

Igbo prose writers and moralization: Thematic study of *isi akwụ dara n'ala, aghịrịgha and agwọ na ihe o loro*

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Abstract

*It is obvious that some Igbo prose works are moralistic and didactic in nature. They satirize some ills in the society and tend to pass one moral lesson or the other to the readers. But it is observed that many Igbo people prefer to read and study literary works written in English to those written in Igbo due to their apathetic attitude to the Igbo language and culture. Consequently, the moral lessons and Igbo cultural values presented in these works are not appreciated. This situation has motivated the researchers to examine the major themes and artistic features prominent in *Isi Akwụ Dara n'Ala, Aghịrịgha* and *Agwọ na ihe o loro*. To get about this, reader-response literary approach was adopted. The selected literary texts were analysed descriptively. From the analyses, it is revealed that the writers of the selected works mirrored and satirized societal ills in their works. Their aim is to raise the moral consciousness of their readers and enhance social harmony and development. This paper therefore submits that Igbo people, especially the youths should read, appreciate and show reasonable interest in Igbo literary works, so as to exploit the moral lessons presented in them.*

Keywords: *moralistic, didactic, ills, cultural values, development.*

Introduction

Moralization has been the focus of many Igbo literary writers. They have worked towards moralization of Igbo literary works. These writers have been inspired and greatly influenced by the didactic nature of the Igbo folktales. So, in their works, they unconsciously indulge in moralization. This is evidenced in the themes they present in their works. Some of the Igbo traditional stories present themes like “evil acts do not pay”, “greed is not good”, “orphans should not be maltreated”, “it is not good to disobey elders” etc. These themes are reflected in many Igbo literary works.

From some previous literary works that were studied, it is observed that the commonest of these oral traditional themes that is being exploited by these Igbo literary writers is “evil acts do not pay”. The reason is because most Igbo stories, both traditional and modern present good or bad characters, who at the end of the story are judged according to their actions. The stories of the major characters in the selected works are very good examples. In *Isi Akwụ Dara n’Ala*, Ada is presented as extremely bad and Chike, as extremely good. At the end of the story, therefore, Ada is punished while Chike is rewarded. Also in *Aghiriigha*, the major character, Dike is presented as a radical. At the end of the story, he receives a reward due to him. Similarly, in *Agwọ na ihe o loro*, the major characters, Mmanyeli and her husband, Udenze are presented as a very good character while Mbaali is presented as a bad character. At the end of the story, they received their reward accordingly. But unlike *Isi Akwụ Dara n’Ala* and *Aghiriigha* which centered on the negative impact of the war on

Igbo community, Agwọ na ihe o loro x-rayed contemporary issues which are prevalent in Igbo society today.

It is also observed that the events of the civil war provided some Igbo literary writers with theme to write on. In *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala*, Ubesie presented his experiences of the Nigerian civil war. Likewise, in *Aghiriigha*, reference was made to the civil war. Some of these literary writers use their creative works to satirize and ridicule societal ills. They aim at discouraging their perpetrators and enhancing social harmony.

Unfortunately, many Igbo people, especially the youths find it difficult to read and study some Igbo literary works. Some readers read these work superficially and approach them purely for pleasure. As a consequence, they are no longer motivated to exploit the themes and moral lessons presented in them. This is as a result of apathy they show on Igbo language and culture. However, this study examined the major themes presented in the selected works. Reader response literary approach was employed in the analyses. From the analyses, it was revealed that the meaning of any given literary work is dependent on the reader's interpretation and evaluation. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will help reveal the moral lessons and Igbo cultural values presented in the selected works and also rekindle the interest of readers especially the Igbo youths in reading and studying the Igbo literary works intensively.

Theoretical framework

Reader-Response theory emphasizes the relevance of the reader in the interpretation of texts. The theory rejects the notion that there is a unilateral meaning inherent in literary works rather it

holds that the reader brings to bear his own personal emotions and ideas in the interpretation of texts. These make the theory subjective and unique.

The origin of Reader response theory according to Dobie (2012:129) can be traced to ancient Greek orators. They are seen as the literary ancestors of reader- response theory. It is also noteworthy that works from other scholars according to Dobie; like Richard (1920) and Rosenblatt (1930) also contributed to the development of the theory. Richard (1920) in Dobie (2012) elicited responses to short poems from a group of students with the aim of the approaches adopted by each student. The study however did not culminate in a theory rather it formed the basis for what later evolved as Reader response theory. Similarly, Rosenblatt's (1938) titled "Literature as exploration" also contributed to the development of the theory. For Rosenblatt, a written work does not have the same meaning for all readers rather each individual brings in background knowledge, beliefs, values, cultural expectations and reading contexts to the act of reading. Rosenblatt avers that rather than view literary works as an entity that can be objectively analysed using clear cut literary criteria, literary works should be seen as an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of a reader and a text at a given time under a particular circumstance.

The theoretical assumptions of Reader Response theory following Ann Dobie are as follows:

- a. Highlighting the effect a work has on a reader and the strategies that produce that effect

b. Meaning interpretation is an act of reading hence, the ultimate authority is neither the text nor the writer but the reader.

c. literary work is an evolving creation due to the possibilities of many interpretations of the same text by different readers or several interpretations by a single reader at different times

d. the significance of a work does not lie in the meaning sealed within the texts but in the fact that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us.

The following procedures apply in Reader Response analysis:

a. Looking inside and around one's self for ways of making a literary work look meaningful

b. Examining the guidelines embodied in the text

c. Noting stereotypes, connotations, patterns, metaphors, fore shadowing, images etc employed in a literary piece.

d. Questioning the accuracy of the information given as well as the reliability of the characters who provide the information.

e. Remarking and highlighting information provided in the text in relation to what the reader already knows

f. Gathering all disparate pieces of information together so as to make generalizations about the text

g. Evaluating the extent to which the text elicits the desired response.

Reader response theory stands directly in opposition to new criticism, a theory whose proponents believe that meaning resides in the text and can only be accessed and understood through the trained eyes of literary critics.

Igbo prose writers and moralization

Many Igbo traditional stories are characterized by moralization. Their themes are didactic in nature. These features of Igbo traditional stories are very prominent in many Igbo literary works especially the prose fiction. The writers of Igbo prose works unconsciously engage in moralization as they write their creative works. This is as a result of Igbo oral literature especially the folktale on them. Undoubtedly, Igbo oral literature contributed immensely in the development of Igbo prose fiction. Godwin Onyekaonwu affirms to the above thus,

Another factor crucial to the development of modern prose fiction in Igbo is the oral tradition. One of the characteristic features of African novel in general and the Igbo novels in particular is that they incorporate some elements of the oral tradition. The West African writer, perhaps, out of sheer patriotism or the desire to maintain some cultural identity, make extensive use of the oral tradition... another major reason why

the West African writers continue to exploit the oral tradition is because it best recaptures the West African sensibility, consciousness and worldview (p. 37).

Most of these writers reflect the major Igbo traditional theme of “evil acts do not pay” as said earlier in their literary works. In some of their creative works, they present their major characters in opposite direction; good and bad characters. At the end of their stories, the bad character is severely punished while the good character is rewarded. Because these literary works are not created in vacuum, the environment of these writers informs and influences their psyche. Therefore, they always aim at employing the Igbo traditional themes in their creative works to criticize and correct some ill which are predominant in the society. By so doing, they contribute their quota for the betterment and development of the society. In fact, they serve as the moral conscience of the society.

Besides, it is also observed that some Igbo prose writers incorporate some Igbo oral forms, especially the Igbo proverbs in their works. This is to enable them bring out the aesthetic quality of their creative works. George Onwudiwe supports thus,

The Igbo language is a language that employs a lot of coloration to create its image and therefore to serve the function of communication. These colorations are drawn from the pool of its oral traditions,

and the proverbs (sic) stands out the most widely used” (159).

Based on the use of the Igbo proverbs by Igbo prose writers, some scholars observe that Ubesie makes extensive use of the Igbo proverbs.

Many Nigerian writers have exploited the proverbs to good narrative effects. But it is only Ubesie who dexterously expands the frontiers of the world of the popular proverbs embellishing them with new dimensions which add to the reader’s insight into his environment ... His proverbs do not just communicate hidden meanings, they broaden the reader’s knowledge of life in general (Ernest Emenyonu 2001:34). He highlights some features that distinguish Ubesie from other Igbo prose writers thus,

...Ubesie’s distinction as writer lies in his stylistic innovations and thematic realism. He brings a fresh awareness to familiar themes and discusses contemporary social and cultural issues in ways that show in the author an understanding of the varying alternatives that come with time” (33).

Ubesie is perceived as a humanist, an idealist, a romanticist and a realist. He is probably the most mature writer of Igbo novels among his contemporaries. He is not only perceived as an author who portrays cultural practices but also as a novelist who, in his themes x-rays the Igbo society, exploring human values that

would help re-shape our contemporary society (Peter Ezikeojiaku 2001: 47).

Peter Ezikeojiaku also observes that Tony Ubesie uses proverbs to describe the environs, situations and themes of his novels. Apt proverbs are used to vividly describe the environs and situations which provide the background to the actions of his characters... The author, like some Igbo novelists, uses proverbs in his writings which sometimes have specific central themes... Thus, by giving proverbial titles to almost all his novels Tony Ubesie's works are unique. There is no doubt that this device is a direct heritage from oral tradition in which Tony Ubesie was very versed (50).

Inno Nwadike in his view justifies Ubesie's use of proverbs thus, "Admittedly Ubesie's makes use of many proverbs in his novels. But he does so to illustrate his points, convince the reader and make his stories realistic and enjoyable" (2001: 73). One of the literary devices Ubesie is prominent and proficient in his use of Igbo proverbs. It is true that Ubesie could be guilty of overuse of the literary device, it is nevertheless obvious that he does not misuse them. He neither clusters (sic) nor uses them inappropriately (Godwin Onyekaonwu, 2001:120). Ubesie's use of proverbs-one of the major fatures (sic) of any good novel written by a typical and good novel written by a typical and educated Igbo man is the repertoire and good use of rich proverbs. Ubesie distinguishes himself in this regard above other Igbo novelists.

Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala* truly portrays a family that is destabilized by war and a marriage relationship that is ruined by a

wife's intransigence, in sensitivity to the plight of her family and her lack of moral rectitude (Ikwubuzo, 2012: 152).

From the views reviewed above, it is obvious that language is very crucial for communication in literary works. The use of proverbs is a prominent stylistic device that helps many Igbo prose writers, especially Tony Ubesie in projecting the themes of their work.

Textual analysis

As stated earlier, we employed the Reader-Response literary theory in analysing the selected Igbo prose works, Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara n'Ala*, Munonye's *Aghirijgha* and Anedo's *Agwọ na ihe o loro*. It is observed that the method of characterization by these writers is unique and this captivates the interest of the readers and makes them to be at alert and spontaneous to their narrative styles. Besides, the continuous flow of proverbs, especially in Ubesie's work helps to project the theme in his work.

In *Isi Akwụ Dara n'Ala*, Ubesie presents the themes man's inhumanity to men and a wife's infidelity and waywardness. The story revolves around the two major characters in the work, Chike and Ada who incidentally are husband and wife. Events of the Nigerian Civil war provided the episode and circumstances, as well as the incidents in the work. At the beginning of the novel, Chike's family relationships are presented as peaceful, loving and harmonious. Ubesie describes Chike as a wealthy man, who loves and cares much for his wife Ada. This is revealed in the following excerpt:

Chike ji ego. O nwere moto. O bi n'ezigbo ụlọ dị mma. Oriakụ Chike Ada na-aza abughị naanị n'ọnụ. O na-eri akụ Chike kwetakwa na ọ na-eri ya n'eziokwu. Ọ bụ gini ga-eme ka ya na Chike ghara ibi nke ọma, hụkwa onwe ha n'anya. N'uche Ada o nweghi. Ada nwere ihe niile nwanyi, na-atụ anya n'aka di ya ... (Ubesie, 1973: 18). (Chike is rich. He has a car. He lives in a good house. Addressing Ada as Chike's wife means something. She enjoys Chike's wealth and affirms it. What will prevent her and Chike from living well and loving each other? In Ada's opinion, nothing will cause that. Ada has everything a wife expects from her husband ...).

From the above excerpt, we observe that Chike is what every woman would want in a husband. He is what every mother longs to have in a son. He is every child's hope of a father.

Ubesie makes his readers to understand that other people notice the harmonious atmosphere that defines Chike's family and wish to be like them:

Dịka ndị nọ n'akụkụ na-ele ha anya si hụ ha, ha na-ebi n'udo. Ha anaghị ese okwu... (Ubesie, 1973: 19). (As perceived by other people, they live peacefully and do not quarrel...).

The circumstances of the Nigerian civil war bring a reversal in fortunes for Chike, disrupting his business, and forcing him to leave the city with his family. Unlike the women, men must restrict their movements in order to avoid being conscripted into the war. This situation impoverishes Chike. But women have no such fears. They enjoy freedom of movement and engage in

business transactions. Because of the freedom of movement women enjoy, Ada, Chike's, wife, engages in *ahja ataaki* "ambush trading" which Chike contributed meaningfully to and starts making money. Her business transactions bring her close to the soldiers with whom she begins to flirt. Overwhelmed by her sudden economic power, she begins to show disrespect towards her husband. She brings male friends into her husband without concern. She ultimately abandons her family and goes away to enjoy life by living on her own. Notwithstanding the situation, Chike remains courageous and goes to Ada's house to beg for food and to remind her that he is still her husband. Ada resorts:

Di gbakwaa oku (Ubesie, 1973: 115) (To hell with husband).

But later, she is evicted and returns to her husband. Chike and his brother, Okechukwu, strive to rehabilitate her but rather than embracing her family, she becomes more wayward and conspires to have her husband Chike conscripted in the army.

Ada's negative attitude and actions disrupt the peace and harmony that once manifested in the family. She mistreats her husband by flirting with other men. She starves her husband and her children because she has become the breadwinner of the family, and ultimately abandons them. She relegates her husband to the background, to the extent of asking him to wash plates and do other household chores before she will give him money and food for the children. These instances demonstrates Ada's failure to keep her marriage vow, "for better, for worse", breaking her relationship with her husband and validating the prophetic

statement made by a mad man immediately after they were joined together as husband and wife by the priest:

Ma ọ buru na ha abuo ejighi aka ha tosaa onwe ha (17) (if two of them do not break the relationship themselves).

Ubesie also describes her refusal to have her meals with other members of the family:

Oge agaala mgbe ya na Chike na umu ha na-eriko ihe onu dika ndi si n'ezigbo ezinaulo. Otu ihe kpatara ya bu na o bu Ada na-eweta ego nri (85). (Gone are the days when she, her husband, and their children used to have their meals together as members of a good family. Now the reason for this is that Ada has become the breadwinner).

The following statement becomes Ada's regular response whenever her husband, Chike demands respect from her:

I wetara ego garị ka o bu ego akpu ka I wetara? ... Di gbakwaa oku (86). (Did you provide money for garri or for foofoo? ... To hell with husband).

We learn that "Di gbakwaa oku" was a slogan commonly used by women during the war to cast aspersion on men and the institution of marriage.

Ada represents the lot of the women who only identifies with their husbands only when times are good. Ubesie comments:

Mgbe ihe di mma, ihe Ada na-akpo ya bu nna ya ukwu, ma o bu nna Chukwuma. Ma ugbu a, ihe o na-akpo ya bu nwoke a (Ubesie; 173: 87). (When the going was good, what Ada called him was her boss or Chukwuma's father. But now she calls him, this man).

Ubesie projects the image of Chike as an innocent man while that of Ada, he projects as a very wicked person thus:

Chike wee gbudo ikpere n'ala na-arijo Ada ka o nyetu ya ego ya na umu ya na Ada mutara ga-eji na-eri ihe, ma Ada bu igbe ego ahụ n'aka abuo na-ele ya anya... Ebe o bu na Chike ahula na ya agaghi enweta ego o na-aria Ada, o si ya mee ebere kunye ya nke bu osikapa ya nuru isi ya. Ndi be anyi onye o bula huru ka odogwu nwoke bu nani mma si sekpuru ala, na-arijo nwunye o ji ego ya luta ego ya na umu aka ya ga-eji rie ihe ghara ibepu anya mmiri, e kunye onye ahụ nwatakiri a muru oheru o nwere ike iji mkpuru akụ rupo nwata ahụ isi (p.122 and 124).

(Chike places one of his knees on the ground, begging Ada to give him some money with which to provide food for himself and the children, but Ada was holding the box containing in her two hands, merely looking at him... since Chike

has realized that the money he is begging for will not be given to him, he asks Ada to kindly give him some rice to eat. Our people! Anybody that sees how a handsome man of valour knelt down, begging the wife he married with his money to give him money for feeding himself and the children, without shedding tears from his, such person could pierce the head of a new born baby with a kernel nut.)

The climax of Ada's anti-cultural behaviour is shown in the following statement in which she is virtually ostracized by the members of her community:

Ada mechaara omume o mere ebe ahụ nke bu na site n'ubochi ahụ gawa n'ihu, ebe o bu la mmadu kporo ya aha, ndi maara ihe agbupu aso. Ndi okenye maara Ada chowa igbo ofo; ha asi, Chineke ekwekwala ka nwa ha nwoke luta onye di ka Ada, ma o bu ka nwa ha nwaanyi di ka Ada. Oha obodo akporula ya n'ubo. onye i kotaara maka Ada, o di gi hapu ya kowa ihe ozozo (p.144).

(The way behaved there was such that from then onwards wherever her name was mentioned, sensible people would simply split. When old people made incantations they pray to God to forbid their sons from

marrying wives like Ada and to further forbid their daughters from resembling Ada. The community spurned her like a taboo. When you mention her name to anyone he would tell you to change the subject).

Based on the principle of Reader-Response literary theory, it is observed that Ubesie indulges in moralization as he concludes the story. The commonest traditional theme of “evil acts do not pay manifests in his work. He gives account of how Chike and Ada were rewarded for their deeds at the end of the civil war. After the civil war, things take a new turn for Chike. As the war ends, he goes to Lagos to see the white man who was managing his company before the outbreak of the civil war. He is surprised to see that his business has grown during the war and that a large sum of money has been made and saved for him. He goes back to Enugu with enough money to start a new life. His family rebounds and they begin to live happily again, but without his wife Ada. While Chike is hosting people at a survival party, Ada, who has learned of his restoration to wealth, reappears with an illegitimate child/baby, looking tattered and hungry. She begs Chike to take her back as his wife Chike refuses, reminding her that he does not eat leftover food, and that *Isi akwụ dara n’ala edetụla aja* (p.205) ‘the palm head that touches the ground has been soiled’. With this Ubesie satirizes immoral behaviours among some women in our society today. He discourages infidelity and waywardness, among other societal ills which are prevalent in Igbo society today so that people will learn there from.

In *Aghiriigha*, Mononye exposes the moral decadence of the contemporary society. The novel is highly moralistic in tone and erotic in language. Munonye presents the theme of the adverse consequences of prodigal living, which is also very vividly put in the little of the book – *Aghiriigha* literally meaning radicalism.

The major character, Dike, represents the decadent society. All efforts to put the society in the right path of rectitude prove abortive and day by day the society moves close to the brink of horrible decadence. Dike, like the society that is impossible to purify, fails to take to the advice of his father and to the warnings of his conscience. When Dike's father, Ibekwe is advising him after his court case with Ego and Eliza, Dike attempts to justify his actions by saying that God created man and woman to mingle freely and that the English people move freely with their women unlike in Africa where such actions are forbidden by culture. In reply, his father asks him:

Bekee o bu nkita? O na-achi amu n'aka otu a isi achi? (Is the white man dog? Does he go about chasing women about with his penis as you do?)

In spite of the advice and heart searching talk and blessings given to Dike by his father as seen in chapter six, Dike, like a pig plunges back into the filth as presented on page sixty one to the first sentence of chapter seven:

Dike laghachiri n'ulo ya, chiri odu dum nna ya duru ya wunye n'ohia (Dike came to his house, and did away with all the advice given to him by his father.)

Dike immediately starts with Nnenna. It is true that this relationship costs Dike a great financial loss and also nearly cost him his life, he comes out worse off in the bargain. At the end of it, he becomes remorseful and attempts to reconsider his attitude contained in the following statement:

Mgbe Dike na Nnenna gbasara, mụọ nke Chineke bata n'obi Dike otu abalị ọnwá ná-etí, n'gá o díná n'ihu ụlọ yá anara ikuku. Yá wéré obu gbakọwá ego dum o tufurula n'ahụ ụmụ nwanyị wee chọputa na o ruola ihe karịrị akpa ego atọ na ụmá... Mgbe Dike chechara ihe ndị a, yá chọputa na yá azụọla ahịa abaghị uru. Yá wéré obi pịa onwe yá ụtari. Yá bido chewe na ihe ga-akara yá mma bụ ịgá chọrọ nwanyị nke yá.

(When Dike and Nnenna parted, the spirit of God came into Dike's heart, this was on one moonlight night, as Dike was in front of his house, taking some breeze. He calculated all the money he has spent on women and discovered that it was more than six hundred naira and more...After Dike has given thoughts to this, he discovered that he has lost in the bargain. He blamed himself within his mind. He started thinking that the best thing for him

to do in the circumstance was to go and get a wife for himself.)

This thought just fizzles out due to Dike's wanton and uncontrolled urge for immoral acts. Now Dike stakes for a married woman, Orijeji. It is this unholy relationship that costs him his life. One night, Dike and Orijeji are caught red-handed by Obioha, Orijeji's husband in his (Obioha's) bedroom. In a frenzy of madness occasioned by extreme provocation, Obioha grabbed his machete and slices Dike's head into two halves. The writer states:

Ara p̄r̄u Obiõha mgbe o jiri anya ya ab̄uõ h̄u Dike n'ime ụlõ ya. Ya sere mma ya, gbuo Dike, gbuwaa ya isi ab̄uõ, ụb̄ur̄u isi ya map̄uta, õbara jup̄uta elu na ala. Dike adaa. Orijeji tie mk̄pu, tie , tie kwa. Obiõha dakpo ya, were mma map̄u ya isi... (p.141). (Obiõha became mad when he saw Dike with his two eye in his bedroom. He grabbed his matchet, killed Dike, broke his head into two, his brain burst, blood filled everywhere. Dike fell. Orijeji shouted and shouted. Obiõha ran to her and cut off her head with his machete...)

From the analyses, it is observed that in *Aghirigha*, Munonye presented Dike as a victim of sexual in continence. The enormous moral lesson given by the writer at the end of this story is directed to the entire society and this goes to confirm that he uses Dike's life just like Ubesie uses Ada in *Isi Akw̄u Dara N'ala* and Anedo uses Mbaali in *Agwõ na ihe o loro*, to mirror the moral decadence of our society and the story itself to satirize and

condemn the moral malaise that has eaten deep into the various sector of the society, so that people will learn.

In addition, *Agwọ na ihe o loro*, x-rays events prevalent in present day Igbo environment. The novel focuses on witchcraft, its consequences and the fate of a witch. In Igbo traditional belief system, witchcraft is detested and frowned at unlike other cultures. The writer also projected the theme of evil acts do not pay” and law of retributive judgement as evident in other selected works discussed above. The story in the work revolves around the major characters – *Mmanyeli* and *Mbaali*. The former and the later are presented as a good and a bad character respectively.

Mbaali’s was presented as a witch while *Mmanyeli* was presented as a very good and kind woman. In the novel, *Mbaali* through her witchcraft activities dealt mercilessly with *Mmanyeli*. *Mmanyeli* really witnessed many mysterious circumstances and miscarriages in the hands of *Mbaali*. The climax of these mysterious experiences was the last miscarriage *Mmanyeli* had because of *Mbaali*’s wicked and witchcraft acts. Actually, this was the last stroke that broke the Carmel’s back. As a result of the loss of her pregnancy, *Mmanyeli* visited a Christian priest; *Ukochukwu Amade* with her husband, *Udenze*. The priest prayed for them and assured them that their ordeal was over.

As is often the case, wickedness does not go unpunished in Igbo belief system. The guilty is always punished. *Mbaali* was severely punished for her evil deeds. She carried the pregnancy she exchanged from *Mmanyeli* for three years and six months. She made frantic efforts to deliver the baby. She visited her witchcraft headquarters at Bini. They gave her conditions she would satisfy before she could deliver the baby. She made her

first son mad and sacrificed her second son before she delivered the baby. After her delivery, she died shamefully after public confession of her wicked activities. The author narrates:

Mbaali ahụla nụ na o nweghi ihe okelekwu ga-emenwu ite ọna, o wee gaa Bini nata ike ịmụ afo ime ahụ nọrọla afo atọ na ọnwala isii. A gwara ya na Bini na tupu ọ muo nwa ahụ, na ọ ga-ejiriri osote okpara ya tuo utu. N'ihia yaa, ọ lotara fee nwata ahụ ogwu e nyere ya na Bini nwa ahụ malite newe ka agwo, o wee nwuru ya tupu n'ezie. Nwa hu wee nwuo. Ma ọ nwughị na-asaghị asisa. Asisa ya, abughị ihe e ji ọnu ekwu... (p. 23).

(Mbaali has seen that there is nothing the rat can do to an iron pot, she went to Bini to be empowered to deliver the pregnancy she has carried for three years and six months. She was told in Bini that before she could deliver the baby, that she must sacrifice her second son. Because of that, she came back and hypnotized him with the charm she got from Bini. The child started behaving like a snake, she threw him out. The child died. But she did not die without confession. Her confession was nothing to write home about).

On the other hand, Mmanyeli and her husband, Udenze were rewarded for their virtuous acts. God finally blessed them with a bouncing baby boy after series of miscarriages. The following excerpt reveals that evil and good acts are rewarded accordingly.

Ọ gwara nwunye ya na ihe ji ha aka, ahapụla ha, na Chineke onyeisi agha ebuworo ha agha. Oge adighi anya, ụgwuru (sic) aloghachi. Ma tupu a ga-asị na ọ lawala Mmanyeli agwa di ya na ya ahughizi nso ya. Di ya amara ụma si ya na ọ rubeghi. Ha no na-ekwu na o rubeghi, o mee onwa iteghete, Mmanyeli amuru nwa nwoke isi kara aka tupu...(p. 124). (He told his wife that what was holding them has left them, that God the mighty warrior has fought for them. Within a short time, harmattan came back. But before it could be said to go, Mmanyeli told her husband that she did not see her monthly period. Her husband jokingly told her that it was not yet time. They continued to say that it was not yet time, it clocked nine months. Mmanyeli delivered of a bouncing baby boy.)

In the novel, retribution is very prominent. The above excerpts projected the major theme of the work to the readers and members of the society. Obviously, the writer employed his creative ability in satirizing witchcraft, which is one of the ills ravaging some members of the society today. Through this literary work, he warns the members of the society to desist from evil acts and adhere to the norms and ethics of the society or else they meet the fate of the guilty. By so doing, the writer has enhanced moral consciousness of his readers and the members of the society.

Conclusion

It is obvious in this study that Ubesie, Munonye and Anedo indulge in moralization in their works; *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala*, *Aghiriigha*, and *Agwo na ihe o loro* respectively, they fashioned their major characters either in vice or virtue, coming out at the end of the story punished or rewarded as the case may be. Their stories revolve around the commonest Igbo traditional theme, "evil acts do not pay" or "evil doer cannot escape unpunished". In *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala*, one of the major characters, Ada was presented as extremely bad person while Chike, another major character, was presented as extremely good person. At the end of the story, Ada was punished while Chike was rewarded. Likewise, in *Aghiriigha*, Dike, the major character, was presented as a radical and a flirt. At the end of the story, he was punished for his evil deeds. But unlike Ada, he paid with his life. Similarly, *Agwo na ihe o loro*, the major characters, Mbaali and Mmanyeli were presented as bad and good characters respectively. At the end of the story, Mbaali was punished while Mmanyeli was rewarded. Obviously, these writers have succeeded in using their creative works to satirize some immoral behaviours, which are prevalent in Igbo society today, so that the readers and members of the society will learn from them. Having seen through the selected texts, that Igbo literary works are rich in Igbo cultural values, morals and ethics, this study therefore encourages Igbo people, especially the youths to read, appreciate and show reasonable interest in Igbo literary works, so as to exploit the cultural values and moral lessons presented in them. This is hoped to enhance human transformation, human development and social harmony.

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