

## A Manifesto for the Fluidity of the Igbo Space and Achebe's Reconstructions in his Narratives

<sup>1</sup>\*Chike Okoye, PhD, <sup>2</sup>Stella Okoye-Ugwu, PhD

**Corresponding Author:** <sup>1</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, Nnamdi Azikiwe

University, Awka, Nizeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to reveal Chinua Achebe's verisimilitude in his colonial-era narratives: *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. These two novels owe their roots to constructs and happenstances that range from myth and semi-myth to real-life events. These occurrences and scenes are congruent to Achebe's fictional societies partly because of the artistry, believability, and binding force of the warps and wefts of the author's story-telling craft and partly due to their realistic reality nature. Using the New Historicism critical theory, a re-interrogation of these seminal works will reveal a unique pan-Igbo albeit utopian world, where special characters, scenes, interactions, and revelations play a pivotal role in Achebe's dream Igbo nation. This, in essence, is his new dream environment, a meta-tale hovering above the two linear plots of the narratives, implicit and ontologically joined but revealed by this paper.

**Keywords:** Achebe, Environment; Historicity; Igbo; Reconstructing; Spaces

### 1. Introduction

Seminal texts such as Chinua Achebe's rural novels, the classic *Things Fall Apart* and the tour de force, *Arrow of God*, have sustained and continually excited critical interest for over six decades. Writers, commentators, and literary critics have reacted to and provided various analyses and insights that cover intratextual, intertextual and contextual spectra on the narratives, and these treatises have been grouped within the broad literary space of Postcolonial Studies and literature. Coming out of and basically about forty years – between *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* – of British imperial conquest, “pacification”, domination, and rule of African colonies, Achebe uses the two fictive communities of Umuofia and Umuaro, and the

characters Okonkwo and Ezeulu to tell his tale. Carefully couched in his narratives is his primary motive which is best described as a mild and enlightening polemic against particular Eurocentric views. According to him, he wants his readers (African) to know “that their past with all its imperfections, was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (*Morning Yet on Creation Day* 45).

Researches and critiques of Achebe’s rural novels – so-called because of their native clan settings of the colonial era – have come from many dimensions, so much so that the number is overwhelming. A review of the magnitude of the Achebean scholarship in terms of multiple and varied dimensions, volumes, and depth of treatment, gives the impression that there is little or nothing left to discover and discuss in a sustaining and intellectually engaging manner. This is basically the lot of writers of Achebe’s ilk, and as discouraging as this condition is, it interestingly demands the strength and wit of a tenacious critic to espy the hidden spark of a researchable strand or trend in order to prove art’s infinite horizons of possibilities. As consolidation and validation of a work’s importance, the possibilities of fresh discovery are germane. For Dan Izevbaye in “Criticism and Literature in Africa”

... the importance of a work (lies in) ... discovering in it new meanings not noticed before by the public, thus giving the work a new form and a new importance, perhaps over and above that originally intended or thought of by the author. (27)

In another paper, “History’s Eye-witness: Vision and Representation in the Works of Chinua Achebe”, Izevbaye believes that a major purpose of Achebe is “...the *reactivation of time* in that expanding space occupied by various Nigerian peoples, beginning with small Igbo communities; first Umuofia and Umuaro...” (22) (Emphasis mine). This is similar to Damian Opata’s reportage in “Chinua Achebe: The Writer and a Sense of History”: “... Achebe is reported as having described his novels as ‘*recreations* of the history of Africa in fictional terms’ (56) (emphasis mine). Umelo Ojinma in *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives*, quotes G.D. Killam as saying, “*Things Fall Apart* is a *vision* of what life was like in Iboland... Achebe makes a serious attempt to capture realistically...” (12) (Emphasis mine); and Abiola Irele in *The African Imagination* says this: “In the first place, the novel (*Things Fall Apart*) provided an image of an African society *reconstituted* as a living entity...” (115). These words are italicised for emphases: *reactivation of time*, *recreation*, *vision*, *reconstituted*, all connote the idea of a deliberate and author-oriented reproduction of literary space. The words also absolve this paper from a possible charge of seemingly presenting Achebe’s works as only historical and rural since they suggest and connote art and talent. Space, here, and for the purposes of this paper, simply refers to a model of the world presented in a work of literature. Literary space, which is dependent on spatiotemporal settings and the author’s realities, is not overtly a novel concept since its vestiges have been present in different forms in myths, legends, histories, and so on. Interestingly, these sub-genres are the ancestors of the novelistic tradition, the genre of choice for Achebe’s rural novels – our focus of concern here.

Myths and histories are central to our discourse in this article. Incidentally, they are both in the narrative mode, which is the basic characteristic of the novel. Through talent and artistry, Achebe has woven snippets of histories, folktales, myth and his own imagination into the novelistic tradition in the production of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. His application of these different modes is discernible, but these works have been seen variously tagged anthropological and historical. As we will see in the course of this treatise, narrative

distinctions such as historical and fictional get blurred and actually coalesce into a wholesome and seamless product. Izevbaye's "History's Eye-Witness" contains these important views:

The historian sees himself as being essentially a recorder of events and his text as a transparent medium through which actual events can be mentally grasped. Fiction, the other kind of narrative, is more indirect in its method. Myth, a form of fantasy, eliminates time from its narrative: it claims an unvarying and enduring truth and so commands the unquestioning belief of its audience. (23)

This element of myth is important here, especially for its quality of 'eliminating time', a view buttressed by Charles Nnolim in *Approaches to the African Novel*. He says of myth: "They differ from legends in that they are unauthenticated narratives, folk-embroidered from historical material and often mistaken for historical account" (2). From a perspective, Achebe's rural novels could be termed 'realistic fiction in the manner Izevbaye has described the sub-genre: "Realistic fiction locates its materials within time, and thus appropriates the technique of the historian. But at the same time, it shuts off the paths that lead directly to historical experience and opens up instead a world of illusion" (23).

The world of illusion mentioned in the quote panders toward the domain of the created literary space that concerns this paper. Interestingly, a much more extended vision of the created illusion beyond the tangible narratives in the novels is what we seek to expose—an Achebean meta-creation. The spaces, signposts, myths, characters, historical instances, and places in the narrative strands of the two rural novels will be seen to ultimately interfuse into a fresh meta-space. More than most other works of his, there was a country except for the historical autobiography. Achebe's dependence on historical and pseudo-historical material for the texts in question passes them off more as somewhat historical novels. M.H. Abram's description and the view are illuminating:

To add interest and picturesqueness to the plot, some realistic novels use historical events and characters. What we usually specify as the historical novels... not only takes its setting and some characters and events from history but makes the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters and the course of the narrative. (201)

These elements and tendencies of historicity, the creative and re-creative streaks, are the bulwarks for the thesis of this discourse; and though appearing naturally in the novels, are actually the ingredients for the formation of the novels' meta-tale and environment in which we are going to see.

## 2. Discourse on Background and Allied Literatures

The deft interplay of history and pseudo-history in Achebe's rural novels has been an issue of interest. No doubt there is a tangible historical setting roughly half a century apart between the novels in use, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, but are they in a popular mode of historical studies, historically dependable source texts? One thing has been made certain: that most of the materials in the novels are derived from traceable and locatable history. In fact, attestations such as Charles Nnolim's revelations abound and will be treated later. Damian Opata in "Chinua Achebe: The Writer and a Sense of History" confirms this (57). But more importantly, the thrust in Opata's essay in the debunking of Landeg White's view that Achebe presents a picture "of a village culture, timeless, pastoral... the image of a culture but no history" (540); a view that presupposes what Achebe did not set out to do. Opata's position is thus:

It is unfair because it supposes that Achebe has failed to do a duty that he, in the first instance, never set out to do and which, too, is not an inherent duty of a literary writer. It is uninformed because of its unstated but erroneous assumption that first, historical novels should be a transcript of the actual historical condition of the time and place in which they are set... and that historians should... refer to such writings to validate their findings... (59)

In the end, Opatata propagates an Achebean view of history that is centred on individuals – in this case, his protagonists –their actions and inactions and the interplay with other forces of chance and accident; and the resultant progress and non-progress of both community and personality. Achebe's 'historical imaginations' make for situations where persons and communities are at the mercy of 'vast impersonal forces, chance and accident; making history "some type of metaphysical determinism" (67).

The literary creativity involved in this characterizes Achebe as a creative artist, skilled in forging something new from sources and resources. In the spirit of creation, he has used the ironically befitting genre, the novel, in making something novel. According to Gerald Moore in *Twelve African Writers*, "The 'novel', as Ian Watt has argued, is so-called precisely because it is something new; a substantial departure from the rehandling of already familiar oral narratives which preceded its emergence" (123); and this describes what Achebe has done. In this artistic exercise of creation, he is left entirely to his creative abilities for his final product; and in order to enhance verisimilitude, he strives to remain realistically fair. Moore reports that "...Achebe had to strive for objectivity in evoking a life that personally he had not known" (124). In his role as a writer (that knows his skills), he has almost limitless tools in his arsenal and, according to Austin, Warren can "...tell a story without laying claim to having witnessed or participated in what he has narrated" (17), and in this case, succeed fairly well in telling the stories of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

Okonkwo, who is the major character and protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, is portrayed as the clan's strongman who strives to meet all the high standards and expectations of the clan. He acquires considerable wealth, has physical strength, proves his valour in battles, shows fearlessness, belongs to the leaders of the clan and violently abhors anything that will suggest weakness in him: be it in the form of memory or the sight of his lazy father, Unoka; or in his family or other persons. The very first page tells us what we need to know:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen, he brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat. Amalinze was a great wrestler who, for seven years, was unbeaten. Okonkwo's popularity had risen like a bush fire in the Harmattan many years ago, perhaps twenty years or more. He was tall and imposing, with bushy brows and a big nose that gave him a stern appearance. (3)

Okonkwo matches his looks with his attitude towards people. He dominates and intimidates: "He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father" (3).

Very close to the height of his prime and influence, he inadvertently commits an abomination and is exiled for seven years. On his return, he meets a different clan whose perceived loss of the warrior ideal and edge coincides with the arrival of the white man. Okonkwo characteristically engages the whiteman's authority harshly by beheading a court

messenger. When the clan does not react spontaneously to war, he takes his own life. Obierika sums it all up:

... gazing steadily at his friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: 'That man was one of Umuofia's greatest men. You forced him to commit suicide, and now he'll be buried like a dog....' He was at a loss for words. His words were strangled by his trembling voice. (165)

Achebe's quality as a writer can be seen in his knack for realistically rooting his stories in realistic settings – so much so that one would easily want to visit Umuofia someday. Abiola Irele's "The Crisis of Cultural Memory in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" confirms this by quoting Emmanuel Obiechina's remark: "the integrative technique in which background and atmosphere are interlaced with the action of the narrative must be regarded as Achebe's greatest achievement" (*The African Imagination*, 116). The spatiotemporal rooting is then described thus by Moore: "Achebe's hero, Okonkwo, may be supposed to have lived roughly between 1850 and 1900, in an inland village rather further...than Ogidi" (124).

*Arrow of God*, which came six years later, features a different kind of protagonist; Ezeulu, the central character, is shown as a priest-king of Umuaro. He is the chief priest of Umuaro's deity, Ulu, and is portrayed as a more contemplative and intellectual character than the brawny and brash Okonkwo. Ezeulu's narrative occurs more than half a century after the Okonkwo/Umuofia era when the whiteman had become much more established. Moore puts the setting thus: "The action of this relatively long book takes place entirely in two adjacent village clusters of Igboland in 1921" (132).

He, too, is brought down partly by the whiteman's meddling in a somewhat totally unfortunate twist of fate and partly by the clan's internal wrangling in which he is pitted albeit as a mere messenger/arrow – but one who ambitiously desires more insidious roles – in primordially liminal and mundanely political battles and contretemps. Captain Winterbottom had good-naturedly but unwittingly chosen Ezeulu to be a warrant chief because he was impressed by the chief priest's integrity which he noticed when Ezeulu testified against his people in a land case against neighbouring Okperi that situated the Government House. He intimates Clarke of his intentions:

'I believe I told you about the fetish priest who impressed me by stating the truth in the land dispute between these people here and Umuaro; well, I've decided to install him as Umuaro's Paramount Chief. I went over the case files again and discovered that the man's name is Eze Ulu. As a result, the guy is a priest-king.' (107)

It is understandable, therefore, that when Ezeulu surprisingly rejects the British authority's offer of appointment with: "Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief, except Ulu", Clarke's angry reply of "In that case, he goes back to prison for making a fool of the British Administration in public!" (175) is a natural but unwittingly calamitous catalyst of actions that will later destroy Ezeulu.

His ambitious streak is first noticed in the early parts of the novel as he contemplates the boundaries of his power as a chief priest so that the sharp reprimand of Ulu later foreshadows the catastrophe looming. Nevertheless, the stubborn Ezeulu hatched and perfected a plan to punish Umuaro and show his powers as a chief priest: "After a long period of silent preparation, Ezeulu finally revealed that he intended to hit Umuaro at its vulnerable point – the Feast of the New Yam" (201). The eventual destruction of Ezeulu as he defies his god's warning of "Who told you that this was your own fight?" 'Beware you do not come between

my victim and me, or you may receive blows not meant for you!” (191-192), by latching onto the delay in eating the sacred yams caused by his detention in order to punish Umuaro and therefore show his power, snowballs in a precipitous manner as Ulu deserts him, his son dies, Umuaro deserts Ulu, and he ends up demented.

As hinted earlier and will be seen later, Achebe’s sources range from myths, folktales, pseudo histories, and documented histories. Our aim is to look at spatiotemporal signposts in the two novels by applying an appropriately critical approach, and secondly, to take off from there to view the world created from a projection of those signposts. Since there is an interplay of internal and external contexts (that is, settings in the texts as relatable to historicities), a context-oriented critical approach such as New Historicism will be applied at this stage. In *Contemporary Literary Theory*, Krishnaswamy et al. define New Historicism as: an approach that advocates the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same period; in other words, the non-literary text becomes a co-text of the literary text... in New Historicism, historical documents of the same period are taken as co-texts or expressions of the same historical ‘moment’ that is found in literary texts. (84)

In addition, M.H. Abrams delineates further that new historicists “attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations” (190). Therefore, the next part will field corroborative textual signposts and contextual historicities of the eras of the rural tales. This will enable us to establish connections for a properly grounded launch into the paper’s findings. Nevertheless, possible charge(s) of heavy dependence akin to (a) validation(s) of existing directions, destinations, and cusps of Achebean criticisms of historical corroborations and historicities, do not hold water presently since such discourses only serve as necessary trajectories to the crux of this study; which is the interestingly artistic reconstructions achieved by Achebe.

### 3. Indices of Place, Space, and Character

Much more than *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* contains easily identifiable corroborative historicities – thanks to the critic’s groundbreaking discoveries, Charles Nnolim, who stumbled onto his uncle Simon Nnolim’s historical pamphlet, *The History of Umuchu*. This part will depend heavily on his findings. Nnolim’s paper, “A Source for Arrow of God,” is noted for the historical sources Achebe relied on for his *Arrow of God*; hence Opatá’s remark that “...the historical sources of Achebe’s writings; that much, at least, with respect to *Arrow of God*, has been done by Charles Nnolim” (57).

On page 19 of Nnolim’s article, we find these corroborations of character and event: In his fictional work, the District Commissioner, who is called Winterbottom by Achebe, was in history, J G Lorain. The High Priest called Ezeulu by Achebe was in the history of Umuchu, Ezeagu, the High Priest of Uchu. He was actually imprisoned for two months at Awka by J G Lotain.... (19)

In a later development, he wrote an additional article in *Okike* titled “A Source for *Arrow of God*: Matters Arising” and made a correction to the Lotain character thus: “Although Nnolim spelled his name as Lotain, the correct spelling, according to the eminent historian A E Afigbo, is J G Lawton” (19). Nnolim’s validations continue as he asserts that “Achebe’s Umuaro is Nnolim’s Umuchu” and that “Achebe’s god, Ulu, is Nnolim’s Uchu” (20) and then declares that the ‘Breaker of Guns’ who appears both in *Things Fall Apart*,

and *Arrow of God* is J G Lotain (Lawton); Achebe's fictional Captain Winterbottom. According to Charles Nnolim, "Nnolim's Gun Breaker, J G Lotain, is Achebe's Gun Breaker, Winterbottom" (20). Again, on the authority of his uncle Simon's historical pamphlet, Nnolim maintains that "Ichu", an antidote medicine (juju) of the ancient Umuchu community (Achebe's Umuaro), was to become Achebe's Ulu goddess in *Arrow of God* (22-23). Nnolim further confidently attests that the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves, which features in *Arrow of God* prominently, is an Umuchu exclusive affair (28); and interestingly, he locates the fictional rival seat of government, Okperi, to be the realistic Awka community: "Captain Winterbottom's illness becomes the motivation or excuse to keep Ezeulu at Okperi (which, in reality, is Awka divisional headquarters)" (39). A corollary to these attestations is found again in the reported treatment meted out to Okonkwo and other elders in *Things Fall Apart*. Captain Winterbottom (Lawton) carries out the dehumanizing treatment and Nnolim refers to this from his uncle's book:

According to oral sources, when the town was subdued, J G Lotain, who was the District Commissioner living in Awka, invited the town to bring their spokesmen so that peace terms could be ironed out. As it turned out, when the elders were assembled, instead of discussing peace terms, they were handcuffed, shaved and carted to Awka and forced to collect heavy fines in addition to collecting all the guns in the village. (26)

Apart from the documented historical source of *The History of Umuchu*, there are other sources, oral mainly, available to any inquisitive and discerning individual, especially one conversant or native to Achebe's immediate locale. His hometown, Ogidi, neighbours Ogbunike, a town famous for its awe-inspiring, oracular, maze-like cave. Though the widely famed Long Juju oracle of Arochukwu is also reportedly labyrinthine, the nearer and neighbouring Ogbunike Oracular Cave is more likely to influence Achebe's Oracle of the Hills and Caves of *Things Fall Apart* than the tens of miles distant Arochukwu phenomenon. Another physical index of place, "Ugwu Ntiji Egbe" (Hill of the Breaking of Guns), is a popular contemporary landmark for commuters and natives of the Ajalli town locale and environs. Ajalli community is within a two-mile radius of Umuchu (Achebe's Umuaro). This lends concrete credibility to the index of events and place of the colonial "breaking of guns saga" that is referred to in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Again, some of the *egwugwu* and masks alluded to in Achebe's historical narratives are actually in existence and are more or less still active. The Ekwensu of Uli and Ajo Ofia of Nnewi are real-life masks that are still actuated by ancestral spirits to this date. These masks are featured in their exact semblances in Achebe's narratives.

An interesting index of person and character is James Ikedi in *Arrow of God*, who, according to Winterbottom, assumed too many powers, became very corrupt and extorted and embezzled money as a warrant chief. His real life historical character is Chief Igwegbe Odum, aka "Omenuko Aku". His corrupt exploits fostered the classic Igbo novel *Omenuko* by Peter Nwana, which has remained popular among Igbo scholars of all levels. Chief Odum's appointment did not go well and he was disgraced out of office by the British administration of Lawton and others. Nnolim reproduces the report of Lawton to his superior and comments further:

... "the appointment of a Paramount Chief for Ajalli District is not working well." He was referring to the paramount chieftaincy of Chief Igwegbe Odum. Umuchu, where Ezeagu Uchu

was chief priest, was in Ajalli District this time, and Igwegbe Odumwas paramount chief from 1914 to 1918. (46)

The last historical index to be mentioned here is the Abam(e) warriors and their ravages. In chapters fifteen and two of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, respectively, Achebe makes graphic reference to the barbaric and dreadful warlike nature of the Abam(e) warriors and pillagers. In *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, G T Basden attests to this: “They were dreaded enemies of the adults and bogies to the young... These warriors used no firearms whatever; they depended on their cutlasses, their reputation, and their sudden onslaughts. The bands were always ready to ravage a town...” (208-209).

Adiele Afigbo lends credence to this:

The early Europeans described the (warlike clans) the Abam...as Aro mercenaries. These clans had developed a tradition of head-hunting...when the Aro had a quarrel with some other communities...those young men (Abam) would seize the opportunity to obtain heads...the Aro also came to exploit the passion of these clans for human heads by inviting them to fight their own wars. (24-25)

#### 4. The Achebe Pan-Igbo Idea: Restructuring, Symbolism, and Re(-)presentation

S.C. Chuta, who is writing on identifying parallels between church growth, Acts of the Apostles, and *Things Fall Apart*, reiterated that reading in between lines could bring out erstwhile hidden patterns in a narrative. After drawing a parallel between Ogbuefi Uzoma’s earlier perception of Holy Communion as a feast and his preparation by tucking away a drinking horn in his goatskin bag, with the implied message being about typical surface misconceptions that are later replaced with deeper understandings, Chuta concludes by saying: “These instances of parallelism could be seen as sheer coincidences. But are they really?” (52). His point is that “coincidences” of that ilk could be serendipitous, concealing interesting patterns and tropes. In *Essays on Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin makes this assertion: “explanation is the discovery of an ‘underlying’ pattern” (55). This underlying pattern that is not always easily discoverable is the product of a hidden spark of creativity occasioned by the foundation established by the surface text(ure) or narrative.

An in-depth study of Achebe’s major narratives unearths an interesting and underlying pattern of tragedy for the protagonists. This find is akin to this paper’s crux and will help set an instance for comprehension. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* features Okonkwo, a man known more for brawn than brain, which is made by the author to use his own strength against himself by hanging himself. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu is admired for his strongest point, his intellect. His end in the novel is a destruction of that intellect – madness. Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* meets his downfall in the only manner that can make nonsense of a civil servant’s life and career; a jail term. *A Man of the People* features Chief Nanga and Odili, and both meet defeat in the most disastrous way for politicians – through sudden military intervention and seizure of power. Ikem Osodi and Mike Oriko, troublesome and opinionated people of the media in Sam’s tyrannical regime of *Anthills of the Savannah*, meet their violent ends through the barrel of guns – the surest way to get rid of recalcitrant journalists. A discerning contemplation now will espy a pattern: that all the protagonists have ‘befitting’ ends as regards their most noticeable traits and occupations: and this uncovers a penchant for ‘organized tragedy’ on Achebe’s part. Whether this pattern of tragic endings is an unconscious product of Achebe’s artistic prowess or they are consciously contrived is what we will no longer know. What is

evident, however, is that it is an underlying and significant construct that requires critical understanding to identify.

Achebe has unconsciously projected a pan-Igbo world based on the high points and poignant indices of his rural narratives of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. He has gone beyond his mindful “recreations of the history of Africa in fictional terms” (*TimesBook Review*, 20); he has gone on to unwittingly, I dare say, construct fresh spaces and places, albeit idealistically, based on the life and power of his own first-tier narratives. This ‘meta-tale’ has grown with a life of its own, independent yet fuller when sequenced on the power of their source narratives – the two rural novels. His holistic view of the Igbo nation, the primary context of his tales, has engendered the deconstruction of the physical boundaries of Igbo history and settlements as they combine their individual baggage of characters and characteristics to morph into Achebe’s new space. These erstwhile environments, now fused together, form an exciting and fresh space – a second-tier product of first-tier worlds. His ideal second-tier world and literary space acknowledges “Ugwu Ntiji Egbe” (The Hill of the Breaking of Guns) of the Ajalli community in Anambra state and repositions it in Umuaro (historical Umuchu). Of course, Umuaro is Umuchu, and the historical latter is approximately eight to ten miles from Awka, which is represented by Okperi. The historical Ogbunike Cave (fictional Oracle of the Hills and Caves) is collapsed into the literary second-tier space foregrounded by first-tier fictional Umuofia. James Ikedi (Igwegbe Odum), Winterbottom (Lawton), Ezeulu (Ezeagu Uchu), Ajo Ofia, Ekwensu, and Winterbottom as Gun Breaker (Lawton) all feature in this new and boundaryless literary space.

Achebe’s composite pan-Igbo world possibly plays out thus: there is a nameless world comprising of Umuaro, Umuofia, Okperi, Mbanta, Nnewi, and Uli, all morphed together; and has revered and dreaded ancestral spirits – Ekwensu and Ajo Ofia. It also has an oracular cave and deities such as Ulu and Idemili. In its history, the white man interlopes with alternating religiously deceptive peace and outright violence cloaked in order and administration. This violence becomes an extended metaphor in the ruthless routing of the faraway Abam(e), which underscores the white man’s unsparing nature; and as a corollary of the destruction of the Long Juju of Arochukwu. The Long Juju could also be seen as the possible destructive force of the Igbo that knows neither foe nor ally but ultimately falls under the white man’s superiority. Representational Igbo personages such as the strong Okonkwo and the intelligent Ezeulu all symbolically fall to the white man’s might while the corrupt James Ikedi is disgraced. On another level, the narrative of the white man as presented by the fictional book *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, represents Basden, Talbot, Conrad, Cary and other colonialists of that sort, while *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, narratives of this space, become the anti-books and foils. Achebe even goes as far as the Owerri Igbo to bring the concept of *ikenga*, which according to Nnolim’s quote of C K Meek, “is the personification of a man’s strength of arm...” (43), into his ideal reconstructed space. Conflations such as these and many more make for the environment of the sketchy pan-Igbo world.

## 5. Conclusion

As a creative writer with the burden of a particular historical consciousness and armed with the story-telling tradition and practical eloquence of his cultural milieu, Achebe has also relied heavily on myths, legends, and historicity in his writing of two major rural novels. *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Interestingly, both narratives share a lot in common, their

significant differences being chronological setting and characterization. In fact, without Achebe's deft manipulation of the time difference and significant characters, one could easily mistake Umuofia for Umuaro because notable historical landmarks crisscross the narrative landscapes of both novels. His artistic prowess comes to the fore in plot, characterization, depth, tone, etc. These factors also create additional differentiation aside from time and setting. But the concern of this paper lies deeper and above what is obvious. There is this feeling, this existence, hazy, illusive yet felt, that there is a greater story, a more expansive and common backcloth from which the finer liveries of the two novels are made. It is a meta-tale, a distinct literary space created but not explicitly mentioned and containing restructurings, symbolisms, representations, backdrops, ontological rooting, and so on, which is partially independent of the two distinct tales. It plays out like an ideal world from which Achebe creates fictional yet historically bulwarked narratives. This discourse gently reveals this meta-fictional ideal but the scantily developed environment. Chinua Achebe deftly reconstructs indices of space, character, and symbolism by adroitly manipulating planes of history for the recreation of fiction.

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