
STYLISTIC FEATURES OF AFRICAN ORAL NARRATION IN SOME SELECTED WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN WRITERS: THE LINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS

Asika, Ikechukwu Emmanuel
Department of English
Anambra State University, Igbariam Campus
Email: excellency4life@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

African literature is a literature of mixed voices, ethnic projections and diversified cultural reaffirmation. This is expected from a continent of multiple culture, ethnic groups, world views and languages. The advent of colonialism did not efface this problem of a collective language, for each country on the African continent laboured much to hold on to the language of their colonizers. Now we have the Francophone, Lusophone, and Anglophone writers among others. But in all these, suffice it to say that the English language is a more appreciable language of literature than any of these other languages. It has become the accepted official language of some West Africa countries. For African writers to express themselves in all clarity to a wider audience they resorted to the use of this world language but not in a way to suit the European taste and jeopardize the African taste, and yearnings. Chinweizu et al, called for the decolonization of African literature. Many African writers responded to this call. This paper examined the use of these stylistic features of African oral narration that give uniqueness, identity, as well as authenticity to Africa literature in some selected works of African writers. How these writers flexed, bent, twisted and manipulated the English language to achieve a unique African voice and decolonize their literary creation; its relevance to the African people and the obvious linguistic implications are the major concern of this study.

INTRODUCTION

Style is very crucial to any work of literature, just as the work itself is very crucial and of immense value to its readers. Style is the very aura of uniqueness and distinction that distinguishes a writer from the others and clothes him with a high degree of individual uniqueness, which he enjoys in a lifetime even beyond. In the words of M.H Abrams (1981):

Style is the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse – it is how a speaker or writer says whatever it is he says. The characteristic style of a work or a writer may be analyzed in terms of its diction, or choice of words, its sentence structure and syntax: the density and types of its figurative language, the patterns of its rhythm and its rhetorical aims and devices.

Style entails a writer's choice of word, diction, narrative technique, linguistic foregrounding, sentence patterning and structuring, direct transliteration, descriptive quality, tonal level and speech pattern among other distinctive qualities that mark one out of a crowd of the likes of him. According to Arungwa Uchechi (2005)

"in the history of art, there has been a general consensus that the content and manner of a work are both important to its overall outlook and function. In other words, how what is said, is said, is as vital as the thing that is said. The manner is the style.

By the study of stylistic features of African Oral Narration we have in mind the three aspects of narrative rhetoric, which Chinweizu et al pointed out in their book, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. These three aspects include the narrative language, the handling of expository materials that might be unfamiliar to some part of the African audience; the utilization of descriptive devices and techniques of characterization derived from African orature. African writers have overtime experimented on the use of techniques and styles peculiar to their African setting of story telling. From a critical look on the bulk of creative works that have emerged from the African continent especially in Nigeria, one could unarguably assert that many African writers have mastered this successfully and have made good and worthwhile use of these stylistic features, while some still exhibit apparent ignorance in the adaptation of ingredients from the rich African oral lore to flavor their creative works. These few writers who have mastered this technique, have rendered a close to heart account of their experiences in their creative writings with such a voice, style and manner of presentation authentically African. This is what we hope to study and buttress in this paper while evaluating their possible significance and linguistic implications. The paper will focus on what Chinweizu et al outlined to be part of the style of writing that adds credence, aura, color, vitality, authenticity, uniqueness and peculiarity to the works of African writers. Chinweizu et al (1980) were of the opinion that:

A necessity for linguistic experimentation lies in the fact that Africans do not use English the way the English do, and in the fact that the rhetorical devices of each African language community are peculiar to it and are a legacy of its cultural inheritance. If a flavour of African life is therefore to be captured in novels written in English, the English language has to be flexed and bent to allow these idiomatic and rhetorical usages to be presented. Several African writers have experimented to this end; some have been more successful than others.

English is no doubt the official language of many African countries. It is a global language that has become the accepted Lingua Franca for many African countries that were once the former colonies of Britain. Nigeria is one of such African countries and the English language as a result of colonialism became the official language of the country. But this language is not free from 'mutilation' and 'adulteration' as it journeys its way deeper into the hearts and jungles of the African regions. Nwogu Ugochukwu (2005) says that:

This 'contact' between English and indigenous languages in Nigeria led to the evolvement of a different variety of English in Nigeria such that today it has become quite normal to talk about Nigerian English. Nevertheless, this trait is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It has become a phenomenon in countries where English is learned as a second language. That is why such expressions as

Indian English, Ghanaian English, etc. have become quite normal. They are all collectively known as New Englishes.

This has become the case for the African writers as evident in many of their creative works. The problem or more convenient the issue at hand is that of language use, the use of the English language by our African writers. Every language has a code, a structure and pattern that must be studied, mastered and used aptly if the flavour and standard version of the language will be created in spoken or written context. This is the normal and accepted background of the language which ought not to be violated in order to avoid syntactically wrong and semantically deviating sentences. According to Yankson Kofi (1987):

Language- any language- is a code: a set of rules for generating what generative transformational grammarians call "well-formed" sentences. A breach of the code could, therefore, result in an "ill-formed" sentences. One such rule is that every lexical item in the English language belongs to a particular grammatical category: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc. however, creative artists are noted for breaching the language code, for stylistic effect.

This is the case of the English language in the hands of several African writers as manifested in many of their literary works. Many of Nigerian writers are guilty of violating and defiling the normal codes of the English language in their bid to create a desired Africaness, authenticity, richness and glamour in their writings. By so doing, they achieve what linguists refer to as linguistic foregrounding, the foregrounding of a language- the English language, which is a deviation from the normal code of a language. The normal code and set of rules of any language is the background of the language. A violation or deviation from the normal code is the foregrounding of the language because it tries to bring the message to the forecourt of the reader's attention. Category rule violation where a noun could be used as a verb and vice versa and selectional restriction rule where an inanimate object could share comfortably the features of an animate object are all examples of linguistic foregrounding. These are among other ways Nigerian writers violate and deviate from the normal code and standards of the English language. Ebi Yeibo (2001) in defense of the Nigerian novelists emphasizes that:

When a language is transplanted in soil other than its native land, it undergoes transformations, modification and adaptation. The variety spoken or written in the new land is invariably distinct from the original form. Signification (in) this linguistic phenomenon is also transferred to the bulk of literature that emanates from the new land, thereby, creating a distinctive literary style or code. This is the inexorable fate of the English language in the hands of the African literary artist.

Chinweizu et al (1980), believed so much in the African oral narrative style, where the true picture of a typical African social discourse situation comes alive in the creative works of her writers. This is regarded, as Bernth Lindfors coined out, 'the African Vernacular Style'. There are no many better ways to render an authentic African voice in a body of creative work than

to borrow from the rich oral past and write in the oral linguistic style uniquely to the African people. They emphasized thus:

If the stylistic features of African oral narrative are to be captured in the African novel in English, it is necessary that the full range of linguistic resources of African prose traditions be rendered in English proverbs, legends, declamatory speech, rhetorical devices of conversation and public oratory – These are just some of the courses that need to be marshaled and so rendered that their flavour comes out in English ... In addition to capturing in the African novel the narrative devices of African languages, there is the task of appropriately employing the various types of English that are spoken by Africans e.g. Pidgin, Creole, the English of secondary school leavers, the English of University graduates etc. The task of capturing the flavour of African life in the African novel would be sadly incomplete if these were left out and if the King's or Queen's English were insisted upon in all contexts.

Achebe more than any other writer of his time made abundant use of this style that Bernth Lindfors (1973) commended him thus:

What gives Achebe's novels an art of historical authenticity is his use of English language. He has developed not one prose style but several, and in each novel he is careful to select the style or styles that will best suit his subject. In dialogue, for example a westernized African character will never speak like an illiterate village elder. Achebe, a gifted ventriloquist, is able to individualize his characters by differentiating their speech of course any sensitive novelist will try to do this, but most novelists do not face the problems of having to represent in English, the utterance of a character who is speaking another language. To resolve this problem, Achebe has devised an African vernacular style, which stimulates the idiom of Ibo, his native tongue.

Lindfors also offered us an example of this when he cited from one of Achebe's novels, *Arrow of God*. It was a speech by Ezeulu when he was sending his son to a mission school:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home to 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. But Achebe in his article on "English and the African writer" demonstrates that he could have written this passage in a different style. I am sending you as my representative among those people – just to be on the safe side incase the new religion develops. One has to move with the time 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.

This is a sample of what we mean by African oral narrative style, the sample of what we hope to x-ray in the works of authors under study. The former is in rich oral African narrative style, the latter in more westernized style of writing.

Stylistic Features in the Works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo

In Akachi Adimora's trilogy: *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* we came to a full close romance with this unique style of writing in the African vernacular style. Each of the characters in these novels is assigned to appropriate language use that equates to the level and personality of the character. The speeches of her characters are laced with local colours and flavours of typical Africa discourse. She laboured much to render the native language in the foreign language without losing the aura, level of imagery and glamour such language commands. Her direct transliteration speaks volumes of her narrative style. Akachi made abundant use of images, ideals and objects familiar to her native people and renders them without mincing words or much embellishment to suit her purpose. She borrowed heavily from the lore of her people to give her works the elegance and beauty they command as true African prose fiction. She used tales, songs, proverbs and riddles to structure her narrative and flexed and bent the English language to achieve a desired local glamour. This is where one applauds Akachi and the sparks of African authenticity one encounters each time one opens the pages of her creative works. We shall consider these few samples from her trilogy, *The Last of the Strong Ones*:

Ejimnaka had not shown any irritation at the interruption. Her words came flowing again, like the Agwazi River, placid and purposeful. "It is time we get to the head of our talk. We are all here now. Dawn has arrived and the day will not wait for anyone. The matter that brought us together is urgent and weighty. Let us not jump into the middle of it. Kosiri put an obstacle across the path of our life and we shall not rest until we clear it". She paused "Do I have your ears, daughters of our land? (7)

Another sample from the novel is the bitter quarrel between Onyekaozuru and Abazu, Onyekaozuru thundered thus:

"Ejimanaka, let me speak", Onyekaozuru said "let me clip Abazu's wings. It is said that when a commoner wishes to criticize the king, he must wear the disguise of a masquerade. But it is not my style. Abazu, I am not afraid of you. I will say it to your face you are not a man. Your strength displays itself only in appearance; in reality it is like air. It is a hollow as the inside of a bamboo" (67).

These are among many proverbs and songs in the novel. In *House of Symbols* we could quickly look at these samples from the speech of Ezenwanyi:

This old woman was the greatest storyteller and historian of Umuga before the white people's culture and religion cast their shadow over Umuga's religion and culture. Hei! You do not know Okwudiba who weave words into a colourful cloth only fit for the blessed, the wise? The wordsmith, the wordmonger who

hypnotized spirits and humans by the sheer power of eloquence, Tell me, who know Umuga's third and fourth eyes ... let word take root and live forever: that's the meaning of her name Okwudiba. It is said that a fart that explodes in the air is a puzzle to the housefly ... (37).

In Okwudiba's speech, we came close to a typical old African woman talking:

I have a question for all those who have deserted our tradition: if you throw away the stone with which you cracked palm nuts in the season of famine, do you have guarantee there will be no other famine in the days to come? Perhaps, the senseless ones should count their teeth with their tongues and puzzle out another question: if a hen abandons her clucking sounds, with what would she gather and nurture her chicks ... (82).

She went on and on to speak in such local flavour that replete the speech of many characters in the novel. In *Children of the Eagle* we shall take these few examples:

My daughter, this experience shook our marriage to its foundation. That man and his followers planned my destruction but my chi was too strong for them. Then help came through Inyang Asuquo Etim. Okon's father. He knew what to do; our people say that a person who visits a town does not know where an abomination has been committed...(122).

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo went on to assign these words in the speech of her characters:

"Yes, I did, you are right. I completely forget. As I was saying, apple and Udara look alike. To us Udara is the symbol of love. It has the roundness of a virgin's breast. It gives up a sap that has the look but not the texture of breast milk. Our people say that Udara especially when it is split into two halves, is shaped like vagina, that part of woman's body through which a baby shoots into the world. A woman's innermost core is a symbol of love" (24).

In the above we hear a voice European artists might never recreate in their works. When Akachi recreates many of these speeches in this style, it is obvious she has one single aim in mind, to recreate the authentic African oral narrative style in her writing. In another example Akachi writes:

As long as mama is happy, I will not allow my personal problem to give me undue stress or full my face with wrinkle. As long as my Chi continues to uphold me with good health and strength, I will struggle to take care of my children and myself ...

The harassed bed bug counseled her children with the comforting words that whatever is hot will get cold... One thing I am sure of the moment is that I will not wash my hands and crack nuts for a fowl to carry away and swallow ... (67).

These words were words of Obioma, a University graduate and a pastor. These are among other examples that replete the works of Akachi Adimora. As a professor of English, Akachi Adimora has a mastery of the Queen's English and can easily write novels that share so much in common with that of Rosamund Plicher, Jane Austin, George Eliot, Charles Dickens among others she obviously must have read, but just like Achebe and others, she chooses to recreate many statements of her characters in the true African vernacular style, the "Igbonized version" of the English language, thereby giving life and local flavour to her novels as true African prose fiction. She could have written these words otherwise but she chooses to be a carrier of the rich African oral narrative style. Her use of songs, tales and proverbs in between narration and speech of her characters brings home this fact.

Linguistic Foregrounding in Chuma Ngozi Udeh's Echoes of a New Dawn

In Ngozi Chuma Udeh's *Echoes of a New Dawn*, we come face to face with a woman who wanted to be more like a village story teller than a University lecturer. In her words during an interview chat while speaking on African oral narrative style and the reason she blended her work on such pattern, she said that:

The fact is that I don't want to suit the English taste, I want to portray my culture. I am talking about my people, I am not talking about Lawson, I am not talking about Tom Sawyer, I am not talking about Huckleberry Finn, I am talking about a core Igbo man and we are talking about core Igbo culture and this is about Igbo tradition. The important thing is the writer being able to manipulate these materials ... that is what makes a writer distinct ... like Achebe has an apt manipulation of Igbo materials. So these are the things that make up for the Igbo material. This is what qualifies this novel as a Nigerian novel.

In *Echoes of a New Dawn*, we encounter these familiar expressions:

"You are still a baby where these things are concerned. My daughter, the Ikwa Ajadu rites are for younger women who are still of marriageable age. The essence is to purify them through these rites so that another man can freely and safely go into them. I was an old woman bent with age when my husband died. So the need for purification rites did not arise who will have a scrawny old woman?" (104)

Another sample echoes thus:

*"Your logic does not follow my daughter. For one, you still have a bride price on your head; secondly you are just a woman, an ordinary woman who will listen to you? Have you forgotten that old fool, I mean the chief priest of Aja Ani is your uncle's bosom friend? Together the duo can conceal without leaking out?"
"Supposing Lucia refuses? Do you really expect Lucia to marry that old, dirty man who is so close to his grave ...?" (106).*

In the squabbles of women we hear familiar expressions of our past ancestors, the way they lived and cursed:

"May Amadioha blow your head off with a bolt of thunder, you, this useless daughter of an errant mother who is an empty head, me or your lascivious mother?"

"Do you call my mother an errant and lascivious woman? You, whose mother was caught behind the compound with a man, may Aja Ani reduce you to a living skeleton".

"I will teach you the lesson of your life if you think you can talk in front of your better ..."

"Who is my better? You, whose husband cannot provide three square meals a day, look at the veins on your neck standing out as if they have come out for a moon light game! (115).

It was obvious that a fight was imminent. This is all we can take from the novel. In the last paragraph of the above quote we could see a good example of category rule violation in the use of the word 'better'. The word 'better' is an adjective and belongs to the adjectival group but in the above passage it has been placed and used in a nominal category to function as a noun. Ngozi did not only recreate the African oral literary style, she did that with her natural sense of humour. One would wish we could see that every time in all the contemporary novels of our time. It is on this, coupled with her use of proverbs and tales that the beauty of her work rests upon outside the very vital message her novel tries to communicate; the need to pull down the very foundations of barbaric and outdated tradition that has continued to suppress and maltreat women in some parts of the country, even Africa at large.

African Oral Narrative Style in the Works of Odili Ujubonu

Odili Ujubonu is another contemporary artist that achieved this feat. In his novels, we get so carried away that we often thought we are reading Achebe and his priceless *Things Fall Apart*. His style of writing is so local and down to earth to the African setting, scene, language and world view. He demonstrated and displayed a high sense of history and closeness with his culture, people and society that no amount of Western education can take that away from him again. In *Pregnancy of the gods*, we hear a voice similar to that of Achebe, but belonging to our ancient forefathers, the great story tellers and raconteurs of the past, both men and women alike. The speeches of her characters did much to give them personality and identity as typical traditional African people. Let's look at this simple:

"My brother, it is only death that could subdue that back of yours. No wrestler in Mbaozo ever did during your lifetime? My great brother, have a safe journey. I know you will return as the prince you are. Go my brother! If you died a natural death, so let it be. If not, may your chi never slumber! May you fight and chase your killers until he or she kisses the doorpost of death. May your sword never go blunt... But if you don't have any need for revenge, please do not hesitate to rest. You take a rest my brother". She paused, then wiped her tears ... (20).

Odili writes thus:

"Ataka why not go straight to the point and avoid opening wounds neither you nor I can heal," he sounded remorseful.

"It was my curiosity that ensnared me towards the widow's home six months ago to witness alu. I got there after dinner when the children were filling out for the moonlight plays.....I made sure that my movement was as silent as the footfalls of a ghost. I climbed the ube tree inside, through the ogirisi tree outside the compound. I took a position that gave me a clear view of the house and the movement within. I waited for a period almost as long as the length of time we have spent talking, until my trap caught its quarry. Do you know who I saw enter the compound? Ataka asked, wriggling his arms in mock shock (54).

Yet another from the speech of Ataka to the chief priest:

Our father, I never meant to waste your valuable time. It is because of the story, the awe of the act, the fear that is associated with it and the problems that may befall the Okike royal priesthood that I cannot find the nerves to convey to you. How can a man be rude to his benefactor? Am I that foolish to bite the finger that feeds me? Eze, no! Mother hen swore never to forget the woman who kindly pruned her feathers during the rainy season. I cannot forget your kindness, great Okike ... (53).

Almost all the pages you turn are rich with this style and Odili Ujubonu deserves a thump up and riotous applause Achebe has and will always receive for his classic *Things Fall Apart*. In *Pregnancy of the gods*, Odili never lost touch or sight with the culture, tradition and custom of his people, and from the forgoing it was obvious that he was writing for his people. He repeated this feat even much more in his second novel *Treasure in the Wind*:

"Obiuta, do not regret your life. Do you know what tomorrow would bring? Tomorrow is pregnant, who knows what it shall beget? A man with the benefit of breath has the benefit of life and he that has life has tomorrow....But you see a dead man and all his dreams are confined to the narrow space of his grave," Agwu said thoughtfully. "Look at your master. He lived in abject poverty as a child because his father was poor. Today, how many sons of the great obis in Abanta can challenge him?"

"You're right." Obiuta nodded absent-mindedly...."But while our master got reprieve from poverty, it gave him no freedom. He has even become a slave to aku n' uba. Is that freedom? Tufiah!" He spat. (17).

Odili recreates further:

"I am happy to believe you. Thank you, father," he said happily. He chose the large Ayaka masks he was still working in. "I like this. We shall use it for a dance masquerade in Atani." He stressed the dance

masquerade to remind the old man who was not in the mmonwu jurisdiction that the mask definitely did not count as mmonwu.

"It will be ready by next Eke."

"Tell your father that he and his family shall always stumble unto good things," the old man said... (312).

Another example reads thus:

"When a meeting is called this late, it means that our day has eaten into our night. It also means that our beards have grown into our mouths and our nails have grown talons. I have few words tonight: Where is the flute?" (415).

It is left for the Europeans, to make sense of the 'Igbonized English' and understand his writings and thematic concerns.

Igbonized English as style in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, we have more than a dose of what we are looking for. Her style of writing and language challenged so many laid down conventions, experimented and flaunted by the Europeans as unique style of prose writing. Her combination of the Igbo and English syntax is to an appealing level. She allows her characters express themselves in words, ideas and imageries from her locale without bothering herself with endnotes, glossary and footnotes to explain to her foreign readers what she meant. It is left for any foreign reader to research and understand her terms. It is a prodigious step in the right direction, something Chinweizu et al clamored for if African literature must be decolonized of many, if not all-Western influences. Let's take few samples from the novel:

As we drove past, people waved and called out papa's title, "omelora!" mud-and-thatch huts stood clone to three-storey houses that nestled behind ornate metal gates...men sat on benches beneath trees, drinking palm wine from cow horns and cloudy glass mugs...three elderly men standing under the lone ukwa tree near our gates waved and shouted, "Nnonu! Nnonu! Have you come back? We will come in soon to say welcome!"(55).

Chimanmanda continued to experiment and explore other patterns like using Igbo words without footnote or translation to aid a foreigner's understanding:

"I joke with you, nwam, where would I be if my Chi had not given me a daughter? Papa nnukwu paused.

"My spirit will intercede for you so that chukwu will send a good man to take care of you and the children" (83).

The last example run thus:

... Doctor Nduoma said "Ndo" to all of us, the smile still on his face. Obiora said he wanted to accompany the Ozu in the fridge. But Auntie Ifeoma said no, he did not have to see papa-Nnukwu put in the fridge. The word fridge floated around in my head. I know where they put corpses in the mortuary was

different, yet imagined papa-nnukwu's body being folded into a home refrigerator, the kind in our kitchen (193).

This is about the last we shall take from Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

The linguist implication of this choice of word or language use is that these African writers have succeeded in decolonizing their writings from many of the western influences that often characterize and condition the shape of many of our literary works. These authors have succeeded in creating in their works a language gleaned from the European language but blended, flexed and twisted in such a way to achieve a local flavour and give meaning and interpretations to the African value and language resources. They have been able to create species of language uniquely African, a language confined and rooted deeply in the African myth, worldview and totality of existence. This could be viewed and rated as "Standard Nigerian English" of communication which these writers ought to beat their chests and pride in their achievements. This language has being able to draw a wild gap, a clear line between the African and European literature in relation to the uniqueness of the former and distinctiveness from the latter. This also has been able to give meaning, value, significance and projection to certain elements in the African culture, her flora and fauna that may never find their equivalents in the English language and may be lost and forgotten in due course. On the other hand, without this style or standard of language, these writers may continue to suffer the difficulty of expressing their exact thoughts in the Standard English language and this will always be to their pains and disappointment. This is a way forward for African literature as gradually we are creating a literature of our own; a style of writing detached from several Europeans modules of prose writing and correct English usage. This often happens in the form of superimposition or transition from one module to the other. However way, we now have in many works the European style of writing juxtaposed with the "Nigerian Standard English."

The choice of words and language structure used by these writers could be criticized by linguists as "ungrammatical" and "unacceptable" having breached the normal and accepted code of the English language but one can crave their indulgence at this point to pardon these African writers and understand that their writings may have violated the normal codes of the English language but in fairness, the literary language is an accepted Standard Nigerian English with which these writers try to communicate their urgent messages to the Europeans without a complete and outright betrayal of the African people, the rich reservoir of language varieties, their cultural identity and language superiority. Direct transliteration is the device with which these writers achieve this feat of balkanizing and butchering the English language to make it suitable, comfortable and appreciable even to a market woman out there in the street privileged to stumble and enjoy any work of African fiction. They were other violations, no doubt, which are all part of linguistic foregrounding but direct transliteration seemed most conspicuous of all. These writers did not suffer to find a genuine and acceptable equivalent of some local idioms, words and ideas in the native dialect in the English language to express and convey their thoughts but rather we witnessed a raw adaptation and direct translation of these local words, oral materials and ideas in the nearest available word in the English

language. The beauty of it all is that all these were done in the most subtle and appealing way that an average native speaker of the English language could understand them and yet the local flavour of the Igbo language, worldview and cultural uniqueness was not lost but was projected in all lucidity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one would be tempted to ask what the bulk of all these quotations have done. But indeed not every African writer could boast of giving his or her work this touch of local flavour. In Nigeria, to continue on the scope of this study, so many writers in their bid to achieve their desired aim or build on their artistic ingenuity, created works that gear more towards the shores of the European than that of the African people which the work was originally intended for. I consider such writers as 'impressionistic writers', who are writing more to suit the European taste and not to feed the imagination and yearnings of the African people. Helon Habila cannot boast of this style in his *Waiting for an Angel*. Tanure Ojaide may be found guilty of lack of this oral narrative style too. Kaine Agary in *Yellow-yellow* belongs to the group I call 'impressionistic writers' who are heading more to the shores of the Europeans than Africans. So are many other writers in this contemporary era. But it is worthwhile to note that this does not in any way undermine the works of these artists, for times change and people are bound to change with time. However way these authors have told their stories, no matter the level of language use, their message and thematic concern lives in our hearts and their style is still worthy of emulation.

What this paper has faithfully done is to highlight on the style of narration uniquely African, the same style that made Achebe and his cohorts immortal writers. This African oral narrative style is the same unique style of writing the troikas clamored for if African literature will be decolonized of all Western influences. This is a style uniquely Africa. The pages of the novels studied are filled with something more than an African vernacular style, but 'Igbonized Western English'. These works have demonstrated clearly how the English language could be flexed, bent, twisted and refashioned to suit the African taste and echo a voice authentically African in the English language. It is on this that the beauty and uniqueness of African literature lies and such works will never cease to delight the heart, body and soul of any African patriot for once again, these writers offer us an opportunity to come in full contact and romance with something we thought was lost during colonialism; something we will always hold supreme as belonging to Africa, our very own unique style of writing, the African oral narrative style. This as Chinweizu et al (1980) pointed out will ensure a continuation of traditional forms with pouring of new wine into old bottles, and will impart an African tone to our literary products. In the end it will continue to help us develop new forms and techniques suitable for rendering new aspects of the contemporary African reality.

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