THE ORAL IN THE WRITTEN: A STUDY OF ORALITY IN SELECTED WEST AFRICAN SHORT STORIES.

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically and fully acknowledged by means of references.

Signature

14th Nov, 1996

Date

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled `THE ORAL IN THE WRITTEN' A STUDY OF ORALITY IN SELECTED WEST AFRICAN SHORT STORIES", by HAMID EL-DOOD MAHDI meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my affectionate mother, Hawa El-Shaffee (Bint. El-ANSARI), and My kind and generous father who devoted all his life for our service.

AND

My only one, the source of my inspiration, the driving force behind every success I achieve and the embodiment of faith, sincerity and loyalty, my wife, Amira Yousuf.

The fruit of our sacred marriage, my Son, Mohamed.

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ABSTRACT

THE ORAL IN THE WRITTEN: A STUDY OF ORALITY IN SELECTED WEST AFRICAN SHORT STORIES.

There has been no sustained study of the fusion of the techniques of African oral narratives and of modern literature. The short story genre has been the chief victim of this neglect. Occasionally, one sees a critic who, in studying the African novel, points out what it borrows from traditional oral narratives but this is hardly extended to cover the form of the short story .

The modern African writer's background as a "cultural hybrid", means that he is a man of two worlds. Born and reared in an inherited oral culture and through formal education, imbibed the cultural apparatus of the West. In attempting to write, he realizes that he could fuse narrative traditions from the two cultures and thus come up with a uniquely blended art form. It is this processs of fusion as it obtains in the West African short story that concerns us here. In other words, we are examining how selected West African short story writers have fused their indigenous oral narrative techniques into the fabric of an inherited Western narrative form for the purpose of expressing peculiar African experiences.

The presupposition is that the West African writer of short stories relies on elements from two literary traditions. Precisely the nature and degree of this welding and how it produced new short stories in West Africa is also the concern of this study.

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter surveys the short story and its origins in both the worlds of Europe and of Africa. The history of writing in Africa which is closely related to the advent of colonialism and missionaries is also examined.

Chapter two looks into the definitions of folklore, significance of orature, the impact of the missionaries and how the oral finds itself in the world of the print.

Chapter three is a textual analysis of five oral based short stories - 'the complete Gentleman; 'Sarzan'; 'A child in the Bush of Ghost'; 'The Pot of Gold; and finally 'the Eyes of The Statue', written by Amos Tutuola (Nigeria), Birago Diop (Senegal), Olympe Bhely - Quenun (Benin Republic), Mohammedul Nuktarl (Muritania) and Camara Laye, (Guinea) respectively. A textual analysis is then carried out for the four Western based short stories in chapter Four, namely 'Black Girl[1] and 'Tribal Marks' by Sembene Ousmane (Senegal), 'Two sisters' by Ama Ata Aido (Ghana) and 'The Truly Married Woman[1] by Abioseh Nicol, (Sirra-leone).

The final chapter is the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SHORT STORY

The modern short story is considered to be one of the oldest forms of the narrative in the world of literature; it is the natural heir of the oral tale. The short story started verbally - people meet and begin telling stories to each other. In the course of time along with the advancement and development of the world, the modern short story developed and assumed a form which is different from the old oral tale. Thus, it is the origins of the short story in both the West and in Africa that this chapter explores. It will also give a generalized historical background of writing in West Africa.

1.1 DEFINITIONS AND ORIGINS OF THE SHORT STORY

The short story is an important but usually misunderstood form of writing, therefore it is helpful to understand what a short story is and how it differs from non-fiction, such as the essay; as well as from other forms of fiction, such as the novel. Ridout and Stuart share the idea that the short story has often been associated with the idea of oneness of impression - this impression is attained by developing a single incident in one locale, with a small group of characters and covering a single, relatively short span of time. However, they feel that such definition of the short story may not be always applicable to short story. They,

therefore, add that "the short story is prose writing rather than verse. Although the short story is neither verse nor poetry, it may have a rhythmic pattern".[1] According to them there are no fixed limits, but the short story generally is fictitious prose not exceeding ten thousand words. A story running to about thirty five thousand words may be referred to as a novella or novelette; anything in excess of that is referred to as a novel. They conclude in their definition of the short story is most acceptable and does not allow too many exceptions might be expressed as follows "a unified work in prose usually no longer than ten thousand words containing elements of fictitious- dealing in a dramatic manner with a character who is faced with a problem about which he must make a decision"[2] This is not the end of the matter. For Fowler in his A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms defines the short fiction as follows:

> "Probably the most ancient of all literary terms; the terms cover everything from the fable, folktale or fairy-story, to such sophisticated and highly developed structures as the German Novella, via the stories of the Decameron, and Cervantes' examplary tales. Like the epic, short fiction goes back in time far beyond the art of writing, and it was not until relatively recently in the history of literature that stories arose from anything but a common stock[3]"

It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the short story, because of the requirement of magazines of everwidening circulation, came into its own and attracted

great writers to practice it, like Pushkin, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, Anton Checkhov, - James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka and D.H. Lawrence, as well as Maupassant who excelled in this particular genre. Fowler says "one of the earliest, and best attempts to define the genre was Poe's definition in two reviews 1842 - 1847 of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tale"Short Prose narrative requiring from a half -hour to one or two hours in its perusal; working towards a single effect, created by incident chosen with economy and a rigorous sense of necessity"[4] . Other critics, most of them in fact themselves practitioners of the art, such as H.E. Bates, Sean O. Faolain and V.S. Pritchett have stressed that fact that short fiction must be examplary and representative, a world in brief compass; that it establishes unity of impression and a feeling of totality, by concentrating on a single character, event or emotion, and by compression and avoidance of digression or a repetition, that it satisfies our craving for paradox and shape our longing to perceive a dramatic pattern and significance in experience.

> I like ambiguity and mystery, and the short story lends itself to that more tentative experience of life. The novel, by its very size, needs to include wisdom and overall vision. I prefer the vividness and the immediacy of the story, its ability to appear before the reader, be intensely alive for a brief moment, then return to darkness-and yet leave itself with the reader, lodge itself in his memory[5]

In another definition, Beachcroft also states that a short story may take only a few minutes to read. It may be

written in unobtrusive prose - yet in those few minutes it may enter into the reader's mind[6]. The Nigerian, Iheakaram cites the definitions of the short story by Walter Allen and Brander Mathew. According to him, "the short story deals with a single incident; the fruit of a single moment of time; a single perception". For the latter, a short story deals with "a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation. It has individuality, compression and completeness"[7]. He provides more elaboration:

> It may range from the short story of five thousand words to the long story of twelve to fifteen thousand words.... it is an imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character. It contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment organized as to produce a single impression[8]

The short story can be anything the author decides it shall be. A death of a horse could be regarded as a story as well as a young girl's affair. The whole thing lies on what appeals to the authors. Bates writes that "a story should be a story: a record of things happening, full of incident and accidents, swift movement, unexpected development leading through suspense to climax and satisfying denouement"[9] On his part, O. Brien, to whom the short story in Britain and America owes an unpayable debt, holds that "the first text of a short story, in any qualitative analysis, is the measure of how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected fact or incident"[10]. He continues to give more convincing explanations

that "the first necessity of the short story, at the set out, is necessariness, the story, that is to say, must spring from an impression or perception pressing enough, acute enough, to have made the writer write".[11]

All of these definitions have one thing in common, none of them has a satisfactory finality, none defines the short story with an indisputable epigrammatic accuracy which will fit all short stories. "so it is that the short story has come to mean all sort of things, situation, episode, characterization, or narrative in effective a vehicle for every man's talent".[12] It is obvious we come back again to the sensible conclusion that the short story, whether short or long, poetical or reported, plotted or sketched, concrete or cobweb, has an insistent and external fluidity that slips through the hands, a situation well described below:

> There is one thing which these many varied definition all have in common. All omit to point out the advantages of elasticity, in both choice of character and use of time, which the short story holds over the novel. The novel is predominantly an exploration of life, reflecting and describing in some form the impact, entanglement fruition, destruction or fulfillment of human emotions and desires. Characters begin young, they grow old, they move from scene to scene, from place to place. This development of character, this forward movement of time, have always been and perhaps always will be the pulse and nerve of the novel. But in the short story time need not move, except by an infinitesimal fraction, the characters themselves need not move; they need not grow old; indeed there may be no characters at all. A novel without characters would be a tiresome affair, but a novel with characters who never spoke a word would surely be more tiresome

> still. Yet many a good short story has characters who never open their lips. A novel whose characters were never named whose location and time were never stated, might well impose on its readers a strain that they would justifiably refuse to bear. Yet many a short story has characters which bear no more marks of identification than the anonymous and universal label of 'boy' or "girl", "man" or "woman etc"[1]

The short story remains elastic, and continues to increase its elasticity, as long as human nature remain the infinitely plastic and variable. From these definitions and characterization, it is reasonable to consider the origins of that form of literature in the West.

Bates, for instance at the conclusion of the Modern Short Story in 1941, prophesized that if the war then in progress produced nothing else in the way of literature it would certainly provide a rich crop of short stories. But his prophesy as to the probability of new golden age of the short story, such as that happened on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1920's and 1930s was, therefore, dismally unfulfilled. There were, of course, other factors militating against it, not the least of them being the economic situation. Even before the war in England the little magazines to which writers of that generation contributed were already dead or dying. Nor was it merely little magazines that disappeared. In America a magazine such as Colliers with a reputed circulation of some millions, was unable to survive; other notable names followed it. Everywhere, therefore, the market for stories dwindled. To this pessimistic picture must be added the fact

that the reading public, not only in Britain and America, but also on the continent, showed no disposition to revise its age-old prejudice against reading short stories in volume form.

The history of the short story through its different phases of myth and legend, fable and parable are not easy to be traced. On that score Bates writes:

> The father of the modern short story in all its manifestations of poetic realism Nicola Vasilievitch GoGol who was born at Sorochintsky, in Russia, in 1809; in exactly the same year Edgar Allen Poe was born in Baltimore. GoGol died in 1852. Poe in 1949. And from these two short lives may be said to follow the twin streams of the modern short story... GoGol marks the beginning of the wider application of visual writing."[11]

E.J. O'Brien, well-known as the editor of the best short stories of the year on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1920s and 1930, conceives the short story not as a new but as an ancient and continuous art. The English short story is a modern literary form, although it can actually show a continuous development from King Alfred to the Present day. It reached one of its highest points in Chaucer's time and his successors. Beachcroft on the other hand argues that the short stories that have survived in written form from the antique world are rare, and those that have been handed down by word of mouth, and recorded in later centuries. In that regard he says:

> Such stories as we may find in the Gesta Romanorum of medieval times or in the collection of the brother's Grimm, are full

> of magic, myth and wildforces very few of them, in fact, have much resemblance to modern art of the short story... the modern short story, that is, the prose narrative of up to ten thousand words or so, seems so obvious a literary form that it is only reasonable to suppose that it must have existed for centuries, and that so many Chekhovs, Kiplings, Somerset Maughams and Salingers of the past have all been composing stories that give us brief, vivid pictures of of the daily life.[15]

Scholars of medieval literature believe that if we have got to look at the historical development of modern short story in English, as a part from the early moods and far-off echoes of Anglo Saxon, we must begin with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. To expect a modern point of view in short story writing would be ridicule, for stories are directed towards moral advice.[16] The Canterbury Tales give us a compendium of every kind of story that was coined in the 14th century, from the saintly to the obscene. It is a wonderful presentation of the pilgrims at the Inn and on the road in the sense that Chekhov intended. To that end, Chaucer contributed generously to the blossoming of the short story in the West.

In the seventeenth century the attacks on the stage are apt to represent fiction as mere lies. But early in the eighteenth century, with the more stolid middle-class merchants appeared in short ancedotes in Defoe's Journal, the whole nation of fiction is moving towards truth seen in every day life. "if we retrace these antecedents through the centuries we discover an interesting point. There are two different sources, two different forms from which the modern

short story might have descended; the ancient spoken story and the acted mime"[17]

Many of the Medieval stories have ancient origins. It is customary to trace the earliest history of the story to Jatakas, which came to Europe from the East, and can be described as a collection of stories emanating from the teaching of the Buddha. From this source came such famous stories as, 'The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs', and many others that descended to medieval times as fables, parables etc. These ancient prototypes, in fact, came into existence as vehicles of religion and moral instruction. It is sometimes said both by priest and historian that the parables of Christ are most wonderful of all short stories. However, the very fact of their historical existence emphasizes that the short story is from the out set deeply involved with a religious mode of thinking. Medieval homilists had books full of anecdotes arranged alphabetically, so that they could look up any vice or virtue from accidie to zeal, and tell a story about it. Elizabethan century essayists were for ever insisting on the moral purpose of their anecdotes.[18]

It is obvious that the idea that the short story ought to be nuggets of moral teaching, that ought to have a moral motive is very deeply rooted. Yes indeed, the short story is older by centuries than the beginning of American literature, but the American short story is one of the most distinct and important modern branches of the form.

The movement most deeply affecting the short story towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, realism and naturalism, are represented in the first instance, by Hamlin Garland, and in the other, by Steven Crane, Jack London and Sherwood Anderson. Other writers could have been selected to illustrate this particular phases in the development of the short story. Frank Norris, Teodore Dreiser, and William Catter all wrote short stories, but their contribution in this field fell short of their excellence and importance as novelists. Several of the writers already mentioned were active after the First World War, but the period since then has been dominated by those who first began to publish in the nineteenth - twentieth or early thirties. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemmingway, John Steinback, William Faulkner and Katherine Anne Porter[19]

On January 14, 1832, Edgar Allan Poe published in Philadelphia Saturday Courier, the story in which he utilized for the first time the techniques of single effect upon which the modern short story has been built.

> what began as an American invention has remained an American speciality: of all the practitioners of the short story in English, the greatest ones, have been Americans with six exceptions. Kipling was an Indian colonial, Conrad a deracinated Pole, Joyce and O' connor Irishmen, Katherine Mansfield, a New Zealander, and D.H. Lawarence, Englishman. In the same year America has produced not only Poe and Hawthorne who together created the short story as a form, but Henry James, Stephen Crane, William F., Katherine Ann Porter etc...[20]

Furthermore, other contributions to the theory and practice of the short story was the local colour movement that dominated American fiction from the Civil war to the near turn of the century. Brete Harte, popularized the short story and gave it sanction as a distinct form.[21] However, a considerable light has been thrown on the use of the short story, this has been well-illuminated here below:

> The short story is one of the oldest forms of literature - perhaps the oldest of all, it probably originated around primitive camp fires, when hunters described, with unconscious art and imaginative emphasis, their deeds of the day. It found more formal expression in the classical fables and in some of the tales of the old Testament and Apocrypha. In the middle ages, it flowered in many different patterns later, the renaissance gave birth to the novella, which is simplified by the Decameron of Boccaccio. From this model came the French Conte and such collection of stories in English as William Painter's "The Palace of Pleasure"[22]

Some observers have attempted to link the short story vogue with minimalism, which emerged during 1980s as an ascendent of literary style in the United States. Minimalism has been described as pared-down writing about pared-down lives. Its 20th century progenitor is Hemmingway, its best known contemporary master is Raymond Carven.[23]

The sudden emergence of the short story is attributable to the development of fiction in general. The vast expansion of the reading public and the rise of the circulating library have caused minds and so more pens to grapple with the techniques of the novel. A close look at the eighteenth

century shows that the short story was not a famous form of writing, and with the advent of the nineteenth century it was labelled as an abbreviated novel. At the end of the nineteenth century, writers began to realize that the short story created problems of story - telling and composition that were quite different compared to that of the novel.

In its various stages of development, the short story has frequently been compared with some other literary forms, sometimes with some artistic forms outside literature. It is thus declared to have affinities with drama; with narrative ballad; with the lyric and the sonnet. It has also shown itself to be pictorial rather dramatic, to be more closely allied to painting and cinema than to stage. It is thus distinct from the novel. "The short story in its use of action is near to drama than to the novel... They have affinities neither is sponsored by a tradition; both are, accordingly free, both; still are self conscious, show self-imposed discipline and regard for form"[24]

The Palace of Pleasure by William Painter was first published in (1566, thirty years before Romeo and Juliet was produced, and forty years before the Duchess of Malfi. However, it is regarded as the most famous store-house of stories of the whole Elizabethan period. After the restoration a less voluminous form of fiction began to appear at first mainly translated in French, this was the story of gallantry and intrigue, often pretending to be a revelation of

scandalous goings - on among the gentry and nobility.[25] Coming the more contemporary times, the social historical circumstances of Europe and the Americans began to exert pressures on the form of the short story. This is a point which is highlighted as follows:

> The beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, commercial opportunity and the development of fictional techniques had conspired to give exceptional encouragement to the short story writers in the twentieth century, other factors accumulated to facilitate the growth of the short story is English-speaking countries. English writers have been influenced by stories of Guy de Maupassant more than French - another stimulus to English story writers the emergence of Russian literature represented by Tchekov, this besides the gradual decline in public appreciation of poetry.Many prospective poets found themselves without an audience, the short story then became an alternative medium for them.[26]

On the technical advancement in the short story, it has been stated that Edgar Allan Poe it was who brought the short story to a point of technical perfection which has never been surpassed. It claimed to have 1,500,000 adherents in America alone, exactly ten years after Poe's death. The vast forces of age-old superstition set crumbling by the touch of education, a public inexhaustibly hungry for melodrama and the supernatural, a sudden increase in those who could read and write - all these factors mingled not forgetting the melodramatic spread of a religion that captured and held its adherents by fear and the exploitation of both the glamour and the terror of the unknown, made the age completely ready for

the spread of Poe's virus.[27]

As it was eclipsed by drama, the short story was later eclipsed, in the eighteenth century, by the rise of the novel. But towards the end of that century, often to the detriment of the short story, they were to develop side by side. A general summing up of the emergence of the modern short story is well - worth quoting here:

> Our short story is sharply marked off from the other form. To be sure, it reveals itself as merely a special case, and particular development of the endless succession of distinctively short narratives, which since the world began, have dealt with those life - units that were simple, brief, and complete in their brevity. But it differs from them in degree if not in kind... the influence of the Russian and French short story writers came late to England, where the form of the short story was molded by the strong hand of Kipling. While the influence of Kipling was at its height, two world famous novelists, Joseph Conrad and Henry James, were also bringing their weight to bear on short stories.[28]

The nineteenth century development of the short story like most development in art was the result not of a single influence but of the clash of several influences, such as music and painting. So with Poe whose influence met that of Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenv and Flaubert not in the street of Baltimore but on the banks of the Seine. The French, interested always in precise forms of any art, naturally welcomed the new development of the short story with open arms. Balzac, Merinee, and Gautier are all roughly contemporaries of Poe, but it was not until the influence of

Tolstoy. Turgenev, and Flaubert began to be felt in the saloons of Paris that the short story was to move forward and revitalize.[29] The spread of the short story from the United States to France is denied because "Balzac in the eighteenth - thirties was writing prodigiously and by 1846, that is before Poe died, Turgenev had produced a series of what are, inspite of all their poetry, terrible pictures of the conditions of Russian serfdom".[30] But perhaps, the greatest of all literary influences on this short story in the years following the second world war has been the tremendous prestige of Somerset Maugham both in his practice and in his critical opinions.

The conditions under which the short story could begin to thrive best, free from the poking of moral umbrella, and class-bound writers, did not begin to exist in England until the ninties. Even in America one can see that Brete Harte who was born in 1839 was to bring a touch of poetic realism to his excellent stories of the West, so no one in England for many years had done anything at all comparable with the short story.

In the development of the short story after Poe (1809), the ten year recurrence of the major names is almost monotonous: Herman Melville (1819), Fitz-James O. Brien (1928), Brete Hart (1819), Ambrose Burce (1862), Sara Orne Jewette (1849), Mary E. Wilkin (1862), O. Herry (1867),Jack London (1976), Stephen Crane (1971). These writers inherited something from one another.[31]

In the nineteenth century the short story took a series of halting steps forward. In Europe, on the other hand, culture rose readily and naturally to the top of artistic life. The literary life and output of Europe appeared richly civilized, smooth, and settled. Under such circumstances it would be strange if Europe had not something to offer, in the short story as well as in literature generally, that America did not and could not possess. It did in fact produce several, but from many distinguished names two stand out as the pillars of the entire structure of the modern short story. Guy de Maupassant, born in 1850, and , Anton Pavilovitch Tchekov. In Russia, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gorky, Dostoevsky, Garshim, Andre-Jeve, Korolenko; and in France, Flaubert, Coopee, Daudet, Anatole France, all actively contributed to the short story form. These names unsupported by Tchekov and Maupassant, make their period one of the richest in the history of the development of the short story. It has been reported that no single writer in England made a contribution comparable in weight and artistry to that of Tolstoy.[32]

From the nineties onwards the most important influence on the English short story is to be the contribution of a woman. It is true that without the touches of Constance Garnett in translating Turgenev, Tolstoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Gorky, and Tchehove, the history of the twentieth century literature, notably that of the short story and drama, must inevitably have been a very different thing. Immediately after the second

World War was over two important writers found their natural expression, as prose writers, solely and exclusively in the short story. Katherine Mansfield and A.E. Coppard, succeeded more than any other writers of their day in assisting the English short story to a state of adult emancipation. They both attempted to bring to the short story some of the fancy, delicacy, shape and colour.[33]

After the war, in the years of immediate bewilderment, Sherwood Anderson who was influenced by Hemingway's style in breaking up every known style started writing stories which broke free from the old tradition. Until the period after the first world war these influences as far as the short story was concerned, came mainly from France and Russia, but in the nineteenth and twentieth, the wind began to make itself felt from America and in a leser degree from Ireland. In the immediate post-war years in Britain, the prominent figures of the English short story were Kipling, H. G. Wells, O Henry, Maugham, Goldsworthy, and Conrad. Until the arrival of Coppard and Katherine Mansfield no English writer, with the exception of Kipling, had made a reputation almost solely as a writer of stories. A third group comprises of Aldous Huxely, Virginia Woolf, Joyce and D.H Lawarence.[34]

> The backbone of the English short story is formed indeed largely by the generation born roughly between 1900-1910. To that decade belong V.S. Pritchett, L.A.G. Strong Mulachi Whitaker, H.A. Manhood, Leslier Halward, Arthur Calder Marshal, Pauline Smith, James Hanely, Elizabeth Bowen, G.F. Green, Geraint Goodwin, Beachcroft

and Dorothy Edward.[35]

On the whole, in considering the short story in the West, it is conceivable to outline some recurrent stylistic features known in the short story writing in the west.

1.2 WESTERN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Generally speaking, the conventional, mainstream of short story tradition of the West rests firmly on the manipulation mostly of such devices as plot, tone, point of view, setting, dialogue and characterization. The reader of novels and short stories structured on these devices is constantly aware of the manipulating hands of the author no matter how much he attempts to hide aesthetically. At the centre of every narrative is man but the social view of man is not uniform in all cultures. The west predominantly sees man as an individual being capable of charting a course of action within a social setting. While traditional African societies share this view of man, emphasis in Africa is not on man as an isolated, introvert being but on man as a communal being. The western concept of man as an individual being with claims which often run counter to group interest has fundamently affected the art of characterization in the western narrative tradition. Whereas strict individualization of character is the norm in the western short story, expansiveness appears to predominate as the ideal in traditional African oral narrative.

It is worthwhile, before delving into West African world

where the short story shall be treated, it is reasonable to throw some light on the roots of writing in West Africa.

1.3 HISTORY OF WRITING IN WEST AFRICA

The colonialists, engineered the process of the alienation and estrangement of the African from his own culture and tradition: "The collision of cultures in Africa involved the loss of the traditional heritage which is so painful".[36] Commenting on the claims of the Whites, Blair states that:

> The Whiteman, did not bring an (Age of Enlightenment), to Africa, in the late nineteenth century only the means for converting an oral tradition into written literature... the Whiteman superimposed his own in the colonial period, thus adding to the traditional literary heritage new themes, new attitudes and new inspiration, together with the adoption of a new language and new means of expression.[37]

Such claims and allegations, without slight doubt, would stir the still pool in the depth of every patriot and make him revolt for his wounded dignity. Chinweizu, Jemie and Ihechukwu removed the misty curtain and write thus:

> It should be borne in mind (a) the written literature has a long tradition in parts of Africa (b) That Africa was not totally unliterate when European arrived there; and (c) that some parts of Africa had written literature long before many parts of Western Europe. Long before Caesar led his Roman legions to bring civilization to Barbarian Gaul to Celtic Britain and to the Druidic German tribes of vercingetrorik in the 1st century B.C. The African Nile valley civilization, Pharaohnic Egypt, Nubia, Kush,

> Meroe (Sudan) and Ethiopia had literate culture-in territories where Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia are located today.[38]

It is worth mentioning that the early European interest and awareness of Africa grew out of writings of Arab geographers, explorers and Portuguese historians. The Arabs referred to such discovery as "ilm a Jaib al-Buldan", the science of the marvels of countries. However, between the fifteenth and the end of the nineteenth century this awareness was boosted and strengthened by the manuscript, and personal diaries of European explorers, merchants and missionaries who visited or settled in Africa's soil and also through the slave traders and colonial contacts. Blair points out that the revival of interest in Africa was taking place in Europe. This was encouraged by researchers of some of more enlightened colonial administrators. Such as F.V. Equibeeq, by ethnologists or social anthropologists and then spread to French writers and scholars as well.[39]

The white invader could not believe his eyes when he found himself landing on the African paradise. So the best way through which he can evacuate and pour his anger and smouldering hatred of the African was to write negatively about the land and the people. Jahn quotes the forward by August Seidel which appeared in the first great anthology of African oral literature in 1896:

> A wild African! A black beast! Fancy him actually thinking and feeling, his imagination providing creative! More than

> whatever, fancy him having a sense and appreciation of Poetic, of rhythm and rhyme! it sounds quite incredible ..... and everyone was amazed to find that the *Negro thinks and feels as we ourselves* think and feel.[10]

The argument is pursued by Obiechina when he stated that before the emergence of western literary education introduced by the colonial and missionary expeditions, African children were inducted into the traditional way of life in two ways: a) by formal teaching in initation ceremonies, and b) by informal teaching in seeing and following the steps of the grown-ups through watching and imitating. He notes:

> The most important single factor is the introduction of literacy into West Africa where, before, the dominant cultural tradition had been based on the spoken word. Literacy is crucial to the emergence of the novel, because, the novel is meant to be read by the individual in quite isolation, and complex narrative is more easily sustained and followed by reading it than hearing it, Moreover, the achievement of literacy produces psychological and social capacities in the individual which facilitate the growth of the novel.[11]

Looking at it in retrospect, the spread of literacy would cause many changes in human life and the society. It is a natural reaction based on many factors out of which are: literacy broadens the scope of thinking and increases the mobility of the individual's mind by widening the individual's experience. Literacy also makes both the writer and the audience fly imaginatively beyond the horizon and visit other literary worlds and enter into a new situation or, at least to

picture them with a certain degree of certainty. This situation is well-described below:

> Through the introduction of literacy, the corpus of western, indeed world civilization its institution and values, arts and sciences, philosophies and theologies, its authentic values, and the artifacts of its martial culture were made available to people in West Africa. Moreover, the use of a cosmopolitan languages like French and English as a medium of instruction provide a vital link for West African peoples who speak different mother tongues.[42]

Other gathered factors, perhaps contributed in pushing forward the wheel of education and made rural exodus are well portrayed by Obiechina when he says "the creation of Westernised urban settlements, and the establishment of a cash economy, modern industries opened new opportunities to the individual, and drew together people from different ethnic areas into urban aggregation"[43]

By the eighteenth-century, with the growth of the conventional novel, Africa began to be used as a stage from which Europeans derived their inspiration and drew their materials. In fact the Europeans used Africa's soil as a mirror to reflect their stagnant hatred through which they claimed the opposite.

By the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Africa witnessed the peak of Europe's intellectual adventurism. Writers like Edgar Wallace, Rider Haggard and Evelyn Waugh released the rein of their pens to distort the image of Africa and depict it in ridiculous and funny ways for

the amusement of the easily deceived masses of the English, urban industrial population.

Obiechina distinguishes the realistic European writers on West Africa into two categories; first, there are the non-western writers who had either not been to West Africa or had paid a fleeting visits to Africa and who consequently wrote their novels in the light of their personal impressions which were based on historical, anthropological data and the popular image Europeans had formed about Africa and Africans. The landmark among them is Graham Green. Others worth mentioning are Elspeth Huxley and Joseph Conrad. The second group of foreign writers are those who have lodged in Africa for some time and who made use of the first-hand experience in drawing the materials of their novels. Well known among them is Joyce Cary.[14]

It is necessary to note that there is a demarcation line between novels written by native West Africans and those by non-natives using the West African setting. The difference is well stated below:

> If, for example, we compare Joyce Cary's Nigerian villagers and Chinua's villagers, we notice that Cary's Nigerian peasant with the exception of Mr. Johnson speak like Cary himself, whereas Achebe's Nigerian villagers weave into the fabric of their every conversation allusion from folktale, legend and myth, and back their opinion and attitudes with appropriately chosen proverbs, traditional maxims and cryptic anecdotes.[15]

As a result of their cultural commitment the West African writers, tend to show a strong didacticism in their works and

inspired by a wish to rescue the culture which have been distorted by foreign writers in their writings, and shortly afterwards, the reassertion of the merits of African and African culture, traditions, values, have become, then the supreme task of the committed African writers. They had to paint a picture of traditional African society opposed to that presented by the European which denied the African any form of dignity. As Ngugi rightly remarks "what African novelist has attempted to do is to restore the African character to history. The African novelist has turned his back on the christian god and resumed the broken dialogue with the gods of his own people... Peter Abraham and Achebe have paved the way".[46] Taiwo pictures the situation even more clearly:

> One outstanding characteristics of West African writing is a return to the past which was almost wiped out by two important historical events, the slave trade and colonialism. The writers attempt to recreate the simplicity and romantic attraction of the traditional way of life ... distorted by his contact with the western world.[47]

If we shift again to the Western Education we may find out that colonial education was geared purposely towards brainwashing. Children, for instance, were well - predisposed by bodies in the field of education to accept the false fact of being with no history. However, education to some extent reached a state of cultural deprivation particularly in French territories. The doings of colonial education is well described by Ngugi:

> African through his colonial education found his image of the past distorted. His colonial middle-class education and brain-washing told him that he had no history. The blackman did not really really exist, had slept in the dark continent until the Livingstones and the Stanley woke him into history through a mixture of piety and violence, the Bible and the gun.[18]

The task assumed still greater urgency in the minds of African writers though many of Africa's societies won their political freedom, but they remained in varying degrees subjected to economic and cultural domination. In this regard, both colonialism and capitalism are considered to have got one message which the exploitation of the oppressed people economically, physically, mentally, culturally etc... Christianity, on the other hand came along by the missionary bodies whose aim was to respiritualize the already spiritual society. These acts led to the distortion of history, values and the hierarchical social orders...etc all are reversed and sustained.

The first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the establishment of elementary and grammer schools in Freetown by various missionary bodies. Schools were established in Bathurst, Cape Coast, Accra and Lagos as well as in Freetown. Education then, was geared toward producing clerks, teachers, evangelists ...etc. Local history, tradition and customs of the people were recorded down by some western African in collaboration with the missionaries, sometimes into vernacular and sometimes into English e.g Hausa Tales and Traditions,

(1969), Dahomean Narratives (1958) and Akan Ashanti Folktales (1st 1930-second 1969) etc... written by Neil Skinner, Melville. J and Herskovits and R.S. Rattray respectively.

About the endless exploitation of Africa which is not only confirmed or attributed to the West and the role of African writers in Portraying such reality Ngugi writes "the exploitation is facilitated by the ruling classes, whether in the traditional African community or by the middle classes in the colonial era... this is the background, the reality, against which Africans are writing".[49] In French West Africa, cultural nationalism was expressed in the Negritude movement and in English-speaking West Africa in the psycho-political concept of African personality.

West African writers who attempt to resurrect West African cultural life in fiction have chosen to do so through the oral tradition of West Africa. The essential reality which can never be concealed is the fact that oral tradition continued to exist side by side with encroaching Western literary tradition. The novels of Amos Tutoula, Achebe, and the plays of Clark and Soyinka all serve as reflective mirrors for African traditional symbols, images and folklore. In Nigeria, for instance, the spring from which the major popular creative productions sprang was the town of Onitsha in 1947.

It is worthwhile to note that in the skilful hands of the following writers, African literature dressed in the cloth of Africanity and locality became a means for expression,

depicting vividly the African society with all its vices and virtues.

The beads of the African literary necklace include; E. Casely Hayford who wrote one of the earliest prose narratives titled Ethiopia unbound (1911), and R.E. Obeng who wrote Eighteen Pence (1943) as the real pioneers in West African fiction. Following them are some non-fictional, and semi-biographical works which emerged in the 1960's. Among these are Kossoh Town boy, The African, and The African Child, written by Cole, Conton and Camara Laye respectively. Amos Tutuola, as has been aforementioned was among the first magnificent writers to pour traditional apparatus in the fictional mould. He was greatly influenced by the works of D.O. Fagunwa. His first novel The Palm Wine Drinkard (1952) is the first novel to be published by a major British Company. Cyprian Ekwensi comes next to Tutuola in the literary beads; followed by Achebe in the chronological merit of the beads, then appeared T.M. Aluko, Sembene Uusman, Yambo Ouologuem, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Soyinka. etc. Among the various themes which these novelists tackled are tradition versus change, conflict between traditionalism and Modernism, corruption, violence, decadence, injustice, social issues, poverty, Islam and Christianity...etc...

At this point, it should be worthwhile to establish the broad origins of the short story in West Africa following the due consideration to its counterparts in the West. Such brief

introduction to writing is inevitable and essential for better understanding.

1.4 ORIGINS OF THE SHORT STORY IN WEST AFRICA

The beginnings of the short story in West Africa is traceable to intellectual activities in Ghana and later in Nigeria. According to Agovi, in Ghana there appeared

> Between (1932-40) the first lady of Pen and Parliament" Mabel Dove Danquah. As a Journalist and short story writer in the 1930s and 40s, she was considered as a herald as well as harbinger to the African new writing in European language. Elites began to establish literary and social clubs. The origin of these clubs can be traced to the early of the 19th century. Towards the end of the 19th century they had become as rendezvous for intellectual self-improvement, and institution of major significance in the rennaissnce and development of creative writing in Ghana.[50]

In the opinion of Agovi, the short story writing in Ghana as a serious occupation can first be traced to J.B. Blay who published his first fiction 'Emilia' in 1944. Among the many landmarks are Ama Ata Aidoo, Ashong Kata; and a number of Young writers, among them are; Kofi Anyidoho, the Poet, R.A. Cantey, Playwright etc.

The short story in Ghana has provided evidence of its close links with the broad masses of the people in their inspiration to retain their integrity in the face of the changes. It has revealed an abiding respect and loyalty to the culture assumptions, oral tradition and tradition of

creativity of the people. By the end of the nineteenth century, it became evident from the works of missionaries such as Widmann, H.N. Riis and J.G. Christaller that with the foundations of a new literary education, languages like Fanti, Twi, Ga and Ewe had been reduced to print. By the turn of the century, elites like Ephraim Casely Hayford, John Mansah Sarbah and Garl Reinford were ready to take over the rein of the throne from colonialists.

On the heels of Ghana were developments in Nigeria, another Anglophone West African country. Iheakaram stresses the fact that the short story is older than the novel. In this regard reference is made to Aluko's seminal contribution in the field of the short story writing, because in 1947 he contributed "No welcome For the Ghost" which appeared in the West African Review in January 1949, and his "seat of All Wealth" was broadcast on the B.B.C in Dec. 1949. Thus, Aluko achieved prominence in the short story writing long before his first novel One Man, one wife (1954) was published. Iheakram exerts no efforts to give us a cursory survey of the short story in Nigeria - Achebe's short story "The old order in conflict with the New" was published in the University Herald of the University College Ibadan, in May 1952. The story appears under the title "Beginning of the End'; in 'the Sacificial Egg; and other stories, (1962). Achebe's other collection is "Girls At war and other stories'(1972) Reflections: Nigerian Prose and verse (1962) is a unique

anthology of stories, poems, plays and articles. It contains six short stories, Poem, plays and articles. It contains six short stories by six Nigerian Prose writers five of whom are today known more for their novels than for their short stories and the African voices (1970) is another anthology. Cyprian Ekwensi's three collections, The Rain Maker (1965), Lokotown and other stories (1966), and Restless City and Christmas cold with other stories, (1975) Aniebo's collection, OF wife, Talisman and the Dead (1983) contains such early short stories as "The forbidden Fruits', 'Dilemma' (Nigeria Magazine, 1963) and 'the symbols', (Nigeria magazine, 1966). Other short story writers, Nkem Nwankwo who contributed alot in (Nigeria Magazine), Flora Nwapa's two collections: Lagos and other stories (1974) and Wives At War (1980). Kole Omotoso wrote stories in Miracle and other stories (1973). More recently short stories collections have been published, notably Tony Momoh's Revolt of the New Breed 1985, and finally Labo Yari's. A House in the Dark and other stories (1985). Moreover, the founding of magazines, Journals and university students magazines have played significant role in the promotion and the development of the short story in Nigeria. e.g the 'Nigeria Magazine' occupies a pre-eminent position in pioneering short story writing. The Black Orpheus(1957) was the first literary Journal to appear in Africa. The short story of 'OKIKe': An African Journal of New writing (1971) are probably, the most prestigious for an aspiring writer of short

stories in Africa include African Creation (1982), Afriscope (1971).[51]

The antiquity of the short story in West Africa could be spotted in Rutherford's words

> for long the stories of Africa were unwritten, handed down by storytellers. But then, at different times and to different parts of Africa came the missionaries. From Portugal, From France, from England, from Italy, they came, and gradually the indigenous languages of Africa were written down one by one mission printing Preses were set up.[52]

Thus, the short story's ancestry is traceable to the storyteller, what can be affirmed is that the novel, as it is known in the West, precisely because it is a written form, has no history in Africa. Because the continent has had its own fictive tradition; the tradition of the oral story telling had dominated. This and not the novel form as we know it, has been the medium through which Africa down the centuries has bared its soul, taught its own and entertained itself. The novel is a literary import from Europe. The oral story, on the other hand, has been Africa's dominant form. Elaborating further, Roscoe argues that the natural descendant of the oral story is the short, written narrative which lies in the shadow of the novel. Yet it has already emerged in a quality and abundance which qualified to be more arresting, striking and exciting.[53]

The development of the short story in West Africa is attributable to the role of reputable Journals such as

'Nigeria Magazine; Black Orpheus (1957), Okike (1971) all based in Nigeria; Okyame published in Ghana; Presence Africaine based in Senegal. West African writers also published in Journals outside the regions especially the Transition (Uganda); Drum (South Africa) and other Journals as the Encounter of Blackwoods.[54] Not all critics laud the role of the magazines in the emergence of the short story. For instance, Larson attacks the contents of some of these magazines when he says "we have the more commercial magazines much like their western counterparts... they tend to cater to the rather transitional reader, more interested in the sensational and the momentary than that which gives an indication of literary pretence at all".[55]

In view of what has been said we can resort to the fact that the short story either in Europe or Africa has its roots in the oral tradition, by being so it should be regarded as the ancestor of the novel- because the novel based on the foundation of the short story, or in other words, the materials of all prose fiction dwell on the grounds laid by the short story.

However, the idea of oneness, totality, unity, individuality, completeness are the characteristics embodied in the short story and meet to skirt the short story's message. It is true that though the short story has not been lucky enough to have got fame like that attached to the novel

but amidst the welter of the quick rhythm of life it has become the citadel upon which the aspiration of both writers and audience is closed.

To that extend, one has to say the short story whether in Europe or Africa passed through three stages-the birth, resurrection and renaissance. The novel on the other hand, though, relied on the foundation of the short story, but, it has got sound reputation. For better understanding the next chapter explores the nature of the foundation on which both the short story and the novel are built.

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CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF ORAL NARRATIVE

In chapter one, a panoramic view of the short story in both worlds, the West and West Africa is treated, with much emphasis on the origins and the definitions of the short story. However, in this chapter, it would be useful to discover the roots of the matter in folklore and extend the meaning of the word literature to include orature Furthermore, attention is being paid to the definition of folklore, as well as of the orature, the relationship between folklore and orature and how the oral finds itself in the world of print and finally samples of oral narratives from West Africa are put into consideration.

2.1 DEFINITION OF FOLKLORE

The term folklore is used here in its general and broad sense to include verbal expression which we consider as prose narratives. Dorson briefs us historically about the term folklore which as he states was coined in Great Britain in 1846, when members of the educated class found out with great surprise that an exotic culture of the 'lower order' surrounded them and was expressed in collections of local tales, custom and beliefs of the people.[1]

Folklore as a study in the nineteenth century was called

a science emerged in those nations where western civilization created a chasm between the learned and the tradition oriented classes. The study flourished in every European country, following the stimulation given by the Grimm brothers in Germany, who collected peasant folktales as supportive evidence of their researches in Germanic philology. The same impulse of romantic nationalism directed attention to peasant folklore in Russia and Greece, Finland and Norway, France and Ireland and resulted in an increasing concern in universities and research institutions to the study of folklore.

The term 'folk' can refer to any group of people whatsoever share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is-it could be a common occupation, language or religion but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own. The term lore on the other hand, as has been defined by Dundes means the materials of the folk rather than the people who use the materials.[2]

Cox defines folklore as being

> The records of man's beliefs and customs-begins only with the traces or records of his thought. The term folklore was first suggested by the late Mr. Thomas, in 1846 to designate that department of the study of the antiquities and archaeology which embraces everything related to ancient observances and customs, to the notions, beliefs, tradition, superstition and prejudices of common people.[3]

Folklore is like an umbrella under which folk ceremonies, feasts, dances, folktales, legends, riddles, superstitions,

proverbs etc fall. On that score, Morris and Mary say "folklore describing the traditional beliefs and legends of the common people, is such a staple item of our culture that it comes as a bit of a shock to learn that the word itself was coined as recently as 1846. Its creator was the editor of the British Athenaeum. W.J. Thomas"[4]

Cuddon in his definition of folk literature seems to be on the same boat with the others. He suggests that under this general and somewhat vague term (folk literature) one may include folksong, ballad, fairy tales, drama, proverbs, riddles, charms and legends. He concludes by confirming that for the most part, folk literature (or, perhaps, more properly,folklore) is the creation of `primitive' and illiterate people that is why he sees that most of it belongs to oral tradition. He claims that folklore becomes literature in the correct sense of the word only when people gather it together and write it down.[5]

Beckson and Ganz have pointed out that the word folklore comprises, the songs, stories, myth of a people or folk as handed down by word of mouth. They, in their definition consider such things as traditional ceremonies, architectural forms and agricultural techniques to be parts of folklore.[6]

Shiply on the other hand, provides us with an informative historical background about the nature of folklore and the variety of meanings adopted in some countries. He says "until the mid 19th century popular antiquities comprised all these

interests and activities now denoted by the term folklore..."[7] In France and Scandinvia especially, folklore is employed to embrace such matters as traditional house forms, agricultural practices, textile methods and other aspects of material culture usually assigned to anthropology. The term, in England is normally confined to the spoken or written traditions of a people to traditional aesthetic expressions.

Bascom's article 'The Forms of Folklore' Prose Narratives; is directed mainly towards a definition of myth, legend and folktale. These three forms of folklore he thinks be considered as sub-types of a broader forms of prose. However, he thinks that not only myth, legend, and folktale are the major categories of prose narratives under which all other kinds of prose narratives must be classified as sub-types. Reminiscences or anecdotes, humorous or otherwise, and Jokes or Jests may constitute the fourth and fifth of such categories.[8]

It has become clear now from the definitions given to us that the term folklore derives from two different words, namely the 'folk' which means group,people, or community and 'lore' which refers to accumulated knowledge, shared experiences, ways and practices. Folklore, therefore, refers to all community oriented and tradition based creations of peoples, literate or non-literate, highly sophisticated or not. Broadly speaking folklore encircles all popular traditions, habits, practices etc which make people melt

together.

Tracing the beginnings of prose narratives in Africa one should resort to what have been written in the collections of folklorists, missionaries and researchers. However, since the short story in West Africa also draws from oral narratives, it is important to stress its significance.

2.2. DEFINITIONS OF ORATURE

It is important to underscore that there are still some societies and cultures in which the old mythology continues to propagate itself anew every generation, through the fecundity of an imagination kept alive by meaningful rituals of stories and songs. The oral expression of African culture contains a virile mythology of current significance in the lives of a vast number of people.[9] Commenting on the efforts being exerted in preserving such oral and traditional culture by aids of modern technology, Ramsaran remarks that "culture will not be preserved by faithfully tape recording praisesongs dirges and folktale; but using these in the business of everyday living".[10]

In an attempt to confirm the importance of oral literature Finnegan makes hints to the literature of the classical world which, as is well known laid more stress on the oral aspect than does recent literature;

> For the Greeks there was a close association between words, music and dance-one which seems much less obvious to a modern European...

> Throughout much of antiquity even written works were normally read aloud rather than silently, and one means of transmitting and, as it were 'publishing' a literary composition was to deliver it aloud to a group of friends. In such cases the relationship of performance and transmission of literary works to the content is not totally dissimilar from that in African oral literature.[11]

Deriving from his conviction of the uniqueness and genuiness of orature, Ikiddeh states:

> It is wrong to imagine that every genre of orature in Africa has a ready equivalent in Europe that literary terms and concepts are automatically transferable... thus, African varieties of epic, the dirge, the divination poetry or maiden song, where they are identified, should be allowed to wear the authentic labels of African languages.[12]

It has been observed of Europe that inspite of the introduction of the alphabetic scripts, printing presses and free education, the transmission of values and attitudes in face to face contact remains the primary mode of cultural orientation.[13] Elaborating further, O. Taiwo confirms that orature is the oldest form ever existed before the introduction of printing presses. He notes:

> Before printing was invented communities ought to preserve their identity as groups by handing down orally from one generation to another the most important elements of their culture. Even since the invention of printing orature in Africa has not died out. In the first place, much of the material could not be printed. Secondly, even if some of the materials been printed, there was still widespread illiteracy and poverty. It was only orally that the elders in the community

> could continue to transmit to the young ones the customs, beliefs and expectations of the race.[14]

In drawing distinctions between oral and written literature and seeking to make, at least one level, the tenuous boundaries between orature and related components of the oral tradition, Finnegan makes the following statement "oral literature by definition is dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion".[15] Furthermore, the primacy and supremacy of orality or speech over writing is well-portrayed below:

> We are forced to accept that oral composition and their outward expression in performance are living traditions; they are creative activities which continue to take place in both rural and urban communities of Africa... and critics are coming to realize that writing is only symbolic way of representing speech and as such is secondary to it...[16]

One of the striking characteristics of orature as distinct from written literature is its verbal variability. Having postulated the antiquity of 'Thonga Tales', Finnegan is quoting Junod's excellent description of this "After having heard the same stories told by different story- teller, I must confess I never met with exactly the same version".[17] This is not the end of the matter. For Obiechina enumerates certain factors which have made West African oral tradition survive despite the changes induced by the introduction of a literary tradition from Europe. Firstly, illiteracy overwhelmed most of the people, secondly among every four, three out of them lived

in traditional villages or traditional urban settlements which enjoy relative cultural homogeniety, thirdly, even those who were influenced by literacy used to pay regular visits to their villages where they exposed themselves to oral culture, and finally, cultural inertia has contributed a lot to the vitality and validity of orature.[18]

Describing the deep rooted orature in West Africa Okanlawon notes:

> Inspite of the political and social changes which have taken place and still going on everywhere in Africa, orature exists in abundance. That is not known is due to a number of factors, among which are: Africans relished in their orature without thinking of it as a subject or discipline. The Europeans who introduced schools and modern scholarship did not in fact know at first that Africans had their own oral literature.[19]

He adds "the origin of man (Genesis) in the Bible and the Bible itself and Quran were oral before they were written down or that the fairy and Household Tale of the Grimm Brothers was literature"[20]

Deriving from his conviction that the African writer and his culture are inseparable, Obiechina comments "Even the intellectuals of West Africa who are most exposed to world of intellectual traditions and the world urban technological culture, are equally at home in their local traditional culture.[21]

The aesthetic value of orature does not stop at bare performance, a faithful representation of the performance

should incorporate as much of its intrinsic and extrinsic elements as possible to enable us to form the right sort of Judgement and evaluation about orature. Sekoni ascribes the aesthetic quality of oral performance to three inseparable components; Capitation of audience, retention of audience and the transfer of cognitive experience to audience.[22]

Okpewho's article "The oral Performer and his Audience" examines the running commentaries by spectators and sees how they underline the emotional stresses within the narrative event. He comes to the conclusion that the interaction between the narrator and his audience is based on the intimacy over the two parties.[23]

Furthermore, the comments by Scheub on the performance by women among the Xhosa of Southern Africa helps us to understand the West African short story situation better. Scheub notes that "everybody is known; the artist emerges from the audience and, her narrative complete, is again swallowed up by the audience, the separate emotion, and experience of individual member of an audience are woven into the narrative being evoked.[24] And for Okpewho, scholars in recent years have been more interested in the potential which the formula has for creative variation than for its role as a mnemonic tether in oral narrative composition.[25] He also admits that "nothing perhaps is more eloquent of the variability of the griot than the following observation by Ba and Kesteloot:"

> It is well known to experts of African oral tradition, that the griot always composes on

> a fixed scheme and develops his episodes in accordance with his mood and the audience before him, if on the same day you were to make a narrator repeat the same account you would hear a different version each time... the variety of his language is a token of his good taste as well as proof of his talent.[26]

In view of all this, it has become very clear that the traditional African artist is identified as a man with a very pressing sense of real and concrete presence, enjoying the closest intimacy, togetherness and unity with the physical and metaphysical environment. By virtue of his dynamic sense, artistic ability and fertilized imagination, he tries in all sorts of combination, with linguistic as well as plastic resources, to produce and create tangible meaning to those visible and spiritual presence that give context to his daily life and thought. Osani quotes Sanya Onabimiro's optimistic assertion that the salvation of ethical and moral values of Nigerian society lies *on going* back to tradition. "Orature is one of the major inroads through which we can re-establish contact with our traditional past".[27]

Orature is unlike modern African literature, because of its inner focus which is always directed towards the audience and situation within. It is evident that unconventional sources particularly narratives, were the methodological anchors round which the nascent discipline of African history revolved. Miller writes "the echoes of the past reverberate, sometimes faintly, in the oral narratives of societies without writing.... historians must approach the oral tradition as

evidence".[28] In this regard, Vansina remarks in his article 'Memory and oral Tradition', that orature is a memory of memories in the most literal way, since the message is learned from what another person recalled and told.[29]

As the issue of where and how oral form is to be labelled is raised by Finnegan she mentions that in written form too there are problems in delimiting what is true literature.

> It is largely a matter of opinion, for example, as to whether we should include science fiction, certain newspaper article or words of popular songs. Opinion differs, furthermore, not only between different individuals and different ages... but at different periods of history. The Problem, clearly, is not unique to oral literature.[30]

This argument tends to the conclusion that there is no logical reason to deny the title literature to corresponding African forms just because they happen to be oral. If we do treat them as fundamentally of a different kind, we prevent ourselves both a rational analytical approach and furthermore, a wider perspective on general subject of comparative literature.

The best way to conclude is with what Iyasere has written in the prelude to his article. He writes of "the modern African is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind".[31] It is now in the light of what has been aforementioned that one can throw some light on the relationship between Folklore and orature.

2.3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOLKLORE AND ORATURE

The term Forklore is indeed very broad. It includes all kinds of prose narratives. For instance; proverbs, folktales, myths, riddles etc. Folklore can be regarded as the foundation, the treasury from where all creative arts draw, their resources. For example sculptors, novelists, poets, weavers, cane chair weavers. Those are some of the crafts that utilize the technique of folklore. Folklore covers all the cultural activities we engage in and all the traditions through which people are identified. It is evident that many scholars operated as folklorists. Examples are Dorson and others. On the other hand, R. Finnegan did a comprehensive study of oral literature appraising the verbal aspects of folklore. Dorson describes her work as lacking direct access to folklore methodology. On her own part, Finnegan accuses folklorists of too much emphasis on folktales. She claims that the collection of tales is easier to assemble and produce than the collection of oral verses, and that is why folklore has come to be associated in the mind of the public with tales of the spider and the rabbit.

Dorson sees that such matters like rituals, festivals, folk medicine, folk costume, folk crafts, etc belong to tribal customs rather than to folklore. He also believes that folklore studies further diverge from oral literature in considering the crossing of genres and the crossing of media. [32]

In view of this the term orature is used in this study to replace the broad form of folklore and the obvious limitations of the term oral literature. Moreover, orature focuses on the aristry of works and attaches due consideration and importance on the primacy of oral characteristics. For instance, the extra linguistic/textual features which include, clapping, stamping, utterance of unknown expressions, gesticulation; facial expressions etc. In other words, orature sophisticates and refines the existing conflict between oral literature and the folklore.

2.4 ORAL IN PRINT

For the sake of history, it is important to mention the fact that, Africa had been introduced to writing and literature long before the arrival of the white man. It is at least true that some parts of the continent had produced written works in indigenous language even before the earliest literature appeared in western Europe in Celtic and Germanic languages. For example, Ethiopia which was invaded by Semitic tribes from Southern Arabia, brought their alphabets with them which was gradually adopted for transcription known as Ge'iez, this besides Sudan and Egypt where writing was not a new phenomena.

Explorers and missionaries of the nineteenth century kept their eyes on Africa, because for them it represented stages through which other more complex communities had passed. They

had, therefore, become more interesting mainly in the content of African tradition, they set out searching for motifs, symbols, and personalities, and compared them with examples from other parts of the world.

The mention of missionaries also indicated that the history of Bible translation into local language of the people as practical steps toward convincing Africans to embrace christianity. Moreover, rhymes, writing and oral compositions of devotional songs in African languages as well as in European languages among christian converts must have resulted in mental and psychological influences...etc

A lot of materials of folklore were gathered by missionaries, travellers, colonial administrators and anthropologists the moment they landed in Africa. Missionaries started to dominate education from the beginning, and many of the African writers today had attended missionary schools. In fact, the main targets of missionary education were the people, and to reach the people, learning vernacular languages was necessary. Therefore, one finds out that many vernacular languages had been translated for easy communication. However, researchers have been motivated and encouraged by language experts working for the missions to investigate the nature and operation of various languages. In Nigeria, for instance, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo ..etc were reduced to writing as the medium of education. Such situation is well described here:

> British administrators required British officials to have a sound knowledge of the

> native languages, history and culture. Officials strove to collect folktales and historical traditions, proverbs, riddles, statements of native custom and belief, and historical subject from Hausa and Bornu. Besides Burdon and Edgar, H.R. Palmer, E.J. Arntt, A.J. N. Tremearne, R.S Rattray, J.R. Patterson and others undertook such enquiries in Hausaland and in Bornu.[33]

A tangible progress has been noticed in the field of bibliography and in this respect those provided by Ruth Finnegan - Oral Literature in Africa, S.A. Babalola, The Content and Form of Yoruba Igala; J.P. Clark, Ozidi Saga etc This besides the importance attached to orature in the universities where orature is researched into and taught as an academic subject.

In the British colonies, cultural activities, especially teaching were in the hand of protestant missionaries, who found it easier to translate the Bible into indigenous languages. Their goal as been mentioned was not to teach English language but to dissiminate the teachings of christianity instead. The missionaries tried to master the local languages, with the view to reducing them to writing. Their mission did not stop at that stage, they started teaching the earlier converts reading and writing. Gerald says:

> When the missionaries came to Africa, they needed to communicate with the people they were trying to convert to this new faith. The missionaries therefore, started learning the indigenous languages of the people and translating part of the Bible into these

> languages in order to spread the gospel and win more converts, Jacob Friedrick Schon (1803-1889) a German missionary, under the church mission society (CMC) was said to have translated the gospel of saint Mathew into Hausa in 1860, and in 1877 part of a translation of St John had even been printed in Arabic script. Germans such as G.A. Krause, R. Prietze, A. Mishlick and K. Krieger, and later, British students were using this new script for recording oral lore.[34]

The extension of German empire in Africa was behind the concern in African studies, a thing that led to recording and analysing many texts by scholars published in German.[35]

If, for instance, we take Hausaland in West Africa, we find that before the advent of British colonialism cultural and literary activities existed largely in Arabic and Fulfulde side by side with the oral forms of expression. Historically, the interaction between Arab and Western Sudan people took place in the fifteenth century. What brought them together was the trans-saharan trade. Black West Africa was converted to Islam, the new religion was highly appreciated by Hausa people. Religious teachers set out to desseminate Islam in Arabic language. However, Arabic alphabets remained the sole medium for the written art. This led to the emergence of a renowned centre of Islamic learning in Timbuctoo. But in the eighteenth century the need was felt to make muslim learning so easy in the tongues of the people. Gerald describes the situation very clearly below:

> The foundations of Hausa writing were laid by by Usman's brother Abdullahi B. Mohammed

> (1817-1829), his daughter Asmau (also known as Nana) bint shehu (1794 - 1863), and such of his early disciples as Asim Degel and Muhammadu Tukur. They handled in hausa the favourite genere and the main themes of Islamic writing.[36]

By the end of the first world war, Africa was to be considered as a place of oral art, but the period of invasion and after independence was achieved by many countries - this period witnessed the rapid growth of European languages to an extent that these language became media of instruction in some African countries. About the volumes in the world's folktale,according to Dorson "they slight the oral narrators... select tales from previously published volumes... they follow the notion of the Grimm brothers that a literary hand should improve the rude oral utterance of the Peasant".[37]

It is worth mentioning that the establishment of the Translation Bureau was first established in Kano 1929 before it was moved to Zaria. The aim behind establishing this Bureau was to encourage the rapid departure from orature to the world of the print. On this Gerald writes:

> The muslim cultures of Black Africa have shown a remarkable resilience to the impact of the West, in part because they are firmly grounded in one of the great religions of the world. Only two of these literatures - Swahili in the East and Hausa in the West - have submitted to various forms of modernization, turning to the Roman script, a waiting themselves the Printing Press... the reason for this special development seems to be that the territories where these literatures flourished were part, of the British empire, whose representatives... gave genuine attention to native languages

> and to the spreading of literacy in the African vernacular.[38]

As has been aforementioned elsewhere the main concern of those missionary bodies was to spread christianity, that is why Bunyan's 'the Pilgrims Progress' became available to almost everybody. Many African writers have shown great indebtedness to its theme. However, in the nineteenth century, there appeared vernacular writers who showed immense respect for their orature. This comes up for discussion here in due course.

2.5 SAMPLES OF ORAL NARRATIVES FROM WEST AFRICA

Since folklore is primarily recorded from the speech and actions of the people, it is likely to be lost unless great care and efforts are taken in its collection and adequate preservation. Folklorists and literary researchers have published tale collections from all parts of Africa. All kinds of oral narratives have been collected, transcribed, translated and published in book form. They are published separately or in anthologies along with other tales. These collections are widely read and enjoyed as short stories. Most of these collections are accompanied by information on who narrated the tales, where they were narrated and the exact number in the audience, their age and sex are also provided e.g The Dahomean Narrative and Akan Ashanti Tales, written by Herskovits and R.S. Rattray respectively.

The Dahomean Narratives were collected in 1931 in former

Dahomey. The method followed in the recording of these tales was to take the text directly on the type writer as the interpreters translated the narrator's flow of the story given in fon, the main language of Dahomey. While Dahomean tales were being recorded they had to record songs of the stories after the whole tale had been narrated. This was due to the absence of electronic recording apparatus. Another defect apparent in the method of gathering the narratives was that no attempt was made to seek out men of reputation as narrators for the stories; instead tales were told by those with whom the collectors could raise and discuss various issues pertaining cultures, traditions, beliefs etc... They did so in order to expedite their work and gain much time. This did not do much justice to the aesthetics of Dahomean oral tale-telling.

Most of the Ashanti folktales, on the other hand were collected at night, under the stars. After listening to many stories carefully the best ones were jotted down, and later the narrator was invited to narrate again and again before-writing down and finally read over for final touch. In the case of F. Edgar's Hausa Tales and Traditions, a collection of stories from Hausaland, it was an endeavour to provide reading materials to British officials who were learning the Hausa language. On that score Smith writes:

> Edgar's published collection of Hausa folklore was made primarily in Sokoto Province at the direction of Major John Alder Burdon, the first Resident of Sokoto, who in 1910 gave

> Edgar some Hausa texts written in the Ajamic script for transliteration into Roman characters as reading matter of real use to Hausa students. That is, to Europeans who wished to learn *Hausa*. Together with some extracts from the Maliki law book and other texts that he had collected himself, Edgar prepared the first volume of the Tatsuniyoyi for publication in 1911. The two later volumes contained materials he collected himself.[39]

The reasons for preparing such material are illustrated here "to provide British administrative officials with suitable materials for Hausa language and study, and secondly to increase their knowledge of Hausa society and culture by presenting their folktales and traditions".[40]

Among many other documented texts was a type script (undated) which includes thirty pages of folktales and moral *fables, written in French language by Boubou Hama, Director of* the local centre of IFAN at Niamey (Niger) States Blair.[41]

Commenting on the Content and Form of Yoruba, Ijala appeared in 1966 by Adeboye Babalola, Sani says:

> It is the first full length, detailed examination of an aspect of Nigerian orature in print..... In the 1960-66 Nigeria witnessed the growth in study of oral poetry and to a lesser extent of traditional performances dominated. Narratives had not been given due consideration compared to oral poetry, until Adeboye Babalola's "the snail and the Tortoise in Yoruba folklore', published in March/May 1968 volume of Nigeria Magazine, not much could be said to exist on the oral narratives in Nigeria. This followed in the same year 1968, by M.E. Omijeh published 'Benin Proverbs'[42].

Another prominent figure who contributed a lot to Yoruba literature was D. O. Fagunwa. He was so unique in his

sustained efforts to give Yoruba folk-tales and legends a special flavour. Totuola,also reworked, transmitted, adapted and transformed Yoruba oral materials into an English Idiom of his own and spiced them with the rhythm of Yoruba language. Among the several works, that have been published in this are those of Adeboye Babalola on Ijala (Hunters Poetic chants). So far very little has been done about collecting oral prose. Clark's Ozidi saga emerged to be one of the famous oral narratives that has been transmitted in dramatic form. Ukala stated that it is a good documented example for transmission of African orature in the written form. [43]

In the detailed introduction, Clark examines the narrative and dramatic character of the Ozidi saga; its poetic language, its music, mime and dance properties. The religious rituals and festival aspects; and finally, the matter arising, out of the text. He also gives us a night by night verbal presentation of the drama. Not forgetting the two languages being rendered English and Ijo side by side. Clark sees Ozidi epic as having fulfilled the aristotelian requirement of tragedy such as length, unity etc. Clark writes:

> The Ozidi Saga is as much drama as narrative and is examined here first for its narrative and dramatic characteristics; secondly, its language and Poetry; thirdly, its music, mime and dance properties; fourthly, the religious ritual and festival aspects of the work."[44]

It is true, most of the documentation of orature in Africa is presented in publications aimed at public outside

the communities from which they originate, but such works, no doubt, underwent many problems which might have caused changes in the essential features of orature.

The tasks of compiling folk-tales in West Africa may either present the collector with a some what difficult or a peculiarly simple task. Orature items have to undergo first the problem of transcription. And secondly, the translation. There are some extra-linguistic features such as dancing, clapping or stamping - these features cannot be transferred to the printed page and so the foreign reader who is not familiar with the contexts may not imagine them properly. When oral narratives are performed the narrator shows some facial expressions, gesticulates or utters unknown expression. These extra textual features cannot be transferred into the written text and this leads to severe losses in the total artistic message of the performance. If one takes a look at the printed collections of orature one finds that the majority do not give detailed information on the physical aspects of the performances due to the difficulties, if not impossibility of this kind of work.

The second problem which affects the oral text is the problem of translation. Here the difficulties stem from the differences in cultural background and environment. This can happen even in translating from a written text talkless of from an oral performance. The performer usually knows his audience and knows very well what they need, so he performs

accordingly. The translator on the other hand, has to do his best to provide his reader with notions of what it was like to be a member of this original audience. One special difficulty in the translating of oral prose text occurs because the spoken language tolerates and accepts repetition a thing which is not highly welcomed in the written text.

In his collection of Ashanti tales, Rattrary was compelled to have done some alteration in the English translation and he ascribes this to the variation in dialect. He says "the story teller would often lead off in the past, and in the next sentence slips into an historic present or sometimes into a perfect tense of which they are fond".[45] Attempts have been made by the collectors to put tales back into their original oral forms even as written stories. In his experience in translating Ashanti tales, Rattray writes: "I have throughout, made the English translation as nearly literal as possible. At this point one meets a certain difficulty in a conflict between a desire for accuracy and an endeavor to give a translation acceptable to English ears".[46]

Rattray confirms the importance of having native assistants in collecting data, because he believes that if a number of such helpers are employed, a large collection of tales may be obtained in a very short time, without much efforts or any necessity for special qualifications on the part of the European collectors. He then talks about the role of transcribers and their deliberate action to ignore the

African idioms and to adjust those apparently trivial details which might be of value and importance to students of language. On that score:

> Even when these Europeanized African helpers have been asked to write down the stories in the vernacular, I have noticed that, unless carefully instructed to record the actual words of the narrators, the long training in the Mission or other schools appear to have resulted in a curious uniform standard of unidiomatic expression which is not really the spoken language of the mass of the people.[1]

While collecting the tales of Ashanti, Rattray encountered certain problems. These included the one pertinent to the origin of Ashanti tales. Here the author ascribes this problem to the similarities between tales which he thinks slave trade played vital role in the dissemination of such tales. The second one is the problem of vulgarity on which he thinks that the European collectors of these tales, being generally ignorant of the language, were in consequence depended entirely upon literate Africans who since childhood received their education in mission schools. Such literate Africans found it as something natural to have felt shy in giving or noting improper tales. Therefore, in this case, adequate and proper recording of facts about tales would have gone with the wind.

The tendency to provide so much details on the tale narration and its socio-cultural context, and also the adaptation or the process of reshaping in a text book fashion

almost puts one off. In fact, oral narratives suffer in the hands of people engaged in adaptation or they try to change and simplify the oral material to what appeals to them. There is hardly any justice that is done to the peculiarities of the oral narrative. A more serious deficiency of adaptation is the fact that little or no creativity is involved in it. Those who do it are neither essentially oral tale collectors, nor are they creative, imaginative short story writers. Rather than acknowledge the imagination of the original tale narrators, those who adapt claim the resultant short stories as theirs. This type of situation has been well -pictured below:

> Various versions of Edgar's tales, collected in the same or different emirates,illustrate certain features of these transforming process, including omissions or re-allocation of roles, recombination of motifs, events and the like. Clearly in such process those items which lack immediate intelligibility or cogency are likely to be modified or omitted, while those which have local relevance will be retained and perhaps elaborated to the other narratives.[48]

The tape recorder is one of the effective methods for the collection of orature, Berry States, but on the limitation of the tape recorder he writes "technically perfect and imaginatively and stylistically creative renditions of folktale are unlikely to be obtained in the artificial context in which so many of our transcription have obviously been,,"[49]

The work of translator is fraught with problems, for the

translation of orature cannot be handled like the translation of written straightforward text. The best approach Abimbola suggests is to make translation in the target language as literal as possible so as to transfer part of the cultural content, imagery and other literary characteristics of the materials into the target language.[50] He, then, shifts to talk about the artificiality of those approaches by saying:

> Oral literature is an interesting and fertile aspect of our culture, can't be preserved on tapes and recorders, nor can it be preserved through analysis and translation. It can only be preserved by forging a link between the older and the younger generation. This link today is held by a tenuous string in great danger of snapping. We should see to it that it does not break and in addition we should endeavor to strengthen it through well-established continuity.[51]

This continuity can be seen in short stories which claim patrimony from oral narratives.

However, inspite of the fact that these approaches might not be of a satisfactory help, but Abimbola seems to have put some emphasis on the necessity for translation, because for him its primacy can only be to make materials available and at hand. He also suggests the necessity for using a phonetic orthography "one must always bear in mind that transcription is and should be a faithful representation of the materials collected".[52] It is evident that much concern is expressed about preserving such oral and traditional culture by the aids of modern technology. Ramsaran says "the collections of folkloric materials in writing remains, especially in

translation, mere dry bones or slices of life cut off from a meaningful commerce of minds.."[53]

Among the many suggestions put forward for good preservation of oral narratives is the one raised by Dorson in which he suggests that any attempt to present a meaningful and representative sampling of the world's folktale to the reading public should mirror the now commonly held views of folklore scholarship. In the first steps he subscribes concern of the nature of the folktale itself, which should be indicated as a spoken performance, rather than a literary text.[54]

The activity of the missionaries, explorers, etc.. resulted in the introduction of western education and emergence of popularization aspects of Western civilization. The establishment of a cash economy and modern industries opened new opportunities to individuals.People from different parts of West Africa in response to calls of modern life started moving towards big cities and between them would appear a kind of intermingling and interaction, by being so, the individual was able to remove himself from a community where status and social hierarchy had determined individuals place in society. Moreover, in West Africa the mass media disrupted the old social order and expedited social changes.People learnt how to read English and French language and local newspaper written in their vernacular, people enjoyed watching cinema, TV and listening to the radio; this compared to a few number who still listening to the harangue

of the (crier) one would find out that the gap is very huge. Such situation is well described by Ramsaran when he says "the historian of letters must reckon with the fact that the very medium that gives the artist's creation the breath of the living word also carries with it the ever present threat of the word being lost in the unsubstantial air."[55]

Barker points out that the change is not taking place in the direction of mere materialism in Guinea Coast. Christianity, entering the country through ports, and Islam brought by the Hausa along the trade route played their part in these psychological and sociological changes. It may not be out of place here to mention the effect of the contact of the slave-trading of Europeans on the folklore and people's mentality. Barker provides us with an example of this metamorphosis, saying:

> after an intercourse of some years with Europeans, the Tshi - speaking inhabitants of the towns and villages in the vicinity of the various forts added to their system of polytheism a new deity who they termed Nana-Nyankupon - sometimes called simply Nyankupon. This was the god of the Christians. Borrowed from them and adopted under a new designation. The great superiority manifested by the whites in their weapons, ships, manufactures in short, in everything convinced the native with whom they had intercourse that they must necessarily be protected by a deity of greater power than any of those to which they themselves offered-sacrifice. They therefore gladly enrolled themselves amongst the followers of the god of the whites, and being informed that he dwelt in the heavens above, they denominated him Nana - Nyankupon, which may be freely translated 'Lord of the sky'.[56]

From the above mentioned example it has become clear that the effects included not only sociological and pyscological aspects, but mental as well. It is necessary to mention the effect and influence of the national movements which appeared in the screen of life in 1940s in some West African countries. Politics began to push the wheel of nationalism - literature class had grown tremendously - revolutionization of ideas and thinking all these factors met and formed newly born society with different views and having different perspective in assessing and evaluating things which alien to the way of thinking of the old one.

Next chapter gives a contemporary panaromic views on how oral and written fuse together, and the cream extracted from this blending is what this study proposes.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ORAL BASED SHORT STORIES

Having examined the various definitions of folklore, orature and how oral narratives find themselves in the world of the print, and the relationship between folklore and orature, we are now analysing the oral characteristic of selected West African short stories. Furthermore, this chapter deals with how far this welding, blending, fusion or rather grafting of West African oral tradition has conduced to creating African literature with new definable characteristics; a sort of 'cultural hybrid'. At this point, before going further, it should be worthwhile to give full-fledged view of the oral African narratives

3.1 ORAL NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Traditional African oral narrative techniques differ remarkably from the inherited Western ones. As Isidore OkPewho, Ruth Finnegan, Achebe, Ngugi and others have pointed out, traditional African narratives are more communal rather than individual in nature. This fact has far reaching implication for African narrative techniques which retain certain ballad qualities as the attempt is made to celebrate group rather than individual experience. The oral narrator is even conscious of a participatory audience some of whose members may as the story progresses, interject epithets,

ideas, comments and even songs. The schematic Western narrative formula is non-existent in the traditional African narrative mode. However, in attempting to diagnose the influence of oral narrative techniques on the modern short story in West Africa, one could resort to the fact that there are many ways in which the modern short story in Africa relies on traditional oral narratives for subject matter, themes, narrative techniques and background. Also, the short story in West Africa has dual parentage. The short story has its roots in the oral tradition and its flourishing in modern writing activities. Another fact that the oral narratives are entertaining and instructive as most short stories in Africa. The short story originates in folklore or to be more exact in orature. Chukwuma in her article "Two decades of the Short Story in West Africa" sees that "the short story is the direct offspring of the traditional oral tale and shows a way of accommodating an oral practice in a written millieu. For another, it shows great originality, freshness and spontaneity, qualities often missing in the novel".[1] That means that the oral narrative as a genre, or category of orature is assumed to be the ancestory of the written short story in West Africa. On that score, Sani sees that the oral tale, shares many similarities with the written story. The characteristics which the short story has in common with the oral narrative include: Both are narrative that are in 'prose' as apposed to being in verse/poetry, or in the dramatic mode.

It should be clear, however, that certain oral narrative forms are more poetic than others. The Epic and the Myth, for instance, though predominantly in "prose", are more inclined to poetry than say the folktale. The same may apply to the written mode of short story depending on the biases of the writer. A great deal of imagination and creativity is seen, both in oral tales and their written variety. Authors and narrators have the freedom to vary their work and to stress one human problem or the other as they wish. In both the oral and the written, there is no standard "text", the practitioners are only guided by the broad conventions of the forms they operate. Although the question of length versus brevity in the short story continues to generate disagreement, shortness or brevity still distinguishes the short story from say the novel. In this respect, we note clear affinities between the oral tale and the written short story. Like the short story, tales are generally shorter than novels. We need not stretch the question of brevity too far, since even within the oral narrative medium itself, the epic can be twenty lines as long as some folktales or myths. Also certain myths or legends are far longer than others. On the whole, the brevity of both ensures that concentration of impact and effect which is seen whether in short story or in the folktale. The short story or the oral tale employ narrative techniques that tend to underline their sense of the dramatic. They can be said as sometimes rambling details we may encounter in some novels,

this again is subject to certain conditions. One author may achieve a great touch of drama more than another, just as one oral tale narrator may be better than other less skilled narrators.

It is therefore, as a result of these similarities between the oral narratives and the written short story that the oral tale is said to be the ancestor of the written short story. Inspite of this resemblances in features and effect we should not forget that while the narratives are orally composed and transmitted, the short story is entirely written. Considering the fact that writing is a different medium compared to the oral form, we ought to see how oral tales relate to the written mode. Since the appearance of writing in Africa through the missionaries and colonizers, an interesting relationship has developed between them and the dominant oral medium. While to the colonizers, the written medium is everything, there was not equal to the verbal medium as far as the African were concerned. In view of this apparent situation of conflict between Africa and Europe, the result of the interaction between orature and the written medium has not been entirely negative or wholly commendable.

In fact, what folklorists and researchers, tried to argue is that, while the tales are actually in writing, a vigorous attempt is made to retain the oral essence of the narratives. They also try to give an air of genuiness and authenticity to the written stories. This represents the earliest ways oral

art forms were made to create to writing since the practice of collections were initiated by colonialists.

3.2 ORAL BASED SHORT STORIES IN FOCUS

It is important to point out that contemporary West African literature is qualitatively distinguishable from traditional orature. The literature is not simply orature converted into writing through one European language or another as a result of introducing literacy and formal education into West Africa.

Two more assumptions underlie the envisaged analysis, namely: Africa had its own culture and cultural traditions which came into 'collision' with Western written style of literature. Modern West African literature, did not therefore start from the scratch. However, it is posited that as a part of the mainstream modern African literature, which was largely inspired by contact with the West, educated West Africans turned to writing short stories with preponderantly oral characteristics. That is, instead of writing typically 'Western' short stories, the authors chose to delve into the resources of orality for the purposes of their compositions. Thus, the narrative techniques used in their short stories are not only influenced by thematic concerns; they are also determined, in their turn, the choice of these themes. The relationship between the two is dialectical; both affect each other and are affected by one another. Each party in both

subject and object - their action is interaction.

The interplay of typically West African oral narrative techniques and the European narrative styles as reflected in the selected short stories take various forms and have led to unique results. In some instances, indigenous African customs and European narrative techniques are blended and fused to an extent that they have become compatible in terms of form and tempo.

Though the selected short stories used in this chapter have naturally some European features, but they are unmistakably African in their tone, theme, subject matter and the narrative line. Moreover, the reason behind the selection of this stories lies in the fact that all the stories in this chapter are from one or the same clay that is to say shaped and molded by hands of authors who are closely linked to the deeply rooted culture. Their indebtedness to the oral culture never hides itselt, but clearly reflected in the stories.

The analyses of these short stories are preceded by a brief biographical sketch of each selected author. The stories selected in this chapter are 'The Complete Gentleman', 'Sarzan'; 'A child in the Bush of Ghost' 'the Pot of Gold', and `The eyes of Statue', written by Amos Tutuola, Birago Diop, Olympe Bhely quenum, Mouhamadoul Mouktor, and finally Camara laye respectively. To start with there is Amos Tutuola, a Nigerian writer with only six years of primary school education. He is one of the most prolific African Writers. He

is the author of six works: The Palm Wine Drinkard, (1952), My life in the Bush of Ghosts (1954), Simbi and the Sartyr of the Dark Jungle (1956), The Brave African Huntress (1958), The Feather Women of the Jungle (1962), and Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty (1967). Tutuola who was born in Abeokuta, Western Nigeria, in 1920, received training as a blacksmith. Tutola's indebtedness to the oral narrative techniques, compared to Achebe for instance, makes him emerged as the most oral apron writer among others. Perhaps, that could be ascribed to his low level of education and the infinite faithfulness to culture.

The selected short story here "The Complete Gentleman" is an excerpt from his first work The Palm Wine Drinkard written with careful elaboration, to satirize contemporary times to convey the bitter message that human existence has become itself an industry. Nothing in man is inalienable from man.

Everything in man can be measured and assessed by the medium of money. The complete Gentleman, had he been exhibited in the market, would have cost £2000 (in figures), i.e two thousand pounds (in letter). Other themes serve as tributaries to this main stream.

The narrative techniques employed by Totuola are many. They reflect his assimilation not only of his indigenous West African orature but also some European writing techniques, and he equisitely blends the two traditions into remarkable short story, with evident craftsmanship.

The universality of the theme of Totuola's story seems to be responsible for the absence of strong characterization. In fact, there is not much of a local colour in the person of the complete gentleman, so that he may become a true representative of contemporary civilization and its impact, everywhere, on mankind.

That there is no highly individualized characterization in the complete Gentleman, is an intentional departure from European norms of the short story writing imposed on the author by the very universality of the theme of the commercialization of human relationships.

Sub-titles or sub-headings are, again, another divorce from conventional European short story writing techniques. Sub-titles are in fact more pertinent to essay writing. What more, they are more ornamental in this story than instructive - they explain nothing. They are almost exactly repeated in the sentences of the ensuing paragraphs.

Repetition is an important part and parcel of orature, as mentioned before. In this short story, repetition is intensively, heavily but not unduly, resorted to. Orature has redundancies. Oral speech is repetitive. This is why, for instance, the word 'Market' alone is repeated on page 50 (the opening page) six times; five times on page 54, and again five times on page 55. Also, if we take a look at the word 'skull', we find that this word has been repeated eleven times on page 53 alone, seven times on page 56 and four times on page 58

etc.

Moreover, repetition manifested itself in terms of structure. To mention only a few examples "if bombers saw him in a town which was to be bombed, they would not throw bombs on his presence, and if they did throw it the bomb itself would not explode" 54. Thus the word 'bomb' is used four times in only three lines. Another example of repetition in Tutuola could be seen in the following;

When I travelled with him a distance of about twelve miles... the gentleman left the road on which we were travelling... But often I had travelled with a distance of about twenty five... After I had travelled with him for another fifty miles... P.55, in not more than ten lines or just all one paragraph.

Repetition is one of the major distinguishing features of the oral narrative techniques from the written ones techniques. Its presence suggests the oral indebtedness of Tutuola in this particular story.

Is the Complete Gentleman complete? This question is crucial to the interpretation of this short story. The proof that he is not a complete, is furnished by the author himself *who says on the same first page that he is 'completed'. The past participle form indeed makes all the difference!*
That he is 'completed' implies that, initially, he had been incomplete. The fact that he is made up of 'hired; or, even, 'shared' parts (P.52) signifies that his completeness is

artificial. he is not complete in himself. he is complete by borrowing from others. Which means that unlike normal humans, his completeness is only provisional, never final.

We do not think all humans are like that. Because amidest the welter of life you may find people do believe in the fact that if some one wants to be happy he has to pay for his happiness. Because, life is not an easy journey as many people think, it is complicated and thorny. Therefore, establishing fame or building a reputable or a distinguishable calibre, if we may weigh things like that, can't 'be of value unless man puts his own touches on. In short, there is a saying says" no sweet without fire'. For the Gentleman's completeness is made without being exposed to fire and therefore his sweetness lacks the natural flavour of sweets. This leads us to the written devices of symbolism. This short story is impregnated with symbolism.

It is justifiable to consider the 'market' as part of the paraphernalia of the contemporary world against which the short story is set. markets, whistles etc... are part of our contemporary times. The market, however, is more than that. The market is symbol. It symbolizes the unwelcome need of human beings for each other. People have to be together in the market even though they are anonymous to each other. Their togetherness in the 'market' is inevitable whatever the market may be.

Money is a yard stick in the market - Money is the main

medium of all exchange, of all sharing, of all hiring. *Everything in the market is measured and evaluated in terms of* money. Nothing is invaluable or priceless. Everything is saleable. Man himself can be a wholesale commodity or can be sold as hired parts. There is nothing inalienable, in man, save his head. This is the only irreducible part in him which he may not buy or sell!

The universality of the theme of this short story, on the other hand, obligates the author to revolt against much attempt at the technique of verisimilitude or plausibility. It obligates him to cloak his narration in a halo of enigma and ambiguity. For example, the market is The market from the beginning. we do not know where it is.

The forest is an African feature, in general, here in this short story, is said to be 'endless'. Obviously, the author borrows from European techniques not only the extended symbol, but also the paradox. let us quote two instances where the paradox is employed.

The gentleman is 'complete' and 'completed'. If his parts are completed, they are borrowed from elsewhere.In other words, paradoxically enough,he is complete and incomplete; complete by others, incomplete in himself.

The second paradox concerns the physical appearance of the complete gentleman. To render him unrealistic, i.e, fantastic, the author describes him as 'tall and stout', this

is an unusual combination. We usually associate tallness with slimness, and shortness with stoutness. What more tallness hides or camouflages stoutness.

There is yet another symbol to dwell on in this short story: the symbol of beauty.

In one of his sub-titles we meet with this, 'Do not follow unknown man's beauty'. (P.51). Beauty in this short story implies adventure, danger, the unknown, the exotic, the inexplicable. In fact, the atmosphere of the short story is full of passage or transition from the known (e.g. the market) to the unknown (e.g the endless forest, from the physical to the metaphysical, from gods (and their father) to the God (capital G), from the natural to the supernatural, from pantheism to monotheism. And inversely.

The two traditions are beautifully blended together to enrich African oral tradition with European written techniques, and inversely, to enrich European written techniques with African oral tradition so that the outcome may excel both.

The market is a known place but the destination of the complete gentleman is an unknown place (P.51) reached through an endless forest from the known to the unknown.

That the human body of the complete gentleman is 'hired' or shared is not very surprising. The author has been inspired in this by contemporary medical practices. Medical operations are being made today in which vital organs like the heart and

the kidney are transplanted. They are even saleable. Everything in man alienable or inalienable, is being hired or shared. Ours is becoming 'a world of skulls'.!

The orality of this short story is also reflected in international linguistic inadequacies. Oral communication arises in response to different sensitivities when compared to conventions of written communication. This is why we often meet with an unusual written English such as (on P.52) the excessive use of cohesive connectives. For instance,

> 'when they went furthermore, then they
> reached where he hired the belly, ribs,
> chest, etc, then he pulled them out...

This kind of English, I tend to believe, is substitute for the element of dialogue which is conspicuously absent from this short story.

There are other instances in the short story even of plain grammatical incorrection. In (P.51) - (52) we read

> 'but when I become a half - bodied
> incomplete gentleman you wanted
> to go back'!

One may attribute these shortcomings to Tutuola's low level of education.

Another thing is that, the author deliberately ignores the sequence of tenses probably in order to approximate his written language to oral communication or dialogue. The oral expression 'by and by' is used on (P.53) only to fill up

memory lacuna and glide over forgotten details.

The author also draws on African pagan pantheism when he speaks of the Father (F) of gods (small g) who does anything in this world: (P.54) why should the Father of gods be written in capital (F)? May be the author is satirizing the Catholic christian concept of Trinity: the three in one and the one in three.

Elsewhere he also mocks monotheism on (P. 55) we read: (this is the Father of gods who is speaking): thanked God that He had created me without beauty; The orality of the story is humorously reflected in the personification of the Father of gods, an addict god, who drinks forty kegs of palm-wine (P.54) at one go. He is an African god!

The author unfolds the knot of the story, if there be a knot, as such, by means of magic, which establishes that this is deeply grounded in oral tradition.

The introduction of 'Juju' is an attempt to explain things by magic, to transfer them from the natural realm to the realm of the supernatural, which some people prefer to call superstitious.

Indeed the 'complete Gentleman' is but one expanded folktale. It is an instance of narration in the folktale mode. It borrows from oral tradition: Personification of gods (the Father of gods marries a human girl), restoration of order and resolution of conflicts by magic, sudden movement from the known to the unknown, encounter between the natural and the

supernatural (human ghosts and skulls, intermingle). Popular or folk wisdom which consists in punishing the wayward (the girl fascinated by the complete gentleman) for rejecting commonsense and positive change as a result of undergoing bitter experience.

The 'complete Gentleman' is a typical world of folktales, full of magic, Juju, imagination and human exchange into animals and objects.

Although this short story rests firmly on western narrative devices like the paradox, the extended symbol, the presence of a marked point of view (condemnation of contemporary civilization), the presence of a man at the centre of the narrative etc... this is wonderfully fused and married with oral culture, as I have, hopefully, shown above.

After we have had a tour of analysis in the world of orally based short story in Nigeria, and our representative author in this chapter is Amos Tutoula, now we shall continue our journey of analysis to enter Senegal. 'Sarzan' is among the five chosen short stories in this chapter.The strong oral quality and sound rythm of `Sarzan' qualifies itself in the consideration of oral based stories in West Africa. It is written by Birago Diop and translated from French by Ellen Conrey kennedy. Diop was born in Senegal in 1906. He received part of his education at the Lyce'e Faidherbe in St Louis (in Senegal) and continued his studies in France, at the University of Taulouse, becoming a veterinary surgeon. After

his return to Africa, he worked for a number of years as a veterinary officer at Ouagadougu (now a port of Upper Volta). Diop is the author of several volumes of traditional folk stories:Les Contes d' Amadu Koumba (1947),Les Nouveaux Contes d' Amadu Koumba (1958), and Contes et Lavanes (1963). 'Sarzan' is from the first of these volumes.

The word or the title of this short story 'Sarzan' denotes ;Sergeants in a Senegalese Local Language. That indicates the Africanized nature of the story.

To begin with, the author means to sweep away any Islamic influences on the events that took place in this story by saying...Dougauba which had long ago erased all traces of the Islamic hords and return to the teachings of the ancestors (P-60). This divorce from the Islamic culture by the people of Dougouba, the author further, emphasized in this line "once again, the village elders wear their hair in braids" in contrast to their forbears experienced from Toucouleur (Muslim) conquerors when they had their hair shorn and their heads shaved.

The major character in this short story, Thiemokhe Keita the Sergeant or (Sarzan), having been exposed to the outside world i.e, travelling to many countries including Dakar,Casa-blanka, Damascus, the Sudan... etc... had transformed himself from a local man to a "civilized" one, and tried to impose fundamental changes in the life of the village (Dougouba) people. In fact he meant to civilize, them, an effort that had

earned the backing of the local administrator (apparently a white) Every act by the villagers to him was seen as the ways of savages" and therefore it has to be stopped and destroyed. Examples are, the 'Endurance Dance' where young men are subjected to beating/whipping on their naked chest by all the young dancers, it is to show if he has become a man, Sarzan wanted to stop his father from sacrificing a white chicken to thank the ancestors for having brought his son back, calling it restless and stupid the killing of black chicken and pouring of their blood in the farms/field when the rain falls; Kieta cut down and burned the Dassiri, the sacred tree, protection of the village; he unhooked the little bag hanging in his hut which held his own family spirit and had thrown into the yard,... etc all these action at last cost him his sense and sanity. He then went mad. The spirit of the ancestors cursed him.

From the outset, one is obsessed by the feeling that Africanism is superior than Eastern (Islam) or western culture, that is the general message. African features, without permission imposed themselves in this short story. The narrative techniques employed by this author reflect his assimilation of West African orature and European written traditions. The product of this blending or, in other word, the child emerged of this marriage is this short story with its unique nature.

Kieta, the Sarzan, for instance, is always in motion.

This incessant motion portrays the oral nature of this short story. Because characters in orature, are always depicted in motion. The aim behind ornamenting oratures characters with the habit of motion, is to glue the audience for the performance of the narrator who usually, in the course of telling stories moves hither and thither.

If we look at Keita's movements from other perspective that is to say, his movement on an international basis, Senegal, Sudan, Damascus etc this reflects the indebtedness of the author to the European devices. This has been carefully blended with local tradition to produced a wonderful picture (motion in local and international basis).

The local atmosphere given to this story could be clearly seen in the following; to mention only a few"... rough as a corrugated tin room, it was paved with logs covered with a layer of clay" (P.61). This picture gives the sense of a real African village. Two more instances "the only dust that struck our faces..." is a reflection of the untarred road found through villages in Africa, ..". a grey mass of huts appeared, topped by the darker grew of three palm trees" it is a melancholic scene to give the story its natural frame which is African blended skillfully with excessive descriptive picture which is borrowed from European techniques.

Kieta upon his arrival is received warmly by the aged chief this act in itself reflects the communal nature of African people. Man is not an isolated or an introvert being

but man is a communal being; "The drum resumed its rumbling... half-chested youngster, each carrying a long branch of balazan wood, stripped clean and supple as a whip, were turning about to the rhythm of the tom tom..." (P.62-63). The oral narrative techniques as can be seen to obligate the author to surrender to the dynamic power of the African series of events, which in the end makes the story to emerge as striking oral tale embellished with letters.

The word 'tom tom', though it is a name of an instrument, but the word as such or the rythm of the word has a repetitive nature which can be ascribed to the elements of orature and so does 'gri gri' on (P.68).

The poetic nature which dominated the last three pages gives, with no slight doubt, that this story is deeply rooted in orature.

Moreover, the sacrificing of a white chicken to the ancestor for having brought kieta home safe and sound; the killing of the black chicken, Dassiri, the sacred tree; circumcision, the little bag hanging in the hut which held the Nyanabolic, the Keita's family spirit, the calabash, the millet beer etc, all these parts of colour of the story constitute African tinge.

The author, in this short story borrows from the European narrative techniques the device of flashback. For instance, Keita, on his way to Dougobe accompanying the medical caravan, transported with his mind to "the teeming crowds of Marseille,

the great tall building of France, the blue sea" (P.62).

The monologue or soliloquy which appears in this short story reflects vividly the fusion of the two narrative techniques .In this monologue mention is made of African features "Keita went out of his mind. He was leaning against the palaver tree, talking, talking, talking against the old who did not want to hear him, against the young who still listened to the old...and against medicine who had sacrified some dogs...etc.

The word 'civilization', in itself is an imported word came to us from Europe. "No", the local commandant told him. You can do more for administration by returning to your village .... you can teach them about how whiteman live. you will "civilize" them abit" (P.61). As I mentioned earlier this word is an exotic one. Therefore we should not take it or rely on it as a means for expression about cultural apparatus. Civilization, to my conviction, spring from full understanding of the donation of environment an the culture of the people to whom one belongs.

The fussion of the two traditions beautifully reflected in these lines.

"The sergeant, however, had been in churches. He had seen little statues there of saints and the Holy virgins that people burned candles to. These statues, it is true, were covered with gifts and painted in bright colours - blues, reds, and yellows. Certainly they were more beautiful than the

blackened pygmies with long arms and short legs carved of cailcedrat or ebony that inhabited the sacred forest" 68.

To conclude, the orality of this short story is clearly seen in the sacrificing of the white chicken, the killing of black chicken, the belief in superstition, magic etc. All these are the essential tools without which orature will be incomplete and lack flavour.

Inspite of the dominant feature of orature in 'Sarzan' this is wonderfully intermingled, fused and blended with some European devices such as, the flashback, monologue and the introduction of the style of hope and dissolution etc.

The third selected story is this chapter 'A child in the bush of ghosts', written by Olympe Bhely- Quenum. He is a writer, diplomat, journalist, UNESCO official, and was born in the Republic of Benin in 1928. One of the most outstanding African short story writers. Un Piege (novel), Stock, Paris, (1960), Le chant du lac (novel), Presence Africaine Paris, (1965); Liaism d' um ete (short stories) etc. However, The elaborate use of oral narrative techniques and the supernatural elements which overwhelm this story, no doubt, are the anchors nailed this story to the domain of orality. Hence, Olympe's story came up with other selected ones.

The first impression from first reading one could form is that - this story bears all kinds of techniques that are dominant in orature. The author has mythicized the story. It is evident that the author has evacuated the mould of this

story from its European contents and filled it with pure oral narrative materials. If one releases the rein of imagination and slips far away imaginatively suddenly he will find himself drawn back by the magnetic power in the world of supernatural which mantles this short story. The title itself could give a convincing clue that this story better be narrated orally. Because, I feel, all incidents are to be enjoyed collectively by a group audience rather than individually.

The author, as has been mentioned earlier, makes use of oral narrative techniques elaborately to an extent that African features such as the bush, earthen-ware pots etc... are portrayed vividly through an African microscope.

Akopoto and his brother's son Codjo set out for the former's farm. Codjo was left somewhere waiting for his uncle. Codjo was impatient so he could not resist the urge to depart, and set out. In the forest he encountered a fleshless skull who ignored him the first time. Shortly after-wards, the same figure gripped his arm and led him to underground world where he saw lions, panthers, snakes, skinbones, human skulls, arms cut off and placed on top of each other in form of an X, sexual organs; horses without heads galloping at full speed, tails and manes flying in the wind, fire shaped like an open lily blossom flaring from apit. Coffins, people performing a ritual dance; seventy seven skeleton sitting up and leaning their backs against the wall of the crypt...etc..

Supernatural elements play an important role in orature

as well as in religious stories. For instance, in the area of supernatural world, the Arabian and Islamic character such as Jinnis and ghouls have haunted and obsessed the indigenous folktales actors and were incorporated in them. Perhaps, Islam which has its own host of spirit, devils and Jinnis, has passed these to West Africa. But through my reading in West African literature, I was convinced that these supernatural elements are of African origin and have African characteristics and may have been adopted by the Arabs from Africans. Instance of narration employed by the author in this story is done in the folktale mode. Humans who can transform themselves into strange shapes and do supernatural things are common in oral based short stories.

Another common theme of this short story as in many oral tales deal with the friendship between a devil in human form and normal human beings and both engage in a brief or long company in which miracles take place. For instance Codjo with the company of the fleshless skull see many things.

The author, in this short story incorporate various episodes from oral narratives wove them together, and arranged them stylistically in myth mode that is preponderant in orature and not in written literature.

Codjo, in his journey back home after the sudden disappearance of his fleshless skull guide encounters "majestic skeleton without any clothes on, saw wisps of white smoke rose from the foot of the trees: experienced

unforgettable little tremors at a place called Wassai brought about by girls he did not know...etc".

One notices shifts from one place to another, from world to world and also the encounter between natural, supernatural, and world of fantasy to the world of reality.

The author's indebtedness to oral narratives techniques does not stop at this stage. Codjo, upon reaching home sees on either side an eartherware pot containing concoction such as customs prescribe for funeral ceremonies. Furthermore, women had untied their hair as a token of mourning. These features could tell that this story is fully impregnated with orality.

Inspite of the fact this short story dwells firmly in orature, we should not deny the author's endeavour to employ some European techniques such as the flashback technique. For instance, while Codjo was walking with the fleshless skeleton he was transported back in his mind and described the skeleton's grip like that coldness left by his grandmother when she was to be taken to coffin - "Yes, I still remember" I hurled myself on my grandmother when they wanted to put her in the coffin, I took her hand and squeezed very hard so as to communicate all my warmth to her. 'O the piecing coldness she left in my hand... It was here I felt again all along, while the skeleton kept my hand in its own"[76]

Beliefs in the coming back of dead man to some extent still prevalent in Africa. Moreover, beliefs in the word by diviners, magic, spirits, and underworld are indispensable in

most oral folktales. Codjo upon reaching parents home, he found out that his people going along with his own funeral. According to this people the message of death confirmed to them by the diviners.

At the end of the story we are removed from the world of fantasy to the world of reality. This structural frame is not linear e.g the sudden shift from one world to another. Without any preamble, the reader is taken hither and thither. In fact, the main source from which this short story draws its materials are oral traditions related to early phases of culture and literary sources based on these tradition. This source owes great deal of its materials to local tradition of earlier phases and feeds back into contemporary tradition, mostly in the form of narrative techniques. In this way, the author,succeed in fostering cultural continuity, episodes and beliefs even though it is depicted in a modern form.

Towards the end, the orality never absence itself. The author after depicting the world of creatures determined to put it in a form of a dream which happened to Codjo. He glued us as readers and would have glued us as audience had the story been performed and narrated orally as obtains traditionally.

Now, we move on from world of fantasy to the world of reality - and witness events mirror and reflect our ordinary life. Mouktar a Mauritanian writer in the 'Pot of gold' guides us to this world.

The thematic content and the psychological background of this short story reflects the atmospheric ambit with which the author is familiar. Infact the strong ties Africans maintain with their ancestors and to what extent these relationship are considered respected have been reflected in this story, a situation that glues it to the oral ambit.

Diop's `the pot of gold' deals with topics and themes related to African social contexts. In other words, the theme is derived from African tales, while only a few analogy to European narrative techniques. The total picture of this short story shows that the author utilizes and synthesizes a theme which is popular and more familiar in African oral narratives.

From the out set of the story one could sense the aroma of the orality. for instance, the sequence of events might give the reader the feeling that it is a living picture e.g Djibi, the poor farmers, with his axe, his chopper, and his hand plough visited by his wife at his plot - found a pot with gold secretly took home - emerged to be a rich man etc.

Traditional African features everywhere in this story e.g the rudimentary tools of cultivation axe, hand plough,chopper etc, other features include, pieces of pestles, calabashes, mortar etc.

We find that most if not all of the subject matter of many oral narratives rests on kinship, social relationships and ancestral spirits etc. In this regard, Djibi has been advised by his people not to cultivate that plot which once

had been occupied by his forefathers and which had now crumbled into dust as asign of respect to his forefathers and for fear that their spirits might harm him.

It is evident that this story revolves round maintaining communication with the ancestors and those related to the belief in how the dead control the fates of the living are common in orature. This short story, no doubt, incorporates various episodes akin to oral narratives.

Khoudia, Djibi's wife, knelt down when she brought the food for her husband as a sign of respect. This act reflects to what an extent women respect their husbands in that particular patch of the continent. This act has European and Asian parallels and it might stem from Europe.

Khoudia in an attempt to comfort Djibi from his fear that rain might not come, she said "God has heard our prayers. He will certainly fulfil them, for the priest have the Quran in the village mosque" (P.14). This shows that this story has some analogies with stories from Arab and Muslim world.

The author's endeavour to blend the two narrative techniques is seen in his descriptive style e.g. "the flames of beating sun", P.13; 'her breast swelling provocatively; P.13" alert and lively, she walked upright and majestically".

Another arresting device employed by Muktar is the device of personifician e.g. 'stop' roared Djibi (P.18), " the sun veiled by this moving canopy", (P.24) "the water smashed down to the Parched earth". (P.14). This techniques is continuously

resorted to when the author intends to make the story more lively,picturesque and expressive.

This story looks typical of oral tales, if we look at it from a social perspective, we find that people's life seems to be closely connected. Actions show that nobody can frame his own life outside of his community. Most of folktales are build round such themes, e.g world of supernatural and social hirarichael order etc.

Furthermore, this story reveals certain degrees of development of character. For instance, Djibi appears as poor farmer, shortly afterwards a rich man.

It may be suggested that the content and thematic analysis of this short story show that these narratives mirror certain social and cultural realities e.g. Khondia was moved by envy and jealousy of Farama's habit of putting on jewels even to go to the well. This act made her to reveal the secret of having found pot of gold before other women.

Again, it is important to point out that this short story is deeply rooted into African oral cultures, the series of events, theme and the narrational line etc. African elements include beliefs in the spiritual power, pestle, calabash, mortar all are used to blend with some western borrowed techniques. In fact, the synthesis of the plot and flow of events shown in a systematic order compatible with the mould from which oral folktales are drawn.

To conclude, this story centres on or contains episodes

pertaining to women's world and jealously governs that world and finally the prompt transition from poverty to wealth or, in other word, restoration of order by the stroke of luck.

To round off this chapter, we may go back again to the world of adventures and supernatural. Camara Laye follows the same track followed by Tutoula and Olympe-(supernatural).These techniques are many in the oral folktales. The reason qualified Tutoula and Olympe's is, also qualifying Camara's to be selected.' The Eyes of the statue', by Camara Laye who is a novelist and short story writer. Born in Guinea in 1928, died in 1980 Novels: L'Enfant Noir (the African child), plan, Paris, 1953; Le Regard du Roi (the Radiance of the king), plon, Paris, 1954; Dramouss (A dream of Africa), Plon, Paris, 1966.

Laye's 'the eyes of the statue' is brimful with traditional materials. The use of traditional theme overwhelms the story, but the author, employs different styles, tone and tempo akin to that of European narrative technique. Laye reveals and adopt indigenous categorizations that are meaningful in orature and from which the events are inherited.

A closer look at this story convinces the reader that the author uses the quest theme which is common in the African folktale mode. As we know, folktale can be divisible according to whether they are dominated by humans or animals /monsters. This story belongs to the latter category.

Absence of characterization, metaphysical aspects,

encounter between natural and supernatural world (human/ghost) exaggeration, all these elements are employed by the author in this short story a situation which gives a typical world of folktale. for instance, no character has been introduced only a girl who is always referred to as She; the eyes of the statue were without pubils; the movement of rettles etc.

Inspite of the author's dwelling on oral narrative techniques, he too resorts to the use of some European narratives techniques. For example, to mention a few, the girl who is always refer to as the girl was depicted in a tate of soliloquy "perhaps I really ought to go back" (117), " I wonder why these remains seem so different from the forest and bush I have come through already? "what I am searching for"? (118) etc.

Another European narrative technique employed by this author is the style of determination and perseverance which is so prevalent and common in European detective stories.

The story, no doubt, leads the reader into a mythical past which coalesces with a supernatural world. It looks like a fictional African prose narrative which to be trustful account of what happened in the remote past in that town.

The girl sees, in the midst of the nettles a fallen status, green with moss. It cast upon her a dead, grey glance. A cry came out from it. It is a frightful world pictured by the mythical Laye's camera. This technique is noticeable in African tales e.g the appealing cry of the statue a midst the

debris and nettles, the shape of the palace which was once to be a great palace, and wave of nettles that chase the girl etc.

The author manipulates the storytelling technique and combines the style, theme, and message to resurrect the old mythical narrative technique in a modern frame.

Among many things, which give this short story its oral shape, is the act of the old man who ushered the girl the various dilapidated rooms of the palace. This man, to me, seems to be endowed with magical power. Because when the waves of the nettles moved toward the girl, the man that time was in his own abode, he miraculously disappeared. Such kind of sudden disappearance we usually encounter in the metaphysical world.

In order to round up this chapter, one has to say the five chosen stories are brimful with colourful instances of narration in the folktale mode or rather traditional ground.

The richness of orality which cloak the stories is highly emotively charged. Though the selected stories are orally based, but we find their authors skillfully succeeded in blending or welding the European narrative technique with oral tradition in striking manners. Thus, the short stories remain firmly in the body of modern African literature but within overwhelming oral characteristics. However, in terms of content, we find that Tutoula, Quenum and Laye successfully employed to some extent, the same techniques. For instance,

the metaphysical world, supernatural world, encounter between human and ghosts are vividly highlighted. Moktar and Diop, on the other hand, share the idea of beliefs in the ancestors, spirits and superstition, this besides the nature of the African communal life is also reflected in their stories. In the next chapter, consideration shifts to another variety of the West African short story, the ones lacking an oral rhythm but rich in universalistic, European themes and techniques.

ENDNOTES

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2. Amos Tutuola, 'The Complete Gentleman', in Modern African short stories (ed) by Charles R. Larson, London: Collins Fontana Books 1971. P. 50-59.

3. Birago Diop, 'Sarzan', In Modern African short stories (ed) by Charles R. Larson - London; Collins fontana Books 1971 P. 60-71.

4. Olympe Bhely - Quenum, 'A child in the Bush of Ghost' In Jazz And Palm wine. by Feuser, Willfried F. Essex: Longman Group Ltd. 1981. P. 69.82.

5. Muhammedul Mukhtar, 'The Pot of Gold', In Jazz And Palm Wine. by Feuser, Willfried F. Essex, Longman Group Ltd. 1981 P. 12-25.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE EUROPEAN BASED SHORT STORIES

In chapter three, the oral based short stories have been treated and analysed intensively. Features revolve round orature or hints that emphasize the oral tradition have been pointed out and analysed. Now, in this chapter, similar process will be carried out, but this time, the selected short stories are mainly European based. Thus, besides the analysis of the major theme, style etc, corners where European narrative techniques employed shall be discovered.

The selected short stories in this chapter written by prominent African writers, but the grounds on which these stories are built is imported one, therefore, a surveyal look on this ground is within the ambit of our concern.

A brief biographical sketch of each author will precede the analysis. To start with Sembene Ousmane's 'Black Girl'

This story was translated from French by Ellen Conry kennedy. Black girl (La Noire de) is from Sembene ousmane's collection of short stories, Voltaique, published in 1962. A movie version of the story was filmed by the author several years and shown at the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966. Ousmane, who is a Senegalese is the author of several novels, including le Doker Noir (1956); Le Bouts de Bois de Dieu (1960); and L' Harmattan (1964). In the last few years, Ousmane has focused his attention almost exclusively on film making.

One single theme pervades and permeates the selected events

events of this short story. It deals with contemporary politics. The story is on the exploitation of 'White' master and their abuse of their'black' brethren in Europe as ell as in Africa, in Europe more than in Africa.

From the outset, the author, a Muslim Senegalese, refuses to subjugate himself unconditionally to West African orature. Suicide was committed in the year of our Lord (capital L) (1958); this is an evident departure from the pagan polytheism of West Africa before the advent of christianity and Islam.

The author relies on the European narrative techniques of 'Paradox'. On the very first page of 'Black Girl', we meet with this paradox; "There was nothing green about the villa of Green happiness except its name" (P.13).

The effect is, to say the least, humorous. Again, the author adopts the cinematic, flashback technique. First, we are confronted with a tragic event, the suicide in France, of a Black Girl, from Senegal. The flashback consists in retrospective narration of what happened before this suicide climax occurred.

The indebtedness of the author to European narrative techniques does not stop there and then; there is a continuous to and fro movement between the two contrastive settings, of France and Senegal. This, again, is an other instance of the impact and influence of the cinema on modern African literature.

There is also comparison and contrast, at the

psychological level between hope and disillusionment. In other words, between ambition and frustration, hope to become rich in France on the departure for France and disillusionment after a short stay therein.

The author emphasizes, in his characterization, the dehumanizing nature of exploitation of man by man, or man to man occasioned by colonialism.

The 'White' family has benefitted not only from the analphabetism of the 'Black Girl', but also from the blackness of her skin (which sharply contrasts with her white teeth) by making her work more for obtaining more salary, so that she is at once a cook, a laundress, a babysitter, or if you like, a nursemaid, a chambermaid, over and above the endless petty tasks she accomplishes according to the whims of her whitemaster. They have simply abused her.

The generosities of those white masters in Dakar are carefully calculated to lure the 'Black Girl' in welcoming her departure for France, which ended in deracination, estrangement, alienation and finally, sucide.

Fusion of the two traditions is vividly reflected in the Black Girl's monologue or solioquy where she steadily compares and contrasts between life in Africa which is a group, community life and the steeped individualism of life in Europe. In this monologue mention is made of African Features such as the native bush, the forest and the palm wine.

To conclude this analysis the writer wishes to note an

element of exaggeration in the way the Black Girl has physically liquidated her life by 'a kitchen knife' from one ear to the other. There are less brutal and painful ways of committing suicide, if the need arises. The author has successfully painted this African short story with European narrative techniques. A very few traditional African features appear in the story as has been pointed out. But this story's roots rest firmly into the European tradition of alienation and its negative effects. That is, so clear from the European devices employed by Ousmane.

The next selected short story 'Tribal Marks' written by the same writer, Sembene Ousmane. The reasons for choosing two stories by the same very writer are attributable to The fact that the prints Ousmane left on the world of cinema in Africa are ineffaceable, a situation made him well-known artist in the world. Moreover, his influence by the European narrative techniques is remarkable i.e. the same devices used in the first story are applied in the second one.

Ousmane, 'Tribal Marks' is more markedly western in form, narration technique and the style employed. On the other hand, it has African tonal tinge, theme and subject matter.

One of the stylistic devices used by Ousmane to make this story so striking is to create and develop two different sets of images. This technique is constantly resorted to, when the author intends to compare and contrast between two character in terms of action. Amoo represents the (virtue). While Mumuto

represents the negative side (vice).

Characters from the out set are introduced discussing topics pertinent to history - such topics are always tackled by highly educated intellectuals. Topics discussed are: Mali Federation, the Algerian war, the sessions of U.N.O. He deliberately employed European techniques which is totally different from the oral opening formula.

The events of this story are mainly based on history hence, history is used as spring board where from Saer started narrating the origin of Tribal Marks historically. It is evident that the series of events in this short story rest firmly on the ground of history, a situation whereby one finds that the flash back device always referred to and is nicely employed.

The story tells about Amoo's adventure and how he is able to fight seriously for his dignity. Obviously the narration here is similar to that of European detective stories. Amoo is always spying on Mumuto's accomplices and is being spied by them inversely.

The influence of education,social status and calibre on style are reflected in the way topics have been raised and the sequence of narration. It is a well-knitted and highly sophisticated approach. The reader's mind is taken to the world of facts through in a fanticised and fictionalized way. The author wonderfully manages to intensify conflict and built it up through some sort of progressive technique.

Ousmane, also employs another imported device based on a psychological level - Destruction and disappointment. Amoo killed his wife and tried to kill his own daughter lome instead of giving her to the whiteman to be sold and her skin be used as boots for the whiteman.

No doubt, Ousmane through Amoo's character has tried to recreate actual events of history. From the sequence of events we notice a close anology to European narrative technique in terms of adventure and beads of events. The plot is woven around such subject matter and theme.

The usual recipe for short story combined some of the normal occurrence of daily life as this story opens. the episodic structure is a very natural to relate a story since the experience of real life can be more like *a string of episodes. The episodic structure and nature of topics raised* are the factors which made this short story so distinguishable and emerged to be more European based.

Furthermore, the general structure is of modern type in the sense that heroes set for tasks which are so risky and might even cause them their lives, but each is determined to succeed in his quest. (This adventures type of stories are common in Europe particularly in form of detective one).

Moreover, the author makes use of hyperbole to reflect heroism and bravery. *Ousmane's experience in writing stories* and his work in the field of cinema have combined and made him so descriptive in style as shown in story. For instance, when

he describes the atmosphere of war "thing like smoke, gun-shots, beheading... etc. Reading through the description of war will apparently give a sense that it is a battle field with things that go with war.

To conclude, the title in itself is an indicative of African feature, because Tribal Marks are common phenomena in Africa. But the soil on which 'Tribal Marks' has been planted is a Western soil. From our analyses to Ousman's stories, one came out with the conclusion that the degree of indebtedness to oral narrative techniques is so clear compared, for instance, to Tutoula, and Laye. Perhaps, the nature of Ousman's work in film making as has been mentioned earlier greatly affected the apparatus he employed. This opportunity niether Laye nor Tutoula has enjoyed.

The third selected short story in this study 'Two Sisters', by Ama Ata Aidoo, Aidoo was born in Ghana in 1942 she received her B.A. degree from the University of Ghana in 1964. In addition to her short stories, which have appeared in many African publications. Miss Aidoo has published two play: The Dilemma of a Ghost (1965), and Anowa (1970). Two Sisters is from her short story collection, No sweetness Here (1970).

There is one and only one theme in Two sisters, namely, feminism, that is, the principle that men and women are equal. Variance exists among individual humanbeings as persons, irrespective of their sexes. Women should have their equal rights and equal obligations to those enjoyed and assumed by

men. Feminist writers consider all women, not only two of them, as sisters, in the face of male tyranny.

Mercy adopts a utilitarian attitude towards having a boy friend. According to her, a boyfriend is not necessarily a potential or would be husband. He is a means of material ease or comfort, of material wellbeing, right now, not tomorrow.

Girls who come to such a conclusion have already despaired of arriving at richness by honourable means, for instance, hard work and further academic and professional qualifications. They accept a boyfriend not for what he is, but for the facilities that can be enjoyed with him such as private car and good food in luxurious restaurants.

This is camouflaged prostitution, partial, yes; but it may as well lead to, or rather degenerate into, down right, whole sale professional prostitution, especially with advance in age and loss of good looks and youthful glamour.

For this, males are responsible. Rich womanizers can always buy young girls with their money, with black shoes, sewing machine motors, no matter how old they may have grown.

Mercy has a boyfriend who is 'handsome' and 'good', but he is only a taxi owner. Ultimately she succumbs to the temptation of forsaking him for the sake of the luxury which the company of a rich male can afford her. She becomes a kept woman, changing steadily from one keeper to another.

The temptation is so irresistable that it has swept all the barrier of her good up-bringing by her presbyterian

parents (P.108). She gives up feminine prudence for the sake of cars that (sail a way) (P.109). Neem trees, constitute part of the local colour of the story. They are an African feature.

Another features is the Guinea Gulf (P.111) which' the natives sacrifice to every Tuesday and once a year celebrate' (P.111).On this the author comments superficially "They might save their chicken, their eggs and their yams' (P.111). Thus she has failed to use this feature in re-inforcing or consolidating her faminist theme. She need not have mentioned it, except to gratify" white readership".

Apart from this, almost all the narrative techniques are from European written short story. The story could have taken place in Europe with slight modification. The type writer, the bus, the taxi are feature we can readily meet within Europe of the 1960's and not much of West Africa. Mercy is a christian name. There are christian in Europe as well as there are in Africa. Christianity come to Africa from Europe. The concept of death as something 'stupidly final', which implies non belief in hereafter, is shared by many European today.

The author, further, seems to favour 'postponing marriage' (P.105). This is again, a European vice: easily assumption of matrimonial responsibility can be an antedote against sexual perversion.

The author heavily employs the dialogue and (the monologue), whereby indicating her indebtedness to western education.

James, the husband of Mercy's sister, is a womanizer. He is a representative of that part of male society which is responsible for corrupting young decent girls and converting them into 'respectable' prostitutes, if prostitution can be said to be respectable because James is a womanizer, he encourages Mercy to become rich by 'boy-friending, a rich man. the author is covertly sympathetic with this. To me, calling women to be 'manizer', so to speak, in retaliation for the womanizing of their husbands is simply false emancipation which appears to be the goal of ferminists. The freedom of a decent woman consists in restraining herself to one man. There is no 'freedom' in converting women into bitches and men into sons of bitches - whatmore, even bitches are selective. It is too bold for the author to put this into mercy's mouth:" I am sure that I can love several men at the same time; (P.106). This is inadmissible, even Jokefully.

The reference to Black Beauty (Capital B) on (P.111) is 'lip-service' to Africa. Beauty has no colour or nationality.

'Two Sisters' is the least representative of Modern African literature effort to graft orature with European narrative techniques. This may be due to the fact feminism is more of a European fashion than to an original movement of social protest.

Aidoo's `Two Sisters' is brimful and colourful with European narrative techniques to an extent that any reader can easily classify it as a modern European short story written

by an African writer whose indebtedness to European narrative techniques is so easy to spot.

The last bead of our necklace of selected short stories from West Africa is 'The Truly Married Woman'. Written by Abioseh Nicol who was born in Sierra leone, received his education in that country, Nigeria and England. Although he studied medicine at the Universities of London and Cambridge, Dr Nicol has long been known throughout African literary circles as a craftsman of the short story.

He has published numerous articles and short stories in Africa, English, and American publications, and in 1952 was awarded the Margaret Won Prize and Medal for literature in Africa. 'The Truly Married Woman' is from his collection. The Truly Married Woman and other stories (1965). In recent years, Dr Nicol has served as his country's Ambassador to the United Nations.

The author in this short story, describes the role of woman after being legally married. He by way of comparison depicts vividly the duty on woman's shoulder as a lover and as a truly married woman.

The message behind this short story I do believe, is like a letter of warning for ambitious men who are intending to taste the flavour of marriage. It is apparent from the sequences of the events, the author as if extending an open invitation for adultery practice, or, in other words, whispering on youths ears to respond the call of illegal

marriage. This indicates that the author refuses to subjugate himself to African traditions which encourage and subscribe formal marriage.

I, in this case give myself the right to say the author, has been drifted by the current and waves of western world, a situation that reflected clearly in his abundant use of European tradition in this story.

The indebtedness of the author to the European narrative technique can be spotted from the first two lines "... he (Ajayi) looked at the alarm clock on the chair by his bedside (P.28). Time in orature is always referred to by things that inspire people the meaning of life like seasons, cockcrow, the sky etc and not by mechanical devices.

The western or the European aspects of his story has been the dominant ones. To begin with the description of Ajayi's household and what it contains. besides the alarm clock, there are, a cup of morning tea with sugar and milk, towel tussore suit, bottle of patent medicine etc. Other features including the baptismal ceremonies of the children, the nature of his work as a Government Clerk, office, World Gospel Crusading alliance (WGCA)' the Parlour, the name of Jonathan Olsen (a crusader), whisky, and iced beer, photograph and church wedding.

From a religious perspective, the author seems to be a little bit satirist. His satire and cynicism appeared when Ajayi posted a coupon to W.G.C.A. asking for free illustrated

Bibles."... which he gives or sell. He hoped at least large reproductions of religious painting which, suitably framed, would decorate his parlour or which he might paste up on his bedroom wall...." (P.32)

The satire lies in the fact that Bibles are sent for not for -religious purposes but merely for keeping the walls in the arresting and attractive shape.

Another confirmatory point about the satirical nature of this short story is the occasional preaching by the pastor in which he spares no effort to attack violently the adultery, polygamy, an unmarried couples live together. The funny thing is that, while Ajayi and Ayo have been together for twelve years without legitimate marriage certificate, the baptism of their three children was carried on in the same very church where hue and cry is heard.

Author final factor in this regard embodied in Ayo's character who upon receiving the message of her would-be-husband which announcing the arrival of V,I,P from (W.G.C.A), she immediately set out to whisk off the wall all their commercial calendres with suggestive pictures. She removed the Wild West novels and Romance Magazine and put instead an old copy of Bunyan's pilgrims progress and a prayer book which would add culture and camouflaged religious force to the decoration... etc. Obviously the western religious hypocrisy has conspicuously painted the theme of this story.

An intentional departure from African norms of short

story writing in a traditional mode can be seen in the usage of paradox technique. Here are two instances where through paradox is employed:

The first paradox concerns the teachings of the church, where in, adultery, illegitimate marriage etc are not allowed. But the same church charged extra for illegitimate children baptism (two dollars instead of fifty cents) (P.29). this is a very strange contradiction concealed by transparent cloak.

The second paradox resembles, if I am right to call it (a dance of slaughtered bird) or (fluttering of a bird in the trap) - "'No; said Ayo, shyly, pushing him (Ajayi) back gently," you must not, wait until after marriage!! !!!. This objection took place after twelve years company the result of which is three children. In other words, she was so obedient, generous, and accessible. But shortly after the formal announcement of the marriage she turned to be disobedient and inaccessible.

The author also borrows from western narrative technique the device of symbolism.

This can be read "we have come to pluck a red, red rose that in your beautiful garden" (P.36). Red rose is being used symbolically refer to Ayo. Moreover, by beautiful garden reference is made to Ayo's house... Ayo's back has been described as an ebony back which significes the blackness of her skin.

Ayo, Ajayi's mistress and later wife, possessed a high

standard of human quality. As a mistress, she worked for the comfort of her lover (Ajayi) and their three children. In short she managed a successful household. She was also intelligent that she involved herself in women association the successful outcome of it caused great delight or pride to her spouse (Ajayi). Her rejection of flogging as a corrective means against enuresis (bed-wetting) by one of her children and proposing a different means of persuation, was a result of this societal engagement.

Western influences was more clear when Ayo exhibited the sense of equality between man and woman by refusing to prepare the morning cup of tea for her husband Ajayi the first morning after their formal marriage was contracted, she told him bluntly (Ajayi) my husband. Now I am a truly married woman. You must treat me with a little more respect, you are now a husband not a lover, get up and make yourself a cup of tea (P.39)

Although the Truly Married Woman, is brimful with European narrative techniques, we can not deny the fact that the author made some endeavours to bring the two traditions (African and European) into amalgamation. The African aspect of the story is vividly reflected in the names of the two characters, Ajayi and his mistress (Later his wife) Ayo.

Secondly, the description of village women as they were tramping through the streets to the market place with their wares, arguing and gossiping is a typical scene of African

life. (P.28)

The appearance of such words, soothsayer and oracles...etc these represent African features.

In fact, the author, exerts no effort to bring African traditions in many ways, e.g the process of marriage starting from the procession to Ayo's father house, this followed by (women show) to bridegroom's relatives to identify their chosen maiden, finally the Joliffication.

The author, after giving us a descriptive picture of the marriage bearing all African features, he skillfully fused these African features with European feature by introducing the wedding cake as a part of the ceremony.

Inspite of the fact that this short story has been coloured by some aspects (African) derived from the core of Africa's environment such as the names of the two major characters, the marriage ceremony, the belief in oracles, sooth-sayers...etc but the European narrative techniques which have been married with African tradition are preponderate and dominant.

Inspite of the fact that the European based short stories have been written by African writers but the effect of European influence is not absent. It is so clearly reflected in their stories. This might be due to the missionary education they received. Though writers appeared in chapter three have also received the same education, but the degree of influence varies from those who write stories which are orally

based and those who wrote stories which are European based. In the end both parties have successfully managed to approximate and bring the tradition of the two different worlds in one melting pot.

ENDNOTES

1. Sembene Ousmane, 'Black Girl' In Modern African Stories (ed) by Charles R. Larson, London: Collins fontana Books 1971. P. 13-27

2. Sembene Ousmane, 'Black Girl', In Jazz and Palmwine (ed) by Feuser, Wilfred F. Essex: Longman Group Ltd 1981. P. 38.54

3. Ama Ata Aidoo, (ed) 'Two Sisters' in Modern African Stories, (ed) by Charles R. Larson, London: collins Fontana Books. 1971. P. 103 - 117

4. Abioseh, Nicol 'The Truly Married Woman' in Modern African Stories (ed) by Charles Larson, Lonmdon: Collins Fontana Book,. 1971. P. 13-27

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Orature has been regarded as one of the ancient world literatures. The type or the content of such literature varies and differs from one country to another depending on the exigency of the environment and the cultural background that contribute in molding and shaping the character of the narrator.People normally meet or gather in circles during moony nights to chat and exchange stories in an attractive manner that capitulates the minds of the participants in an amazing way. This is usually accompanied by paralinguistic features which adds vividness or vitality to the session. It is a normal thing that the narrator becomes more encouraged to contribute his quota when the number of the attendants in the session increases or grows large. The degree of interaction or performance of the narrator is usually tele-guided by the cultural background of the audience, simply because he knows what they want and what they don't want.

This is a true and actual picture of how orature was and still existing among some societies despite the emergence of the written mode which is seen as an encroaching danger in the face of the orature. But inspite of the numerous attempts to transcribe and translate this sort of literature after the advent of the colonialists and the missionaries, orature remained to be an unanswerable questions due to what it

comprises in its contents such as extra-linguistic features...etc.

These extra linguistic features and the others are difficult if not impossible to be transcribed or translated into its original form. Such impossibility may lead to the loss of the natural traits of the orature. In addition the changes that happened in today's world negatively affected this kind of literature. In other words, the susceptibility for the orature has been atrophied to some extent. The factors for such negligence could be attributed to the following industrialization, urbanization, proliferation of schools... etc . All these factors collectively contributed in depriving orature its brightness and brilliancy. This of course doesn't mean that orature has been faded away completely, but it means that its practicability has been diminished or vanished to some extent.

The orature has become a point of contention. There are those who are continuously calling for preserving orature by any means available so as to reflect the culture and civilization of peoples, despite the fact that, they are fully aware that the soul and the contents are intransferable. On the other hand, there are those who deprive orature the recognition of the title literature. But this issue has already been settled by Ruth Finnegan.. J.P Clark, Isidore Okpewho, Adeboye Babalola... etc, as being experts on this field. Today, all over the world we find that all the

educational institutions give more concern for this sort of literature, and people/scholars have started delving into this literature which has become a literature in its true meaning.

The folktale which has been converted into a written short story form has taken a unique form, not because of its orality but due to the marriage that took place between the two. The white man came to Africa bringing written materials with him, and in addition to the way he sees things and issues as well as aims behind his invasion; here there arose a cultural hybrid and an artistical fusion between the two traditions and techniques . Here the short story has emerged a child of two parentages.

What has been said so far is what the researcher has built his study upon. The researcher has selected some short stories written by African writers for studying. The study concerns on West Africa particularly. The researcher found out that the relationship between oral tradition and western tradition is dialectical, both affect each other and affected by one another. Some African writers have been influenced by western techniques in writing stories, e.g characterization, plot, paradox, theme, setting...etc. Although the cultural background of the African writer is firmly grounded on his own traditions, we find that he finds himself hovering between two poles - an African civilization deeply rooted in his beliefs, customs, values ...etc and the western civilization as a result of his education. As time went on we find that the

African writer was greatly affected by the imported techniques as a natural outcome of the education he received. When writing a prose he usually tries to bring in what he has acquired of the western education and culture, and what is actually implanted and inherited through generations in terms of cultural traditions. These two civilizations have been molded and assumed a unique form of literature.

This study was carried out by selecting some short stories from West Africa, and after a careful study of the traditional African narratives and the devices and methods that brought and introduced by the Western literature, all of this was analysed into two perspectives, namely Oral based short story and European based short story. In the former perspective the assimilation of these writers was not only confined on their indigenous West African culture, but on some of the European techniques. These writers with evident craftsmanship succeeded in blending these two civilizations. In some instances we find that there is an obvious departure from the European narrative techniques. This is more obvious in the writings of Amos Tutuola. This is evident in the use of repetition, sub-title, linguistic inadequency,... etc. His story "The Complete Gentleman" is categorised as a long folktale story, comprising all the features of oral folktales, such as the shifting from the known to unknown. supernatural world, Juju, magic,...etc. These features have been artistically fused with the European narrative techniques such

as paradox, symbol, etc. Such a fusion between the Western narrative techniques and the oral African tradition has made The Complete Gentleman" a story to be reckoned with.

Birago, D.'s story "Sarzan" too does not go short of the African oral tradition. The writer has successfully reflected the real African life in a form of oral story telling. e.g the communal nature of the African society, beliefs in superstition and narrational line being akin to that followed in the oral tale. This has made the Diop's story to emerges as a true oral tale worth of being narrated orally to a group of people. Diop has also borrowed other European devices such as flashback, monologue, et.

Our study was meant to cover some West African countries. In addition to the two examples from Nigeria and Senegal, another example was taken from Benin Republic. The example from Benin Republic is Quenum's 'A child in Bush of Ghost' in this example we find that this title alone indicates the orality of the story as being overwhelmed by the supernatural world. We find that the indebtedness of the writer to the oral narrative is clearly seen and spotted. The writer in this story has attempted to borrow from the western narrative techniques, but the basic source from which this story derived its materials no doubt is, oral tradition.

Furthermore, the scope of the study was extended to include Mauritania. Here Mohamdul Muktar's story "The Pot of Gold" does not also significantly differ in form from the

already above stated stories. But in its content we find that, this story has dwelt on social ground more clearly. For instance, the series of events appear in a systematic order compatible with that mould from which oral folktale are drawn.

The final short story considered in this study is by Camara laye titled 'The Eyes of The Statue'. This story resembles that of Quenum's in content, form and theme: eg ,metaphysical aspect, encounter between human and ghost, etc. are vividly employed here too as in the other story. In this perspective the study was more concerned about the stories that have oral dominance. In other words, stories that are based on oral ground or are more akin to folktales form.

On the other hand, the study also was focused on the European based short stories in terms of methods, techniques style. Here all the selected short stories built on European ground. Though have been written by African writers e.g Ousmane's; 'Black Girl', has shown a clear departure from the pagan polytheism which was so dominant in West Africa before the advent of Islam and Christianity. this departure has clearly shown that there is violent western wave by which Ousman was influenced to an extent that has been reflected in his story. This indebtness is shown in the way he uses the paradox, flash back and monologue, comparison and contrast on the basis of psychological ground. Ousmane's reference to African features is very weak.

The next short story in the perspective has been written

by the same writer Sembene Ousmane. Because, by virtue of his work in the field of Cinema he has become the most closest writer to the western style of writing compare to others. The cinema as being more advanced in the Western world in terms of creativity and techniques, this writer finds himself amidst the Western world, and no wonder he uses the western devices. There is close analogy to European techniques in terms of adventure, narrational line,etc... in Ousmane's 'Tribal Mark'.

Aidoo's 'Two sisters', is regarded as a full fledged European style, in an African tone, she used a false slogan named feminism which means equality between man and woman in all field. Aidoo seems to have been influenced by the western winds of change, so she began to call for such slogan in an implied style that can be spotted in this story and others. This slogan, is no doubt, alien to the African tradition. This is because a woman has her own position as well as physiological and psychological situation which are incompatible to that of man. 'Two sisters' is the least representation of modern African literature effort to graft orature with the European techniques. It is just written; I do believe, for the gratification of the white readers.

In the 'Truly Married Woman', Abisoeh Nicol employed the European narrative techniques from the beginning e.g the description of the room, use of paradox, satire on religion etc. He in the use of satire seems to follow the track of Bernard Shaw and Evelyn Waugh.

The gist of the whole study lies in the fact that inspite of the urbanization, rise of capitalism sociological changes, technological development, industrialization, most African countries are still maintaining strong links with their cultural roots. Written African narratives novel or short stories sprang from the three main civilizations indigenous, Western, and Islamic. The modern African writers influenced by all, he takes from his own cultural background the essence of the cultural inheritance, this is mixed with the imported one which he adopts due to his education - both poured in a fantastic literary mould. The study explored the outcome of the fusion between the two traditions. The technique in orature as well as that adopted one were highlighted. To that end, the depth, degree and nature of this welding is what this study has tried to focus on. Moreover, tracing the origins of the short story one finds out that the short story originated in orature that is to say orature is the ancestory of the written short story. This too is what the study attempted to explore. However, inspite of the apparent difference but they are contributing to the body of narrative called short story. No serious critic or student of literature can deny or ignore any of them. We need the two streams to have a better understanding. The short story in West Africa no doubt, expresses different human experiences.

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