

**ACHIEVING UNITY AND COHERENCE THROUGH CONTRADICTIONS IN THE
NOVELS OF ACHEBE, IYAYI AND HABILO**

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MAY, 2015

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**BEING A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMADU
BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
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ZARIA**

MAY, 2015

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis **ACHIEVING UNITY AND COHERENCE THROUGH CONTRADICTIONS IN THE NOVELS OF ACHEBE, IYAYI AND HABILA** has been written by me and that it is the record of my personal research work. No part of this thesis has been presented in any previous application for a higher degree or diploma at any university.

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Signature

Date

CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled **ACHIEVING UNITY AND COHERENCE THROUGH CONTRADICTIONS IN THE NOVELS OF ACHEBE, IYAYI AND HABILA** meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in English Literature, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

To my mother who never lived to see the fruits of her labour

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts an exploration of how unity and coherence through contradictions are achieved in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence* and Habila's *Measuring Time*. It is significant to state that the choice of these texts is informed by the need to comprehend how various generations of Nigerian writers have negotiated the contradictions, tensions, distortions and challenges, which have characterized the social, historical and political landscape of Nigeria. In addition, this study reflects the many dimensions of contradictions, distortions, tensions, injustice and disillusionment prevailing in the selected texts. It touches on character juxtaposition, comparative analysis, differences and interrelationships among structures in the texts. It however achieves unity and coherence by showing the connection of representations in the texts. For instance, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* projects unity and coherence of the African culture as well as Western religion through distortions and tensions evident in the text. The writer's skilful portrayal of the two cultures, co-existing side by side, is one of such structuralists binarism achieved in this study. Iyayi explores unity and coherence by pointing out the insensitive nature of the government. He encourages the masses to unite in the struggle towards a desirable and functional social order in the country. Habila's *Measuring Time* depicts family disunity and its effect on the individual character. He achieves unity and coherence in the text, emphasizing on individual contributions towards the unity and development in the community. Structuralism as a reading method is appropriate. This is in relation to its distinctive features of binary oppositions, the primacy of the text and the generation of meaning through differences, etc. The deployment of these features enhances the understanding of the contradictions, distortions and tensions predominant in the texts. The study therefore establishes that in spite of these contradictions, complexities, disintegrations and distortions the texts display some levels of unity and coherence towards a desirable functional society.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The study attempts to explore and examine how literary texts achieve unity and coherence through contradictions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979), and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time* (2006). The study foregrounds the manner in which the selected Nigerian novelists appropriated and engaged the social realities, changes, challenges, sensibilities experienced in Nigeria to recreate and express a new consciousness.

To understand the nature of this new consciousness, the contact of Africa with the Western world is significant in the modern literary imports of Nigeria and Africa at large. The contact significantly impacted on the formation of literature from the oral to the written form, the language use from indigenous languages to the English language, the change in thematic values of cultural encapsulation, the issues of colonialism and post-independence disillusionment, etc. This contact with the Western world and its implication has drawn critical attention in Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918), Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1968), Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), Austine Amanze Akpuda's *Reconstructing the Canon*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1988), and many other literary and critical texts. These works essentially explore and articulate the many dimensions of colonialism. One of such relevant comments to this study is credited to Simon Gikandi (2007:54):

But what is now considered to be the heart of literary scholarship on the continent could not have acquired its current identity or function if the traumatic encounter between Africa and Europe had not taken place. Not only were the founders of modern African literature colonial subjects but colonialism was also to be the most important and enduring theme in their works. From the eighteenth century onwards, the colonial situation shaped what it meant to be an African writer, shaped the language of African writing, and over determined the culture of letters in African...,

The view explains to a large extent, the positive and negative impacts of colonialism and its impact on the African writer.

Chinua Achebe is one of Africa's prolific and influential writers and no discussion on the historical relevance of Africa's fiction can be complete without referring to him. Achebe's work emphasizes and focuses on the importance of the individual person, the family structure, and the community. His creative vision transits from one generation to another, exploring the distortions, misrepresentations, standards, changes and phenomena which characterized the society through the use of history and realism. As a critical realist, Achebe selects a language frame that most appropriately conveys his messages. This is demonstrated in his works as they move through a certain level of historical progression from *Things Fall Apart* (1958), through *No Longer at Ease* (1960), to *Arrow of God* (1964), and *A Man of the People* (1966).

Festus Iyayi, on the other hand, represents one of the most powerful voices in contemporary Nigerian literary scene. His writings are distinctly characterised with directness of words that address societal and national interests. As a socialist realist, Iyayi explores the nature of the Nigerian society in various ramifications, from political to the economic especially in terms of implication for the poor and marginalised members of the society. He explores the Nigerian socio-political structures and how individuals negotiate their existence within these structures. Iyayi demonstrates great measure of radicalism with Marxist fervour in his literary works. The radical propagation of Marxist ideology is a common feature associated with many of Iyayi's contemporaries such as, Niyi Osundare, Isidore Okpewho, Femi Osofisan and others. This presents an interest for this study because Marxist register is full of opposites and contradictions, such as the rich and poor, oppressed and oppressor and privileged and less privileged which fully express the sense of the binary. The Marxist approach sees the history of

human beings in terms of class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, capitalism and socialism. He also simplifies the language that he employs in his works in order to generate spontaneous response from readers. His writings project limitless possibilities of the masses towards changing the society at large.

Iyayi embodies the younger generation of Nigerian writers referred to as committed writers because his novels, to a larger extent, offer a comprehensive insight to the life of the poor working class facing the odds of exploitation and oppression in Nigeria. He explores the socio-political degeneration in Nigeria which is defined by the economic imbalance in place.

Helon Habila demonstrates a level of writing that shifts from the conventional approach of writing in Africa, as he negotiates between fantasy and realism in *Measuring Time*. His appropriation of Magic realism, allows his work to extend social experience in the novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folktale and myth while retaining a strong contemporary social relevance. This type of avant-garde is also seen in some of Ben Okri's works.

This study offers a refreshing attempt to unveil the approaches adopted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*, in structural terms, toward the creation of unity and coherence through contradictions prevalent in them. In this regard, the study examines the differences in ideological perceptions and connections between the novel and reality, binary oppositions in characterizations that have defined the trend and focus of these writers across generations.

1.1 Literature and Society in Nigeria

There is a way in which a symbiotic relationship exists between literature and society. It is this relationship that enables literature to follow the various contours of changes in the society.

In this regard, Nnolim (2010:1) argues:

It is now commonplace knowledge that contemporary African literature cannot be properly understood and appreciated as an isolated expression but must rather be viewed as part of the totality of human experience. As a literature of a people, it cannot be fully understood by the simple separation of form and content, for literature is part of a social situation and must be approached primarily as a mode of collective belief and action...

The dynamism between literature and society pave ways for possible reconciliation in the work of art. This simply means that although there are dynamics and complex developments in Nigerian history including its social and cultural formation, Nigerian literature could still be explored, and understood as a unified and coherent experience.

Nnolim(2010:112-113) argues further that:

The relationship between art and society cannot be ignored, for art itself is a social phenomenon: first, because the artist, however unique his primary experience might be, is a social being; second, because his work, however deeply marked by his primary experience and however unique and unrepeatable its objectification or form might be, is always a bridge, a connecting link between the artist and other members of society; third, because a work of art affects other people - it contributes to the reaffirmation or devaluation of their ideals, goals, or values - and is a social force which, with its emotional or ideological weight, shakes or moves people. Nobody remains the same after having been deeply moved by a true work of art...Art and society are thus necessarily connected: no art has been unaffected by social influences and no art has failed in turn to influence society...

The above view further validates the importance of art in human existence especially in Africa where this existence invariably includes the contact with the Western world. Again, Nnolim (2010:29) posits that:

The story of Europe's encounter with Africa, it seems, will never be complete in our literatures until its ramifications are traced by our literary artists from that initial break-up of our culture, which Achebe so splendidly recreated in *Things Fall Apart*, to Ousmane Sembene's concerns with the oppressive nature of the forces of production which Europeans unleashed among the labouring African

masses, then to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's tracing of those oppressive elements inherited by Africa from the departing Europeans and perpetrated by them as neocolonist African stooges on their disadvantaged fellow Africans, as recreated in *Petals of Blood*.

Nnolim's view again establishes link between the artist and the society in which the artist is both voice and conscience. Simon Gikandi (2007:101) had earlier made the point that:

it has always been the task of African art and artists to be critical prods and guides of their societies. "The artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experiences of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time....

In the same vein, Achebe expresses the opinion that the African writer functions as a teacher in his society and as a teacher, he/she is expected to inculcate values or at least live an exemplary lifestyle. It, therefore, means that African writers have the social task of raising the consciousness of their people about reality in terms of their social well-being, history, cultural values, challenges and leadership, to mention but a few. Achebe's commitment, in using literature in creating awareness in African society, has always been obvious for decades now. He argues accordingly that (1975:79):

It is clear... that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames.

Consequently, most African novelists are not too concerned with the triviality in the society but with critical or "burning issues" of violence, leadership, social injustices, etc. Since independence, many literary works have reflected the changing phases in the society. These works examine the claim that literature entails man's daily and conscious struggle with forces in society. Ngugi (2003: xi) mentions that:

Imaginative literature in so far as it deals with human relationships and attempts to influence a peoples' consciousness and politics, in so far as it deals with and

is about operation of power and relationship of power in society, are reflected in one another, and can and do act on one another.

The open-ended realm of possibilities in imaginative literary works is very well noted in Ngugi's comments.

Similarly, the trends in Nigerian literary works have been affected by the relationship between art and society as social changes determine the direction writers take in exploring the state of affairs in their various milieus. Thus, according to Irele in *Literary Criticism in the Nigerian Context*, has in mind when he says that:

...in a growing literary culture the canon is hardly ever a stable or final one, and every generation has the opportunity to shape its literary preferences according to its own perception of the values it considers essential to the continuity of its tradition.

It also means that the terrain of Nigerian fiction is dynamic. This dynamic nature of Nigerian fiction is reflected in its various handling of thematic preoccupations and the stylistic devices are commonly used. For instance, the first generation of writers represented by Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Gabriel Okara and J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, dealt with specific cultural issues while Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Femi Osofisan and Festus Iyayi, who are the major voices of the second generation, express their angst against the decadence of post-independence leadership. There is, then, a group whose artistic features constitute another terrain of Nigerian fiction, such as Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Attah, Helon Habila, Doreen Baigana, etc.

The first generation came into the limelight in the days of Nigeria's struggle for independence in the late 1950s, including the period of the country's first attempt at civil rule. The testimony of culture is their central thematic preoccupation. For instance, Wole Soyinka's long conversation with the Yoruba god of Iron, Ogun; Christopher Okigbo's presentation of

natural phenomena as signs and symbols of higher spiritual truths; and Chinua Achebe's reliance on cultural properties as well as infusion of indigenous elements involve consistent effort at cultural assertion by this crop of writers. They are influenced by modernist tendencies and model their English language. Accordingly, Chinweizu, et al (1980) refers to them as suffering from the Hopkins' disease because of the initial enthusiasm for Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Classics which gained ground vastly at all literary construction among these Nigerian writers. Asein (1978:98) aptly describes the writing of this era thus:

... We can conveniently affirm that there was no serious discussion of the social responsibilities of the writer in the Nigerian society before 1965. For many Nigerian writers before that date, social/political commitment in so far as it related to literature was generally suspect: and literature of commitment was understandably looked upon as second-rate and ... society at that particular stage of national development. Greater emphasis was placed on the need to restore the past, and 'commitment' for most Nigerian writers meant cultural commitment which did not necessarily involve the writer in partisan politics and social programmes.

The social reality and dynamics are explored in an attempt to restore and celebrate the past and its importance.

Again there was the emergent of new voices of Marxists and the decolonization of African literature that had begun in East Africa. Unlike the Achebe's generation of writers, the new writers are public in their treatment of themes, conscious of their readers, quite unpretentious, direct and simple in expression. The new writers include Festus Iyayi, Niyi Osundare, to mention a few. One clear distinction between the first generation and second generation of writers is in the latter's belief that literature has to reflect what is happening in the society, in order to effectively play its social function which is to be accessible to the masses. On the role of Marxism, for instance, a leading member of the generation, Niyi Osundare (1996:79), states thus:

We read the works of Marx, the works of Lenin, and many of the speeches of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro and, of course, the works of Fanon, particularly Fanon.... These were works that we read and we discovered that they were saying things that were true about our position, and of course, these things influenced what we wrote eventually.

Not only did they study the works of Marx, Lenin and speeches of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and Fanon, such works influenced their writings and build their literary preoccupation on social reality. In addition to this, their expressions serve as a gateway into the consciousness of the state of affairs in the society.

The second generation of writers explore issues of dislocation, exploitation, question of identity, corruption, bad leadership, and the disintegration of society. The thrust of their expression are socially-driven. Osofisan (1996:16) further expatiates on the mission of this generation as follows:

... our focus was on the present state of our society, on unmasking the class forces at play within it, revealing the material sources of exploitation and injustices, demonstrating how the masses could liberate themselves [and] of greater pertinence now as the collective struggle, fought by the hero with a thousand faces, a thousand hands....

Since the writings of this era are now focussed on the condition of the ordinary people, the peasants and workers, the language and style of such write-ups are more accessible and reflective of the societal realities.

The third, emergent generation of writers articulate social happenings in relation to its effect in the society. Niyi Osundare (1996:20), however, refers to them as those "...born around Nigeria's independence (1960), Nigeria's midnight children, as it were, who have spent the first three decades of their lives confronting the nightmare that the country has become". He further describes their literary temperament as ranging "from angry through desperate to despondent"

(p.40). Some of these voices include Helon Habila, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Sefi Attah, Sade Adeniran. According to Nnolim (2006:8-15):

The 21st century seems to have taken the African writer and critic by surprise. Pioneer writers like Achebe and his contemporaries have fallen silent or are playing into what soccer enthusiasts refer to as injury time. Ben Okri, Nuruddin Farah, Niyi Osundare and a few others are holding the field...

This generation of writers primarily endeavour to shift focus to reflect both their predecessors and successors. They explore the structural order of the society in relation to the mode of production and the chasm between the rich and poor.

These polarizations demonstrated in manner of writing and thematic presentation by different generations of Nigerian writers are further highlighted in Nnolim's view (2010:196) as:

Literature must not be conceived of as being merely a passive reflection or copy of political, social or historical developments. But since the catch is that we cannot really detach the movement of literature from intellectual, historical and political realities, we should regard a literary period as a time-section dominated by a set of literary values and conventions which have crystallized around certain historical and political events and possibly modified the concept of the whole period. We should adhere to what Russian formalists call "the process of automatization" which traces the see-saw movement between the stage of exhaustion of one literary movement and its replacement by a more vibrant one which is visibly in the ascendant – a series of revolts leading to new "actualization" through changes in emphasis on themes, subject matter, social concerns, modes of expression

The above vividly captures the transformation and changes in society which invariably affect the trends in the Nigerian writing. It also exemplifies how the writer takes full advantage of social dynamism to express newness and rebirth in writing. Consequently, the changes in society invariably affect the trends in the Nigerian writing. It is in this regard that each of the selected primary texts is a representation of a particular generation of writers in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The choice of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*, is informed by the need to comprehend how three generations of Nigerian writers have negotiated the contradictions, disruptions and distortions that have characterised the social, historical and political landscape of Nigeria. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, reflects the Nigeria society as a microcosm of the larger Nigerian society. His craftsmanship lies in his ability to project the unity and coherence in an African society through contradictions and distortions, in terms of the characterization, ideological issues and the styles of presentation. Achebe points out the binary oppositions of weakness as well as strengths of the native society in his attempt to confront colonialism, thereby presenting a deeper impression and foundation upon which the Nigerian identities, values, norms and peculiarities are built.

Festus Iyayi's *Violence* ambitiously tackles the question of a dilapidated society punctuated by disillusionment. The writer interprets the societal events in Nigeria as rather unfortunate and as the cause of the shortcomings experienced in the country. Festus Iyayi's *Violence* explores varying dimensions of violence inflicted on the individual in the society, such as the lack of development, fragmentation, the quest for wealth, the soured relationship between the employer and the employee, and the gulf between the rich and the poor and urges the masses to embrace revolution as a way of reconstructing the social reality of the chasm between the rich and the poor.

Helon Habila's *Measuring Times* reflects the issues of family disintegration/unity, the favoured/unfavoured, poor leadership, man's unending quest for wealth, unemployment and lack of infrastructural facilities in Keti community. Habila's themes and mode of exploration is novel. The deployment of the twins further illustrates the structuralist concept of binarism.

The selected texts are relevant in the contemporary African literary discourse as they add a new dimension to the study of literature. It is important to note that the selected texts explore sensitive but complex terrain of the society and the essence of this study is to comprehend how these writers have negotiated these contradictions of one thing over another, nature and culture, being and nothingness, complexities, and tensions prevailing in the texts through the structuralist analysis of binary oppositions. The centrality of the discourse touches on every major aspect of the Nigerian system. The selected novels would contribute to the study of literature and aid in interpreting layers of fundamental issues on the Nigerian social reality. In essence, this study demonstrates how structuralism would be used to resolve the contradictions and tensions in the texts into unity and coherence of meaning. The study investigates how the various writers arrive at coherent pieces, in spite of the complexities and tension which characterize the texts. Structuralism would be used to resolve the contradictions and tensions in the texts into unity and coherence of meaning.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to establish a structuralist reading of the selected texts. It therefore demonstrates that literature presents continuous, relevant and open-ended engagement by readers. The following are the objectives of this study:

- a. To show that although the primary authors and their texts could be situated within different periods their texts share a commonality of binarisms and oppositions,
- b. To establish a more scientific and systematic interpretation of the selected literary texts, and:
- c. To further illustrate that a reading of the various texts presents an overall conclusion of unity and coherence about the Nigeria that they project.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

The area of study covers the analysis of the selected novels of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence* and Habila's *Measuring Time*. The study is limited to the structuralist features of binarism and the generation of meaning through codes and conventions predominant in the selected texts. The focus of the study is anchored on the analysis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence* and Habila's *Measuring Time* as they represent the various generations of Nigerian writers.

1.6 Justification of Study

The research study seeks to foreground the complexities, ironies and the contradictions in the various texts. Structuralist features of binary oppositions of paired opposites and the interplay of meaning through the structures in the texts would analyse these underlying structures in the texts.

Although many critics have explored Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence* and Habila's *Measuring Time*, there is the need to explore and evaluate the uniqueness and significant ways these writers present the Nigeria situation and its influence on both characters and the society at large. This study by adopting the parameters of structuralism further expands the conversations on how texts are interpreted.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The choice of structuralism as the theoretical framework lies on the significant structural nature of the selected texts, especially with regard to social, economic, political and cultural developments. Structuralism exhibits divergence in scope, texture and technique.

Structuralism in literature examines primarily the binary and alternative views and thoughts predominant in any literary work, and looks for ways to transcend the opposites and form a unified whole. It addresses directly multiple facets of ideas, by presenting how contrary views are arranged within a text by exposing or identifying how binaries or opposites coexist

side by side within a text, with the view of arriving at some acceptable interpretation. Structuralist discourse reinforces opposites and insists that the opposites have something in common. This school of thought also sees the process of change through the understanding of the whole system. This suggests that nothing is infinite. Literary discourse could be meaningful if accessed in its totality. According to Eagleton (1983:82-84), structuralism is concerned:

...with structures, and more particularly with examining the general laws by which they work...the method is analytical, not evaluative...structuralism is a calculated affront to common sense. It refuses the 'obvious' meaning of the story and seeks instead to isolate certain 'deep' structures within it, which are not apparent on the surface. It does not take the text at face value, but 'displaces' it into a quite different kind of object...viewed language as a system of signs, which was to be studied 'synchronically', - that is to say, studied as a complete system at a given point in time - rather than 'diachronically', in its historical development...made up of a 'signifier' and a 'signified' ...an attempt to rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics....

The foregoing introduces the fundamental components of structuralism. Structural analysis views literary works as emerging continuously because meaning is considered through the interplay of words in any work. One advantage of structuralism is that it advances meaning through structures in the text. Structuralism predominantly searches for principles of order, decorum, coherence and meaning, no matter the challenges, contradictions, disjointedness in a work of art. Meaning could be established even in a mundane way.

Structuralism is further referred to in Baldick (2004:245-246) as a:

...modern intellectual movement that analyses cultural phenomena according to principles derived from linguistics, emphasizing the systematic interrelationships among the elements of any human activity, and thus the abstract codes and conventions governing the social production of meaning. Building on the linguistics concept of the phoneme...structuralism argues that the elements composing any cultural phenomenon are similarly 'relational', that is, they have meaning only by virtue of their contrasts with other elements of the system, especially in binary oppositions of paired opposites. Accordingly, structuralist analysis seeks the underlying system or langue that governs individual utterances or instances...

Structuralism concentrates on elements within works of literature advancing meaning through the interplay of words. It is grounded in linguistics, which implies that language is a complete, self-contained system and should be studied as such.

Gerard Genette (1980:48) observes that 'structuralism underlines the importance of genre, that is, basic rules as to how subjects are approached, about conventions of reading for theme, level of seriousness, significance of language use, and so forth. Different genres lead to different expectations of types of situations and actions, and of psychological, moral, and aesthetic values', while Fredric Jameson (1972) refers to structuralism as the project of giving literary criticism the theoretical rigour of a science of language. These assertions emphasize a coherent connection among the conceptions of reality, the social, the individual and the unconscious. This is because they are all composed of the same signs, codes and conventions, all working according to similar laws and decorum in literature.

Hawkes (1977:77-18) posits that structuralism is fundamentally;

a way of thinking about the world which is predominantly concerned with the perception and description of structures...the principle involved must invest the whole of reality. In consequences, the true nature of things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationship which we construct, and then perceive, between them...the nature of every element in any given situation has no significance by itself, and in fact is determined by its relationship to all the other elements involved in that situation... the full significance of any entity or experience cannot be perceived unless and until it is integrated into the structure of which it forms a part...,

The above view suggests that structuralism stretches through the boundaries that define literature, to redefine its contradictions, and relationship. Hawkes also notes that the importance of the relationship of the element in a structural discourse is in its contrast.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics*, language is made up of signs, which is the combination of a signifier (a sound or a sound-image) and signified (an idea, a concept). Saussure further argues that the first principle of linguistics is the arbitrariness

of the sign. This arbitrariness of the sign means that there is no natural connection between the signifier and signified. Saussure opines that words name ideas, not things. It therefore connotes that a word is defined not by its relation to some eternal essence, but through the relationship it has with another in the system, in this case, in a text. In addition, one of the major tasks of linguistic analysis is synchronic, rather than diachronic. Synchronic is the study of all the relations among the different parts of a linguistic system at any given moment in time, without reference to the past while diachronic is the study of the evolution of language, of history's impact on linguistic events. This provides key to the most fundamental element of structuralism. It also presents a text as an object whose meaning can be interpreted in terms of its symbolic patterns.

According to Palmer (1997:24), Saussure's structuralism can be seen:

...most clearly in his (Saussure) claim that the whole of language as he wishes to study it can be displayed as a system of syntagmatic and paradigmatic negative relations of difference. Saussure's science of linguistics is a radical departure from the past because it entails a whole new picture of the human mind. Rather, the mind is a system of operations that generate structures of similarity and differentiation in terms of such rules as those of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationship. It is because of these operations that meaning is possible – that one thing can signify another.

The above affirms the generation of meaning through differences among signs, codes and conventions in a system. Meaning is possible and basically occurs through differences.

In addition, the French critic Roland Barthes (1915-1980) is also fascinated by the meanings of the things that surround us in our everyday lives. His writings, which include *S/Z*(1970) and *Mythologies*(1957), challenge the 'innocence' and 'naturalness' of cultural texts and practices which are capable of producing all sorts of supplementary meanings, or connotations. Roland Barthes' later writings, however, show a shift to post-structuralism, a school of thought that emerged partly from within French Structuralism in the 1960s. The post-

structuralist thinkers emphasize the instability of meanings and of intellectual categories and set out to dissolve the fixed binary oppositions of structuralist thought, including that between language and metalanguages. Instead they favoured the indeterminacy of texts through free play of meaning in a literary work. The theory of structuralism sees the literary text as a structured entity. Structuralism gives the reader room for a complete overhaul of literary appreciation of a text to produce other meanings in the same context. It tends towards a deeper understanding of literary phenomenon. No wonder, Eagleton (1983) posits that structuralism is a calculated affront to common sense.

There are substantial evidences of structuralist principles in the selected primary texts in this study leading to rediscovery of meaning. These primary texts reveal essential qualities of structuralism through the characters, events, structures and thematic applications. The texts are also rich in structuralist thinking as the writers' record of an exploration and exposition of man and the environment are embedded with structuralist properties.

Therefore, one of the basic features of structuralism is the juxtaposition of structures in the text by interrogating events and exploring the binary opposites within the text. This in essence, engenders new meanings, and new perception concerning the events in the text. Structuralism creates meaning through difference in most cases. Meaning is generated through differences among signs in a signifying system or essential reality. For instance, the meaning of the words 'man' and 'lad' are formed by their relations to each other. They both refer to a human male, but what constitutes 'human' and 'male' are themselves gotten through difference, not attached with any essence, or ideal truth, or the like. In other words, meaning gains its effect through constant juxtaposition and interplay of words in the structures.

In addition, the structuralist study of literature could be referred to as the systematic study of literature, which analyses words as linguistic signs, expressing ideas in terms of the language they

represent. The Saussurean dichotomies or binary oppositions are fundamental. There is also the interplay between the opposites which further unfold meanings in literary studies. Structuralism concentrates entirely on the material process of deeper meaning. It compels our attention to the underlying and unrelated meaning in the text, renewing our perceptions, transforming our consciousness to perceiving the world anew.

In spite of the various definitions of structuralism, this study mainly concerns itself with the binaries prevalent in the selected texts. The structuralist analysis which addresses directly or indirectly multiple dimensions of ideas, thereby identifying how opposites coexist side by side within a text would be applied. It would promote synchronic study of structuralism. The reinforcement and interrelationship of opposites, insisting that the opposites and contradictions have something in common is to be assessed. This discourse generates meaning through differences and the interplay of words in the selected texts. The study gives importance to the underlying structure of the texts, and underlines the significance of genre, basic rules and codes. Through the use of structuralism, this study searches for principle of order, decorum and coherence in the contradictions and disjointedness in the texts. This is the extent this study streamlines the varying explanations provided by the scholars of structuralism. The aforementioned precepts are taken into cognisance in the analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*.

1.8 The Structuralist Concept of Binary

Structuralism is built on Saussurean dichotomies or binaries, such as being/nothing, hot/cold, certainty/uncertainty, appearance/reality, freedom/bondage, weakness/strength, fearless/fearful, and culture/nature; these binary opposites structure meaning and one can describe fields of cultural thought, by describing the binary sets which compose them.

According to Baldick (2004:27) binary means:

The principle of contrast between two mutually exclusive terms: on/off, up/down, left/right etc; an important concept of structuralism, which sees such distinctions as fundamental to all language and thought. The theory of phonology developed by Roman Jakobson uses the concept of binary features, which are properties either present or absent in any phoneme. Voicing, for example is present in /z/ but not in /s/. This concept has been extended to anthropology by Claude Levi-Strauss (in such oppositions as nature/culture, raw/cooked, inedible/edible) and to narratology by A. J. Greimas.

Baldick's views indicate that the binary usually looks for contrasts, complexities, paradoxes, ambiguities, ironies and antithesis in an exclusive but mutual structure in a text and finds a unifying ground between them. It is therefore sufficient to note that structuralism is heightened by the application of the binaries, juxtapositions, signs, contrasts, contradictions, and antitheses. For instance, the structuralist binary opposition is dependent on the social reality versus the human interaction prevalent in the literary text. The theory of structuralism stretches forward and backward, exploring and interrogating the human encounters, social happenings and every mundane phenomenon involved in the texts of Achebe, Iyayi and Habila. The deployment of structuralist analysis of binary oppositions therefore elucidates the various distortions in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; the lingering insensitive nature of the government as depicted in Iyayi's *Violence* and varying instances of family disintegration prevalent in Habila's *Measuring Time*.

1.9 Unity as Used in this Study

Merriam Webster's *Encyclopaedia of Literature* refers to unity as "a combination or ordering of parts in a literary or artistic production that constitutes a whole or promotes an undivided total effect. This definition shows that unity is the state of being in agreement and working together, the state of being joined together to form one unit. Unity is also staying on the topic within the focus while coherence involves the clear movement of thought within the topic.

This study thus argues that structuralism as a reading method is appropriate for understanding the selected texts because the structuralist features of binary oppositions, codes and conventions, etc, are

all embedded in the selected primary texts; Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence*, and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time* demonstrate how they achieve unity and coherence through contradictions.

2.0 Literature Review

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence*, and Habila's *Measuring Time* have drawn and attracted several critical opinions, multiple facets of ideas, thematic preoccupations and styles of these works. While some critics examine the several cultural issues, self-assertion and community peculiarity in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's critics have concerned themselves with issues of injustice and oppression in the Nigerian society, manifested in the lack of social amenities, man's inhumanity to man, and the chasm between the rich and the poor. Habila's *Measuring Time*, a much more recent text, has been labelled by critics as a text that relies heavily on magic realism, a sort of surrealistic approach in the treatment of complex societal happenings in Nigeria.

In Achebe's case, Nnolim (2010:197) is of the view that:

Achebe is the inaugurator of the great tradition of the Nigerian novel _ that tradition which is concerned with cultural assertion or cultural nationalism which stresses and promotes the innate dignity of the black man and makes creative use of our myths, legends, rituals, festivals, ceremonies, and folklore. Achebe is a pioneer of whatever is authentic and indigenous in the Nigerian novel. His novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are referred to by Charles Larson as both "the archetypal" African Novel and "the situational" novel... we must all hark back to Achebe for what is great and enduring in the Nigerian novel- for he established that tradition which promotes awareness of what is really great and dignified in our culture, salted with the lilt of our proverbs and local expressive mannerisms... imbued with the charm of our folkways, the respect for our ancestors and the beauty of our traditions and culture, plus the rehabilitation of the image of the black man whose dignity has been bruised and damaged by the colonial master.

Nnolim's comment identifies the relevance of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in terms of cultural celebration and the dignity of the black man as a social being. Achebe buttresses the historical background as well as ascertains the cultural degeneration experienced by Africans as a result of the colonial contact with the white. Achebe's analysis of colonial rule also is similar to Moore's (1980:123-124) who argues that:

The appearance of *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 won for its author a position of eminence in African literature which for a long time led to his being elevated above his fellows, in his own and the succeeding generation. The book was quickly recognised as a classic and tended to be used as a yardstick with which to measure the many Anglophone novels, Achebe's task was not merely to look back to the Africa of his childhood, but through that childhood into the Africa of some two generations earlier. At the beginning of *Things Fall Apart*, the whiteman has not even been seen. By the end, he has already destroyed the delicate equilibrium of the traditional world... Achebe's theme is suggested by his title, chosen from Yeats's celebrated poem "The Second Coming"... Things Fall Apart, the Centre cannot hold...

Moore views Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as distinctively a representative of intellectual trajectory of the challenges in Africa in general, and in Nigeria in particular, as well as in the global construction of human identity. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provides ample examples about the relationship between Nigerian history and Nigerian literature. The social and historical encounter of the African and the whiteman manifests itself variously as the novel unfolds. This study, however, aims at exploring the structural elements such as the binary oppositions, the interplay of words to create differences and exploring the underlying meaning in the work and the primacy of text to generate meanings. Through the application of structuralism, this study illustrates how unity and coherence through contradictions is achieved. This study therefore locates several linguistic and structural contradictions that are prevalent in the selected primary texts.

Iyayi's critics offer some remarkable observations on the situation in the Nigerian society. They emphasize Iyayi's insight in re-enacting the social conflict of his society, allowing himself not to be overwhelmed by these societal predicaments, but instead evaluates them and exposes the reader to the plight of the masses in the society. Simon Gikandi (2003:342) holds the view that Iyayi "seeks to capture the chaos and corruption engendered by a selfish business elite... this disruption of ordinary social life and the degradation of the physical environment engendered by a relentless quest for wealth". Iyayi's *Violence* consciously projects the reality of daily life in Nigerian society and what the writer sets out to achieve is the quest for material things. Uwasomba (2005:323-335) observes that Iyayi's fiction is

an exploration of the contradictions, class rifts, disunity and conflicts in the Nigerian system. He opines that such controversies pervade Iyayi's fiction and "demonstrate Iyayi's hope in a new social order through his revolutionary characters". Iyayi's *Violence* takes a look at a Nigerian society progressively moving towards the path of retrogression, degeneration, corruption and moral decadence.

Akaana E. Terhemba (2004) situates Iyayi's *Violence* as a post-colonial Nigerian novel, which according to him explores:

...the exploitation the working class people undergo. Due to the already suffocating unemployment market in the society, the labourers have no alternative than to stay and endure all the indignities of dehumanization. Iyayi here expresses his disgust for both the foreign and local exploiters... Iyayi's optimism that despite the influence of capitalism ... nature of capitalism if individuals have the capacity to forgive and organise themselves...

Though the novel portrays joblessness, sexual exploitation, the capitalist system with its exploitative tendencies, it reveals the contemporary situation of the Nigerian system. Again, Gakwandi (1977:108) states:

African novelists have been involved in the search for ways of combating the forces of disintegration that have been let loose by unhappy circumstances of history...The committed novel, on the other hand, necessarily looks into the future because of implied faith in the ability of a people to change their history...in the ability of their societies to hold their own against evil and to unite in the struggle towards a desirable social ideal...

Accordingly, Iyayi's *Violence* shares in this faith towards a functional and desirable society.

Habila's *Measuring Time* has also earned some measure of critical comments. One of such comments is Hari Kunzruin "A Review on *Measuring Time* and Culture", which gives some details on the works of Habila. Kunzru's comments in this regard are worth noting, "*Measuring Time*... overlaps this tradition of despair with a self-consciously mythic plot that brings the book to the borders of that definitively postcolonial style, magic realism".

In addition, Giles Fodenin an article 'The power of two' reveals that Habila's *Measuring Time* brings,

African tale-telling in which the novel becomes part of the oral narrative tapestry of a particular community, the book also integrates many themes of the

modern African novel, from the journey undertaken by LaMamo as a version of the traditional initiatory excursion, to the equivalent quest of the hero, Mamo, for true wisdom. The story is essentially a tale of a fight to realize those things and places in the eyes of these two twins, while at the same time moving past those fears. *Measuring Time* is a story that demonstrates how fears of love, ambition, and the possibilities of individual potential must be overcome through experiences facing them firsthand. Even though a family such as the Lamangs can crumble and be torn apart by selfish desire and the coinciding fears that plague its members, they, like their village, as written in LaMamo's biographical chronicles, must learn to take their losses in stride, without failing to notice the important things that are often overlooked by the characters and people around them.

This reflects the many dimensions of Habila's *Measuring Time* and the journey of the twins towards self-discovery and self-growth.

The critics have taken different positions on the thematic preoccupation of the texts. Specifically, none of the critics explores the structuralist analysis of the selected texts, in relation to binary oppositions, primacy of the texts, to generate meaning through the interplay of words, codes and conventions. It is essential to note that none of these critics attempt an in-depth analysis on the structural study of the selected texts to establish a sense of coherence from the seeming contradictions and inconsistencies in the texts. Therefore, this study attempts to fill these gaps by highlighting the several patterns of approach adopted by the writers, especially in the apparent contradictions of ideas, characterization, and other challenges encountered in the Nigerian social reality and demonstrate that in spite of these tensions there exists unity and coherence in the texts.

From the foregoing therefore it is clear that structuralism as an aspect of this discourse is streamlined and simplified to suit the prevailing contexts in the texts. In other words, structuralism in this study primarily concentrates on the binaries prevalent in the texts. The binary is essentially relevant as it searches for order, decorum and cohesion through differences, divergences, interrelationships,

contradictions, the application of codes and conventions, the interplay of words in the system and the underlying structure of a text.

The choice of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Iyayi's *Violence* and Habila's *Measuring Time* is informed by the need to comprehend how various generations of Nigerian writers have severally negotiated the contradictions, tensions, disruption and difficulties which have characterized the social, historical and political landscape of Nigeria.

This unity and coherence is ingrained in the writers' vision of the system at the end of the text. For instance, Achebe's attempt to promote the African cultural identity is thwarted by various tensions of war and disunity within the culture. The author, however, illustrates that unity and coherence is visible through contradictions. The writer's skilful portrayal of the two cultures, co-existing side by side, is one of such unity and coherence in the text.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and its Various Interpretations of Binarism

This chapter explores how unity and coherence are realised through contradictions in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by deploying structuralism as a reading practice.

In order to achieve unity and coherence through contradictions as discussed in the previous chapter, attempt will be made to create new details through logical reasoning. This creation includes critical arguments based on the juxtaposition of opposites, views, structures and a graphic representation.

Chinua Achebe demonstrates a much greater prowess in his writings on cultural assertion than his contemporaries as shown in his insights on several cultural issues in Africa which have drawn the attention of several literary critics, including Moore, Gerald. (1980), *Twelve African Writers*; Ngugi W., (1981), *Writers in Politics*; Nkosi, Lewis (1981), *Tasks and Masks, Themes and Styles of African* and Nnolim, Charles (2010), *Approaches to the African Novel, Essays in Analysis*, to name but few.

Structuralism enables us to grasp the portrayal of a peaceful societal existence of the people before the colonial intrusion and, subsequently, colonial distortion. Attempt would be made to recognise the cogent unity and coherence which abound in the text through a web of contradictions.

2.1 A Diagrammatic and Structuralist Representation of Binarisms and Oppositions

The use of diagrams is to give a graphic account of the structuralist feature of binary oppositions as discussed in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. The diagram exploits the structuralist binary operations and character juxtaposition and interrelationship prevailing in the text.

TABLE 2.2

OKONKWO		
STRENGTHS		WEAKNESSES
1.	Central character	Over-ambitious

2.	Confident	Self-destructive
3.	Acceptance of African values	Rejection of Western religion
4.	Seemingly successful and happy	Internally uncontented and sad

TABLE 2.3

	OKONKWO	UNOKA	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Son	Father	Family
2.	Conservative	Liberal	
3.	Brave	Lazy	
4.	Great wrestler	Good musician	Sour relationship
5.	Static	Dynamic	
6.	Over-ambitious	Contented	Kinsmen
7.	Strong	Weak	
8.	Complex	Simple	
9.	Emissary of war	Afraid of war	Same shameful death, bodies thrown in the Evil forest
10.	Great farmer	A debtor	
11.	Title holder	No title	
12.	Hardened spirit	Generous spirit	
13.	Firm-minded	Amenable to change	

14.	Good chi	Bad chi	
15.	Flat character	Round character	
16.	Strong warrior	Weak	
17.	Warlike	Peaceful	

TABLE 2.4

AFRICAN VALUES VS. WESTERN RELIGION			COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Unpretentious	Pretentious/hypocritical	Ways of life
2.	Human sacrifices	Abhors violence, killings etc	
			Preach brotherhood
3.	Abandoning diseased people to die at the Evil forest	Condemn vehemently such act of dehumanization	Both cultures believe in its own respective authenticity and are ready to stand up for it
4.	Rigid	Flexible	
5.	Patriarchal	Equality	
6.	Complex	Simple (choices abound)	

TABLE 2.5

	EZINMA	VS.	NWOYE	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
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1.	Female	Male	Siblings
2.	Courageous	Lack courage	
3.	Hardened	Compassionate	
4.	Brave/Assertive	Cowardly/Weak	Sensitive
5.	Decisive (as her father, Okonkwo)	Indecisive (as his grandfather, Unoka)	Born and bred in Umuofia
6.	Lived-up to her father's cultural expectations	Profane (turns against the African traditional system which his father's position and character represents)	
7.	Masculine in behaviour	Feminine in behaviour and approach in life	

As seen from the aforementioned tables, the primary text has provided a number of character juxtapositions, differences in characters and structures evident in the text. The illustrations would reflect in the discussion.

2.6 The Role of Colonialism in the Nigerian Literary Formation

Colonialism and its aftermaths provide some fertile ground for the first and subsequent generations of African writers. Issues ranging from the westernization and Christianization processes under colonial rule, enslavement, war, disintegration, dislocation and others become so potent for the literary artist in Nigeria. However, Achebe's contact with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) is instrumental to the recreation of his society from the focal point of an insider. The writing of *Things Fall Apart* is a conscious effort to debunk the stereotypical view that Africans had no organised cultural background, hence, the primacy of the African traditional values in the text. Accordingly, Achebe (1973:8) states thus:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this they must regain now...

In the light of the foregoing, it is not surprising that the ontological and realistic backgrounds of the African society, through Nigeria, are fictitiously captured in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe attempts to capture the cohesion in the Nigerian society through the juxtaposition and evaluation of the society's peculiarities, contradictions and communal existence. In *Things Fall Apart* there is the exploration of Africa communal existence and how this is challenged by other inter and extra tensions such as war, killing, fragmentation in terms of conflicts, family disintegration, etc. However, in spite of all the tensions and contradictions, the people are united and coexist as one. Achebe's profound investigation and further illustration in the history of his people is posited in Nkosi (1981:31-32) this way:

It is important to note that we are here dealing with not pure historical facts...but with fact transformed into myth...thus his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, has made a deeper impression upon the literary sensibility of Africa than all the valued labours of historians and archaeologists put together...

Here, Nkosi seems to be in agreement with Nnolim's (2010:197) position that, "we must all hark back to Achebe for what is great and enduring in the Nigerian novel – for he established that tradition which promotes awareness of what is really great and dignified in our culture". The writer's reliance on historical material reflects this view.

2.7 The Clash between Western Values and African Traditional Culture

The world of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is clearly demonstrative of the clash between the Western culture and the African traditional system. The novel is concerned with the nature of events that generated conflicts, war, fears, in Umuofia.

In a structuralist sense, some occurrences such as the intrusion of Western values into the African tradition within the text make meaning. The significance of this is that events are revealed and illuminated in not just one direction, but through opposites, contradictions and distortions as vividly illustrated in Table 2.4 above. One of the fundamental issues to evaluate is the cultural clash in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Instances are portrayed where the communal peaceful and stable lives of the people gradually move to fragmentation and confusion. The atmosphere later leads to the acceptance of the new Western religion. At a point, Okonkwo is enslaved and imprisoned. The terms 'enslaved' and 'imprisoned' illustrate Okonkwo's painful exile to Mbanta, which inevitably prevents him from at least fighting back the white men when they come to Umuofia. As shown in this text:

It was going to be Okonkwo's last harvest in Mbanta. The seven wasted and weary years were at last dragging to a close. Although he had prospered in his motherland Okonkwo knew that he would have prospered even more in Umuofia, in the land of his fathers where men were bold and warlike. In these seven years he would have climbed to the utmost heights. And so he regretted every day of his exile. His mother's kinsmen had been very kind to him, and he was grateful. But that did not alter the facts. He had called the first child born to him in exile Nneka _ 'Mother is supreme' _ out of politeness to his mother's kinsmen. But two years later when a son was born he called him Nwofia _ 'Begotten in the wilderness'. (*Things Fall Apart* 1958:117)

The above narrative illustrates the difficulties and enslavement Okonkwo encounters as a result of his exile. Okonkwo "would have prospered even more in Umuofia". In addition, during his exile at Mbanta, decisions and efforts are made by the Western intruders to disorganize the normal flow of tranquillity experienced in the community. Okonkwo as an embodiment of bravery, and a strong warrior, is cut off from the clan, while the intruders are in a position of

affairs. The Westerners' influence affects the social lives of the community. Achebe's narrator shows further that;

There were men and women in Umuofia who did not feel as strongly as Okonkwo about the new dispensation. The whiteman had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia. (*Things Fall Apart* 1958:128)

It is deducible from the above that the level of disintegration among the people is glaring. The contradiction and disunity, however, is on the achievements as well as the losses of the Western religion. Beyond the foregoing, it is interesting to know that Okonkwo has had to contend with the Western intruders. This excerpt describes the binary opposites of Western values and African traditions.

As a result of the disintegration experienced in Umuofia, for instance, the people of Umuofia pay homage to their ancestors and interact with the ancestral spirits, the society and human beings. Meanwhile, such reverence to ancestral spirits and gods of Umuofia is sacrilegious to Western religion.

Achebe critically reveals the various ways traditional values are adhered to and the community's commitment towards honouring its ancestors. Attempt at re-establishing and restoring the once experienced tranquillity in Umuofia community are distorted by the Western rule.

Furthermore, Achebe minimises ambiguity through the application of simple and plain words. The deployment of simple diction enhances the readers understanding of characters and situation in the text. This brings the study to another structural development in the text which is the division between Okonkwo's personal pride, his actions towards the Western values and Umuofia. Throughout the novel, Okonkwo maintains consistence as evident in Table 2.2. His

pride and integrity sees him through the end. He chooses to terminate his life instead of submitting to the western whims and caprices as in Table 2.3. Instances of Okonkwo's courageous nature is captured in this way, "I [Okonkwo] will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands. And, if you stand staring at me like that, he swore, 'Amadiora will break your head for you!'" (p.24). Okonkwo's devotion to custom does not mean he does not admit being wrong. He adheres to the rules of the laws, his relocation with his family members to Mbanta and his desire to preserve the tradition of the community is commendable. It therefore becomes traumatic for Okonkwo when his struggle to protect and preserve the traditional values of Umuofia is undermined. His final act of suicide is the ultimate demonstration of things falling apart, as the title suggests, and it shows for the first time Okonkwo's disobedience to the laws of the clan. This unprecedented final act of suicide by Okonkwo demonstrates the binary of Westernization against African traditions, further illustrated in Table 2.5.

Again, the conflict between the Western religion and African traditional religion as re-echoed in the text establishes one of the ways that Western religion is imposed on the people of Umuofia, negates the people's established culture that led to the abandonment of local traditions as reflected in Table 2.5. As seen in the text:

Mr. Brown's mission grew from strength to strength, and because of its link with the new administration it earned a new social prestige...Okonkwo's return to his native land was not as memorable as he had wished...Umuofia did not appear to have taken any special notice of the warrior's return. The clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that it was barely recognisable. The new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people's eyes and minds. There were still many who saw these new institutions as evil, but even they talked ...certainly not about Okonkwo's return...Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women...(*Things Fall Apart* 1958:146)

The picture painted here is such that reveals the dislocation and aftermaths of the cultural clash that followed the disruption of cohesion in the society. The author directs attention to this scene to contrast the social and cultural happenings in the Igbo society of that time. The writer carefully narrates the mission of the Europeans to break that which binds the community together. In other words, structuralism works effectively in terms of its opposites and fusion in the way that contrasts between the two religions present in Umuofia community show things that are attractive and those that are unappealing in Umuofia.

Achebe's portrayal of cultural clash between the Western values and African traditions reflect stages of disillusionment Okonkwo passes through. Through the third person narrative, authorial intrusion and paradox, the reader learns that:

Okonkwo slept very little that night. The bitterness in his heart was now mixed with a kind of child-like excitement. Before he had gone to bed he had brought down his war dress, which he had not touched since his return from exile...he thought about the treatment he had received in the whiteman's court, and he swore vengeance. **If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But if they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself.** He thought about wars in the past. The noblest, he thought, was the war against Isike. In those days Okudo was still alive. Okudo sang a war song in a way that no other man could. He was not a fighter, but his voice turned every man into a lion 'worthy men are no more'...The greatest obstacle in Umuofia, 'Okonkwo thought bitterly', is that coward, Egonwanne. His sweet tongue can change fire into cold ash. When he speaks he moves our men to impotence. If they had ignored his womanish wisdom five years ago, we would not have come to this'...Tomorrow he will tell them that our fathers never fought a "war of blame". If they listen to him I shall leave them and play my own revenge(*Things Fall Apart* 1958:143) (emphasis mine)

Achebe intrinsically deploys the binaries or paired opposites in the above statements. Okonkwo distinctively considers the binary option of engaging in a war rather than refusing to fight. This, in essence, brings to limelight the structuralist view that things, ideas, elements are positioned in binaries. Nothing is infinite and everything emanates anew from the opposite of the other or same. The novelist juxtaposes the possibilities of fighting and the consequences of remaining

'cowards'. Achebe notwithstanding suggests that change is inevitable and that life is in a stage of flux. He therefore paves way for the Western values to thrive alongside with traditional lifestyle of the people. Through the poetic licence he places Okonkwo at the receiving end. In the end, the author negotiates the happenings through the structuralist analysis in *Things Fall Apart*.

2.8 Binarism in Characterization

There is also a structuralist feature of binary opposites in Achebe's characterization in *Things Fall Apart*. Almost all the central characters are ingrained with comparison in contrast with one other character. The first of such is between the character deployment of Okonkwo which signifies bravery and Unoka, his father, which represents laziness and fear. Okonkwo as an influential leader in Umuofia represents his father's direct opposite. For instance, Okonkwo's abhorrence of laziness and squandering drives him to success. His hard work and prowess in war earns him peak positions in the clan and among his contemporaries. He is fixated on greatness and, as a result, one of his flaws is that he is terrified at being considered weak like his father, which makes him to be harsh and hasty and this in turn exposes him to troubles and sorrows.

On the other hand, Unoka is seen as a coward in the clan. He never takes any title in his life. He borrows money from his clansmen, but hardly pays back. He never becomes a warrior because he fears the sight of blood, unlike Okonkwo. On a positive note, although the novel opens ten years after his abominable death, the novel acknowledges that Unoka had been a talented musician and gentleman. From the authorial voice Unoka was;

... an ill-fated man. He had a bad chi or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave. He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess. When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die... With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the

foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed, he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death...There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village, who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan. It was for this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams...(Things Fall Apart 1958:13-14)

This view into the past of Unoka is quite illuminative to the reader. Okonkwo fights to break the patterns of poverty and laziness in his family and associates himself with the wealthy. His fear of failure turns into a positive aspect of his formation, and breaks the chains of stagnation, laziness and lack of ambition. The fear of failure, of poverty incidentally turns him into a very successful man, in fact one of the most prominent sons of Umuofia. Structuralism seeks to encourage the process of change by cutting across the differences in an event, existence and ideas. Structuralism analyses meaning through difference. In this case, the meaningful life of Okonkwo is built through the meaninglessness of his father's lifestyle. Perhaps, if his father were successful, Okonkwo would not have been as hardworking, ambitious and promising as he is presented in the text. Another underlying fact is that Okonkwo's fear of becoming like his father, although propels him to obvious greatness, contributes in ruining his life at the end. He becomes over-ambitious and refuses to accept glaring changes. He ends up in the abominable evil forest, after he commits a crime against the values of Umuofia. One remarkable thing is that despite Okonkwo's apparent distinctive separation from his father's ill ways, he commits suicide and is thrown to the evil forest like his father, a unifying end. This is graphically detailed in Table 2.3.

Similarly, another crucial structural formation prevalent in the text is the contradicting personalities of Nwoye and Ezinma, Okonkwo's children. Achebe describes Ezinma as a clever, bright and brave daughter. She is apt in several levels and a formidable character. Her strong characteristics are in binary opposite with her brother, Nwoye's. Nwoye is sensitive and

thoughtful because his responses to Ikemefuna's folktales are highly commendable, imaginative and great. Sadly, however, he is indecisive and lazy. However, the death of Ikemefuna complicates matters for Nwoye. Nwoye becomes alienated and turns against the African traditional system which his father's positions and character represent. This act literarily destroys the already soured relationship between father and son. This action leaves his father, who signifies the community's traditional symbols and values, embittered. According to the narrative:

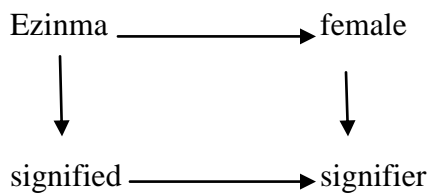
He called his son, Nwoye, to sit with him in his obi. But the boy was afraid of him and slipped out of the hut as soon as he noticed him dozing...Ezinma took the dish in one hand ... 'she should have been a boy', Okonkwo said to himself again... I am worried about Nwoye. A bowl of pounded yams can throw him in a wrestling match. His two younger brothers are more promising. But I can tell you, Obierika, that my children do not resemble me... if Ezinma had been a boy I would have been happier. She has the right spirit... A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches. I have done my best to make Nwoye grow into a man, but there is too much of his mother in him'. 'Too much of his grandfather', Obierika thought, but he did not say it. The same thought also came to Okonkwo's mind... whenever the thought of his father's weakness and failure troubled him he expelled it by thinking about his own strength and success...(Things Fall Apart 1958:47)

During this conversation, the protagonist reveals to his friend, Obierika, how weak his first son is. Okonkwo's determination to make his son a powerful and strong man is defeated. In this case, the attributes of masculinity is embedded in Ezinma rather than in Nwoye and this is represented in Table 2.5.

In achieving unity and coherence through contradiction, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* uses folktale to strengthen the bond of cohesion. The character of Nwoye, who is christened Isaac, to reflect his new found religion, is quite illustrative here. For instance, the folktale of the Earth and Sky is rooted in didactic tendency. Achebe systematically narrates this to show the feminine side of Nwoye which Okonkwo detests. Nwoye prefers his mother's story of peaceful resolution to the stories of war and heroism, tales of violence and bloodshed his father tells him. Ironically,

the Western religion preaches peace, love, brotherhood, and abhors violence, killing of twins, placing curses on the younger generation, segregating the Osu, abandoning diseased people to die at the Evil Forest, etc. These become acceptable to Nwoye who turns his back permanently on the "violent" ways of Umuofia society. This is a sharp contrast between the whiteman's religion and African realities. It also portrays the underlying peculiarity of the once condemned Western religion as reflected in Okonkwo's character.

It is also imperative to understand the structuralist linguistic sign. According to Saussure, the relationship between signifier and signified is "unmotivated" or "arbitrary" meaning that it is purely based on social convention rather than on natural necessity. For instance, there is nothing about a female which demands that it is called "Ezinma". So the signified, which is the conceptual component "Ezinma" and the signifier, which is the concretely perceptible component "female" are arbitrarily connected.



Although, Ezinma is a female but that is just a meaningful sound which does not take her attributes as a man into cognizance.

The study of structuralism reflects literary imaginations through the juxtaposition of one thing over another. The role of juxtaposition relies on the use of sources of something or sameness to make remarkable and relevant observation. Juxtaposition also entails the placement of two opposing ideas or characters side by side. The aim of juxtaposing two directly or indirectly related entities close together in literature is to highlight the contrast and possibly compare them. Juxtaposition etches out a character in detail, thereby creating suspense or

lending a rhetorical effect. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the author uses juxtaposition to draw a parallel between two characters of Okonkwo and the clan. The writer discusses this by placing their traits in comparison with each other, highlighting their differences and similarities. This is obvious in the character portrayal of Okonkwo and the clan. The central character, his behaviour, and surroundings represent to a large extent, the clan. Okonkwo's tragic death is also seen as the tragic end of the people's traditional values. His tragic death is regarded as part of a larger tragedy. More so, the whole idea surrounding Okonkwo's death is strange and the author could not offer any reasonable answer to that effect. This is one major lure and equivocation created by the author which delays the answers to certain questions. Also, Achebe's use of flashback proceeding to the point at which the protagonist appear is foregrounded on the importance of the character of Okonkwo. As the narration ends, the reader realizes that the culture of the people as described in the text has been irrevocably transformed. Okonkwo is confident that he can master his environment, he rules as a man, and he is indeed proud of his people. Understanding these beliefs is the key to understanding the tragedy that strikes Okonkwo later, after the intrusion by the white man. The dialectical relationship between Okonkwo and the African traditional system is vastly portrayed. In acknowledging this, the writer adds:

Looking at a king's mouth', said an old man, 'one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast. He was talking about Okonkwo, who has risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortunate to be one of the Lords of the clan...Anyone who knew his grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say he had been lucky. If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his chi or personal god was good. But the ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed. And not only his chi but his clan too, because it judged a man by the work of his hands. That was why Okonkwo had been chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo's wife. And such was the deep fear that their

enemies had for Umuofia that they treated Okonkwo like a king... (*Things Fall Apart* 1958:19-20)

This is an indication that Okonkwo is a representation of the clan who fully understands the tradition and other relevant structures of the culture. He is therefore ready to do anything to protect and ensure the survival of the tradition. The community also recognises Okonkwo's devotion to the culture of the land and accords him respect as a king. Symbolically, therefore, Okonkwo dies for the traditional values, but he never won in the struggle against Western cultural intrusion. Achebe thus creates Okonkwo to significantly personify the Umuofia community. Ker (1997:127) argues that:

The personality of Umuofia enables us to interpret the community as we do characters in a novel. When Ezeudu goes to warn Okonkwo of the impending death of Ikemefuna he announces that "Umuofia has decided to kill him"... In peace or in crisis the community emerges as a single force. The bond of kinship and the need to speak with one voice surpass all other needs. When they celebrate, the entire neighbourhood "wears a festive air" and one man's behaviour is often interpreted in terms of the larger group. Achebe creates the character out of a clear understanding of the meaning of community...

In this instance, issues of communal lives are handled as single entity. This sharp contrast is based on the fact that Okonkwo expects Umuofia to engage in war against the Western enculturation thus opposing the Western ways amount to opposing the local kinsmen and clan as well.

Okonkwo's individualistic nature blunts his reasoning and perception beyond his own point of view. Unlike Okonkwo, Uchendu offers a philosophical view of life:

You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world. Do you know that men are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all their yams and even their children? I had six wives once. I have none now except that young girl who knows not her right from her left. Do you know how many children I have buried – children I begot in my youth and strength? Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive. If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akeuni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away. Have you not heard the song they sing when a woman dies?

‘For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well!’
(*Things Fall Apart* 1958:97)

The dynamics in life is richly detailed in Uchendu’s statement and the literary device of rhetorical questions is also very remarkably used. In other words, Achebe draws the reader’s attention to the complex nature of life. Okonkwo’s blunt refusal to accept change contributes to his downfall. His unreasonable rage also causes him havoc. This explains the structuralist study that the essence of existence is appreciated through logical contrast of one thing or structure over another. This dichotomy between self and other in the character of Okonkwo conflicts with each other in several ways. It therefore means that there are even internal crises or binarism on the individual level.

Appearance and reality is another binary form of structuralism in *Things Fall Apart*. While appearance could be referred to as the arrival of something believable, reality denotes the emergence of certainty, the here and now. In the novel, Okonkwo, the protagonist appears ambitious and famous in life. He has wives, barns of farm products but impatient “with unsuccessful men”. His personal merit is based on reputation and the people of Umuofia see and eulogize Okonkwo’s personality. This is because Okonkwo is extremely concerned with respect and reputation. He lives life as if he was competing with someone. His bravery and strength is motivated by the desire to prove that he is the opposite of his father, Unoka. In reality, however, Okonkwo’s strong reputation, social position and bravery intertwine with his obligations to his immediate family and clan. It violates the most intimate bond of family integration and happiness. For instance, Okonkwo suffers from the fears of being lazy and infamous like his father, he nurtures the fear of losing his identity and the worst fear of being impotent. Being haunted by these fears, he easily becomes suspicious and unleashes his anger on anyone who he

feels disrespects him. Examples are his constant beating of his wives and his inability to accept biological son, Nwoye as he is. The writer also notes:

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. No wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders... ((*Things Fall Apart* 1958:6)

Fear in the text is one of the major traits that foster Okonkwo's internal nature into crisis. Okonkwo's determination to regain all that he has lost, 'he had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years' (p.123). Okonkwo's hopes to rebuild his compound to a more magnificent structure, to develop larger barns, to marry off his daughters and to initiate his sons into the Ozo society are left unfulfilled.

The novel foregrounds on the binary fate of man. While some are in luck, others are destined to be unfavoured. Achebe implicitly unfolds nature affairs in the life of man. He depicts existence, as devoid of human control, but of natural forces which control and determine the fate of man. A typical example is that Okonkwo's determination to succeed in life is thwarted by anger, fear and ambition. The reader envisages Okonkwo's steps that lead to self-destruction. Ikemefuna, Okonkwo's surrogate son, is an epitome of a young, promising and adorable "ill-fated lad" who is later killed in accordance with the custom of the land. Also, the formidable hand of fate befalls Unoka, Okonkwo's father. It suffices to note that Unoka had not chosen to

live his life the way it is portrayed in the text but it is his fate to have a bad “chi” and so it dictates his life and he dies in shame. Umuofia people also experience a bad year of harvest and lack of rainfall. The people plant and wait for bountiful harvest in vain, as the year produces nothing in return, as portrayed clearly in the text:

The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibie was the worst year in living memory. Nothing happened as its proper time; it was either too early or too late. It seemed as if the world had gone mad. The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams had been sown...that year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself. (*Things Fall Apart* 1958:16-17)

All these point to the fact that nature controls the fate and activities of man, that no matter the circumstances, man is helpless and cannot change the course of nature.

The foregoing analysis shows that a study of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* could also yield itself to a structuralist worldview. His combination of Western religion and African traditional beliefs, the contradictions and disintegration of the clan, the binary presentation of characters and events are significantly woven together in a unified manner. *Things Fall Apart* thus offers a rich and convincing structuralist features in the text. The stylistic techniques of binary, oxymoron, paradox, flashback, stream of consciousness, prolepsis, rhetorical question, authorial intrusion, the interplay of words, and juxtaposition enhance the twist in the entire text. In all these, however, it is shown that both the Western and the African cultural experiences could co-exist side by side in a relationship that promotes unity and coherence among the people. This is demonstrated in *Things Fall Apart*:

Mr. Brown came to be respected even by the clan, because he trod softly on its faith. He made friends with some of the great men of the clan and on one of his frequent visits to the neighbouring villages he had been presented with a carved elephant tusk, which was a sign of dignity and rank. One of the great men in that

village was called Akunna and he had given one of his sons to be taught the whiteman's knowledge in Mr. Brown's school. Whenever Mr. Brown went to that village he spends long hours with Akunna in his Obi talking through an interpreter about religion. **Neither of them succeeded in converting the other but they learnt more about their different belief** (*Things Fall Apart* 1958:128) (emphasis mine)

This is one of the structuralistic properties prevailing in the text. In spite of the complexities associated with the Western religion, and the challenges of African values, through the binary opposition, the two cultures coexist side by side, promoting their values towards unity and coherence in the community.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Iyayi's *Violence*: The Intricate Relationship between Literature and the Society

The unfortunate situation of the post-independence Civil War of 1967-1970 in Nigeria signalled a new direction in the way Festus Iyayi and his contemporaries (second generation of

Nigerian writers) engaged literature. The Civil war changed the social perception of the preoccupations of their literary output. The experiences of the Civil War changed the ideological bent and literary perceptions that defined the writings prior to the war. The writings of this period to a large extent condemned war by depicting the many dimensions of its impact. In this regard, the writers became disillusioned with post-independence experiences, of poor leadership and the increasing gulf created between the rich and the poor. Consequently, war eventually reshapes almost all aspects of human existence in Nigeria.

In this light, it is obvious that the politics of the civil war and its overall impact on human lives thus draw the angst of the second generation of Nigerian writers who are more ideological and radical in their approach to events within their society and thus drawn most detailed representation of the post-independence reality of inequality, injustices and corruption in Nigeria. Little wonder, Tse-Tung (1967:25) asserts that, “In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics”. The above view affirms that art is for definite purposes, and that literature cannot be divorced from the social milieu. Olaniyan, T. & Quayson, A., (2007:467), in agreement with Tse-Tung posits that “literature (*art*) deals with life (*existence*)”, (italics mine). This explains the dialectical relationship between literature and the society.

The political and social features of the various epochs of Nigerian society are varied, discussing such social factors through the medium of structuralism enhances an understanding of the Nigerian system. Consequently, the structuralist concept of binary opposites such as the military and civilian administration and institutions become typical demonstrations. This is because while the former is authoritative, unconventional, the latter is accommodative and

conventional. These are parts of the heterogeneous problems in Nigeria and which have been reflected in the literature from this country. As a result, Nigerian fiction can be described as an emerging form, such that accommodates literary formation of various discourses. In this regard, structuralist analysis prevalent in this discourse details the binaries in existence in most Nigerian fictional narratives. To this extent, Iyayi's *Violence* demonstrates how cohesion and unity could be identified in spite of the contradictions predominant in the text. What the novel depicts is that existence cannot be one-dimensional. With the deployment of structuralism, some degree of cohesion and unity through contradictions is clearly enunciated.

It is therefore imperative that the reading of most second generation of Nigerian writers, which Iyayi represents, demonstrates a great level of structuralist thinking. The manifestations of such structuralist traits enhance the paradigm of life. For instance, the gap between the rich and the poor are clearly revealed through the application of structuralism which juxtaposes the social happenings that principally subjugate the existence of an ordinary man. In this line of thought, Palmer (1972:129) argues that:

The decolonization of African literature is already in process. Novelists are becoming less preoccupied with cultural and sociological matters, and more concerned about exposing the corruption and incompetence which are so widespread in African political and government circles.

The foregoing sufficiently summarises the ideological and imaginative motivations of most writers in Nigeria, especially the second generation of Nigerian writers.

Iyayi's *Violence* illuminates the author's yearnings for the freedom of the oppressed. The novel introduces themes and issues that are socially-driven, such as the deplorable condition of the oppressed in the society and the insensitive nature of the government towards her citizens. Sartre (1980:65-71) acknowledges this trend when he contends:

The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning... when one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen. A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus, however you might have come to it, whatever the opinions you might have professed, **literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom**; once you have begun, you are engaged, willy-nilly... As a matter of fact, the writer knows that he speaks for freedoms which are swallowed up, masked, and unavailable; and his own freedom is not so pure; he has to clean it. One must win an inner victory over his passions, his race, his class, and his nation and must conquer other men along with himself... Thus, all works of the mind contain within themselves the image of the reader for whom they are intended....(emphasis mine)

In his attempt to unmask the societal ills against the masses, Iyayi sides with the powerless against the powerful. The powerful are thoughtless and oppressive. He has faith in the ability of the underprivileged in the society to hold their own against evil and to unite in the struggle towards a desirable and functional social order for all. In terms of great upheavals in the community, Iyayi suggests revolution as the “way of wanting freedom”. The major concern of Iyayi’s *Violence* is investigating, commenting and interrogating the role the bourgeoisie and proletariat in the transition and transformation of Nigeria, from beyond the colonial era. The text concentrates on the attempt to regain the consciousness of the masses through revolution. This consciousness is presupposedly lost as a result of a stratified society, which brings about disillusionment and poverty. He also awakens the consciousness of the masses to avert division or diversion, for the possibility of winning revolution requires some collective effort. This chapter draws specific examples from the text, to show how cohesion and unity is achieved through contradictions prevailing in the text.

3.1 Diagram Illustrations

The primary points as discussed in this Chapter are highlighted in this diagram depicting the structuralistic feature of binary oppositions of paired opposites:

TABLE 3.2

GOVERNMENT (FEW PEOPLE)		CITIZENS (MAJORITY)	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Obofun, Queen, politicians	Idemudia, Patrick, Osaro,	Same society
2.	Capitalist	Socialist	
3.	Oppressor	Oppressed	
4.	Ruler	Ruled	
5.	Affluent	Poor	
6.	Insensitive	Sensitive	
7.	White elephant projects	Lack of social amenities	
8.	Ostentations	Unfulfilled life	
9.	Significant	Insignificant	
10.	Secure	Insecure	
11.	Superior	Inferior	
12.	Self-sufficient	Lack of individual growth	
13.	Gainful employment	Massive unemployment	
14.	Fearless	Fearful	

TABLE 3.3

QUEEN		ADISA	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Materialistic	Prudent	Married
2.	Greedy	Open-handed	
3.	Selfish	Selfless	
4.	Thoughtless	Thoughtful	
5.	Lack control	Self-controlled	
6.	Comfortable	Disillusioned	
7.	Abundance	Emptiness	Same society
8.	Affluent	Impoverished	
9.	Worldly wise	Conservative	

TABLE 3.4

CAPITALISM		SOCIALISM	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Few	Majority	Same society
2.	Inequality	Equal outcome	
3.	Encourages progress and wealth creation but increases the gap between haves and have-nots	Tries to bridge the gap by making everyone have same of everything	
4.	Ruler	Ruled	
5.	Affluent	Poor	
6.	Profit orientated and free market	Profit and production controlled	Affect everyone in the society
7.	Individualism and competition	Collectivism	
8.	Efficiency	Inefficiency	All about power and control
9.	Employed	Unemployment	
10.	Individual or private businesses planning	Relies on governmental planning	
11.	Decision makers	Followers	

As shown above, the text has captured the structuralist binary oppositions of paired opposites which would subsequently be discussed. It is also important to note that war is supposed to create peace albeit through violence, bloodshed etc.

3.5 Post-War Reminiscences Prevalent in the Text

Iyayi's *Violence* explores the injustices meted out on the masses in post-civil War Nigerian society. The narrative shows how violence originates and its dimension and

consequences. According to Achebe (2012:227) “the cost of human life made it one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history”. War is a paradigm of the evil and destructive side of human nature. The root cause of war in the first place lies in the insensitivity of government towards the plight and yearning of the masses. The insensitivity on the part of the government is the foundation and basic thrust of the text.

Significantly, the novel explores and splits the Nigerian society into two significant dimensions which is essentially detailed in Table 3.2 of the diagram above, of those alienated and those in the sphere of affairs, the class of the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’, oppressor/oppressed, powerful/powerless, ruler/ruled, affluent/poor, government/citizen. The novel suggests that the only way out of the crisis and, in order to create ways for new beginnings is to use revolution. Iyayi opines that revolution would pave way for a new class of leaders as well as improve the living standard of the downtrodden. Accordingly, Iyayi posits that revolution would break the chains of capitalism, eliminate servitude, and enforce socialism for a better society. The author highlights that the necessity is to understand the basic tenets of the revolution, which is tailored toward freeing the people from the yoke of servitude. He adds and challenges the masses to unite in the struggle towards a better society for all. The irony could be observed on the government relationship to the citizens, although consider as insignificant body of the society, the majority of the sacrifices for the betterment of the society is being carried out by the citizen through their selfless and priceless commitments.

On the other hand, structuralism explores human relations, behaviour, culture and experiences in terms of man relationship with another. Structuralism enlarges meaning through the contrast of another or the whole. It is this accumulation of meaning which generates unity, wholeness and cohesion to the work in the end. A structuralist reading also emphasizes the

presence of structures in a literary works. The structural linkage of one thing, structure or phenomenon with another, makes structuralism very relevant in this discourse.

It is in this regard that Iyayi's *Violence* is examined through the platform of structuralism which also operates through the use of juxtaposition. Juxtaposition fosters binaries, unities, symbolism, antithesis, contrast, play-within-a-novel technique, third person narrative, simple diction, powerful imagery, etc; places side by side the major points in the study. Furthermore, juxtaposition is predominant in the novel and it enhances the novelist critical but continuous striking of two opposites that are present in the post-war Nigerian society and the contemporary Nigerian society. One of such is the families of Obofun and Idemudia as shown in Table 3.2. These families are glaringly antithetical in every ramification but are interwoven and unified in the complex situation in the society. The crisis between Obofun and Idemudia's families display several levels of discomfort such as the entrapment of the poor, lack of individual growth, unemployment, and lack of infrastructural facilities. The dilemma of the family of Idemudia is further illustrated through the literary technique of analepsis, a form of anachrony, by which some of the events are related to the reader retrospectively. For instance, Idemudia is not properly educated because his father, a victim of the Nigerian society, could not afford to pay his tuition fees, as exemplified thus:

When he [Idemudia] had been driven away from school because of school fees three years before, he had found his father uncompromising. "I have no money", his father had said after neglecting to return his greeting. "But that may mean that I won't be going back to school again...his father's face remained unemotional. "I have no money", he repeated. "You can ask your mother to pay your fees from now on"....Six months earlier, his father had married a new wife, his third."My mother has no money", Idemudia had told his father."Then you'll have to go to school and bring your box back. I have no more money. I can't pay any more school fees". Idemudia had gone back to his mother heartbroken and in tears. (*Violence 1979:5*)

This incident is narrated to the reader through analepsis and it is a clear manifestation of the disintegration between the son and his father, who “had married a new wife, his third”. It also illustrates personal priority over mundane things. Again, it is a demonstration of the celebration of trivialities over futuristic endeavours. There is in fact, evidence that parents would rather satisfy their selfish needs than those of their children. Little wonder, Gimba (2006:117) argues that;

It is an irresponsible doctor that abandons a critically ill patient on the operation table to go and protest the inadequacies of the hospital, while yet breast-beating himself that is the best way to give the dying, helpless patient a good cure. If the patient does not die before the doctor returns, it will be a surprise, as I would be, unless he is a magician...Doctors stay close to their needy patients.

The foregoing offers how significant selflessness could help in the human development. Extreme selfishness however spells doom for the society and posterity.

Another thing which compounds and brings to limelight the structuralist analysis in the text is the unhealthy situation of “unfaithful” indulgence of Idemudia’s wife, Adisa. It is termed “unfaithful” because the futility of her action is heightened when Idemudia’s friends, Osaro and Patrick, settled the hospital bills of her husband, Idemudia. Even though culture disapproves of adultery and sexual liberties outside of marriage, Adisa’s case is however understandable and possibly justifiable when seen in the light of the fact that she is ready to get help for her husband who is recuperating at the hospital. The hospital bills are actually what propel her to commit adultery. From another direction, Adisa’s character resonates the ideal woman, who would give anything humanly possible for the man she loves. One of such instance is reflected as:

‘No man is worth suffering for’, her aunt had said... our men test their manhood by their ability to beat their wives, not by their ability to protect their wives and provide for their children. You are still a beautiful woman, Adisa. ... But, Auntie, ‘Adisa said, How could I leave him?’ ... Oh, Adisa, you are a beautiful young girl still and you will see how the men will run after you. That husband of yours is a fool...She shook her head. ‘No, Auntie, She said, I cannot leave him. I

couldn't stay in a room all by myself, and I would die if the hands of other men were to touch me. Honestly, I could not bear it. I would die!'....(*Violence* 1979:46-47)

This is one of the various dimensions of Adisa's affection and faithfulness to her husband. This, of course, is unlike the proudly and self-centred Queen, who is ruthlessly efficient in celebrating bad conduct and selfishness. The author proceeds to celebrate and contrast heavily the great ingenuity of the character of Queen as she utters thus, "From now on, I am going to do whatever I like whenever I like and wherever I like" (p.204). In essence, Queen is everything Adisa is not. Again, the writer uses the two characters to signify the contrasting nature of two characters. The character of Adisa is introduced in the midst of nothingness and emptiness while the character of Queen is shown in abundance and resourcefulness. Adisa is trapped in poverty like her husband and yet she maintains decency. This is the situation the female characters find themselves in the experiences in the system, as seen in Table 3.3.

3.6 Structuralist Analysis of Binarism as Predominant in Iyayi's *Violence*

One of the major structural analyses could be deduced in the payment of labourers. The character of Queen shows the level of inhumanity in the system. Queen pays the labourers (Idemudia, Osaro, Patrick, etc) little, in spite of the hardship they encounter in offloading the cement. Iyayi's *Violence* argues that people should enjoy the fruit of their labour and that the lack of such appreciation leads to human instability, disillusionment, corruption and lack of growth. On the other hand, the novel uses Idemudia as a mouthpiece to portray the stages of oppositions as well as in the novel, the binary opposites between the rich and the poor, between life and death and between affluence and poverty. The writer explores each binary to uncover the other, and further confront the plight of the masses in the community of people toiling hard to make ends meet. From dawn to dusk, the masses are struggling to get food for their families. The intensity of their struggles and contradictions remain basically same, the struggle could differ

only in their forms and hazards. The writer therefore suppresses unfavourable views about the capitalist system and upgrades views of socialism. This is achieved through the character of Idemudia whom life's dimensions transit from frustration, through inhuman treatment, disillusionment, despondency and then survival.

Also, the marriage between Obofun and Queen creates another contrast in life. While Obofun's wealth is ill-gotten, because it is the tax payers' money, Queen relatively prostitutes to achieve her desires. This is one of the reasons that lead to Obofun's attempt to disengage from the marital relationship with Queen. Obofun dishearteningly laments:

They could never leave each other now. At least, he couldn't afford to. They were no longer husband and wife in the true sense of the word. They were strangers to each other in many respects. The sun had gone out of their relationship and there was nothing left now but the darkness and the coldness. The stars were the memories of earlier years and they crystallised now because they had been so full of promise. Now there was nothing but the bitterness, the hatred, the anger, the frustrating knowledge that he couldn't divorce her. No, he told himself, there could be no question of separation. They would continue to live together as husband and wife. The business that had forged the gap between them also tied them together. There was nothing they could do about it. Business had to grow on them. And the more it grew, the colder and more impersonal they became to each other...(Violence 1979: 197)

Obofun's attempt to divorce his wife, Queen, is thwarted the moment he is informed by his lawyer of the possibility of sharing his wealth with her, if the threat of separation and divorce is enforced. This situation condemns him to an unhealthy relationship with his wife. The quest for material gains as shown by some characters in the novel, pictures the materialistic situation in contemporary Nigerian society, where love has become a cliché and consideration is placed more on what is to be gained than lost in relationships. These unhealthy relationships are contradictory and ironical. Indeed, the principal reason for keeping closeness between Obofun and Queen is materialistic and for personal gains. On a larger note, this is the reflection of the social

happenings where people tend to disguise their motives and deceive others in the name of friendship.

The novel also provides another structuralist feature in terms of its deployment of antithesis. To start with, the constitution of any country provides for certain rights, such as security, health care, education, to mention but a few, but in the Nigerian system, these rights are denied. The poor are subjected to all forms of degradation and are denied their fundamental human rights. In the capitalist Nigeria, the rich and powerful are portrayed as agents of terror, fear and oppression of the masses. Literarily, Iyayi's application of several levels of contrast and antithesis indicts the country to the level that the upper class are protected by the full force of the law, since the law is subverted in favour of the powerful few and those who are able to embezzle millions of money to the detriment of the majority. Iyayi asserts that it is these people who actually commit violence against the common man. The structures in the society thrive and perpetuate violence on its citizens. Iyayi advocates for another level of violence against the structured society, which is through revolution. In this instance, the same instrument used against the ordinary citizens by the ruling class is to be used to overthrow the system.

Violence also uses imagery to mirror the living standards of both the working class which Iyayi sees as demoralising and unfulfilling, and those of the rich, as successful and great. Through this juxtaposition, he appeals to the consciousness of the reader to sympathise with the poor and hate the affluent. The image of 'short broom', 'bare floor' (p.1), signifies poverty, injustice, insecurity, inequality, deprivation, exploitation, degradation and abject condition of the working class. Iyayi strikingly defines the differences and signification between the working class through characters, such as, Idemudia, Osaro, Patrick, Mama and Papa Jimoh and others as well as the affluence represented by Obofun and Queen, Clerides and others. Iyayi illustrates

several levels of violence in the society and maintains that a civil and transformed society can be re-established in Nigeria through revolution, as seen in Table 3.2.

Another structuralist feature in *Violence* could be associated with Ogbe hospital, which symbolises the class distinction in the society and portrays the level of inequality in the society. While there is lack of beds in the male ward, empty rooms are reserved for special people of the society as evident in the novel. The writer observes:

‘They have been referred here from the University Hospital because there are no beds there... We have no beds here either, he complained. Why, he can share a bed or sleep on the floor, the nurse suggested. Too many people are already sharing beds or sleeping on the floor ...What then do we do? ...Can you bring a mattress from home? Adisa nodded vaguely. That would reduce her to sleeping on bare iron springs. Or perhaps ... I guess he can share a bed with the patient from Asaba... (*Violence* 1979:59-60)

Though satirical and sarcastic, Iyayi brings the reader to the terrifying condition at the hospital where life is meant to be saved. This is the society with so much resources and potential but what characterises the existence of the majority is abject poverty.

In addition, Idemudia drops out of school and goes in search of greener pastures and notices with dismay millions of ‘able-bodied but jobless’, homeless and hungry young people. The ironic and sarcastic implication of “able-bodied but jobless” underscores the enormity of this social problem. The writer metonymically replaces the name of one thing with the name of something else closely associated with it and portrays different aspects of likely social revolt. The binary arrangement or structure of the society is further highlighted when Osaro laments that ‘One man has enough to eat, in fact so much that he throws some away. Yet here we are, hungry, with nothing to eat’(p.20).

Iyayi uses the above illustration to clearly hold the leadership or political group of the country as responsible for the plight of the downtrodden and to picture existence in its state of binary.

The character of Mr. Clerides, who works in Queen's building project, represents the collaboration between the expatriate (foreign exploiter) and the local business class in the exploitation of the downtrodden. (p. 239). Idemudia fashions an answer to these levels of violence inflicted on the masses, which is a collective dismantling of any form of capitalism, through revolution. In a wider sense, it is upon these two families of Obofun and Idemudia that the paradigms of capitalism and socialism can best be explicated. One represents the bourgeois or ruling elites and by extension the exploiters while the other represents the proletariats and the exploited. This is explicit in Table 3.4 of the diagram above.

In structuralist terms, the writer insightfully constructs his characters to embody antagonistic and ideological camps. He portrays two parallel forces with divergent views in confrontation and conflicts. It is against this background and in an effort to address these societal menace that the radical group of writers, represented by Iyayi in *Violence*, advocate for a socialist society, where there will be a classless society with some measures of equality for all citizens. Accordingly, reconciliation is feasible through revolution; the writer asserts a society where the rule of law would no longer be subverted by the rich and the powerful. When all citizens become "equal" before the law and all spheres of life, the case of binarisms, divisions and conflicts within the society and between the classes would have been largely eliminated. From the several descriptions, one can deduce Iyayi's use of contrast, juxtaposition, antithesis, to constitute the fulcrum upon which the novel revolves.

Ngara (1988) argues that 'It is the duty of revolutionary writers...to produce works which awakens the masses and fires them with enthusiasm so they can unite in one single effort to transform their environment'. Consequently, Iyayi shows that what needs to be done now is for the people to unite themselves to dismantle the capitalist society. The revolutionary writers

reveal social discontent of the populace and proffer solution. This is one of the aims of revolutionary writers. In the play-within-a-novel the authorial intrusion stands in bold belief. ‘I feel and think it is necessary that all the oppressed sections of our community ought to take up arms to overthrow the present oppressive system; the system has always proved that it operates through violence...’(p. 185). The statement encapsulates the whole essence of revolution, the taking of arms, which is demonstrated as the masses embark on strike. It is important to note Iyayi’s graphic depiction of events and characters as true to life.

Significantly, Iyayi’s *Violence* tackles the mismanagement of power through binaries. It is noteworthy that Iyayi’s *Violence* is produced after the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 and its subsequent intensive authoritative regime and so efforts are made to capture such social vices in his writings. In Iyayi’s *Violence*, the author appropriates radical and structuralist indices to present the Nigerian system in its deplorable state and appalling conditions. This fosters Iyayi’s description of events in a more realistic and naturalistic manner. A typical instance is;

Children cried, women wept; **everywhere there was a great urgency and paradoxically little activity, hopelessness and helplessness that invoked the onlooker to tears...** these people still struggled and aspired to keep their lean flames of lives going. There seemed to be no point in seeking recourse from death, the abundant evidence of life about was distressing and frustrating enough. And yet, even as the women wept and the children cried and the men sat or stood about with stony watery eyes, coughing and spitting and occasionally going to the fence to urinate, there was **in each pair of eyes a stubborn determination not to let go of life no matter how filthy and degrading it was.** (*Violence* 1979:56-57) (emphasis mine)

The importance lies on the clarity of analysis in capturing every single move at the hospital. It also investigates the painful reactions of the masses, as against the ruling class and indirectly appeals to the readers’ consciousness. Iyayi consciously paints the society in distress and encourages the masses to remain unified and persevere in the course of revolution.

Moreover, Iyayi appears conscious of his use of words and its impact on the society. He does this to avert distorting his primary focus of creating mass awareness and revolution. He exposes the shallow grasp of the system and its complications through the use of simple diction. Iyayi speaks for the people in the mood of what Fanon posits “On National Culture” (2007:257) thus:

He turns himself into an awakener of the people, hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. During this phase a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances ... feel the need to speak to their nation, to expose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action

The attempt by Iyayi to identify with the people clearly explains Iyayi’s motive at challenging the unfair social framework in place. Iyayi exposes the evils and the state of dehumanisation that capitalism reduces the human being structurally, psychologically and otherwise. As a matter of fact, the thrust of the narration questions the segregation and exploitation experienced by an ordinary person in a society endowed with rich natural and human resources. Ironically, the rich natural and human resources are under-utilized, thereby fostering starvation and other atrocities throughout the system and inevitably leading to disillusionment among the majority.

In addition, Iyayi’s *Violence* provides a new African voice about the happenings in Nigeria. Interestingly, the writer tends to connect more closely with the more functional indigenous forms, primarily for the aim of projecting literature with words that can passionately appeal to the ordinary man in the society. The use of folklore, myth, legend and mostly the related social happenings are some of the ways of connectivity between the writer and the people. This in effect has given the Africans the opportunity to explore and reclaim their identity. Iyayi’s choice to recreate the experiences is a brave attempt towards re-evaluating the futility of

the war. One sees this, for instance, in the revolutionary character, Idemudia, who in spite of suffering psychological loss perseveres towards challenging the forces in the society. This is captured in the conversation between Obofun and Adisa this way:

Obofun drew a sharp breath. "I see, from the hospital he goes to prison! Adisa frowned. She could not understand. "What has my husband got to do with you? ...he liked her at once, particularly the pathetic look on her face. Surely, if he could ... But he was here on business ... "Your husband and some of his friends have robbed my wife of one hundred and fifty bags of cement"... Adisa looked Obofun full in the face ... "Do you want to search our house? ... Obofun laughed. "You don't expect a thief to keep what he has stolen under his bed! "My husband is not a thief! ... "We may be poor but we have never stolen" (*Violence* 1979:64-65)

In all, the novel essentially reclaims Idemudia's innocence and reveals Adisa's strength of conviction in standing up for the injustices meted out on her husband, Idemudia and the masses, the oppressed in the community. Her absence from the scene of the event does not ruin the strong personal conviction she has over the personality of her husband.

The frequent use of multiple role-playing characters to enact and bring to life the situation at hand greatly enhances the structuralist undertone in the text. The writer identifies certain inevitability in the process of writing. Accordingly, he observes that violence occurs in different stages of existence. The violence could be in form of verbal, psychological, sexual, gender harassment, etc. Experiencing violence, according to the writer, is a daily routine. The oppressed are vulnerable to violence as a result of the stratified nature of the society in favour of the rich, women are intimidated and criticised as a result of their gender and the yearnings and aspirations of the youth "able-bodied" are stifled in a bid to perpetuate the wishes of the few. It is a system where developmental ideas hardly flourish.

Iyayi's *Violence* illustrates different levels of violence suffered by the citizenry especially the oppressed. The writer notes various deaths, injuries, disintegration, dearth of infrastructural

facilities and unemployment in the society. He notices that there are broad ranges of strategies for prevention of death and injuries and for the provision of social amenities in the society. However, none seems to be effectively or sufficiently in place. These he sees as a systematic failure on the part of the government. The writer suggests to the people, in Africa, Nigeria in particular, to concern themselves more with the practical aspect than the theoretical aspects of revolution. He articulates exactly how today freedom struggles embody new passions and forces in relation to revolution. Amidst the happenings and devastating effects of violence, the writer suggests innovative solutions to the masses. The writer believes strongly that through revolution there would be potential improvement in the lives of the less privileged. Although the writer suggests revolution as a way out, revolution is another form of violence. In this instance, revolution is more terrifying because its consequences will prove more destructive than enduring. This is also another contradicting parameter which structuralism explores. In fact, opposite events create ways for further exploration and exposition. In other words, structuralist study in literature admits that meanings are initiated through differences in thoughts, events and character.

In conclusion, Iyayi's novel draws on the sour relationship between the rich and the poor in the attempt to confront issues of societal structures squarely. The characters and events serve as contrast to one another. Iyayi focuses on his characters to demonstrate who is being exploited and by whom. The novel touches on poverty, the manipulation of the rich against the poor, and the indomitable strength of the human spirit, to persevere and succeed. On several occasions, the civilian and downtrodden are depicted as the unfortunate majority while the highly placed in the society are constantly reflective of the exploiters. It is the writer's ambition to project the poor as the innocent ones of the crisis instigated by the bad leadership that failed to provide the basic

necessities of life and the implementation of the constitution of the country to its citizenry. The detailed portrayal of Iyayi's *Violence* emphasizes the bleak and tragic turn of the entire events in leading to structural, psychological, and physical effects of the human lives. The writer urges the populace to be the agents of change against the glaring insecurity, unemployment, falling standard of education, poverty and corruption, through revolution. He, however, writes the text to weaken the position of the powerful and allocates primacy to the majority. The author emphasizes that the various segment of violence in the system could be tackled through the course of revolution, which will bring about unity and coherence.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Habila's *Measuring Time*: A Reflection of the Modern Nigerian Society

The versatile nature of literature necessitates the capability of literature in doing many things competently. This flexibility of literature explores various levels of analytical formations, stylistic dimensions, human endeavour, thematic application, social changes and other phenomenon in life in order to communicate to a wide range of readers. In his reaction, Stephen in "Poetry and Social Development: A study of J. P. Clark Bekederemo's *State of the Union*" (2003:88) postulates that literature deal;

essentially and continually with the **image of man**, with the shape and method of **human conduct**. It embodies essential **aspects of society** ... It is to be in touch with the deeper movements or consciousness of the society that it is necessary in probing into the causes and the nature of human motivation and action in order to gain a full **understanding of the human situation and the real world for progress and development** (emphasis mine)

The above view suggests that literature deals with the "image of man", "human conduct", and "aspects of society", "for progress and development".

In the structural formulation therefore, Habila's *Measuring Time* differs from the writings of earlier authors. The novel brings to limelight realism, war and isolation. In its most subtle manner, it brings the shortcomings of war, its follies and the dilapidating situations of an underdeveloped community, Keti. Unlike their predecessors, the third generation of Nigerian writers embraces contemporary social changes as a result of the dislocation and disarticulation in the modern society of Nigeria. Nnolim (2010:210) sums up in this way:

Contemporary Nigerian fiction is, therefore, more spatial than temporal. The characters...signifying the disintegration of social values in time of moral anarchy. Emphasis on the lusty, the physical aspects of living, food, wine, women, and indulgence in armchair discussions on what is wrong with Nigeria without suggesting or doing anything positive to reclaim her...The third generation of Nigerian writers...is a disquisitory novel where characters are mouthpieces for opinion they espouse, where discussions on everything wrong with Nigeria takes centre stage, analysed, condemned...the subjects they discuss _ the lack of maintenance culture, the chaotic transport system, the garbage heaps that assault the doorway of the eye _ all make for depressing reading unrelieved by humour. There is no hope for the future it seems. There is no character development, no climax, and a doubtful denouement...

The third generation of writers modify their literary expressions to distinctly overlap the conventional traditions used in writings. This group of writers interrogates the greed and lack of openness on the part of government. In an atmosphere of greed and materialism, corruption becomes the order of the day. In this regard, Lucy Irene Vajime's remark in "Modernism in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*" (2003:126) is quite useful:

Habila captures the state of terror under which Nigerians are faced to live...It is remarkable that Nigeria could produce such fine writers in the same generation...They seek a better life with useful opportunities (utopia) in a world of lost values, both religious and ethical. Modernists usually advocate a restructuring of society and argue for an alternative status quo. They question old beliefs and attempt to transcend inherited traditional practices...

The above captures the complexity of the modern world. One of such complexities is that in an environment where everything is clothed in religious, spiritual and political languages, one finds

it hard to distinguish what is truly or genuinely religious. The modern world is full of binaries and the paralysis associated with modernism cannot be underestimated.

4.1 Diagrams Illustrating Binarisms and Oppositions:

TABLE 4.2

MAMO VS. LAMAMO			COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Major character	Minor character	Twins
2.	Historian	Soldier	kind-hearted
3.	School teacher	Mercenary	
4.	Weak/Suffering from sickle cell anaemia	Strong/healthy	
5.	Fragmented	Alienated	Similar childhood experiences
6.	Writer	Peace maker	
7.	Emptiness	Vastness	
8.	Rural dweller	Migratory, international	Compassionate Tormented by their biological father, Lamang
9.	Older	Younger	Love and cared for by their Uncle, Iliya

TABLE 4.3

FEMALE CHARACTERS VS. MALE CHARACTERS			COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Binta, Tabita, Zara	Uncle Iliya, Lamang	Same community of Keti
2.	Indecisive	Decisive	
3.	No meaningful relationship	Recorded some meaningful relationships	
4.	Weak	Strong	
5.	Voiceless	Voiced	

6.	Dependent	Independent	
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TABLE 4.4

LAMANG VS. UNCLE ILIYA			COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Domineering father	Caring Uncle	Same community of Keti
2.	Ill-gotten wealth	Generous but struggling to make ends meet	
3.	Politician	Citizen	
4.	Self-centred	Selfless	
5.	Reckless	Meticulous	

TABLE 4.5

SOCIETAL BINARISMS			COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Civilian	Military	Same individuals
2.	City	Village	
3.	Urban	Rural	
4.	Islam	Christian	
5.	Colonial history	Nationalist history	

The diagrams provided above would help in discussing various binarisms and oppositions below.

4.6 Explorations of Levels of Structuralist Binarism in Habila's *Measuring Time*

Measuring Time (2006) is Habila's third novel. The novel exemplifies the dynamic nature of literature. The novel focuses on expressing the modern Nigerian society which is characterised by people's disillusionment, brutalization of women, family disintegration, domineering father, lack of infrastructural facilities, cause and effect of migration and the high

quest for acquisition of wealth. The author's innovation of italics, biblical allusion, disjointedness, rhetorical questions and special concentration on the twins, Mamo and Lamamo, emphasizes some of the unconventional modern ways of writing. The twins also embody the devastating situation faced by ordinary Nigerian families, and other series of failures that characterise the modern Nigerian society. The novel vastly creates an even richer portrayal of the main characters: the twins and the time they live in. The text also concerns itself with history, politics, leadership and the African way of life. All these indicate the author's opinions about the configuration called Nigeria.

Furthermore, Habila's *Measuring Time* explores the social despair evident in the community of Keti in northern part of Nigeria. Stylistically, Habila's work is unified through the resolute deployment and commitment to magic realism and folktale which instead appear as the reflection of diversion from the traditional way of writing. He also employs myth, soliloquy, irony and rhetorical questions to flourish in the novel. His use of italics to emphasize specific thoughts in the novel is unique, remarkable and fascinating. The novel is an integral component of Nigerian prose-fiction owing to the significant reliance on folktale which is rooted in oral forms, such as epic, legends and use of oral traditional performances.

Habila's *Measuring Time* on the other hand uses literary expressions to recreate and influence the economic, social and political changes in the society. The novel reveals the ability of the writer to create new myths, principles and newer ways of perceiving literary and social realities. It shows the use of originality and techniques to create new ideas by the writer's deviation from established literary conventions.

In a society, such as Nigeria, crucial aspects of social cultures and social structures are passed from one generation to another, through the process of socialization. In that manner, on

one hand, residues of literary cultures are carried on from one generation of writers to another, especially if the modalities that originated the conventions in the first place still exist. On the other hand, the existence of a vibrant literary culture in Nigeria does not indicate a homogeneous approach in literature. This heterogeneity reinforces the originality and multiple nature of Nigerian writers' perspective.

The use of myth in Habila's *Measuring Time* is wittingly deployed with its varying deviations. Baldick (2004:163-164) describes myth as:

A kind of story or rudimentary narrative sequence, normally traditional and anonymous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs or accounts for the origins of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural or boldly imaginative terms. The term has a wide range of meanings, which can be divided roughly into rationalist and romantic versions: in the first, a myth is a false or unreliable story or belief, while in the second, myth is a superior intuitive mode of cosmic understanding. In most literary contexts, the second kind of usage prevails, and myths are regarded as fictional stories containing deeper truths, expressing collective attitudes to fundamental matters of life, death, divinity, and existence ('sometimes deemed to be universal'). Myths are usually distinguished from legends in that they have less of an historical basis, although they seem to have a similar mode of existence in oral transmission, re-telling, literary adaptation, and allusion.

From the foregoing, myth alludes to a culture or customs which origins cannot be specifically determined by the people or an imagined thing that has undergone severe telling, and has become natural to the people. According to an interview in the Nigerian Newspaper, Saturday Sun of January, 8, 2011, a Professor of Literature at the Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria, JOJ Nwachukwu-Agbada while responding to a question that reads: "Our recent literary discourse have been dominated by myth and fantasy in an age when a renowned scholar like Professor Charles Nnolim is inviting our writers to be more adventurous and write science fiction". Professor Nwachukwu-Agbada responds accordingly:

Mythicization should not only be seen in terms of referring to legends and other old genres of literature. But when you project that you are going to do this or

that, you are mythicizing. If you want to go to the moon or the sun, and you write about it, and you are wearing something derived from charms, and in the end, you use it to get to the sun, you (as a writer) is just mythicizing...so, mythicization should not be **restricted**(emphasis mine)

Mythicization opens an endless discussion, which could be personal, social and global. In Habila's worldview the use of myth is symbolic. It is a medium through which certain issues are explored and discussed. In Habila's *Measuring Time*, the myth lies in the depiction of Nigerian citizens as alienated and dislocated and thus facing a crisis of identity and being economically underprivileged. The twins, Mamo and Lamamo, are mirrored with social and cultural attitudes, dispositions and capacities through which the social and individual tendencies could be revealed and assessed. Habila reflects the parallel journeys of Lamamo and Mamo as the split paths to explore the world of war and pursuit of education respectively. The twins are opposites of each other. In this case, the writer examines the opposite sides to life. The characters of the twins show lucidly the binary fusion and opposites of structuralism. The writer also deliberately manipulates his way into the local folktales of his people through myth, and interweaves it with the contemporary situation in Nigeria. For example, the writer subtly shows that civil society can be re-established in Africa through the proper understanding of history. In this regard, Mamo becomes a local historian and schoolteacher, all the while struggling with his father and his illness. Fortunately, his own fortunes rise as his father's decline. The creation of literary myth also occurs in nameless politicians in Okri's *Famished Road* (1991). Habila and his contemporaries, depict developmental crises, bad leadership and indifferent attitudes among the politicians in the Nigerian society. In addition, the third generation of Nigerian writers exhibit a nation with vast possibilities in which the majority of the citizens live in abject poverty, alienation and fragmentation.

In this context, it is clear that the writer's socio-cultural background plays a great influence in the analysis or explication of his creative output, which eventually impacts and influences his fictional ability. Therefore, one could safely say that Habila's use of myth, symbols and archetypes is not just the convention of repetition of old ideas, but is rather the creation of new art forms from pre-existing literary conventions. The literary device of myth in Habila's *Measuring Time* succeeds in creating that connection between the breakdown of societal mechanism, including publishing, and the wider degradation of individuals. The use of the aforementioned devices establishes character formations as it affect the society. It also upholds that an individual's success relies essentially on the provisions available in the system.

In terms of the issue of publishing, for example, the central character is challenged as his efforts to have his article published in the country are fruitless. He later gets two letters from a London and Uganda Publishers. The writer narrates that:

The next day two letters came for Mamo...the first was from a London magazine called the Empire Review... we really enjoyed the piece, "A Review of Drinkwater's A Brief History of the Peoples of Keti", but we regret that the subject does not suit our particular demand at the moment. However, if you have other pieces that address such issues as the AIDS scourge or genital circumcision, or other typical African experiences in a challenging and progressive way, we'd like to take a look at them. The second letter was from Uganda, a journal called the History Society Quarterly. They loved his article and they were publishing it... The editor was delighted to get a submission from as far away as Nigeria, this was the first and he hoped it wouldn't be the last, because he wanted to make the magazine really international, and he was especially delighted with this piece because of its "relaxed tone"... (*Measuring Time* 2006:151)

In this instance, the author's concern is to relate to the world the difficulties experienced in writing in a country such as Nigeria. It is rather hard to survive as a writer. The publisher influences to a large extent what is to be written or published. In other words, the binary connection between the breakdown of societal mechanism and degradation of individuals is deduced. The writer ironically explores this challenge to draw the attention of the government to

provide publishing firms. These firms would be unbiased, which in turn encourage artistic writings. Habila also notes that tradition and modernity are at it here. For instance, Mamo's piece is on 'A Review of Drinkwater's: A Brief History of the peoples of Keti'; unfortunately, the London Publisher would rather appreciate any discourse on modern reality such as AIDS scourge or genital circumcision. This is a situation where the central character explores on the history of his people with the intent of telling the world about his people but his efforts are thwarted because what is needed from the publisher is a different global issue.

Another instance where Mamo exhibits writing prowess is on the history of the people. This is reflected thus:

On the way back, in the same car that had brought him to the palace, Mamo's mind went in all directions – he thought how uncanny it was that only days ago Professor Batanda's letter had urged him to think of taking up biography, now here he was being offered a chance to write the Mai's biography. This was not the biography he wanted to write, true. What he wanted was to write the story of ordinary people, farmers, workers, housewives, and through their stories to arrive at a single overarching story. But he knew that the Waziri's offer was not one to be scorned; it offered him a chance to launch the Mai's biography, whether he believed in it or not, wouldn't necessarily prelude doing the other biographies; in fact, he'd consider the Mai's story simply as part of a bigger project. How he wished his brother were around to see how everything seemed to be working out for him. Suddenly he was no longer the awkward, bumbling idiot his father had so mercilessly derided. He felt strong and unafraid, he had somehow outwitted his sickle-cell anaemia, it has been over a year since he'd last fallen sick, and his odds of staying alive could only improve with each passing year. He felt like screaming out loud, *'I am alive and I am useful and everything will work out fine'*. (*Measuring Time* 2006:164)

The history of the people could be rewritten through the biography of Mai, one of the important leaders in Keti community. Again, another significance of rewriting the history is to properly understand the people's traditional values and to internalise same for posterity. The history of the people is important and encompassing to engaging in writing of some sectional issues. On the

other dimension, Mamo had wanted to explore the yearnings and aspirations of the ordinary people and it would have exposed the shortcomings and insensitive nature of the government.

While responding to some questions in an interview on *Measuring Time*, in Nigerian Dailies, Helon Habila argues thus:

I think I approached the writing of this book with an epic conception, that is a view of events and history that goes far beyond what is discussed or represented in the book, call it an echo if you want, that bounds from the book and goes on and on to give the reader a sense of the vastness and complexity and the limitless possibilities that is Africa. Mamo, the main character in the book, tries to express this to his students when he tells them to imagine other horizons beyond the one they can see outside their window, a million other horizons. And so I presented not just the war theatre in Liberia as a microcosm or metaphor for the continent, but I also presented the serene and deceptively eventless village of Keti. If we are to paint life truly – and to me the quest for truth is the sum of a writer's endeavours – then we mustn't fear to show the ugly as well as the beautiful. It uses appearance and stereotypes to lead you to the complexity below. A novel goes deeper than a newsflash on CNN; it doesn't just show you a war, but it also shows you why the war happened, and also the folly, the human cost, of seeking to resolve our differences through war. It brings up-close the lives of the ordinary soldiers, and their hopes and dreams, and how they might never live to fulfil these dreams – and in that we see how just like us they are. That is what a novel does, and that is why Aristotle says a narrative is ultimately more beneficial than either philosophy or history, because it contains both strands in itself...

The significance of this excerpt is dependent on its binary formation of appearance and reality, traditions and modernity, certainty and uncertainty, poverty and richness, vastness and emptiness, war and its follies, ugly and beauty. Habila explores the scope deeper and more convincingly with the aim to capture the events and incidents that led to Keti's conversion to Christianity by the white missionaries.

In the same vein, in a structuralist sense through the literary decorum and codes of juxtaposition, contrast, antithesis and paradox, the writer introduces the twin, Mamo and Lamamo, distinctively. For instance, the author underscores this through the words of Mamo in this way "But I guess I've always been jealous of him [Lamamo], he has everything I don't have.

He is always the strong and healthy one, and when we were kids, adults would always pat him on the head and say, ‘What a healthy strong boy’, and when they turned to me the look on their faces would change. My fantasy is to have his body, with his mind, and then I’ll be the perfect person.” (p. 102). *Measuring Time* deduces the psychological study of a man (Mamo) who must “measure up” to his brother and the critical demands of a society. Although they share same childhood experiences such as the brutal attitude and intimidation from their father, they fight to identify themselves, etc, as captured in Table 4.2. While the narration revolves majorly around the affairs of Mamo as he overcomes his sickle cell anaemia and grows into an educated man, the author captures all that is equally significant to Lamamo’s life in his short but detailed writings to his twin. The inferiority complex or “sibling rivalry” (p. 103), as noted by Zara in the novel, paralyses their existence. Habila also draws the reader’s attention thus:

The twins stayed with their uncle Iliya for the first three years of their lives, believing him to be their father, his wife their mother, and their cousin Asabar, whose meals they shared, their brother. But after three years Lamang came and shattered their illusion, he took them away _ that was the day the seed of their hatred for him was planted, and when they grew older and began to hear the song about the King of Women (Lamang), and about his maltreatment of their mother, the seed sprouted into a tree. Lamang, for his part, never took much interest in his children; he left them in the care of their aunt Marina, who had been staying with him since the breakup of her marriage, and the village widows who occasionally dropped in to help with the housework and to generally advertise their availability to the once again eligible Lamang. He smiled at the widows and flirted with them, but he remained single... (*Measuring Time* 2006:16)

The complicated lifestyle of their father affects the twins in no small measure. Throughout the novel, the author exhibits the twins’ isolation, alienation and dependence on each other. The twins witness events that force them to examine their conscience, and they believe that they can make their fortune. Habila skilfully depicts the twins’ emotional and personal growths over time as they learn how to deal with issues like fame, education, family disintegration, estrangement

and eventually love. Literarily, the author expresses the theme of appearance and reality. He unfolds the illusive aspects of existence in juxtaposition with the reality on ground. These are reflected in the use of setting, structural built and characterization in the novel. The twins enjoy better treatment unlike the ill-treatment they received while with their biological father as noted in Table 4.4. What an irony! The twins take their decisions and act on their own, and most times endanger their lives in the process. A typical example is when the twins place a scorpion into their father's shoes. In another circumstance, they misplace his car keys, all in the attempt to torment their father: for the wrongs meted out on them, and to express their intention to **HATE THY FATHER, MAKE HIM PAY** (p.20). Similarly, the killing of one of the dogs (Duna) as depicted in the text is mythical, and depicts their impressionable nature as children. The twins kill the dog with that mythical belief that a dog's rheum in a human eye is capable of invoking spirit or ghost, in fact the supernatural being. It could therefore be deduced that the twins desire some supernatural being to discuss or interfere in their isolation or ordeal.

Also, the introduction of the twins shapes the direction of the text and unfolds the structural line. It also unearths the binary opposite in existence. The relationship between the twins are exciting and promising but the relationship between the twins and that of their father, Lamang is heavily portrayed as incompatible as portrayed in the diagram above. Having lost their mother in childbirth, and unable to get fatherly love from their father, the twins unite to torment him. Habila's records this thus:

Not that the twins had the means to make their father pay... their best whenever he was back from his endless business trips to the state capital and Lagos. They'd drop the occasional scorpion into his shoe... once or twice they had contemplated poison, but some unclear, unnamed terror had deterred them from that exigency. In any case, they preferred the death of a thousand cuts to the single bullet in the head. The first time they put a scorpion in his shoe, Lamang's foot had swollen to twice its size, forcing him to stay indoors a whole week... (*Measuring Time* 2006:20)

The excerpts reveal the twins intention to suffer Lamang severally. The revenge in their minds controls their gruesome acts towards Lamang. The twins are left with the only option of keeping an ‘imaginary diary’ with their first priority stated boldly ‘*Hate They Father Make Him Pay*’ (p.20). Here, Habila reveals a father whose hegemonic tendencies cannot be compromised, as exemplified in Table 4.4.

In contrast, through the theme of family disintegration and estrangement, lack of parental affection and inadequate communication, the character of Lamang (father) and Mamo (son) is captured. This lack of love between the father and son is recorded in this way:

We have everything, Mamo felt like answering, except your [Lamang’s] love... From very early Mamo had learned to keep his sick and awkward body in the background, learned to observe from the sidelines...to confess would be to forgo his position of superiority by sharing his knowledge with his father. He didn’t want to put his father’s mind at rest; what would be the point of that? For once he wanted to be the torturer, his father the tortured. After all, he was sure his father was not concerned about his son’s [Lamamo, the other twin] fate in faraway Timbuktu, only with what people would say about his son running away...(Measuring Time 2006:58-59)

Parental love and cordial relationship in the family is the basis and process of evolving moral, ethical and aesthetic values in the family. At this point, Mamo has a reason to assert his superiority over his father. It goes to emphasize how individuals derive pleasure in being in control of others or things, no matter the short time involved. Family integration brings unification and endless benefits. This sour relationship within the family is also noted in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, between Okonkwo and his first son, Nwoye.

The differences in the life of the twins symbolise the binaries in life. The image of “water” serves as the demarcation point between Mamo and Lamamo. Mamo’s sickle-cell anaemia which disrupts his plan to join the army along with his brother and Asabar serves as an obstacle. The situation changes and transforms lives, experiences and shows the disparity between the rural and urban areas in the novel. In a nutshell, Habila captures this thus:

Mamo stood up and silently the twins embraced, then Lamano said, “I will send for you as soon as I am settled. I promise. Don’t fall sick again”. Mamo watched his brother disappear through the grass, and in his mind he felt like a prisoner, imprisoned by the village with its vast hills and valleys and river. He felt certain, more than ever before, that he was doomed to die young... (*Measuring Time* 2006:55)

Mamo laments the departure of his twin brother. Mamo’s sickly disposition prevents him as planned from moving to the city with his brother. He is enslaved and imprisoned in Keti community, with its vast hills and valleys and river. As the protagonist, he feels isolated, debased and alienated. Habila introduces the theme of time in the text. In this instance, Mamo learns to grasp time without his brother through the act of waiting, “just waiting. Once he had waited for death, and once he and his brother had waited for fame and adventure, but now he wasn’t sure anymore what he waited for” (p.120).

The issue of gender inequality is also displayed. The female-characters are treated in an undignified manner in contrast to their male counterparts in the text as Table 4.3 of the diagram shown. The male-characters in the novel are built and embodied with greater benefits to the detriment of female characters. The female characters are portrayed as less human, indecisive, and dependent on men as the tradition and culture permits. This supports the structuralist thinking that existence cannot be same, in this case, between a man and woman. For instance, Tabita suffered heavily in the hands of her husband, Lamang, before she dies. Zara laments the societal segregation, intimidation and could not establish any meaningful relationship with the opposite sex. Zara is traumatized and demented as she records her ordeal through the use of flashback to Mamo thus:

He was a gentle man... then things changed after the baby. That was when the money began to come in...During the last military regime, he was just a Lieutenant...made him head of task force on petroleum. He bought cars and went away for weekends with his friends and their girlfriends, leaving me at home with the baby. Those were terrible times...I remembered the first time he slapped

me. I had caught him red-handed with a girl in his car as I passed them on the street...The next time was this one, with the belt. He was drunk... (*Measuring Time* 2006:106)

This is one of the many instances of intimidation and ill-treatment against the female characters in the novel. The reader is turned to the devastation faced by the African women and the sufferings she endures in order to protect her home. This binary opposite of the male character against the female character could be linked to the structuralist thinking that when one thing is contrasted for another meaning becomes imminent. Structurally, also is the case of Binta whom the author harshly describes as being:

a nymphomaniac. She really loved sex... All the boys in our neighbourhood had had her. She just loved it. Then she got pregnant and when she couldn't make any of her many casual lovers accept responsibility, she ran away to the state capital to get an abortion...then Binta fell ill, she wasted away. When they brought her home she was just a skeleton. She died a week later (*Measuring Time* 2006:108)

The author warns the reader that dreaded diseases abound in the modern world, which could be contacted through sexual exposure. He intrinsically advises abstinence from sex. The writer also portrays these diseases from the angle of the female-character. Habila seriously undermines the involvement of other partner, many of them men who probably share in this crime as well.

Habila's unique presentation of modernity and tradition stands as one of the features of structuralism. The interplay between modernity and tradition gives a grim understanding of the ills and complexity in the society. The writer identifies many elements of modernity and tradition and its dialectical relationship. For instance, the character of the twins, Mamo and Lamamo desire to be famous but as a result of sickle disposition, the former ends up in the village of Keti. It suffices to say that Keti lacks modern infrastructure, such as schools etc. Lamamo leaves for urban city and ultimately joins the army. He travels to Liberia, Mali, Chad and other African countries as a peacemaker while Mamo remains in the village of Keti. Lamamo's urban life affects his thoughts and perception of life. At the end, in spite of abounding tragedies, Mamo

discovers that the secret of survival lies not in individualism but in essence, the sort of oscillatory in-between-ness that his twinship exemplifies. It is indeed of interest to mention here that the structuralists' analysis of binary opposition and fusion is demonstrated. Scholes's opinion that 'structuralism is a way of looking for reality not in individual things but in the relationships among them' (1985:4) is important.

Thus, Habila's *Measuring Time* reveals the focal point of his social commitment to the Nigerian society by exploring the new Nigerian personality in a rural setting through characters such as Mamo, Zara, Uncle Iliya, Auntie Marina, Tabita, etc. The novel reflects the alienation of the above characters from the social life of the affluence (Lamang and the politicians) in Keti community as noted in Table 4.4. This also reflects that even in such rural setting, binaries exist in term of characterization, thoughts, development, position, etc.

The writer leads the reader into a world full of binaries of various meaning. For instance, the twins are confronted with issues beyond their imaginations, and their different experiences to portray the symbol of imbalance in life. What the character of Mamo lacks is complemented in the character of Lamamo. Also, the deployment of twins as the central characters is evident of the writer's view that life is composed of two or more opposite sides as stated in Table 4.2. This phenomenon of opposites raises the discourse on the features of structuralism. In structuralism, issues, concepts, ideas are usually analysed in various ways, thereby enhancing continuity and newness of ideas and thoughts. In the novel, the author contends that:

how do you distinguish **good** from **bad**...the difficulty lies not in **new** ideas, but in escaping from **old** ones...the truth is complex and various. Exclusion is never the answer. It is what gives rise to fascism and all sorts of racial and religious fundamentalism. We are **pure**, you are **not**; we are **superior**, you are **inferior**...Uncle Iliya was also a lover of poetry, and among the books Mamo took home from his office would be a few poetry collections, from Dennis Brutus to Wole Soyinka to Okotp' Bitek to Agostino Neto to Leopold Senghor to Kofi Awoonor to Christopher Okigbo. He became particularly captivated by

Okigbo when he found out how the poet had thrown away his poetic career to become a soldier in the Biafran army, and how he had died at the front...(emphasis mine) (*Measuring Time* 2006:83-85)

Habila's statements above indicate life in its binaries. The instances of good and bad, new and old, pure and impure, and superior and inferior are some of the channels through which the writer contributes to the structuralist thinking unwittingly. In other words, nothing is definite; there is always the other side to everything.

There is also the capacity to distinguish the various levels of meanings, the author compares the Keti community to other communities, in terms of social/individual developments, structural achievements, and growth. This is further developed as most characters in Keti Community fail to live up to expectations, in contrast to urban dwellers with viable infrastructure. It appears that social backwardness in the community of Keti negatively affects the individual efforts and desire to grow and become resourceful. The author paints a scenario where the privileged few in the community subjugate the majority of the poor. The politicians, for instance, represent the object of force, oppressing the masses and less privileged in the society to accomplish their aims and thereafter abandon them as soon as their desires are achieved. In this regard, when the elections are over, they eventually become the casualties of electoral violence. The dehumanization of the masses is captured in the novel through the voice of Uncle Iliya in this way:

What do these idiots know about general standards when they send their kids to private schools in London and America...In his ramblings, he tried to make sense of life and its unfairness...“Let me explain, for those of you who don't know how the school is sponsored. The twelve clans contribute voluntarily whatever they can at the end of the year – our sons and daughters working in the cities send money every year to the clan elders, who then hand over the money to me. That is how we pay your salaries. Sometimes, at very difficult moments, I go from house to house, from family to family, soliciting for contributions. More than once special offerings have been made for us at the church. For the past couple of years I have been trying to get the local government to give a

hand, but up to now we've only had promises. And now the ministry wants to finally shut us down"... (*Measuring Time* 2006:88-111)

Uncle Iliya laments the devastating situation in Keti community, ranging from inadequate funding to finance the community schools and its closure. Habila uses Uncle Iliya as his mouthpiece and Mamo as the central character to comment on social problems such as education and the questionable attitude of politicians in power. It is through the experiences of Uncle Iliya that the writer expresses the mixed feelings in the community. As such, the significance of the two characters is essential in the novel as revealed in Table 4.4. At a point, Mamo laments thus, 'do you sometimes feel like there's this big sack you want to carry, and you know you can carry it, only it has no handle' (p. 114). The burden is heavy on the community and there are no signs that it would be over soon. Even the handful kind-hearted ones cannot affect any tangible change because such problem requires the attention of well-to-do individuals in the community. Such is the dilemma in Keti. Such that the villages continue to wallow in the filthy plains of poverty, joblessness, failed government, failing national structures and institutions and empty promise of a better future by political leaders in the community. The writer rhetorically asks the reason behind the continuous and significant decline in the standard of education particularly in the rural areas. Habila prepares the reader's mind to the marginalization faced in the rural areas, their social life in complete disarray.

The third generation of Nigerian writers as well as their predecessors and successors should be appreciated for their social commitment. According to Chinweizu (1975:78-79), 'The function of the artist in Africa, in keeping with our traditions and needs, demands that the writer, as a public voice, assume a responsibility to reflect public concerns in his writing...because in Africa we recognise commitment as mandatory of the artist'. This view is demonstrated in Habila's reliance on magical realism and the neglect of chronological coherence which fosters

his aesthetics. Arguing in this direction, Egejuru (1980:10) states that: ‘The novel is the dominant genre in African literature even though most writers agree that it is not the best vehicle to reach the African people. There are several reasons more novels are written than any other literary form. The novel is “a catch-all genre”, one can do so many things with it.

From the foregoing, one can affirm that writing is a committed adventure, particularly in Africa. These should not complicate the fact that Nigerian writers have structurally and otherwise distinguished their writings, to the extent that no reader would confuse a Nigerian novel with a Western one. It would therefore be seen that Habila’s *Measuring Time* is a novel portraying the struggles, hustles, despair, hopes in a Nigerian society, full of uncertainties. This is well presented through the characters as portrayed by the twins, Mamo and Lamamo as in Table A, through which the writer laments the situation in Nigeria. The novel specifically compels the reader to forget the past and to turn to the future, even though uncertain, owing to peoples’ disenchantment, fragmentation, disintegration, quest for wealth, and other dehumanizing indignities of the modern Nigerian society. The future might not be promising, but the writer urges the reader to make personal contributions towards the development of the nation. He therefore urges the individual to engage in making efforts for unity and cohesion.

The writer also condemns the system for failing to admit being responsible for the inexcusable and unjustifiable poverty in the land given the many availability of human and natural resources. He sees Nigeria as an oasis of prosperity if the resources are properly used. He therefore encourages readers through the characters of Mamo and Uncle Iliya to be good ambassadors of the nation, by contributing towards the development and growth of both the rural and urban areas of the country. As far as Habila is concerned, a better society is feasible, unity

could be achieved and cohesion experienced, once individuals contribute their quota no matter how little.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Conclusion

The study has been streamlined and anchored on the structuralist analysis on binary opposites, the primacy of the text, the intertextuality of the selected texts, the interplay of words, conventions and codes to generate meaning. With these, structuralism has enabled a better understanding of the interrelationship of structures, and juxtaposition in the selected texts Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*. Tradition and modernity, appearance and reality, affluent and poverty, life and death, nature and culture, employed and jobless, bitter and sweet, to mention a few are some of the binaries explored in the course of this study. Also, binary opposites develop and build meanings and discussions through contradictions.

The Nigerian society is made of distinct identities. It is therefore natural that it is characterised by varying views, thoughts and opinions. Suffice it to say that such differences and contradictions in the writings of the selected authors are ingrained under some courses of unification and growth for the society. It is therefore significant to emphasize that the selected texts through the framework of structuralism has enhanced meaning and cohesion from the seemingly contradictory situations and characters that exist in the novels.

One of such unification is on the need for a greater individual empowerment and consolidated provision of basic social facilities. This growing consensus is buttressed through the writers' predominant exploration on the various deplorable conditions in the country. The writers note that in spite of divisions, cultural differences, tensions, complexities, contradictions, family disintegration and estrangement, inequality, nepotism, bigotry, unfairness, fragmentation, despondency, and other antagonistic features, the texts attempt to bring unity to issues in order to reflect meaning and coherence at the end.

In addition, the writers posit that any departure from addressing the pressing issues of man's inhumanity to man, insecurity, inequality, insensitive nature of government and lack of social amenities would destabilise the country. The writers observe that while change is fundamental, the quest for a functional Nigeria must be upheld vehemently. The authors envisage a Nigeria of greatness. For instance, Iyayi's *Violence* critically urges the populace to revolt against the system. Some of the ways of revolting against the system include insisting on change by voting wisely and condemning every iota of corrupt activities.

Essentially, the writers promulgate a functional Nigeria. Change is needed for a better society. Change to maximize the resources available, to capture the social realities, exchange ideas, interact with one another and recognise the power of unification toward building a better society. Accordingly, collective struggle to bring about popular government must be enforced. The writers negotiate their writings and come to term with the fact that a functional social order is significant.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, the author redefines contradictions, and relationships of characters and events to one another in the text by consciously juxtaposing two opposites. Achebe emphasizes that the two cultures could coexist side by side. Evident in the critical and conscious elimination of Okonkwo, whose character structure is built around the local tradition. Furthermore, the structuralist principle of linguistics on the arbitrariness of the sign is lucidly captured. This arbitrariness of signs reflects on the unnatural connection between the female character of Ezinma and male character of Nwoye. In other words, between the signifier and signified.

Iyayi's *Violence*, on the other hand, negotiates the relationship of one character and event to another, contradictions and tensions, while unifying them on the need for a change. Practically, the author presents the text as an object whose meaning can be interrelated in terms of its symbolic patterns to the reality in the Nigerian system. The society where social dishonesty is allowed and social provision is

inspired by a few in the society, who turn tax payers' money into private use. The writer explores the power of the populace and challenges the masses to mobilize themselves against self-enrichment, political and social injustices through revolution. According to Iyayi, revolution is the surest way of fixing the system's unpopular policies, non-functional body and an end to the reign of corruption and insensitivity of the government.

Habila's *Measuring Time* achieves unity and coherence through contradiction by negotiating the reality and appearance between modernity and tradition. The writer colourfully paints the differences and divisions in the society through the characters of the twins. There are, notwithstanding, various instances of structural features in the text. The twins are vividly embodied with structural element of modernity and tradition, alienated and fulfilled, culture and nature and individual sacrifices toward building the nation.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the writers arrived at coherent narratives in spite of the contradictions and binarisms prevalent in the respective texts. The selected texts are unified in one single effort to bring transformation and conscientize the reader. These texts have demonstrated distinctively a society with vast possibilities both in human and natural resources. Yet, this capacity is not realized with majority of her citizens living in abject poverty, fragmentation and alienation. The writers also uphold that the success and growth of the individuals and society rely essentially on the prevailing social and political system. In the light of the above discussion, it is clear that a structuralist analysis is vividly applicable to the works of the selected authors.

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