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ORAL FORMS IN ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*: A STYLISTIC READING

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Contents

	Page
Dedication	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Abstract	iii
 Introduction	 2
 Chapter one : <i>Theoretical Background</i>	
1.1 Stylistics	11
1.2 Style	16
1.3 Oral Culture	25
1.4 Characteristics of Primary Oral Culture	28
1.5 African Traditions: Oral and Written	42
 Chapter Two : <i>Literary Forms</i>	
2.1 Proverbs	47
2.2 Folktales and Storytelling Situations	51
2.3 Poetry and Songs	63
2.4 Simile and Metaphor	68
2.5 Irony	72
 Chapter Three : <i>Linguistic Forms in Writing</i>	
3.1 The Use of “and”: Additive rather than Subordinative	77
3.2 Repetition	80
3.3 Code-switching and Ibo words	85
3.4 Apposition	91
3.5 Alliteration/assonance	93
3.6 Onomatopoeia	96
3.7 The Talking Drum	97
 Conclusion	 100
 Bibliography	 109
Glossary	111
Appendix 1	113
Appendix2	114

Abstract

This paper is a tentative critical reading of Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. It is an attempt to determine whether the use of oral forms in a literary tradition can help to better understand the underlying meaning of the novel without distorting its form as a literary tradition. It tries also to demonstrate that the analysis of these oral forms can help the reader to draw a stylistic interpretation.

Most African writers use orality in their writings. It constitutes the primary source of literary creativity in Africa. *Things Fall Apart* is based on traditional African culture and it is the foremost example where oral forms are overused .

This paper is divided into three chapters. Chapter one deals with a theoretical background of orality and oral style.

The second chapter deals with literary analysis of oral forms such as proverbs, stories, songs, similes, metaphors and irony.

The third chapter deals with linguistic analysis of oral forms such as repetition, code-switching, the additive "and", onomatopoeia and alliteration.

The conclusion will expose a few views on what may come out from a literary point of view, when two literary traditions meet.

Key words : proverbs , stories, songs , similes, metaphors, repetition, additive "and", onomatopoeia and alliteration

RESUME

Ce travail est une lecture critique expérimentale du roman de Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. C'est une tentative de déterminer si l'utilisation des formes orales dans une tradition littéraire peut mieux aider à comprendre la signification fondamentale du roman sans tordre sa forme comme tradition littéraire. Il essaye également de démontrer que l'analyse de ces formes orales peut aider le lecteur à dessiner une interprétation stylistique.

La plupart des auteurs Africains emploient l' *orality* dans leurs écritures. Elle constitue la source primaire de créativité littéraire en Afrique. *Things Fall Apart* est basées sur la culture traditionnelle Africaine et c'est le premier exemple où les formes orales sont surutilisées.

Ce travail est divisé en trois chapitres:

Le premier chapitre traite un fond théorique d'*orality* et du modèle oral.

Le deuxième chapitre traite l'analyse littéraire des formes orales telles que des proverbes, histoires, chansons, comparaisons, métaphores et ironie.

Le troisième chapitre traite l'analyse linguistique des formes orales telles que la répétition, code-commutation, l'additif "et ", onomatopoeia et allitération.

La conclusion exposera quelques vues sur ce qui peut venir dehors d'un point de vue littéraire, quand deux traditions littéraires se réunissent.

Mots clés : proverbes, histoires, chansons, comparaisons, métaphores et ironie, répétition, code-commutation, l'additif "et ", onomatopoeia et allitération

ملخص

يعتبر هذا البحث قراءة نقدية تجريبية لرواية *Things Fall Apart* للكاتب النيجيري Chinua Achebe. هو محاولة لتحديد ما إذا كان استعمال الأشكال الشفهية في التقليد الأدبي يُمكن أن يُساعد لفهم المعنى التحتي للرواية بشكل أفضل بدون تحريف شكله كتقليد أدبي. يُحاول هذا البحث أيضاً أن يُبين بأن تحليل هذه الأشكال الشفهية يُمكن أن تُساعد القارئ لرسم قراءة أسلوبية. يستعمل أكثر الكتاب الأفريقيين الأدب الشفهي في كتاباتهم. كما انه يُشكل المصدر الأساسي في الإبداع الأدبي في أفريقيا. رواية *Things Fall Apart* مستندة على الثقافة الأفريقية التقليدية وهي المثال الأول أين تعتبر الأشكال الشفهية مُفرطة في الإستعمال. ينقسم هذا البحث إلى ثلاثة فصول:

يعتبر الفصل الأول قراءة نظرية للأسلوبية والأدب الشفهي على العموم. يدرس الفصل الثاني التحليل الأدبي للأشكال الشفهية مثل الأمثال، القصص، الأغاني، التشبيهات، الإستعارة والسخرية. يتعامل الفصل الثالث مع التحليل اللغوي للأشكال الشفهية مثل التكرار، تحويل الرمز، "و" الإضافية، المحاكاة الصوتية والجناس الإستهلاكي. الخاتمة ستعرض بعض وجهات النظر حول ما سينتج عندما يجتمع الأدب الكتابي و الأدب الشفهي.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأمثال، القصص، الأغاني، التشبيهات، الإستعارة والسخرية، التكرار، تحويل الرمز، "و" الإضافية، المحاكاة الصوتية والجناس الإستهلاكي.

Appendices

Appendix 1 : Characteristics of Primary Oral Cultures

<u>Primary Oral Cultures</u>	<u>Literate Cultures</u>
Additive – Oral literature tends to build in structure by adding new events. This is often called parataxis, where the author builds up idea after idea with <i>and</i> between them.	Subordinative – Written literature tends to subsume subpoints under main points. It has a large number of subplots.
Aggregative – Oral literature relies on epithets and clustering. Heroes tend to have praise names attached to them.	Analytic – Written literature relies on more detailed distinction of parts.
Copious/Redundant – Oral literature stresses a fullness of expression that builds; one cannot loop back to previous text.	Continuity – Written literature, because it makes visual retrieval possible, can go back and resume previous developments.
Conservative/Traditionalist – Oral texts tend to build on what has existed so far.	Potentially Subversive – Written texts can more easily break from previous patterns.
Close to the human lifeworld – Oral literature tends to be concerned with human deeds, even the gods act like humans. Texts conceived in oral cultures do not focus on abstractions.	More able to distance or denature the world – Written texts tend to allow one to talk about philosophical ideals, principles, and scientific laws.
Agonistically toned – Oral literature tends to be performed in a more combative style. Oral performers are contestants, so they must compete for their audiences.	Calmer in tone – Written literature tends to be more objective because it is more abstract.
Empathetic, Participatory – Oral literature tends to be more communal in reaction.	Objectively Distanced – Writing, and especially print, encourages distance, objectivity, and neutrality.
Homeostatic – Oral literature tends to treat the past and the present as essentially the same.	Historical – Written literature is less able to conflate the past with the present.
Situational Self – In oral societies, personhood is discovered in the communal; it is hard to think of the self as existing outside community structures.	Isolationist Self – Written societies tend to make it possible for one to be more separate and private. Texts become owned property.

Appendix 2 : William Butler Yeats: "The Second Coming"

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand;
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

INTRODUCTION

Before the introduction of literacy into West Africa, traditional African culture was mainly based on the spoken form. Much of the precolonial African literature was oral. Oral literature (or orature), including songs, poems, and folk tales, was used to entertain children and to pass on histories through generations. African oral literature also includes myth, storytelling and legends. However, with the introduction of schools during 1930's , there has been a great change in the traditional societies and in their ways of thinking. Many writers and journalists have used newspapers to air their views. They denounced colonialism and proudly asserted the validity of the cultures that the colonials had tried to crush. As Africans began demanding their independence, more African writers were published. Such writers as, in western Africa, Wole Soyinka , Chinua Achebe and, in eastern Africa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o produced poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and plays. All were writing in European languages, and often they shared the same themes: the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European conquest, pride in the African past, and hope for the continent's independent future. Many writers incorporate other arts into their work and often weave oral conventions into their writing. Moreover, the use of English, which is the language of the colonist, has opened the doors for the West African Novel to emerge.

For example, Achebe's first novels deal mainly with the impact of Western culture on the traditional African culture which results from the contact between indigenous people, missionaries and colonists. Indeed, under the missions of civilization, and through colonialism, the Europeans misunderstood the Africans and almost completely deformed the real history of Africa . Besides, they considered Africa as a "Dark Continent" and its

inhabitants as cannibals and savage people. This European imagination, in fact, was reinforced by many writers such as Conrad and Carry. Africa was seen as barbaric , a prehistoric land in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*¹ and primitive in Joyce Carry's *Mister Johnson*². Indeed, after reading *Mister Johnson*, which is a novel about an African from a British prisoner-of-war camp who begs to be killed by the white Englishman, Achebe decided this characterization of Africans was ridiculous and ignorant.

Achebe is among the many African writers who encourages cultural nationalism and decides to defend his traditional African culture through his writings³. He has reacted against the European Novels and played an important role in modern African literature.

Furthermore, he has become aware that the Africans now must write their history by themselves. Therefore, Chinua Achebe has written his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, both as an affection to his past and as a recognition that Africa's story should be told not in such novels as *Heart of Darkness* or *Mister Johnson* but only by African writers themselves. He states that he became a writer in order to tell his story and the story of his people from his own viewpoint. The narrative and linguistic strategies in the text help create a new perspective and new story of Nigerian and African history. He lectured in 1964:

“ I would be quite satisfied if my novels - especially the ones I set in the past – did no more than to teach their readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them ”.⁴

Achebe has written five novels. *Things Fall Apart* is his first novel .It was published in 1958. It deals mainly with pre-colonial and colonial periods in Nigeria. Achebe did an excellent job of portraying the pre-colonial culture of the Ibo⁵ . This book was not only educational, but entertaining as well. His ability to focus mainly on one individual and still show the complexity of the entire clan's beliefs and self-governing tactics was incredible. It is hard to believe that he was able to show us so many aspects of the pre-colonial culture in so few pages. He uses African proverbs and stories to tell his tale. He may try to suggest in the writing the oral rhythms of traditional story-telling. To some extent, the patterns of temporality, which regulate the lives of the people, shape the structure of the novel. Achebe may even be trying to sound like a story teller, rather than a novelist, trying to speak as the voice of the community. Achebe was saying that the education is there, and the best way to overcome pain and evil is to somewhere find the positive. The positive being that by learning the English language, he as an African can now communicate to the rest of the world and relate the truth and break down the negative images of Africa.

This book definitely left me wanting to learn more about Ibo culture. Some of the areas, I feel, really stood out to show they were a civilized people, include their social organization, their economic system, and their religious beliefs. The Ibo seemed to have a very structured social order. Everything from the way one attains status in the village to the way the people receive their guests leads me to believe this. The use of titles in the village to determine status demonstrates that they had a hierarchy of institutions in place, much like the Europeans have judges, mayors, senators, and a president. For instance, *the egwugwu* acted as judges by passing sentence in

disputes between the people. Their use of titles also seemed to make up a sort of government.

Along the same lines, the way they interacted shows that they were a civil people. They seemed to try to settle everything peaceably, if at all possible. As Achebe pointed out, they believed that a “war of blame” was an unjust thing. Also, the way they interacted between each other leads me to believe they were not the “savages” the English had thought. The sharing of the kola nut and palm wine between neighbors shows a mutual respect for each other. They seemed to have a deep feeling of kinship not only among their families, but with the clan as a whole as well.

I really enjoyed reading the book *Things Fall Apart* and felt the need to read it several times for two reasons:

First, I found it enjoyable and interesting as an aesthetic work and the distinct style that Achebe used to narrate his novel let me feel as if I were a fellow tribesman of the Igbo People. Second, when the hero, Okonkwo decided to put an end to his life, I found it as an ironic tragedy. How could he behave the way he did? Achebe points at the beginning of the novel that he brought honour to his village and yet he committed a suicide by killing himself.

While reading *Things Fall Apart*, I noticed the use and the integration of oral forms from traditional African culture in a modern European literary work. Achebe writes in English, the language of the colonizer, but integrates proverbs, stories, repetitions, alliterations, pidgin words and idioms, and imagery that bring out the Igbo tradition and culture into his novel, on the one hand and the overuse of the conjunction “and”, on the other hand, especially the initial “And” at the beginning of the sentence.

This leads me to think of my research question. Why does Achebe overuse oral forms in his writings, especially in *Things Fall Apart* ?

To deal with this topic, the following hypotheses may help to provide at least a clearer picture if not an answer to this question.

Achebe uses oral forms to preserve traditional African culture and to correct all what is distorted by Europeans.

He tries to bridge the gap between oral traditions and literary traditions by his distinct and artistic style. He combines them without deforming neither English nor the meaning of his narrative.

This paper does not claim to be the first analysis of oral forms as used in written language. However, my purpose is to point out that oral forms do not distort the underlying meaning of the novel. On the contrary, they would highlight and enrich any reading and writing a piece of literature. Besides, language is power . African writers must develop that power through their own sense of cultural and historical language and usage. Symbols, words, proverbs, poems, songs and stories that are told and heard, written and read conceptualize language. Achebe has used this power to reflect the values and ethics of his people through the power of language.

The study will be conducted through a stylistic analysis.

I have divided this research paper into three chapters .The first chapter deals with a debate of theoretical reflection on style, stylistics and a linguistic description of oral forms. I will base my research especially on Walter Ong' work who is one of the pioneers who tried to explain what is orality and contrasts it to literacy, though I shall refer also to other major linguists and stylisticians.

The second chapter focuses on literary formulations as major proverbs that are used by Ibo people and overused by Achebe. I will also deal with folktales songs, similes and metaphors and irony .

In the third chapter, linguistic analysis, I shall examine the overuse of the connective “and” in the novel and how it contributes to orality. I shall also point out the role of repetition and apposition, alliteration and onomatopoeia , Ibo words and code-switching in oral traditions. This will illustrate how the written word integrates features of oral cultures.

Notes and references

¹ - If you've ever read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, you can see why Achebe calls it racist. Conrad's portrayal of the Africans as savage (p.23) uncivilized, cannibals(p.49) and prehistoric(p.51) is part of what prompted Achebe to write his eloquent novel. The surprising thing was that he was one of the first critics to do so.

² - He notes that “What Mister Johnson did for me was not to change my course in life and turn me from something else into a writer; I was born that way. But it did open my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or a town...” (Achebe, *Home and Exile* , p. 38)

³ - “For me there are three reasons for becoming a writer. The first is that you have an overpowering urge to tell a story. The second, that you have the intimations of a unique story waiting to come out. And the third, which you learn in the process of becoming, is that you consider the whole project worth the trouble-I have sometimes called in terms of imprisonment-you will have to endure to bring it to fruition.” (Achebe, *Home and Exile* , p.39)

⁴ - Chinua Achebe, “*The Novelist as a Teacher*” , *Morning Yet on Creation Day* , 1975, (p. 45)

⁵ - Ibo for “People of the Forest.” Umuofia is the village in which Okonkwo, Achebe's protagonist, prospers in everything and is able to secure his manly position in the tribe. Now known as Nigeria, this land was a primitive agricultural society completely run by men

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Background

1.1 Stylistics

1.1.1 What Is Stylistics?

1.1.2 Linguistic Stylistics

1.1.3 Literary Stylistics

1.2 Style

1.2.1 Defining Style

1.2.2 Foregrounding

1.2.3 Oral Style

1.3 Oral Culture

1.3.1 What is Orality?

1.3.2 Nature and Function of Orality

1.4 Characteristics of Primary Oral Culture

1.4.1 The Use of "and": Additive rather than Subordinative

1.4.2 Mnemonics and Formulas

1.4.2.1 Proverbs

1.4.2.2 Alliteration

1.4.2.3 Onomatopoeia

1.4.2.4 Poetry and Songs

1.4.2.5 Code Switching : Use of Ibo Words

1.4.2.6 Similes and Metaphors

1.4.3 Redundant or Copious Structure

1.4.3.1 Repetition

1.4.3.2 Apposition

1.4.4 Storytelling Situations

1.4.5 Irony

1.5 African Traditions: Oral and Written

The conflicting relationship between orality and writing is not new .Most epics, ballads and poems are based on oral traditions such as lyrics, songs, riddles and proverbs. However, the novel characterizes the written literature which is the outcome of the cultivated class of the artists and it also characterizes modern literature. Yet the oral literature has its roots deep in tradition and is preserved in memory.

In this chapter, I shall describe the nature and function of orality and what characterizes it according to Walter J. Ong . I shall also describe major oral forms and devices as seen and interpreted by Halliday , Leech and other major linguists and stylisticians. Of course, these oral forms, already mentioned in the introduction , are the devices that characterize Achebe's Style and therefore will be the subject of my research.

Ferdinand de Saussure distinctly points out the differences between the written word and the spoken word by naming them as *Langue* and *Parole*. He uses *langue* to express the idea of the system that qualifies the speaker to produce language. He uses the word *parole* to express the idea of the speech produced by the individual.

He points out that a written representation of the language can reflect either the *langue* or the *parole*. *Langue* is an intangible concept, while *parole* is the performance. In other words, there is a difference between what speakers know about the language and what they choose to say when they speak. Why people speak in certain way, and what alternative forms of expression they choose to use or to ignore in particular situations. The stylistic competence of a speaker is also directly relative to his or her knowledge of different varieties of language and to the successful switching from one sub code to another. Stylistic creativity is a special segment of stylistic competence as a feature of individual style. In the following points I shall

open doors to discuss the notion of stylistics and style then I shall analyse oral culture and the characteristics of orality in details.

1.1 Stylistics

1.1.1 What Is Stylistics?

According to Leech and Short (1891), stylistics is simply defined as the linguistic study of style¹. They also add that: “Stylistics investigates the relation between the writer’s artistic achievement and how it is achieved through language”.²

From what is seen, I can say that stylistics is the study of style used in literary language and the effect the writer wishes to communicate to the readers. It attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language, such as, socialization, the production and reception of meaning, literary criticism, and critical discourse analysis. Here is another definition by Widdowson (1975),

By ‘stylistics’ I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two.³

According to the definitions given above, stylistics is generally regarded as the formal analysis of style and its variations in speech and writing. It emerged from the study of classical rhetoric and developed as an area of literary studies that came to be included in modern linguistics. In the history of literary criticism, the prescription of style gave way to its description and analysis.

The study of style in modern literary studies was initially set in historical periods, with attention directed to authors as specific exponents of distinctive methods of writing. In recent decades, poststructuralist thought has emphasised the multiple ways of reading texts. In contrast, the growth of stylistics has pointed to the ways in which linguistic analysis could offer support to literary criticism in the interpretation of texts.

Stylistics then is concerned with the application of linguistic techniques to the analysis of style in language. Since literature works in the medium of language, it naturally explores a vast range of alternative ways of using and understanding language, and in so doing keeps developing new styles. Its focus, therefore, is the way in which language varies under the influence of factors such as context, purpose, author, and period.

1.1.2Linguistic Stylistics

Stylistic analysis in linguistics tries to identify patterns of usage in speech and writing. It tries also to identify and classify the elements of language being used. Crystal and Davy (1969) have already argued that the purpose of stylistics is to analyze language patterns in order to identify “features” common to English which are used in certain situations as opposed to other alternatives and to classify them according to their function in the social context .They state,

By ‘features’ here, we mean *any* bit of speech or writing which a person can single out from the general flow of language and discuss-a particular word, part of a word, sequence of words, or way of uttering a word.⁴

The use of linguistic procedures thus offered stylistics both an affinity with an established discipline and the possibility of founding the description and interpretation of style upon the basis of science.

Stylistic analysis of a non-literary text for instance means studying in detail the features of a passage from such genres as: instructing, informing warning or persuading. The method of analysis can be seen as looking at the text in great detail, observing what the parts are, and saying what function they perform in the context of the passage.

Let us analyse the language of the following warning sign (a non-literary text) which says : *NO SMOKING*. After careful reading, we might point out the following observations:

The text is a command.

It is written in the imperative mode.

There is no punctuation.

The text lacks a subject and a verb. Of course, they are implied (THERE IS).

Capital letters have been used for emphasis.

Simple vocabulary is used to suit wide audience.

Extreme compression for rapid comprehension.

Form completely suited to function and audience.

As a conclusion, we can say that this method claims to be rather scientific. It is a useful discipline which encourages logical thought and can be applied to a variety of subjects.

1.1.3 Literary Stylistics

Stylistic analysis in literary studies is usually made for the purpose of commenting on quality and meaning in a text. It is practiced as part of understanding the possible meanings in a text and it reveals the good qualities of the writing. Leech and Short (1981) state that the purpose of literary stylistics is to investigate the relation between the writer's artistic achievement and how it is achieved through language. Therefore, for a linguist, the question is *why* does a writer choose to express himself in a particular way? Whereas for a critic the question is *how* and not *why*? They maintain,

The aim of literary stylistics is to be relational in a more interesting sense than that already mentioned: to relate the critic's concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguistic description. (We use the term 'appreciation' to comprehend both critical evaluation and interpretation, although it is with interpretation that stylistics is more directly concerned).⁵

According to Leech and Short, therefore, stylistic analysis is a normal part of literary studies in that it combines between the linguistic description and aesthetic appreciation. They introduce the reader to the concept of style, stressing the importance of choice in the creation of effect.

Other stylisticians maintain that detailed attention to the language of texts can explain how effects are achieved and interpretations consulted, as well as provide further insights into the meanings of literary works. To illustrate this, let us analyse the following poem⁶:

Whose woods these are *I* think *I* know.

His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch *his* woods fill up with snow.

According to Widdowson (1975), after analyzing the language , the first thing we might observe is the use of the pronominal forms. *I* is repeated twice in the first line . In the second line and the third line , *his* is repeated twice again. In addition, if we consider the relative possessive pronoun , *whose* ,at the very beginning of the poem , this might lead us to think that the theme of the poem has something to do with possession. Moreover, being possessed in the same way, *his house* and *his woods* might lead us to think that woods and houses are equivalent and belong to the same kind of thing.

So what do we conclude from such literary stylistics? In fact , stylistics may well be popular because it regards literature as simply part of language and therefore it opens doors for further analyses and interpretations.

As I have already mentioned , stylistic analysis in linguistics refers to the identification of patterns of usage in speech and writing whereas stylistic analysis in literary studies is usually made for the purpose of commenting on quality and meaning in a text. And in both cases, an extremely detailed attention is paid to the text. But which one is most prominent? In fact, both of them are necessary. Leech and Short (1981)argue :

There is a cyclic motion whereby linguistic observation stimulates or modifies literary insight, and whereby literary insight in its turn stimulates further linguistic observation.⁷

Stylistics ,therefore, integrates linguistic form and literary function in one academic discipline. It applies linguistics to literature in the hope of arriving at analyses which are more broadly based, accurate and objective.

1.2 Style

1.2.1 Defining Style

According to the Stylistic critic, style means simply how something is expressed, which can be studied in all language, aesthetic and non-aesthetic (literary and the non-literary).In fact, for many stylisticians , style is a very ambiguous word. Asking the question, what is style? is almost a philosophical attempt, comparable with what is truth? Or what is personality ? A simple definition may suggest that style is a way of doing something. Leech and Short argue :

In its most general interpretation, the word style has a fairly uncontroversial meaning: it refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on.⁸

Emmanuel Ngara (1982) backs up this idea but favours the social context because, for him , literature is about man, society and the universe. Furthermore, The linguistic choices are determined by the period , the place , the culture and the political conditions existing at time of writing (in this context, one should note the difference between the European and the African cultures) . He says:

The importance of context to literary composition and criticism has been emphasized by Ernst Fischer, the Marxist critic.To him the social context

in which a work of art is written, what he calls ‘the social element’ is crucial: “An analysis of style, however intelligent it may be and however brilliant its insight into specific problems and details, is bound to fail unless it recognizes that content- that is to say, in the last instance, the social elements- is the decisive style –forming factor in art.’ So to do justice to any work of literature, we must study ‘the social conditions, movements and conflicts of the period, the class relationships and struggles and the resulting ideas’.⁹

As mentioned before, it is difficult to find any general agreement about just what style is. Instead, there is a variety of ideas, and an even wider variety of terms people use to describe any particular style. Style has been an object of interest in modern times for literary studies, linguistics, and stylistics. In this context, I have found it useful to quote the following definitions by Crystal and Davy. For them, four senses of the term “style” need to be distinguished :¹⁰

“Style may refer to some of all the language habits of one person –as when we talk of Shakespeare’s style (or styles), or the style of James Joyce.”

“Style may refer to some or all the language habits shared by a group of people at one time, or over of a period of time, as when we talk about the style of the Augustan poets, the style of Old English ‘heroic’ poetry.

“Style is given a more restricted meaning when it is used in an evaluative sense, referring to the effectiveness of a mode of expression. [...] there is no primary reference to the formal characteristics of the language used, and hence this sense is in no way descriptive and objective, as in the first senses described above.”

“Partly overlapping with the three senses just outlined is the widespread use of the word ‘style ’ to refer solely to literary language. [...] This sense is partially evaluative, partially descriptive, and stylistics here would not concern itself with uses of language outside that of literature.”

According to Crystal and Davy, a linguistic approach is best appropriate to have a clearer idea about style. They even exclude the emotive and the literary definitions. Therefore, they favour the first two definitions of style.

However, a rhetorical definition of style suggests that style is a relation between what is said and how it is said (a relation between form and content). This definition presupposes that effect is a feature of style since rhetoric is the art of persuading and influencing people by effective delivery. This might suggest that a relation between form and content that has no effect on the reader or the listener is therefore stylistically irrelevant. In fact , style is the way in which, in a particular situation, the writer succeeds to give his words an intended effect. And it is in this context that stylistics tries to explore how readers interact with the language especially literary texts in order to explain how we understand, and are affected by texts when we read them.

Style therefore is the way writers shape language to communicate ideas. Components of style include simile and metaphor, shifts in tone and register, use of irony and humour, sentence structure, repetition, alliteration, punctuation, diction, unity, emphasis, and syntax. There are many types of styles, from very casual to quite formal. The most successful styles are suited to the topic. Good writers also shape their styles to the needs and preferences of their audiences. For example, the style of a magazine article about poetry would be very different from the style of a speech written for a television audience. Some people believe that style indirectly reveals the writer’s

character and worldview. However, it is difficult to judge a writer's personality based upon his or her style.

1.2.2 Foregrounding

The Russian Formalists and The Prague Structuralists have developed a new way to approach a literary text .It is called *Foregrounding Theory*. This view suggests that some parts of texts have more effect on readers than others in terms of interpretation, because the textual parts were linguistically deviant (unexpected) or specially patterned in some way, thus making them psychologically salient (or foregrounded) for readers.

According to The Russian formalists, the purpose of art and literature is to defamiliarize the familiar, and by defamiliarizing a work of art or a text we make it stand out from the norm, it becomes foregrounded. Foregrounding theory was seen as a means of explaining the difference between poetic and everyday language. It has become widely accepted as one of the foundations of stylistics.

Foregrounding can be achieved in one of two ways, either via linguistic parallelism and repetition of linguistic patterns or by deviation from the linguistic norm. Parallelism can be defined as unexpected regularity within a text.The most common way of introducing this extra patterning is by repeating linguistic structures more often than we would normally expect to make parts of texts parallel with one another. In repetition, the lexical item is being repeated. Note that the repetition can be achieved through the same lexical item or through other synonyms and words.

The second method to produce foregrounding in a text is through linguistic deviation. If parallelism is unexpected regularity, then deviation is unexpected irregularity. Deviating from accepted norms or expectations also produces a

foregrounding effect. Parallelism and deviation can be grammatical, graphological, lexical, semantic and phonological. And the important point here is that anything that is foregrounded is highly interpretable and more memorable. As Leech and Short put it, foregrounding, or motivated deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norms, has been claimed to be a basic principle of aesthetic communication. They argue:

The aesthetic exploitation of language takes the form of surprising a reading into a fresh awareness of, and sensitivity to, the linguistic medium which is normally taken for granted as an 'automatised' background of communication.¹¹

Therefore, if foregrounding occurs in a text, it is important for us to assume that every element of that text has a possible interpretative significance. So, a stylistic analysis of any piece of writing will enable us to explain the foregrounding within it methodically, and will also show how stylistics can be a valuable tool for the literary critic.

1.2.3 Oral Style

Oral style is linked directly to oral tradition, which is my subject matter indeed. Many researchers see that oral style is different from the literate style in that the literate style is based on writing and print communications whereas the oral style is based on sounds and verbal communications, in general. Ferdinand de Saussure has already made a difference between what he calls *langue* (written word) and *parole* (spoken word). *Langue* then characterizes the literate style whereas *parole* characterizes the oral style. In addition, he thinks that writing symbolizes spoken language in visible form.

Walter J. Ong, however, makes a clear distinction between literate cultures and oral cultures which I shall expose in detail in my next headings. He notes that oral traditions are part of literature. He explains:

One might argue that the term 'literature', though devised primarily for works in writing, has simply been extended to include related phenomena such as traditional oral narrative in cultures untouched by writing.¹²

Oral cultures, though illiterate, produce their own literature which he names 'oral literature'. In addition, he cites new styles and ways of expressing one's ideas and thoughts. He even relates oral traditions to sounds to say:

We might refer to all purely oral art as 'epos', which has the same Proto-indo-European root, *wekw-*, as the Latin word *vox* and its English equivalent 'voice', and thus is grounded firmly in the vocal, the oral. Oral performances would thus be felt as 'voicings', which is what they are.¹³

In his book, *Orality and Literacy*, Ong (1982) also states that the African oral art forms are different from the European and that the African epic and the ancient Greek epic are to some extent similar to each other. He gives much analysis of the Homer's poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He contrasts the views that see the poems as purely styled as oral traditions and those who see that the poems were so well structured and organized in a way that could be produced only by literate poets.

As stated above, therefore, there is a certain reciprocity between the African oral tradition and the Greek oral tradition. Ong, mentions Chinua Achebe's novels as an example and representation of the African oral tradition in West Africa in particular and Africa in general. He notes that the Oral Style is varied, flexible, expressive and rich of formulaic expressions. Orality alone has the capacity to voice instant sensations, impressions and feelings between individuals, and also social modes, fashions and ideas as they are felt in the community. And this is largely due to its roots in face-to-face communication. He states:

Fictional works such Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease* (1961), which draws directly on Ibo oral tradition in West Africa, provide abundant instances of thought patterns of orally educated characters who move in these oral, mnemonically tooled grooves, as the speakers reflect, with high intelligence and sophistication, on the situations in which they find themselves involved.¹⁴

However, The novel is an imported genre in Africa. It belongs to the European literary tradition. To make it feel at home in an alien land, modern African novelists rely on both the European model of fiction writing and the indigenous model of oral narratives which is a mixture of traditional epics, proverbs, legends, myths, and metaphors. They foreground African oral traditions by allowing the traditional methods of oral literature include European techniques. With this type of intertextuality, therefore, most especially the intertextual links between oral and written texts, the African writers always participate in defending Africa's real history and fighting colonialism.

Despite intertextuality, we can state the differences between oral style and literate style. The following features characterize oral style:

- High incidence of simple sentences.
- Overuse of coordinating words (“so”, “well”, “and”, “then”) as sentence introducers or joiners.
- High occurrence of nonstandard or regional pronunciation and spellings.
- Overuse of indigenous (especially rural country) vocabulary.
- Story-telling situations.
- Overuse of definite determiners and reference items (“the”, “this”) with noun phrases not known or introduced to the reader.
- High occurrence of reduced words and contractions.
- High occurrence of one- and two-syllable words.

The following example is taken from Achebe’s third novel, *Arrow of God*.

The text suggests that it is an oral style:

Once there was a great wrestler whose back has never known the ground. He wrestled from village to village until he had thrown every man in the world. Then he decided that he must go and wrestle in the land of spirits, and become champion there as well. He went and beat every spirit that came forward. Some had seven heads, some ten; but he beat them all. [...] he gave a challenge to the spirits to bring out their best and strongest wrestler. So they sent him his personal god, a little wiry spirit who seized him with one hand and smashed him on the stony earth.¹⁵

The first thing one might notice is the word “Once” which suggests a story telling situation. Stories are extremely important in oral cultures. Not only they explain the culture of a people but also their histories. The second thing we might notice is the overuse of the coordinating words such as “ so”, “well”, “and”, “then. This suggests that oral people tend to use simple sentences rather than complicated sentences which might slow down communication or cause misunderstanding between them. The other thing we might notice concerns diction. The vocabulary used in the text is that of indigenous people (wrestler, village, land of spirits, personal god, seven heads).In addition, the story is a form of epic and myth. It is epic in the sense that the hero is a great champion and fights till he dies and myth in the sense that the hero not only fights super power beings (spirits) but also challenges his personal god which causes his destruction at the end. The idea is well expressed through the repetition of the lexical items “wrestle”, “beat”, “spirit” and “wrestler”.

In an essay called “*The African Writer and the English Language*”¹⁶, Achebe contrasts a paragraph from his third novel, *Arrow of God*, with a second version to illustrate his approach to the use of the English language to demonstrate the difference between oral style and literate style. In this paragraph from the book, the Chief Priest in the novel tells one of his sons why he must go to the Christian church:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask, dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow.

Achebe then offers the following alternate version:

I am sending you as my representative among these people - just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight

The first version suggests that it is an oral style whereas the second a literate style as might be written and understood by European writers and readers. There are differences in style, tone, and literary devices. The first version contains oral and literary elements, simile, proverbial saying and Ibo idioms (mask, spirit, dancing) but they are removed from the second version.

1.3 Oral Culture

1.3.1 What is Orality?

Throughout the following discussion, I shall draw heavily upon Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* (1982). Walter Ong has defined an oral culture as a culture before the introduction of script. Elsewhere, he has written that "primary oral cultures" are those which are "untouched by writing in any form" (p.9). He states:

I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality'. It is 'primary' by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print. (Ong, 1982, p.11)

Ong's lifework was the exploration of the history of language technologies, from the stage of primary orality, to chirographic or manuscript

culture, to typographic or print culture, and then to our own time and the secondary orality of the Electronic Age.

There are people who think that orality is not only the original but the natural mode of existence of language. These people argue that in their natural form, words are sounds, not marks on a piece of paper. When language was just oral, that was the reality. Besides, Knowledge and traditions in ancient cultures were preserved by memorization and repetition and passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth.

Oral tradition¹⁷ is generally associated with old forms of poetry and thus is also defined as follows:

As a rule, it is the product of illiterate or semi-literate societies. It is usually sung or chanted and is the earliest of all poetry, in the sense that it precedes written poetry.¹⁸

Oral literature can spread information rapidly through a culture. So it serves an evolutionary function and enhances survival by conserving information and heightening the senses. Here is another definition:

Tradition has two different meanings. The first is taken from shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 'Transmission of statements, beliefs, rules, customs, or the like, especially by words of mouth, or by practice without writing' and the second is described by T.S.Eliot 'All those religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger'.¹⁹

The poetic and narrative forms of oral tradition among those peoples living in the past are immensely rich and varied. They include myths, praise

songs, epic poetry, folktales, riddles, proverbs, magical spells, and oral history.

1.3.2 Nature and Function of Orality

In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong suggests differences between primary oral cultures, those that do not have a system of writing, and chirographic (writing) cultures to look at how the shift from an oral-based stage of consciousness to one dominated by writing and print changes the way we humans think. His approach to the subject is both synchronic in that he looks at cultures that coexist at a certain point in time, and diachronic in that he discusses the change in the West from being oral-based to chirographic. In addition to identifying fundamental differences in the thought processes of the two types of culture, he comments on the current emergence in Western society of what he calls a second orality. This second orality, dominated by electronic modes of communication (such as television and telephone communications), incorporates elements from both the chirographic mode and the orality mode.

Many people confuse illiteracy with orality. Illiteracy simply means an absence of the ability to read and write. Orality, however, refers to the sophisticated communicational skills used by cultures with no need for writing. Orality is not spoken communication, as opposed to written communication. Orality is a communication style that is highly corporeal, context bound, and interpersonal. Orality is also a term used to describe these skills when they are used in cultures that have writing.

Oral culture had a unique mode of interpersonal communication that was integrated with verbo-motor skills or what Ong calls “effective use of words”. The ethnography of speaking or ethnopoetics school interprets orality by

entering into the social milieu of the oral performance. Personal associations and experiences become part of the interpretive process. This school is the most proficient at preserving the vocal delivery of the performance as well as the cultural ambience at the time of the telling.

Studies of oral tradition are primarily works of ethnography. When studying orality some researchers focus on the performance of the spoken word, others on situational aspects of the oral event. Still others make an issue of the interaction between speaker and listener. When writing about orality, a researcher must first conceptualize the oral event in some way and then attempt to represent it in a text.

1.4 Characteristics of Primary Oral Culture

Walter Ong (1982) sees clear distinctions between orality and literacy but does not hold either as superior. He proposes that orality has its own psychodynamics which he draws from former works to validate his claims. These oral psychodynamics form habits of thought and behavior that are reliably seen throughout the world's oral traditions. Ong demonstrates that oral thought moves and constructs itself by adding image upon image. It tends to group things in wholes rather than deconstruct them. It also functions by building upon or utilizing preexisting patterns of thought, language, and behavior, and in doing so, it revitalizes and preserves those patterns. Ong states that oral thought remains close to the human life-world. It thinks in context with the situation and resources immediately at hand. It is empathetic and participatory, rather than objectively distanced.

In chapter three (p.31) , Ong provides a list of nine the characteristics of the way people of a primary oral culture think and express themselves through

narrative and discusses them in light of memory. The characteristics of thought and expression are as follows:

1. Expression is additive rather than subordinate.
2. It is aggregative rather than analytic.
3. It tends to be redundant or “copious.”
4. There is a tendency for it to be conservative.
5. Out of necessity, thought is conceptualized and then expressed with relatively close reference to the human lifeworld.
6. Expression is agonistically toned.
7. It is empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced.
8. It is Homeostatic.
9. It is situational rather than abstract.

All of the above characteristics contribute to the saliency and, consequently, increase the memorability of an utterance. Ong explains that this would be especially important to those trying to memorize a poem or a tale because, whereas people from a literate society can always refer back to a written text, those from an oral society must be able to process and memorize bits of spoken, otherwise irretrievable information quickly. Utterances which fit the above description would tend to leave a strong impression on the hearer and facilitate recollection.

I shall now indicate some of the major characteristics of primary orality and which will be the focus of my analysis of *Things Fall Apart*.

1.4.1 The Use of "and": Additive rather than Subordinative

Ong points out that oral structure is additive and literate structure is subordinate. The real insight of this contrast is in the recognition that the

additive structure builds one thought upon another through the use of the conjunction “*and*”. Each thought is equally present and adds to the meaning and momentum of the last. Through this method, the additive style creates a rhythm. That rhythm tends to engage the body, creating an active presence that is an expressive dimension of the phrase itself. This is quite different from a literate structure that organizes the phrases in subordinate relationship to one another. Such an organization makes the sentence its own object of reference.

Ong has already explained the difference between the additive “and” and the subordinative “and” by comparing two translations of Genesis from the Bible,

1- In the beginning God created heaven **and** earth. **And** the earth was void **and** empty, **And** darkness was on the face of the deep; **and** the spirit of God moved over the waters. **And** God said: Be light made. **And** light was made. **And** God saw the light that it was good; **and** he divided the light from the darkness. **And** he called the light Day, **and** the darkness Night; **and** there was evening **and** morning one day.

“And” is used 13 times in the space of six sentences. In the contemporary version of the Bible, and is used only five times, and clauses are joined in a subordinate fashion characteristic of a literate mode of writing .

2- In the beginning, **when** God created the heavens **and** the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, **and** darkness covered the abyss, **while** a mighty wind swept over the waters. **Then** God said, ‘Let there be light’, **and** there was light. God saw how good the light was. God **then** separated the light ‘day’ **and** the darkness he called ‘night’. **Thus** evening came, **and** morning followed-the first day. (Ong, 1982, p.37).

In literate culture, we have punctuation and the resulting syntax which contribute to more elaborate representations of words. In fact, unlike oral culture, literate culture, particularly academic culture, demands an element of complexity in communication: a move away from repetition and spoken fluidity. As Ong suggests, the word “and”, in a literate culture, needs to be replaced by a multitude of other transitional words, including “and”, “when”, “thus”, “then”, “while” and so forth to gain a level of desired complexity.

1.4.2 Mnemonics and Formulas

Ong observes that oral expression is aggregative or holistic rather than analytic. In other words, rather than analyzing concepts and searching deeply the philosophical problems involved, oral expression will simply add to what has been said with examples and additional information by using slogans, clichés and formulas such as the “beautiful princess” and not the “princess”. Ong gives the following definition for clichés and formulas:

I shall understand formula and formulary and formulaic here as referring quite generically to more or less exactly repeated set phrases or set expressions (such as proverbs) in verse or prose which do have a function in oral culture more crucial and pervasive than any they may have in a writing or print or electronic culture.(Ong,1982,p.26)

In oral culture, thus, mnemonics are essential for recalling and retelling tales. Mnemonics come in the forms of patterns, repetitions, rhythm, literary tools such as alliteration, descriptive words, meter, and other formulary devices. Lengthy oral thought required not only mnemonics, but also

physiological responses such as breathing, articulation, inflection, gesture, and other forms of physical expression.

According to Ong, the key factor in memory skill is the ability to “think memorable thoughts” by the employment of mnemonic devices. He argues :

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulatory expressions, in standard thematic settings, in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. Serious thought is intertwined with memory systems. Mnemonic needs determine even syntax (Ong,1982, p.34)

Each of the acoustic and structural devices which Ong's lists in the quotation above contribute towards creating rhythm, which aids recall, but each in their own right act as mnemonic aids.

Because of their efficiency as mnemonic devices, formulaic expressions occur with high frequency in oral cultures, and to some degree fulfill the same function as writing in literate societies. Ong points out:

In an oral culture, to think through something in non-formulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms, even if it were possible, would be a waste of time, for such thought once worked through, could never be recovered, with any effectiveness, as it could be with the aid of writing .

(Ong,1982, p. 35)

The formulae and themes are themselves rhythmic and patterned compounds of smaller, or shorter, sonic devices. They are groups of words or stereotype phrases which convey an idea and which are regularly employed under the same or similar circumstances. And themes are groups of ideas in which the focus is on things and events rather than words.

1.4.2.1 Proverbs

Proverbs are wise sayings. Ong defines them as “formulaic sayings”. They store knowledge and serve as a mnemonic for recalling experience. Besides, they are summaries to preserve ancestral wisdom and experiences that are part of the shared knowledge of the community of oral people. They are also used to educate children, argue legal matters, decorate oratory, give ordinary advice and to indicate irony and sarcasm. Furthermore, they have other additional functions as provoking others to engage in conversations. Ong adds:

“Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat: utterance of one proverb or riddle challenges hearers to top it with a more apposite or a contradictory one”.Ong,1982,p.44)

Achebe notes that that the integration of proverbs into the narrative is similar to the pattern of African epic .Thus it is a stylistic or aesthetic decision, not just an insight into the culture. Besides, the concentration of meaning and evocative power of proverbs communicate a poetic quality to Achebe's prose.

1.4.2.2 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of a consonant sound especially at the beginning of words. It is used for emphasis of the repeated word or idea, since repetition has a reinforcing effect. Like rhyme, alliteration is a great help to memory. It is a powerful device that prose has borrowed.

Some literary critics call the repetition of any sounds alliteration. However, there are specialized terms for other sound-repetitions. **Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds as in **Big Ben**. **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds as in **Rome and home**.

1.4.2.3 Onomatopoeia

In addition to alliteration, songs, and music, oral expression is full of onomatopoeic or echoic words. This explains that oral people give much importance to sound in absence of the written word. Onomatopoeia is the use of words or phrases that sound like the things to which they refer like the **meow** of a cat or the **quack** of a duck. Ong, however, names this characteristic as “the interiority of sound”. He says:

I can rap a box to find whether it is empty or full or a wall to find whether it is hollow or solid. Or I can ring a coin to learn whether it is a silver or lead”.(Ong,1982,pp.71-72)

Elsewhere, Leech also argues that there is a direct link between a particular sound and a particular reference such as the link between the /s/ sound and the sighing (whispering) of the wind. He states :

Onomatopoeia is on stronger ground if it is appreciated that the effects is generally a result of phonological features acting in combination with one another, and in combination with meaning”.²⁰

In addition to onomatopoeic words, the combination of certain consonant sounds may create a special effect. Raymond Chapman (1973)states:

More subtle is the associative effect of certain English consonant clusters such as the quick movement suggested by /fl/ in *fly, flee, flash, flick, fling*; or the hard breaking /kr/ in *crash, crack, crush, crunch, crumble*.²¹

1.4.2.4 Poetry and Songs

An important feature of oral traditions is their close link with music. Poetry exists almost exclusively in chanted form or as song. While some songs are sung only by specific people or in ritual contexts, a vast number of songs are composed by both men, women, and even children and are sung without restriction. Much of poetry and songs serve to recall or recount events from the past. We have also to acknowledge that sound is a pleasure, and something innate in human beings. We like to sing, and chants that approach song, as Ngara notes, are moving and socially cohesive. He argues: “songs, folktales, and praise poems have a social function”.²²

In most African languages there are numerous laments or dirges, love songs, children’s chants, war poems, and poems of praise and abuse. Drums and horns are often used to communicate or emphasize the tonalities in some African languages, and transmission of poetry by drums is widespread in Congo, Ghana, and Nigeria. In all traditions that are sung, mnemonic aid is

found in the melody and rhythm of the song. Drum rhythms are used as mnemonic aids as well. Concerning African drum talk, Ong points :“It takes on the average around eight times as many words to say something on the drums as in the spoken language.” (Ong,1982,p.40)

1.4.2.5 Code Switching : Use of Ibo Words

Code-switching occurs when speakers shift from one language or variety of language to another, usually in the course of a single conversation. For example, speakers might switch back and forth from English to Ibo or from Ibo to English, as it is the case in *Things Fall Apart*. Sociolinguists are interested in discovering if there is a pattern to the use of varieties in different situations .Is, for example, one language or language variety used to express emotions, or evaluations, while the other is used to relate facts more neutrally?

One prominent method that Achebe uses for convincing the Europeans of Nigeria's potential was writing his novel in English and then using the African language within passages. He uses his English knowledge for destroying the enemy (the colonizer) from within, while his native language forces readers to look outside of their constraints and identify more with the African culture.

1.4.2.6 Similes and Metaphors

Like proverbs, similes and metaphors are highly used in oral cultures. The depth of one's membership in a culture can be judged by the richness of one's use and assimilation of its metaphors. In oral cultures, most similes and metaphors refer to nature and real situations. As Ong observes, primary oral cultures are “close to the human lifeworld”. Whereas written texts tend to allow one to talk about philosophical ideals, principles, and scientific laws, oral expressions tend to revolve around the living human world, even the gods

act like humans. Everything is in harmony with nature. Leech states :
“Metaphor and simile serve to animate and humanize what is inanimate: the engine stumbles[...]”²³.

Simile compares how two things are similar using the words “as ” or “like” to make the connection between the two things that are being compared.

Metaphor compares two items to one another. It does not use “like” or “as” in the comparison like a simile. For example,

- ‘The man is like a lion’ is a simile, while
- ‘The man is a lion’ is a metaphor.

1.4.3 Redundant or Copious Structure

Walter Ong explains that the oral style is redundant and copious (p. 39). Redundancy appears to help the mind maintain a continuous train of thought. The reader, Ong points out, does not need redundancies because the eyes may scan back over a passage as many times as needed, and only when it is needed. In oral performance, however, words fade into silence rendering them unavailable for further analysis. To keep listeners entrained, the oral style must build its phrases to echo what was said moments before, and it must provide multiple interpretations to animate its message in the mind of the listener. Two examples of this type of oral structure are repetition and apposition.

1.4.3.1 Repetition

I have already discussed the notion of parallelism and repetition as stylistic device in a previous heading. In fact, the redundancy that literate culture avoids is highly effective in oral cultures. Redundancy build’s ideas

one upon another by repeating themes and by using vocal rhythms and synonyms. It is seen throughout the oral tradition. For Ong, redundancy is “repetition of the just said” (p.40). He points out that redundancy is favoured especially before a large audience :

Not everyone in a large audience understands every word a speaker utters, if only because of acoustical problems. It is advantageous for the speaker to say the same thing, or equivalently the same thing, two or three times. If you miss the ‘not only...’ you can supply it by inference from ‘the but also...’ .(Ong,1982,p.40)

Repetition is understandably favored in oral communication because of the inability of the hearer to go back and study what has already been explained. Therefore, almost as a didactic tool, repetition ensures the reception and comprehension of the message in the absence of a written text. It is also defined as follows:

Repetition is an essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose .It may consist of sounds, particular syllables and words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns , ideas ,allusions and shapes .Thus refrain, assonance, rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia are frequent in repetition.²⁴

Repetition which is part of the rhythmic pattern, can be created within the text by use of assonance and alliteration, synonym and synonymous parallelism, and recurrent phraseology (formulae) and themes.

Halliday and Hasan have classified types of repetitions under the term “reiteration” and defined it as:

Reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition item , at one end of the scale ; the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item , at the other end of the scale ; and a number of things in between - the use of a synonym , near synonym , or superordinate.²⁵

1.4.3.2 Apposition

In oral style, rather than having long, complicated sentences, there is a tendency toward shorter, simpler sentences or longer sentences composed of relatively simpler phrases. As part of this concept, orality also tends to favour appositions, definitions, and clauses.

Appositives are similar in effect. An apposition is the close placement of words or expressions where the second explains or defines the first and becoming somehow equivalent. Appositives build up layers of association creating what Ong calls a “copious” description. In the same way Crystal and Davy (1969) clarify:

A further way of gaining specificity and descriptive details is to place in apposition to a nominal group another which adds to or expands the information contained in the first.²⁶

Appositives which add necessary new information are called “restrictive” (limiting). They identify the noun more closely and should not be set off by commas from the rest of the sentence whereas appositives which add no necessary new information (but provides more information about the main subject) are called “non-restrictive”. This type should be set off by commas

from the rest of the sentence.(Leech, *A Communicative Grammar of English*,p.204)

You can use dashes instead of commas if you want to emphasize the appositive. We can take the following examples:

- 1- My brother Ted studies German.
- 2- My brother , Ted , studies German.

In the first example, “The restrictive” appositive *Ted* implies that I have one specific brother who studies German, while my other brothers do not. Therefore, *Ted* is essential to the meaning of the sentence. In the second example, however, The “non-restrictive” appositive *Ted* implies that I only have one brother whose name is *Ted* and he studies German. The word *Ted* is equivalent and in apposition to *my brother* .It provides additional information but not essential.

1.4.4 Storytelling Situations

According to Ong, the fourth characteristic of orality is that it is “conservative” and “traditionalistic”. In this respect , people of oral cultures tend to devote more resources to retain much of their society’s spoken knowledge and tales. Therefore, One of the most common forms of oral tradition is the story. Storytelling is an art passed down from one generation to another. Just as with any form of art, practice is the key. The storyteller must be able to gain the full attention of the listeners; otherwise part of the lesson will be lost. The passage of lessons by word of mouth leaves them exposed to different interpretations and vanishing forever. The story can cease to exist if it is forgotten; because there are no backup copies (like modern day disks, and books), the people’s memories are the keepers of the scripts.

People are taught many lessons through stories passed down from their ancestors. Culture is generally transmitted from generation to generation through stories, myths, rituals and ceremonies. Oral tradition is the spoken relation and preservation, from one generation to the next, of a people's cultural history and ancestry. It was traditionally used to transmit religious beliefs because it conveys cultural tradition.

We can classify stories into folktales like fairytales, animal tales or fables (synonyms of fables include parables and allegories), myth and legends, and epics.

The most fascinating tales are legends and myths which attempt to teach why things are found as they are, for example, why the elephant has a long nose. While no one labels entertainment as a function of folklore, it seems that one of the primary purposes served when a story is told is to interest, and provide fun or excitement. Fables or animal tales are more simple in form. Those with more complex form are called fairy tales. Another kind of tales is epics or the tales of human heroes .

1.4.5 Irony

According to J.A.Cuddon (1977), irony is a form of expression, through words (verbal irony) or events (irony of situation), conveying a reality different from and usually opposite to appearance or expectation.²⁷ A writer may say the opposite of what he means, create a reversal between expectation and its fulfillment, or give the audience knowledge that a character lacks, making the character's words have meaning to the audience not perceived by the character. This could take, for example, the form of saying "Oh great weather!" when there is a rainstorm, (opposite).

Irony is the most common and most efficient technique of the satirist, because it is an instrument of truth, provides wit and humor, and is usually at least indirectly critical, in that it decreases, scorns, or attacks. *Things Fall Apart* abounds with ironies which will be pointed out during the course of my analysis.

Finally, I am interested in the meeting point between “orality” and “literacy” to see how the same language that provides a native English speaker with means to tell his life, may be re-adjusted, modified, and bent to express an African writer’s , non-native speaker of English, view of life.

1.5 African Traditions: Oral and Written

The relationship between oral and written traditions and in particular between oral and modern written literatures is one of great complexity and not a matter of simple evolution. Modern African literatures were born in the educational systems imposed by colonialism, with models drawn from Europe rather than existing African traditions. The modern African writer thus uses tradition as subject matter rather than as a means of effecting a continuity with past cultural practice.

African literature was mainly oral until the twentieth century and oral traditions of proverbs, mythological narratives, and poetry persist and influence contemporary writing. There is a wide variety of narrative, dramatic, and lyric forms.

Most oral societies have no written literature, but may possess a rich and varied oral traditions such as folk epics, folklore and folksongs that effectively constitute an oral literature. Oral literature, including stories, dramas, riddles, histories, myths, songs, proverbs, and other expressions, is frequently employed to educate and entertain children. Oral histories, myths, and

proverbs additionally serve to remind whole communities of their ancestors' heroic deeds, their past, and the precedents for their customs and traditions. Essential to oral literature is a concern for presentation and oratory. Folktale tellers use call-response techniques as well.

The reworking of forms of indigenous folk traditions is a deliberate and necessary attempt at indigenizing the novel, which is an imported genre. The African novelists integrate traditional elements from their cultural backgrounds into their novels so as to give them a local flavor and transmit a multitude of African cultural artifacts. This is desirable, since it fills their works with a certain identity code, cultural signification and pedagogical strength.

The use of oral history has been an important element in West African culture and continues to influence modern literature today. Oral history preserved the memory and details of West Africa's vibrant past through the spoken word. Writing as a means of communicating is a relatively recent event in this region. West Africans did have an elaborate writing system early in history, but it was not in popular use so the use of oral history became quite important. Many European scholars mistakenly saw African oral history or orature as primitive and unsophisticated because they compared the art of oral storytelling to the written works of Europe.

The vastness in size and population of Nigeria gave it an advantage over smaller countries. In the 1950s, a large readership made up of clerks and small traders and a steadily increasing number of high schools students developed in Nigeria, and this readership enabled the emergence of Onitsha market literatures. Ibadan college, founded in 1957, produced some of the writers that came to the forefront in the 1960s.

The distinctive mark of written African literature in European languages is the striving to attain the condition of oral expression, even within the boundaries established by Western literary conventions. African novelists more often than not draw heavily from the oral traditions of their societies. In the construction of their novels, certain traditional forms of expression are reconstructed to utilize the prose works as an effective weapon for cultural pedagogy.

Today, it is believed that the study of oral history is very important when looking at West African culture because so many African writers today still borrow techniques and ideas from their oral traditions. Other writers often introduce oral narrative proverbs, myths, folktales, or ballads into their written work. For example, Achebe, who is popularly regarded as one of the fathers of the African novel in English, was urged to write in part by his desire to teach his readers that before the coming of Europeans, African got their oral literatures. In *Things Fall Apart* (which is my case study), he includes many aspects of Ibo culture which I shall analyse in detail in my next chapters.

In this chapter , I have tried to give a brief introduction to the notion of style and stylistics and ways of studying orality especially according to Walter Ong. I have shown how in oral cultures, a number or series of skills has been developed to intensify the human capacity to memorize information and traditions in such a way that the whole cycle of transmission, preservation is facilitated. These skills form an integrated system built upon the fact that memory can be stimulated by various kinds of rhythm, whether the rhythm of acoustic patterning of speech, and melody, or the rhythm of the repetitive or antithetic juxtaposition of ideas, or the rhythm of formulaic and thematic structuring of the text. All these element are included in what is called a “primary oral culture”.

Notes and references

- ¹ - G.Leech & M.Short, *Style in Fiction ,a Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 1981, p.13
- ² - *Ibid*
- ³ -Widdowson , H.G, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, Longman, London, 1975, p.3
- ⁴ - Crystal and Davy, *Investigating English Style*, Longman, London, pp.10-11
- ⁵ - See *Style in Fiction*, p.13
- ⁶ - Widdowson , H.G, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, Longman, London, 1975, p.3
- ⁷ - G.Leech & M.Short ,*Style in Fiction ,a Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* ,1981, p.13
- ⁸ - *Ibid.*, p.10
- ⁹ - See *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* :London, Heinemann, pp.19-20
- ¹⁰ - See *Investigating English Style*, pp.9-10
- ¹¹ - G.Leech & M.Short ,*Style in Fiction ,a Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, p.28
- ¹² - *Orality and Literacy,The Technologizing of the Word*, Methuen, London, 1982. p.12
- ¹³ - *Ibid.*, pp.13-14
- ¹⁴ - *Ibid.*, p.35
- ¹⁵ - Chinua Achebe , *Arrow of God* , 1964, pp.26-27
- ¹⁶ - *Morning yet on Creation Day* , 1975 , pp.61-62
- ¹⁷ - Note that , in this paper ,oral tradition ,oral culture and orality are three similar concepts.
- ¹⁸ - J. A. Cuddon , *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* , 1977, p.617
- ¹⁹ - Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, 1975, p.31
- ²⁰ - See G.Leech & M.Short ,*Style in Fiction*, p.46
- ²¹ - Raymon Chapman, *Linguistics and Literature*, p.38
- ²² - *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* :London, Heinemann , p.27
- ²³ - G.Leech & M.Short ,*Style in Fiction* , p.95
- ²⁴ - J. A. Cuddon , *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* ,1977, p.742
- ²⁵ - Halliday and Hasan *Cohesion in English*, 1976 , p.278
- ²⁶ - See *Investigating English Style*, p141
- ²⁷ - J. A. Cuddon , *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* , 1977, p.430

CHAPTER TWO

Literary Forms

2.1 Proverbs

2.2 Folktales and Storytelling Situations

2.2.1 Epic Heroism

2.2.2 Animal Fables

2.2.2.1 Little Bird Nza Tale

2.2.2.2 Tortoise and the Birds: A trickster Tale

2.2.2.3 Mother Kite Myth

2.2.3 Folktales and Myth

2.2.3.1 The Abame Story

2.2.3.2 Quarrel Between Earth and Sky

2.2.3.3 The Quarrel Between Earth and Sky

2.2.3.4 The Mosquito Myth

2.3 Poetry and Songs

2.4 Simile and Metaphor

2.5 Irony

Oral literatures have flourished in Africa for many centuries and take a variety of forms including folk tales , myths, epics, praise poems, and proverbs. Myths explain the interrelationships of all things that exist, and provide for the group and its members a necessary sense of their place in relation to their environment and the forces that order events on earth. Epics are elaborate literary forms, usually performed only by experts on special occasions. They often recount the heroic exploits of ancestors.

Achebe was raised in what was primarily an oral society. When he writes about his people, the Ibo, he has them speak and think in the ways of orality. His novels are renowned for their rich mixture of proverbs, folk tales, songs and chants, and metaphors. Although some of these are created by Achebe, most of these are traditional Ibo. In this chapter, I shall analyse proverbs , tales and myth, poetry and songs, similes and metaphors, as well as irony.

2.1 Proverbs:

Most well known of the African oral forms is probably the proverb, a short witty or ironic statement, metaphorical in its formulation, that aims to communicate a response to a particular situation, to offer advice, or to be persuasive.

Proverbs are highly praised in Ibo culture. They appear several times in Achebe's novels. They deal with every aspect of Ibo life and Ibo people. As the narrator from *Things Fall Apart* expressively remarks: "Among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and **proverbs** are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (p. 5). This proverb is typically African but does not distort the narrative. It is not used as a mere technique but to show that Igbo people have a great expertise in controlling the art of conversation.

They believe that a good speaker is he who uses language, with skill and wisdom.

The novel contains several native sayings that represent the strong religion, morals, and culture of the country. An example is seen early on in the novel when Achebe writes, “If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings,”(p.6) referring to Okonkwo, who “washed his hands” of his bad reputation which came because of his father’s lifestyle. This is parallel to Nigeria’s circumstances, and implies that if Nigeria “ washed her hands” the country could be just as important as Britain. A third example of Achebe’s proverbial language : Okonkwo is asking Nwakibie for yam seeds and he says, “ The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did”. (pp,15-16) These few words show that the Umuofians had a great sense of pride, and if used properly it could result in great accomplishments. Okonkwo’s being ashamed of his father is apparent with the use of the proverb “an old women is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb”(p.15).

Besides, the strong religious beliefs of the tribe are clearly seen when Achebe writes, “ Those whose palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble”, (p.19) showing that Okonkwo and the Ibo should be thankful for everything that they have .Also, Achebe goes on to write, “When a person says yes, his Chi (personal God) says yes to him”, (p.19) this implying that the natives believe that if you humble yourself to your God he will not say no to you. Furthermore, he also uses the proverb “A man that makes trouble for others also makes trouble for himself”, this being similar to the rule that the British knew and were very familiar with. These proverbs say the exact opposite of the European

opinion, providing evidence that this highly religious , moral culture is civilized.

With no reference to any written language, these proverbs were probably passed verbally from family to family throughout the generations. Achebe says “When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.”(p.7).This proverb paints a picture of the events on a moonlit night in comparison to the terror they held of the dark, symbolizing a belief in a protective quality of moonlight in contrast with the fear of the darkness.

To describe Unoka, Achebe says, “He always said that whenever he saw a dead man’s mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one’s lifetime.”(pp.34). This briefly portrays Unoka’s philosophy, for whatever the dead man has saved can no longer be of any use to him. There are repeated instances where the characters use proverbs: “A child’s fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm”,(p.47) or “if one finger brought oil it soiled the others”(p.87). Okonkwo used this idea to justify himself in killing Ikemefuna and therefore avoided the idea of any harm coming to him or his family because he believed that the Earth like a mother would not punish him for obeying her. Proverbs are meant to be simple and easy to understand so that the point or the reasoning of its use can be communicated.

Each of these sayings has a particular meaning in terms of the development of the story, but taken as a body of knowledge they convey the sense of the long-term development that has already gone on within the civilization.

Ibo proverbs aid the reader in understanding Achebe’s characters. Chinua Achebe has set his work apart from European writers’ works by

using Ibo proverbs to strengthen characterization and to pronounce the beliefs of Ibo society.

Proverbs have been very important in earlier chapters of the book. Achebe uses them to give a flavour how the Ibo speak but there are no proverbs in chapter twenty five because the language of the book and the last chapter is no longer the language of the Ibo. Until the last chapter, the book is about Okonkwo and it is written in Okonkwo's language, full of proverbs and pidgin words but now Okonkwo is dead and his language died with him. This is artistic device Achebe has used to show that really things fall apart in Ibo society.

Achebe is saying that his people are not perfect. However neither should they be seen or considered as “primitive” or simple. The very last line of the book proves that Achebe is writing back to European writers and trying to contradict the African stereotypes from an insider's point of view. “He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.” (p.148) Just as we, the readers, felt as if we are becoming familiar with the characters, the Ibo culture, and Okonkwo's sudden suicide at the end, this strange white man, who knows nothing of the Ibo people, dismisses them as “primitive” and reduces Okonkwo's life to the size of a “reasonable paragraph”. Chinua Achebe's repeats a great proverb that goes “until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” He knows the danger of not having our own stories and writings and he has created a masterpiece of understanding in this work which is a cataphoric response to the District Commissioner's title who presents the European's point of view, of course.

Here are other important proverbs:

- “You can tell a ripe corn by its look”
- “Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them”.
- “Among these people, a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father”.
- “Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered”.
- “Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching”.
- “You have the yam and you have the knife”.
- “If a man kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut, the matter lies between him and his God”
- “The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines”
- “Let the Kite perch and let the eagle perch too”
- “A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness”
- “A toad does not run in the day time for nothing”

2.2 Folktales and Storytelling Situations

In the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, the use of third person and a narrative voice are the basic characteristics of Achebe’s approach to the telling of his story. The narrator is an observer and does its best to relate the truth. I think that Achebe uses a simple easy to read format, so that any and all can read this book. I believe he intends his story to be read by a vast audience of all reading skill levels. I also think that Achebe wants all who read to absorb the information and the story easily.

2.2.1 Epic Heroism

We might see *Things Fall Apart* as an epic. It resembles stories about heroes that we find in many ancient cultures. In these stories, the heroes are extraordinary individuals, whose careers and destinies are not theirs alone, but are bound with the fortunes and destinies of their society. They become heroes by accomplishing great things for themselves and their communities, winning much fame as a result.

Okonkwo fits this pattern. The first paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* is notable in this respect, for it describes Okonkwo as follows:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old man agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (p.3)

In an epic story, the hero undergoes many tests, which we can see as rites of passage and hard exercises for achievements. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo undergoes such tests, including the wrestling match with Amalinze the Cat, his struggle with the negative legacy of his father, and the struggle to succeed on his own.

Praising heroes is a basic function of epics. As a story about heroes and heroism, the epic tends to be built around a praise song. Besides, it tends to function like a praise song. *Things Fall Apart* exemplifies this very well. It contains many passages in praise of Okonkwo and other heroic characters. There is, for example, the famous praise song for the champion wrestler, which I shall point out later.

2.2.2 Animal Fables

As pointed out in literature review, fables include animal tales. The Ibo often use animal tales to naturalize their rituals and beliefs. The presence of animals in their folklore reflects the environment in which they live. The Ibo perceive these animal stories, such as the account of how the tortoise's shell came to be bumpy and not smooth as logical explanations of natural phenomena.

One of the main purposes of these stories is to reflect upon traditional values of the past in order to make sense of the moral changes of the present. The issues discussed are more to make sense of the personal and social existence of the people. The second purpose is to educate children especially through animal tales.

2.2.2.1 Little Bird Nza Tale

In its thematic and structural patterns, *Things Fall Apart* manifests its debt to the tradition of oral storytelling. Consider, for example, the story of the little bird *nza* which is repeated and amplified in various ways. I think it is a very significant story in the context of this novel. The novel notes that Okonkwo's enemies "said his good fortune had gone to his head. They

called him the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi*". (p.22)

Looking at Okonkwo's life in terms of the story of the little bird *nza*, enables us to raise questions about his greatness. We can discuss whether challenging one's personal god, or *chi*, is an act of bravery, mischief or disrespect. This little bird resembles trickster characters in the mythologies of many cultures who also challenged the gods. In different contexts, *Things Fall Apart* repeats the idea of the defiance exhibited by the little bird. Obiako is a case in point. Upon hearing that his dead father wanted a goat as a sacrifice, Obiako told the Oracle: "Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive" (p.15).

Besides violating norms, the trickster tends to be skilled at many things, including using wit and eloquence. One can produce a list of trickster characters in *Things Fall Apart*. They range from Unoka, Okonkwo's lazy father, to tortoise, who borrows feathers for the trip to the sky. Indeed, this implies there is something of the trickster in Okonkwo as well.

Though it might be productive to see Okonkwo in the framework of the story of the little bird *nza*, we must acknowledge that he is also a great man. This underlines his complexity.

2.2.2.2The Tortoise and the Birds: A trickster Tale

One method that Achebe puts to use is having his characters tell traditional folk tales. This shows Europeans that the natives have a great amount of pride for their country, and it draws the readers in by using something that they are familiar with doing themselves. The most apparent example is when Ekwefi told her daughter, Enzima a story about a selfish, greedy tortoise (pp.67-70). She begins the same way as the Europeans might

begin a story to a child, saying “Once upon a time.” She goes on to tell the story of a tortoise who overhears that there is a great feast for birds approaching, and he wants to go. Tortoise persuades the birds to include him in their party and even to provide the feathers for his flight. He also convinces the birds that they must each take a new name for the great feast. “Our hosts in the sky,” he says, “will expect us to honour this age old custom” (p.68). Tortoise, who takes for himself the name *All of you*, again appeals to custom when the host of the meal states that the food has been prepared “for all of you.” Tortoise then claims that the “custom here is to serve the spokesman first and the others later” (p.69). He tricks the birds, getting all of their food. When Tortoise at last finishes eating the food, the birds are left with only scraps and bones to pick at. Together they decide to take their revenge and reclaim their feathers from the tortoise. Tortoise, disappointed that he cannot return to earth, sends a message to his wife, requesting that she brings all the soft things out of his house so that he will land safely when he jumps from the sky. The messenger, Parrot, brings a different message, however, and Tortoise lands on “hoes, machetes, spears, guns and even his cannon” (p.70). The village medicine man sticks the bits and pieces of Tortoise's shell back together, and thus it is no longer smooth. The consequences are high, as the birds get revenge and the tortoise's shell is scarred forever, as the story provides the lesson to not be greedy and selfish. This is the moral side of it.

The story is in general an etiological myth explaining why the tortoise does not have a smooth shell. The tortoise is an individualist in pursuit of his own desires, and this character flaw causes him to come into conflict with the birds. Okonkwo is similar to the tortoise because his selfishness and ego brings him into conflict with society on several occasions. The fall of the

tortoise also foreshadows the fall of Okonkwo in the end of the story. The tortoise has his shell ruined and Okonkwo commits suicide. Okonkwo is a capable person but he can't be "all of you" just like the tortoise could not be, and so when Okonkwo acts outside the desires of the clan for his own selfish desires he risks isolation and ultimate defeat. A prime example is the end of the novel when Okonkwo takes actions into his own hands and kills the court messenger to generate a war, while the clan searches for an appropriate response but has not yet found one, Okonkwo acts suddenly out of his own ignorance and selfishness for the clan without their permission and because of this he is punished.

Also, many tales deal with a trickster element. These characters create destruction and disharmony among a group and threaten the groups' survival. These tales explain the bad behaviors and evil forces that the group must deal with and keep in check. In the end, the trickster's behaviors are usually punished reaffirming the harmony and wisdom of the community. It explains that the community can survive and will prevail over any situation.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* can also be read as an analysis of the colonial moment in African, Nigerian, and Ibo history in which the traditional folktale of the tortoise and the birds is recoded as an allegory of resistance. In such an allegory, Tortoise represents colonial power. The birds, who are his victims, signify the colonized population that remains subject to manipulation until it learns to command the weapons the colonizers have used against it: words, machetes, spears, and a cannon.

Furthermore, the tortoise's tale describes the transformation of Parrot as well. Parrot, capable only of repeating someone else's words, becomes an active historical agent who uses language creatively to help himself and the other birds. The tale insists, however, that rhetorical skill alone is not

enough, and it shows Parrot using Tortoise's own weapons to end Tortoise's exploitation of the birds. This again foreshadows the transformations that happened in Umuofia.

By contrast, Okonkwo has not learned, as the parrot has, to use language. Nor is he able to participate in the processes of change. He dismisses the parrot's story, which demands the overthrow both of inherited paradigms and of the colonial system, as a tale told by women. Okonkwo's personal failure represents the inadequacy of disobedient traditionalism in responding to the requirements of the present or elaborating a vision of the future.

2.2.2.3 Mother Kite Myth

Mother Kite myth (p.98) is an animal tale , in fact . It completes another story called Abame story. It is a story within a story. I shall analyse this in my next headings.

2.2.3 Folktales and Myth

According to the following stories, in *Things Fall Apart*, myths have three functions: etiological, foreshadow coming events in the story, and relate to the issue of colonization.

2.2.3.1 The Abame Story

The story of Abame (p.97) shows the first demonstration of the power of imperialism, and first account of the European encounter. It contains a story within a story, **The Kite Myth** which is on one level an etiological myth which explains why kites eat chickens but not ducklings. It is also an ethical comment on the killing of a lone traveler without any provocation, because ensuring the safety of travelers is one of the best held ethical-religious

values of traditional African societies. Myth of the kite is a means of coming to grips with the events that are shaking the foundations and stability of the African world. The introduction of the Europeans introduces a radical new dimension requiring new knowledge to understand the events which are occurring. As a reflex the Africans look to regular sources of knowledge, myths, the oracles, the elders, and their own memories. The oracle in the story relates the Europeans to something the Africans know: locusts (this will be dealt later). In this story Achebe says:

“They [Abame] killed the white man and tied his iron horse to their sacred tree because it looked as if it would run away to call the man’s friends. I forget to tell you another thing the oracle said. It said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain. And so they killed him.”(pp.97-98)

The story of the duckling and the kite (p.98) is a true parable in the sense that it gave direction although not heeded by the men of Abame. They killed the missionary who said nothing. It shows the folly of the people of Abame. Achebe says again, “Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about the men?”(p.98) Okonkwo tells Obierika it is a grave mistake for them. Such tales also point out indifference and inconsiderateness of human beings.

2.2.3.2 The Locust Myth

As noted before myth explains event outside the focus of everyday experience. The arrival of the locusts might initially worry the reader who

knows that locusts (p.38) are often disastrous for a community of farmers. These locusts pose no threat to the Ibo. However, they foreshadow a more dangerous swarm that will arrive later. Like the white man, they send scouts first and then arrive with overwhelming numbers and force. Note that The Locust myth is juxtaposed with the news of the decision to murder Ikemefuna, and the advice for Okonkwo to take no part in it because it will anger the earth. Achebe says, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." (p.40) Furthermore the locust myth sets up the coming of important devastating events for Okonkwo. Just as the the men let out the locust plague to consume the land, the Oracle of the caves lets loose news which will eventually ruin Okonkwo.

The myth also relates to colonialism, the Europeans like the locusts will come at first in small groups, but eventually will come in huge troops to destroy the African culture. Achebe goes on saying,

"And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass [of locusts] like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky, and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star- dust .It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty." (p.39)

The Locust myth links the known and the unknown in the story in that the oracle knows what is going to happen and uses the locust comparison, which everyone understands to let the others know what the future holds for the Umuofians. The locust as a scout also serves to explain why he was killed, because he was seen as the forerunner for imperialism. This myth serves to

alert the exiled Okonkwo of the changes in the area, and show the power of imperialism. This is entailed in the phrase, “full of power”.

2.2.3.3 The Quarrel Between Earth and Sky

Other tales demonstrate the clan’s dependence on the earth and the sky for its survival. Nwoye guiltily prefers his mother’s stories, such as the tale of the quarrel between Earth and Sky, a tale which illustrates the nature of power and its potential for abuse. The story states that sky suspended rain for seven years until earth becomes dry and stony. Vulture, Earth’s emissary, is sent to beg rain. He sings a beautiful song that softens Sky’s heart. Sky is deeply affected by the song and finally sends rain to Earth.(p. 38)

The Earth is dependent on the Sky for rain, sun, night and day, elements necessary for fertility and prosperity. The Sky’s oppression is tempered not by the Earth confronting its dominance with aggression but by the artistry of its messenger the Vulture, whose song moved the sky “to pity”. This emphasizes the significance of gender in the fable’s representations of power and links the fable to the dominant themes in the novel.

Paradoxically the myth endorses the triumph of imagination over power in that the cosmic quarrel is resolved not through overt demonstration of masculinity and power but through conciliation and affectivity and the agency of song. By extension, therefore, the myth underwrites the feminine principle of creativity over absolute masculinity. Nwoye’s adoptions of the

feminine principle and Okonkwo's dedication to the masculine create an unbridgeable impasse that ends in total alienation .

The narrative between earth and sky (p.38) is embedded in the context of the crisis between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye. Nwoye prefers his mother's stories instead of his father's violent tales.

Myth is important because it sharpens the focus on characterization, and foreshadows the split which will come between Okonkwo and Nwoye. The story also shows the inequality between father and son, Okonkwo like the sky rules and keeps son down with cruelty. The alienating relationship builds and continues because Okonkwo's masculinity alienates Nwoye, who's enjoyment of the feminine myths shows that he is not like his father, creating an impasse that ends in alienation.

The story can also relate the vulture to Okonkwo who also acts as a messenger to the Mbaino people, when he goes to the village to present an ultimatum for compensation for the murdered woman, he brings back Ikemefuna, and a girl, but he fails as the vulture did to finish his mission properly when he participates in the death of Ikemefuna. Finally, myth can also be related to colonization and the way Europe overpowers the countries which it colonizes

These stories serve the function of correcting people's behavior. They are told, indirectly, to people who encroach Ibo moral codes. Once a story is told to a person, that person feels the impact of the story whenever he sees the geographical feature associated with it or witness the events that resemble it.

2.2.3.4 The Mosquito Myth

The Mosquito myth is etiological in the sense it answers questions on why the mosquitos go for peoples ears. The myth of the mosquito is told to Okonkwo by his mother, and these memories of his mother's stories show that she was present in his life unlike his father and that she didn't let him down as his father did. Achebe says,

“Another one [mosquito] was wailing near his right ear. He slapped the ear and hoped he has killed it. Why do they always go for one's ears? When he was a child, his mother had told him a story about it. But it was as silly as all women's stories. Mosquito, she had said, had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in an uncontrollable laughter. ‘How much longer do you think you will live?’ she asked. ‘You are already a skeleton.’ Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive.” (p.53)

This story, however, shows that Okonkwo's acts of brutality originate because of his gender imbalance, his over compensating masculinity, because he dismisses all his father loved which included imagination, poetry and music. The stories which he defines as feminine and "silly" have great purpose because they give people the values and attitudes needed to participate in community life. Thus, by eliminating the feminine influences in his life Okonkwo sets himself up for a life of crisis and pain despite his potential. It also can be seen as a colonial myth, the Africans will always be a mosquito whispering, they are still alive, from time to time in the Europeans ears, and that there comes a day when they regain their dignity and freedom. In *Things Fall Apart* details are relevant not because they

further the plot or reveal character but because they contribute to the display of Igbo culture. Therefore, Achebe succeeds to use folktales as stylistic device to portray Ibo culture and comment on the behaviour of his characters.

2.3 Poetry and Songs

I have already stated the importance of sound in primary oral cultures, like the Ibo culture. Poetry has texture like “food in the mouth”. It, as mentioned before, exists almost exclusively in chanted form or as song. The sound of words should be appreciated, and poetry read aloud to enjoy the flavour of its language.

One important characteristic should be noted that the title of the book, *Things Fall Apart*, and thus the main idea, is taken from a poem called “*The Second Coming*” by William Butler Yeats,¹

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer,
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

This entails that Achebe, himself is influenced by poetry. This is why he includes so many folk songs and chants in his novels. He makes his characters tell stories, chant, sing songs, and praise people and events in many occasions. These give the reader vital cultural information about the Ibo people: How do they view the world? What concerns them most? And how do they deal with others?

In chapter sixteen, we are told that Nwoye was captivated by the poetry and the music of the new religion. In this context Achebe says,

“It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow.”(p.104).

And when he hears poetry he felt a “relief within”. This gives us a clear idea how the Ibo people appreciate poetry and songs. However, if we analyze the poem, "*The Second Coming*," we notice that the title of the story is included in the poem. Besides, in the beginning of the book, Achebe includes a whole stanza from the poem. We may call it as a foregrounding parallelism because the title is foregrounded in the book which repeats the same idea included in the stanza. The poem is based on changes and it implies that when mere anarchy is in play, the whole community lets go and things fall apart. The only reason why the society fell apart is because the people did not stand up for their religion and government. They let the missionaries change their ways. That was also referred to in the poem. The poem stated that things fall apart when the center cannot hold. And this is the case of Nwoye who converted to the new religion causing things to fall apart and conflicts between Ibo culture and European culture.

Poetry and songs can also be performed for an audience or just for the pleasure of our own ears. There are praise songs, war songs, ritual songs, work songs, funeral songs, bridal, and many other forms. They all reveal the Ibo culture and experience.

There is, for example, the famous praise song for the champion wrestler, Okafo, who threw his rival, Ikezue, in a wrestling match. In deed, this

praise song closely mirrors Okonkwo's own achievements in that we are told at the beginning that Okonkwo is the best wrestler:

"Who will wrestle for our village?
Okafo will wrestle for our village.
Has he thrown a hundred men?
He has thrown four hundred men.
Has he thrown a hundred Cats?
He has thrown four hundred Cats.
Then send him word to fight for us." (p.36)

African praise songs often simultaneously praise and criticize the intended person. The same is true of *Things Fall Apart*. This novel presents both positive and negative aspects of Okonkwo. Since we tend to see Okonkwo as representing his society, we can say that *Things Fall Apart* both celebrates and critically appraises the culture whose tensions and contradictions he embodies.

Another important song tale is called Ikemefuna's song, found in chapter seven. It is important not because it presents Ibo culture but it is a land mark in the narrative. It foreshadows Okonkwo's self destruction and the beginning of his inevitable death. The Oracle warned him not to take part in the killing. Yet he did. If you kill your son, you are killing your self, and putting an end to your existence because the boy has lived with him for three years and calls him father.

Achebe says,

“Eze elina, elina!

Sala

Eze ilikwa ya

lkwaba akwa oligholi

Ebe Danda nechi eze

Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu

Sala” (p.42)

Here is a translation into English offered by Obiechina ²:

King, do not eat [it], do not eat!

Sala [the audience responds]

King, if you eat it

You will weep for the abomination

Where Danda [white ant] installs king

Where Uzuzu [Dust] dances to the drums

Sala [the audience responds]

The song has folktale origins in that it is being sung as Ikemefuna walks to his death. It deals with Okonkwo who like the king in the song does not listen to advice and is acting in a way he is warned against. The man who warns Okonkwo not to kill Ikemefuna has his son killed by Okonkwo when his gun explodes accidentally against the boy (p.86). The Goddess of the Earth punishes him causing him to lose his land, title and rank in the process. The song also foreshadows his death, because the king dies, and only the white ant and the dust will claim him.

The song is, as remarked, not translated by Achebe because he thinks it does not make sense to readers who are not familiar with Ibo culture and language and let readers themselves discover the meaning behind this song or it might be addressed only to readers who know Ibo language.

From another stylistic point of view, the song not only appears untranslated but written in italic form as well. This suggests significant linguistic deviation, and it is important for us to assume that every element of any piece of writing has a possible interpretative significance. By this graphological deviation in the poem, I feel as if Achebe tells the reader *listen* to the following song and not read it. In deed, he wants to transmit this beautiful Ibo song-tale to the reader's ears and not to his eyes only in the same way as the mosquitos buzz in our ears.

Play songs are other types Achebe has used in *Things Fall Apart*. They are songs that the Ibo sing while they are playing. Although these songs are for play, they force us as readers to stop and think of the intended meaning behind them. At the end of chapter four Achebe says,

“The rain is falling, the sun is shining.

Alone sits Nnadi cooking and eating.” (p.25)

The song reveals the connection that exists between Ikemefuna and Nnadi. Both share loneliness. Whatever climate or events are good, Nnadi is always alone and this will be the destiny for Ikemefuna who will walk alone to his expected death.

Besides, we can relate the song to Nwoye who will be eventually alone as he hides his affection to the new religion for fear of being killed by his

father, Okonkwo. This again shows us how successfully Achebe uses songs, tales and proverbs as literary techniques to convey and relate events in his narrative.

There are many other beautiful songs which I find no room to include but all relate to the events and behavior of the characters in the narrative. Think for example of the bridal song found on page 83 where Achebe explains the bridal and marriage ceremonies. Another song is found on page 95. It is a work song type. It is sung while people are working. It serves as an entertainment and a critic to those who convert to the new religion and are exploited by their superiors.

2.4 Simile and Metaphor

According to Ong, proverbs, similes and metaphors are classified under formulas and clichés, as they are the sort of ready-made idioms and expressions. *Things Fall Apart* is full of many similes and metaphors that bring the narrative to life. Achebe uses the sorts of comparisons that relate to the Ibo experience and he frequently refers to nature. This entails that the Ibos are closely attached to nature. For example the following two similes are very important:

-“Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water.”(p.3)

-“Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan.” (p.3)

The first thing one might notice is that the similes are taken from the same page as they are used in the same context in describing Okonkwo. However, Okonkwo is seen as “a fish in a water” on one scale and as “a bush fire” on another scale. Why are these contradicting elements ironically juxtaposed? Of course, they are not put together accidentally. “As slippery

as a fish” is a typically well known European example where as “like a bush fire in the harmattan” is a well known African idiom. This contradiction depicts the conflicts that will arise later in the novel between the Ibos and the Europeans. In my next heading , I shall explain how ironical this contradiction is. Even contradicted, these similes are used artistically by Achebe to describe the speed in fame and action that characterizes Okonkwo. When there is much rain, water will flood and invade millions of hectares in a few minutes as fire so does in similar circumstances. This rapidity explains Okonkwo’s fame as well.

In the same situation, Achebe uses another simile to describe Ikemefuna. He says, “He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season.”(p.37) Again, here, Ikemefuna is compared to “yam” which grows rapidly and in huge quantities when it rains. This comparison may also entail Okonkwo’s fame.

The following three similes, however describe Okonkwo’s weakness and the beginning of his gradual destruction: “He drank palm wine from morning till night and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor.”(p.44), “He felt like a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito.” (p.44) And “Okonkwo felt as if he had been cast out of his clan like a fish onto a dry sandy beach, panting.” (p.92) From a wrestler and a great warrior, he is belittled into a “rat”, “mosquito”, and a breathless “fish”.

Again Achebe goes on using contradicting elements to show us the strength and weakness that characterize Okonkwo’ character. The adjective in “fierce” eyes usually implies power and is associated in most cases with a lion and not a rat .The same thing goes for the second example. How can a giant “walk with a limbs of a mosquito?”

The next simile is another stylistic device used by Achebe to reveal many aspects of Ibo life. The harvest is greatly important to Ibo society even so much that a man committed suicide due to a bad harvest year. Achebe says, "That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug up the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself." (p.17)The simile might predicts Okonkwo's final life who will be like a "miserable and rotting yams" and will hang himself as that man who hanged himself to a tree branch.

Yam is, however, used as a metaphor for manliness and prosperity, as in "Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop" (p.16), and "yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed" (p.23).Here, yam is compared to a king which entails richness , achievement and prosperity. Similarly, kola symbolizes prosperity: "He who brings kola brings life." (p.5) The next metaphor is taken from a previous proverb: "Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (p. 5).It suggests that proverbs encourage and provoke conversations and become natural in Ibo language. The metaphor of "words" as food is highly appropriate, given the almost exclusively agricultural nature of Igbo society. They give the same value that they place on food, the fuel of life, to words, the fuel of interaction and hence community.

Fire is, as stated before, associated with Okonkwo's strength. He is called a "Roaring Flame" and a "flaming fire" (p.108), while his son is cold, "impotent ash" (p.109).These metaphors ,once more, explains the contradicting relationship between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye.

Through similes and metaphors, therefore, Achebe forces the reader to look at things from an African eye and not from a European one.

Starting from chapter seven (p.37), all similes , metaphors, proverbs stories and songs that are used later in the novel will give the reader traces and signals about the events that will finally lead to conflicts and Okonkwo's failure.

I quote some similes and proverbs that help the reader have other ideas and interpretations:

- "Obierika's house is as busy as an ant hill."
- "His head seemed to swell ,like a solitary walker"
- "Something seemed to give way inside him,like the snapping of a tightened bow"
- "Rumbling like a thunder in the rainy season"
- "It began to shake and rattle, like something agitating with a metallic life"
- "Teeth that were as big as a man's fingers"
- "His body rattled like a piece of dry stick in his empty shell"
- "His voice was as clear as metal"
- "Ekweife jerked her head sharply like an animal that had sniffed death in the air"
- "The crowd burst into a thunderous roar"

2.5 Irony

Most ironies used in *Things Fall Apart* are of the extended type or situational which are depicted from the events of the narrative and not only from words or phrases. An irony is not very easy to determine. Readers must use their intelligence to come to the intended meaning behind the irony. It can be a second reading or interpretation of a text.

However, we can depict irony from the following words, which I discussed before. Okonkwo is described as being “a bush fire” and “a fish in a water”³(p.3) The irony of having the contrasting elements , “water” and “fire”, juxtaposed on the same level also symbolizes Okonkwo’s internal contrasting elements and conflicting relationship. Achebe perhaps brings forth the question whether it is possible for both elements, strength and weakness, to be juxtaposed and coexist on the same level. But how can one be compared to water and fire at the same time? Till now the irony is not so clear if we could not read the comparison carefully. The contrasting elements “fire” and “water” echo strength and weakness. The comparison may suggest that water echoes strength whereas fire echoes weakness because water represents power in that it extinguishes fire .Yet for Achebe fire is strength because he associates fire with Okonkwo’s strength. Throughout the novel, Okonkwo is called a “Roaring Flame” and a “flaming fire”(p.108).In fact, fire is an important element in Ibo culture and all events and stories are told around it. They praise fire and dance around it.

One thing more it is ironic that Okonkwo's strength of character develops from his father's weakness of character. It is also ironic that the source of his strength is at the same time the source of his weakness and finally of his downfall and death.

Another irony is shown in the word “Efulefu”. It is defined as, “a worthless man.” I found it ironic that the story begins with it applying to one man and ends with it applying to a very different man. In the beginning of the story, it is Unoka who was thought of as a worthless man by Okonkwo due to his having no titles and in general not being able to be successful in the clan way of life. But in the end of the story, it is himself that Okonkwo believes is a worthless man due to him not being able to be successful or adapt to the new way of clan life.

A similar irony is shown in the following paragraph,

"Since I survived that year," he always said, "I shall survive anything." He put it down to his inflexible will. His father, Unoka, who was then an ailing man, had said to him during that terrible harvest month: "Do not despair. I know that you will not despair. You have a manly and a proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails *alone*."(p.12)

The ending of the story is ironic. Okonkwo believes that because he is such a fierce fighter, he can conquer anything life throws at him. However, it is his fierce, proud, fighting attitude that will cause his downfall in the end. When the white men threaten the tribal way of life, Okonkwo prepares to handle the situation according to his own way. He wants to go to war against the new white invaders, chasing them from tribal lands and ending the threat of different ways of life. The passage ends with, “it is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails *alone*.” I believe this is exactly

what is the final blast to Okonkwo that pushes him into taking his own life. Okonkwo kills a messenger of the white men. He does this thinking the other tribal men will be behind him. He believes the act will lead to the war with the white men. But after killing the messenger, Okonkwo immediately knows that he will be *alone* in his fight because he hears people asking : “Why did he do it? ”

Okonkwo is fully prepared for all out war. It is more difficult when a man fails alone. When Okonkwo finally knows that he is indeed *alone* in his wish for war and in his idea of Umuofia still a powerful place, it is the final crushing blast for a once proud man and warrior.

Another thing that strikes me is the graphological deviation of the word “*alone*”. It is foregrounded because it is written in italics, and therefore deviated from the norm of the previous paragraph. This deviation in fact is a stylistic feature Achebe has used to convey a certain message . As it is done on purpose, it must create an effect. It signals, to the reader, Okonkwo’s downfall at the end. Most ironies used in *Things Fall Apart* have cataphoric effects in that they explain events that will happen later .The word is applied to Unoka at the beginning and is finally targeted to Okonkwo.

Let me take another example. The only individual that is praised and singled out by older men as having a sense of tradition and connection with his community is Okwonko. Ironically he is the man who constantly clashes with the culture he so dearly loves. He beats Ojiugo, one of his wives, in the middle of the Week of Peace (p.21). Despite the possibility that his action may “ruin the whole clan,” he continues beating his wife. He kills Ikemefuna, despite the respected Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s warning not to have a hand in the boy’s execution. He commits suicide, despite his culture’s admonition against this act.

Summing up the points made in chapter two of this paper, it seems evident that the oral art forms of the culture portrayed in Achebe's book come in many forms such as proverbs, stories, songs, and other forms of clichés and formulas. For example proverbs do not merely convey an attractive charm, nor are the only part of the sophisticated conventions of Ibo society, they have a very important role to play in conversations and are an indispensable aspect of Achebe's style. The folk tale, often featuring an animal hero, is one of the most common genres. There are also many songs, religious myths, and stories that are woven into the text and preserve in legendary form the history and world-view of the Ibos. Furthermore, Achebe has used similes, metaphors and ironies to portray events and history of Ibo culture in an artistic way that could have not been done only by Achebe himself.

Notes and references

¹ - See Yeats's poem on the appendix page

² - <http://cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/num211/airstory.num>

³ - Note here Okonkwo is compared to fish and not water, yet water is a general word to fish

CHAPTER THREE

Linguistic Forms in Writing

3.1 The Use of “and”: Additive rather than Subordinative

3.2 Repetition

3.3 Code-switching and Ibo words

3.4 Apposition

3.5 Alliteration/assonance

3.6 Onomatopoeia

3.7 The Talking Drum

Chinua Achebe has emphasised that one of the greatest achievements of tribal society in Nigeria is its ability to utilise folklore with facility in conversation. The greater the body of lore the speaker possesses, the more effective his conversation will be. He, as seen before, uses stories, metaphors, songs and nice proverbs to portray Ibo life. This chapter will continue to display other types and characteristics of primary oral cultures as seen by Ong and interpreted by Achebe. Ong states that oral cultures use additive and formulaic structures. They also use mnemonics as an aid to recall past experiences. I will deal with the most foregrounded elements in *Things Fall Apart* such as : repetition , additive structure, appositions, alliteration, onomatopoeia and Ibo words.

3.1 The Use of “and”: Additive rather than Subordinative

Walter Ong has pointed out the oral style tend to use additive compositional structures. Just as parallelism pulls the listener gradually from one idea to the next, while also helping the speaker do the same, additive grammatical structures allow images to be strung together one after the other. By using conjunctions such as “ and ” the oral style can easily append notions and images to the existing body of composition.

The extensive use of the conjunction “*and*” is more a characteristic of oral discourse rather than written discourse. Halliday and Hasan also back the idea of the additive structure but make clear distinction between the additive and coordinate structures. They point out :

We shall refer the conjunctive “and” by the more general term ADDITIVE, to suggest something rather looser and less structural than is meant by COORDINATE. Thus the coordinate is structural where as the additive relation is cohesive. The additive is a generalized semantic relation in the

text-forming component of the semantic system, that is based on the logical notion of ‘and’¹

The repetition of the conjunction with successive sentences, phrases, or words, is used for the purpose of attracting attention to every part of what is being said. In oral literature, therefore, we may notice that one idea is randomly tacked on to another without strict organization. This means that there is a tendency toward using shorter, simpler sentences rather than using longer, complicated sentences.

The use of “and” as an additive style is found throughout Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. The following paragraph describes Unoka, Okonkwo’s father,

“Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward **and** could not bear the sight of blood. **And so** he changed the subject **and** talked about music, **and** his face beamed.. He could hear in his mind’s the blood-stirring **and** intricate rhythms of the *ekwe* **and** the *udu* **and** the *ogene*, **and** he could hear his own flute in **and** out of them, decorating them with a colourful **and** plaintive tune.” (p.5)

If we rewrite another version of the paragraph supporting the subordinate style, it might look as follows,

Unoka did not like talking about wars **because** he was uncourageous. **Thus**, he immediately changed the subject to talk about music. **When** he talks about music, he gets happy **because** music makes part of him. **In addition** to the *ekwe*, the *udu* **and** the *ogene*, his flute will add to the flavour **and** the rhythm of music.

In the following table ,I quoted few examples and compared them to a subordinate structure ,

Page	Additive Structure	Subordinative Structure
3	“The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath”	When the drums started beating and the flutes singing, the crowd kept silent immediately
6	“He laughed loud and long and his voice rang out clear as the ogene, and tears stood in his eyes.”	When he laughed loud and long, his voice resembled the <i>ogene</i> . Thus , tears stood in his eyes
38	“In this way the moons and the seasons passed. And then the locusts came. It had not happened for many a long year”	Months and years passed on . Suddenly , locusts came after they disappeared many years ago.
44	“Bring me my bag,’he asked, and Ezinma brought his goatskin bag from the far end of the hut”	‘Could you bring me my bag?’ Then Ezinma went to fetch it for him.
45	“Ezinma took the dish in one hand and the empty water bowl in the other and went back to her mother’s hut.”	Ezinma took the dish in one hand while the empty water bowl on the other hand. Then she went back home.

There is a persistent belief that it is improper to begin a sentence with **And**, but this prohibition has been cheerfully ignored by many authors. An initial **And** is a useful aid to writers as the narrative continues. However, I come to a result

that we can omit the initial **And** in many instances and yet the meaning does not change. Let us consider these examples,

“she could not rid herself completely of her fear. **And** although she believed that the iyi-uwa which had been dug up was genuine, she could not ignore the fact [...]”(p.56)

If we rewrite the sentences, without **And** the meaning remains the same.

“ she could not rid herself completely of her fear. **Although** she believed that the iyi-uwa which had been dug up was genuine, she could not ignore the fact [...]”(p.56)

I think the same thing goes for the next examples when omitting **And**

-“ they saw Okagbue and guessed that it must be something to the with ogbanje. **And** they all knew Ekwefi and her daughter very well. ” (p.57)

-“they saw Okagbue and guessed that it must be something to the with ogbanje. They all knew Ekwefi and her daughter very well. ”

-“Every one was puzzled.**And** then it became known that the white man’s fetish had unbelievable power. ” (p.106)

-“Every one was puzzled.**Then** it became known that the white man’s fetish had unbelievable power. ”

3.2 Repetition

I have already stated in chapter two that the oral style is repetitive and additive. *Things fall Apart* has this characteristic. Repetition is not only favoured but encouraged as well. Achebe states,

“When he [Okonkwo] walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody.

And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father.”(p.3)

In this paragraph Achebe presents us many repetitions and redundancies. We notice the lexical repetition of the words, “pounce” and “no patience”. The word people echoes somebody and his father echoes unsuccessful men. The redundancies here help us to understand Okonkwo’ character. He is a man of action. He does not like lazy people like his father and he wants things to be done immediately without any delay. Besides, he is fearful and he may harm people. In another context, Achebe says,

“Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper , and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. 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 of magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, read in touch and claw. Okonkwo’s fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father’s failure.” (pp.9-10)

Despite Okonkwo’s strength and achievements, however, his life is filled with fear, the ever-present fear of weakness and the appearance of weakness that governs his every action. The repetition of the lexical words “fear”, “failure” foreshadows his failure at the end of the story. Moreover, Achebe uses alliteration as another device to reinforce and emphasize the words being used. Notice the sound /f/ in **f**ear, **f**ailure, **f**iercy, **f**ire and **f**ather. The reiteration of the

words, gods, evil, magic, forest, nature is a further demonstration of how important tradition is in the Ibo culture.

The following scene describes the arrival of locusts to Umuofia after an absence of many years,

“And at last the locust did descend. They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown-earth colour of the vast, hungry swarm.” (pp.39-40)

The repetition of words like “settled” and “every” emphasizes the sudden presence of these insects and suggests the way in which the arrival of the white settlers occupies the Ibo land later. “Branches broke away under them” foreshadows the downfall of the Ibo traditions and culture because of the white settlement and colonialism. Achebe has directly stated this: “the Oracle [. . .] said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts,” (P.97).

In the next example Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, is talking to Ekwefe about her daughter, Ezinma,

“And how is my daughter, Ezinma’?

‘She has been very well for some time now. Perhaps she has come to stay.’

‘I think she has. How old is she now?’

‘She is about ten years old.’

‘I think she will stay. They usually stay if they do not die before the age of six.’

‘I pray she stays,’ said Ekwefe with a heavy sigh.”(p.34)

The first thing we notice is the repetition of the word “stay”. It is repeated four times in this short conversation. The Ibo believe that if a child reaches the age six, she will live because the *iba* generally kills most children at an early age. Furthermore “she will stay” suggests Nigeria will stay longer life even after

the downfall of the culture and traditions. Ezinma is a symbol for Nigeria .In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes Ezinma as the “crystal beauty” and “village beauty” like her mother. She is as beautiful as Nigeria will be.

I found many repetitions in the book like the repetition of the word “yam” which stands for “manliness”, wealth and other achievements. Achebe goes on saying,

“Okonkwo spent the next few days preparing his seed-yams. He looked at each yam carefully to see whether it was good for sowing. Sometimes he decided that a yam was too big to be sown as one seed and he split it deftly along its length with his sharp knife.[...]Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed” (p.23)

Throughout the novel, Achebe associates “yam” with masculine life, strength and achievement. Man is respected and honoured according to the number of farms he possesses.

The repetition of the word “fire” is also associated with Okonkwo. As fire is dangerous and destroys everything it encounters, Okonkwo is also destructive. He destroys Ikemefune, Ogbuefi, Ezeudu’s son , his culture and he destroys himself at the end.

I find also the word “seven” repeated many times. May be Achebe used the word “seven” to address European readers to explain certain events in the novel. Here are some quotations:

- “The founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.”(p.3)
- “Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered.”(p.38)
- “The guests rose to go, taking their bride home to spend seven market weeks with her suiter’s family.”(p.83)
- “He could return to the clan after seven years.”(p.87)

-“And we want you all to come in every seventh day to worship the true god.”(p.106)

-“And so excitement mounted in the village as the seventh week approached.”(p.106)

-“Seven years was a long time to be away from one’s clan.”(p.121)

-“It was on the seventh day that he died.”(p.125)

Notice that the notion time for Ibo culture is measured in terms of events, market weeks, moons, seasons, the week has only four days and not seven days. The novel explicitly focuses on the theological and moral similarities between Christianity and Ibo religion.(pp.126-127) The repetition of the number seven is important to both religions and it is a way of highlighting these similarities between the two cultures. Here, Achebe wants to create a meeting point between the two cultures that may eventually reduce the conflicts and misunderstandings.

However, the number seven is a misfortune for Okonkwo who was exiled for “seven years” to his mother’s land. The repetition of “seven years” reveals Okonkwo’s punishment. Besides, during these seven years one can see that Okonkwo’s hopes and dreams have begun to fall apart. His hopes of being a rich and popular individual has drifted away with this upsetting incident. Okonkwo has no longer had his farm or animals. This goes to show that Okonkwo has lost faith with his friends, like his father who lost faith with his friends, too.

Before that the number seven is repeated twice in Chapter Seven. Note that it is juxtaposed with Ikemefuna’s murder in that Chapter Seven describes the clan’s decision to kill Ikemefuna. Thus the number seven also foretells Okonkwo’s failure. The idea of failure is repeated through many examples. It starts with killing Ikemefuna. In this episode Okonkwo’s failure begins to overcome his strength. In another situation, Achebe states,

‘When did you become a shivering old woman,’ Okonkwo asked himself, ‘you are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war? How can a

man who has killed five men in a battle fall to pieces because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed.’(p.45)

The repetition of the lexical word “woman” in the first chapters is applied to Unoka, Okonkwo’s father, only. In the above example Okonkwo applies it to himself. This not only explains his inner conflicts between his feminine and masculine sides but also explains his final downfall. Achebe uses “fall to pieces” to reinforce this idea.

By glancing at Okonkwo’s life, one could see that the title *Things Fall Apart* fits perfectly with the book. Starting from the episode with Ikemefuna, one can see that Okonkwo’s life will fall apart. Then, later on in the book, when Okonkwo was thrown out of his clan for seven years, one could have been sure that Okonkwo’s hopes of being rich and famous were ruined. After all that, with the incident of Nwoye, who converts to Christianity, one could see that Okonkwo’s life was a total failure. Any speculator could see that Okonkwo has not achieved his goals, but instead, by the end of his life, he has become a failure like his father.

3.3 Code-switching and Ibo words

The first thing I would like to point here is the word Ibo itself. In pre-colonial Nigeria, there were many spellings of the name Igbo. By the time Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*, the spelling was being standardized. So why does Achebe use the archaic spelling, Ibo, instead of the contemporary spelling, Igbo ? This is described as the ‘British way’. He wants to get rid of all what is inherited by the British culture. Thus he wants the Africans themselves write the languages and histories of Africa and not Europeans as we have seen in the title of the book suggested by District Commissioner (p.148) at the end of the narrative. We may deduce that the word ‘Ibo’ represent the oral style where as the word ‘Igbo’

represent the literate style. I feel that Achebe is great in the sense that he relates events to each other and weaves it in his writings.

Achebe's characters also use an elevated diction, integrating Ibo vocabulary, and conveying to us a sense of their beautiful, and expressive speech. He makes his characters switch from English to Ibo and vice versa, he says, "Ikemefuna told him [Nwoye] that the proper name for a corn-cob with only a few scattered grains was *eze-agadi-nwayi*, or the teeth of an old woman." (p.25) Ikemefuna uses an Ibo phrase because he is teaching Nwoye about his culture and one of the aims of *Things Fall Apart* is to teach and educate especially Ibos.

In describing Unoka, Achebe says, "He could hear in his mind's ear the blood-stirring and intricate rhythms of the *ekwe* and the *udu* and the *ogene*, and he could hear his own flute in and out of them." (p.5) If we consider the untranslated words when isolated, we can not understand their meaning. Yet with their context they are understandable. The word flute may help us to come to know that the *ekwe*, the *odu* and the *ogene* are musical instruments.

The following scene describes Obiageli, one of Okonkwo's daughters, "That fact was that Obiageli had been making *inyanga* with her pot. She had balanced it on her head, folded her arms in front of her and began to sway her waist like a grown-up lady." (p.31) The word *inyanga* can not be an obstacle to the reader. Even untranslated, it is understood within the context. "Sway" and "waist" indicate that the Ibo word means an act of dancing as to show off. Consider this example as well,

"Ezinma lay shivering on a mat beside a huge fire that her mother had kept burning all night. 'It is *iba*,' said Okonkwo as he took his matchet and went into the bush to collect the leaves and grasses and barks of trees that went into making the medicine for *iba*.'" (p.53)

From context, then, a reader can understand easily that the Ibo word means an illness. Achebe often leaves Ibo words untranslated. These foreign traces in an English text refer metonymically to a whole world that cannot be adequately translated, a world that Achebe implicitly shares with the characters he writes about. The non-native reader, by implication, can only achieve a mediated knowledge of that world. The glossary at the end of *Things Fall Apart* tells the non-Ibo reader that *iba* is fever. The word is presumably not translated because ‘fever’ in English has the wrong connotations: it would be thought of as something to be diagnosed, then treated with medicine. Okonkwo's people see in *iba* a manifestation of spiritual disorder: the mischief of an *ogbanje* or the perversity of one's *chi*. Ekwefi is terrified.

Achebe goes saying, “Ezinma did not call her mother Nne like all children. She called her by her name, Ewefi,” (p.54) The word Nne may mean “ma” or mother, as the context may suggest.

Some words such as *obi*, *chi*, *osu*, and *egwugwu* become assimilated very quickly into this knowledge through the way in which Achebe scatters them casually through the text. Others, which occur less frequently, require translation or a few words of explanation, such as *ilo* (the village playground), or *agbala* (woman, or ‘man without title’).²

Many times by avoiding translation or instructional commentary, Achebe forces the reader to depend upon the context of the narrative in order to decipher subtle meanings behind the interwoven languages.

The following code-switchings appear also untranslated for the same reasons above,

“The drum sounded again and the flute blew. *Egwugwu* house was now a pandemonium of quevering voices: *Aru oyim de de de dei!* filled the air as the spirits of the ancestors, just emerged from the earth, greeted themselves in their esoteric language.” (pp.62-63).

Another thing that the language of *Egwugwu* is “esoteric” which means mysterious and therefore could not be translated or Achebe wants these words remain untranslated since they present some thing sacred for Ibo religion. When the *egwugwu* appear, we have the following scene :

“‘*Umuofia kwenu !*’ shouted the the leading *egwugwu*, pushing the air
with his raffia arms. The elders of the clan replied, ‘*yao !*’
‘*Umuofia kwenu !*’
‘*yaa !*’
‘*Umuofia kwenu !*’
‘*yaa !*’ ” (p.63)

Call and response forms, found seemingly everywhere in Africa, entail a caller or speaker who starts talking or singing , and the community chorus who respond, or agree with “*yaa*” or “*sala*” which means more or less amen

The Novel is written in English yet relying on the author's extensive use of Ibo terminology and vocabulary. Chinua Achebe forcefully draws his readers’ attention to the problematical relationship between language and cultural identity, for language is the arena in which the cultural struggle between the folkways of the Ibo of Nigeria and the "High Culture" of their British colonizers is ultimately fought. Indeed, he has been quick to note the interdependency of language and culture, going so far as to argue that one cannot exist without the presence of the other.

By incorporating Ibo words, rhythms, language, and concepts into an English text about his culture, Achebe goes a long way to bridge a cultural gap. Speech patterns and rhythms are occasionally used to represent moments of high emotion and tension. Consider the sound of the drums in the night in Chapter

Thirteen, page 84 (*go-di-di-go-go-di-go*), the call repeated several times to unite a gathering followed by its group response, first described in Chapter Two, page 8 (*Umuofia kwenu. . .Yaa!*), the agonized call of the priestess seeking Ezinma in Chapter Eleven, page 70 (*Agbala do-o-o-o!*), the repetitious pattern of questions and answers in the *isa-ifi* marriage ritual in Chapter Fourteen, page 82.

The Igbo language is a tonal one. That is, differences in the actual voice pitch and the rise or fall of a word or phrase can produce different meanings. In Chapter Sixteen, for example, Achebe describes how the missionary's translator, though an Ibo, can not pronounce the Mbanto Ibo dialect : "Instead of saying 'myself' he always said 'my buttocks'." (p.102)

Ibo names usually represent meanings, often entire ideas. Some names reflect the qualities that a parent wishes to give to a child. For example, *Ikemefuna* means my power should not be dispersed. Other names reflect the time, area, or other circumstances to which a child is born. For example, *Okoye* means man born on *Oye* Day, the second day of the Ibo week. And Ibo parents also give names to honor someone or something else. For instance, *Nneka* means "mother is supreme".

Achebe adds another taste in his creative use of language by incorporating a few examples of pidgin English. Pidgin is a simplified form of language used for communicating between groups of people who normally speak different languages. In the final chapter, the chief court messenger is ordered to take down Okonkwo's body, saluting, he replies, "Yes, sah," (p.147). His answer is a pidgin phrase illustrating how the native-born court messengers submitted to the orders of their white bosses . Achebe uses only a few Pidgin words or phrases like the following two examples: *tie-tie*,to tie, (p.39) or *kotma* ,a crude form of court messenger,(p.123) just enough to suggest that a form of pidgin English was being established. As colonialists, the British were adept at installing pidgin English in their new colonies. Unfortunately, pidgin sometimes

takes on characteristics of master-servant communication. It can sound patronizing on the one hand, and subservient on the other.

Achebe's use of pidgin English helps him realistically portray Ibo life. Because of his own life experience, Achebe is able to incorporate Ibo language in *Things Fall Apart*. Therefore, he can depict traditional Ibo life in a way unlike any European author.

In addition to Ibo language, *Things fall Apart* is full of Ibo cultural concepts and traditions as well as rural vocabulary. In fact, diction or choice of words is an important element of style. When writing for a general audience, therefore, an author has to make a choice: to use the word, and spend time defining it, or not to use the word, and to use more difficult or less precise phrases instead. Moreover, the arrangement of words, into phrases, clauses, and sentences plays an important role in creating effect. Besides, the repetition of particular lexical items serves special purposes for building up emphasis, establishing contrasts, similarities, parallelisms, identifications, and equations of one idea to another, all of which will build up a series of associations and emotional responses.

From the beginning, one feels that the novel is written in an oral style. Achebe says: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond." (p.3). Note that the choice of words is very important here. First Achebe introduces the hero and it is Okonkwo not Peter or John. The name Okonkwo is unfamiliar to a native English speaker. It is an indigenous name. The second thing to mention is the concept "nine villages". This will be opposed to a literate culture where the Europeans are accustomed to the notion "city" or "town" for example. Another thing the word "beyond" which equals more or less all over the world. There are still many other concepts that explain Ibo life such as: bride price, Egwugwu ceremony, Evil Forest Feast of the New Year, Kola-nut, titles, Week of Peace and Yam Festival.

In the following paragraph, Achebe shows us another example how primary oral cultures think,

“During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chicken went to roost.”(p.10) This entails the notion of time which means from morning till afternoon or from dawn to dusk in a literate culture. Achebe goes on saying: “ Each of his three wives had her own hut, which together formed a half moon behind the *obi*.” The word *obi* is an Ibo word which stands for a hut. The concept “half moon” stands for half circle. Those people do not read or write so they associate things to their environment or nature in general.

3.4 Apposition

Things Fall Apart is filled with long runs of appositives that build up ideas that are before them. I noticed most appositives come just after Ibo words, names and idioms. Achebe, then, uses them to explain, or define what is said before. “ Everybody soon knew who the boy was. His name was Maduka, the son of Obierika. ” (p.34) The appositive phrase the son of Obierika is non restrictive because it adds no necessary new information since Maduka is sufficient enough to know who the boy is.

Consider “ the medicine itself was called *agadi-nwayi*, or old woman .” (p.9) Old woman here is an appositive to the Ibo word. Achebe not only explains the Ibo phrase but gives a rhythm and poetic effects to his narrative.

When Ikemefuna was brought by Okonkwo we are told,

His mother has had wept bitterly, but he had been too surprised to weep. And so the stranger had brought him, and a girl, a long, long way from home, through lonely forest paths. (p.11)

The appositive phrases here explain Ikemefuna’s fear and anxiety about the future. This is exemplified by the words “stranger”, “long way from home”, “lonely forest” which will be his final destiny at the end. The appositives

mention more information about Ikemefuna but not necessary. I quote another paragraph which says,

“A vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then something had given way inside him. It descended on him again, this feeling, when his father walked in, that night after killing Ikemefuna.” (p.43)

It is quite clear that appositives create redundancy in most cases as in the above paragraph. A depiction of Nwoye's sadness and state of confusion is built image upon image, each clarifying and augmenting the suggestive power of the last until a whole atmosphere of climate and mood is evoked. “Something”, “it descended”, “feeling” are echoed by “killing”. All these elements characterise Nwoye's state after the killing of Ikemefuna.

The following paragraph is about Okonkwo after being exiled,

“As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take his machet, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang. [...] Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people, be cursed with such a son?” (p108)

In the above paragraph Okonkwo is sitting alone and talking to himself, trying to answer some questions. These images help to understand Okonkwo's state of consciousness and because he is a man of action he wants to do something.

In the following example, when Unoka sees a kite in the sky, “he would sing with his whole being, welcoming it back from its long, long journey, and asking

it if it had brought home any lengths of cloth.”(p.4) because , Unoka is very poor and lazy, he even thinks if a bird could help him when coming from a long journey.

The next oppositives are preceded by dashes and commas,

He [Okonkwo] had called the first child born to him in exile Nneka – ‘Mother is Supreme’ – out of politeness to his mother’s kinsmen. But two years later when a son was born he called him Nwofia – ‘Begotten in the Wilderness’.(p.115).

Dashes, unlike commas, are used to emphasize a point or to set off an explanatory comment. Achebe wants to emphasize in the first appositive the name Nneka and the importance of one’s mother’s kinsmen in need because Okonkwo is now in his mother land. In the second example, Achebe wants to emphasize the word Nwofia which implies Okonkwo’s exile and sorrow.

3.5 Alliteration/assonance

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, whereas assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds. Generally alliteration is much used in prose where as assonance is a device much used in poetry. There are less assonances in *Things fall Apart*. However, I noticed the repetition of the long vowel sound /o/ a lot. This vowel occurs frequently when Achebe is describing the Ibo names or the Ibo tribal system such as **O**konkwo, **U**noka, **O**racle, **o**gene, **o**du, **chi**elo and so on. The vowel sound becomes long in the following example:

“ ‘Agbala do-o-o-o-! Agbala ekeno-o-o-o-o,’ came the voice like a sharp knife cutting through the night. ‘Okonkwo! Agbala ekene gio-o-o-o! Agbala cholu ifu ada ya Ezinmao-o-o-o!’ ”(p.70)

Prose writers sometimes repeat vowel sounds to reinforce the meaning of the words. It also helps to create moods. Here, the long /o/ sounds mysterious. Let me quote another example,

“The story was told in Umuofia of how his father, Unoka, had gone to consult the Oracle of the hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest.”(p.12)

Notice the idea that is emphasized by alliteration, the story of Unoka who consulted the Oracle. Here alliteration is one of the most important sound techniques. It makes particular words stand out or foregrounded.

Since repetition has a reinforcing effect, like rhyme, alliteration is a great help to memorize what is heard. In addition it affects the rhythm and makes it so beautiful that you carry on listening to the orator. Orality is first and foremost a sonant medium. Consisting only of sound, the oral word, and strategies for its use, has distinct qualities. In the oral world, words are invisible. They are indistinguishable from the sound that constitutes them. Therefore, in the oral world, words exist only in thought and sound. Sound is invisible. It moves easily through air and through walls. It sometimes reveals what is hidden behind and inside solid objects. At higher decibels, sound can be felt throughout the body. In oral cultures, the word is recognized as having these same active and magical qualities. In the following songs, there is a poetic effect behind the sound /o/,

“If I hold her hand
She says, “Don’t touch!”
If I hold her foot
She says, “Don’t touch!”
But when I hold her waist beads
She pretends not to know.” (p.83)

“For whom is it well, for whom is it well,
There is no one for whom is it well.” (p.95)

In addition to the poetic effects , it also plays an important role in connecting the words to be emphasized. Here is another example with another sound , /ing/ but has the same effects mentioned above

“The **rain** is **falling**, the sun is **shining**.

Alone sits Nnadi **cooking** and **eating**.” (p.25)

Concerning alliteration or consonance, *Things Fall Apart* is filled with many instances. The repetition of the sound /s/ in the following example is significant. Achebe says,

The night was very quite. It was always quite **except** on moonlight **nights**. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits. Dangerous animals became even more sinister and uncanny in the dark. A snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a **string**. And so on this particular night as the crier’s **voice** was gradually swallowed up in the distance, **silence** returned to the world, a vibrant **silence** more intense by the universal trill of a million million forest insects. (p.7)

First the repetition of the sound /s/ emphasizes the repeated words in that there is a direct link between this sound and a particular reference such as whispering or sighing when we want to lower our voice or to keep silent. The repetition of the sound /s/ then emphasizes the idea of silence and this is clearly shown by the repetition of the referent words in the text such as: “whistle”, “silence”, “quite”, “nights”. The Ibo people fear nights especially dark ones. But when there is moonlight, they are happy and tell stories.

Look at this example with different sound, “until crops withered and the dead could not **be** **buried** **because** the hoes **broke** on the stony Earth.”(p.38) The voiced /b/ sound here create rhythm and has poetic sound effect.

“We do not pray to have **more money** but to have **more kinsmen**. We are better than **animals** because we have **kinsmen**. An **animal** rubs its aching flank against a tree, a **man** asks his **kinsman** to scratch him.”(p.117)

Here the sound /m/ comes to reinforce the repeated words and the idea of belongingness, (kinsmen, animal).

3.6 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word or expression which resembles the sound which it represents, like the **meow** of a cat or the **quack** of a duck. In oral style sound is very important. Achebe includes some onomatopoeic words to raise tension and emotion within the characters .He says,

“Okonkwo had just blown out the palm-oil lamp and stretched himself on his bamboo bed when he heard the *ogene* of the town-crier piercing the still night air. *Gome, gome, gome, gome*, boomed the hollow metal. Then the crier gave his message.”(p.7)

I noticed that most Ibo words which have acoustic effects are written in italic form. This is a technique used by Achebe to make his characters sound natural as they speak. The italic form of the onomatopoeic word “*gome*” has visual and acoustic effects. This makes it sound louder and nearer to the reader’s ears rather than his eyes. It is part of the Ibo life. Notice the Europeans are familiar with *ding-dong* and not *gome-gome*. The other onomatopoeic word in the paragraph is “boomed” . It also, suggests the power of sound.

In chapter thirteen, Achebe portrays the same effects of the onomatopoeic words,

“Go-di-di-go-go-di-go. Di-go-go-di-go. It was the *ekwe* talking to the clan. One of the things every man learned was the language of the hollowed-out instrument. Dim! Dim! Dim! Boomed the canon at intervals.”(p.84).

The drum in African culture talks and conveys messages to nearly all surrounding villages. Another sound conveys meaning is the canon, with its distinct sound, “dim, dim”. Other onomatopoeic words include roared and clapped, and whistled. It is in these few examples that Achebe communicates through English the oral art forms of the Ibo by using many techniques that make the reader live the story and not only read it.

3.7 The Talking Drum

As a general rule instruments are constructed individually according to the particular tastes and traditional norms of the musician. The tuning of these instruments is subject to the language patterns of the musician’s mother-tongue, as are the rhythms that are generated in performance. The musician thus teaches the instrument the traditional language it will “speak” in its role in society.

This is the principle by which the “talking-drum” operates in order to render the thoughts, language, and emotions of the community as faithfully as possible.

As a communications technique the “talking-drum” principle is a quest for truth. Often the drum has been used to convey messages over long distances to others familiar with the language.

Sound is powerful, and indeed magical. It expresses action. Consider the following example, “Old men nodded to the beat of the drums and remembered the days when they wrestled to its intoxicating rhythm.”(p.33)

Throughout the novel the beating of the drums tell the people of Umuofia that celebration or sadness is coming. Although these drums are inanimate objects and do not necessarily “speak” it is the drummer that is doing the actual communication. For example:

“There were seven drums and they were arranged according to their sizes in a long wooden basket. Three men beat them with sticks, working feverishly from one drum to another. They were possessed by the spirit of the drums.” · (p.33)

This comes from the part in the book where the annual wrestling match is to begin. The drums announce the beginning of the match and help work the people into the “frenzy” that wrestling can provoke in the wrestler and the spectator.

“The drums were still beating, persistent and unchanging. Their sound was no longer a separate thing from the living village. It was like the pulse of its heart. It throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement.” (P.31)

This gives us a clear illustration where the drums are part of Ibo life and existence. Even nature responds to the sounds of the beating. Finally we soon come to grasp the true significance of the drum as manifesting ritualism inherent in and interwoven with the community’s organic mode of existence

To summarize, Achebe has created a novel that in turn shows the Igbo culture and people as complex and sophisticated, and simultaneously questions some of the more “outdated” norms and morals of the clan. He has used many stylistic devices that help the reader understand the Ibo culture. Repetitions and the additive structure build the narrative and make its elements appear more cohesive. Besides the integration of Ibo words shortens the distance between the reader and the Ibo culture. Moreover, alliteration and onomatopoeic words give rhythm and acoustic effects which make the reader live the story Achebe is telling.

Notes and References

¹ - Halliday, *Cohesion in English*, 1976, p .234

² See appendix 1 for a glossary of Ibo words quoted from *Things Fall Apart*

CONCLUSION

In this paper , I have tried to explain why Achebe integrates oral forms such as proverbs, stories, songs, and other stylistic devices in his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

I have also tried to illustrate whether those oral forms can help or hinder readers' understanding. Achebe has done an excellent job in creating his own unique form of English by blending Igbo words, phrases, proverbs, and concepts into his writing. From the title through to the end of the novel, Achebe integrates and appropriates a mixture of traditional African and modern Western cultural and literary elements. Achebe writes in English but incorporates Ibo words , proverbs, and imagery that invoke the Ibo tradition and culture into his prose in order to convey the experience of the African society under colonization and force the reader accept the story he tells in his own terms.

Proverbs play a large part in *Thing Fall Apart*. The English translations provided by Achebe are a personal rendering, attempting to invoke the spirit of the proverb, while retaining a faithfulness to the phraseology and terminology. Oral and communal storytelling traditions are also very much a part of the Igbo culture, and Achebe has stressed in the past how these have been an inspiration to him, and admitted that he continually appeals to this oral tradition in his writings, wanting to record and therefore preserve it.

By integrating Ibo the language, he succeeds in drawing the readers within one's own language and then show them an "inside" view as no writer ever did before.

In my literature review, I have tried to give a simple overview on style and stylistics which greatly helped us in approaching any piece of writing. We have seen that style is the way in which language is used in a given text,

determined by the frequency of occurrence of particular linguistic features in that text like the frequent use of formulas, and repetition of the lexical words in Achebe's books. Some approaches are essentially concerned with describing style as a habitual form of expression particular to an author or authorial, while others describe style as an affective response generated in the reader. Similar to these alternatively expressive and receptive approaches are definitions that see style as indicative of a larger context: a cultural sensibility, a historical period, or a national feeling. More textually focused approaches define style in terms of a particular genre, or in relation to other linguistic registers, or simply as a web of relations between the elements of the text itself. In all this work, whatever its variety, the main attraction for stylistics remains great and powerful.

I have shifted to the oral style which is my subject matter. I have shown what characterizes oral style as opposed to the literate style such as the frequent use of rural vocabulary and idioms, short and simple sentences, Ibo proverbs and stories. I have based my analysis on Ong's *Orality and Literacy*. I find the book not only interesting but a real "technology" and worth reading as a tool of analysis. The book describes the difference between oral cultures and literate cultures. Ong has also made differences between what he calls primary oral cultures and secondary cultures and in chapter three of his book he contrasts primary oral cultures and literate cultures and he cites many characteristics. We write to enjoy alternatives to all of these characteristics. I found all the characteristics apply to Achebe's novels and others dealing with oral traditions. Oral societies base their interaction on sounds in the absence of writing. I have shown how poetry and songs accompanied with music play an important role in preserving as well as recalling past information.

In *Things Fall Apart* there are praise songs, ritual songs, work songs, and bridal songs. They are chanted or sung either when telling stories or just after the stories finish especially in ceremonies or religious rites. The Ibo give much importance to drums. The beating of drums help communicating messages in crucial moments. They are used as a technique in the novel. Beating drums always implies important events happening. They are also a great help to memory. Different sounds speak to different parts of the human body and inform the various responses which appear in a call and response dialogue. The dancer who is familiar with the language of the music knows to make certain audible or physical responses to particular sounds and rhythms, thereby entering into the dialogue in linguistically and visually appropriate ways.

Stories and proverbs occur in conversations as natural language. They are used by Achebe to educate, settle disputes and engage others into conversations. Besides, they preserve Ibo wisdom and culture. The oral traditional story reflects its present context, its own history as a story, and the histories of those who listen. The oral traditional speaker weaves these elements together with the greatest sensitivity toward the audience. Stories and proverbs then explain present events that are similar to those happening in the story or told in the proverb.

Similes and metaphors reveal and describe Ibo people and culture. Most of them refer to nature such as animals, rain, fire and agriculture. Redundancy and apposition are important factor of the additive style, and together with the additive “and”, they help to build ideas image upon image to stimulate associations in the listener’s mind. Alliteration and onomatopoeic words are used to give a poetic effect to the narrative and to emphasize the words being

used. By using these techniques, Achebe succeeds in portraying Ibo culture the way it is without being ashamed of certain habits or deficiencies that might not appeal to European readers. He wants to tell the story of the Africans from an inside point of view. He has created a novel that in turn shows the Ibo culture and people as complex and sophisticated, and simultaneously questions some of the more “outdated” norms and morals of the clan. I think that Achebe has truly created a complex and thoughtful classic work of literature and an incredible achievement of merging two audiences. Chinua Achebe was the first who succeeded in developing an African style of writing as opposed to the European style. He has even been called the father of African literature. He uses the English language to achieve something that he wanted to do since his college days, and shows the Europeans that they were wrong in presenting Africans as “primitive” or “savage”. Indeed, they are as human as the white man and they possess a history and a culture rich of human achievements and experiences. Achebe achieved something that no other writer had done before him. With his distinct style, he managed to change the careers of many writers to come , in Africa and western countries. He changed the entire literary world and proposed a new theory in literature. Besides, he has offered encouragement and challenged African societies to struggle for the improvement of human conditions. Furthermore, Achebe's central role in the development of modern African writing through his role as Advisory Editor for the Heinemann African Writers Series, is surely one of the most amazing publishing phenomenon in publishing history.

At the end of the book ,we have seen how Okonkwo committed suicide and how the District Commissioner belittled the culture of the Ibo people in the title he chose , *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes On The Lower Niger*.

Achebe suggests that colonialism has led to this entire tragedy, but the seeds of dread and self-will are obvious in Okonkwo. He is not a survivor. Our goal is to survive, and to teach and study that. In our journey through this life of good and evil influences, we firmly choose our own end by the choices we make along the way. Success can be defined as the acceptance of all of our experiences that have led us where we are today. Acceptance of ourselves is the key to acceptance and tolerance of others. Okonkwo's failure is a failure to recognise the principles of duality that structure the world-view of the Umuofian clan. He denies the validity of aesthetic values and production. He refuses to engage in the celebratory practices that stand beside the principles of hard work, physical strength, and success at war. He even opposes the values of his father and of the mothers of the clan, whose storytelling he associates with idleness.

However, the stories that Okonkwo does not like are used as a device by Achebe to explain certain events in the narrative. For example myths represent a persons' perception of the deepest truth about nature. Myths and legends had a two-fold purpose to provide and explain history and beliefs of the Ibo people, while at the same time to show the rise and fall of Okonkwo and his culture. They did this through stories such as "The Birds" and the "Tortoise". The Tortoise is the story of the sudden rise and fall of Tortoise, just as *Things Fall Apart* is the story of the rise and fall of Okonkwo and his clan. The story says that the birds lent the tortoise their feathers so he could accompany them to the sky. Okonkwo was treated with great honor and respect, just as the birds took the tortoise "as the king of the birds." Achebe does not spare any energy , or any literary device to explain every tiny element in Ibo culture and to bring the reader think the way he does.

I find that Achebe foresees a bright future not only for African literature but also for all literatures in the world. What Achebe would probably like more than anything is to establish African pride in the hearts of indigenous Africans. I also believe Achebe hopes to communicate the pain of a country losing its soul to nations that want to steal and govern a people that does not belong to them. Achebe as I believe wants the world to never lose the facts, that the identity and history of a culture in spite of its questionable aspects remains beautiful in its beginning and falling. I also think Achebe advocates writers and artists to embrace the positive use of language and writes the stories and songs that will tell the real story of Africa not only the past Africa but the present Africa.

There is one more thing I would like to say about orality. Ong claims that orality is "conservative or traditionalist" (Ong,1982). No doubt many oral cultures are opposed to change and hence are conservative, but we have seen how the Ibo are tolerant and how they welcomed the white man. Achebe has used both Obierika and Nwoye as open-minded characters. Nwoye has converted to Christianity and Obierika comments and criticizes the old fashions of the clan. That is, oral tradition can be both deeply conservative and yet open-ended .

Another thing worth mentioning is that Ong seems to claim that the shift from orality to literacy erases oral modes of comprehending and expressing reality. I do not agree with this idea. Achebe is a writer, but he remains in some ways very rooted in oral traditions. What exactly is Achebe doing? Achebe has tried to bridge the gap between orality and literacy and created relationship instead. He proves that oral and literate modes can co-exist in our mind. Literacy or "the technologizing of the word", does not hamper nor impoverish, story telling in any absolute sense. Each medium has its strengths

and weaknesses. Yet by means of the written word Achebe can tell stories, the stories that humans have told orally since time immemorial, just as someone else can tell those stories through the medium of a film or on the Internet. Finally will the gap between orality and writing be shortened in further writings? Can oral traditions develop into a new type of literature? I may not contradict Ong's views but such findings may enlighten a further research.

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