

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF PEACE: A READING IN  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S  
*THE TEMPEST* AND CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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**Abstract :** Through a critical analysis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, we intend to show how some characters' commitment to live according to the prescriptions of the supernatural forces in their societies, is mainly motivated by the will to conform according to male and female gender roles established by social norms and in the process, be in peace and harmony with their environment. In the selected works, a cult is devoted to some deities and to nature to promote peace and establish harmonious relationships between man and his environment. Besides, male and female characters strive to live in accordance with what roles their ancestors prescribed to both males and females. Our article finds that practices which consist in worshipping or behaving in accordance with nature's laws seek to guarantee peace to individuals in their respective cultural environment. We also find that respect for the supernatural has in one way or the other reinforced gender bias among male and female characters as portrayed in the selected works under study. Based upon textual analysis, the theoretical frameworks used to achieve our result are semiotics and psycho-analysis.

**Keywords:** supernatural, gender issues, peace, beliefs, worshipping.

**Résumé :** A travers une analyse critique de *The Tempest* de William Shakespeare et *Things Fall Apart* d'Achebe, nous avons l'intention de montrer comment l'engagement de certains personnages à vivre selon les prescriptions des forces métaphysiques dans les sociétés où ils vivent, est principalement motivé par leur volonté de se conformer aux rôles affecté au genre masculin et féminin par les normes sociales et, ce faisant, d'être en paix et en harmonie avec leur environnement. Dans les œuvres sélectionnées, un culte est voué à certaines divinités et à la nature pour promouvoir la paix et établir des relations harmonieuses entre l'homme et son environnement. En outre, les personnages masculins et féminins s'efforcent de vivre conformément aux rôles que leurs ancêtres ont prescrits aux hommes et aux femmes. Notre article montre que les pratiques qui consistent à vénérer ou à se comporter en accord avec les lois de la nature cherchent à garantir la paix aux individus dans leur environnement culturel respectif. Nous constatons également que le respect du surnaturel a, d'une manière ou d'une autre, renforcé les préjugés sexistes des personnages masculins et féminins tels qu'ils sont dépeints dans les œuvres étudiées. Basé sur l'analyse textuelle, les cadres théoriques utilisés pour atteindre notre résultat sont la sémiotique et la psycho-analyse.

**Mots clés :** surnaturel, questions de genre, paix, croyance, adoration.

## Introduction

While William Shakespeare is undeniably, the most acclaimed and canonical English writer, Chinua Achebe is well-known by many critics as the “father of the African novel in English” (C.L.Innes, p.19). Clearly then, while Shakespeare is highly central to English literature, Achebe is a best-known icon of the African literature in English. Even though Shakespeare on the one hand and Achebe on the other are separated by a time interval of over four centuries, Shakespeare’s England bears some similarities to Achebe’s traditional Igbo society in terms of the belief systems. In other words, the English and African communities though belonging to two different continents manifest similar forms of the impact the supernatural forces have on the characters’ behaviours, beliefs and life styles. It becomes obvious that the fictitious societies portrayed by Shakespeare and Achebe may be historically distant, but ideologically close from the standpoint of the supernatural and the individual in his community.

Many preceding scholars have identified relationships between the individual and the surrounding supernatural forces. According to C. Lévi- Strauss (1961, p.396): “it seems that humankind lives in two worlds, one which he or she may understand in action and the other only in thought”. Both these worlds can be related to the physical and the spiritual”. Such worlds are fictionalised in Shakespeare’s and Achebe’s literary works under consideration. In the context of our article, the supernatural is referred to as “something that exists beyond nature, or not subject to explanation according to scientific and natural laws; something that is neither physical nor material. It can be mysterious, imaginary or capable of generating unreasoning” (K.N. Usongo, 2011, p.33).

Despite the recent growth of research in literary criticism, the relationship between the supernatural, gender issues and the problematic of peace seems to suffer the misfortune of being taken for granted. Most previous scholars in the field have shown the relationships that exist between the individual and his community without a clear emphasis on how the supernatural impacts characters’ lives. In fact, being under the hold of supernatural forces and ancestral prescriptions, both male and female characters struggle to live in accordance with their gender roles in order to be in harmony and peace with their social environment. Commenting on the individual and his society, A. Sow (2008, p.284) in his article entitled “The Individual and his Community in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964)”, assesses “the extent to which Igbos favour self-fulfilment of the individual as a free element closely associated with the group they deeply belong to”. If it is true that our article will be working out the relationships between the individual and his society, it,

however goes beyond to elaborate on how some characters' endeavour to live according to ancestral prescriptions is explained by the fear for the supernatural which constitutes the whole pantheon of the fictive societies under consideration.

In fact, it is obvious that Prospero and Okonkwo strive to live in harmony with the supernatural which is believed to protect them. In his "William Shakespeare and Chinua Achebe: A Study of Character and the Supernatural", K. N. Usongo (2011) lays emphasis on how the use of supernatural or mysterious forces in the forms of charms, amulets, divinations, etc. impact characters' mind. It is worth mentioning that our article differs from the problematic dealt with by K. N. Usongo in the sense that it contends that beliefs in supernatural forces and their prescriptions promote peace as they generally shape thoughts and actions of characters. Shakespeare and Achebe resort, respectively, to Prospero and Okonkwo to highlight the richness and humanism of both English and African cultures. In both settings, individuals are in peace or undergo sufferance according to the relationships they have with the supernatural. Prospero's, Okonkwo's, and other characters' behaviours in the novels are inspired by the fear of gods who constitute the supernatural.

This cross-cultural reading becomes therefore important to show how the supernatural goes beyond borders but may function in the same way in different cultural environments. Again, A. Sow (2008, p.287) observes that: "In traditional Igbo society, the individual must act and react as his ancestors would in any circumstances. Ancestral deeds are the reference and jurisprudence book for society". This quotation which goes in line with our article clearly demonstrates that there are strong connections between the individual and his ancestors. In the same vein, R. Hooker (1993), believes that those people who deviate from the laws of society risk divine punishment, in various ways, for their disobedience. His overarching argument is that human beings, in general, strive for good behaviour as represented in the perfection of God. Consequently, the fear of retribution from supernatural agencies is common to both protagonists, an indication of how the supernatural can impact the human mind irrespective of cultural differences.

This article proposes to examine the relationships between the supernatural, gender issues and the problematic of peace. Concomitantly, we intend to analyse these supernatural features as to how they impact character, how they reinforce gender jeopardy, how they guarantee peace, and how they ensure morality and justice among people in society.

The theoretical frameworks used to achieve our results are semiotics and psychoanalysis. Semiotics is an investigation of how signs and symbols create meaning in a

text. Jacques Derrida, is one of its founding fathers. Discussing the psychoanalytic theory, C. Suprenant (2006, p.200) opines that: "Psychoanalytic literary criticism does not constitute a unified field".

The problematic of our article will be tackled essentially by textual analysis with a focus on identifying one after the other, scenes, episodes and facts from the works in order to show how characters' seek peace by living according to supernatural prescriptions. Our essay is divided into two sections. Section one entitled "Magic as Peace Making Art in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" shows how the supernatural impacts characters' mind and behaviour whereas section two elaborates on "The Individual and the Supernatural in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*."

### **1. Magic as Peace Making Art in Shakespeare's *The Tempest***

Peace takes in many elements such as quietude and order. Referring to peace in his poem titled "Invitation au voyage", C. Baudelaire (1857, p.79) mentioned many items that generate peace. According to him, peace is the consequence of order, beauty, prosperity, calm and sensual pleasure. This conception of peace indicates that peace is composite for, beauty is the consequence of order, harmony and hierarchy. While indigence should not exist for luxury is associated to beauty and the fulfilment of carnal desires. Prosperity and harmony have to fit the individual quest whence calm and sensual pleasure. As long as every individual of the society experiences the above mentioned conditions, peace is unconditionally there in the light of Ch. Baudelaire who conceives peace to mean more than the simple absence of war. In the same vein with Ch. Baudelaire, the United Nations Organisation posits that, "peace is more than just the absence of war..." subsequently, "United Nations officials today stressed the need for concerted efforts to achieve the common vision of a life of dignity and well-being for all."<sup>1</sup>

Within the framework of efforts that are requested in the process of peace achievement can be mentioned culture and its promotion. It consists in favouring the symbiosis between men and nature. The promotion of culture has much to do with traditional rituals, magic, and in some extend witchcraft that indorse harmony with nature and quietude.

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<sup>1</sup> - Peace according to the UNO, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/09/476992-peace-means-dignity-well-being-all-not-just-absence-war-un-officials#:~:text=UN%20Podcasts,Peace%20means%20dignity%2C%20well%2Dbeing%20for%20all%2C%20not%20just,absence%20of%20war%20%E2%80%93%20UN%20officials&text=In%20September%201999%2C%20the%20Assembly,on%20a%20Culture%20of%20Peace> retrived on 30/09/2021 at 14h10'.

Addressing the relevance of witchcraft amongst the Azande, (E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 1976), studied magical practices and the influences of witchcraft amongst the Azande where he shows the omnipresence of magic and witchcraft in the daily life of the Azande. According to him, the Azande magicians can heal mysterious diseases by their spells. In the light of his study, the power to have spirits intervene in people's life is an evidence of men's capacity to control the supernatural. In (M. Kandji, 2012) and (M. Kandji, 2014), Professor Mamadou Kandji has addressed rituals and mysteries in Britain and in Africa in drawing a link between supernatural beliefs through a comparative view of oracles, superstitions and magical practices in both spheres. He raises similarities between the British and African beliefs whence he advocates the universality of beliefs related to the supernatural.

The supernatural is a topic that shows up in many literary works. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is an illustration of interactions between the mystical and man through the depiction of Prospero the magician's exile and rescue. Magic is in fact, an art that has much to do with the control of the invisible world to impact the material world. In *The Tempest*, the dramatis personae such as Prospero and Ariel use magic to drive the plot forward. Their spells and enchantments can be referred to as the evidence of man's control over nature whether in matters related to love or those related to the quest for social position. In nutshell, magic and its mysteries stand as the vectors of the comedy turns. Magic in *The Tempest*, has been ultimately used by Shakespeare to restore harmony by knitting reconciliation and marriage, (B. K. Kloutse, 2014, p. 167).

As a magician, Prospero's art consists in controlling the metaphysical world by the exploitation of the secrets of his divinity books and his magic rod. This inclination to magic has occasioned his destitution and exile. Prospero spent his exile with his beloved daughter Miranda, who he would not want to suffer his mistakes. For it is generally preferable for elders and parents to carry alone the load of their mistakes than having their children suffer their mistakes.

On the island, Miranda can afford no friend, no joke, nothing known common to young ladies. She seems to be confined on an island where she is to spend her whole maturity single and perhaps die without enjoying life amongst fellow human beings. Her lot will be even sadder than Caliban's if she happens to lose her father. In this hypothesis, Miranda will have to compose with the monster and certainly be dominated by Caliban the monster son of the late Sycorax who even started brandishing his right of property (*The Tempest*, I, ii, 331-345).

There is need to point out that the survival of Prospero and his daughter on the haunted island is due to his magic. Prospero got the spirits inhabiting the island including Caliban the ruler island under his control. By subduing Caliban and delivering Ariel the airy spirit imprisoned by Sycorax the sorceress, Prospero got to become the ruler of the Island and the benefactor of Ariel who became his servant (*The Tempest*, I, i, 285-292).

Imprisoning or even releasing an airy spirit from prison denotes a metaphysical power. For how can airy spirit endowed with power as Ariel be imprisoned? If not that Sycorax has a superior power? Consequently it this implies that sorcerers and magicians are powerful enough to control spirits and demons. This is the case in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, (B.K. Kloutse, 2014, p. 131).

The loneliness becoming more and more unbearable, Prospero got the pressing duty to get back to Milan by all means in the likeness of the Prodigal Son (*Luke* 15; 8-32) no matter what it costs him. In this perspective, and having still his art which consists in controlling the invisible world, Prospero got to know that a royal ship in board of which is Alonso the King of Italy and some dignitaries is passing by. To Prospero, this occasion is unique for his rescue. And he could not found such an occasion of rescue and afford losing it whence the tempest. In fact, by the help of his servant Ariel, the airy spirit, he got the Ship on which are voyaging the King of Naples and his followers shipwrecked on his Island (*The Tempest*, I, i, 178-188). By having Ariel the Airy spirit who proves to be a charmer to provoke a sudden tempest on the sea around the Ship on board of which are Alonso and his followers. Ariel proclaims his allegiance to Prospero saying, "All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I come/ To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly, / To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride/ On the curl'd clouds. To thy strong bidding task / Ariel and all his quality." (*The Tempest*, I, ii, 189-192).

This situation exhibits not only the capability of magic into the hands of Prospero by also the fact that the tempest caused by Prospero through magic is not all that natural. For no sailor can avoid that magic-provoked-tempest except the fact that the sailor is also endowed with the antidotes of the power used by Prospero. In such circumstance of vulnerability of the ship and its passengers, the accident is unavoidable. Magic is in the light of *The Tempest*, a power that consists in controlling events and manipulate them in one's favour.

To achieve his project of restoration Prospero had the airy spirit, Ariel, handle his business. By the exploitation these qualities and devotion of Ariel, Prospero has being able to create a state of surprise mixed to fear and insecurity within his new 'prisoners'. Subsequently, Prospero starts enjoying his formerly denied authority over

his enemies. In this context, Magic is used as a means of revenge but also as a means of reconstitution of a lost position. The tempest is a phenomenon created by Shakespeare to illustrate the weakness or vulnerability of people and things before magic. Within such a chaos of tempest and shipwreck, Prospero is the unique Italian who knows that the tempest is not natural and the Ship wreck is the result of his manipulation. Then when the King and his followers were despaired and could not foresee a rescue, only Prospero knew their real lot as he planned their restoration back in Italy. Through this illustration, the dramatist is unveiling the capability of magic as magician to manipulate phenomenon and people to their choice and turn others as simple followers or mere puppets.

Those who neat the destitution of Prospero and his exile have turned to become his servants and subjects. In order to illustrate the peaceful dimension of Magic, Shakespeare turns the early revenge of Prospero into rancourless strive for restoration. Subsequently, Shakespeare's play holds that magic is not all that devilish and bad. All the regrettable lot that happens to Prospero is simply caused by the divergent view upon religious matters.

With the assistance of Ariel, Prospero, has been able to exploit the surprise and the accident to create the meeting between his Miranda and Ferdinand the Prince of Naples Son of Alonso king of Naples. The meeting between Ferdinand and Miranda indicates the capacity of magic to solve unimaginable crises. For the situation which appears to be a surprise for both Miranda and Ferdinand is not all that to Prospero and his servant Ariel, designers of the ongoing events. Ariel designs many things to trouble the castaways. Gonzalo, Antonio, Adrian and even Sebastian, the four noble men part of the voyage with the King could not even remember the real state of their garments as Ariel is playing funny of them, (*The Tempest*, II, i, 1-100).

Miranda who has never seen a human's face on the Island except that of his father and Caliban's got seduced at her first sight of Ferdinand. She declares to Prospero about Ferdinand, " My affections/ Are then most humble; I have no ambition/ To see a goodlier man" (*The Tempest*, I, i, 484-485) who also was amazed to meet a human being able to speak his idiom in a deserted land of no hope where he thought everything lost for ever. Love came in under the influence of circumstances. (*The Tempest*, I, i, 445-452) and (*The Tempest*, III, i, 37-56), clearly illustrate the abovementioned comment. Their love for each other got kindled that both parents could not but approve.

As chance made both Ferdinand and Miranda to meet, the latter got so seduced by the look of Ferdinand to break the recommendation of his father who forbid her to

give her name to any person on the island. She declares with a little fear after given her name to Ferdinand saying in (*The Tempest* III, I, 35-36), "Miranda.- O my father,/ I have broke your hest to say so!"

The case between Miranda and the Prince, cannot be related to the effects of spells which are known to alter feelings and motives of people to the satisfaction of the magician. Things are different in this comedy. Instead of spells and enchantments, Prospero has put emphasis on surprise and the beauty of his daughter. He also exploited the excitation of Ferdinand who freshly assisted a marriage between his sister and the Prince of Morocco (*The Tempest*, II, i, 65-66). As a result, Love between Miranda and Ferdinand is not fake. The penchant of Ferdinand to Miranda can be traced back to the love Achilles devoted for Polyxena the daughter of Priam. A love which turned him to become unexpectedly affable towards the Trojans (T. Bulfinch, 1979, p.182). But only the circumstances around their love are designed by magic.

The marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand illustrates how Prospero's magic has been useful in securing happiness to his daughter and beyond all to find her the best husband that Italian parents could desire for their daughters. In consequence, Prospero gives his consent to the marriage of his daughter and The Prince Ferdinand. Prospero declares to Ferdinand in *The Tempest* IV, i, 13-14, "Then, as my gift and thine own acquisition/ Worthily purchased, take my daughter:" and Alonso the King of Naples to add his blessing to the union saying in *The Tempest*, V, i, 14-15, "Give me your hands: Let griefs and sorrow still embrace his heart / That doth not wish you joy!"

Love has been crucial in the progress of the play. In fact, the love of Prospero towards his daughter has been his real motivation to leave the island but the final incentive is the love between both Miranda and Ferdinand which led to marriage occasioning thus the restoration of Prospero to his former status in Italy. Whence restoration can be viewed as a key element in the commerce throughout the comedy.

Restoration is the real pursuit of Prospero. Everything he could do on the island was centred upon his rescue. Despite the progress of his plan, Prospero remains lucid to keep the move knowing that there is still a long to go before reaching full restoration. Restoration for Prospero means to get firstly back to Milan, his home town and enjoy life within his community.

By arranging the marriage between his daughter and Ferdinand, Prospero has simply regained his consideration in the heart of the King of Naples who cannot suffer him alone on the island after all the kindness he has been granted by Prospero. The bound of marriage has not only contributed to the restoration of Prospero but also the steadfastness of his reign over Milan as the father in- law of Ferdinand.



Magic in this context has served as an art of the restoration of Prospero while the experience of the island has turned his hangmen to become open-minded in order to soften their verdicts related to religious differences. The help he has given to the misfortune voyagers, has rendered him to be seen differently. He is no more the pariah rejected by his society by his status has changed from a devil servant to a kind man and saviour. Prospero said, " Yet do my nobler reason against my fury/ Do I take part; the rarer action is/ In virtue than in vengeance (...)" ( *The Tempest*, V, i, 27-28), a declaration that got implemented in ( *The Tempest*, V, i, 315-318).

All in all, either the tempest or the marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand have been neatly designed by the magician. These provoked phenomena has occasioned reconciliation between Prospero and his former accusers whence peace in Italy through the restoration of Prospero.

## **2. The Individual and the Supernatural in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart***

In *Things Fall Apart*, the fear for the supernatural forces appears as a narrative technique used by Achebe to maintain some characters in harmony with their environment. As such, they behave and act only according to their gender and other social norms established by their ancestors whom we regard in this article as being part and parcel of the supernatural. This is so because, "the vital link between the individual and his community is generally blessed by the godhead through the support and the role of the ancestors" (A. Sow, 2008, p. 287). Discussing the relationship between the individual and his ancestors/supernatural, H. Deschamps (1965, p.19) informs the reader that:

Les ancêtres règlent ainsi les relations entre les membres du groupe. Tous reconnaissent ces règles. Le conformisme est total et les excès individuels condamnés à l'avance...L'isolement de l'individu est inconcevable. La force vitale est en relation constante avec celle des ancêtres et des autres membres du groupe. [The ancestors thus regulate the relationships between the members of the group. Everyone recognises these rules. Conformity is total and individual excesses are condemned in advance... The isolation of the individual is inconceivable. The life force is in constant relationship with that of the ancestors and other members of the group. (My own translation)]

From this quotation by Deschamps, it is obvious that the individual in an African society be it real or fictional is compelled to live in harmony with his ancestors by faithfully following the norms of conduct established by his or her society which in fact exists under the supervision of its ancestors. This is extremely important for any individual willing to take advantage from society's protection and therefore avoids explosion to severe visible or invisible punishments. There is more than ample evidence that, it is to avoid such punishments which do not promote peace that

Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* along with other characters constantly see to it that Igbo ancestral prescriptions are faithfully respected by all the fictive members of these fictitious Igbo societies portrayed by Achebe.

In *Things Fall Apart*, a reading between the lines reveals to the reader some close relationships between the individual and the supernatural. This section demonstrates that Okonkwo and other characters' behaviours are closely related to the supernatural associated with the environment within which they live. Besides, it holds that individuals' endeavour to conform to their socially constructed gender roles is motivated by the fear of supernatural punishments. These are important factor for peace building in society.

All the preceding observations are visible in Okonkwo's characterisation when we take into account his commitment up to death to never betray the traditional norms of his dear Umuofia. His love and strong desire to be in close relationships with his ancestors is presented more than once in the novel. In this logic, the narrator of *Things Fall Apart* presents Okonkwo as follows:

But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. (*Things Fall Apart*, Pp9-10).

This quotation fully accounts for what actually may justify Okonkwo's permanent struggle to always live in accordance with the supernatural forces and prescriptions of his community. Chinua Achebe made Okonkwo use two major strategies which ruled his life all over the novel. First, Okonkwo strictly sees to it that all his behaviour reflects what his people have prescribed for his male gender. Interestingly enough, he fully conforms to his masculine gender as promoted by his Igbo society. By so doing, he seeks peace and harmony with his ancestors and supernatural forces to avoid thus visible and invisible punishments. The immediate consequence of Okonkwo's commitment to conform to his gender roles, is his description by feminist critics as a macho and violent character who has no regard for women. Secondly, Achebe sees to it that Okonkwo has a particular and high regard for his ancestors' cultural norms to which he conforms without any hesitation. Okonkwo's conformism is motivated by his fear of evil, the fear of the forest, the fear of the forces of nature and most definitely the fear of capricious gods and magic.

The supernatural in *Things Fall Apart* appears under the form of gods, ancestors and forces of nature and it is rightly that supernatural which inspires fear in Okonkwo. The narrator even informs us that fear lays deep within Okonkwo. This is a clear instance of the narrator's ability to read Okonkwo's mind and psyche. From this

psychoanalytical portrayal of Okonkwo, the reader arrives at the conclusion that Okonkwo was not free as such since he is under the hold of fear of the supernatural. As the story of *Things Fall Apart* continues, we come across many scenes and episodes which demonstrate how Okonkwo struggles to be in close relationship with the supernatural and therefore live in peace in his cultural milieu. Consequently, Achebe equips us, readers, with the knowledge that Okonkwo killing Ikemefuna and his brutality towards his wives and children is not synonymous with his cruelty as a man. However, he does this with one main objective: to faithfully fulfil what the gods of Umuofia have decreed. According to the narrator: "...Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man" (*Things Fall Apart*, 9). That he is simply conforming to a cultural norm is emphasized by the fact that "down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man".

By doing so, he conforms both to his masculine gender and to cultural norms as established by his people. This allows him to live in peace and harmony within his society which celebrates bravery and conformism to its laws. In the process, Okonkwo avoids punishments as when he has been sent to exile in his mother's village, Mbanta, for having killed a clansman by accident. Furthermore, he broke the sacred week of peace and he was not capable of enjoying a happy life because he was full of grief and anger.

In fact, during the week of peace, the village is expected to resonate with joy and not hate. Any violator of this sanctity is punished by forces and spirits that nurture and regulate the society regardless of one's social status. By giving his wife a heavy beating, Okonkwo is punished because "It was unheard of to beat someone during the sacred week" and that "It was the first time for many years that a man had broken the sacred peace. Even the oldest men could only remember one or two other occasions somewhere in the dim past" (*Things Fall Apart*, 22). The punishment inflicted to Okonkwo shows that when individuals violate the rule of conformism, they are in clash with society and do not therefore live in peace. Furthermore, we may consider Okonkwo's self-murder as the cause of his overzealous commitment to live only and strictly according to his ancestors' laws. As such, he lacked the ability to be flexible in a drastically changing world where collaboration between African and European religions becomes a must.

Wherever we go and whatever African culture we consider, individuals are supposed to own personal gods to which a cult is devoted. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's and other characters' own gods are referred to as *chi*. Igboes are made to believe in the phenomenon of *chi* or a personal god ruling and guiding one's destiny.

As such, I totally agree with K. N. Usongo (2011, p.133) when he puts it that : « Igbo representations of the supernatural, like most traditional societies of Africa, are clearly evident in their traditional religion, cultural beliefs, mythology and divination, as well as their conception of the universe and the relationship between the living and the living dead ». Clearly then, Igbo characters in the selected novel attempt to be at peace with their *chi* by either conforming to their gender roles or living according to the traditions of their communities because « it plays an important psychological role in liberating the mind from worry or torture » (M. E. N. Njaka, 1974, p.32).

### 3. Shakespeare and Achebe on the Vital Contribution of the Supernatural

This third section of our article seeks to assess the portrayal of magic and the supernatural in Shakespeare and Achebe's selected works.

Throughout *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has been able to demonstrate that magic is not all that devilish as primarily conceived by the people of Milan who punished their Duke for the practice of magic. To achieve this purpose, the dramatist has depicted the solitary life of Prospero and his daughter within a wilderness surrounded by wicked spirits. Their survival in such an adversity can be taken for Shakespeare's demonstration of the salvation dimension of magic overlooked by the people of Milan.

In the same vein, Shakespeare has successfully nurtured the restoration of Prospero in Milan as Duke against all expectations in strengthening his rule over Milan by rendering Prospero the in-law of the King Alonso. Magic in consequence, has served as a means to provoke the marriage between Miranda the daughter of Prospero and the Prince Ferdinand; occasioning thus an allegiance of peace between the King of Italy and Prospero.

It takes to mention that, the restoration of Prospero through which got the approval of Alonso the King has not been only a means to impose religious tolerance and mutual understanding amongst people of Milan and Italy but also a means to demonstrate the full capability and power of magic which can prove to be saving and a factor of peace and reconciliation as depicted in *The Tempest*.

Taking into consideration the two preceding sections of this article, it becomes evident that while Shakespeare on the one hand has resorted to magic through the character of Prospero for the reader to see how magic which is part and parcel of the supernatural can bring peace for the individual if well managed, Achebe on the other hand has used Okonkwo and other characters' beliefs in the supernatural to demonstrate how this links the individual to the society he/she belongs and consequently how individuals are rewarded or punished as they live or not according to the laws and prescriptions of the supernatural forces represented in the novel *Things*

*Fall Apart* through ancestors, spirits, *chi*, divinations, deities, thunder, rain, etc. Belief in the supernatural and magic become, in the writings of Shakespeare and Achebe, powerful narrative techniques which allow the reader to see how and when the supernatural and magic can be factors of peace. Consequently, the narrator of *Things Fall Apart* more than once in the novel, introduced Okonkwo to the reader as a prosperous man of titles whose “fame had grown like a bush fire in the harmattan” (*Things Fall Apart*, 3). The immediate result is that Okonkwo “was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond” (*Things Fall Apart*, 3). As an Igbo proverb goes, “He who brings kola brings life” (*Things Fall Apart*, 5). Inspired by that proverb, the reader of *Things Fall Apart* may be tempted to deduce that he who obeys to the supernatural and all its prescriptions brings a peaceful life in society.

What again is strikingly interesting is Shakespeare’s and Achebe’s portrayals of magic and the supernatural as peace making factors contrarily to their perception as devilish and all those negative images people have had about them. Though belonging to two different geographical settings, the two canonical authors have succeeded in demonstrating that magic and the supernatural be it in a European or an African setting promote peace for the individual in his society. Consequently, readers should stop negating magical practices and supernatural forces.

## **Conclusion**

This article has shown remarkable connections between Shakespeare’s and Achebe’s portrayal of the supernatural and how it affects peace building among the individual in their fictive societies which have been the subject of our study. In the process, a number of findings are worth mentioning. First, our article has revealed that the belief in the supernatural and magic helps in the keeping of peace. Next, an analysis of the works by Shakespeare and Achebe from a supernatural perspective might help to determine cross-cultural symbolic habits in terms of human nature. Moreover, both authors make use of the supernatural in the development of their minor as well as major characters. Last of all, in spite of the timeline between Achebe and Shakespeare, they appear unique in their exploration of the relationship between humankind and supernatural forces. Both authors indicate how the supernatural may affect humankind.

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