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). He wanted to show;

That African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; ... their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty. They had poetry and; above all, they had dignity The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Igbo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them.

Achebe's literary portrait of the history and culture of the Igbo was limited to the extent that he marginalized women and neglected their voice. While Achebe thematizes the curse of colonialism with a view to men alone, and without a deeper examination of gender relations, Adimora — Ezeigbo is interested not only in colonialism, but also in gender relations on the eve of colonization. Unlike in *Things fall Apart* (1958), existing gender relations are not merely portrayed, but institutions such as polygamy and violence against women are put in a critical light. This double — tracked thematic orientation of the novel is also manifested in the narrator, who is commissioned by the inhabitants of the village "to preserve our tradition and guide our people back to our way of life before 'Kosiri' infested us with their presence" (p.82). In very concrete terms, she has the task of recording the life stories of the four Oluada, the "top women representatives" of .Umuga, who are also the main figures in the Umuada, the association of the daughters of Umuga. Later she is appointed chronicler of the colonial destruction of Umuga. The first person narrator lives up .to both tasks in the novels. By using the medium of literature for remembrance, she puts herself in the oral narrative tradition, to which the first-person narrator herself refers when she names "the family historian, the storyteller and the custodian of tradition" in one breath (p.83). This goes along with the fact that the narrator tells the story in an oral narrative style. Ezeigbo manages to imitate conventions of spoken language, so that when reading one has the impression that one is hearing the novel rather than reading it.

b) FICTION

Fiction is an abiding social beauty, the expression of human activities in written words; the expression and the impression of the people who have created it; it is the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experience of individuals.

The novel reflects actual human experience narrated in a straight forward manner. While reading any novel, the reader might feel that he is reading about his own character or about his neighbors. This kind of reading is purely for enjoyment, leisure and probably to while away time, Besides, since prose is a narrative form, it becomes more accessible to the reader than other genres of literature especially in the African setting where the culture involves storytelling techniques.

Here, the literary artist is able to use very effectively, I for communicative purposes through imagination and

creativity. And basically, the novel can be classified into fiction and non — fiction. Fiction in opposition to non — fiction is the prose from which the elements are based on mere creative imagination of the artist rather than the real life situations presented by the non — fictional writers who are the novelists.

1.3 THE LAST OF THE STRONG ONES (1996) A SYNOPSIS

The novel is an imaginative reconstruction of the history of Uga, a town in South Eastern Nigeria. Woven around the lives of four influential women who flourish alongside their male counterparts in the leadership of their town, the story relates the struggle of a people to free their community from the clutches of meddling British colonialists, chronicling their experience as they resist a disruptive order that threatens their tradition and their humanity. Amidst the dramatic build up to an inevitable collision between tradition and change, the author embarks on a journey of role re- evaluation and redefinition of womanhood within the context of the Igbo culture.

Following the footsteps of Nigeria's first female novelist, Flora Nwapa, who protested the relegation of the Igbo woman in a patriarchal society in her works *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1968), Ezeigbo's work is a reaction to the unacceptable socioeconomic situation of Igbo women in particular and Nigerian women in general, under colonial rule.

Like other Novelists in the womanist genre, Ezeigbo is preoccupied with the struggle for change, consciously expressed in the different forms of protest. In the case of The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) however, the author chooses to reconstruct the social realities of the Umuga community by entrenching women in active leadership roles alongside their male counterparts. This can be seen as a deliberate insistence on positive Igbo Heroines as a means of drawing attention to the importance and relevance of the woman's voice, despite tradition.

Thus, by tracing the history of the Umuga community through the voices of women and reconstructing the transition process via women's experiences, pains and emotions, the author protests the one sided presentation of gender roles in the writings of men which overlooked the militant role of women in the struggle against Colonialism (C.F. Nina Mba 1997).

Adimora Ezeigbo, through her fictional novels enlightens her readers on issues concerning her society. Social realities are entailed in her works, these issues are facts.

1.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTS AND FICTION.

Literature teaches moral lessons to man. A lot of lessons can be learnt from various works of literature. This is what we mean by didacticism. At the same time, literature is a source of entertainment. It is a known fact that man is always facing one problem or the other, because of the complexity and multiplicity of human problems. Human mind is most of the time being troubled. Literature can be used to heal the mind. This is what we mean by psycho-therapeutic function of literature. One should not forget to mention the fact that literature can be used to promote culture. Through it, we are exposed to the norms and values of various human societies.

Recently, I asked my sisters to make their biodata available to me as soon as possible, to write down facts about their lives that I might include in the family book. I believe I should also put together facts about my life that can go into the book. What is fact? And what is fiction? Can a line be really drawn between the two? I often think that the line between fact and fiction is blurred. What about the myths that society surrounds itself with? Is myth fact or fiction? People create myths to explain the unexplainable, the unknowable. In my family, we have our myths, just as Umuga has her myths (p.368).

The above excerpt by the author, explains that facts are real events and happenings in her life. Through her short stories and novels, the author tells us about her family background and childhood in 'The Blind Man of Ekwulu'. She also tells us 'The War's Untold Unstory': The challenging years of youth and also through her short story 'Agarachaa', She writes on the fact of the memories of her youth. However, 'The life out there' tells us the single and searching days of the author. In 'The life out there', the author writes on the strict, stern and constraining background in which she grew:

My parents were strict with us... I was a subdued child and quick in obeying whatever rules my parents laid down. One of those rules was that we were never to have boyfriends. I remember the day a boy posted a letter to our house without my knowledge and it got into my father's hand. He read it and threatened to give the letter to the principal of my school and even to stop my education. You can imagine how I lost my patience with the boy upon my return to school. I warned him never to write such letters to me again... (Wov: 18).

Ezeigbo also wrote about her marriage and family life in 'A Day to Remember' (Rituals and Departures). It tells us about the author's early marriage while in school and her first pregnancy.

Ezeigbo in her trilogy puts all these short stories together to produce a bigger novel. The writer is seen in the character Nnenna. She is a lecturer and a writer.

'...She was happy; she was free from lectures, from supervision of projects and dissertations' (COE: 343).

Ezeigbo in her literary works tells her readers the story of her life, family and children. She makes use of the novel because it gives her an avenue to depict fictional characters that represent her in her works. These events in her works are real but told as stories to entertain her readers and show her skill in writing.

1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research study will address itself to the way people tend to see fictional works. People see fictional works as being fictitious but they are over laid with fact. This study using Akachi Adimora – Ezeigbo's works as guide, will demonstrate the impact of the intermeddling of fact with fiction in literary works.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This research work will make use of the sociological theory. This theory is adopted for this study because Ezeigbo's two works; The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002) are centered on literature and the society. Sociological theory relates arts to the society. This is virtually important because literature cannot exist without the society. This study will also make use of the Socialist realism theory as a branch of sociological theory.

1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY AND LIMITATION

This research work titled Facts and fiction in Akachi Adimora — Ezeigbo's The Last of the strong Ones (1996 and Children of the Eagle (2002), will begin with facts and fiction in literature. The researcher will limit this study to areas of Orature, Feminism /Gender issues and Aesthetics concerning Ezeigbo's works. This study is supposed to contain, broader aspects of facts and fiction. But due to time and space, this study will limit itself to the study of facts and fiction in Ezeigbo's two works. The researcher's inability to interview Akachi, personally due to distance of learning is a limitation. Ezeigbo is a new writer. This fact led to difficulties in getting materials for the research work. This research work will pioneer criticism on the novelist.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION

This research work is carried out on Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's works because she ranks among the most

out — spoken and prolific writers of modern times who use their literary works to challenge colonialist literatures and also African men's literature. Akachi's two works, The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002) are used for this study because the author infuses oral narratives of Igbo land. By adapting oral narrative devices, Adimora Ezeigbo decolonizes or, to be more precise, appropriates the Western' based and determined novel and short story genre. This topic was chosen by the researcher because little has been done on Facts and Fiction in Ezeigbo's The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002). The research will find out the realities in Ezeigbo's fictional works. This research is carried out on Akachi because her novels have won awards and also because she is an award winning writer. She has won four major literary awards. She has also won several academic awards.

1.9 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research will exhibit that literature contains fact and fiction. They do not always obstruct each other and when harnessed depending on the ingenuity of the artist they can serve multiple purposes This study will show how Ezeigbo through her works reenacts the evolution of modern Nigeria from the era of colonial incursion to the present. Ezeigbo's works show with priority the role of women in the making of national history. Ezeigbo's maturation in her literary writing will be exhibited in this research work.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapter one of this work covers the introduction to literature. It explains the definition of terms and it's relationship. It also shows the research problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study and limitation, justification and methodology.

Chapter two of this research work contains the literature review. It entails the role of the Nigerian writer, issues related to Ezeigbo's works and the use of oral literature in Ezeigbo's fiction.

Chapter three of this study titled "Facts and Fiction in Akachi's The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002)", looks at the realities in Ezeigbo's fiction.

Chapter four of this study covers the "Aesthetics residues of facts and fiction; An example of Akachi's The Last of the Strong Ones (1996) and Children of the Eagle (2002)".

Chapter Five is the summary of findings and conclusion of the research work.

FACTS AND FICTION IN AKACHI ADIMORA – EZEIGBO'S CHILDREN OF THE EAGLE AND THE LAST OF THE STRONG ONES

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