

Principles of Literary Study
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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

April 22, 2021. Achebe (3).

U-review

- ▶ How is Tortoise's story related to Okonkwo's?
- ▶ What is the significance of the narrative situation?
 - ▶ EN1 EN2 [Ekwefi]
- ▶ Are women's stories silly?

Mother is Supreme

- ▶ Listen for two minutes to Achebe reading from 133–34.
 - ▶ <https://pls21.blogs.rutgers.edu/achebe-reading/>
 - ▶ Start at 2:00, stop at 4:00.

Discussion

What does this passage suggest about gender and authority?

interpretation

“Your buttocks understand our language,” said someone light-heartedly and the crowd laughed.

“What did he say?” the white man asked his interpreter. But before he could answer, another man asked a question: “Where is the white man’s horse?” he asked. The Ibo evangelists consulted among themselves and decided that the man probably meant bicycle. They told the white man and he smiled benevolently.

“Tell them,” he said, “that I shall bring many iron horses when we have settled down among them.” (145)

which side is he on?

It was one of those gay and rollicking tunes of evangelism which had the power of plucking at silent and dusty chords in the heart of an Ibo man. (146)

The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul—the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. (147)

Discussion

How does the novel invite judgments about the missionaries and the converts? Pay attention to point of view.

the missionaries

At last the day came by which all the missionaries should have died. But they were still alive...And for the first time they had a woman [convert]. Her name was Nneka, the wife of Amadi, who was a prosperous farmer. She was very heavy with child.

Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and childbirths. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away. Her husband and his family were already becoming highly critical of such a woman and were not unduly perturbed when they found she had fled to join the Christians. It was a good riddance. (151)

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He [Okonkwo] had called the first child born to him in exile Nneka—"Mother is Supreme"—out of politeness to his mother's kinsmen. (162)

protagonists

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He had just sent Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, who was now called Isaac, to the new training college for teachers in Umuru. (182)

next

- ▶ finish Achebe if not finished already
- ▶ Gikandi (link on Sakai)
- ▶ Quayson (link on Sakai)