

**AESTHETICS OF NARRATION IN SELECTED MIKE
EJEAGHA'S FOLK SONGS**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, the fountain of knowledge and giver of wisdom.

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ABSTRACT

This study identified and analysed the narrative devices used by Mike Ejeagha in the performance of the selected songs which include *Onye Isi Oche* and *Omekagụ*. It discussed the literary implications of the narratives and highlighted the aesthetics inherent in the selected Mike Ejeagha's songs. This was with the view to shedding light on the creative ingenuity of Ejeagha as a folk narrator who is committed to the exposition and preservation of Igbo traditions/cultural practices.

Both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. The primary data comprised *Onye Isi Oche* and *Omekagụ* from Mike Ejeagha's folk music Album titled: *The Omenala Series Number One*. The songs were selected because of the narrative devices that characterised them. The selected songs were translated from Igbo Language into English Language and analysed to identify the narrative aesthetics used in the performance of the songs. Secondary source included books, journal articles and the Internet. The tales in the songs were analysed with Roland Barthes's proairetic and semantic narrative codes.

The results of the study showed that there were artistic beauty in selected Mike Ejeagha's folk songs which were evidenced in the narrative devices - repetition, digression, ideophones, and parallelism. From the analysis, it was discovered that the repeated lines increased the temporality of the songs and also captured the interest of the audience in the performance of the songs. The study also revealed that parallelism enabled the narrator to arrange the wordings of the songs to express the actions and emotions of the characters in the tales. The study further showed that the narratives in the songs addressed some aspects of Igbo customs especially issues of inheritance and injustice as explicated in the story of *Omekagụ* while the story of *Onye Isi*

Oche condemned desperation for power and fame as an attitude for failure. Using Roland Barthes narrative codes - semantic and proairetic in analysing of the narratives in the songs, it was discovered that there are cultural and aesthetic meanings in the two selected songs of Ejeagha.

The study demonstrated that narrative devices abound in the selected songs of Mike Ejeagha. The study also analysed the tales as well as the narrative styles in the selected songs. The literary implications of the narratives to the Igbo genre and society where the selected songs domiciled were also discussed. It was concluded that the aesthetics of Ejeagha's songs was in his narrative style.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Human beings have been telling stories from the beginning and these are in form of myths, fables, legends, folktales and so on. Man as an animal with developed speech organs expresses his experiences and cultural milieu in narratives (tales). Historically, man has been questing for knowledge to make his natural habitat more conducive for him to live and move freely and these are achievable because he couches the findings in narratives – personal experiences, dreams, struggles in life, inevitability of death, scientific discoveries of respiratory diseases like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome - S.A.R.S, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome - M.E.R.S, investigative reports, and reports of situational events.¹ Narrative is mother to other disciplines (Communication, Medicine, Psychology, Literature and so forth) because it entails dramatic involvement, in a time space, where issues affecting human beings and their environs are being expressed and analysed with the intention of arriving at some solutions, so as to identify the roles stakeholders or players have in the business of making this world a happy place to live in.²

Narrative cuts across different disciplines - psychology, business, communication, literature, social sciences and so on.³ It has been observed recently that interest in narrative

¹ Simon Peter Ongodia, "Oral Narratives an Underutilized Tool of Transformation: The Case of Ateso Folktales in Iteso Communities of Uganda and Kenya," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 4, no. 10 (2014), 768.

² Ibid., 768.

³ Paul Hazel, "Narrative: An Introduction" <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/wlabovusen:1>.

research has increased among scholars of different discipline. Jane Elliott affirms to this by giving a concise list of the narrative works that have been published by researchers (Abbot, 1990, 1992a, Finnegan, 1992, Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997, Mishler, 1995, Riessman 1993, Somers, 1994).⁴ In the context of psychology, psychologists use narratives (stories of the patients' life experiences) to examine the cause of an unconscious act or the mental conditions of their patients; likewise the managers of business organisations and the like recount the acceptability of their products and performance of the workers in narratives thereby providing a common ground to establish the success and failures in the activities of their companies. Communicators formulate the storied life of the nations ranging from the government officials to the common man on the streets. Communication contributes to the development of products in advertisement and also connects people from different facets of life through the platform of social media. On the other hand, social scientists use narratives to examine the behaviour and experience of individuals in the community to demonstrate the relationship between the society and individuals. It is therefore, obvious that narratives are not limited to a particular field of study.

Narrative is the expression of ideas, concepts and beliefs that are structured purposively. A narrative is a concatenation of events or situations which are chronologically arranged to form a meaningful whole. This means that narrative meaning is a necessity in every narration because the absence of a well structured story leaves the work dead or meaningless at the detriment of the narrator. However, this does not mean that narratives that are not arranged sequentially are meaningless. He/she exudes a kind of competence while executing tales (animal, ghost, and

⁴ Jane Elliot, "Narratives and New Developments in the Social Sciences" in *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage Publications Ltd), 3.

moral) in a way that appeal to the emotive, retentive and descriptive perceptions of the audience. In narrating the stories, the narrator ensures that the account of incidents and occurrences are in a chronological (linear), circular or cyclic manner for easy understanding.

Tale - telling in the form of narratives have always been a part and parcel of the traditional African societies. It functions as a unifying force among the community where they tell stories concerning their experiences in life. Tales are also tools of education, social cohesion and entertainment. The people learn about the cultures, traditions, communal rituals, duties and expectations in tales that address varying thematic issues since there are no formal schools or institutions in the community. There are no electronic social media such as television, radio, films, cinemas and the internet, so they entertain themselves after the day's hard work on the farm with thought provoking tales and riddles which are all genres of oral narration. During the communal seasonal festivals, oral artists and performers of different categories engage in different kinds of competitions ranging from story - telling, wrestling, acrobatic display, dance, to music. All these competitions are means of maintaining peace, harmony, and progress in the community.

Furthermore, Peter Knapp and Megan Watkins posit that “what characters say and do in the stories give a narrative thought pattern about the actions and events which lead the audience to discussion, reasoning, describing, and alluding to recent events in their milieu, in an attempt to understand their present predicament better.”⁵ This implies that they are performers, creators and reformers in their own rights. Meyer Abrams complements this by asserting that new thought patterns are provoked in the events that are being performed by characters created

⁵ Quoted in Ongodia “Oral Narrative,” 769.

or cited if not masked to do so.⁶

Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen state that narrative [tales] involves coding and decoding of images that perform a cognitive process of placing the narrative plot into the

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⁶ M.H Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (Sydney: Harcourt Bruce College Publishers 1993), 123.