

Pedagogic Content of Orality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

MOTAZE, DOROTHY

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RÉSUMÉ

La langue écrite de fiction qui est d'ordinaire bien claire, se trouve mélangée en partie avec les structures orales dans *Things Fall Apart* de Chinua Achebe. Par conséquent, cette langue se présente comme ambiguë et lente à comprendre. L'article qui suit fournit un effort pour élucider une méthode par laquelle le lecteur qu'il soit étranger ou africain, puisse obtenir des leçons dans le style d'Achebe. Le roman *Things Fall Apart* (déjà traduit dans *Présence Africaine* par Michel Ligny comme *Le Monde s'Effondre*) est l'histoire des Igbo du Nigéria au temps du colonialisme européen, écrite en partie dans un style d'un conteur oral de l'histoire. Le problème que cela pose donc est: comment apprendre (ou enseigner) les contenus réels de l'histoire par les moyens oraux adaptés à l'écriture? Comment fonctionne la mémoire (humaine) qui est le réservoir de tous les saviors. Toutes les citations "in-text" sont tirées de *Things Fall Apart* Heinemann Educational Books 1958.

ABSTRACT

The simple denotative language of fiction in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* seems to be mixed up, in places, with oral patterns and idioms (which are not so "clear"). The problem in part, therefore, is that the language is obtuse and ambiguous* This paper is an attempt to indicate how the lessons (content) behind Achebe's style can be brought out so that both the "alien" and the African readers have something to learn from it. *Things Fall Apart* features the colonial history of the Ibos in Nigeria in the story-telling style. Theoretical problems of teaching and learning will arise as to how memory functions with oral patterns being adapted in writing and what can be retained. The psychological treatment of memory, which this suggests, will not feature in this exercise. All in-text quotations are taken from *Things Fall Apart*, Heinemann Educational Books, 1958, London.

KEY WORDS: Orality, oral history, context, memory, imaginative interview.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country with many different ethnic languages and cultures drawn from the North, West, East and South regions. Some of the languages have no written literature up to this day. Others have literatures that are being developed into written form. New authors emerge and attract the attention of older writers, University intellectuals, linguists, and translators. Students also undertake their post-graduate research work on specific authors and their works.

For quite sometime now, Nigeria has been known the world over as an important literary arena especially with the texts of Chinua Achebe put on foreign university programmes, while the Nobel Prize in Literature attributed to Wole Soyinka in 1986 has attracted particular public attention to Nigerian literature.

From these Nigerian works, we shall study Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* because this work has not only been translated into and studied in many world languages including French, Russian, German, Italian and Spanish, but also because it seems to contain much information on orality adapted into writing with pedagogic intentions.

Orality here is simply defined as all forms of oral (verbal) manifestations including dialogues, vernacular (native) language use, songs, oral reports, story telling or the repetition of an existing oral corpus, calque on the mother tongue, proverbial language use.

1.1 The Novel *Things Fall Apart*

The first edition of *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958, two years before Nigeria's independence from the British colonial masters. So, the novel can be regarded as a story that had been told before in the native language of the people of Igboland.

One would not know just what form the early story took. A possibility is that it may have been an emotional oral account of an act of bravery of a man named Okonkwo who wanted to impress it upon his tribesmen to hold out against the assault of colonial intruders in their midst but he failed in the end. It may even have started like a song where particular sentences and phrases become expected signals just like "once upon a time" is still signal for a fairy tale that should follow. But *Things Fall Apart* is not a fairy tale. It is a document of real historical events reported with the oral modes of perception

of the Ibos of Nigeria. The Ibo author, Chinua Achebe, uses story-telling techniques because he intended above all to give pleasure to his readers. Oral tradition of story telling survives till today in the Igbo community (and elsewhere). For instance, a young lad Ikemefuna is a character in the book that has "a sad story (which) is still being told in Umuofia unto today" (P. 9).

Achebe is well aware of the oral linguistic materials of his people and he uses them with great effect to recreate history. He draws largely from fiction and myth. His tale, therefore, is a legend where the hero, Okonkwo, is clothed with fictitious details just like King Arthur of the British/French legend. It is not very possible to discover who the true Okonkwo was. Infact the tale of Okonkwo, the chief character of *Things Fall Apart*, explores issues of traditional institutions and customs, belief systems, phenomena, the supernatural and all forms of traditional roles. All these affect individual and communal life at the eve of the colonial incursion. According to Anjali Roy and Viney Kirpal (1989), "it is possible to view Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* as oral records of Igbo life" in the pre-literate world.

Our repertoire of oral forms drawn from the novel includes patterns of time scheming not in terms of years of pure history, but a flexible phenomenal time where nothing marks it off from the present time. That is time, as it exists in memory. It also includes context in terms of the dimension of the history in a flexible language as a learning tool.

1.2 The Novelist as a Teacher

Chinua Achebe is known the world over as a writer, someone whose job is to write, an author, not a pedagogue. Like Shakespeare or other world renowned authors, he did not intend that his books be used as textbooks because what is talked about is not just for the classroom but is rather concerned with life as it can be lived somewhere else; hence its literary value.

In Africa however, and in Nigeria in particular, teachers and students who acquire the books in cheap paperbacks meant for the schools discover authors mostly through reading them. This particular readership is interested in the books in as far as they contain information on education such as good English style or bad English style as an extension of the mastery of the language, a strong manly hero such as Okonkwo ready to defend tradition, history and culture, and so on.

Achebe is however, recorded¹ as saying that he does not have any particular readership, European, African or American in mind. Still, he recognizes that:

Most of my readers are young. They are either in

school or colleges, or have only just left. And many of them look to me as a kind of teacher²

This is not to say that Achebe takes instructions from anybody. He writes as a person and his third person narrative allows him to be anywhere, anytime. Infact he remains free to help African readers draw from his books a belief in themselves so as to put away the complexes of the years of domination by foreigners, while the non-African can also learn from it of the grandeur of African past. This makes Achebe's works deviate from pure art of writing for writing sake. They have a function of making the readers increase their knowledge and understanding outside being a source of delight. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* does more than just draw the reader's attention to the wrongs committed by the colonialists against the Igbo society; it is also the fabulous story of a strong but restive man who was ridiculed in the end, and this is what interests us.

2. STORY- TELLING ARTISTRY IN THE WRITTEN FORM

The pleasure, interest and curiosity that stories arouse in people lead Chinua Achebe to convey many ideas through the narrative appeal. One such appeal is the use of particular signals of recall. There are, for instance, sentences and phrases used in the same pattern of the oral story telling to talk about the past and the present time. These mixed patterns of history tend to blur knowledge and understanding because they (the patterns) are not "clear". Sean Field, in his *Oral Histories*, confirms this and says:

Their relationships (that is of the oral and the written) are not separate but overlap, blur and contest each other in different ways. Therefore the documentation and writing of "histories" are both created within and through these contested relationships.³

The mixed patterns are, thus, found throughout the book but those at the beginning that is from chapters I to III interest us. When Achebe writes the following narrative formulae

"That was many many years ago, twenty years or more"
P. 1.

"It was said that ..." P.12

"The story was told in Umuofia" ... P.12.

"Our elders say ..." P. 6.

"One day..." P.4.

"That was many years ago when he was young" P. 4.

"Many years ago, when Okonkwo was young" P. 12;

The researcher is bound to ask questions like the following: when exactly was "one day", or "many years ago"? Who was

Okonkwo and when was he born? When did it all start to be said by "our elders"? We notice in these formulae that there is no demarcation of time past or present. There are no singular authors and their dates, no named historians, but "our elders" of all times. Infact, there is no numbering or naming of dates as in the Western calendar. How then can the formulae relate to history or to the content of the story? How, infact, does memory operate as a written text with all the impreciseness (ambiguities) of time and persons?

We have noticed also that there are signals of "error" or change associated with repetitive sentences and phrases. As the repetitions extend beyond one context to another, language also changes. This follows from what we indicated from the onset, that the book itself seems to be an analogous repetition of an oral literary corpus in the native Igbo language containing other forms of repetitions such as the songs, proverbs, sayings and dialogues. The problem now is to find out what readers/learners can retain from "errors" in the repetitive appeal or structure.

Sean Field, an authority on this, informs us that "oral historians" can resolve through interviews, such research problems as we have stated above. Accordingly, we can create a field situation and interview the storyteller or narrator of events. Field quotes Portelli (1991:x), who warns that:

We must bear in mind the field situation is a dialogue in which we are talking to people, not studying "sources" and that it is largely a learning situation (emphasis ours) in which the narrator has the information we lack.⁴

That simply means that we are going to interview the narrator of events in *Things Fall Apart*. We expect that narrator, Chinua Achebe, to provide us with answers to questions of ambiguity above. This dialogue with the author will create an interactive open-ended method allowing him the opportunity to "re-tell" the story we have just read in "his own way" about what happened or might have happened in the past (of the Igbo community) and so provide us with the explanations we need. To do this, the narrator relies on his memory which, according to Sean Field, functions as "a social memory always a process of construction, selection and exclusion of interwoven elements."⁵

Precisely the narrator or storyteller arranges the incidents so that they have a meaning for the story and draw the reader on to the end. He also selects descriptive details that will help fill out the story and add colour and emphasis to it.

In this creative art, it is possible for the story teller (oral

historian) to present different versions of the same story. It all depends on the circumstance and manner in which he guides the "interview" and nothing can be more true or correct to him than what he desires or "remembers" to recount. We can demonstrate this later on to explain what may be termed as "error" in the repetitive structure of the stories.

Taking Achebe for granted as our interviewee and guide in an imaginative aural genre (interview)⁷, we can listen to him, as he constitutes the identity of Okonkwo: his biography and his achievements. We can also now see ourselves as actors within the context of the stories in *Things Fall Apart*, and are thus ready to find answers to our problems. These answers will be guided in part by the linguistic and grammatical conventions that are consciously broken by the narrator/oral historian through the forms of his day-to-day relations in the spoken word. Besides, this transgression of linguistic conventions will be highlighted further by pressures on the storyteller to conform to his community's cultural forms of expression. Our observations in all these will be by way of comments and interpretations of the texts to arrive at their meanings.

3. PEDAGOGIC CONTENT

The state of oral communication that we have documented above is confusing. We shall now place the oral items in specific contexts of time and space to bring out the messages.

3.1. *Situation in Time:*

Who was Okonkwo? How does he relate to the present day readers? These research and theoretical questions abstracted from the problems in 2. above are meant to help us find out who Okonkwo was in reality.

Things Fall Apart opens with the story of a mythic and fabulous demonstration of an act of courage and bravery in a wrestling bout. The question of power suggested here has various meanings in the modern times. It denotes, among other things, status in the society, title, rule or the absence of these along with all that they imply. Persons in the position of power, especially among Africans, usually want to hold on to it no matter what it costs them to do so. Achebe, therefore, presents Okonkwo, his chief character, who had personal fears about himself because of his origin; he feared that he would be a failure like his father.

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 their magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but they lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself lest he should be found to resemble his father. (Pp. 9-10).

There is a listing above of analogous forms (repetitions) of

great fear for emphasis. But the greatest of these fears is that of resembling his own father who was a weak man. This translates to being called a woman. In fact, Okonkwo did not want to be referred to as *agbala*. "Agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title" P. 10.

Before taking the reader/researcher to the much-anticipated fight, Achebe digresses a bit to explain this native term *agbala* adopted directly into writing the story in English language. This is to allow the monolingual English readers to understand. Thereafter, he explains away the psychological (or child-like) fear in a man by telling of how Okonkwo, in a personal wrestling combat with Amalinze, the Cat, threw the latter who was reputed to be the greatest wrestler in the entire land. The use of the animal name *cat* is meant to take the reader's imagination to the animal world stories where the *cat* is the archetype of sleekness, so much so that its back can never touch the ground in whatever adventure or situation. Amalinze, the Cat, is also supposed to be a supernatural human being playing the double role of both man and animal.⁸ If Okonkwo is courageous and powerful, he has to prove it by taking on Amalinze in this particular fight as presented by the story-teller:

Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end, *Okonkwo threw the Cat*. That was many years ago; twenty years or more P. 3. (Italics ours).

This is like the tale of an incredible feat of strength of heroic giants often found in ancient Greek myths and English folktales. "Many years ago" expresses a time as age-long as the mythic times, very indeterminate. An attempt to limit it to a historical numbering, that is, twenty years, is stretched to an indefinite "or more years". But young African readers and all lovers of sports, not minding time, are thrilled today by this kind of achievement of a hero like Okonkwo carried away even beyond the bounds of reality. Instances of such sports abound in the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) Championships, Olympic Games competitions, acrobatic games, karate meets and so on. Sport lovers are equally thrilled by Okonkwo's physical appearance, which the storyteller or oral historian portrays in these terms:

Okonkwo was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a severe look. He breathed heavily and it was said when he slept, his wives and children could hear him breathe. When he 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 (P.3).

As an oral artist and teacher, Achebe must have intended the above passage to be given a spoken potential as he communicates with his audience. This makes the picture to come out live and memorable. In their written form, the words alone are important: they create rhythm in the prose passage making it sound like poetry: "bushy eyebrows", "wide nose", "breathed heavily", "pounce on somebody" produce accentuation and this helps the reader to retain and remember what has been read.

The sentences of time recall which we have placed in italics appear in other forms in the novel and they are as if constantly sound a note of a song about the past life in the Igbo community. That is why the storyteller, himself an Igbo man, tries to recapture time past in an erratic way: "that was many years ago, twenty years or more"; "it was said that ." etc. These notes of historical time references are unsure statements, which show Achebe here faltering or trying to fill in the gaps, or trying to correct himself in an attempt to recall the past. This is peculiar to human memory. And that fills the "imaginative" prose passage with fascinating and thrilling emotions just like the language of poetry.

In that emotional and persuasive atmosphere, one learns that Okonkwo, a strong virile man with a giant figure (because he was tall and huge) is the head of an African family with many wives who live in out-houses surrounding him. His children too are attracted to him even though he treats them "with a heavy hand" (p. 20) in order not to show affection which he, however, has for them. We can understand that the children come to him more out of respect for him, and curiosity about "his fiery temper" (P. 9), than out of filial love.⁹

The passage just quoted above, according to its context, is the description of Achebe's chief character, Okonkwo. This character is made memorable through the author's resourcefulness in language. He has chosen adjectives that allow more scope to comment on the African situation, which is thus sustained. Most African communities are used to bushy environments, which are talked about in daily parlances. In West Africa, hunters chase animals through bushes. Bushes must be cleared in order to give some space for the cultivation of food crops. Bushes have a thickness usually of a rough and wild nature. The point is that the choice of the term "bushy" allows the reader the opportunity to investigate the facts of the African situation. The reader, if he is African, is thus made to go down memory lane, so to say. A man with "bushy eye brows" and wide nostrils creates a certain impact among his people, and if he is the head of a family, he looks fearful and cruel. When he sleeps, his wives and children, apparently not asleep themselves can hear him breathe heavily. He is the head of the family and this is not unfamiliar in Africa where a single man lives surrounded by his wives and children.

On a more general plane, readers who are not used to the

African polygamous system will at least have read of such people as the Troglodytes, the cave and lawless men of the earliest century described by Montesquieu (1689-1755) in his work *Lettres Persannes* (1721), where the father is described as the head of the family: "Le pere est le chef supreme de la famille". This comparison is functional: it makes the head of the family referred to in the passage look like a savage because the injustice done to the condition of women and children in the passage tends to portray the head of the family as bestial in a modern age of civilization, reason and education.

The women and children are the poor of the society, so to say; they are hardly able to sleep in the night for being too many, whereas, the head of the family sleeps peacefully like the peasant lords of the European Middle Ages or the noble savage of the eighteenth century. The concept of the "noble savage" may be boring to an educated African who has often been told the wrong ideas by outsiders that the African evolved from bestial men, but European readers of Achebe's text will find in it something exotic, charming and even noble. What is important is the level of social awareness and appreciation of other peoples of the world. And all this knowledge deducted has been achieved by the careful choice of an adjective "bushy" to describe Okonkwo's eyebrows.

Outside the home, Okonkwo was the proud and imperious emissary of war. When war threatened to break out between his village Umuofia and a neighbouring village Mbaino, he was sent out to Mbaino to arrange for peace. There, he was treated with honour and respect, and a few days later, "he returned home with a lad of fifteen and a young maiden" (P.9), as a sign of peace.

The story teller (oral historian) who believes in the practical use of oral tradition has been able to mobilize everybody's attention, mostly that of children, women, and our attention to focus on Okonkwo who is neither gentle nor playful. He explains:

Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength (P.20).

He, (the story-teller) is ready to expose the evils inhibited in excessive love of power and strength through the actions of Okonkwo in the rest of the book. In fact, Okonkwo turns out to be a bully. He "pounces" on people as, indeed, he killed with his own machet the young lad, Ikemefuna, who was placed in his care and whom he loved as his son, inwardly of course. He was always battering his young and third wife Ojiugo, the village beauty whom he won at the wrestling contest with Amalinze, the Cat, and he nearly

killed his second wife Ekwefi with his gun. When an inquisitive neighbour asked Ekwefi:

Is it true that Okonkwo nearly killed you with his gun?

Ekwefi replied:

It is true indeed, my dear friend. I cannot yet find a mouth with which to tell the story (P. 34).

The storyteller generally takes time off his schedule of recounting past events in order to digress into some present dialogues between other characters in the book. He has all the time at his disposal to talk about other things. In the dialogue above Ekwefi "cannot find a mouth with which to tell the story" is in fact a transliteration of an everyday Igbo expression:

E-Nwegim	Onu	M-Ga-eji	Koro	gi	akuko a
I don't have	mouth	to	tell	you	the story.

Given for instance, a similar expression in English language: "words cannot express .", the term "words" changes to "mouth" in the pre-literate Igbo community where everything was totally oral and spoken. One is however, perplexed to find out what things words of every day dialogue cannot express about Okonkwo. But we have to be careful because as Coplan has observed,

Ordinary discourse is itself highly figurative, and can slip in and out of aesthetic genres, from proverbs to war anthems. This is because in so many situations, people employ versions of and references to such texts and metaphors both in daily discourse and in their dialogue.¹⁰

The point about Okonkwo is this: Okonkwo of the imaginative narrative is a giant, not a man. Nevertheless, in the context of contemporary human community, he is a human being living with other human beings, but lacking in moral sense and friendly emotions. He is a bully and this warrants that ordinary people talk about him in their "proverbial" language. In the end, nobody will follow him as he pitches himself against the government and church and he will die committing suicide. Chinua Achebe is persuaded about the value of oral tradition, and that is why he uses oral items such as dialogue to drive home a point of universal moral importance.

3.2. "Error" in the contexts:

Within the general tendency to expand which is peculiar to the oral narrative, Achebe creates speech by adding. This seems to be a strategy to help learners of the English Language to develop their skills in the language. The notion of "error" is

pedagogic as we intend to act as language teachers in the classroom.

There are sentences in the book that seem meant to be repeated, and there are other sentences that are repetitions. The repetitions have the value of songs or stereotype structures coming at various stages of the narrative. (This could be better seen in a narrative poem in the verse form). The question to ask is: how do these various songs relate to the main narrative? Do "errors" in the songs or their variations not distort or change the content (sense) of the story? The truth must be told without modification since every modification is a distortion. How, in fact, does memory (knowledge) function in this circumstance? In the following passages of *Things Fall Apart*, we shall note as RD the sentences to be repeated, and as RN, the repetitions:

Okonkwo did not have the start in life, which many young men usually had: RD1. He did not inherit a barn from his father. RD2. There was no barn to inherit RD3. The story was told in Umuofia of how his father Unoka had gone to consult the Oracle of the Hill and the Cave to find out why he always had a miserable harvest. (P. 12)

The last sentence in the passage just quoted provides a kind of context as the storyteller digresses into the story of Okonkwo's father. After a few paragraphs the storyteller returns to the same sentences (RDs) adding to them words that he must have forgotten in the first context:

With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had: RN1. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife: RN2 and 3. But in spite of those disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future (P. 13).

"Error" occurs in the repetitions as a result of a change of context. In the case above, the meaning of the term inherit in the sentences to be repeated (RD) is extended to include an emotional meaning in the repetitions (RN) through additions or modifications. Thus:

"with a father like Unoka": addition to RD1

"nor a title, nor even a young wife": addition to RD2 and 3.

In other words, to inherit in the first context is given a general meaning of receiving a father's property (here barn

of yams) as heir. This meaning is expanded in the repetitions to include inheriting a title which is a sign of power, and inheriting a young wife when a father dies. This happens in African societies, including the Igbo community.

What then seems to be an "error" in the repetitions" is in fact a process of making a meaning clearer as it relates to African readers; it is also to educate foreign readers of the Nigerian novel about the traditions of the Nigerian, in fact the African past. Therefore, with regard to the texts of our demonstration, one can note that in spite of the modifications in the contexts, the Oral text in the various circumstances leads to the same formula: Okonkwo did not start in life with an inheritance. He earned his fortune through hard work. This is the bare fact and it is important for the lesson it teaches. Often, many young persons do not work hard to prepare for their future and social status.

In the words of Achebe himself "a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (P.6) among Africans. If he comes to tragedy as Okonkwo did, he cannot blame it on his origin. Other forms of repetitions proverbs, songs, etc. in their various contexts would normally follow this contextual treatment given above.

Conclusion

Our unstated observation regarding oral documents of history is that the history stored in human memory dies with the "historian", the old man or the bard whenever this latter dies. That is why Chinua Achebe, one of the oldest authors in Nigerian and contemporary African writing was not satisfied to just know and keep the "history" of the Ibos within him as an institutionalized memory but also to put it in writing, for preservation and permanence. Otherwise, who would teach our young African people that are still listening to stories? It is also important to teach them in a pleasurable manner to keep their attention fixed to the lesson (P. 25). In other words, Achebe has in *Things Fall Apart*, and in other novels reversed the trend of what Amadou Hampate Ba of Mali once commented on. He said that the death of an old man is like an entire library that gets burnt.

Our task in this article has been to study the "history" of the Ibos through the chief character of *Things Fall Apart*. We have observed how memory works with oral items being adapted into writing. By investigation in an imaginative dialogue with the author, we have asked the latter questions and discovered that the book is filled with emotions of the author using oral items. While we believe that complete "history" could not have been documented without emotions, we have also tried to be dispassionate by placing the oral items (patterns of time, reconstruction, oral report, vernacular words and expressions, dialogues, repetitions) in their various situations and contexts; all of these in an integrative garb so as to arrive at the pedagogic contents (sense) of the story.

We cannot claim to have exhausted the possibilities, but our projection is that it is common in the Nigerian society to hear an educated Nigerian speak the English language with the native Nigerian vernacular terms being adapted into his speech. In addition, other writers in the wake of Achebe use whole songs in their original form or as transliteration from the native vernacular in English language writing.

On the global scene, one would also believe that Chinua Achebe has done a lot to discourage the linguistic and political fragmentation and isolation of local languages by provoking and forcing the integration of his native Igbo language into literary writing in a world language and the general scheme of learning.

End Notes

- *. See Majorie Winter: "An objective Approach to Achebe's Style" in *Research in African Literature, Special Issues on Chinua Achebe*. 12, No.1, 1981. University of Texas Press.
1. See G. D. Killam (ed.). *African Writers on African Writing*. P.1.
 2. *Ibid*, p.2.
 3. Sean Field: "Oral Histories. The Art of the Possible". In Russell H. Kaschula (ed.). (2001). *Oral African Literature*. P 250.
 4. *Ibid*, same page.
 5. *Ibid*, same page.
 6. According to Ian M-L. Hunter (1958) to remember is a part of the functions of memory, which we can summarize as follows. Memory is a human faculty with four basic activities or processes namely learning, remembering, forgetting and retaining. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge when reading or hearing; remembering is the process by means of which the effects of past learning manifest themselves as when one tries to recite or write out what has been learned. As far as one cannot reproduce what has been learned, one has forgotten although one may have retained it as an effect of learning. Generally, memory is the construction house of knowledge.
 7. According to the advice of David B. Coplan in R.H. Kaschula (ed), *African Oral Literature*, p. 259, ".any address to Africa's popular literature must begin with the study of the imaginative history of existing vital aural genre".
 8. See Vladimir Propp, (1958): *Morphology of the Folktale*, for function slots of dramatis personae in the Oral folktale.
 9. In the structure of the family, note that every head of the family is giant-like. Nevertheless, Okonkwo is described as a "giant" because he has to take giant steps and decisions.
 10. David B. Coplan: "Orature, Popular History and Cultural Memory in Sesotho"; in Russell H. Kaschula (ed.), *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts*. P. 265.
 11. Further comments on repetitions in the oral style have been furnished by Anjali Roy and Viney Kirpal: *Oral Rhythms of Chinua Achebe's Fiction*; Majorie Winters: *An Objective Approach to Achebe's Styles*, and Ruth Finnegan: *Oral poetry: Its Nature,*

Significance and Social Content. They agree that repetitions lead to redundancy but that redundancy goes together with clarity and lucidity of a style.

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