RAL NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN NIGERIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A FORMALIST STUDY OF AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S SELECTED WORKS

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.) IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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APRIL, 2021

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation titled: "Oral Narrative Techniques in Nigerian Children's Literature: A Formalist Study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Works" has been carried out by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other Institution.

_____	_____	_____
Josephine Joshua	Signature	Date

Certification

This dissertation titled "Oral Narrative Techniques in Nigerian Children's Literature: A Formalist Study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Works" by Josephine, JOSHUA meets the regulations governing the award of Masters in English Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Prof. Abubakar Aliyu Liman Chairman, Supervisory Committee	_____ Signature	_____ Date
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Dr. Isyaku Saminu Head of Department	_____ Signature	_____ Date
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband, Dr. Joshua Markus, my children: Jochebed, Jemima, Joy, Jane, and Joseph; grandson, Alvis-Derick and my sons-in-law: Princewill Illiya and Haruna Saleh.

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Abstract

Most critical investigation carried out on Nigerian Children's Literature have either focused on the linguistic elements and thematic interpretation or the identification of structural motifs of the text. However, this dissertation examinesthe elements of oral narrative techniques in selected Nigerian Children's Literature, with special focus on Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narratives to demonstrate the extent to which and to what purpose they have been used in the texts. The research adopts the Formalist literary theory as its tool of analysis with the aim to investigate the effects of the supernatural, the magical, the talking animals and journey quest as fundamental elements of narrative techniques in Akachi's *Asa and the Little Stream* (2004), *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005) and *Fire from the Holy Mountain* (2007). The work also adopts the qualitative research methodology in which non-statistical mode of data collection and analysis is applied, thereby relying on books, journal articles, library materials and internet sources. The study argues that the supernatural, the magical, talking animals, and journey quest are all elements of oral narrative techniques deployed in children's texts to achieve thematic, didactic, structural, and aesthetic purpose(s), not only in Nigerian children's narratives but also in all other forms of literary works. Thus, the research finds that the supernatural, magical, talking animals and journey quest are oral narrative techniques deployed in texts under study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This dissertation surveys Oral Narrative Techniques in Nigerian children's Literature with a special focus on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Works.The study foregrounds the influence of traditional oral forms on contemporary written Nigerian children's literature.Children's literature, long before the era of printing, were in the oral form embedded in folktales, fairy tales, proverbs, fables, myth, etc. (see Hunt, 2002:5, and Adams, 2004:227). This view is supported by Scholes and Kellogg, (1966) as cited in Ong, (2012:138) who maintain that narratives developed from some ancient oral origins into what they are today. The oral origin of narratives, according to critics, "does not immediately disappear by the mere fact of its being in contact with writing, nor does the literature of the oral society disappear because of the introduction of written literature" (Obiechina, 1992:197 and Ong, 2012:9). Obiechina (1992) holds that "a synthesis takes place in which characteristics of the oral culture survive and are absorbed, assimilated, extended, and even reorganized within a new cultural experience". In Obiechina's view, "vital aspects of the oral literature are absorbed into an emerging written literature" (p. 198). It is this composite existence of orality and written narrativity that draws the interest of the present research to express the interplay of orality (oral narrative techniques) and the Nigerian children's literature.

Furthermore, the choice of this study is premised on the arguments that a lot of papers, dissertations, and theses have investigated Nigerian children's literature either from its linguistic, thematic/contextual, or from its recurrent motifs. Little research has been carried out on the

Nigerian children's literature in relation to orality. Although, Akachi Ezeigbo Adimora is a prolific Nigerian children's writer, there are only few critical works on her children's texts. On this backdrop, this study intends to fill the gap by surveying the elements of oral narrative techniques in her selected works.

The choice of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's texts proves to be more difficult because there are other texts out there that might suit this research. However, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's texts stand out as narratives that combine the elements of orality and written narrativity. Besides, Akachi's texts fall within the most preferred and literary compared to most of the children's texts out there. Akachi's children's narratives fall within the binary configuration of old/new, indigenous/foreign, traditional/modern, and oral/written. The concern of this work is to dissect those oral techniques in the written narrativity of Akachi's selected children's texts. In other words, the focus of this research is to examine the creative use to which Nigerian children's writers have deployed the resources of oral tradition in narrative fictions. Before delving further, it is vital to delineate the concept of orality.

The term orature was coined by the Ugandan linguist Pio Zirimu in the early seventies of the last century to counter the tendency to see the arts communicated orally and received aurally as an inferior or a lower rung in the linear development of literature (Wa Thiongo, 2007:4). Wa Thiongo asserts that Zirimu rejects the term oral literature. This brief definition of orature as the use of utterance, as an aesthetic means of expression remains tantalizingly out there, pointing to an oral system of aesthetics that did not need validity from the literary. Whatever the case, in a clearer and lucid manner, Abraham (2013:2) upholds that "oral literature refers to any form of verbal art, which is transmitted orally or delivered by word of mouth". Abraham maintains that

today, these two terms are used interchangeably. Thus, orature of a community remains a window to their traditions while playing the pivotal role of binding the different cultural aspects.

For Liman (2010:132) “Orature in Africa is diverse because of the wealth of its genres and sub-genres.” Ogundokun (2015:181) asserts that proverbs, oral poetry, myths, legends, folktales, music, songs, chants and invocations also form parts of daily life of the African people in which their culture is expressed. Similarly, Wa Thiongo (2007:6) identifies the major generic elements of orature as “riddle, proverb, story, song, poetry, drama and dance - are an imaginative attempt to explain the universe.” Unlike the postulations of Liman, Ogundokun and Wa Thiongo, orature can be categorized into three broad genres:the spoken form (oral narratives), the sung form (poetry), and the performance [drama] (*National Open*, 2009:18).Oral narratives (the spoken form) is divided into: myths, fables, legends, folktales, anecdotes, riddles, proverbs and tongue twisters. This is supported by Liman (2010:132) who posits that “in narrative forms, for example, there are various types of tales, classes of proverbs, riddles, wise sayings and oratory skills.” It is within the context of the oral narrative form of orature that this research explores the oral techniques deployed in Akachi Ezeigbo Adimora’s children’s texts. This focus will link up with the questions of “What is children’s literature?” and “What is Nigerian children’s literature?”

Children's literature first emerged in England as a distinct independent form of literature in the second half of the eighteenth century. In this light, *Pilgrims' Progress* by John Bunyan, now regarded as a landmark in children's books, was published in 1678. It was intended as an allegory of the Christian struggle in overcoming evils and was meant for adults. Children immediately took this book as their own; and equally, they adopted other popular texts such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels.* One of the later children's books in England that shows

a departure from the moral stories to the beginning of modern children's literature was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll first published in 1865 (Apeji, 2009:45).

But the modern era of children's literature in English began with the publication of the story,*Treasure Seekers* in 1899 by E. Nesbit, and children's book publishing only became an industry producing adventure stories as well as school stories in 1920's. The general concern for children's welfare in the 30s led to the appointment of children's editors by publishers and the subsequent establishment in 1936 *of Junior Bookshelf* for the critical review of children's books. In Nigeria, the first two titles to be published were children's books: *First Book of Spelling and Reading Lessons for the OldCalabar Mission Schools* by Reverend Hope Waddell and *Miqua Usuana Esup Nwed* by Samuel Edgerley. Both books were published in Calabar in 1846 (Apeji, 1991:13). This is an indication that western children's literature came much earlier than its Nigerian counterpart.

There have been various attempts by several scholars to pin down the definition of children's literature. Children's literature has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Akuso (2014:13) posits that "subjecting it to a single definition is preposterous" because the problematic of defining children's literature could be traced to the fact that some books meant for adult literature are read by children and vice versa. Some authorities are of the view that children's literature is that which appeals only to the sensibilities of a child (Smith, 1967; Nikolajera, 2005; Hunt, 1995; Mickenberg & Ray, 2003). One major issue with this definition is that it seems to uphold the notion that children's literature can only make sense to no other audience than children. For Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009:235), "Children's literature is designed with children in mind as the primary consumers". This outlook is fair

enough because it focuses on children as the primary audience of the texts in question. Osazee, as cited in Akuso (2014:13), defines children's literature, from African perspective, as:

> That piece of literary creation which draws its matter from the African world view and which is written in a language and style the African child can comprehend. It must be seen as promoting African culture and enables the child or the young adult to understand and appreciate his or her environment better and it must give him or her some pleasure.

The problem with this view is that it excludes the non-African child and it is mainly focused on the African world view (philosophy or belief system), language, style, culture, setting, and delight. Another broader definition of children's literature is the one given by *Encarta Kid Dictionary* (2009) as cited in Akuso (2014:13):

> The writings that are specifically fashioned to appeal to the interest of children. They are meant to be read to them. They include fiction, poetry, biography and history. It also includes: riddles, precepts, fables, legends, myths, folk poems and folktales based on spoken tradition.

This definition, in a way, is holistic in the sense that it covers both the spoken (oral narrative techniques) and written literature with the intent to capture the interest of its primary audience: children. All together these conceptualizations of children's literature point to the fact that whichever angle one may define children's literature, it must come from three broad perspectives which are that of the intended audience; purpose; and style/quality: and the purpose of children's literature cannot be far from entertainment, information, and empathy. The implication of this is that children's literature is not a watered-down version of adult literature neither is it a nostalgic reminiscence of childhood.

For Fayose (1988:6) children's literature is a distinct form of literature written with a specific audience in mind. It comprises essentially those books that children would want to read or books that they enjoy reading. "Children" is used in this context to mean school boys and girls between the ages of four and fourteen years. They are usually in primary and lower secondary

school and are still under the care and control of their parents or other adults. However, some scholars including Fayose, put the age between six and fourteen although most urban children are already in primary school at the age of four. This dissertation is not only interested in the nature of children's literature as a genre in its own right, but it also examines the oral narrative techniques in Nigerian children's literature (this is thoroughly discussed in chapter two), with special focus on Akachi Ezeigbo's children narratives: *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005)

1.2 Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Her Literary Works

Akachi's blog titled *My Biography* (2016), records that she was born and raised in Eastern Nigeria, and now lives in Lagos. She is the first child of Joshua and Christiana Adimora and has five siblings. Raised partially in a rural environment and partially in the city, she combines these two factors, as background and setting for her children's stories and adult fiction. Though born in Eastern Nigeria, she has lived in different parts of the country - East, North and West. She has travelled extensively in Africa, Europe and the USA. Akachi obtained her Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Masters (MA) degrees in English from the University of Lagos and her PhD from the University of Ibadan, in Nigeria. She also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the University of Lagos. A lecturer, writer, novelist, critic, essayist, journalist, and administrator, she was appointed a Professor of English at the University of Lagos in 1999. She has taught in the Department of English, since 1981. She was head of the English Department in 1997 and 1998, from 2002-2005, and 2008-2009 respectively.

In Ogunyemi's (2013:347) account of Akachi Ezeigbo, he submits that her works cut across creative and critical works. According to Ogunyemi, she attempts a survey into the

prospects and problems associated with children's literature in Nigeria. She aligns herself with the positions of many renowned scholars such as Emeyonu and Nnolim the *Iroko* of African Literature. It is worthy of emulation, according to Ogunyemi, that Ezeigbo probes into what children's literature encapsulates, she opines that 'the literature under discussion concerns children between 7 and 12 years' and this 'genre of children's literature include folktales, fiction, drama, poetry, pictures books, fantasy, and fairy tales (p.347). In the same vein, Nwachukwu-Agbada, (2011:87) asserts that Ezeigbo has written pieces of creative writing even in her secondary school days but we never got to meet her as a writer until well into her forties, that was in the early 1990s when she had become a Senior Lecturer in the English Department of the University of Lagos.

In other words, she went into creative writing more or less as a specialist in literature and must have allowed her theoretical and practical knowledge of literary techniques to have a bearing on her writing. Combining her creative writing with her traditional skills as a critic, her prose works come to us virtually 'well-made'. Currently, a full professor, she has, apart from a copious publication of critical essays, chapters and books, and poems in various journals, three collections of short stories, three children's books and four full-length novels, the first three being a trilogy. Amongst her literary oeuvres are: *Echoes in the Mud (1996), Children of the Eagle (2005) The Last of the Strong Ones (1996), Cloud and Other Poems for Children (2009), Waiting for Dawn (2010), Barmaid and the Witches of Izunga (2010), Trafficked (2008), The Burried Treasure (1992), Snake Child and the Star Baby (2006), Zoba and His Gang (2009), Ako the Storyteller (2009), Hands that Crush Stone (2010), Whisker the Brave Cat (2005), Alani the Trouble Maker and Other Stories (2003), Asa and the Little Stream (2004), Gender Issues in Nigeria (1996), Roses and Bullets (2011), Rhythms of Life (1992), Rituals and Departures*

(1992), My Cousin Sammy (2007), and *Houses of Symbols (2001).* Akachi's children's texts, whose target audience ranges between the ages of 9 and 12, are chosen for the analysis of this research work because they areimbued with oral narrative content such as myths, legends, folk-tales, fairy tales and fables, much more than other children's texts. Most scholars have dwelt more on her adult texts and have given less attention to her children's narratives. Consequently, this study is a departure from other works on Akachi because its critical objective is centered on oral narrative technique deployed in her children's texts. Thus, this work bridges existing literary gap by extending the field of oral narrative criticism to Akachi children's literary texts.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Studies have shown that Nigerian literary institutions have ignored and neglected children's literature both in terms of the need to produce them and the necessity to give them the critical reception they duly deserve (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, 2009:12). Although, several critical investigations have been carried out on Nigerian Children's Literature, most of them are focused on the linguistic elements, contextual/thematic interpretations, and identifications of structural motifs. There are limited works on the examination of the oral narrative elements in Nigerian children's narrative fictions. As a result, this study intends to fill this gap by delineating the elements of oral narrative techniques in selected Nigerian children's literature, with special focus on Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narratives: *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005) to determine the ends to which they have been deployed. Thus the research is premised on the propositions that:

- There are oral narrative techniques deployed in some Nigerian children's literature.

- Oral narrative techniques can be traced in some of Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narrative texts.
- The formalist critical poetics can be used as a viable critical tool for analyzing elements of oral narrative techniques in Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narrative texts to demonstrate the creative use to which Akachi has put the resources of oral tradition in her Nigerian children's narrative fictions.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the elements of oral narrative techniques in selected Nigerian children's literature, with special focus on Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narrative texts as utilized in *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005) to show the extent and purposes of their applications. These narratives are not only regarded by this research as depictions of the functionality of Nigerian oral tradition in particular, but as representations of the aesthetics of African oral tradition in general. African, and by implication Nigerian children's literature contains in itself such aspects of orality as riddles, fables, legends, myths, and folktales based on spoken tradition. Thereby, signifying that children's literature borrows elements from the oral tradition of its place of origin. In the light of this, the specific objectives of this research are:

- To demonstrate that some Nigerian children's literary narratives are embedded with peculiar elements of Nigerian oral narrative techniques which advance the narrative mode of the texts.

- To illustrate that some of Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narratives, either for thematic, structural or aesthetic functions, are laced with elements of oral narrative techniques which can be critically identified and analyzed.
- To show that the formalist poetics can be deployed as a viable critical tool for the analysis of the texts understudy so as to uncover the interplay of orality in the Nigerian children's narrative texts.

1.5 Justification of the Study

Most studies on children's texts focus on the written techniques or the contextual aspect of the written form of the children's texts while less attention is paid on the oral narrative style of these texts. For instance, Ashimole (1992), in her work "Nigerian children's literature and the Challenges of Social Change" focuses on Nigerian children's literature pitted against other social realities, especially the electronic mass media because of its influence in the lives of Nigerian children. In her conclusion, she argues that children's literature in Nigeria should be characterized by blatant glamour, professional and attractive packaging of practically everything in order to attract consumers patronage. This is because for Ashimole, "when the chips are down, children will always capitulate to the most captivating". As it is clearly seen, the study only touches on the external properties of children's literature, and pays no attention to the internal characteristics of children's texts of which orality is a part.

Furthermore, Ogu (1992), in his paper "Creativity and Children's Literature" is interested in literature as an instrument for fostering creativity in children. He views the writer as teacher who through his literary creation helps to develop the creative potentials of the child. In his conclusion, he argues that children's literature must aim at destroying the tendency to be part of an amorphous supergang. It must aim at extricating kids from the entrapments of collectivism. One thing that is obvious in this postulation is that children's literature is seen as the function of creativity. It is therefore viewed from the contextual perspective rather than the textual. In the light of this, the present dissertation is very significant as it bridges an obvious gap by exploring the oral narrative techniques in selected Nigerian children's literature, with particular attention to Adimora Akachi-Ezeigbo' children's narrative texts:*Asa and the Little Stream (2004),The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star*

Baby (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006),*Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005) and *Fire from the Holy Mountain* (2007) to demonstrate the effects of oral narrative techniques in the selected texts, alongside understanding the child's relationship to language either in the oral or the written form.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research investigates the oral narrative techniques inselected Nigerian children's literature with special attention to the primary texts of Adimora Akachi-Ezeigbo's children's narratives:*Asa and the Little Stream (2004),The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005) and *Fire from the Holy Mountain* (2007). The study is hinged on the orality of Nigerian children's narratives with the view to survey the aesthetic and thematic functions of oral narrative techniques in the texts understudy. The study largely draws from secondary materials such as *Calabar Studies in African Literature: Children and Literature in Africa* edited by Ernest N. Emenyonu, *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* by Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, *Representing Africa in Children's Literature: Old and New Ways of Seeing* by Vivian Yenka-Agbaw as frameworks that give insight into the connection between the thematic and aesthetic functions of oral narrative techniques and children's literature.

As earlier mentioned, the choice of Akachi Ezeigbo Adimora as a writer is informed by the fact that she is not only a prolific writer of children's texts but her works falls within the most literary and contemporary of Nigerian children's literature of the this generation. Her selected children's narrative texts are chosen because they stand out as narratives that combine the elements of orality much more than most of the contemporary Nigerian children's narrative texts.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research adopts the qualitative methodology which is anchored on "descriptive data – people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVoult, 2016). The research approach is void of numbers or statistical procedures but it is highly dependent on non-quantitative or non-statistical modes of data collection and analysis (Prasad & Prasad, 2002, as cited in Klenke, 2008). Its primary sources are Akachi Ezeigbo's children's narrative texts: *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005). While the secondary sources include books, journals, articles, library materials, and internet sources that cover the key variables of the study, using the formalist poetics as a viable critical tool for the analysis of the texts understudy to highlight the interplay of orality in the Nigerian children's narrative texts.

1.8 Organization of Chapters

This study is organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter one situates the research within a broader context of related key variables of the study. It has background to the study, statement of research problem, aim and objectives of the research, justification or significant of the study, methodology and organization of chapters. Chapter two consists of two parts, namely: Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework of the research. Chapter three investigates the use of oral narrative techniques in *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005) to demonstrate the extent to which they have been deployed, and to what purpose, while chapter four explores the use of other oral narrative techniques in *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*

(2005) to illustrate how the elements of oral narrative techniques have been used in the selected texts. Finally, chapter five is the conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

As earlier stated in the introductory chapter, this research examines the elements of oral narrative techniques in Nigerian Children's Literature with a special focus on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected children's texts. As can be seen from its title, this chapter is divided into two: the first part is the literature review which offers the historical overview of children's literature in ancient civilizations, in Africa, and Nigeria, alongside a review of writers, review of critical works on Nigerian Children's literature; and empirical works on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's literary works in general. The second part of the chapter expounds on the formalist literary theory as the theoretical framework upon whose assumptions and tenets the study draws insights for the analysis of the selected texts. This chapter therefore aims to provide the historical background, describe related research in the field understudy, and discuss the relevant theory which underpins the research work. This shows how the present study extends and addresses gaps in the previous works in Nigerian children's literature in general and Akachi's children's texts in particular.

2.2 Literature Review: Perspectives of Children's Literature

Children's literature, before the era of printing were in the oral form manifested in folktales, fairy tales, poetry, advice, proverbs, fables, adventure and school stories (Hunt, 2002:5, and Adams, 2004:227). The earliest extant children's text from Sumer, according to Adams, dates back to 2400 BC. There were major children's texts from the Sumerian Renaissance, ushered in by the Third Dynasty of Ur in 2112 BC. Citing examples of these children's texts, Adams submits that a sixty-three-line patriotic hymn, 'Lipit-estar, King of Justice, Wisdom and Learning', proverbs, and hymns are a beginner's text that covers Sumerian cuneiform signs,

different sentence patterns, stylistic features and phraseology exist on the most elementary level (Adams, 2004:227).

Another children's literature is the Egyptian "Instructions" which is the equivalent of the proverb texts used by Mesopotamian elementary school children. In this uniquely Egyptian literary form, according to Erman (1923: 55) as cited in Adams (2004:229), a father instructs his son by means of a series of maxims strung together in more or less logical order, some instructions more likely to be a part of the schoolboy curriculum than others. Erman states that the oldest extant is the *Instruction of Hardjedef*, which was a work of the Fifth Dynasty, *c*. 2450–2300 BC. And the best known and most popular of the Old Kingdom Instructions is the *Instructionof Ptah-Hotep* (*c*. 2200 BC), still used as a schoolbook in the Eighteenth Dynasty, 1546–1085 BC.

The implication of this is that the ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians had children's literature which weretaken from the oral culture (proverbs and fables), borrowed from adult literature (the literary debates) or created particularly for their edification (the school stories). It is in this regard that most scholars classify this literature within the genre of 'wisdom literature' because of its didactic content (Adams, 2004:227).

These genres and some narrative themes from the children's texts of Mesopotamia and Egyptalso became a part of the Ancient Greek educational enterprise. For example, in Greece, according to Adams, boys did not go to school before the age of seven and spent their early childhoodplaying games and listening to lullabies and stories: fables, myths, legends, and tales about talking animals, witches and wizards. Such stories were part of the many religious rites, particularly choral performances of the Homeric poems (in which children of both sexesparticipated), and became the material, particularly fables, out of which writing exercises

were created later in the curriculum (p.232). Thus, children in Greece after being exposed to myth and legends in written form in the poetry of Homer, Alcman, Callinus, Pindar, Solon, Theogenis and Tyrtaeus, they were asked to summarise or expand them in their own words, checked by the teacher, recited aloud by the class, and finally read aloud by the individual student. There was no silent reading in Grecian children's literature.

In the Hellenistic period, Romance became the primary children's literary genre because children were said to enjoy reading much more than any other one (Adams, 2004:232). Heiserman, (1977:114) argues that Greek romances are "Egyptians in origin and character". One of the striking characteristics of these romances is the use of youthful protagonists, in early adolescence, who are in love. According to Adams, "after a series of exciting and often improbable adventures that involve magic, travel, captivity, shipwreck, and so on, the protagonists are allowed by their parents to marry. The language is straightforward" (p. 232). Adams identifies the Greek *AlexanderRomance* or *The Life and Deeds of Alexander*, usually referred to as Pseudo-Callisthenes, as one of the most important romance for children's literature. Two other important children's texts in this period, according to Mo and Shen (1999:18), are the "Indian *Fables of Bidpai*, stemming from the *Panchatantra*, and a part of the canon of Confucianism, the Chinese *The Classic of Filial Piety* and its later supplement *The TwentyFour Examples of Filial Piety"*. Adams is of the view that "the *Panchatantra*, belonging to the Mirror for Princes genre, and its derivatives, have a complex history. Perhaps a product of the Vedic period (after 1500 BC), its actual age is unknown because the original Sanskrit version has been lost" (p. 233). The *Panchatantra,* according to Adams, belongs to the Vedic period, i.e., 1500 BC.

Roman children's literature was a product of dual curriculum, Greek/Hellinistic and the Latin (Pomeroy 1975: 170). Thus, Bonner (1977: 172–6), as cited in Adams Adams (2004:234), observes that for several centuries, the major beginning text in Latin was the earliest Roman legal

code, *The Twelve Tables* (*c*. 450 BC), which children were forced to memorise and recite. Part of the Latin and Greek curriculum were collections of maxims, drawn from Greek and Latin sources and apparently put together especially for children; the best known is that of Publilius Syrus. The so-called *Distichs of Cato,* collection of anecdotes and vignettes primarily from Greek and Roman history and written under Tiberius (AD 14–37), Valerius Maximus's, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, entered the Latin curriculum and became an educational staple in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. A major part of the primary curriculum were books of prose fables illustrated in colour in both Greek and in Latin (Bonner 1977: 178 as cited in Adams, 2004:234).

Among the Middle Ages children, whether taught at home by parents or tutors or in school taught by clergy, the method remained the same, instead of learning the Sumerian hymn, an Egyptian model letter, Greek passages from Homer or the Roman *Twelve Tables*, children memorised the Paternoster, the Creed and part of the Psalter, they were made to learn the *Distichs of Cato,* the *Fables of Avianus*, a scaled-down Latin version of the *Iliad*, and aversion of Donatus, a grammar book in question-and-answer format (Adams 1998: 9-10). Religious texts, such as Claudius Marius Victor's fifth-century paraphrase of Genesis, *Alethia,* and the narratives taken from the Vulgate by Peter Comestor in his best-selling *Historia Scholastica*, constitutes another important genre of children's literature which was written for the training of the young (Bottigheimer 1996: 14–23).

Another important children's literary text in the Middle Ages is"the ancient tradition of illustrated fables for children is the *Medici Aesop,* an illuminated collection of fables probably commissioned by the tutor of the eight-year-old Piero de Medici, Angelo Poliziano, about 1480" (Aesop 1989).In discussing "Texts in English Used by Children, 1550-1800", Evans (2004:239) states that "children's book publishing in English began in earnest in 1744, when John Newbery issued *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book".* Townsend (1996: 668) corroborates this when he submits that, "The modern history of children's books in Britain is commonly regarded as beginning in the 1740s, when John Newbery opened a shop in London and began to publish and sell books for 'little masters and misses' ".

Evans is of the view that children's literature in the mid-eighteenth century were far from light-hearted; they were a mixture of courtesy books, schoolbooks and religious texts. Noting that substantial real books for the education of well-to-do children included the books of courtesy like *Stans Puer ad Mensam* (*c*. 1479) and Hugh Rhodes's *Booke ofNurture* (*c*. 1545), and schoolbooks on Latin and Greek grammars, spelling books, arithmetic books and so forth, provided the mainstay of reading for older schoolchildren, Evans also observes not all of the schoolbooks used by children in this early period were therefore lacking in imaginative stimulus. The old fables, especially the compilation known as *Aesop's Fables*which was first printed in English by Caxton in 1484, were also much used in schools. Thus, Evans states that:

> One of the earliest English translators was Robert Henryson, whose version has survived in an edition published in 1570; John Brinsley produced another translation in 1624 and in 1692 Roger L'Estrange provided one of the most comprehensive renditions in amagnificent collection of 500 tales from Phaedrus, Avian and La Fontaine, as well as 'Aesop'. (p. 241)

This suggests that the evolution of Aesop from a collection of somewhat florid moral fables to the neat tales published by Newbery exemplifies the paradox that the history of

children's

literature has always been characterized by continuity mixed with far-reaching change.

Thus, Evans (2004) notes that in Thomas White's *A Little Book for Little Children* (*c*. 1660), readers are warned to "read no ballads and foolish books, but a Bible, and the Plainmans pathway to Heaven". Children were exhorted not only to read scripture; they were also directed to adult devotional books. Arthur Dent's *The Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven; wherein every man may clearelysee whether he shall be saved or damned* (1610) was an important Puritan text and was used by children beside other classics such as John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563), usually known as the *Book of Martyrs*. An even more significant book, designed specifically for children and which continued in publication into the nineteenth century, was James Janeway's *A Token for Children:Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths ofSeveral Young Children*. Published in two parts between 1671 and 1672, the book contains moral tales of young children who died young of unspecified illness, or the plague, and who lecture their families and companions for their lax religious observance (p. 241).

Another children literature writer, discussed by Evans, is Abraham Chear. Abraham is identified as one of the most popular of the Puritan writers, whose work was used by many writers. He had his verse published in *A Looking Glass for the Mind* (1672), a book of poems and elegies which went into four editions by 1708. This book, according to Evans, is remarkable only for its popularity; like many others of its kind it was bought by parents seeking to educate their children for a good life and a holy death.

In discussing Benjamin Keach, as one of the most prolific of the Puritan authors, Evans submits that Benjamin's *War with the Devil* (1673), which describes the fight for a young man's soul between Conscience, Truth, the Devil and Christ, was still being published in the mideighteenth century, when it was advertised as "necessary to be read by all Christian families". Another much-read author was Nathaniel Crouch, editor and publisher as well as writer; his pseudonym was 'R.B.' – Richard Burton. *The Young Man's Calling* (1678), *Youth's Divine Pastime* (3rd edn, 1691) and *Winter Evening Entertainments* (1687) were conventional in tone and contained much that was repackaged from other works: riddles, stories, and morals.

Children's writers whose works, in Evans's view, stood above the mediocrity of Puritan religious tracts, are John Bunyan, William Ronksley, and Isaac Watts. Evans illustrates that William Ronksley's work, for example, displayed considerable interest in the child as a reader. His *The Child's Weeks-Work: or, A Little Book so Nicely Suited to theGenius and Capacity of a Little Child ... that it will Infallibly Allure and Lead him on intoa Way of Reading* (1712) was moral in its intention but so well composed with neat rhymes for every day of the week that the child would have undoubtedly been charmed by it. Evans again notes that Isaac Watts also wrote at the turn of the century, at the point when Puritanism was losing some of its ferocity in dealing with children. Like Ronksley, Watts wrote gentle verse; his *Divine Songs attempted in Easie Language for the Use of Children* (1715) continued as a staple of the nursery through to the Victorian period and was lovingly parodied by Carroll in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). In summing up, Evans concludes that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, books for children were becoming more child-oriented: in the tone, the language and the subject matter. While death and damnation were still important concerns, so too were the more prosaic concerns

of family life. Thus, Evans submits that Watts was writing in the Puritan tradition, but his verse was accessible to everyone, and remained a staple of schoolroom and nursery for two centuries.

Tenniel (n.d:5) posits that, in the later part of 19th century, children in the English-speaking world read and enjoyed adult novels, such as *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1719), *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift, 1726), *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Wyss, 1812), *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 1843), and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Verne, 1864). Thus, from the above historical perspective, it is clear that children's literature has its origin in the oral tradition and the earliest books written for children were entirely religious, instructional, or for the improvement of their morals and manners. This research, away from the western children's texts, draws attention to the oral narrative dimension of Nigerian Children's literature with a special attention to Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected children's literary texts, to demonstrate the extent to which, and to what effects oral narrative techniques have been deployed in them. It is in this regard that the next section of the present study explores the historiography of Nigerian children's literature.

2.2.1 African Children's Literature

The history of Nigerian children's literature in particular cannot be adequately dealt with without making reference to African children's literature in general. Heale (1996: 786), in his article, "Africa: English-Africa", argues that the history of African children's literature can best be discussed in three phases: original identity; dominant colonization; and an original oral tradition of story-telling; the arrival of literacy and literature from abroad; and the growth (or not) of a new indigenous youth literature. In his comprehensive survey of the history of English-speaking African children's literature, Heale explains that British colonialists' quest for empire brought the English language to such West African countries as Nigeria and Ghana, to Kenya, Uganda

and Tanzania in the east, and to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa in the south. As a result, schools were British-run, books were printed in Britain, and the benevolent white man knew best. Heale asserts that the first indigenous publishing for children was ardently didactic. So early literature for African children was confined to moralistic primers with a few safe folk-tales with a strong (inserted) moral flavour.

According to Schmidt (1981:23), the British colonialist naturally brought with them English education. "Fiction was intended to aid Christianisation and the teaching of literacy". Into the missionary school came the 'English reader' book preaching the benefits of European lifestyle and values. All were written and published overseas. Heale argues that only a few authors wrote from their brief experiences of Africa. Among these, he mentions Sir Henry Rider Haggard, whose *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) was partly inspired by his visit to the Sudwala caves in South Africa.

On the contrary, Schimidt (1981:84) submits that many authors stereotyped Africa in which the residents were "sometimes described as hideously scarified, naked, superstitious, bloodthirsty, and un-changing in their ways, and are called vagabonds, rascals, pagans, cannibals, ignorant brutes and 'niggers' ". Better informed writers, perhaps after a tour of duty in Colonial Africa, created kinder images of the inhabitants either as noble savages or dutiful servants.

Heale points out that the only genuine indigenous African story-telling to reach European readers was in the field of animal legend. He claims that there still remains a world interest in quaint folk-tale. So the Ashanti tales from Ghana by Peggy Appiah (for example, *The Pineapple Child*(1969)), the Nigerian folk-tales retold by Chinua Achebe (for example, *How the Leopard got his Claws* (1972)), and the Swazi, Zulu and Xhosa tales collected in Southern Africa

by Phyllis Savory (for example, *The Best of African Folklore* (1988)) have retained their popularity – as well as capturing in print some products of the dying oral tradition.

The major argument of Heale in this work is that people working with African children today can be in little doubt of the need for relevant local material. In his view, if books reflect a world that is foreign to children, then the concept of reading (and enjoying) books must also be foreign. Heale maintains that Sheer 'book love' is not the only target of African authors, however. In the same vein, Odaga (1988:32) emphasizes the point that "In Kenya, one of the writer's tasks is to decolonise the thinking of his readers…. He tries to make them discover and recover their dignity and honour which they had lost during colonial suppression".

Heale notes that the production of imaginative indigenous fiction, divorced from the textbook or school reader field, has emerged in appreciable quantity only in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and (very recently) Namibia. According to Heale, efforts there have begun to be supplemented by international publishers who produce an 'African' series of stories featuring black boys and girls in genuine localized adventures. Such series as the Heinemann Junior African Writers Series (JAWS) or the Macmillan English Language Teaching Services (MELTS) offer the advantage of an Africa-wide readership to indigenous authors. In this way, a young reader in (say) Kenya can meet stories about children in west or southern Africa.

Heale also notes that the difficulty in marketing books with a small print to a huge continent has been solved to a certain degree by a sponsored, non-profit organization; African Books Collective (in Oxford, England) which warehouses and publicizes books from Africa. Among the children's section of their Catalogue No. 4, 1992, are five publishers fromNigeria, and one each from Kenya, Ghana and South Africa.

2.2.2 The Nigerian Children's Literature

For some time now Nigerian children's literature has gained increased attention as a literature in its own right (Wagner, 1976). Thus, this section of the present research discusses Nigerian children's literature using Heale's (1996: 786) three phases of African literature which can be aptly applied to the Nigerian situation. These phases are first, the original identity of oral tradition of story-telling; second, the dominant colonization that brought about the arrival of literacy and literature from abroad; and finally, the growth (or not) of a new indigenous children's literature. Wagner (1976) did an excellent job on these phases in the article entitled, "Nigerian Children's Books: An Evaluation" and this study borrows heavily from it.

In the first phase, Wagner posits that Nigerian children's literature was heavily oral in nature. Here, it provides Nigerian children with folktales, riddles, lullabies, and songs, and rhymes over the centuries. The second phase, which is connected with colonial domination and the arrival of literacy and literature from abroad, led to the establishment of missionary schools. At that time, according to the Nigeria Education Department Annual Report of 1927, the missionaries were also collecting and recording oral literature in Nigeria in addition to their activities of translating Bible stories and textbooks. Although these folktales were notalways specifically collected for children, there is evidence that they were also recorded for use in schools as supplementary readers.

With the establishment of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Wagner asserts that missionaries were faced with the problem of the provision ofbooks for school children. In order to supply the pupils with books and supplementary readers in English, missionaries either wrote these materials themselves or imported them from Great Britain. In some cases, according to Wagner, school books were

printed at the mission presses in Nigeria, such as, C.M.S. Press in Lagos or the Niger Mission Press in Jos.

Creative literature for children in Nigeria flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to Wagner, because of two main reasons. First, because it coincided with the interests in the local languages in West Africa. Secondly, because of the wealth of oral tradition in folktales constituting the natural source from which to collect and to record these tales in the various "vernaculars". Wagner states that at the time, creative literature in English for children existed mainly in the primers and other supplementary readers, which were especially written for Nigerian children to increase their familiarity with the English language.

The above situation led to the third phase of children's literature in Nigeria, that is, the growth of a new indigenous children's literature. This was embedded in the desire to make the curricula more relevant to Nigerian school children. In Wagner's view, educational policies in West Africa have long been associated with British educational systems which required rethought in order to make education more meaningful for African children within their own experienceand culture. Batey's (1953:20) findings of a survey of educational policies in West Africa, reveals that in the primary school curriculum, too much attention was paid to British primary school tradition and too little to the African environment. At the secondary school level, the report submits that school curricula in West Africa were far more dominated by the Cambridge School Certificate Examination than in a given English grammar school.

A decade later, Macmillan (1963:157) maintains that the introduction of African texts into the literature syllabus was felt particularly necessary in order to make the students realize that "there is a small but rapidly growing body of African writing worthy of serious study and informed criticism."Resultantly, contemporary African writing should be included. According to

the Macmillan's report, it was decided that the following categories of literature be included: (1) significant works by African writers; (2) non-African literature accessible to African students by reasons of themes, or situation or attitudes of mind within the student's range of experience and comprehension; (3) a selection of established and recognized classics. In the long run, the influenceof making school syallabi more relevant to the needs of Nigerian school children has affected the production of children's literature at two levels. It has encouraged the publication of more children's books with recognizable and relevant themes, such as folktales, adventure and school stories. It has also encouraged the production of books supporting the primary and secondary school syllabi more directly, such as biographies of Nigerian personalities and anthologies of poetry.

Wagner (1976) emphasizes that Nigerian writers and illustrators played an important role in the production of Nigerian children's books as the creative force behind them. He further maintains that these writers were mostly concerned with the preservation of the cultural heritage of Nigeria for present and future generations. Writers saw themselves responsible for recording the cultural heritage of Nigeria. Thus, the popularity of folktales as a theme for their stories is therefore a conscious effort on their part to preserve oral tradition. He thus points out that a few of Nigerian children's writers who were well-known for their writing outside of children's literature include Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Nkem Nwankwo.

Heale (1996:789) states that the pioneer series in Nigerian children's literature is the African Reader's Library, where readers encounter such redeeming adventures as *Akpan and the Smugglers* (1996)by Rosemary Uwemedimo in which a boy struggling to restore his family's good name, receives a large reward for exposing a smuggling syndicate which saves his family from poverty *and* pays his own school fees. Heale also identifies Cyprian Ekwensi as one of the

most prolific children's writer in Nigeria. His books include *The Drummer Boy* (1960) which is about a blind boy in modern Nigeria, *Trouble in Form Six and Juju Rock* (1966) are set in high school, and thedramatic *Samankwe and the Highway Robbers* (1975) concerns the struggle to survive in the days after the Nigerian Civil War. Heale submits that a series of books about *Mr. B* by Ken Saro-Wiwa (1987) reached wide popularity when they were used as the basis of a Nigerian television comedy series *Basi and Company* (1986).

Heale (1996), citing Segun (also a children's writer), observes that although many books of folk-tales have been published including *The Drum and the Flute* by Chinua Achebe, *Stories My Mother Told Me* (1995)by Remi Adedeji, and *The Hunter and the Hen* (1994)by Oladele Taiwo, librarians have found that most children do not read folktales although they enjoy listening to them being told" (p. 790). Note that Akachy Adimora-Ezeigbo, though a children's writer, does not belong to this first generation writers. Akachi is ranked among the third generation children's writer (see Bryce, [2008] in"'Half and Half Children': Third-Generation Women Writers andthe New Nigerian Novel").

2.2.3 Review of Critical Works on Nigerian Children's Literature

There are considerable number of critical works on Nigerian children's literature; however, many of these works are basically concerned with the linguistic elements, contextual (thematic) focus, or the general motifs that run through the Nigerian children's texts. Thus, the postulation of this review is premised on the argument that little or less critical works have given attention to the elements of oral narrative techniques in Nigerian children's literature, especially in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narrative. For instance, Kamalu (2013) in his work, "Metaphor and Education: Exploring the Social Semiotic of Nigerian Children's Literature"examines Nigerian children's literature as a metaphorical construction and processfor a better understanding of our world.Working within the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and Cognitive Semantics (CS), Kamalu's work investigates the ideology behind the cognitive use of language and pictures (illustrations) in Olabisi*Are's Home of the Brave* (2000) (HOB henceforth) and Akachi Adimora- Ezeigbo's *Fire from the Holy Mountain*(2007)(FHM henceforth).

In Kamalu's view, the texts were purposively selectedbecause they embody certain commonality in their ideological and aesthetic orientation. It is this that makes his work tofocus on how the rhetoric of metaphorization enabled the writers to frame and express certain ideologicalpositions about the Nigerian situation. For Kamalu, children's literature is mainly didactic in orientation because it takes upon itself the burden of teaching social, political and moral lessons. Thus, his concluding argument is that semiotic regimes such as metaphor enables art to provide a better understanding of human situations and actions.

Moving away from the semiotic regimes of children's text, Daniel (2014) in the work titled, "Children Literature: A Potent Tool in the Hands of Absentee Parent(s)"discusses the tangible role children literature can play in the socialisation process. He specifically focuses on

the way the absentee parent(s) can effectively use children literature as a tool of child training. Daniel's work outlines the nature of children literature as it exists in the Nigerian society; it identifies some important techniques such as didacticism, journey motif, child abuse, characterisation, etc. which writers use to convey their messages in Nigerian children literature; and it also identifies how writers use aesthetics to attract, keep and teach children the needed morality in the society. Daniel's work is suggestive of the fact that children literature can be a more effective arm of our educational and socialisation agent of development for the children. Daniel is of the view that it is only when we allow our children to be children and we moderate their growth can we have children literature becoming effective in its relevance to our children.

Still within the contextual discourse of children's literature like Daniel, Haruna-Banke (2014), in her work, *Gender Stereotype and Children's Literature inNigeria: A Study of Onuora Nzekwu and MichaelCrowder's Eze Goes to School, Chinua Achebe'sChike and the River, Eddie Iroh's Without A SilverSpoon and Mai Nasara's The Missing Clock*,contends that a huge imbalance exist in the presentation of gender in children's literature. Using feminist literary approach, Haruna-Banke argues that despite the positive attributes that typify children's literature in Nigeria, the literature is gender biased. She posits that gender stereotypes in children's literature in Nigeria enhance gender inequality by imparting notions that privilege masculinity and downgrade femininity, and that gender bias exist in content, language, and pictures in a number of children's literatures and reinforces the building and maintaining of biases towards the female genders. Haruna-Banke's dissertation, therefore, analyses imbalance in gender relations in selected children's books in Nigeria. In doing this, the study uses the following as basis for discourse: underrepresentation of the female in language, content and pictures leading to gender inequality, and the effect of stereotype on the choices children make.

Haruna-Banke's concluding argument is that children's literature in Nigeria is gender biased and displays imbalances in the representation of textual characters and as a result there exist the absence of dynamic and positive female characters in the literature produced for the younger ones.

Although from a contextual approach to children's texts as Haruna-Banke's work, Ateequ (n.d.) in his work, *Using Children's Literature in the Teaching of Moral Education inNigerian Primary Schools,* does not use the same theoretical framework as Haruna-Banke did. Ateequ, in his attempt to emphasize the importance of children's literature in building character education in children, highlights the importance of Information Communication Technology and its implications in children's moral upbringing. For Ateequ, Information Communication Technology (ICT), though a necessary evil, is good in teaching moral education. He cautioned that the stake-holders of character education must watch the type of literature and other information children get from ICT. Ateequ's argument therefore is that ICT is a viable tool for better teaching moral education in our primary and secondary schools.

Like Ateequ, Mode (2015) discusses children's literature in relation to Education. However, his work, "Children Literature Education in Nigeria and the Challenges of Readership" x-rays children's literature and the challenges of its teaching and readership in Nigeria. Mode's work concludes that children's literature education and readership help in developing and shaping the personality of the child in the society. In the same vein, Festus (2015) in an article titled, "A Survey of Children Literature as the Bedrock for theNigerian Child Education and Cultural Change", surveys on children literature as the bedrock of the Nigerian child education and cultural change. Using the survey of inferential research design, Festus studies large population through a representative sample with the view of generalizing the result to the larger

population. The research demonstrates that the consolidation of the role of children's literature produces benefits to the development of language, and thus literacy; and that it enhances critical as well in children as well.

A critical work that is a shift from the educational value of children's literature is that of Otuburu and Akpan (2016). In "The Journey as Structural and Instrumental Technique inNigerian Children's Fiction", Otuburu and Akpan attempt, through ample textual analysis, to show how the journey is used not only as structural but instructional technique in Nigerian children fiction. The scholars demonstrate that each major character in the stories is created realistically and always placed on a journey in order to convey the morals poignantly. Also through this journey motif, in Otuburu and Akpan's view, the authors have successfully established the relatedness between the physical journey and the journey of life.

In contrast to Otuburu and Akpan's work, Smart (2016) in his thesis titled,*National Consciousness in Postcolonial Nigerian Children's Literature*, highlights the role of locally produced children's written literature for ages six to fourteen in postcolonial Nigeria as a catalyst for national transformation in the wake of colonial rule. The objective of the work is to reveal the perceived possibilities and pitfalls contained in Nigerian children's literature (specifically books published between 1960 and 1990), for the promotion of a new national consciousness through the reintegration of traditional values into a contemporary context. To achieve this objective, Smart draws together children's literature written by Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Mabel Segun so as to illustrate the emphasis Nigerian children's book authors writing within the postcolonial moment placed on the concepts of nation and national identity in the aim to refashion the nation.

Unlike the other critics of Nigerian children's literature whose works are primarily concerned with children's fictions, Iwuji (2015) appraises selected children's nature verses drawn across five children's poetry texts. Being a renewed academic and creative inquiry into the field of children's poetry to illuminate its relevance, Iwuji's dissertation makes use of the ecocritical theory as a framework of analysis to highlights the need for a reinvigorated zest in the study of children"s poetry, particularly nature poetry, considering that poetry for children has not enjoyed the popularity of prose. Thus the study appraises nature in selected children's poetry texts of Olajire Olanlokun (*Children's Poetry forPleasure, 2003*), Philip Onuoha (*Songs for my Mother, 2007*), Efe Lovetta Ani (*Elo Poetry, 2004*) and John Sarpong Asiedu (*Sweet Talking Drums, 1996*and *Poetry for the Young Ones, 1991*). In his conclusion, Iwuji establishes among other things that nature holds familiar symbols and images that could interest children to study poetry, and that poems of nature predilection stir the consciousness of children to the safety of their environment.

In summary, this section of the review has evidently shown that most works done on Nigerian children's literature are either on the linguistic elements, thematic/contextual functions, or recurrent motifs of the texts understudy. Thus there are far less or no previous works on oral narrative techniques in Nigerian children's literature which is the main thrust of this research. To explore orality as a narrative technique in Nigerian children's literature, this present work specifically focuses on Akachi Adimorachildren's narrative texts. It is in view of this that the next section of this work reviews critical works on Akachi's literary texts in general.

2.2.4 Empirical Review of Akachi Ezeigbo-Adimora's Works

Although there are many critical works on Akachi's literary texts, the central argument and hypothesis of this review is that there are, however, limited research works on her children's

literary texts. The present study finds that previous research works on Akachi abound much on her adult texts rather than on her children's texts. For instance, Bryce (2008) did a paper on seven novels by women published since 2000 in the article titled, "'Half and Half Children': Third-Generation Women Writers andthe New Nigerian Novel". The texts understudy include *House of Symbols* (2001) by Akachi Ezeigbo; *PurpleHibiscus* (2004) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) by Sefi Atta; *Sky-High Flames* (2005) by Unoma Azuah; *The Icarus Girl (*2005) by Helen Oyeyemi; and *26a* (2006) by Diana Evans. From the critical reading of these texts, Bryce argues that older identities are more of a hindrance than a help to negotiating postcolonial realities. That women's determination to negotiate this reality through fiction is unstoppable, and that they do so in full recognition of the fictions which have preceded them and have, so far, defined the terrain on which articulation can take place.

Bryce is of the view that, rather than contesting or opposing this definition, these women enter into a dialogue that allows them to redefine it, using the terms and techniques of preceding generations while calling into question their interpretation of the past. According to Bryce, though realism is their preferred mode, it is realism that bears the trace of preexisting non-realist modes of expression and belief, however deeply buried. Above all, Bryce argues that it is through these novels that we come to understand the price being paid by the present generation for the failure of the founding fathers and their inheritors. Thus, the concluding argument of Bryce's work is that the fact that more women than ever before are writing, getting published and being read, in Nigeria and outside, means that this time around, the story of Nigeria will not be gendered masculine.

In the same vein, Ladele (2009) in her work, "Reconstructing Identities through Resistance in Postcolonial Women's Writing: A Reading of Ezeigbo's *The Last of the Strong Ones*"explores how African women writers seek to negate the authenticimage of the African woman, as writers, they are compelled to negotiate new sites in which they articulate more viable and acceptable self-images. Ladele's work is articulated in three parts. In its introduction, the paper attempts a definition of the indices of identity that circumscribe the lives of African women especially within the present-day postcolonial matrix. The second part demonstrates the novelist's repudiations of stereotypes and her reconfigurations of women's identities as part of the needful project to recover the distinctive tradition of African female stories (herstories). In the final part, attention is drawn to the areas where women need to further interrogate and construct meaningful identities. The work is suggestive of the view that identity is foundational as it reinforces the possibilities of resistance in the literatures of women.

Similar to Bryce and Ladele who are primarily concerned with the question of women identity, Odoemelam (2011) from the view-point of Liberal Feminism (womanism) examines how women characters are created and developed, particularly female assertiveness and empowerment. In *History, Contemporary Reality and Social Vision: A Study of Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's The Last of TheStrong Ones, House of Symbols* and*Children of The Eagle,* Odoemelam analyses*The Last of the Strong Ones* as a historical text that portrays women as frontline anti-colonialism activists who fought with their teeth and nail alongside their male counterparts to ensure their freedom from every form of oppression and marginalization. And *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* as contemporary novels are embedded with contemporary issues such as pervasiveness of bribery and corruption, religion as a tool of exploitation amongst others which are underscored by the novelist. On the whole, Odoemelam's

work attempts an inter textual analysis of Akachi's trilogy and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, with special emphasis on the interface between feminists and womanist and identifying the borderline that separates them.

Unlike Bryce, Ladele, and Odoemelam whose works on Akachi's fictional texts, Chukwuememka (2011) examines how Akachi's poetry, a peculiar genre of literature, serves as aweapon for social criticism and reformation in the quest to free and purgethe society of certain forms of vices and evils which militate against herpeace and highly expected progress.Chukwuemeka selected the two collections ofpoetry by Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo *Heart Songs*and *Waiting for Dawn*respectively. The study examines how the poet blends and weaves her lines of poetry;harnesses her fountain of poetic ingenuity to criticize, satirize and mock withthe hope of reforming her society and her visions of a new future as aprophetic poet is the crux of the study. Chukwuemeka's research establishes that Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo uses her poetry as a tool for social criticism. Shecriticized and mocked several facets of human lives but with the sole aim of correcting and reforming our society.

In contrast to Chukwuemeka's work on Akachi's poetry, Ogunyemi (2013) surveys Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's "50 Years of Children's Literature in Nigeria: Prospects andProblems" and makes a meta-critical analysis of the trends and generations of writers she portrays. Using narratology as theoretical framework, Ogunyemi argues that the science of fiction is an instrument of portrayal of re-engineering of cultural ethosand the development of the mindset of the children and their exposure to literatures that teach morality.Thus, the paper calls for a concerted effort to develop the children through the imaginative science ofliterature in order to respond positively to the yearnings of globalization. The study concludes that narratological

evaluations of African works, children works and others are significant instruments which lend axiomatic credence to vertical and horizontal relevance in African nationalism.

Similarly, Matthias (2013) through textual analysis, examines Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's artistic response in *Trafficked,* to the experience of Nigerian ladies in the international sex-trade and prostitution. Through characterization, setting and other literary devices, Matthias points out that Akachi dramatizes the nature, form and effect of the sextrade on Nigeria. While socio-economic pressures and the general dislocation in societal values are identified as some fundamental factors that drive some Nigerian youths into the illegal sex trade, Matthias' research shows that humiliation, emotional dislocation and social stigmatization are some negative effects of the phenomenon.

In contrast to Matthias' textual analysis of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked,* Ezeifeka and Ogbazi (2014), who hinged their research work on critical discourse analysis, Halliday's systemic functional grammar, Fairclough's tri-dimensional social theory of discourse and insights from feminism, did a contextual analysis of texts by examining the construction of widowhood in the traditional Igbo society as represented in three texts set in the Igbo culture, namely, two stories from Ifeoma Okoye's *The Trial and Other Stories* entitled "Soul Healers" and "The Trial"; and Akachi Adimorah-Ezeigbo's drama text, *Hands that Crush Stone*. The study rethinks the facet of gender construction through the lens of systemic functional linguistics. Ezeifeka and Ogbazi conclude that the literary texts understudy, though set in apparently enlightened fictional Igbo societies, mirror authentic social practices that need to be critically addressed.

Awa (2015) in her work "Language and Creativity in African Literature: A Stylistic Examination of AkachiAdimora-Ezeigbo's *The Last of the Strong Ones*", applies the techniques

of language to examine the stylistic value of lexico-syntactic devices in Akachi's *The Last of theStrong Ones*. The study aims to demonstrate how Akachi manipulates all the levels of linguistic elements especially lexis, syntax, grammar and African orature so as to make the English language capable of projecting African creative impulse and cultural roots. In her analysis, Awa shows how Akachi employs transliteration, translations, lexical borrowing, linguistic apposition, word coinage, Nigerian English, African orature for Nigerianism, Africaness and literariness. Interestingly, Awa argues that all these distinctive features do not make for limitation or inhibition to the English language or message of the author. Rather, they are extensions and literary innovations to the English language.

Tilting away from the linguistic analysis of Akachi's texts is Olufemi's (2015) "The Place of the Woman in the African Novel: A Study of Akachi Adimora-*Ezeigbo's House of Symbols*". In this paper, Olufemi critically examines the various negative stereotypical perceptions of African male authors and explores the counter-hegemony discourse made by African female authors. Thus, the research makes a critical study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols* in showing the trials and triumph of the female sex in African Society in the patriarchical/religious oppression and the struggle for selfhood despite all limitations by creating a niche for the women in socio-economic development within the African Society. In Olufemi's view, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols* successfully captures the African traditional society; the roles of women in the home and in the society are clearly espoused. Olufemi point out that Akachi, in her text, aims to show that though women are suppressed and oppressed in the society, they contribute immensely to the growth of the society. This suggests that Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo believes women can create a niche for themselves and occupy a special place in the sociopolitical structure of the traditional society.

Another critical work on Akachi's text analyzed from the feminist perspective is Hunsu's (2015) "Redefining Otherness: Writing Fictional (Auto)biography and Centring Female Subjectivity in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*". In this paper, Hunsu argues that femalesubjectivity is a strategy that locates female characters as subjects, narrators, insiders and participants who share their experiences in the novel. For Hunsu, *Children of the Eagle* shows that the centrality of the female narrative voice(s) in determining the course and thematic focus of the novel enables female characters to demonstrate their otherness as a quality and position that makes them resilient, strong, and uncompromising promoters of women's cause against debilitating patriarchal beliefs and systems. Being the speaking subjects also helps them to unpack the underlying trajectories in their development and depiction in the novel. Hunsu therefore concludes that Adimora-Ezeigbo's adoption of this technique in *Children of the Eagle* strengthens the view that placing women as narrator-subjects enables the redefinition of otherness as a favourable concept capable of showing women as critical members of their societies and also a tool for African women writers' to transform the literary scene.

UnlikeHunsu (2015) whose work is on Akachi's adult narrative, Ojo (2017:viii), in her work *Projection of the Girl-Child in Nigerian Children's Literature: A Study of Selected Works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun,* deploys the liberal feminist literary theory to explore new ways to integrate the girl-child into private and public that is devoid of stereotype and under representation. Thus, Ojo's research questions the underline assumption of the projection of girl-child in the Nigerian children‟s literature. The study proceeds on the assumption that children‟s literature is a powerful tool used to create improving social awareness regardingthe girl-child‟s ability and potentials. Thus, the work argues that the girl-child is also

anindispensable being that could contribute toward the positive development of the Nigerian nation.

Overall, this review of previous works on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's literary texts establishes the argument that there are little and limited works on her children's texts. In this regard, this study bridges this existing gap by adopting the Formalist literary theory to survey the elements of oral narrative techniques in selected Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Nigerian children's narrative texts as utilized in *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise* (2006), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2005), *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* (2006), and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005), to demonstrate the extent of their applications and aesthetics values in the texts.

2.3 Formalism as a Theoretical Framework

Formalism, according to literary scholars, emerged in Russia in the years before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and flourished throughout the 1920s (Eagleton, 1996:2, and Habib 2005:602). The major figures of the formalist movement include Victor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Leo Jakubinsky, Boris Eichenbaum, Osip Brik, Yury Tynyanov and many others (Newton, 1997: 1). These formalists developed and contributed to the theory as it is appreciated today. The Formalist, in Eagleton's words "…rejected the quasi-mystical symbolist doctrines which had influenced literary criticism before them, and in a practical, scientific spirit shifted attention to the material reality of the literary text itself" (p. 2). Formalism is the critical approach that seeks to examine the basic features and characteristics that qualify a literary work or writing. Formalism as a literary theory is concerned with examining the 'form' in an isolated entity. The formalists, according to Newton 1997:1):

> […] rejected the unsystematic and eclectic critical approaches which had previously dominated literary study and endeavoured to create a 'literary science'. As Jakobson puts it: The subject of literary science is not literature, but literariness, i.e. that which makes a given work a literary work'.

This means that their interest is not in the representational or expressive aspects of literary texts but on "those elements of texts which they considered to be uniquely literary in character" (Newton, 1997:1). Initially, according to Newton, they emphasized the differences between literary language and non-literary or practical language. The best known Formalist concept is that of 'defamiliarisation' particularly associated with Shklovsky who discussed it in his 'Art as Device', first published in 1917, where he argues that art renews human perception through creating devices which undercut and undermine habitual and automatized forms of perception. Literary interpretation to the formalist was more dedicated to understanding the form, structure and the use of language in a literary work than in the content. That is why Bartens

(2001:33) elucidating on this, asserts that:"The major focus of formalism to literary criticism is concerned with the literary form. He further states that formalism is concerned with investigating how literature works, how it achieves it defarmiliarizing effect" to create meaning.

Formalism has two schools of thought, the Moscow linguistic circle led by Roman Jakobson formed in 1915 and the society for the study of poetic language founded in 1916 (Habib, 2005:603). Viktor Shklovsky as cited in Bartens (2001) asserts that "… the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known". The concept of defamiliarization is anchored on the investigation of how language works in a literary work. It means the use of the common or the familiar in an uncommon way or unfamiliar manner. Language creates the entire conceptualization of defarmiliarization. Furthermore, "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the processof perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (Habib 2005:604). In this light, language is an important aspect of literature, it was considered as an ultimate criterion in establishing literariness (Bartens 2001:35). The role of language in any literary work cannot be overemphasized, thus it is a tool or a window through which literariness is attained and interpretation derived through the literariness. However, in later Formalism, Newton puts it that "the emphasis shifted from the relation between literary and non-literary language to the linguistic and formal aspects of literary texts themselves".

Formalism is acclaimed to have established the scientific basis for the study of literature. Therefore, form, structure, technique and the use of language forms part of the basics in formalism as a literary theory (Carter 2006:31). Similary, Bartens (2001:35) asserts that: "if a work of art draws attentionto its own form, then that form becomes part of its content: itsform is part of what it communicates". In other words, when attention is drawn to the form of a work

that is the literary qualities embedded in the work, it becomes easier to understand the content or the meaning of the work, thus anything outside of the work is not given prominence in terms of understanding or interpreting the work in accordance to formalist preferences. Thus, literary meaning is conceptual (concept based; i.e. based on the concept of form).To the formalist, other mediums through which a work could be interpreted such as the emotions, and ideas are of secondary concern, but provide the context only for implementation of literary devices.

In light of the above, this dissertation focuses its interest on two key Formalist figures; Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson's postulations and arguments as the basis upon which the analysis of the research will be carried out.

2.3.1 Viktor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique"

One of the best known Formalist concept is that of 'defamiliarisation', a concept coined by Shklovsky who propounded it in his "Art as Technique", first published in 1917, where he argues that art renews human perception through creating devices which undercut and undermine habitual and automatised forms of perception. Shkslovsky posits that **"**If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic" (p. 3). For Shklovsky, **"**The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known". This can be achieved through the device or technique he terms "defamiliarization". Shklovsky describes it as the technique of art which is meant:

> […]to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is away of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important ... (p. 4).

To illustrate the concept of defamiliarization, Shklovsky cites the example of Tolstoy, who presents a meditation on property from the point of view of a horse, or who recounts the

story of aflogging in such a blank manner that the then accepted practice seems strange and novel to the otherwise inured reader. Shkslovsky thus illustrates that Tolstoymakes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object, describing an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an event as if it were happening for the first time. In describing something, Shklovsky posits that Tolstoy avoids the accepted names of its parts and instead names corresponding parts of other objects.Shklovsky feels that defamiliarization is found almost everywhere form is found and "its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object - *it creates a 'vision' of the objectinstead ofserving as a means for knowing it…*"(p. 5).

Over all, Shklovsky's argument is that "defamiliarization" as a formalist literary technique is "obviously created to remove the automatism of perception" and that the author's purpose in using it is "to create the vision which results from that deautomatised perception" (p. 5). What this portends, according to Rivkin and Ryan (2004:4), is that defamiliarization makes

> […] literature presents objects or experiences from such an unusual perspective or in such unconventional and self-conscious language that our habitual, ordinary, rote perceptions of those things are disturbed. We are forced to see things that had become automatic and overly familiar in new ways.

Thus for Shkslovsky, defamiliarization enhances a work to be created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception, andas a result ofthis lingering, the object is perceived not in its extension in space, but, so to speak, in its continuity. In Shklovsky's view therefore "poetic language" which gives satisfaction is made possible through the device of defamiliarization.

2.3.2 Roman Jakobson's "The Dominant"

Roman Jakobson represents the later Formalists style whose emphasis shifted from the relation between literary and non-literary language to the linguistic and formal aspects ofliterary texts themselves (Newton, 2004:1). In this essay, Jakobson as cited in Newton(2004) defines the dominant "as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components", and for him it is "the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure" (p. 6).

In Jacobson's view, the element which specifies a given variety of language dominates the entire structure of a literary text and "thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them" (p. 6). This suggests that, for Jackobson, language is the dominant aspect of a literary text that has an overriding influence on it. He is of the opinion that one

> […] may seek a dominant not only in the poetic work of an individual artist and not only in the poetic canon, the set of norms of a given poetic school, but also in the art of a given epoch, viewed as a particular whole. (p. 6)

This means that the dominant literary technique can be identified in an individual work, canonical work, institutional, and epochal texts as a whole. In illustrating this, Jakobson asserts that in Renaissance art such a dominantwas represented by the visual arts, but the dominant technique in Romantic poetry is musically focused that is why "its verse intonation imitates musical melody" (p. 6). It is in light of this that Jakobson argues that "a poetic work is defined as a verbal message whose aesthetic function is its dominant"(p. 7). Thus the aesthetic function of a text is in its diverse linguistic functions within the poetic work. Jakobson, in his concluding argument points out that language is a dominant technique of defamiliarization "a pioneering significance for linguistic research in general, since it provided important impulses toward

overcoming and bridging the gap between the diachronic historical method and the synchronic method of chronological cross section" (p. 9).

In sum, Roman Jakobson's argument focuses on the linguistic and formal aspects ofliterary texts. For him, the dominant technique is in the language because it is the literary language which "transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech" thereby giving a text its defamiliarizing effects.

2.3.3 Formalist Method of Literary Analysis

In his work, "The Formal Method", Eichenbaum asserts that the Formalist method of inquiry or criticism is premised on "the principle that the study of literature should be made specific and concrete" (p. 7). That is why he states that:

> [The Formalists'] basic point was, and still is, that the object of literary science, as literary science, ought to be the investigation of the specific properties of literary material, of the properties that distinguish such material from material of any other kind… (p. 7).

In this manner, the Formalists are specifically interested in analyzing literature into its component parts and in describing its principal devices and modes of operation. This analysis took two main forms in the two major genres of prose narrative and poetry, concentrating in the first on the operations of narrative and in the second on sound in verse (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004:4). Formalist method of criticism concerns itself with how literary texts actually worked. For them, a literary text is a "material fact, whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. It was (sic) made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of an author's mind" ((Eagleton, 1996:3). Elucidating on this, Rivkin and Ryan (2004:4) submit that:

> The Formalists noticed that narrative literature consisted of two major components: the plot, by which they meant the story as narrated within the pages

> of the book (with all the attendant arrangements of chronological sequence, point of view, etc.), and the story, by which they meant the sequence of events in the order and the actual duration in which they ostensibly occurred. Once this simple distinction is made, one can begin to analyze all of the features of story-telling, the many devices such as point of view, delayed disclosure, narrative voice, and the like that go into the creation of the imaginary story through the manipulation of plot or story-telling devices.

In the analysis of poetry, according to Rivkin and Ryan, the Formalists focus is on the qualities of poetic language that distinguish it from ordinary practical language, the distinction between the literary and the non-literary being more pronounced in this genre. Whereas ordinary language must subordinate its rules of operation (grammar) to the practical goal of communicating information, poetic language is distinguished by the foregrounding of such devices ormotifs as euphony,rhythm, alliteration, consonance, repetition, and rhyme which obey a very different logic from that required to communicate information. In the same vein, Eagleton points out that the Formalists see literary text as:

> […] arbitrary assemblage of 'devices', and only later came to see these devices as interrelated elements or 'functions' within a total textual system. 'Devices' included sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative techniques, in fact the whole stock of formal literary elements; and what all of these elements had in common was their 'estranging' or 'defamiliarizing' effect. (p. 3)

This is because, for the Formalists, according to Rivkin and Ryan, for literature to be literature, it must constantly defamiliarize the familiar, constantly evolve new procedures for story-telling or poetry-making. And such change is entirely autonomous of the social and historical world from which the materials of literature are taken. Thus, in Eagleton's view, Formalist criticism dissociates art from mystery and concern itself with how literary texts actually worked because literature, for the Formalists, is not pseudo-religion or psychology or sociology but a particular organization of language. It has its own specific laws, structures and devices, which are to be studied in themselves rather than reduced to something else.

In this way, this dissertation adopts the formalist method of critical analysis of oral narrative technique in Nigerian children's literature with the view to investigate the specific properties that characterize the elements of oral narrative technique in Akachi Ezeigbo selected texts, some of which include application of the formalist concept of defamiliarization relation to the oral elements of the supernatural and magic as narrative techniques. Defamiliarization has been connected to Freudian notion of uncanny [strange or mysterious, and in the context of this work, the supernatural and magical] (Royle, 2003). In his work, *Das Unheimliche* ("The Uncanny"), Freud (1955:220) submits that "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar… this is not a fear of the unknown, but more of a feeling about something being both strange and familiar". The link between defamiliarization and the uncanny is underpinned where Freud ruminates onthe technique of literary uncanniness that allows a writer create "a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation" (230). Freud is, therefore, of the view that when writers pretend "to move in the world of common reality", they can situate supernatural or magical events "in the quotidian, day-to-day reality of the modern world, defamiliarizing the reader and provoking an uncanny feeling" (250).

The research also surveys talking animals and journey quest as elements of oral narrative techniques which have structural and instructional implications in children's narrative text. The reason is because talking animals as a narrative strategy has its root in the oral tradition "in the form of fables" (p. 18) in which "animals talk and act like human types they represent" (Livingston & Brown, 2017:18; and Abrams & Harpham, 2012:9), while the journey quest, an essentially part of the West African oral tradition, is a prevalent motif in orature (Chinweizu,

1988 as cited in McIntosh, 2015:31). It is in this regard, therefore, that the present research is of the view that talking animals and journey quest are elements of oral narrative techniques (i.e. a structural devices) deployed in children's texts to achieve certain purpose(s). The study adopts the formalist theoretical framework in relation to the supernatural, magic, talking animals, and journey quest as elements of oral narrative techniques to examine their applications and the literary effects they make in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected Nigerian children's narratives.

2.4 Oral Narrative Techniques

Formalism is acclaimed to have established the scientific basis for the study of literature. Therefore, form, structure, technique and the use of language forms part of the basics in formalism as a literary theory (Carter 2006:31). It is in this regard that the present work is focused on oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected texts. Thus, narrative technique, as a concept, is seen as "[…] the means by which the novelist chooses to tell his/her story" (Schore, 2003:251). Narratively, technique is some form of "craftsmanship" because it is through it that a writer can translate his experiences, thoughts and emotions into art. Narrative technique does not only make difference and distinguishes the early writers from the present writers but it also distinguishes the oral narrative from any other form of narrative. Works reviewed in this research have shown that the following are some of the oral narrative techniques:

- Oral narratives usually plunge its audience"[…] *in medias res* not because of any grand design, but perforce. They had no choice, no alternative" this is because "A narrator in an oral culture […] normally and naturally operated in episodic patterning, and the elimination of narrative voice appears to have been essential at first to rid the story line of such patterning. We must not forget that episodic structure was the natural way to talk out

a lengthy story line if only because the experience of real life is more like a string of episodes than it is like a Freytag pyramid" (Ong, 2012:140-145)

- Oral narrative is laced with songs because it is more or less "[…] the result of interaction between the singer, the present audience, and the singer's memories of songs sung. In working with this interaction, the bard is original and creative on rather different grounds from those of the writer" (Ong, 2012:143). Thus, songs are common components of oral narrative prominent in short story (Trinya, n.d:8)
- The oral narrator's protagonist, distinguished typically for his external exploits, has been replaced by the interior consciousness of the typographic protagonist (Ong, 2012:146).
- Oral narratives usually makes use of the flat character (the type of character that never surprises the reader but, rather, delights by fulfilling expectations copiously) as opposed to the round character (Ong, 2012:148).
- Oral narratives also achieve character depiction through"the use of symbols, appropriate names that sum up a character or give a clue to his behaviour(Chinweizu and Madubuike, 1980:272). The names thus function not merely as labels of identification; they project the characters more vividly than otherwise (Trinya, n.d:8).
- Oral narratives use historical sketches that give either the genealogy of the character or an account of his past deeds, or of significant incidents in his life (Chinweizu and Madubuike, 1980:272).
- Oral literary techniques of characterization also gives it audience a particular mystical view of the character as well as expectations of the supernatural (Trinya, n.d:8).
- Generally, oral narratives more or less blend folkloristic elements: myths, legends, belief systems, magic (or spells), etc., which also give the work its special local colouring.

> Because the content, with its narrative style, comes straight from the soil, the story has a more communal appeal, especially also because of the form's characteristic simplicity and familiarity (Trinya, n.d:9).

It is against this backdrop that this dissertation examines Oral Narrative Techniques in Nigerian Children's Literature with a special focus on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Works.Thus, study foregrounds the influence of traditional oral forms on contemporary written Nigerian Children's literature.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECTING THE SUPERNATURAL AND MAGICAL IN AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES

3.1 Introduction

The supernatural and the magical play important roles in African oral literature, especially in the African oral epic traditions. This is because "in the African worldview, therealm of the visible and the invisible do not constitute two completely separate entities but arerather combined to form one dynamic entity"(Deme, 2009: 402-403). Bowra (1964:7) as cited in Deme, states that the supernatural and magical are more interested "with forces outside human control," where "strange beings decide the destinies of men," than with human qualities". This research aligns itself with Deme's postulation that the supernatural and magical areanalyzable structural devices characteristic of the African oral tradition which have not been extensively investigated in children's literature.

In this regard,this chapter, with emphasis on the supernatural and the magical as oral narrative techniques, examines the defamiliarizing effects of oral narrative techniques in Akachi-Adimora Ezeigbo's *Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits, Asa and the Little Stream* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*. The chapter explores the relevant applications of these oral elements and how they are foregrounded to achieve defarmiliarizing effects and configuration of meaning in the selected texts. The chapter therefore regards the elements of the supernatural and magic as oral narrative technique deployed in the selected texts for the purpose of defamiliarizing the characters and settings which are parts of the formal and structural features of the selected texts.

3.2 The Supernatural and the Magical in Children's Literature

As much as a good number of critical works have explored the phenomenon of the supernatural and magical in literature, not many have addressed the concepts in children's literature. Seelinger Trites as cited in Schers (2016:7), argues that the supernatural and the magical (uncanny) are some of the "most important principles that motivates international children's literature" but that it is underrepresented in academic research".

Discussing the uncanny (strange and mysterious), Freud (2003:157) as cited in Schers (2016:13), argues that fictional narratives can produce more uncanny effects than real-life experiences, because "in his stories [the writer] can make things happen that one would never, or only rarely, experience in real life." He confronts his reader with a "superstition" he thought he had "surmounted". Townshend (2008:23) as cited in Schers (2016:14) traces the origin of the supernatural and the magical in the oral tradition of the medieval times where stories were orally told because many people were illiterate. Thus, the supernatural and the magical were oral narrative elements encased in myths, legends, and folk and fairytales which were attempts to understand the world. They were, according to Townshend, designed for adults because childhood was not recognized: only at the end of the eighteenth century was it considered as a distinct developmental period.

Schers (2016:14) states that during the Enlightenment era views about the fairytales in relation to children's literature changed, coinciding with a changing view of the child, first inspired by Locke. Schers (2016:15) submits that:

> His belief in the preservation of innocence led Locke to argue that children should be read stories devoid of "all impressions and notions of spirits and goblins, or any fearful apprehensions in the dark" …. He was, therefore, strictly against chapbooks and fairytales because they contained exactly those frightful apprehensions and he blamed the children's nursemaids for spreading such stories

> about "raw-head and bloody bones" …. Influenced by Locke, children were encouraged to read didactic tales.

Thus, Locke recommends didactic tales for children's literature. However, Rousseau (1889:15) as cited in Schers (2016), opposes Locke's idea by arguing that children should gradually be exposed to the dangers of the world, to make them resilient to them. Such a statement was "unwittingly" beneficial for the supernatural and the magical in children's literature (Townshend, 2008:28 as cited in Schers, 2016:16). This buttresses his submission that the child's familiarity with the Gothic, as well as the supernatural and the magical dates back to the early oral tradition. In affirming this, Townsend (1996) as cited in Schers (2016:19) argues that:

> …[a]t least since the early modern period, British culture had consistently associated ghosts and children with the oral tradition in storytelling, and this primarily through that most maligned and misunderstood cultural personae: the Old Wife" …. Scientific knowledge "during the early modern period" rejected her supernatural remedies and caused a "cultural prejudice" against the belief in supernatural activity.

This is a firm confirmation that the supernatural and the magical are oral narrative techniques.

3.3 The Supernatural and Magical in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Children's Narratives

Having established that the supernatural and magical can have defamiliarizing effects in children's texts, this section, firstly, seeks to examine the concept of defamiliarization as it relates to the supernatural and the magical. However, the section will focus more on the defamiliarizing effects of the supernatural and the magical as oral narrative techniques deployed in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected children's narratives such as the *Snake Child and Star*

Baby,*Fire from the Holy Mountain*, *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits,* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narrative are imbued with strange objects, supernatural and magical characters and settings which are meant to defamiliarize the formal and structural features of the selected text, and this by extension defamiliarizes the perceptual realities of the child narratee of the texts. For instance, in *Snake Child and Star Baby*, Afa (the mother of the protagonist) who goes to the forest to look for vegetables and snails for stew finds six large eggs. Afa goes home with one of the eggs which refuses to crack when she hits it with a spoon. The reader is told that:

> She took a pestle and hit it again and again, but the egg did not break. She dropped it in a mortar and pounded it with the pestle. Still the egg would not break. Afa was annoyed. She lifted the pestle high up and then lowered it with some force. The pestle hit the egg with a loud noise, but could not break it. afa gave a loud hiss and pounded away with all her strength. At the end of her pounding, the egg was as it was the first she saw it (pp. 10-11).

In the text above, defamiliarization is located in the supernatural nature of the egg. Here, the literary text presents the eggfrom such an unusual perspective or in such unconventional and self-conscious language that habitual, ordinary, rote perceptions of those things are disturbed. We are forced to see things that had become automatic and overly familiar in new ways (Rivkin and Ryan 2004:4). Thus, the argument of this research is that, it is the deployment of the supernatural oral narrative technique that enhances the presence of defamiliarization as a literary technique in the selected texts.

In the same text, Ufu (Afa's husband) tells his wife that, at some point in the forest, he loses his way because his body touches the*nju* leaf. The story has it that "*Nju* leaf has the power to cause anybody who touches it to lose his way in the forest. So Ufu wandered in the forest until a hunter he met showed him the way out of place" (p. 13). The magical power of this leaf is what

"makes the familiar seems strange" (Shklovsky, 1997:4). The two instances in *Snake Child and Star Baby*, thus far, have shown that the supernatural and the magical can be located in objects within the narrative. However, it is necessary to note that they can also be found in characters, settings and events in literary texts thereby enshrining the element of defamiliarization "almost everywhere form is found" (Shklovsky, 1997:4).

Udude, Afa's first child exemplifies a supernatural character who despite his humanity, is also a snake at the same time. "He could" according to the narration, "change into the shape of a snake when he wanted" (p. 22). It is Udude turned-snake that swallows "the eggs, the hens and the cock". When there are no more hens and cocks left in the house, Udude swallows "all the rats he could find". The narration has that:

> Afa and Ufu became very unhappy because of the problem in their lives. Udude was still not walking and their hens and cocks had all disappeared. They did not know that Udude was a snake. This was the reason he could not walk. He could change into the shape of a snake when he wanted. It was he who swallowed the eggs, the hens and the cocks. When there were no more ehens and cocks left in the house, he started to swallow all the rats he could find. He waited for Afa to go out, then he change into a snake and crawled around the house, looking for food. He avoided the trees Ufu planted to keep the Snake Queen away. When he could not find rats in the house, he began to go out to search for them in other places. He always did this in the night when everybody was asleep. Then he would crawl back into the house and change to a human being (pp. 21-22).

The fact that Udude lives a double life as both a human and a snake defamiliarizes him and equally presents him as a dynamic character that gyrates from the realm of the ordinary to that of the fantastical in the texts thereby giving it the feel of the fairy. In this regard, the element of character in this text, through the device of defamiliarization, "[…] is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possibleeffect isproduced through the slowness of the perception" (Shklovsky, 1997:5).

Zobo, Afa's second child who doubles as the protagonist as well as the eponymous character (star baby) in the text, is another instance of a supernatural character with a

defamiliarizing effect in the narrative. The reader is told that when Zobo is six months at the time he has learnt to stand on his feet and take a few steps, Udude, the snake raises itself to strike Zobo, but there comes a flash of light, this was when:

> On another occasion, Zobo was alone with Udude for a few minutes. It was raining and Afa put the baby down and ran outside to gather the melon seeds she had spread outside to dry. It took her quite some time to do this. Udude tried again to swallow Zobo. He was six months at this time and had learnt to stand and take a few steps. He was on his feet, playing with a toy, when the snake raised itself to strike. Again there was a flash of light. The star shone brightly and blinded the snake. It was exactly like the other times. Shaken, the snake moved back and crawled swiftly to another room. When Afa returned, she found the baby alone (pp. 31-32).

Zobo's reliance on the supernatural (i.e. a flash of light from the star) to fight Udude, the snake child defamiliarizes him (Zobo) as a character, and thematizes:

> […] the use of the supernatural as a means to cope with man's original weakness constitutes a belief system that is still widely held today in many African societies. The existence of the marvelous and the recourse to supernatural means by the hero symbolize his consciousness about his own weaknesses and limitations as a human being and his desire to transcend them. (Deme, 2009:409)

Thus, the supernatural here does not only defamiliarizes Zobo as a character in the text, but it also imbues him with the epic-like power and quality. Mazuo is yet another strange and supernatural character whom the narrative describes as someone not easy to find because he has no fixed address and does not stay in one place. "He is not" according to the story, "always visible to people" (p. 35). Mauzuo as a character in the text is, again defamiliarized by the aura of the supernatural and magic around him. This exemplifies the technique of "defamiliarization in psychological parallelism" in which "the perception of disharmony in a harmonious context is important in parallelism" (Shklovsky, 1997:5).

Defamiliarization is not only peculiar to object and characters in the text. There are other strange and odd people and settings in *Snake Child and Star Baby*. Ufu, one of the major characters "came to a town where people pounded palm nuts with their feet before extracting oil

from it" (p. 42). Ufu also arrives in a town "where it was day all the time. There was no night. The people were active all the time. Whenever anybody was tired, he or she went home to sleep. Others continued to work or farm or do whatever they had to do" (p. 44). The reader is also told that, at a point in the story, "Ufu was shocked that a child of two years could speak […]" (p. 59). And the quality of the supernatural in this town "where it was day all the time" defamiliarizes the setting and removes it from the automatism of perception. This implies that this particular setting, as one of the formal and structural feature of the text, "draws attentionto its own form", and therefore "becomes part of its content" which forms "part of what it communicates" (Bartens, 2001:35). In other words, the technique of defamiliarizing this setting helps greatly in thematizing it.

In*Fire from the Holy Mountain* there are also instances of the strange and the supernatural. The reader of the narrative is made to come face to face with Ugele, a kind spirit who helps Oseka, the unloved wife of the king of Goshe. Ugeli lives in the sky. "There was a shadow, which hid her face when she came to Oseka. So she could not say whether Ugele's face was young or old" (p. 5). There is that time that Ugele "changed Oseka and made her look like the king's third wife" (p. 5). When Oseka has a baby boy, "Ugele took him away and kept him safe in the sky" (p. 7). Later in the narrative when Oseka's child comes to visit his mother, he tells her that where he lives in the sky "There was no darkness, for it was daylight all the time" (p. 10). The supernatural as an oral narrative technique defamiliarizes the character, Ugeli and the setting, the sky. Oseki's reliance on Ugeli as her supernatural mentor defines and determines her true heroism (Deme, 2009:410).

At some point in the course of the narration, the reader is told that Ugele "[…] had supernatural powers which she used to help people in trouble, especially innocent and humble

people" (p. 20). Another instance of the strange and the supernatural is when Nwakannaya reaches the top of the Holy Mountain where he is attacked by "[…] a three-headed bulldog […]" (p. 32). After killing the strange bulldog on the Holy Mountain, Nwakannaya "[…] did not have to climb down the Holy Mountain. He did not have to return the way he came", because "unseen hands carried him to Goshe" (p. 35). The analysis of the defamiliarizing effect of the above instances of the supernatural does not only allows us to understand the context of the story but also, most importantly, opens doors into the societal and cultural beliefs of a people. Thus, the analysis implies that in African oral tradition, "a true hero is the one who is able to use his unnatural [supernatural] powers to achieve extraordinary deeds and actions (Deme, 2009: 411 & 414)

Another instance of the defamiliarizing effect of the supernatural is also presented in *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits* where Ezezemale, the eponymous character "[…] did not know that it was the Tree Spirits that threw down all the *udara* for her" (p. 20). Later on in the text, the reader is told of how the king of the Tree Spirits comes to claim Ezezemale as his rightful wife because of the *udara* she picked. As earlier mentioned, one element of oral tradition evident in Akachi's children's narrative is the application of the magical. Idowu (1973) as cited in Deme (2009:412) asserts that, "[…] magic is the means and the technique by which man, being aware of his limitations, seeks, through the use of supernatural means, to gain control over his environment to fulfill his own aims and desire".

Throwing light on this, Deme muses that the person who resorts to magic does so because he acknowledges the fact that he needs divine intervention to cope with weaknesses and limitations as human. For example, in *Asa and the Little Stream* a magician visits Lubeluland and informs Chief Igunu of the magic river at the foot of the Mamfe Mountains. The river called

the Beautiful River is said to "[…] cure all kinds of diseases. Any sufferer who jumped into the river at midnight would be healed instantly" (p. 18). At some point in the narrative Chief Igunu wants to kill the magician who refuses to follow the bidden of the Chief. Thus he sends his guards to execute the magician, however, the guards return and explain to the angry Chief Igunu "how the magician and his boy disappeared into thin air when the guards try to arrest them" (p. 30). Magic as an oral narrative technique that facilitates defamiliarization of the characters recognizes the transcendental power, a power beyond man and made this the basis of operation.

When Princess Akudu, Asa and some grown-up palace attendants embark on the journey to the Beautiful River, they meet a man, so richly and singularly dressed on their way, who shows them the way to the Beautiful River. The man is said to have disappeared when Princess Akudu is about to thank him. "There was no trace of him, yet none of them there could say how he left" (p. 62). Immediately the royal group arrive the Beautiful River:

> It seemed everyone experienced one form of miracle or another. The man who was bitten by a snake reported that the scar of the bite had completely disappeared. One of the women who suffered from arthritis made it known that the pain in her knee was gone completely. She was now able to walk without the slightest pain.… One of the guards who had trouble with his eyes said that his sight was completely restored and his eyes felt normal.… Princess Akudu also had some good news to share. She called everybody together and told them that her headache was gone and she felt no pain at all (p. 76)

The appearance of a large boat the little stream-turned-big river is something fantastical and magical. When Princess Akudu falls into the little stream-turned-big river and disappears, Asa being her personal maid, follow her into the river. The maigicality of this event in the story lies in the fact that immediately Asa follows her mistress, "Asa was astonished to find herself in a big mansion, at the bottom of the river" (p. 103). It is here that Asa encounters Prince Eras who has been held captive for quite some time in the mansion at the bottom of the sea. Later on Asa and the Prince are set free by a man who "[…] stretched his right hand and waved a magic wand

over the Prince and Asa […]", and "In a twinkling of an eye, Asa and Prince Eras found themselves in Falalaland" (p. 116). The defamiliarizing effect of magic in the above instances affirms Idowu's assertion, as cited in Deme (2009:416), that magic is […] an attempt on the part of man to tap and control the supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit. . . . Magic serves man's egocentricity and is for him a short cut to spiritual bliss.

Red One and the Wizard of Mula is one of Akachi's children's narrative that exemplifies the magical element as an oral narrative technique. When the eponymous Wizard of Mula abducts the also eponymous protagonist of the text, Red One, he magically "[…] touched her head with his stick and her red hair turned black completely. After this, she did whatever he told her, without showing fear" (p. 45). It is also narrated that, "The wizard had caused Red One to lose her memory when he waved his magic stick over her. She forgot her parents and her people. She also forgot her past. She could not remember her name. She thought the Wizard of Mula was her father […]" (p. 48). The text also has it that, "[…] the wizard had magic powers and could change into animals and other shapes whenever he wanted. He could travel in the air as a bird or spring into the forest as a lion or leopard" (p. 49).

The Wizard of Mula is later seen using "magic power to make a beautiful red velvet robe for Red One" (p. 58). Towards the end of the narration, the Wizard of Mula "touched Red One and Mansa with his magic stick and they became two beautiful birds. He told them how to change themselves back to human beings as soon as they reached Ubungu. They flew into the air and began the homeward journey" (pp.115-116).

Aside the defamiliarizing effect of magic in this texts, it also thematizes the belief in the supernatural and the transcendental worldview of the society in which the narratives are crafted. It is also worth noting that when children read the supernatural and the magical, they learn that there are rational explanations for the darkness they are experiencing and that they are complicit – at least

partly – in evoking those dark forces, as they learn that the darkness is inside of themselves (Coats, 2008:78 as cited in Schers, 2016:22). Thus, the defamiliarizing effect of the supernatural and the magical thematizes the exploration of darkness in the life of the child narratee of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's texts.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has used the formalist defamaliariation as a device to explore the elements of the supernatural and magic as oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits,Asa and the Little Stream* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*. The chapter has foregrounded the relevant applications of these oral elements in the selected texts to point out how they are they are deployed to achieve defarmiliarizing effects and configuration of meaning in the selected texts. Thus, the research affirms the oral offshoot of the supernatural and the magical and how they appliedto defamiliarize the formal and structural features of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected children's narratives.

The primary argument of the study has been that the selected texts are imbued with strange objects, supernatural and magical characters and settings which are manipulated to defamiliarize the formal and structural features of the selected texts, and by extension defamiliarize the perceptual realities of the child narratees of the texts understudy. In other words, the study demonstrates that the deployment of the supernatural and the magical elements of oral narrative techniques heighten the presence of defamiliarization as a literary technique in the selected texts. On the whole, the work concludes that the defamiliarizing effect of the supernatural and the magical thematizes the belief in the supernatural and the transcendental

worldview of the society in which the narratives are crafted; and also explores the darkness in the life of the child narratee of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narratives.

On the whole, the supernatural and the magical often similar to those of fairy tales"; that even when the narratives might be predominantly realistic, they are made partially unreal, strange, and romantic by that content. Such incorporations, therefore, serve the writer as a device for creating the atmosphere of the fantastical, and for preparing his child reader for events that are not subject to the laws of real life. Thus, the primary argument of this work is that the deployment of the supernatural and the magical in children's literature makes the familiar strange, it challenges children's beliefs and assumptions about the world and about the nature of reality. The power of children's literature to defamiliarize or shake beliefs and assumptions are intricately bound up with the supernatural and the magical.

CHAPTER FOUR

TALKING ANIMALS AND THE JOURNEY QUEST MOTIF IN AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES

4.1 Introduction

Talking animals as a narrative strategy has its root in the oral tradition "in the form of fables" (Livingston & Brown, 2017:18) in which "animals talk and act like human types they represent" (Abrams & Harpham, 2012:9), while the journey quest, an essentially part of the West African oral tradition, is a prevalent motif in orature (Chinweizu, 1988 as cited in McINTOSH, 2015:31). Onukaogu (2009) as cited in Otoburu & Akpan (2016), sees the journey quest as a situation in literary texts where "A character either by compulsion, necessity or election, embarks on a journey, most of the time perilous, which is meant to bring about a significant change either in the condition of the person, or his society or his personality" (p.29). Otoburu & Akpan are of the view that "In children's fiction, the journey basically serves structural and introductive rules most especially in stories having both human and animal character" (p. 29). This motif, according to Otoburu & Akpan, draws the attention of children to the fact that "the journey of life is extremely difficult and the time for life's unpredictability is now".The journey quest motif, according to McINTOSH, is not only prevalent in West African orature, but it also "permeates the culture by influencing religion, dance, music and various aspects of socioeconomic realms of life" (2015:31).

It is in the light of the above that this chapter examines the deployment of talking animals and journey quest in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narrativesas elements of oral narrative techniques. The chapter aims to survey the relevant application of, and how these elements of oral tradition contribute to the configuration of meaning and representation in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's*Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, The*

Adventures of Anum the Tortoise, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits, Whisker the Brave Cat,Asa and the Little Stream and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula.*

4.2 Talking Animals as Oral Technique in *Snake Child and Star Baby, The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise,* and *Whisker the Brave Cat*

As stated in the preamble, talking animals in literature, generally, has its beginning in the oral tradition in myth and folktales that invoke animal characters which "is so universal a convention that we hardly notice" (Le Guin, 2004:22; Jaeger, 2018:19). An instance of this can be realized in *Aesop's Fables* where animals are imbued with the capability to talk. Viewing this from the formalist perspective, Granata (n.d:3) points out that "[…] the talking animals are only a fictional device […]" that authors choose to adopt as a narrative device. In this regard, therefore, the present research is of the view that talking animals is an oral narrative device or technique (i.e. a structural device) deployed in children's texts to achieve certain purpose(s). Thus, this segment of the work is meant to unravel the purpose(s) for which talking animals are used in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's*Snake Child and Star Baby, The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise*, and *Whisker the Brave Cat.*

In *Snake Child and Star Baby* a child (Udude) who is, in a way, an animal is featured. The narrative reveals that Udude's parents, Afa and Ufu "[…] did not know that Udude was a snake. This was the reason he could not walk. He could change into the shape of a snake when he wanted" (pp. 21-21). Here Udude is depicted as a shapeshifting character (a human character who can turn into an animal). In literature, typically, a shapeshifting character (in this regard a talking animal) plays the trickster role (Jaeger, 2018:21). Udude who is, here, a talking animal that has a shapeshifting nature in the text always tricks his parents because they do not know his nature. At night when his parents are asleep, he would turn into a snake to swallow the eggs, the

hens and the cocks. In fact, he is the one who eats up the two female babies earlier born in the family. The omniscient narrator states that:

> When the second daughter disappeared after three months, Ufu and Afa became worried and afraid. Afa had left the baby sleeping in its cot for about twenty minutes to take some vegetables from the garden. She came back to find the baby gone. There was evil around them, but they did not know who or what it was. Could it be one of their neighbours who was doing this? Was is it an evil spirit? Not for one moment did they suspect that Udude was responsible for what was happening (p. 24)

Thus, in *Snake Child and Star Baby*, Udude becomes an oral narrative device deployed not only to play the role of an animal trickster, but also as a device that allows the child character to blur the boundaries of good and evil, human and animal. This kind of narrative device and technique, according to Jaeger (2018), helps the child readers to learn "[…] to negotiate their identities and their place in the world" (p. 21). Thus, metaphorically, "Identifying the animal in us all allows us the opportunity to explore these expectations, shapelift our identities, and rise to meet them" (p. 21).

As an oral narrative technique, talking animals can be deployed as a device to show that "[…] the civilization of animals mirrors the desired western civilization of people" (Jaeger, 2018:20). The instance of this is demonstrated in *Whisker the Brave Cat* which is centered on how the eponymous Whisker the Brave Cat discovers and exposes the evil perpetrated by the lion and his kinsmen who eat up the weaker animals. At the end of the story other weaker animals decide to leave the forest to live with the civilized humans for fear of being attacked and eaten up by the most savage and uncivilized bullying lions and the other cat family animals. The movement of the weaker animals from the jungle to the city to live with the human symbolizes a journey from an uncivilized and anarchical society to a descent, civilized and well-ordered society. The text, thus features jungle characters who must in a way integrate into human society

in order to find peace and success. By this, the text also demonstrates and juxtaposes the dualism of good and evil inherent in the world that the child readers are being exposed to gradually.

Again, talking animals as an oral narrative technique can be adopted by writers to humanize, socialize, and educate the child readers. That is why Jaeger (2018:19) notes that in children's literature, "[…] no matter how animalistic the animal character behaved, the narrative point was directed towards educating or humanizing child readers" (Jaeger, 2018:19). This is demonstrated in "Tortoise, Man and Leopard" one of the story cycle in *The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise*. In the first part of the narrative, Anum the Tortoise, who embarks on a journey quest, is helped to cross a river by a human named Jaga, a farmer. And at the end of the story, Anum the Tortoise uses his wisdom to rescue Jaga from a leopard that intends to eat up the man. This is meant to teach the child reader that "One good turn deserves another" (p. 18).

In "Tortoise and Snail", another story cycle in *The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise*, Anum is depicted as a fraudster and an imposter who is recognized as the best singer at a funeral of a big chief in Zompi village. What the human audience at the funeral does not realize is that Anum has hired snail to sing on his behalf while hidden in his bag which he always wears like a necklace. The narrator relates that, "Anum promised to share with Snail everything he would receive at the funeral. In fact, he said that if he won the singing contest, he would share the prize with Snail" (p. 59). Anum and the Snail agree that Snail would hide inside Anum's bag and sing from inside there. Well, at the end of the day Anum won the singing competition but he refuses to fulfill his own part of the bargain. This is indicative of Anum's level of dubiousness, deceit, and greed all rolled into one. Such thematic issues as these have led Jaeger (2018:20) to argue that, "Humanizing animal characters simultaneously socializes children and teaches them to put

aside childish and thus animalistic behaviour". The story is, by implication, discouraging fraudulent acts and greed which can be categorize as childish and animalistic.

There are times that the talking animals in children's literature are deployed to "[…] racialized animals, where the animals themselves take on stereotypical traits of marginalized groups of people" (Jaeger, 2018:20). This thematic concern is echoed in *Whisker the Brave Cat*, where in the forest community there is a "[…] disagreement and quarrel between the Lion-led group and the rest of the animals […]" (p. 77). Consequently, the animal community breaks-up because the weaker animals feel racialized and marginalized by Lion-led group (i.e. the cat family and other flesh eating animals). Thus, the reader of the texts realizes that, "The peace the community had once enjoyed was shattered forever. Hatred and suspicion crept into relationships. Fear ruled the forest. Animals, especially the smaller and weaker ones, were afraid to leave their homes. Danger lurked everywhere" (p. 78). This racial feeling of marginalization is that which leads the weaker animals in the text to desire integration into human society for peaceful co-existence and success.

4.3 Journey Quest as an Element of Oral Technique in *Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise, Whisker the Brave Cat, Asa and The Little Stream,* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*

One of the outstanding recurrent motif of oral narrative technique is the journey quest. This, as earlier said, is an essentially part of the oral tradition of West Africa. This study aligns itself with view that the journey quest, aside its thematic leaning, governs the structure of a narrative text because it is through their journeys that characters "[…] go through different experiences that help in broadening their horizons and transforming their character and personalities. Therefore, the journeys the characters embark on are linked to their inner search for their own identities

(Ulayyan &Awad, 2016:27). It is in this regard that this research considers journey quest as an oral narrative technique deployed in the selected Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's texts.

Otoburu & Akpan (2016:29) are of the view that "In children's fiction, the journey basically serves structural and instructive roles most especially in stories having both human and animal characters". For example in *Snake Child and Star Baby*, Ufu and Afa are troubled when their first and second children mysteriously disappear from their cots soon after they were born. Ufu does not give up his quest for a native doctor or seer who can tell him what to do to destroy the power of the evil around his home. One day he meets a seer in a town called Zunga, who tells him that there is only one man who could help him. His name is Mazuo, "the one who knew things others did not know" (p. 34). Ufu feels his trouble has come to an end, but the seer tells him that it is not easy to find Mazuo because he has no fixed address, he does not stay in one place, and he is not always visible to people. He could only be seen on rare occasions when he chooses to reveal himself to a seeker Thus, Ufu embarks on a long journey in search of the man who will help them solve the mystery. At the end of Ufu's journey, he meets Mazuo who, in an antithesis, tells him that "The cause of the problem is in your house. The solution of the problem is also in your house" (p. 53).

As an oral narrative device patterned in almost all oral journey quest, structurally, Ufu's journey, after facing challenges, results in an epiphany that can be "used to improve the world" of the hero (Gabriel, 2017:66). Thus the solution to Ufu's trouble is wrapped in oral rhetorics (riddle), however, when he arrives home he is able to understand it better.

There are instances in which journey quest as oral narrative technique is deployed in children's text to help the child readers understand "[…] that their lives are a series of journeys, and they can have some control over their own destinies" (Hall, n.d:1). For example, in *Fire from the Holy*

Mountain, Nwakannaya, the son of Oseka, the unloved wife of the king of Goshe is told to "go to the Holy Mountain and bring fire from there to Goshe" to prove his sonship to the king. Nwakannaya prepares for his journey. The narrative submits that:

> He polished his silver sword and it shone even brighter. He knew it would not be easy to reach the Holy Mountain, but he was not afraid. Ugele had told him about his destiny, so he knew all along that he would return to Goshe when the time was ripe. He also knew he had to face a difficult task before he could claim his birthright in Goshe. Nwakannaya understood that the time was near. He was ready. He was glad (p. 27).

It is in this spirit that Nwakannaya takes leave of his mother, the king and the people of Goshe and leaves the palace all alone to journey to the Holy Mountain. As the structural motif of journey quest in all oral narratives, Nwakannaya undergoes trials, receives aid from Ugele who shows him the way he is to go, he fights his enemy (a three-headed bulldog at the top of the Holy Mountain), he succeeds in attaining the treasure sought (the golden bowl of fire) and returns to Goshe unharmed (Howard, n.d:2). This kind of journey quest, as an oral narrative technique is meant to assist the child readers, according to Hall, to connect the journey to their lives and to parallel the hero's steps in the text "[…] to the heroic nature in their own individual journeys, no matter how mundane they may consider their daily lives to be" (p. 1).

It should be noted that most of the journey quest begins with "the call to adventure". It is that device that "[…] sets the story rolling by disrupting the comfort of the Hero's Ordinary World, presenting a challeng or quest that must be undertaken" (Vogler, n.d:3). This is evident in all the selected texts of the present research. For instance, in "Tortoise, Man and Leopard", one of the stories in *The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise*, the eponymous character, Anum the Tortoise has a daughter called Little Tortoise who coughs all the time. She is so ill that Anum is sure she will die soon if a cure is not found for her strange disease. For "No one knew how to treat the disease" (p. 5). Anum is told of a herbalist who lives on the other side of the forest. He

learns that the herbalist can cure his daughter, Little Tortoise. Thus, the next day Anum the Tortoise sets out on a journey in search of a cure for his only daughter. The call to adventure is Anum's daughter's incurable ailment.

In yet another story from the same text,*The Adventure of Anum the Tortoise*: "Tortoise and the Blacksmith's Daughter", the chief of Jaga gives Anum a small bag of maize and asks him to use the bag to get him (the chief) a beautiful woman to marry, to prove the cleverness of Anum the Tortoise. "Early in the morning" the reader is told, "Anum set out on his search for a beautiful girl" (p. 28). Here, the call to adventure is the challenge thrown at the Anum by the king.

The call to adventure is also evident in *Whisker the Brave Cat.* One of such is when the young antelope is killed by the young lion and later eaten by the lion family. The narrative has it that:

> Mother Antelope and Father Antelope went around looking for their young one. They went from one family to another, but did not find him. They also went into the forest to search for him. They did not find him. They came to Father Lion's house because they knew the young lion was his friend (p. 41).

The search continues everywhere but the young antelope is not found. All the animals are puzzled. In fact, Father and Mother Lion join in the search. Even Mother lion weeps with the other mothers. Her eyes are red from weeping. As the story progresses, more animals disappear, most of whom are young. The eponymous Whisker the Brave Cat wonders why no mother or father has been lost, and so he determines to find out what causes the disappearances. Journey quest, in literature generally, shapes "[…] protagonist's experiences and help each to reach an epiphany" (Ulayyan &Awad, 2016:28).

In *Asa and the Little Stream* the call to adventure is also evident. Chief Igunu of Lubeluland is informed by a magician of a river that has curative powers. His adventurous daughter, Princess Akudu shows her interest to go to the river. Initially, he refuses but he later

allows her to "embark upon a search for the Beautiful River. He insists that she should go with some guards who would protect her on the way. Asa was also to go with her" (p. 23). At times, the journey that is undertaken by these characters take them from the physical world to the land of the spirits. This happens when Asa jumps into the river and soon disappears as Princess Akudu. After that Asa is "[…] astonished to find herself in a big mansion, at the bottom of the river" (p. 103). This aspect of style, according to Okpewho (1975:50) as cited in Otoburu & Akpan (2016:29-30), is exploited to educate the children on "Africa's acceptance of the trinity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn".

Red One and the Wizard of Mula demonstrates an instance of journey quest in Akachi's children's narratives. When "a mighty bird with wings more powerful than an eagle" swoops, takes away the Red One and shoots into the air like an arrow, the entire kingdom of Ubungo is shocked. This is one of the characteristics of Nigerian children's literature in which there is "[…] heavy reliance on the folk tradition of the Nigerian people which […] ascribes to the ethics of magical realism – the suspension of concrete reality and the approximation of the fantasy of the cosmological backgrounds of the African existential equation" (Martins as cited in Otoburu & Akpan, 2016:30). This triggers a call to adventure.

Thus, King Opoko, hurries into the palace and prepares for the search for the Princess. The mandate is that "The heiress of Ubungu must be found" (p. 29). Ubungu young men and warriors volunteer to join in the search. After six months, the first batch of the young men and warriors including General Osebo who went for the search did not return. The king again sends out another search party to look for them and for Red One. The warriors also seem "to have suffered the same fate. They did not return" (p. 39).

On the whole, as can be seen from the instances given above, journey quest as an oral narrative technique is more than the "[…] concept of transport, or being transported from A to B" (Letherby & Reynolds, 2009:xviii). It is a structural device that helps both the character in the text and the reader outside the text to learn; it is indeed a narrative device that does not only advance the narrative process, but it also shapes both the characters' and the child readers' personalities.

4.4 Other Oral Narrative Techniques in Akachi's Texts

4.4.1 Episodic Plot Structuring

Oral narratives usually plunge its audience"[…] *in medias res* not because of any grand design, but perforce. They had no choice, no alternative" this is because "A narrator in an oral culture […] normally and naturally operated in episodic patterning, and the elimination of narrative voice appears to have been essential at first to rid the story line of such patterning. We must not forget that episodic structure was the natural way to talk out a lengthy story line if only because the experience of real life is more like a string of episodes than it is like a Freytag pyramid" (Ong, 2012:140-145). In *Fire from the Holy Mountain* the narrative begins in *in medias res*, i.e. from the middle, where in the first event:

> The king invited many doctors to examine the women [his wives] to find out why they could not give him children. However, he did not allow the doctors to examine one of the wives because he hated her. Her name was Oseke. As far as the king was concerned, she was not his wife so he did not treat her like one (p. 2).

Literary scholars are of the view that the episodic plot is "[…]the natural way to talk out a lengthy story line if only because the experience of real life is more like a string of episodes than it is like a Freytag pyramid" (Ong, 2012:140-145). Walter Ong further affirms that "starting in 'the middle of things' is not a consciously contrived ploy but the original, natural, inevitable

way to proceed for an oral poet approaching a lengthy narrative" (p. 141). One of the episodic techniques Akachi uses is the flashback meant to recall what has been omitted at the beginning of the narrative. An instance of this is when the reader is told that:

> The truth was that he [the king] did not choose her as a wife. His father, the former king, forced him to marry her. Oseka was the daughter of the old king's bosom friend. Only fifteen, at the time of her marriage to the prince, Oseka didn't know that the young prince had no desire to marry her. From that time he began to hate and resent her (p. 2).

Under this retrospection, the audience is made to understand why the current king hates Oseka with passion.

4.4.2 Songs as Oral Narrative Technique

Songs are usually short musical works set, at times, to a poetic or narrative texts (Jensen, 2001; Marlina, 2011 as cited in Ilyasa, 2013:68). As earlier mentioned, oral narrative is laced with songs because it is more or less "[…] the result of interaction between the singer, the present audience, and the singer's memories of songs sung. In working with this interaction, the bard is original and creative on rather different grounds from those of the writer" (Ong, 2012:143). Thus, songs are common components of oral narrative prominent in short story (Trinya, n.d:8). This is exemplified in *Snake Child and Star Baby when*Ufu and Afa had slept only for a short time when they hear a song behind their window, thus:

> Snake eggs, snake eggs
> Snake eggs, snake eggs
> Snake egg I left in the forest
> One egg is missing
> It must be returned

Ufu and Afa get up to listen. They hear the song many times. After a while, a small voice replies with a song. The voice comes from inside Afa's belly.

> Pregnant woman, pregnant woman

Can you hear the call?
It is my mother who is calling
The Snake Queen is calling
You pounded me in your mortar
I refuse to die
You cooked me in your pot
I refuse to die
You rolled me in hot okro stew
And you swallowed me. (pp. 14-15).

Through the fusion of this song in the narrative, Akachi artistically recreates an African traditional setting where children, at night, hear wonderful stories with music and dancing and songs. Thus, songs in children's literature can be deployed for entertainment. Aside the use of songs for entertainment in children's narratives, they can be usefulin plot development. Just as it can be seen in *Fire from the Holy Mountain*, when the king captures Oseka, the reader is told that "As the sun beat down upon her, Oseka groaned. There was no one to help her. She was hungry and thirsty. But she was determined not to tell the king about Nwakannaya. Because she refuses to talk, the king refuses to release her. She was brave, but after three days in the open, her strength began to fail her. Oseka wept and began to call out in a song, thus:

My son, Nwakannaya
Your mother is tied up and thrown into the sun
She lies bound and starved
The sun beats down on her without pity
The rain beats her without mercy
Your mother is dying from hunger and thirst (p. 22).

The narrative has it that Oseka "sang the song several times. The guards listen and wait. One of them goes to report to the king. He tells the king about the song. The king gives orders for the arrest of anyone who answers Oseka's call (p. 23). This is also demonstrated in *The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise* where Anum, to scare the old woman is said to have "[…]

raised his voice above the noise and told the old woman to save her life before she was killed. He sings a song to add to the noise:

> Old woman, you are about to be trampled to death
> Tinjajarara, Tinjajarara, Tinjajarara
> Old woman, you are about to be crushed to death
> Tinjajarara. Tinjajarara, Tinjajarara
> Old woman, run, run and save your life (pp. 77-78).

The above song does not only help in developing the storyline, but it also plays a role in building the narrative context and social purpose.In *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits,* for instance,song is sung to build the social context of the characters when the king of the Tree Spirits visits Ezezemale's family house. "They heard someone singing in a strange voice. The song came from outside. It sounded very clear", thus:

> My in-law, welcome from the market
> Ezezemale
> My in-law, I greet you
> Ezezemale
> I have come to take my Ezezemale
> Please, give her to me now
> Ezezemale
> I will take her to my kingdom
> Ezezemale (p. 33-34).

From the foregoing, therefore, it will be wrong to agree withIlyasa (2013:68) that songs used in narratives can help "… in building context and social purposes…, generating ideas or topics…, developing the storyline…, enhancing vocabularies…, prompting" and motivating students to write narrative texts.

4.4.3 Revelation of the Internal Consciousness of the Protagonist

The oral narrator's protagonist, distinguished typically for his external exploits, has been replaced by the interior consciousness of the typographic protagonist (Ong, 2012:146). Instances

of this can be found in almost all the texts understudy. For example, in *Fire from the Holy Mountain*, the writer does not only describe the protagonist's (Nwakannaya's) external exploits but also goes ahead to depict his interior consciousness. When Nwankannaya's mother, Oseka is captured by the king, he is said to have:

> […] descended from the sky and landed in the king's courtyard. Guided by Oseka's sad song, he approached her as she lay in the dust. He cut the rope that bound her and lifted her up in his arms. When the guards saw him, they were surprised. They were afraid to fight him. He looked so strong and impressive that they could not come near him. They retreated in confusion. Some ran to tell the king what had happened (p. 24).

This focus on the external abilities of the protagonist offers the audience a particular mystical view of Nwakannaya as well as the aura of the supernatural around his personality (Trinya, n.d:8). However, it can be observed that Akachi's depiction of the protagonist is not only centered on his external exploits but also on his interior consciousness. This is demonstrated when the reader is given access into the thoughts of the protagonist, Nwakannaya, thus:

> Nwakannaya prepared for his journey. He polished his silver sword and it shone even brighter. He knew it would not be easy to reach the Holy Mountain, but he was not afraid. Ugele had told him about his destiny, so he knew all along that he would return to Goshe when the time was ripe. He also knew he had to face a difficult task before he could claim his birthright in Goshe. Nwakannaya understood that the time was near. He was ready. He was glad (p. 27).

The above paragraph exemplifies the interior consciousness of the protagonist in *Fire from the Holy Mountain*. An instance of interior consciousness of the protagonist is also found in *The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise* where:

> Anum wished with his whole heart that he were like the Turtle, who lived mainly in water. Indeed, Turtle felt at home in water and also on land. Anum envied Turtle's ability to swim. He wondered why tortoises and turtles looked alike so much, yet one was made solely a land animal while the other was both a land and water animal. How lucky turtles are, he thought (p. 8).

Here the narrative information is restricted to the Anum's perception, cognition and thoughts. When Ezezemale is captured by the tree spirits in *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits*, the

writer, through the stream of consciousness, takes the child reader through Ezezemale's mind, thus:

> She looked up and saw a bird flying high up in the sky. Sky wished the bird could help her. Was it an eagle or a hawk? Her father once told her a story about an eagle and a hawk. He told her that the two birds had sharp eyes that see an object from a far distance. He said eagles could see farther than human beings. Should she call on the bird to help her? She thought there was no harm in trying. (pp. 59-61).

In the above paragraph, the child reader is made to identify with Ezezemale's hopes and intentions through the revelation of her internal consciousness. Thus, the reader is not only made to sympathize, but also to empathize with the protagonist.

4.4.4 Names that Sum Up a Character or Give a Clue to His Behaviour

Oral narratives also achieve character depiction through"the use of symbols, appropriate names that sum up a character or give a clue to his behaviour(Chinweizu and Madubuike, 1980:272). The names thus function not merely as labels of identification; they project the characters more vividly than otherwise (Trinya, n.d:8). Akachi's children's texts are replete with names that give the readers clue to the characters' behaviour or destiny. In *Fire from the Holy Mountain*, Nwakannaya's name which means "[…] the child that is greater than his father" (p. 7) carries a clue to his destiny which is to bring "fire from the Holy Mountain". That would be the only proof that he was Prince of Goshe and heir to the Crown" (p. 27). This is also found in *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* where the protagonist called the Red One because her "hair was curly like the hair of Ubungu people but unlike theirs, hers was red" (pp. 1-3).

4.4.5 The Use of Historical Sketches

It has been earlier asserted that oral narratives use historical sketches that give either the genealogy of the character or an account of his past deeds, or of significant incidents in his life (Chinweizu and Madubuike, 1980:272). This feat is demonstrated in *Fire from the Holy*

Mountain where, by way of flashback, the reader is journeyed back into the past of the king so as to account for his present acrimony for Osseka, thus:

> The truth was that he [the king] did not choose her [Oseka] as a wife. His father, the former king, forced him to marry her. Oseka was the daughter of the old king's bosom friend. Only fifteen, at the time of her marriage to the prince, Oseka didn't know that the young prince had no desire to marry her. From that time he began to hate and resent her (p. 2).

This technique helps to put the king's resentment of Oseka, his wife in context. This illustrates the fact "[…] that meaning… is defined by reference to concrete situations rather than abstract elaboration" (JanMohamed, 1984:29). In *Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits*, the central character's (Ezezemale's) carefree attitude throughout the narrative is predicated on the fact that her "[…] parents were among the richest farmers in Koko […], and they "[…] loved her very much because she was the only child they had. She did not lack any good thing. They gave her whatever she wanted" (pp. 2-3). Usually this technique sets the background to the sociological context of the narrative.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has, through sufficient textual analysis surveyed the deployment of talking animals and journey quest as elements of oral narrative technique in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narratives. It has amply illustrated the relevant application of, and how these elements of oral tradition contribute in the configuration of meaning and representation in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected children's texts. In analyzing talking animals as an element of oral narrative in the texts concerned, it can be noticed that talking animals has become a structural and narrative device deployed for the following reasons: to allowthe child character to blur the boundaries of good and evil, human and animal; to humanize, socialize, and educate the child readers; andto racialize animals, where the animals themselves take on stereotypical traits of

marginalized groups of people. Also, in analyzing journey quest as an element of oral narrative technique, the chapter has demonstrated that journey quest is a textual structural site that allows children's narratives tohelp the child readers understand that their lives are a series of journeys, and they can also have some control over their own destinies; it can also be deployed to assist the child readers to connect the journey to their lives and to parallel the hero's steps in the text to the heroic nature in their own individual journeys, no matter how mundane they may consider their daily lives to be; it is also used to help child readers appreciate Africa's acceptance of the trinity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn especially when the journey that is undertaken by these characters take them from the physical world to the land of the spirits.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Generally, the dissertation examinedoral narrative techniques in Nigerian children's literature with a particular focus on Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Selected Works.This chapter offers the summary and conclusion of the research work. The reason is to bind up the study by underscoring some significant points and by so doing, highlight the contribution the study has made to the body of knowledge. To realize this, the chapter has been broken into two relevant parts: summary and conclusion. The first part (summary) consists of the chapter breakdown of the entire study. The second part (conclusion) retrospectively wraps up the findings of the main thrust of the research which is the deployment of the formalist theoretical interpretive framework to survey the elements of oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimara-Ezeigbo's selected Nigerian children's literature.

The study consists of five chapters, beginning with chapter one, entitled "Introduction". Consequently, chapter one presents the general background to the study, it further foregrounds the research problem, the research aim and objectives, justification of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, research methodology, and organization of chapters. In chapter two the dissertation offers a review of relevant and related literature. Thus, the chapter presents critical voices on historical perspective on children's literature, African children's literature, Nigerian children's literature, works on Nigerian children's literature, empirical review of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's works, and Formalism as theoretical framework. Essentially, the reason for this is to capture critical point of views that have dealt with relevant issues that are related to this study so as to open up gaps that the present dissertation can bridge.

In chapter three, the study drew on the formalist literary technique of defamiliarization to investigate the supernatural and the magical as elements of oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits, Asa and the Little Stream* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*. Thus, the chapter is an exploration and demonstration of the relevant applications of the supernatural and magical elements of oral narrative and how they are being foregrounded to configure meaning and achieve defamiliarizing effects in the selected texts.

Chapter four examined the deployment of talking animals and journey quest as elements of oral narrative techniques inAkachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's*Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits, Whisker the Brave Cat,Asa and the Little Stream* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*. The chapter showed the relevant applications of these elements and how they, as narrative devices, are deployed to represent and make sense of realities in children's literature.

5.2 Conclusion

This study, using the formalist literary theoretical method, analysizes the elements of oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimara-Ezeigbo's selected Nigerian children's literature, namely:*Snake Child and Star Baby, Fire from the Holy Mountain, The Adventures of Anum the Tortoise, Ezezemale and the Tree Spirits, Whisker the Brave Cat,Asa and the Little Stream* and *Red One and the Wizard of Mula*. The literature review of this research has shown that, although, several critical investigations have been carried out on Nigerian children's literature, most of which are focused on the linguistic elements, contextual/thematic interpretations, and identifications of structural motifs. There are less works on the examination of the elements of oral narrative techniques in Nigerian children's fictions. Thus, this study is a step towards

bridging this gap by surveying the elements of oral narrative techniques in selected Nigerian children's narratives. It is in that regard that the presented work proceeded on the proposition that theformalist critical poetics can be used as viable critical tools for analyzing elements of oral narrative techniques in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's narrative texts to demonstrate the creative use to which Akachi has put the resources of oral tradition in her Nigerian children's narrative fictions. In this way, therefore, the study has illustrated that the selected Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's children's texts,either for thematic, structural or aesthetic functions, are laced with elements of oral narrative techniques which can be critically identified and analyzed as the supernatural, magical, talking animals, and journey quest.

In the analysis of the supernatural and the magical elements of oral narrative techniques in the selected texts, the study has found that the deployment of the supernatural and magical elements of oral narrative technique in form of objects, characters, and settings in children's literature manipulate and defamiliarize the formal and structural features of narratives, and by extension defamiliarize the perceptual realities of the child readers. It is against this backdrop that this dissertation argues that the defamiliarizing effect of the supernatural and the magical in children's literature thematize and heighten the child readers' belief in the supernatural and the transcendental worldview of the society in which the texts are crafted, and it also exposes the child readers to the darkness in the life of the society in which they live, and invariably the darkness in them as children within that society.

Also, in the analysis of the deployment of talking animals as an element of oral narrative technique in the selected texts, the study has shown that this element is not only an instructional device, but it is also a structural device meant to allow the narrative text to let shapeshifting characters to blur the boundaries of good and evil, human and animal; to humanize, socialize,

and educate the child readers; andto racialize animals, where the animals themselves take on stereotypical traits of marginalized groups of people. In the analysis of journey quest, the dissertation has found out that that journey quest is a textual structural site that allows children's narratives tohelp the child readers understand that their lives are a series of journeys, and they can also have some control over their own destinies; it can also be deployed to assist the child readers to connect the journey to their lives and to parallel the hero's steps in the text to the heroic nature in their own individual journeys, no matter how mundane they may consider their daily lives to be.

On the whole, the study argues that the supernatural, the magical, talking animals, and journey quest are all elements of oral narrative technique deployed in written texts to achieve thematic, didactic, structural, and aesthetic purpose(s), not only in Nigerian children's narratives but also in all other forms of literary works.

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