
Orature: The Political Interpretation of Performance Framework in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Jing Duan

Changsha University of Science & Technology

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Television Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Duan, Jing. "Orature: The Political Interpretation of Performance Framework in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 24.5 (2022): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3988>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 0 times as of 02/26/23.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 24 Issue 5 (December 2022) Article 2

Jing Duan,

"Orature: The Political Interpretation of Performance Framework in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol24/iss5/2>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 24.5 (2022)**
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol24/iss5/>>

Abstract: The focus of discussion in this paper lies in a perception that orature of African written literature is not innocent but a form of control. Operated through its performance framework, the concept of orature provides an angle to observe how African oral tradition penetrates written literature and cultivates an awareness of the political nature both of the material to be written and of the writing process itself. This paper explores the performance framework in two African novels — Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Through such key concepts as event, narrative and self-reflexivity in performance theory, readers can perceive how the spatiotemporal dimension and audience-performer relationship are manipulated and how the four realms of African orature are reflected in these two novels and thereby help decipher their specific political connotations. Achebe and Adichie's writing practices have indeed created a new purpose for orature in Nigerian literature.

Jing DUAN

Orature: The Political Interpretation of Performance Framework in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

African scholars and writers have repeatedly observed the importance of establishing a new African literary tradition in which orality is an integral part. In Liz Gunner's highly influential essay "Africa and Orality," she opens with a sentence where the argument for orality and its significance is clearly defended. She states that "the continent of Africa can be viewed as a site of enormous, long, and ongoing creativity in relation to orality as a vector for the production of social life, religious beliefs, and the constant constituting and reconstituting of society, ideology, and aesthetics" (Gunner 67). By this, Gunner stresses the constructive potential of oral tradition for modern Africa. A fact that cannot be ignored is that many contemporary African writers who have acquired international reputations, including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo, Nuruddin Farah, all paid tribute to the value of this tradition. The storytelling elements that derive from oral tradition represent among the most popular and important features of these authors' narratives. Achebe, one of the pioneers of such use of orality, writes "in English to communicate African sensibility in the mode of an oral narrative" (Pegu 3608); and his writing "preserves Igbo speech culture by constructing a 'fabricated reality' that suggests the timelessness of oral literature amid the struggle for control of the means of communication" (Watts 65). Regarding his younger compatriot, the third-generation writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Achebe once made the comment, "here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers".¹ Oral tradition is not only a relic of ancient civilization, but also indispensable in the expression of modern African experience.

A salient feature of modern African novel arising from the integration of oral tradition is its expression of political implicature. Bernth Lindfors claims that "the new literatures in English and French that have emerged in black Africa in the twentieth century have been profoundly influenced by politics" (135). She further asserts that African writers "served not only as chroniclers of contemporary political history but also as advocates of radical social change" (135). How African writers interfere with politics and even advocate social change through "imaginative verbal production" (Thiong'o, "Oral Power" 103) has become a focus of studies. In Thomas Jay Lynn's study *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration*, he traces how orality is extended in Achebe's fictions and nonfictions from political tricksters to language decolonization. In *Ethnosensitive Dimensions of African Oral Literature: Igbo Perspectives* edited by Afam Ebeogu, the nineteen essays spanning almost all genres of African oral literature are concerned with their ethnocentric imperatives. As Furniss and Gunner summarize, oral tradition is "not merely ... folksy, domestic entertainment but ... a domain in which individuals in a variety of social roles articulate a commentary upon power relations in society and indeed create knowledge about society" (1). Lack of appreciation for the significance of this tradition to the political allusions in written literature hinders our understanding of a literary resource that strengthens the power of African literary tradition and exhibits the complexity, diversity, and dynamism of African societies. Oral tradition contributes significantly to the extensive political meanings of two modern African novels: Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The affinity between Achebe and Adichie has been amply discussed,² but little attention has been paid to their successive inheritance and development of orality. Although there are close formal features, these two novels integrate oral elements for different purposes, which displays both the continuity and richness of orality in modern writing context. In the first place, both Achebe and Adichie adopt narrative agents in narration. While Achebe uses narrative agents to construct an open space for the debating of different views, Adichie manipulates them to explore the relationship between self and other. Secondly, they differ in the use of interludes in that Achebe inserts stories to guide the reader's understanding of and reflection on the political reality, while Adichie exhibits a more aggressive intervention in reality by mixing fictional and nonfictional materials. Finally, both Achebe and Adichie discuss the role of the writer but each with different focus. Achebe advocates the idea of the writer as the teacher of the people, while Adichie goes deeper into the question of authorship and gives her

¹ This comment comes from the front page of Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

² Studies in this regard include Elleke Boehmer's "Achebe and his influence in some contemporary African Writing" (2009), Ruth S. Wenske's "Adichie in Dialogue with Achebe: Balancing Dualities in *Half of a Yellow Sun*" (2016), Daria Tunca's "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as Chinua Achebe's (Unruly) Literary Daughter: The Past, Present, and Future of 'Adichebean' Criticism" (2018), Chima Anyadike's "The Global North in Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*" (2018), etc.

answer to the question of what kind of person is legitimate in narrating the nation's story in the aftermath of the civil war. Analyzing the similarities and differences between these two writers in their reference to oral tradition provides us with a deeper understanding of the concerns and ambitions of different generations of Nigerian writers. Although the old generation of African writers seem to be closer to tradition and more concerned with politics, the young writers who possess more overseas and multicultural experience are definitely not divorced from the political context of their nation. They still rely on their tradition and are more deeply involved in the postcolonial reality they are living in now, which enables us to see the vitality and rich connotation of modern African literature.

Performance: the core of orature in framing the textual implicature

The political meaning of oral elements in written literature can be interpreted through the concept of "orature." Coined by the Ugandan linguist and literary theorist Pio Zirimu in the early 1970s, this term was expanded by later artists and writers, including Thiong'o. Thiong'o takes the term as a way to "counter the tendency to see the arts communicated orally and received aurally as an inferior or a lower rung in the linear development of literature" ("Notes Orature" 4). He believes that it mirrors the features and elements of African life and language in pre-colonial society and defines it as "the use of utterance as an aesthetic means of expression" ("Notes Orature" 4) in post-colonial society. Based on this definition, later artists and scholars³ use "orature" to fuse and connect "features and elements" of different art forms "that made up the wholeness" (Thiong'o, "Notes Orature" 4). This ideal naturally leads to the practice of African creative writing, through which the legacy of orature is inherited by modern African writers, as claimed by Onwuchekwa Jemie Chinweizu and Ihechukwu Madubuike, "African orature . . . is the incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, esthetics, and achievements for traditional African thought and imagination outside the plastic arts. Thus it must serve as the ultimate foundation . . . for a . . . liberated African literature. It is the root from which modern African literature must draw sustenance" (2).

The sustenance that African writers draw from orature develops into an overall system "of aesthetics and method and even philosophy" (Thiong'o, "Oral Power" 113), which can "be seen as rejecting the formal boundaries between the written and the oral, between the sign and the icon, or between voices and silences" (Thiong'o, "Oral Power" 115). Through this conception of orature, the binary opposition between orality and literacy is mediated theoretically.

To describe how orature is embedded formally and functions ideologically in written literature, Thiong'o borrows the concept of performance from performance studies in American academy. Since performance theory arose from American folklore in the 1970s and 1980s, it has provided rich insight into the common and essential part of oral tradition across nations, languages and art forms. Richard Schechner, a leading scholar, treats theatre as a performance genre juxtaposing "sports, games, carnivals and street processions" (Thiong'o, "Notes Orature" 4). Based on this conception, orature can be viewed "in the light of the all-pervasive presence of Performance ... a term that may help shed light on a whole lot of other arts and systems of artistic thought" (Thiong'o, "Notes Orature" 4). Richard Bauman, another representative folklorist of performance theory, describes performance as:

a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence. (*Verbal Art* 11)

This description, and Barbara Babcock's definition of frame as "an interpretative context or alternative point of view within which the content of the story is to be understood and judged" ("The Story in the Story" 66), together contribute to the conception of performance framework, which is used to illustrate how the performer strategically manipulates his/her narrative to influence his/her listener in any speech event. In a speech event, the storyteller, the narrative, the stories and the audience coexist and integrate with each other in different modes of combination. These modes constitute the performance framework and provide clues for interpreting messages sent out by the performer through their narrative behavior. Bauman refers to the narrative event and self-reflexivity as important concepts

³ In the 1980s, pan-African, London-based performing artists from all parts of Africa actively used the concept of "orature" to integrate different art forms, among whom are the South African sculptor and poet Pitika Ntuli, the leader of the group African Dawn and editor of Ntuli's *Storms of the Heart* Kwesi Owusu, etc.

that protrude the performance nature of an event, on which I will further elaborate in the following text analysis. What needs to be clarified here is that these concepts are discussed in the sense of performance studies, their association with traditional narratology being left aside due to space constraints, although there is overlapping between these two studies.

Orature is not peculiar to Africa but is present in all oral traditions. What is peculiar to African orature can be seen through the three conditions put forward by Thiong'o for the self-realization of the oral aesthetic in written literature: the architectural space, the time frame and the audience-performer relationship (Thiong'o, "Oral Power" 110). These conditions constitute the basic dimensions of performance framework in African orature. Under such framework, four realms that are specific to African worldview can be presented: "the natural, site of the material force; the supernatural, site of spirituality external to human; the nurtural, site of social force; and the supernurtural, site of human spirituality" (Thiong'o, "Oral Power" 116). These factors continue to affect, as in the past, the views of African people on today's world and are integrated into the modern genre of novel in a process of "re-enchantment" described by Harry Garuba, which is "the recuperation of traditional forms and practices — ... — and their incorporation into the forms of Western modernity" ("Animist Materialism" 265). This re-enchantment "subverts the authority of Western science by reinscribing the authority of magic within the interstices of the rational/secular/modern" (Garuba, "Animist Materialism" 271) and serves for the expression of political aspiration by African writers. Although the devices of performance framework such as the narrative event and self-reflexivity are common and general, the realms presented through the framework of space, time and audience-performer relationship differentiate African orature with other types of orature.

The political implications of performance framework in *Anthills of the Savannah*

Anthills of the Savannah, the last novel written by Achebe, was nominated for the 1987 Booker McConnell Prize. It tells the story of the subversion of a military regime in late twentieth-century Kangan, a fictitious republic in West Africa that alludes to Achebe's native land Nigeria. After independence, the first generation of Nigerian elites came into power in the political and military institutions of the nation. However, the blueprint of a prosperous and democratic country they sketched for the people was soon lost to dictatorship and military coups that followed one another. Meanwhile, the Nigerian economy heavily relied on foreign sources. The abnormal economic structure created a small class of wealthy businessmen "whose interests were aligned with those of foreign investors and rent-seeking politicians, who were content to use a booming economy to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of the population" (Falola and Heaton 185). Class contradictions became increasingly prominent with the growing polarization between the rich and the poor. *Anthills* is an allegorical novel of this reality, whose political allegorical style is firmly established on the performance framework of African orature. To acquire a better understanding of the operation of performance framework in the novel, one needs to be acquainted with the concepts of event and narrative. Bauman defines these two concepts as follows: "Events are action structures, organized by relationships of causality, temporality, and other such linkages; narratives are verbal structures, organized by rules of discourse. Most commonly, narratives are seen as verbal icons of the events they recount" ("Introduction" 5).

This definition indicates a significant difference between novels of orature and other novels. In classical narratology, narratives are accepted as icons of events, that is, narratives are the recounting of events that happen prior to the narration or of events that are only imagined by the author and never actually occurred. Those narrated events are writing resources that have their own logic and self-evident literary connotation. What the author wants to express through the events may not be exactly interpreted by the reader, or the author just deliberately hides his intention and leaves more space for the reader's own interpretation.

In a novel of orature, the logical order between narrative and event can be reversed. The narrative itself becomes another event enriching the meaning of the events narrated. Writer (storyteller), narrative, events and reader (audience) coexist and integrate with each other. The meaning structure in the narrative gives coherence to the events in the reader's understanding and enables him or her to "construct in the interdependent process of narration and interpret a coherent set of interrelationships that we call an 'event'" (Bauman, "Introduction" 5). In such novels, there are both narrated event and narrative event working through the performance framework, with the latter reinforcing or changing the meaning of the former and the former also serving for the narrative purpose of the writer. The concepts of event and narrative help us trace how disparate layers of a performance framework are organized and how those layers facilitate the transmission of information from the author to the reader as a storyteller does from the script creator to the audience. Drawing from those basic concepts, writers may

adopt such devices as narrated event, narrative event, narrated character and narrative agent to situate the reader in a performance scene and bring the writer and the reader into a dialogic relationship.

In *Anthills*, Achebe achieves three purposes by manipulating the events and narratives through the performance framework: to inspire political debate by adopting different narrative agents, to lead the reader to reflect on reality by inserting stories, and to advocate the writer's political responsibility by comparing writers to storytellers.

First, the consecutive narrating of narrative agents recognizes "a plurality of discourses and admits different points of view" (Gikandi 44-50), which conforms to the function of traditional storytelling, and more importantly, gives prominence to the feature of pluralistic coexistence in the spatial dimension of performance. In *Anthills*, except Sam His Excellency, who is completely narrated by the author and other characters, the other three characters, Ikem, Chris and Beatrice, are narrated by the author and narrate other characters as well as himself or herself for the author at the same time. They work as narrative agents. The free switch between different narrative agents reproduces a traditional oral performance scenario in which different views from different participants coexist and argue with each other. This narrative strategy serves for the expression of author's political ideal of establishing a democratic political public space.

The characters of *Anthills* are highly abstract and represent disparate ideologies in the nation's political life. Sam His Excellency is a person who turns from an excellent student into an ambitious and hypocritical dictator. Chris and Ikem, Sam's classmates in college, are called by the author "first witness" and "second witness." Because of their democratic ideals, they embark on a path opposite to Sam's. Nevertheless, in considering the people's destiny during the historical transition of the nation, they hold contradictory views. Beatrice, Chris's fiancée, is the ideal leader of the future African society in Achebe's eyes. She knows well the other three and has her own independent ideas. The storyline is pushed forward by the consecutive narratives of Chris, Ikem, Beatrice and the author. In the narrated event concerning Sam, Ikem sees that Sam "withdraw into seclusion to prepare his own face and perfect his act" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 49), but he is not aware that he himself is "romantic," as Chris says, and he "had no solid contact with the ordinary people of Kangan" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 35). Ikem's concept of struggle is, as the chairman at the meeting at the university of Bassa summarizes, "too individualistic and adventuristic" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 154). Although Chris regards himself as one who has "always been in the middle" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 62), the real insight comes from Beatrice who says: "you fellows, all three of you (Sam, Chris and Ikem), are incredibly conceited. The story of this country, as far as you are concerned, is the story of the three of you" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 62). Beatrice's comment truly points out the limitation of individualist telling of the nation's history, suggesting that civilians' stories and those of the national elites are of equal importance.

Ikem, Chris and Beatrice's narratives provide a good illustration of the "interactive, dialogic dimensions of African novels" (Ibironke 34). The interlacing of narratives produces a special effect of spotlight that inspires the reader's reflection on how African intellectuals should deal with the complicated struggles for power and interests among different ethnic groups, social classes, domestic and foreign organizations, etc. to ensure the sound development of the nation. What is the strength that the intellectuals, being the advanced group, can have despite being only a small fraction of the people? Achebe gradually reveals his point of view by opening up before the reader the disparate roads taken by the four characters — it is the common people such as the farmer, the woman in small business, the soldier and the students that they should unite with and rely on. The destiny of the nation is not decided by a single person or party, but by the common will of all people. The dimension of space sets the framework to accommodate the competing views of different narrative agents, which sketches a modern political space based on orature and is crucial in "the expression of communal views" (Lynn 10-11).

The second purpose realized through performance framework is to arouse the reader's reflection on the narrated events that carry profound political implications by inserting stories into the novel. Narrated events and narrative events interact through the performance framework, which changes the relationship between the writer, the reader, the work and the world. In a traditional novel, the writer's narratives usually draw the reader into the fictional world of the novel. The relationship between the writer and the reader is indirect. Conversely, in an African novel of orature, since performance is understood as "the enactment of the poetic function, the essence of spoken artistry" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 62), the narrated events are dealt with according to the teller's intention or better expressed, more communication oriented than when told singly according to the inner completeness and logic of the story, as Walter Benjamin describes, "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience — his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (87). The role of the writer becomes more active than the traditional one and his/her influence over the

reader more direct and interactive. The reader-writer relationship becomes like the audience-performer one. Centering around this relationship, the novel brings together all elements in the four realms summarized by Thiong'o. By constantly referring to the reader's experience in real life and blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction, the writer demonstrates his "knowledge of human relations, of human behavior, of human capacities consciously, suggestively, descriptively" (Brecht 185) and urges the reader to view things in flexible and rational perspectives.

In *Anthills*, Achebe interweaves many highly allegorical oral elements into the text, which seems to loosen the structure but actually strengthens the tie between the narrated events and reality. What distresses Beatrice mostly, after her being humiliated by His Excellency at the party, is the haunting question asked by the bird in an old story: "Is the king's property correct?" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 128). While the story connects the readers, local readers in particular, to the distant tribal culture, its implication is related to the situation that Beatrice is in, which is exactly a reflection of turbulent post-colonial Nigeria. With oral tradition laying at the bottom of local reader's understanding, the political implication contained in the interludes is more naturally conveyed. Regarding herself as "the chief servant" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 128) of the nation, Beatrice is in agony for not being able to stop the theft of the nation's property, just like what the Nigerian intellectuals feel when national wealth is engulfed by greedy foreign capitalists. In postcolonial Nigeria, the discovery of large deposits of lucrative crude oil in the eastern region did not improve people's life. Earnings from crude oil export were stolen by foreign and domestic interest groups, and the nation's leader was exactly one of those with a vested interest, as "corruption ... run rampant, since there is no accountability other than that owed to the multinational corporations" (Falola and Heaton 184). The newly emerged wealth finally became the fuse of fighting and triggered the civil war in 1967. For Achebe, the most direct way to reveal the truth to the common people is to tell a story that has long been told by their ancestors. The oral tradition dates back to the formation of the African people's worldview and provides prototypes for their understanding of the real world. The insertion of oral elements can be seen as "literary movements that were an act — however far-out — of acknowledgement of a relationship between politics and fiction" (Gordimer 117).

Through the insertion of stories, Achebe exerts influence over the reader like the performer does over his/her audience. Thiong'o argues that "the audience-performer relationship is one of the most important elements of orature" ("Oral power" 121). It is a common practice for the performer to tell the story by constantly referring to other related events to attract or divert the audience's attention. By doing this, the performer inspires people to explore the fundamental problems that lay at the bottom of the social and political conflicts and seek solutions. That is how, as Thiong'o claims, "performance was what made the oral imaginative product so very powerful" ("Oral power" 109-110). In a novel, emphasis on the performance nature of the narrative events serves for the expressing of political implications, strengthening the political function of a literary work. For example, the two stories told by Ikem are very thought-provoking. The first story is about how a champion wrestler calmly get rid of the entanglement of a drunkard and wins other people's respect.. The second tells about a furious soldier who suppresses a civilian's resistance by force only to become victim to people's ridiculing and hoodwinking. By comparing the champion wrestler with the soldier, we can easily identify the topic that the writer wants to discuss with the reader — the quality of a good leader. In the beginning, Ikem and Chris hold opposite opinions as for if Sam can still be saved from the flattery of the surrounding people. Ikem argues that the crux is the flatterers surrounding Sam, whereas Chris regards one's being really strong as the decisive factor. Achebe does not make any judgment, but tells the stories of the champion wrestler and the soldier through the narrative agent Ikem. Here is the trick set by Achebe: though the stories are narrated by Ikem, they obviously prove Chris' argument that a really strong man decides people's attitude toward him. The dislocation between the narrative agent's opinion and the standpoint that the narrated stories express is typically the effect of performance framework that inspires the reader to ponder over the issue of what kind of leader the nation needs. With the interweaving of those disparate events, the novel is no longer a narration of a coherent event but more like an oral performance in which the writer does not "die" at the birth of the work, but closely guides the readers' reading and understanding of the narrated events while at the same time encouraging them to question reality and authority. Fanon writes in the end of his classic *Black Skin, White Masks*: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (181). Similarly, The performance framework urges people to question reality rather than immerse themselves in the fictional world, which strengthens the novelist's role as "the teacher of the people" (Achebe, *Creation Day*). On this famous position of Achebe and how it is expressed in relation to orature, I will further elaborate in what follows.

The third purpose that Achebe achieves through the performance framework is to advocate the political responsibility of writers by making an analogy between the writer and the storyteller. Achebe

maintains that African writers "cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration (of his people) that must be done" (Achebe, *Creation Day* 44). For him, there exists a high degree of similarity between the writer and the traditional storyteller. On the one hand, a storyteller assumes the leading role in the daily life of a community. For generations, African people have acquired knowledge and experience about the world through word to mouth transmission. The role of storyteller is usually assumed by the senior people of an ethnic group and what they say is widely accepted as being credible and indispensable for the operation of the community. The stories they tell are "our escort; without it, we are blind" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 119). In this sense, the bearded old man of the Abazon delegation and Ikem the former editor of the Gazette constitute a pair of highly similar roles representing the storyteller and the writer respectively. When the bearded old man gains respect from the audience, Ikem becomes more aware of the role that a writer should play, which is, the teacher of the people just as the storyteller has been. He states that "I want instead to excite general enlightenment by forcing all the people to examine the condition of their lives ... As a writer I aspire only to widen the scope of that self-examination" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 151). Transmitting knowledge and experience for the guidance of the people is exactly what Achebe regards as the mission of a writer. Drawing on Achebe's intellectual genealogy, Harry Garuba adopts the word "teacherliness" to describe the major feature of the cultural aspect of anticolonial nationalism and decolonization. He argues that the task of writers is "guiding their people to be proper 'subjects' of their own cultures and histories" ("Teacherly texts" 16). This argument echoes Achebe's advocating of "the novelist as teacher" in his essay and the novelist as storyteller presented in his novel.

On the other hand, a storyteller is open and tolerant enough as not to impose any neat resolution on the audience. Since the audience is the main judge of the success of the performance, the storyteller attaches importance to their reaction and tends to adopt narrative strategies to attract their attention and guide their thinking, however, the storyteller keeps appropriate distance from the audience and refrains from imposing any idea on them. Achebe expresses this opinion through Ikem's mouth, "Writers don't give prescriptions ... They give headaches!" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 154). In shouldering political responsibilities, the writer should neither be divorced from the masses like His Excellency, nor have no real connection with them like Chris, nor be like Ikem in being unaware of how to rely on their strength. These three persons all fall short of the role of a storyteller. The ideal leader Achebe chooses in the end of the novel is Beatrice who is not only well cultivated, but also is "sharpened more and more by sensitivity to the peculiar needs of her company" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 220), and can coordinate disparate ideas. In the ending scenario, the reader can see a prototype of storytelling event in which Beatrice is the storyteller, and people from different classes with different backgrounds are the audience, all participating in the naming of Ikem's orphan whose name symbolizes that "May-the-path-will-never-close" (Achebe, *Anthill Savannah* 213). An ideal political space is formed with an intellectual of storyteller type as the spiritual leader. Educating people and listening to them are the storyteller's responsibilities that Achebe recognizes. The analogy between the writer and the storyteller outlines a new writer-reader relationship by highlighting the audience-performer relationship in African orature. The narrated events in *Anthills* seldom deal directly with such issues as corruption, tyranny, and thrilling struggles between forces. However, by making full use of the narrative events, Achebe exhibits the fundamental political problems and invites both local and foreign readers to think about the roots of these problems as well as the ways to resolve them in Nigeria. The novel is no longer a passive object to be read, but a subject that sends out calling whenever a reader reads it. The techniques of free switching between narrative agents, the insertion of stories into the novel, and making analogies between the writer and the storyteller constitute the performance framework of orature in *Anthills*. Pointing directly to their relations with oral tradition, these techniques make breakthroughs in the traditional genre of novel and serve the expression of political ideals and the construction of political awareness in the context of postcolonial Nigeria. Such practice is further developed by later writers such as Adichie, exhibiting the concerted efforts of Nigerian writers in giving out their voice in a both traditional and universal way.

The political implicature of performance framework in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Yellow Sun, the second novel of Adichie, has been highly praised as an epic of the Nigerian Civil War — the Biafra War. Although, in comparison to *Anthills*, it is not rich in direct references to oral genres such as stories, proverbs, songs and storytelling, it is deeply embedded with the performance framework of orature. The novel tells the story of five people during the war: the twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, their respective lovers — the British journalist Richard, the Igbo professor Odenigbo — and Odenigbo's houseboy Ugwu. The narrative switches between two periods — the early sixties and the late sixties, each period appearing twice consecutively. The narrated events are organized into different time frames, with some consequences already known by the reader in the first "late sixties" but the causes of which

have to be found out in the second "early sixties." Adichie intentionally breaks the coherence of the narrated events and reorganizes them into small frames of "story time" like a storyteller does. The effect is that the reader would not read the novel as a passive information receiver. The reader has to track the writer's narrative clues and ponder over the underlying meaning of those narrated events. The first "early sixties" section contains many events that outline the lives of and the relationships between the characters. However, Odenigbo's betrayal of Olanna and the agony it causes to both are described in detail in the second "early sixties" section. It is presented after the first "late sixties" section, in which Olanna has raised Baby, the daughter of Odenigbo with another woman, like her own. The nonlinear narration echoes the political reality of Nigeria, when it is still unclear if the nation is progressing, retrogressing or in stagnation, and at the spiritual level, people's memories are lingering over pre-war and post-war stages. Furthermore, with the consecutive time frames, the characters' experiences and sufferings before, during and after the war are told gradually according to the emotional influence instead of the natural timeline. The reader understands with the advancement of reading that during war, personal grudges, family conflicts and other events all yield to the struggle for a living. Compared to personal love and hate, national reconciliation and peaceful coexistence should be the overriding goal for all people. The breaking of the structural completeness of narrated events and the construction of new story time frames deal with the time dimension of performance framework, and put the reader in the context of African orature. In James Phelan's work *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*, Phelan treats narrative as "act of purposeful communication" (8), in which there exists "recursive relationships among authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader response" (19). The performance framework reinforces such communication. Since it carries African cognitive pattern shared by the performer and the audience, it helps the writer set an African context for the expression and understanding of the novel's political implicature.

The structural completeness is further broken by eight paratexts which are entitled "the Book: the World was Silent When We Died," embodying two purposes of the utilization of orature devices. First, the insertion of paratexts builds a narrative framework in which historical events and fictional stories that integrate the four realms mingle to mirror the reality of Nigerian society. This reflects exactly the process of re-enchantment "whereby 'magical elements of thought' are not displaced but, on the contrary, continually assimilate new developments in science, technology, and the organization of the world within a basically 'magical' worldview" (Garuba, "Animist Materialism" 267). By re-enchanting the world, African writers modify their writing and "adjust their angle of perception to take account of those political and social realities that began in the wake of African independence" (Irele 213). For them, the invention of different fictions is to "help us (African people) out of particular problems we encounter in living" (Achebe, "Truth Fiction" 108). What Adichie wants is, likewise, "to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present" (2). In her writing, integrating history and myth becomes a way to reconstruct the nation's history.

In *Yellow Sun*, the fusion of historical events and fictional stories is performed by Ugwu's narrative in the paratexts. Ugwu stands simultaneously as a narrated object in the main text and as the author of the paratexts. Through Ugwu's writing, Adichie supplements lots of historical materials as the background of her story, such as the British soldier-merchant's controlling of the palm-oil trade, the British creation of "warrant chiefs" to rule Nigeria indirectly, and Nigeria's situation at Independence in 1960 (155). The narrated event about the woman's calabash with the child's head in it, which is told by Olanna and might be fabricated by Adichie, is juxtaposed to the historical events recorded by Ugwu in the paratexts. Those images interrelate, blur the boundary between the fiction and the non-fiction and shift the reader's attention from the narrated events to the narrative itself. For Ugwu, "the Book" serves as "a source of knowledge" and "an outlet for his discovery of agency through writing" (Krishnan 78). Those fictional stories mixed with historical events acquire authenticity through Ugwu's metaphorical writing behavior and remind people of the history that has just passed but is fading away from the memories of younger generation. As Irele maintains that "the historical experience in all its ramifications ... serves as a constant reference for the African imagination" (ix), those stories reinforce the reader's memory of the national history in resisting against the "collective amnesia." They summon individual experiences during the war and create a new and common national history shared by all Nigerians.

While the insertion of historical events grants the fictional stories historical authenticity, the fictional stories revive traditions in modern life and show the vitality of them. Again, the re-enchantment shows the inter-crossing between the natural and the supernatural, the natural and the supernatural. With the disappearance of her sister Kainene, Olanna turns to tribal traditions such as seeing signs in things, buying a goat for the oracle, and throwing a copy of Kainene's photo into the Niger river. Those gestures maintain the hope of Kainene's return. Although Olanna has received almost a totally Westernized education, she still carries with her a cultural awareness which is deeply rooted in African tradition. It is

in her cultural matrix and intercommunication with the collective belief that Olanna is able to soothe the trauma of losing her sister. At a time when everything is drawn into the wheel of modernization, tradition still provides harbor for its people in face of the harm caused by war atrocities.

The second purpose realized through the insertion of paratexts is to usher in the question of authorship, as Adichie admits: "I wanted to make a strongly-felt political point about who should be writing the stories of Africa" (Adichie, *Half* 6). The secret contest for the authorship of "the Book" between Ugwu and Kainene's white boyfriend Richard becomes one of the focuses in reading. The reader would try to figure out who "he" is in the paratexts but has to struggle with many confusing hints and clues before the end of the novel. On the one hand, there are the facts of Richard's profession as a journalist, his longstanding ambition to write a book, and his devotion to the newly established nation the Republic of Biafra. On the other hand, there are the facts such as Ugwu's illiteracy, his rape of the bar girl, and his longing to be like his master. Although Ugwu and Richard know each other and both of them are bereaved during the war, the difference between their identities is fundamental. Kainene's friend Madu invites Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate because Richard is "white ... They will believe a white man who lives in Biafra and who is not a professional journalist" (Adiche 305). Finally, Richard admits: "The war isn't my story to tell, really" (425). Adichie does not reveal the author of "the Book" until the last paratext which contains only one sentence: "Ugwu writes his dedication last: *For Master, my good man*" (433). Here, her stance on the question of authorship is made clear — the narrator should be the real insider of the narrated events. This is in accordance with the trend depicted by Elleke Boehmer that "as African novelists in the 2000s turn increasingly towards local audiences and narrative traditions, and away from the implied European reader, they become ever more independent interpreters of their own internal conflicts and identities" (251).

Inheritance and developments of orature between Achebe and Adichie

From what was argued so far, we can see that what is practiced and advocated by Achebe in his writing is mostly inherited by his "literary daughter" (Tunca 107) Adichie. They take form experiment on novel to express African experience and ideal. They adopt oral strategies such as nonlinear narrative, insertion of stories and consecutive narrative agents in tight combination with the African political context. Both attach importance to the writer's role. Choosing Ugwu as the writer of "the Book" is an indication of Adichie's affirmation and inheritance of Achebe's thought. In his first well-known novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uncovers how African civilization has been erased and African history distorted by the West—the history of the culturally enriched Nigerian ethnic group would be written by the white commissioner into a book called *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. In that book, the story of the tribal hero Okonkwo only becomes trivial details, even will probably be totally deleted. By this, Achebe tells us that it is important for a nation to have its own storyteller as the recorder of history. Then in *Anthills*, the three young intellectual elites are given the role of narrator of national story. However, although Achebe "links reform to inclusive social dialogue" (Ganapathy 88), he does not include the possibility that "the subaltern" would narrate of national story. It is Adichie who "resuscitates this possibility through its structurally complex representation of authorship. Echoing *Anthills*, Adichie's novel extends the role of national storyteller to peripheral voices and appears to forecast state rehabilitation" (Ganapathy 88). For a continent that has been deprived of the right to speak and been in a stake of aphasia under the colonial rule, even the most sympathetic Westerner like Richard cannot represent the will of African people. Adichie leads the problem of authorship in depth in the postcolonial context and broadens the scope of potential national storyteller, which proves what Susan Vanzanten argues: "Adichie deepens and extends Achebe's legacy, and in doing so, complicates his account of African identity and history" (85).

As the father of modern African literature, Achebe is very insightful but moderate in expression. Comparatively, Adichie is more realistic and direct in achieving her literary purposes. This can be seen in their manipulation of another key mechanism of performance framework — self-reflexivity. To understand how performance framework changes the relationship between the author, the reader and the text, one needs to be acquainted with the concept of self-reflexivity. Babcock observes that in its most abstract sense, the term reflexivity refers to "any kind of doubling back or self-reference" ("Reflexivity" 2). Harris M. Berger further defines self-reflexivity as "the performer's awareness of him- or herself as a participant in an interaction, his or her signaling of this awareness, and the reciprocal phenomena experienced by the audience" (63). While self-reflexivity is actively practiced by subjects in social practice and interaction, it can be used to "illustrate how one local passeggiata participant creatively manipulates local ideas about gender, cosmopolitanism, comportment ... to achieve a subtle, multilayered performance that is interpreted in a variety of different ways by local observers" (Berger 84). In African oral tradition, self-reflexive language has become a kind of communication resource and

plays a prominent role in the organization and mediating of community affairs. Accordingly, in modern African novels, when a character looks inward and adjusts its action by referring to other people, self-reflexivity becomes a mediator between individual and society and a connector between the character inside the book and the reader outside of it. That is how Evan M. Mwangi locates self-reflexivity "in the context of indigenous aesthetics and politics" and proposes self-reflexivity as a device of African novels "writing back to themselves and to one another" (ix). In *Anthills*, the narration of narrative agents, the insertion of stories and the analogy between writer and storyteller all impact the reader by arousing self-reflexivity. However, self-reflexivity is most noticeable in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, in which the narrative agent often engages in introspection while narrating other characters in the third person.

In *Yellow Sun*, Kainene and Odenigbo's stories are mainly narrated through the narratives of the other three narrative agents. Initially, their images are quiet, distanced and enclosed. It is only through the narratives of Olanna, Richard and Ugwu that the significance of their stories is made visible to the reader. Being the daughter of a rich Igbo business family, Kainene takes care of the family business and is well versed in the transactions between the politician and the businessman. From such an objective description, the reader cannot understand her personality. It is through Richard's efforts to explore her, define her, narrate her, and most importantly, reexamine himself at the same time, that the author's intention in creating this character is revealed. In his first meeting with Kainene, Richard "didn't think Kainene was some wealthy Nigerian's daughter because she had none of the cultivated demureness" (Adichie 57). He is observing this African lady in the Western perspective. He even regards Kainene as one who "didn't even have the generic prettiness that made him inclined to believe the rumour that Nigerian politicians swapped mistresses" (57). Unexpectedly, his unsure nature submits himself to the aloof and assured disposition of her, which leads him to find out his own weakness. When Richard dates Kainene the next day, he even hopes that "the umbrella above would keep away those unflattering ripe-tomato spots that appeared on his cheeks whenever he was out in the sun" (63). The character of Kainene is silent and unitary in the narrated story about her. It is in the narrative events—Richard's speculation about her, awe for her, and desire of her that multiple themes are unveiled to the reader. We read about the rigidity of the image of Africans in white people's eyes, and white people's negative evaluation of African people. We also read about the possibility of equal love between an African woman and a Western man. The self-reflexive narrative of Richard conveys a reversed self and other relationship in which the West is no longer the absolute subject that gazes at the other. The image of Kainene, the African woman, conveys a refusal to be gazed at and calls for self-reflection by the gazing subject.

Similar narrated character and narrative agent relationship also exist in the pair of Odenigbo and Olanna. The description of Odenigbo's betrayal, when Olanna, shocked and frustrated, goes to her family — her uncle, aunt and cousin for consolation, is an anatomical drawing of self-reflexivity. In this scene, there are three narrative events around one narrated character Odenigbo — Olanna's self-reflection, her cousin's rage toward Odenigbo and her aunt's warning that she should "never behave as if your life belongs to a man" (Chimamande 246). With the discovery of her lover's weakness, Olanna keeps asking herself what attitude she should take in face of the betrayal. While blaming Odenigbo's vulnerability, she also notes her own blindness and weakness. When Olanna is both looking at the narrated character Odenigbo and at herself, her cousin and aunt's reactions represent these two attitudes respectively. The former attitude — blaming others, is adopted by most people in their association with the outside world. The second attitude expressed in her aunt's comment points to a more self-reflexive direction. One valuable point about Olanna is that she is able to combine both attitudes together and take the other and the self as mutually influential units, which helps her take appropriate action. As "language and, specifically, reflexive and metapragmatic language, does not merely depict the subject but actually construct it" (Berger 66), Olanna's self-reflexive narrative facilitates her growth from a naive girl who is submitted to her fantasy about a heroic man into a rational woman who knows well the weak points of the man and herself. Self-reflexivity is a capacity to adjust oneself in considering "the other," which is part of the traditional African outlook — "I am well if you are well" (Muponde 387). It is also how the supernatural should contact with the other three realms, which can generate the vitality of a harmonious society. Operating in African political and aesthetic context, self-reflexive narratives arouse the reader's self-reflexivity. In a performance, self-reflexivity is to "affect performance and audience interaction ... to evoke particular audience responses and active participation during performances, not primarily as methods to convey ideas" (Killam and Rowe 204). By highlighting the narrative events in a novel, the author involves the reader tightly in the storytelling scene and urges him or her not only to listen to the story itself but also to pay attention to the implied meaning of the narrative events. The reader reads the novel like an active audience in a storytelling performance and interprets the novel in at least two perspectives: one is interpreting the narrated stories as the text reader does, the other is reflecting on the narrative events as the audience of an oral performance does. Their difference is crucial

in that the latter remarkably enhances the "appeal and response" relationship between the writer and the reader with self-reflexivity more protruded. With regard to Odenigbo, a reader can that Odenigbo continues to retreat into himself because the loss and suffering during the war, especially after the death of his mother. But as an audience and through the narrative of Olanna, the reader perceives Odenigbo's weakness as something that has always been there and it is only the harm caused by war that exposes it. The same analysis applies to Olanna. The reader reads the stories between her and Odenigbo, but it is through Olanna's narrative of her man's setbacks and her introspection on her own wrongs that we see how a young woman grows into a more independent and stronger person. In this sense, Olanna's self-reflexivity may work as the reader's self-reflexivity, too. Self-reflexivity works in different characters and narrative events and provides multiple interpreting angles. It strongly involves the reader in the creation of meaning, since "meaning is more than just the voice of the composer/poet (in the past pictured as the central figure), but also the other participants who help to form the work and mediate its meaning and the dynamics through which this occurs" (Finnegan 51). The protruding of self-reflexivity is an indication of the author's efforts in constructing a new type of intersubjectivity in postcolonial Africa. With self-reflexivity comes the power for change. This has been one of the major functions of oral tradition in the long past.

The utilization of self-reflexivity in African written literature is a development of the core value of African orature and does add something new to Adichie's expressing of her feminist politics. As Chukwuma Azuonye argues, the power of oral literature is "to sustain ... a particular type of social ideology against the claims of rival or contending ideologies" (66), orature serves as a tool for constructing postcolonial African political discourse which can be seen through Achebe and Adichie's writings. Irele postulates a continuity "of form and function between the oral tradition and modern African imaginative expression, a continuity that rests primarily on the African writer's conception of literature as testimony" (102). In this continuity, Achebe is a forerunner in developing the performance framework of African orature that makes the Western genre a carrier of African culture and a reflection of African political space. Adichie is a successor of this literary tradition. Her writing shows a more conscious manipulation of the performance framework and a more direct style in achieving her literary ideals. As a writer born after the 1970s, she shows greater interest in people's inner world and tries to strike a balance between grand theme and individual concern. These factors make her writing bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, and "associate it with an individualism that is harmoniously reconciled with national responsibility and ... the eventual rehabilitation of the state" (Ganapathy:88). In the whole, both Achebe and Adichie display the sense of responsibility of different generations of Nigerian intellectuals in carrying forward the Nigerian tradition and creating a new postcolonial literary space with an aim to "encourage dialogue across ethnic, religious, regional, class, and gender lines so as to build a more democratic and multi-cultural society that would also help to further humanize the state" (Adejumobi 44). Said Adejumobi says, "Nigeria needs to rise to the challenge of managing and cultivating diversity, and making 'difference' the building block of national unity and integration" (76-77). Achebe and Adichie's writing practices have indeed helped create new contexts both for orature and political discourse in African literature.

Works cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. Heinemann, 1975.
- . *Anthill of the Savannah*. Penguin Books, 2001.
- . "The novelist as teacher." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp. 103-106.
- . "The truth of fiction." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp. 107-114.
- Adejumobi, Said. *State, Economy, and Society in Post-Military Nigeria*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2014.
- Akpome, Aghogho. "Focalization and polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of Yellow Sun*." *English Studies in Africa*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2013, pp. 25-35.
- Azuonye, Chukwuma. "Igbo enwe eze: monarchical power versus democratic values in Igbo oral narratives." *Power, marginality and African oral literature*, edited by Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner, Cambridge UP, 1995, pp. 65-82.
- Babcock, Barbara. "The Story in the story: Metanarration in folk narrative." *Verbal Art as Performance*, edited by Richard Bauman, Waveland Press, 1984, pp. 61-79.
- . "Reflexivity: Definitions and discriminations." *Semiotica*, vol. 30, no.1-2, 1980, pp.1-14.
- Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Waveland Press, 1984.

- . "Introduction: Story, performance and event." *Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*, Cambridge UP, 1986, pp. 1-10.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Schocken, 1969.
- Berger, Harris M. and Giovanna P. Del Negro. "Bauman's verbal art and the social organization of attention: The role of reflexivity in the aesthetics of performance." *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 115, no. 455, 2002, pp. 62-91.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Brecht, Bertolt. "A Dialogue About Acting." *The Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Bial, Routledge, 2004, pp. 185-188.
- Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Howard UP, 1983.
- Ebeogu, Afam, editor. *Ethnosensitive Dimensions of African Oral Literature: Igbo Perspectives*, African Heritage Press, 2017.
- Falola, Toyin. and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press, 2008.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*. Routledge, 1992.
- Furniss, Graham and Liz Gunner. *Power, Marginality and African oral literature*. Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Ganapathy, Maya. "Sidestepping the political 'graveyard of creativity': Polyphonic Narratives and Reenvisioning the Nation-State in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of Yellow Sun*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2016, pp. 88-105.
- Garuba, Harry. "Explorations in animist materialism: Notes on reading/writing African literature, culture, and society." *Public Culture*, vol.15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 261-285.
- . "Teacherly texts: Imagining futures in Nuruddin Farah's Past Imperfect Trilogy." *boundary*, vol. 244, no.2, 2017, pp.15-30.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction*. James Currey, 1991.
- Gordimer, Nadine. "Three in a Bed: Fiction, Moral, and Politics." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp.115-121.
- Gregory, Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Ballantine, 1972.
- Gunner, Liz. "Africa and Orality." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp. 67-73.
- Ibironke, Olabode. "African writers challenge conventions of postcolonial literary history." *Rethinking African Cultural Production*, edited by Frieda Ekotto and Kenneth W. Harrow, Indiana UP, 2015, pp. 29-51.
- Irele, F. Abiola. *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*. Oxford UP, 2001.
- Julien, Eileen. *African Novels and the Question of Orality*. Indiana UP, 1992.
- Killam, Douglas and Ruth Rowe, editors. *The Companion to African Literatures*. Indiana UP, 2000.
- Krishnan, Madhu. *Contemporary African Literature in English: Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Lee, Benjamin. "Metalanguages and subjectivities." *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, edited by John A. Lucy, Cambridge UP, 1993, pp. 365-391.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Politics, culture, and literary Form." *African Textualities: Texts, Pre-texts, and Contexts of African Literature*, Africa World Press, 1997, pp. 135-50.
- Lynn, Thomas Jay. *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.
- Mwangi, Evan M. *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality*. State U of New York P, 2009.
- Muponde, Robert. "'I am well if you are well': Nervous conditions of African philanthropy in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novels." *African Identities*, vol.9, no. 4, 2011, pp. 387-400.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Narrative proverbs in the African novel." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1993, pp. 123-140.
- Pegu, Satya Nath. "Orality as African sensibility in Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart." *Journal of Critical Reviews*, vol. 7, no. 8, 2020, pp. 3608-3611.
- Phelan, James. *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*. Ohio State UP, 1996.
- Radin, Paul. *African Folktales & Sculptures*. Princeton UP, 1952.
- Ramey, Lauri. *Slave Songs and the Birth of African American Poetry*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa. "Oral power and Europhone glory: Orature, literature, and stolen legacies." *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*. Oxford UP, 1998, pp. 103-132.
- . "Notes towards a performance theory of orature." *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, vol.12, no. 3, 2007, pp. 4-7.
- Tunca, Daria. "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as Chinua Achebe's (Unruly) literary daughter: The past, present, and future of 'Adichebean' criticism." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2018, pp. 107-126.
- Vanzanten, Susan. "The headstrong historian: Writing with Things Fall Apart." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2015, pp. 85-103.
- Watts, Jarica Linn. "'He does not understand our customs: Narrating Orality and Empire in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2010, pp. 65-75.

Author's profile: Dr. Jing Duan is Assistant Professor of English at Changsha University of Science & Technology, China. She is a director of the Sino-African Language and Culture Comparative Research Association. She has co-translated two collections, *A History of World: Arts and Humanities* (2010), *African Literature: An Anthology of*

Criticism and Theory (2020), and published several essays in core periodicals of China. Her research interests include African English literature and oral literature. Email: <duanjinqdj@163.com>