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In the effort--to write the African story in European languages, Africans seem to have written themselves out of a lived African history into an alien and transitional narrative world. Though enabling in its capacity to open up Africa to the international world, that narrative world continues to close itself to Africans focused on a reality invented for the service of an extant colonial imperative. This invented Africa is ridden with questions about language, identity, viable political systems, and others that continue to challenge the African intellectual engaged in the quest for true African freedom from continued Western domination. Most scholars (see Achebe, *Morning Yet*; Gates, *Signifying Monkey*; Okpewho) agree that successful engagement of the issues it raises requires both a sustained engagement of African oral traditions to discover its own theories of aesthetics, criticism, and performance as well as the formulation of relevant theories for exploring contemporary African literatures. Predictably, general agreement on the necessity of these projects in the literatures of African-descended peoples has resulted in the initiation of various methods of discovery and inquiry. Notable examples include the works of Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's Nobel Prize laureate, which explore the uses of Yoruba mythology as fictional and literary tools and strategies of engagement for the new literature (*Myth, Literature and the African World*), and Henry Louis Gates's theory of Signifyin(g) in African American formal literary traditions (*The Signifying Monkey*), and Abiola Irele's focus on ideology and language (*The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*). As a result of its history, the assumptions of contemporary African literature continue to depend on the anthropological, insisting that Africans in general and Africanists in particular should rise to the project to (re-)member and re-deploy African thought, African traditions. Further, the political implications of the encounter demand immediate deployment of the artifacts of these archeological endeavors. This essay explores the purposeful use of the oral narrative as a contemporary African literary technique with positive implications for the development of an African literary theory.

Regarding viable methodology, Foucault reminds us that

it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within those rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say--and to itself, the object of our discourse--its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance. The archive [...] emerges in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it: at most, were it not for the rarity of documents, the greater chronological distance would be necessary to analyse it. (130)

Although the postcolonial situation provides limits and possibilities, the implications of self-reflection hinder full exploration of contemporary Africa's archives. The point is

not to assume that we need to arrive at a different place (Appiah 68) or to become a different people. Productive strategies should create change that must not disconnect us from our origin--nationalism's resistance of this possibility upholds sovereignty, validating tradition along with the rights of society's members. For Africans, this means that modernization's efforts will fail if one of its main purposes is to erase ancestral archives. Consequently, contemporary African literature strives, together with African peoples, to keep African earth from "heaving [only] dust" (Echewa, *I Saw the Sky*) by purposefully inserting fragments from traditional archives into the new.

A persistent problem is that on the level of language acquisition, it looks as though Africans have gained much that is new, useful, and superior through learning to read and write in the colonizers' languages. It is significant to note that colonized Africans would have had difficulty acquiring elements of the new cultures if no parallels existed in African societies before the encounters with the East and West. The nontrivial assumption (re-)presented here must be fully explored for productive change to continue in both literary production and nation building because it presupposes a precolonial Africa in full possession of unfettered humanity with the attendant possibilities and consequences. That ancestral African thought was not set in Roman script does not invalidate this fact. The question is: Would Africans have been able to move into that which we know as modern reality without Western interference? Probably not. What concerns us here is not an imagined African-initiated entry into a contemporary reality but the fact of the colonized African's conscious efforts to increase the match between the oral tradition and Western scriptocentric incursions into existing African temporal and spatial realities. The narrative tradition that has emerged is not only part of transitional, contemporary African experience; it belongs to it. Understanding this self-evident truth in African literary criticism is crucial to productive exploration of the intellectual traditions that gave rise to and maintained African oral traditions. Further, the existence of these traditions enabled Africa's colonized, Western-educated subjects to begin to offer the counterfactual arguments and postures that sustain African literature today.(FN1)

Early discussions of the novelty of African literature included assumptions of its disengagement from African society. This meant that literary works were seen as portraying African culture and traditions rather than emerging from them. Of necessity, this approach excluded the use of African thought, rhetoric, etc. in the analysis of African literature. This phenomenon has more to do with normal research practice within Western centers of knowledge than with the absence of knowledge about African thought and intellectual history. The problem also exists because of the need for the objectification of the self encountered by the Western-educated African in Western centers of knowledge. Even though most research on African life and experience continues to find that African communities link all aspects of existence and practice in coherent and consistent patterns, it has not been necessary to explore the possibilities of an African literature that emanates, at least in part, from a holistic African arts tradition because most of the literature is written in non-African languages whose cultures do not espouse this unity among disciplines. Further, that which is perceived as authentic African art has also assumed more responsibility for the traditional, alienating it from African literature. This disconnection presents contemporary African literature as a colonizing tool and obscures its place within African oral narrative traditions.

As a strategy for including contemporary African literature in the Western narrative

tradition, this inversion succeeds because it encourages the African's self-objectification as it keeps contemporary African literary practice within the Western academy and beyond the boundaries of African oral narrative practice. Nullification of the role of African oral narrative practice in contemporary literature poses anthropological questions for the creative writer, requiring African creativity in the new narratives to adopt a predominantly explanatory focus. Convincing objectification of the self is sustained by the use of European languages. The result has been a focus on the production of a contemporary African literature that explores African life as an event that is tied to European presence in Africa. This is not to suggest that this is wrong or bad; European presence in Africa has been around long enough to merit some attention. This focus, however, limits contemporary African literature's referential modes as it poses difficulties from the use of African thought and intellectual history to initiate and evoke a literary project independent of incessant responses of the European presence--presumed necessary for its validation. Successful African writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi, and others have responded by embedding African oral narrative theoretical frameworks in plot structure and other literary techniques. The African writer's resourcefulness in this regard is seen as part of the effort to claim African literature for Africans.

Recognition and exploration of African identity embedded in the oral traditions of people of African descent occupies a significant place in continental and African Diaspora scholarship. Efforts in this regard largely contributed to making literature a convincing vehicle for writing "ourselves out of slavery" (Gates, "Writing 'Race'" 46) in the New World and out of colonialism on the continent. However, and especially, in the New World situation, "writing ourselves" presupposed the existence of a vibrant oral culture with a viable archive with origins that continue to be traced to the continent. In the New World, the Slave Narrative tradition succeeds because not only has the enslaved African already (re-)developed a way of knowing the African self, s/he has also identified freedom from chattel slavery as the only and appropriate destination of the scriptocentric autobiography. It is from this vantage position that narrators like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs could resist and engage the Slaveholder's tradition whose written "Slave Codes" denied enslaved Africans verbal engagement through refusal of the right to read and write. Although contemporary African literature does not have a known colonial corollary to the Slave Narrative, Africans did incorporate the colonial experience into African life through existing traditional art forms like the Mbari among the Igbo as well as masks and masked dancing traditions like the Yoruba Gelede and recognizable references in oral narratives. These traditional art forms belonged to the community and were used to engage social, spiritual, and other issues as appropriate. For instance, among the Igbos of Nigeria who held Ana, the Earth goddess in high esteem, Mbari was a celebration performed at her command. A home of images in honor of Ana, Mbari was constructed "under the instruction and supervision of master artists" (Achebe, "African Literature as Restoration" 2):

Architecturally, it was a simple structure, a stage formed by three high walls supporting a peaked roof; but in place of a flat door you had a deck of steps running from one side wall to the other and rising almost to the roof at the back wall. This auditorium was then filled to the brim with sculptures in moulded earth and clay, and the walls with mural [...]. The sculptures were arranged carefully on the steps. At the center of the front row

sat the earth goddess herself, a child on her left knee and a raised sword in her right hand [...]. Human figures, animals [...], figures from folklore, history, or pure imagination; forest scenes, scenes of village and domestic life; everyday events, abnormal scandals; set pieces from past mbari, new images that had never been depicted before--everything jostled together for space in that extraordinary convocation of the entire [...] human experience and imagination [...] after months or even years of preparation, the makers of mbari, who had been working in complete seclusion, sent word to the community. A day was chosen for the unveiling and celebration of the work with music and dancing and feasting in front of the house of mbari. [... Mbari] deliberately sets out to include [...] all significant encounters which man makes in his journey through life, especially new, unaccustomed and thus potentially threatening, encounters. (2-3)

Engagement of society's issues employing creativity in the written word occurs when Western-educated Africans learn the new narrative style and begin to use it to create and support the transitional culture. However, successes in reclaiming African temporal and spatial realities in the colonizers' languages are clouded by African unrest--known in African literary criticism as the language and identity questions. My claim is thus: The reception of Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1953) differs from that of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959) not because Tutuola's world is written in "young English"(FN2) but because Achebe's mastery of both the new language and its narrative tradition validate, for the non-Africanist-oriented critic, the successful colonizing of the African mind. Although both works explore the African world (Tutuola--Yoruba, Achebe--Igbo), Tutuola presents a layer of African thought that is unfamiliar to this type of critic while Achebe's narrative topography coincides with a real and already colonized Africa. Further, Tutuola's presentation of the Yoruba narrative world threatens both the colonized and colonizer's imagination with his works' assumptions of and comfort in an unexplained parallel universe.

Subsequent relegation of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* to an exotic and, simultaneously, ambiguous literary category speaks to its boldly successful counterfactual presentation of African thought to an English-speaking public in Nigeria and abroad. Even after Achebe explains the existence of a "'spiritland' where dead ancestors recreate a life comparable to their earthly existence [...] physically contiguous with it for there is constant coming and going between them in the endless traffic of life, death and reincarnation" (*Morning Yet* 95), most Africanist literary critics continue to focus on Tutuola's "failure" with English-language usage. The fallacy here is in the assumption that either Tutuola or Achebe was writing for the benefit of speakers of English. Tutuola wrote *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, his first book, while working at an "unsatisfactory job" (Tutuola 130). Eric Larrabee reports that after the publication of the book, when he asked Tutuola "what his future writing plans were, he said that possibly there were more stories down on the farm and that if I liked he might be able to get some [...]" (qtd. in Lindfors 11). If these responses are read according to the African idioms Tutuola re-presents in his works, it becomes possible to see Tutuola as writing himself out of his boredom (colonialism?) using familiar (to him) Yoruba oral narrative practice.

I use oral narrative practice to refer to the synergy between orality, oral performance, the conscious deployment of meaning in African arts and the relationships between those within African societies and cultures. While oral narrative practice places emphasis on

the spoken word it is not relegated to it. It is therefore not the same as Oral Literature. Oral narrative practice assumes planning and deliberation as intrinsic to other aspects of African traditions and rejects the unwarranted implications of "the folk" in "folklore." Extending beyond the boundaries of Oral Literature, oral narrative practice includes not only the actual performance of the oral narrative but also the cultural landscape whose design depends on specific language use. This definition reestablishes the relationships between normal cultural practice and Oral Literature. Isidore Okpewho defines Oral Literature as "literature delivered by word of mouth" (3). Oral narrative practice includes works like Mbari, Gelede, Egungun, and other ancestral or contemporary artistic practices whose delivery sometimes require verbal and/or musical accompaniment. Also, since an objective of this work is to show that traditional African thought is significant to the transfer of relevant information from its core to contemporary African literature, Okpewho's discussion of the inadequacy of terms such as "folklore" and "folk literature" within the African experience (4-5) are appropriate here. Neither "folk" as a term that refers to uneducated people (in the Western sense) as producers of simple ideas nor "folklore" as that which they produce is a viable contender for a productive exploration of African verbal art traditions deployed in the retrieval of meaning in a changing African world. Although Africans recognized the need for change early in the colonial encounter, it is still necessary to work within parameters that facilitate change while ensuring security in Africa's valuable material and abstract ancestral heritage. The creation of contemporary African literature was sparked by the need to maintain this balance.

Most works on the use of oral traditions in contemporary African literature explore only the meanings of the narratives, riddles, proverbs, or their applications to themes and other literary techniques (see, e.g., Egejuru). There has been little effort to link the use of African oral narratives and other verbal art forms to African literary theory. For the most part, African literary theory has been seen as a derivative of the Western. Closer examination of Achebe's application of oral narrative practice reveals it as a technique for both assertion and insertion of the society (in this case Igbo) and its rhetorical practices. For example, the first dialogue in *Things Fall Apart* takes place between two old men, Unoka and Okoye, and begins with the classic salutatory phrase "I have Kola." Prefacing the character and style of Igbo rhetoric, this introduction is significant to the exploration of Igbo art traditions in at least two ways: 1) it announces one's readiness to engage friendly and unpleasant issues in one's home, and 2) the subsequent exchange between Unoka and Okoye is both an announcement and an example of the preferred discursive mode for the novel. The proffered kola serves the same function in the novel as the formulaic announcements at the beginning of an oral narrative performance. This similarity lends credibility to a comparison of the novel's tropes to familiar ones in an oral narrative. As narrative tropes, the two men's names reflect their roles and functions in the story. Unoka ("home is supreme") focuses on aesthetics, the abstract rather than the concrete and the functional meaning of home and homeland; Okoye ("male child born on Oye day") refers to youthfulness and achievement. Unoka's dismissal of his debts to Okoye and his apparent lack of interest in things material also foreshadow the impact of his thinking on his son, Okonkwo. His fear of being seen as replicating Unoka's approach to life drives Okonkwo to make rash decisions that result in his inability to achieve the status of a venerable ancestor--Umuofia abandons him when he commits the final abominable (according to his people) crime of suicide. This connection between the oral

narrative's approach to a predictable interpretation that emanates from its rules and techniques insists on the purposeful use of its rhetorical modes in the crafting of significant portions of the novel. This is not to say that the oral narrative always has a message or meaning. Rather, it does mean that when a meaning or message exists, the routes to them are inherent in the narrative's techniques, its structures, and its intent (see Scheub). Rarely are the relationships between these elements dependent on a particular narrator's performance skills. This is the main reason that the Yoruba basis of Tutuola's works is recognizable as such.

Like the masks or other molded art forms of a particular people or group, the techniques and craft of African oral narratives reflect and convey traditional thought, and their specifications are unique to the group. In this regard, the quest for theory has to first consider general frameworks. For the oral narrative, a satisfactory framework bears not only the weight of narrative elements such as form, style, structure, and language, but also that of the world view. As a general rule, the African oral narrative tradition has been identified as one that presents a parallel universe. In that world, the fantastic is allowed to flourish with the implicit understanding that although the narrative world is ordered like the world of the living, it is not its mirror image. The narrator who ignores this convention risks his/her reputation as a performer because it is a skill without which a narrative cannot come into being for the audience. The acquisition of relevant oral narrative and performance skills creates the conditions for the introduction of new ideas into existing narratives. Conversely, the absence of such skills produces audience inability to suspend belief. This is the problem that the Western fictional world poses for the African narrator; ironically, it also constitutes the major attraction. Since the African fictional world, like all such worlds, is one of make-believe, African participation in the creation and consumption of contemporary fiction begins with this assumption.

A great deal of the real African world, however, became incorporated early into the Western fictional world during the encounter with the West. At first, the inclusion of Africans in Western fictive imagination created a response of general wonder and pleasant surprise. But as Africans became aware that there was negligible difference between the real and the imagined African in the new fictional world, suspension of belief became a problem. Initial reaction is similar to that which an unskilled oral narrative performer would receive from a knowledgeable audience. The inability to suspend belief led to African efforts to tell an African story using familiar frameworks with appropriately applied aesthetic principles. These conditions marked the beginning of the African struggle to clarify the blurred boundaries the West was creating between literature and history. But the transitional nature of the postcolonial state produces a dynamic conflict between creativity and performance as Africans continue to explore reality by mobilizing indigenous and alien narrative worlds. In the new narratives, the stabilizing impact of the indigenous is constantly refuted by the unrestrained assault of a Western fictional world.

The African who encounters an African self portrayed as a citizen of an identifiable parallel but foreign universe frequently experiences an identity crisis. To paraphrase Achebe, one of the difficulties it poses is that of knowing that initial ideological commitment to an alien fictional world conflicts with both the desire and the project of a return to the indigenous unless the maps are redrawn. But how does the African redraw a fictional map that will enable real people to exit a fictional space? Although problems of

incommensurable viewpoints loom large at this juncture, it is possible to attempt a solution. Since an African fictional world exists, a comparison between it and the Western is imperative to finding viable solutions. If the African fictional world was not created at the moment of contact with the West, then the most plausible beginning is in the exploration of its territory, its engagement of Western narrative traditions, and its modes for self-redeployment in the new narratives.

Most works about linkages between African oral narrative traditions have focused on description and counterrefutations. For example, a cursory examination of the reviews of Tutuola's works shows Western scholars' focus on finding resemblances between his Yoruba fictional world and theirs while even the Nigerians who fault him for misrepresentation confirm his debts to his Yoruba sources. But the question remains: Why did a semi-educated African who had read *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Arabian Nights* (Lindfors 294) present his people's fictional world in the new language? Could his response be compared with Achebe's to *Heart of Darkness*? Soyinka's to Greek mythology? Given his lack of training in the structure of Western fiction, the structure of Tutuola's works suggests this conclusion (see, for instance, Lindfors).

Effective engagement using the African narrative world and its techniques is evidenced in the works of Achebe, Soyinka, and others whose explorations of both worlds resulted in the development of a merging of fictional techniques such that the dynamism essential for the retention of an African core is retained. This is consistent with the utilitarian view of African art. Always striving for a functional response to Western incorporation of Africa into its fictive imagination, many African writers have been successful in either combining the prescriptions of the new fiction with existing African ones or an emptying of significant elements into existing African oral narrative frameworks.

The counterfactual assumptions underlying Tutuola's and Achebe's narrative projects become more evident on a closer examination of Achebe's straddling of both traditions. The implicit and long-standing acceptance of successful African writer's ability to straddle European and African narrative traditions demands engagement beyond the anthropological; it alerts us to vibrant, viable intellectual histories and traditions in African societies without which there would be no African will to freedom. Unless, of course, one is willing to agree with Albert Schweitzer on the African's natural subordinate status (Achebe, *Morning Yet 3*) or with Kwame Anthony Appiah that the orality of African cultures always and already precludes the existence of a viable intellectual tradition because its contents, when transferred to a postcolonial reality, lack validity because conveyance is usually not affected by the postcolonial "intellectual" (54-55). In this regard, it is significant to note that the majority of African writers' works presume a continuum within which artists and their works exist and succeed because ancestral cultures provided mechanisms for transfer of ideas. The fact that the colonizers did not recognize these mechanisms negates neither their existence nor their viability. My point here is that it was not the colonizers' responsibility to teach or maintain African traditions. Colonization and exploitation depended on strategies that encouraged the Western-educated African to see greatness and permanence only in the expressions and actions of identified great men and women from European traditions. The absence of African names on the list of great men and women began to mean that Africans were (and should remain?) incapable of greatness despite the fact that the postcolonial scholar-in-training inhabited Western-type educational spaces after the fact of an early childhood

socialization into African life.

Artistic response within the Oral Narrative Practice evident in forms like Mbari, Gelede, and others provided the Western-educated African with unspoken (unspeakable?) avenues for resistance to colonialism, however. The major differences reside in the choice of media and our ability to read their modes of representation, their texts. Recognizing Africans' predilection for nature and the tendency to "keep looking around [them]" (Echewa, *The Land's Lord* 39), it becomes possible and, yes, necessary to read the variety of stories that have been told through African art in forms like Mbari. Undoubtedly, significant numbers of these representations are historical; but given also the African narrator's pervasive love for the figurative, the immense wealth of the fictional heritage embedded in molded African art forms is limited only by the imagination. Referring to the need to include the European presence in existing oral narrative art practice, Achebe says of the Mbari:

[W]hen Europe made its appearance in Igbo society out of travellers' tales into the concrete alarming shape of the District Officer, the artists immediately gave him a seat among the moulded figures of mbari, complete with his peaked helmet and pipe. Sometimes, they even made room for his bicycle and his native police orderly. To the Igbo mentality art must, among other uses, provide a means to domesticate that which is wild; it must act as the lightening conductor which arrests destructive electric potentials and channels them to the earth. ("African Literature as Restoration" 3)

Similar efforts are evident in the performance of Gelede among the Yoruba. Focused on social commentary, Gelede nevertheless offers significant allusions to other aspects of the human condition and experience. Henry John Drewal asserts:

In contrast to Egungun, Agbo, Oro and other masking traditions whose main concerns are the spiritual forces in orun [the otherworld], Gelede concentrates on forces in the world, primarily the elder mothers. [...] The performances are thus an ebo (sacrifice), or appeal to forces in the world using the aesthetic power of sculpture, costume, song and dance. They offer explicit commentary on social and spiritual matters, helping to shape society and those within it in constructive ways. [...] All the masks convey some sort of social or spiritual commentary, or both simultaneously. They often convey a particular point of view, whether of praise, humor or condemnation, though this is often difficult to determine with certainty unless specific contextual and performance data are recorded for a mask. (220; emphasis added)

For the most part, the confluence of the exploration of the social and spiritual elements that dominates most African oral narrative practice has been ignored in the effort to provide access for the contemporary African intellectual in Western centers of knowledge. The apparent absence of recorded data continues to baffle Africanists despite pervasive knowledge and specific data on African insistence on a holistic approach to data collection, recording, and interpretation of data and performance. This absence, however, is only apparent because one needs merely to consider the processes of producing an Mbari stage or a Gelede performance to see that indigenous research programs adhered to their own unique (sometimes unyielding) approaches to the notion

of verisimilitude. Rather than predicting blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, this work suggests that traditional documentation processes allowed ample scope for further exploration and/or interpretation.

Given the above examples, continued focus on the difficulties encountered by the contemporary narrator, in European languages, of African life and experience begins to lose significance as one realizes that emphasis has been placed for too long on one aspect of the African experience. African discomfort at inheriting two opposing worlds must not continue to mean Africa's lack and/or inability to theorize from a viable knowledge base. Rather, most of the difficulty arises from the delayed recognition of the nature and relevance of African texts. Ancestral African thought may not have been written in great books but they were written in African traditions and minds. Like the world views explicated in the great books of the scriptocentric traditions, African thought within African traditions also remains open to interpretation for the purposes of initiating and implementing change. Writers like Achebe can therefore be seen as using African archives the same way that the Western scholar/writer uses library reference materials. Since the African writer/scholar uses both the library and the African archive, the challenge is for the postcolonial scholar/critic to accept (a) that a new knowledge base is under construction, (b) that the knowledge base so constructed complements the African scholars' Western intellectual heritage, and (c) that its contents must be used creatively and responsibly.

Understanding the complementary relationship between ancestral and Africanized Western knowledge bases also facilitates a new reading of the African writer's efforts to synthesize a transitional culture. For example, the knowledge that Achebe is responding, in part, to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in *Things Fall Apart* allows Achebe's crafting of Okonkwo's story to be seen as both a part and an extension of traditional oral poetry, song, and narrative practice that use references to situate and re-establish performer and audience in a shared tradition. In other words, on the level of artistic production of concrete images, the African novel is not unlike other molded art pieces on the Mbari stage or on the Gelede headdress and/or superstructure that is used to display old and new aspects of societal life and experience (Drewal and Drewal 152-220). This interpretation is plausible because traditional art forms like the Mbari and Gelede early included the new images of the colonial encounter without jeopardizing their integrity. Further, the artists did not perceive either the inclusion of non-African figures or the inevitable European gaze during the Mbari exhibit or the performance of Gelede as an acknowledgment of the colonizers' control of their works. If we accept this re-vision of traditional African arts and performance, the question becomes: Why has it been difficult to recognize the creation of the African novel, for example, as proceeding from an existing African art tradition? I want to submit here that this explanation has been obscured by prolonged focus on the language question. To be sure, the form of the novel is Western. If, however, as has been argued on behalf of the African writer, the African novel can be identified as not articulating Western experience in Africa, an explanation that goes beyond language is necessary.

Viewing African literature, especially the novel, as one of the art pieces displayed at Mbari or on the Gelede mask/superstructure facilitates the emergence of different and new interpretations, enabling, for example, a re-visioning of the language question. In his discussion of the formation of enunciative modalities, Foucault uses the fact of "other

forms of statement [...] found in the discourse of nineteenth century doctors" to assert the following:

The status of doctor also [...] involves a number of characteristics that define its functioning in relation to society as a whole (the role that is attributed to the doctor according to whether he is consulted by a private person or summoned, more or less under compulsion, by society, according to whether he practices a profession or carries out a function; the right to intervene or make decisions that is accorded him in these different cases; what is required of him as the supervisor, guardian, and guarantor of the health of a population, a group, a family, an individual; the form of contract, explicit or implicit, that he negotiates either with the group in which he practices, or with the authority that entrusts him with a task, or with the patient who requests advice, treatment, or cure). [...] If, in clinical discourse, the doctor is in turn the sovereign, direct questioner, the observing eye, the touching finger, the organ that deciphers signs, the point at which previously formulated descriptions are integrated [...], it is because a whole group of relations is involved. (51, 53)

Although Mbari, Gelede masks, and similar ancestral African art traditions do not speak to their communities using enunciated speech, their functions within the society are based on established forms, contracts with the society and norms about expectations of continuity and change predetermined by boundaries within which society's members operate. Consequent texts are therefore both fixed and readable within these art traditions. The fact that language is involved for the effective interpretation that these art forms require necessitates a re-evaluation of our engagement of such texts in contemporary African literature.

Significant to the new interpretation is our ability to see the African novel on display at the Mbari stage and similar locations. The problem with the language question has been the tendency (acceptance?) to allow the language of the novel on display to override the language at the Mbari stage or whatever traditional art location from which the contemporary writer works. This is not an argument for a return to traditional norms and practice or a recommendation for the use of African languages in contemporary literature. Rather, it is an argument for a transformative vision of a modified African dispensation. The needs of the intercultural discourse that *Things Fall Apart* as a molded art form undertakes requires that such works simultaneously extend (a) the existing limits of Mbari by considering the inclusion of a molded art object with the potential for self-verbalization and (b) the limits of the novel providing space for contemplation of its possibilities as a molded work of art. The potential for creativity in both instances is limitless.

If the language of the molded object is allowed to override that of the artist's society whose "art must, among other uses, provide a means to domesticate that which is wild" (Achebe, "African Literature as Restoration" 3), consequent chaos cannot but erase creativity. If Achebe is right about the function of African art, and I think he is, then the problem is not with its predictions or intentions but with the postcolonial society's interpretation of relationships between the novel-on-display and traditional locations and/or forms like Mbari. Another look at the artist-as-member-of-society will be helpful at this point.

Both Achebe and Tutuola agree that their works emanate from societal archives. Tutuola's works mostly translate archival contents into a different language, whereas Achebe extends the relationships between the language, the archive, and relevant discursive modes. Without knowledge of Achebe's stated intentions in the crafting of Okonkwo's story, the introductory paragraphs of *Things Fall Apart*--

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 honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. (7)

--can be seen to fit a rhetorical mode that is non-Western. Obvious in its intent after Achebe's explanation of his reaction to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, this introduction merits in-depth appraisal because of its significance to this work's exploration of Oral Narrative Practice and contemporary African literature. This introduction identifies Achebe as working within the boundaries of oral narrative practice. If the reader does not hear the drums at the wrestling match before Achebe's narrator mentions them in the second paragraph, their significance to the novel's application of and participation in oral narrative practice cannot be ignored once they are introduced.

Additionally, Achebe's oblique references to the contents of the Western library archives he shares with Conrad are evident in the novel's emphasis on the different criteria used to determine Okonkwo's fame and honor among his people. This African-based response to Conrad's and, eventually, Western depiction of Africans as people without history and culture qualifies *Things Fall Apart* as a molded object on display on the Mbari stage. Furthermore, as an object molded by a local artist, *Things Fall Apart* may be appraised using prevailing norms and aesthetic principles.

Within this new framework, the drums are seen as tools for oral narrative practice and heard as part of the language that supports Achebe's response to Conrad's negative delineation of his African characters. Responding to the drumbeats at a fictional wrestling match, the African reader is restored to an African narrative world in which a non-African language can be and is spoken. Consequently, what becomes an issue is not a comparison of the artists as members of their respective societies but the artists' mastery of relevant narrative skills and practice. From the African viewpoint, then, the wrestling match becomes a metaphor used to examine artistic performance between contenders from different villages. This explanation is plausible because Okonkwo can now be seen as a narrative device rather than a representation of the quintessential Igbo (African?) man. As a narrative device, this character is used to explore some assumptions about an Okonkwo that is invented from Conrad's forest(FN3) of Africans without history and culture. Consequently, the failure of the Western-invented African character within an African fictional world merits consideration.(FN4)

Returning to the exploration of African art traditions, creativity, interpretation, and the Mbari stage, what needs explanation is therefore neither the novel's capacity to speak nor the fact that it speaks a European language. This does not mean that the analysis of language is irrelevant in African or other literatures; rather it suggests a modified analytical approach based on relevant predictions of African traditional arts and practice. For African literature, current problems in analysis and interpretation exist because artists and participants at the new Mbari who assert the dominance of their Western-educated

viewpoints seem satisfied with the appropriation of ancestral art forms without careful evaluation of their underlying principles and the implications for contemporary African arts. In most cases, this group's views are not only more prominent, they also appear to have more access to contemporary forums in Africa and the West. This suggests that rather than (re-) presenting the modified versions of the District Officer and his aides as ideas that need continued domestication and further exploration, the new Mbari focuses on explaining itself to the novel-on-display. The overall effect is that of the reduction of forms like the Mbari and Gelede from their statuses as formidable depositories of African thought and cultural practice to corollaries of the Western novel, poetry, or dramatic arts. This inversion of one of the main purposes of traditional African art is at the core of African discomfort with the postcolonial heritage. Understanding its dynamics clarifies the linkages between traditional African art and contemporary literature.

Interpreting contemporary African literature as a molded form that fits into existing art traditions with inherent verbal capabilities extends the boundaries of contemporary African literature. From this standpoint, Africanists can effectively practice that which is already known from existing research about Africa's long-standing traditional approach to knowledge acquisition and dissemination. More importantly, this reinterpretation facilitates the molding of new forms and the analysis of existing works such that the contemporary African artist will develop again an unequivocal focus that illuminates a world view consistent with that of lived traditional and contemporary African experience.

ADDED MATERIAL

FOOTNOTES

1. It is important to note here that although writing does produce a certain level of permanence in record keeping, this does not mean that interpretation and practice of their contents are and/or do become predictable and stable. The best example of this within Western traditions is the Bible. If written records help maintain stability through clarification and consequent codification, then there would be only one church, one nation, one government, etc. That this is not the case might mean that the modern intellectual is probably inclined more toward orality than we are willing to admit.
2. Dylan Thomas, *The Observer* 6 July 1952, qtd. in Lindfors 7.
3. Umuofia means "children of the forest."
4. It is worth noting here that in the oral narrative tradition, characters that pose similar puzzles usually fail to accomplish their major objectives. They are used as narrative devices in the cautionary tale. Well-known examples are stories about the "Complete Gentleman" whose perfect physical features compel the hard-to-please maiden to agree to a marriage proposal from a stranger whose unknown origins harbor possibilities for confrontations with disconnected and alien realities. Another example is the "Good-girl, Bad-girl" narrative used to portray character traits that the society discourages or abhors.

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grz.g.andritz.com.Â permission of the copyright holder. ebrd.com. ebrd.com. a special article in a newspaper or magazine, or a part of a television or radio broadcast, that deals with a particular subject. agony column. the part of a magazine or newspaper where letters from readers about their personal problems are printed, together with advice about how to deal with them. agony aunt. a person, usually a woman, who gives advice to people with personal problems, especially in a regular magazine or newspaper article.Â 62 terms.

kerrystoten. Unit 3 Phrasal verbs. 30-35) ____ 6. a rectangular pattern of black lines of magic ink printed on an object so that its details can be read by a computer system (lines 35-40) ____ 7. surface that carries a reproduction of the image, from which the pages are printed (lines 45-50) ____ 8. in-between; middle (lines 50-55) ____.

Read the article and match the paragraph headings with the paragraphs. Write the letters "a" through "e". Note that there is one heading you don't need. a The invention of books by Gutenberg b Early forms of written communication c Books in their most modern form d Communication without reading and writing e The history of book making Dau coroana si 50 de puncte va rogga. Colect the information about a sporting event in your country. Image you attended it. Prepare a presentation of it.