

Intersection of Okonkwo's Tragic Fate and Communal Fate in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Every discourse of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* aiming to view the tragic dimension of it will never be complete without the reference to the idea of man's feeble struggle against superior forces that have resolved firmly to incapacitate him to the point of death or *near death* situation. Very few to none of these readings have attempted to trace how Okonkwo's errors intersect with Umuofia's negligence over serious issues bothering on the maintenance of the metaphysical order, an intersection of two different tragic situations that have generated a situation far too great for Okonkwo to handle. It is this issue that this reading sets out to examine. This study deploys Louis Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory and tragedy as critical frameworks to achieve its aim and objectives. This study locates the hand of Okonkwo's *chi* in his tragic journey/fall. It is premised on the assumption that this *chi* on a higher level of abstraction doubles as Okonkwo's tragic fate, and that it is this same phenomenon that leads Okonkwo into actions that place him in stiff opposition against the potent forces that ruin him. It is also in that sense that the folktale is torch lighted as a formative pool of wisdom, which Okonkwo disdains and abhors greatly.

Keywords: *Tragedy, Chi, Intersection, Okonkwo, Things Fall Apart, Metaphysical Order.*

INTRODUCTION

Indubitably, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has garnered many critical attention to itself, many of which have been directed towards Okonkwo as a tragic figure. Of course, the identity of the work as tragedy is what offers Okonkwo a sufficient space to exist as a tragic hero. On the nature of the novel itself as tragedy, scholars have failed to reach a resolution. Abiola Irele sees it as a historical tragedy (1970), while Afam Ebeogu (1983) views it as an Igbo tragedy. Some others, like Bruce Macdonald (1980), insist that the work does meet up with the demands of Aristotelian tragedy. Alastair Niven (1990), in his assertion, believes that the work succeeds as a modern tragedy (Niven cited in Richard Begam 398). Many others have appraised it as a historical chronicle of a period in the life of Umuofia which has witnessed an apocalyptic clash between their culture and that of an alien European culture. Some of these readings have resorted to the 'basest' form of what Louis Rosenblatt has characterised as "the efferent mode" of reading. Hence this study will critically engage this widely read text in the light of Louis Rosenblatt's and Wolfgang Iser's Transactional reader-response models to show the intersection between Okonkwo's tragic fate and Umuofia's fatal flaw.

Patrick C. Nnoromele consents to the view that Okonkwo's ordeal is both "due to his character weaknesses" as well as "the fragmentation of the Umuofia society and the destruction of its cultural values by the colonial powers." He, however, believes it is too limited to be considered from only these two standpoints. He then goes on to argue that "Okonkwo's downfall is not necessarily due to weaknesses in character or departed African glories but rather

is a function of heroism in the cultural belief system of the Igbos” (146-147). Diana Akers Rhoads in his reading avers that, though a somewhat sociological tone, Achebe “represents the cultural roots of the Igbos to provide self-confidence, but at the same time he refers them to universal principles which vitiate their destructive potential” (61).

The Reader Response Theory and the Making of Meaning

Engaging Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* in the light of Reader-response yields great results. Many of its theorists like Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, among others, have continued to show that there is no one-size-fits-all way of engaging literary texts. The bulk of their arguments are based on the premise that each of these ways of engaging literary texts depends partly on what each individual reader brings to the table, in the forms of gained experiences, critical skills, cultural background, and so on. This does not, in any way, cancel out the role the text itself plays in the production of meaning, since the very notion of transaction includes both the reader and the text in the meaning-making event.

Louise Rosenblatt’s postulations on Reader Response Theory ‘drew upon the epistemological constructs from pragmatic philosophy which challenged the age-old assumption of the importance of the text over the reader’. Every time a reader experiences a work of art, it is in a sense created anew. Fundamentally, the process of understanding a work implies a recreation of it,’ (Rosenblatt, 1976, qtd in Corcoran, p.16). Rosenblatt’s view stands clearly as a reaction against the Formalist or New Criticism’s approach of arriving at a meaning in the study of creative works. Her transactional opinion foregrounds the interconnectedness of reader and text in the process of meaning making. Rosenblatt’s ‘transactional’ view required attention to the words of the text and also “assumes an equal closeness of attention to what that particular juxtaposition of words stirs up within each reader.” (Corcoran, 1987:38) It is this stirring within the researchers that dilienate the intersection between Okonkwo’s fate with that of Umuofia in general.

Similarly, M. S. Thirumalai, et al aver that ‘Reader Response critics focus on the ongoing mental operations in the responses of the reader. Many modern literary critics agree that meaning in the text are the creation of a reader, hence there is no one correct meaning for all readers’ (1). This negotiation of meaning between the text and the reader (Rosenblatt 1976) resonates in our study of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. One of the products of this fresh transaction between the text and the researchers is the discovery of the intersection between Okonkwo’s tragic fate and the communal fate. This new reading is made possible by the application of Reader Response Theory which stretches the literary canvass well enough to accommodate ‘an attempt to grasp completely the structures sensations and concepts... in order to make a new synthesis of these elements... so as to evolve these components of experience to which the text actually refers’ Rosenblatt, 1976 qtd in Corcoran, p. 16).

Re-assessment of Okonkwo’s Tragic Fate

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is one of those canonical texts whose meaning will undoubtedly remain inexhaustible. And one of the very interesting things about this text is the dominant presence of the tragic hero, Okonkwo, who attracts and retains attention to himself as the text is read and re-read. As in Greek tragedies, Okonkwo’s tragic fate has been suggested from the beginning of the text. Okonkwo’s tragedy has a lot to do mostly with a certain level of disconnect between him and the spiritual world of the pantheons and ancestors that watch over and protect Umuofia’s physical world of the living. This idea has textual evidence, if one takes into consideration the belief system that governs these people. Just like what one sees in

some of Soyinka's plays, *Death and the King's Horseman*, for instance, intra- and inter-personal order among mortals depend on the maintenance of balance and harmony between the different segments that constitute their realities. The world of the Umuofia involves harmony and constant commuting between the world of the living and the ancestors. One of the textual pieces of evidence laying credence to this fact is stretched out during the burial of Ogbuefi Ezeudu where the narrator commenting on the masquerades states:

The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him clearer and nearer to his ancestors. (Achebe 97)

In the Umuofia society, any conflict between these two worlds can result in irredeemable calamities. The living engage in rites as ways of securing and retaining the favour and protection which the world of the ancestors and gods offer. The understanding of this relationship is very important to Umuofia people and has survived for generations.

It would have been very difficult if not impossible for Okonkwo's tragic end to be realised if his clamour for expression and overwhelming postures of strength has not barred him from this extraordinary pool of wisdom known as the folktale. And in as much as some postcolonial readings of this same novel examine Okonkwo's story as a chronicle of a mere apocalyptic cultural clash between Umuofia and that of the invading European counterpart, a critical follow-up on the narrative voice leads to its identification as a voice critical of Okonkwo and his mores which also include the extreme audacity in the neglect of the folktale tradition and implicatively its inherent wisdom as a culturally integral and formative instrument.

With this understanding, one will see the humorous and/or satiric gesture imbedded in the generous deployment of this same folktale in the narration of the tragic story of a man that has loathed and disdained folktales in his lifetime. The progression of Okonkwo's tragedy is sustained partly by his rejection and disdain of the folktale as a formative pool of wisdom. Instead, he cherishes "masculine stories of violence and bloodshed" (42). In *Things Fall Apart*, the so-called "masculine stories of violence" (42) are juxtaposed with tales of wisdom, safety, and adaptation. And the whole text itself could be seen as the placement of these two (masculine stories of violence and tales of wisdom and safety) on antithetical nexus. In chapter seven, the "masculine stories of violence and bloodshed" (42) immediately close in on the lesson-packed folktales. Certain instances and lessons from chapter seven suggest the origin and root of Okonkwo's tragedy, which has first to do with his rejection of the wisdom from the folktales and inability to maintain a balance in his views of ancient wisdom and strength, and also perhaps refusal to go beyond being just the "child" (7) who eats with Kings only by the virtue of washing his hands through quickly attained wealth and military prowess (7). That is why his exile and sojourn in his mother's clan reaches up also to the level of symbol. It symbolises yet another opportunity for Okonkwo to learn the traditional wisdom, which he missed growing up, from his matriarchal root which Mazi Uchendu represents.

Furthermore, the people hold the veneration of the unseen spiritual world to such an extent that even the idea of disobeying the injunction or challenging the unseen spiritual order is seen both as a grave error as mortals are considered to be very small and weak when compared to the pantheons of gods and the ancestors. Hence, the *nza*, a very small and fragile bird, is used as a metaphoric representation of any mortal who willingly places himself against the gods and ancestors. It is so with Okonkwo's case and tragically ironic too.

Okonkwo can also be seen on the other hand as “the *eneke-nti-oba* who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat” (Achebe 43). Following this sub-narrative of the tragedy of the *eneke-nti-oba* is the story of the conflict between the earth and the sky, the resolution, and the compromise reached. All these cautions and lessons are embedded in the folktales of the people of Umuofia which Okonkwo appears too proud and impatient to draw from. He lives and grows with the rashness of the very same bird that is later thrown by the cat up till the end where that same kind of rashness pushes him to behead the white man’s messenger. And instead of translating into a replica of Soyinka’s “superman” (Akwanaya “The Superman” 1), leading a revolution against the oppressors, he is left disappointed at that point where he has rashly acted to his peril on the idea that his kinsmen will follow up with similar action. Note that the unanimous gathering has only identified the water that is still ankle-deep yet to arrive at a consensual agreement on how to bale it when Okonkwo acted. The accompanying interrogation of “why did he do it?” (Achebe 163) signifies that Okonkwo’s approach has gone against the deliberate general yet unspoken agreement to weakness and resignation which Okonkwo is not cut out for. So, by acting before an agreement is reached by his people against the magnificent colonial socio-political *other* singlehandedly, he again assumes that mythological dimension of the over-conceited *eneke-nti-oba*.

Okonkwo’s life and tragic end are better understood as that of a man who lives his entire life immersed in an exercise in futility – an attempt to run away from his fate. He grows up, psychologically tormented by the presence of a father, whose whole life is everything he loathes and does not want to become. He continually distances himself from everything that has any vestige of his father. His sudden and speedy rise to valour is nudged by this same consciousness to distance himself from every likeness and thought of his father. His whole life is then, not just consumed by fear of being thought weak, but also the insatiable urge to display extreme strength, zest, and daring spirit. It is this continual move away from weakness to strength that sees him land into a sphere where he continually challenges the pantheons. A very good instance of this is the grave sacrilege he commits against the *Earth Goddess* during the *Week of Peace* by beating his wife Ojiugo for not serving his afternoon meal early. “In his anger, he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace,” (24) and even when “his first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading that it was the Sacred Week”, he refuses to stop. The explanation given by the narrator’s voice for Okonkwo’s blunt refusal to stop the desecration of the *Ani* here is his pride and self-will as can be deduced from the narrator’s confirmation that “Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess” (24). Here, just like in some other instances, Okonkwo places his pride, anger, and other personal emotions over every other thing else, including the gods and ancestors, who his people naturally hold in extreme regard. The narrator’s inclusion of “...not even for fear of a goddess” is an important footnote to the temperament and personality of Okonkwo and his level of value for the gods in general and the *Ani* in particular. This footnote, however, leaves a *gap* that has been ignored all along by most readers of *Things Fall Apart* and taken as an unimportant remark on the person of Okonkwo. This same *gap* attains greater prominence when we look at Okonkwo’s suicidal act from the traditional perspective as an offense against the Earth goddess. In Okonkwo’s case, it is better judged, indeed, as a deliberate offense, taking into consideration his status and level of understanding of the local culture. Among these people, this kind of offense is nearly unthinkable, especially if it has to do with someone of Okonkwo’s standing. This is because even in a case of inadvertent killing, it is adjudged an abomination that requires an atonement in Umuofia.

It is also common knowledge in Umuofia that one's personal god can lead one to death just by luring the person into a deliberate act of unforgivable offense against another deadlier god or forces. Okonkwo's tragic fate can be linked to the mischief and whims of his *chi* whom he willfully undermined at various times. At the peak of Okonkwo's ironic reversal, the narrator confirms that Okonkwo "saw in it (his misfortunes) the finger of his personal god or *chi*" (122). The more Okonkwo makes to run away from what he loathes in other men, the more he runs towards it. On page 104, the narrator reminisces on Okonkwo's tragic fate which is clearly linked to his *chi*'s opposition to his ambition.

It is, indeed, shortly after the time he makes that remembrance, referred to above, that his *chi*, humours him, like the Sea King in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* would do to Ihuoma, with a temporary agricultural success which is marred by the sorrow of Nwoye's rebellion (137). He overcomes that too through the help of his resilient spirit only to be dealt the final blow. This blow proves too strong for his resilient spirit which lacks the dynamism to withstand "a nay" by both his *chi* and kinsmen, who would refuse to go to battle because although they respect valour but they revered thoughtfulness. Okonkwo's inability to understand this, aids the actualization of his tragic fate. This weakness or flaw is buttressed further when he engaged in conversation with some elders at the death of Ogbuefi Ndulue. Okonkwo could not fathom how such a great maintained a just balance between the life of valour and life of restraint and practical wisdom. This balance, which Okonkwo lacked, wrecks his life in contrast to Ndulue's, whose burial rites mark a peaceful transition to the world of their ancestors (53-54)

In all, Okonkwo breaks the bond between the living and the ancestors, as his kind of death and being 'buried like a dog' (165) does not allow him any space in that world where those in the physical world can reach out to him for assistance in the time of need. The reality of this despicable burial is also part of what Okonkwo has struggled and worked hard throughout his life to avert, his father having already suffered the same ordeal. His becomes nothing far from the kind of internal futility in Oedipus' struggle to retract from his fate which only works to draw him speedily to it.

Communal Fatal Flaws

A very integral aspect of the life of the people of Umuofia is a daily consciousness not to offend the supernatural order or the metaphysical world. This explains the series of sacrifices made to the members of this *world* believed to provide security and sustenance for the members of the physical world. Not even the error of an individual is ignored as it is believed that the repercussion of an individual's error can escalate to reach 'cosmic dimensions' (Opata, "Structure" 81). It is believed that "if one finger brought oil it soiled the others" (Achebe 100). This is also what the Priest of the Earth goddess buttresses to Okonkwo while condemning his desecration of the Week of Peace, thus 'The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall perish (24).' Expounding on this fact, Opata explains further:

This incident portrays the closely knit relationship which exists among the different domains of the world of *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo's wife Ojiugo, annoys him; in consequence, he beats her during the "Week of Peace" and thereby provokes not only his household, but the entire society of Umuofia as well as the earth goddess. One event then triggers off consequences which ultimately attain cosmic dimensions. (81).

As long as the ‘closely knit relationship which exists among the different domains’ (81) of the traditional Igbo world of *Things Fall Apart* is harmoniously maintained, they are not expected to encounter any fatal problem.

Problems arise when the ties between these ‘different domains’ are severed. It is a fatal situation indeed. The damage is hardly quantifiable as it is similar to that of the ‘half-child’ in Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forest* and the fatal situation in his *Death and the King’s Horseman* brought about by Elesin’s refusal/inability to commit the ritual suicide to ride the king safely to the world of the dead – a situation which can be seen to be later salvaged by his son Olunde. These instances from these texts show the community as a unit; they also support the belief that individual members of the community can commit flaws that breach the harmony between the different domains, which is the physical and the metaphysical spaces. The act of *cleansing*, in Umuofia’s case, for instance, is a way of restoring harmony whenever it is disrupted. The fact that the traditional Umuofia community can sometimes commit *flaws* that they may not be able to correct cannot be overemphasised. One of the evidence from the text is found where a passing reference is made to when:

Ekwefi remembered the night, long ago, when she had seen *Ogbu-agali-odu*, one of those evil essences loosed upon the world by the potent ‘medicines’ which the tribe had made in the distant past against its enemies but had now forgotten how to control. Ekwefi had been returning from the stream with her mother on a dark night like this when they saw its glow as it flew in their direction. They had thrown down their water-pots and lain by the roadside expecting the sinister light to descend on them and kill them. That was the only time Ekwefi ever saw *Ogbu-agali-odu*. (Achebe 83).

Strong consideration of the above instance transcends mere optionality to a stringent necessity for any critic engaging it within the demands of the aesthetic mode of transactional reading guided by a kind of thought in concord with the thought patterns, traditional belief systems, and tangible realities of the world of the Umuofians. Thinking within the boundaries of the traditional ideologies and realities of the Umuofians is a better way of understanding their world and the problems they face. These things having been said, it will not amount to taking the criticism of this text “too far” (Frye 86) to situate Umuofia’s problem in their inability to negotiate order between them (the physical world) and “the metaphysical worlds” (Opata 78) or to control the “evil essences” (Achebe 83) loosed upon them. At this point, it has become impossible to de-link Umuofia’s socio-political apocalypse, which the textual Europeans are only used to achieve, from their *error* of forgetting how to control such evil essences from the potent medicines they have made in the past against their enemies. This forgetfulness may have been as a result of neglect or carelessness. These essences then, having lurked around for long, turn around to bite them hard. To say, therefore, that the phrase, “those evil essences loosed upon the world” (83), from *Things Fall Apart* echoes “mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” in Yeats’ “The Second Coming” is to emphasise a very important point. Their relationship has indeed transcended beyond mere intertextuality to offer a clearer clue for the understanding of one another.

The above (inter)textual clues, therefore, suggest that the falling apart of things in the world of *Things Fall Apart* is not an event initiated by the advent of Christianity or the Europeans in Umuofia. It is already an action in progress, an ongoing event, before their arrival; they are only integrated as catalysts in this process. Before their arrival, there is already an ongoing unresolved conflict between “the different domains” in the Umuofia world. This conflict is the kind greatly linked to offenses against the Earth goddess and the other sacred

order that govern the terrain of Umuofia as both a geographical and cultural space. It has already been said beforehand that to properly understand the Umuofia and Okonkwo, one has to draw from or think within the boundaries of their belief systems and realities. In Umuofia, the entire community can be implicated in an offense by an individual member against its “sacred order”. The community easily gets implicated, for instance, if they refuse to effect punishment for an offense against the Earth goddess. The advent and culturally apocalyptic activities of the Europeans in Umuofia is proof that “...if the clan did not exact punishment for an offence against the great goddess, her wrath was loosed on all the land and not just on the offender. As the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others (100).” One of such offences is the one recalled by Ekwefi on page 87, thus:

As they stood there together, Ekwefi’s mind went back to the days when they were young. She had married Anene because Okonkwo was too poor then to marry. Two years after her marriage to Anene she could bear it no longer and she ran away to Okonkwo... Okonkwo’s house was on the way to the stream. She went in and knocked at his door and he came out. He just carried her into his bed and in the darkness began to feel around her waist for the loose end of her cloth. (87)

This again is another instance proving that Okonkwo has no respect whatsoever for the cultural and sacred spiritual order governing Umuofia. This is not unknown to the divine order either, since it is one of its “mouthpiece” that proclaims in a cautionary tone earlier in the text: “I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors” (24). The growth of Okonkwo’s fame and wealth runs concurrently with the diminishing of his respect and impatience for both the divine world and unsuccessful men. A sexual affair with the wife of a fellow Umuofia man is sufficient enough to have incurred the wrath of the man’s personal god and the sacred divine order and set these “potent” forces on his toe over a lifetime. Also, Umuofia out of neglect condoned this abominable act for no obvious reasons. This unhealthy silence must have angered their gods and ancestors, thereby disintegrating the cohesiveness of their cosmology or metaphysical landscape gradually.

Okonkwo on diverse instances has felt the fingers of these forces only that he has mistaken them to be essentially that of his *personal god*. That is what is seen in Okonkwo’s reversal of fortunes, from his accidental murder of Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s son to the betrayal and departure of Nwoye, and then to his death. Okonkwo’s humiliation continues after his death as Nwoye “return(s) later to his mother and his brothers and sisters and converts them to the new faith” (122). Not even Okonkwo’s threat “to visit” (138) and “break their neck” if they rebel against him in death would stop them from following what he refers to as Nwoye’s “great abomination” (138).

Okonkwo’s fate over time has evolved into a situation beyond his control. It has commingled with the other irresolvable complexities wrought by the negligence and failings of those from “the distant past” (83) which, for instance, have left the Umuofia physical terrain with the dangerous “essences” from the potent medicines from the past which has come to stay with them. The more he attempts to run from or resolve these complexities, the more he gets engulfed in them. All those have worked together to generate a fatal situation in which the “personal dynamism” (27) required to combat it would be “far too great for the human frame”. It is within the catastrophic canvas where these complexes are splashed that Okonkwo’s tragedy too is located. His reversal of fortune takes a very unique outlook as it also involves some irreparable losses (137), a fact which is implicated in the statement, “...some of these losses were irreparable” (137). It also foregrounds the futility in the Okonkwo’s effort to make

reparation for them especially as these losses have been generated by forces far beyond his immediate control –forces which he has greatly upset throughout his lifetime till they have completed their resolve to push him to his fated end. It is in Okonkwo’s bid to repair the irreparable –irreparable because the force in motion has been set rolling by Okonkwo’s *chi* (something more than man) and some other concerned spiritual forces and never to be stopped by mere mortals– that he devolves into an eternal abomination to the earth (goddess) who he has always disrespected.

Another communal fatal flaw in Umuofia is their acceptance of the Christian religion into their villages. The acceptance of Christianity in Umuofia is more widespread and rapid than in Umuaro, judging from the fact that the headquarters of the church is located there. Umuofia did not do enough to prevent this new religion from coming into their community and as such unwittingly allowed *another god* to exist side by side with their gods. Obierika confirms their indolence and/or negligence that allowed the new religion when he said that ‘... he came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay (141).’ The Umuofia has this cultural practice of consulting their oracles in times of need to be properly guided on what line of action to take. But in the case of the advent of Christianity they failed to consult their gods but simply were amused. This act is similar to Okonkwo’s acts of neglect or undermining the prime place of the supernatural forces in maintaining a cohesively healthy society. It is only through this new religion that the Christian visitors can break the unity that exists among them and they did. Their inaction amounts to communal flaw.

CONCLUSION

This study has brought the tragic dimensions of both Okonkwo’s personal life and Umuofia’s communal life to the fore. It has gone ahead to prove that tragic situations can be generated both at the individual level (in Okonkwo’s case) and at the community level (Umuofia’s case). Tragedy often, and in this case, deals with the discourse of man trapped against something more than him (be it fate, *chi*, deities or any name to that regard), and we have seen how an intersection between Umuofia’s flaws and Okonkwo’s tragedy has drawn Okonkwo deep into a situation far beyond what he could have possibly handled.

Okonkwo’s neglect of the folktale has been shown to be his undoing, as the wisdom he lacks is the ones provided by the folktale. It is the deficiency of this wisdom that allows him the freedom to often disrespect the gods, his fellow men (especially those he regards as unsuccessful), and some of the sacred beliefs and customs of Umuofia. So, instead of him displaying patience and useful restraint when they are needed, he displays impatience and rashness which leads him on to his downfall. This study has shown how Umuofia’s careless neglect of their cosmology weakened their society over time. The *Ogbu-agali-odu* and other potent medicines that protected them against their enemies were neglected and abandoned, hence, they could scarcely withstand the European encouision which proved tragic at the end. Also, their taciturn posture in some instances when their social norms were broken contributed to the widening gap between them and their gods who suprintend over their land even in times of external aggression. This destructive damage done to the healthy existence of their society combined with Okonkwo’s fragrant disrect for the gods and the ancestors to bring both Okonkwo and Umuofia down on their knees before the Europeans. The negligence on the part of Umuofia towards maintaining their cosmological sphere and Okonkwo’s consistent pulling down of their gods and ancestors formed a credible intersection that propelled the tragic circle

that engulfs him and his society because a knife was put in what held them together and the center could not hold. These flaws of Okonkwo that intersected with the Umuofia's flaws generate the kind of situation which is beyond what Okonkwo could have withstood.

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