

# Dimensions of Intertextuality in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*

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## Abstract

The readings on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are, for the most part, steeped in Igbo culture and cosmology as well as the deployment of language in the texts. None, consequently, has taken up the question of examining both texts by means of Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. This research report occupies that critical void. Concretely, it utilizes select dimensions of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality in investigating *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. This is in order to understand what the characters are saying and what the narrator is saying, the role played by culture in these discourses, and whether the theory's select dimensions apply to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Ultimately, it is uncovered that indeed intertextuality is applicable to and exists in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* by means of the various dimensions of the theory. By Kristeva's account, these dimensions are the intersecting of citation and narration within the novel, dyadic figuration and arbitrary termination, the relationship between the literary text and the text of culture, the figure of double destinations, the horizontal dimension of the function of the symbol, the non-conformity between a named object and its name within the Symbol as Ideologeme, and the relationship between individual texts (books).

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Citation, Narration, Culture, Speech act, Utterances

## 1. Introduction

The general trend of criticism on the two novels by Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, is about the culture and cosmology of the Igbo and the linguistic resources inherent in both texts. For instance, Nnolim, in an article, reads *Things Fall Apart* as an Igbo Epic and its protagonist, Okonkwo, as the Epic hero, and compares the novel with other epic works as *Beowulf*; Homer's *The Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Lindfors' influential study argues that Achebe deploys rural similes for local colouring, proverbs to build up and reiterate themes, to characterize characters like Okonkwo, to make conflict known, and to direct attention to social values.

On the other hand, an article by Onyibor opens a probe into how the novel *Arrow of God* recreates the native Igbo world through different incidents and characters within the narrative and the state of these components to the present Igbo and Black Africa as a whole. For their own part, Ahmad and Jabaka have conducted an inquiry into the deployment of two linguistic devices, the pause and the rhetorical questions, in public oratory in *Arrow of God*. Nonetheless, there is a critical gap in the body of criticism on these texts, which this analytic report fills. Therefore, the issue opened up is to utilize select dimensions of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality as critical appliances with which to analyze *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* in order to understand the saying of the character and that of the narrator, the function of culture in these discourses, and whether the select dimensions of the theory pertain to the texts under examination.

In specifics, in “Intertextuality: An Analysis of Utterances” as a dimension of Kristeva’s theory, the core signification of intertextuality is unearthing, which is that intertextuality is located in the forms of utterances found within the text of the novel. Kristeva (1980) recognizes these utterances as “narration and citation” (p.45). By her account, narration, on the one hand, is the speech of the narrator or author and citation on the other is the speech of the character in the novelistic text. Put another way, citation is *quoted dialogue* and narration is *writing* within the text of the novel. “Dyadic figuration and arbitrary termination” is another dimension of intertextuality by reason of which Kristeva (1980) explains that it is a situation of “oppositional terms, always exclusive” (p. 40) in the novelistic text, and that this dyadic relation in the novel usually terminates in an arbitrary way, by the choice of one term over the other. For Kristeva (1980), the meaning of intertextuality is in part rooted in culture; which is to say that there is interweave of a literary text and the broad text of culture. Under the dimension of the theory of intertextuality known as “Text Production”, Kristeva (1980), considering the novel as a site with several novelistic ‘utterances’ otherwise known as ‘figures’, isolates one of such utterances or figures occurring at the level of theme where there is interplay of antithetical dyads. The isolated utterance or figure of Kristeva’s, known technically as “double destinations” (p. 43), are in forms as “ruses, treason, foreigners, androgynes” (p. 43). Put differently, Kristeva views the figure of double destinations as something interpreted as two opposites mated to a figure.

With regards to “the horizontal dimension of the function of the symbol”, it actually signifies that “the articulation of signifying units” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38), say, virtue and vice, are not at odds with each other as they are two linguistic poles. Within the dimension of the theory, which can be dubbed the symbol as an ideologeme, there is non-conformity between a named object and its name. This means that there is no harmony between the symbolized and the symbolizer, between the “signifying units” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38) and what is represented outside of language. To further elucidate, there is actually no agreement between the “signifying units”, the terms used to represent, and the represented; say, “heroism”, “courage”, and “treason”, these being things not within language. As for “the relationship between individual texts (books)”, it is a dimension of the theory implicated in it in principle, and it literally means the intersection of individual texts (books).

In this study, therefore, these selected dimensions serve as equipment with which to examine the novels in question in order to understand the character and the narrator’s utterances, the function of culture in the discourses, and whether the selected dimensions of the theory bear on Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

## 2. Select Dimensions of Intertextuality in *Things Fall Apart*

*Things Fall Apart* is a literary text replete with questions of ontological antithetical dyads, as its design steepens in “dyadic figuration” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38). Its closure is also arbitrary, as shall be seen further below. Of opposing poles, therefore, there is the matter of the metaphysical and the physical in the work. For, as one learns, whereas in physicality Okonkwo works to become one of the great men of his clan, the dream eventually shatters because there is no basis for it in the transcendental. Witness how this is marshalled in the novel:

His life had been ruled by a great passion – to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. Then everything had been broken. He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or *chi* was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his *chi*. The saying of the elders was not true – that if a man said yea his *chi* also affirmed. Here was a man whose *chi* said nay despite his own affirmation. (Achebe, 2008, p. 104)

Indeed, the fact that Okonkwo’s gun explodes and a piece of metal inadvertently murders the son of a deceased man to whom Okonkwo is paying his last respects, and for which crime he suffers, is a marker that his “personal god or *chi*” (Achebe, 2008, p. 104) does not approve that he should be great. It also speaks to the fact that the spiritual and the physical are usually bound up in the existential. Similarly, through the character of Obierika, one is made aware of the twin children that Obierika’s wife had borne him, but which he had disposed of following the order of the Earth goddess that they were a crime against the land and must be demolished. Here, too, the lacing of two opposites can be seen – transcendentalism and physicality, the former exerting an influence on the latter.

There are yet other “signifying units”, “universal transcendences” and “symbolized universals” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38) within the novel’s architecture. For instance, there is the figuring of these “oppositional terms” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 40), fear and bravery, to the overall meaning of the story of Okonkwo. In fact, early in the novel there is this rendering:

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo’s fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. ... And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion - to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness. (Achebe, 2008, p.11)

It is not so much the obvious linguistic dexterity in this passage that is the attraction here as in the highlights of Okonkwo’s dislikes, one of which is the fear of not living up to expectation, thereby leading one to understand why he embraces the antithesis of fear. It is no wonder he strikes his foster son, Ikemefuna, to death despite the boy’s cry of anguish as well as his rush towards Okonkwo; evidently for protection, and in spite of a warning delivered to him by Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest living grandee in a quarter of the clan of Umuofia, that Okonkwo should not participate in the killing of the boy. It is also the

underlying fear in Okonkwo that leads him to unleash onslaught on a messenger of the white man. “In a flash Okonkwo drew his matchet. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo’s matchet descended twice and the man’s head lay beside his uninformed body” (Achebe, 2008, p. 163), it is narrated. Okonkwo is, therefore, a figure with “double destinations” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 43) as he is an embodiment of the set, fear and bravery, oscillating in much of the work.

Further, the oppositional dyads of life and death occur in the work’s plot. One such scene in which this occurs is where Ikemefuna is led outside of Umuofia and put to death. Here is how the narrator presents the lead up to the boy’s tragic end:

At the beginning of their journey the men of Umuofia talked and laughed about the locusts, about their women, and about some effeminate men who had refused to come with them. But as they drew near to the outskirts of Umuofia silence fell upon them too. The sun rose slowly to the centre of the sky, and the dry, sandy footway began to throw up the heat that lay buried in it. Some birds chirruped in the forests around. The men trod dry leaves on the sand. All else was silent. Then from the distance came the faint beating of the *ekwe*. It rose and faded with the wind – a peaceful dance from a distant clan. (Achebe, 2008, p. 47)

Appropriately, life exists side by side with death in *Things Fall Apart*. For even when “the men of Umuofia” (Achebe, 2008, p. 47) set out to kill the youth, there is yet life around in different forms – what with the presences of the sun, the sky, the chirruping birds, and of the dance from far away. Indeed, all of these, plus the presence of the men themselves as well as their laughter translates to life. Below is a parallel evocation of a life-suffused atmosphere:

Thus the men of Umuofia pursued their way, armed with sheathed machetes, and Ikemefuna, carrying a pot of palm-wine on his head, walked in their midst. Although he had felt uneasy at first, he was not afraid now. Okonkwo walked behind him. He could hardly imagine that Okonkwo was not his real father. He had never been fond of his real father, and at the end of three years he had become very distant indeed. But his mother and his three-year-old sister... of course she would not be three now, but six. Would he recognise her now? She must have grown quite big. How his mother would weep for joy, and thank Okonkwo for having looked after him so well and for bringing him back. She would want to hear everything that had happened to him in all these years. Could he remember them all? He would tell her about Nwoye and his mother, and about the locusts. ... (Achebe, 2008, pp. 47-48)

The passage above is, of course, a record of the happenings prior to the murder of the child Ikemefuna. Moreover, nothing in the passage itself points to impending doom for the ill-fated youth, except perhaps Ikemefuna’s uneasiness. However, Ikemefuna’s uneasiness is quickly dispelled by the presence of Okonkwo, obviously from a moral posture; namely, that Okonkwo is his *de facto* father. Soon after the portion of the novel above is rendered, the reader encounters a swift transition from that serene, life-filled atmosphere to one aghast in the following:

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his machete, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry, “My father, they have killed me!” as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak. (Achebe, 2008, p. 49)

Indeed, Ikemefuna’s anguished cry for help, which is a desperate attempt to cling onto life, and the resultant swift slay of him instead, is altogether proof of “the interplay between two exclusive oppositions” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 42), life and death, this being also a “thematic loop” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 42) of *Things Fall Apart*.

In the end, the novel’s closure is arbitrary, true to resolution of the novel. Had Okonkwo opted to live and not commit suicide, the novel would have ended differently. In other words, there is no definitive way in which a novel ends; hence, its termination is arbitrary.

In *Things Fall Apart*, there is also “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36) where “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (Achebe, 2008, p.36). An instance of the intersecting of texts in *Things Fall Apart* is thus: “He turned again to Okonkwo and said, ‘Thank you for calling us together’ ” (Achebe, 2008, p.134). In the first clause, “He turned again to Okonkwo and” is narrative, and, therefore, the narrator’s speech which is a text linked to another text, a character’s speech, signaled by the lexicon ‘said’ before the ushering of the citation itself, “Thank you for calling us together” (Achebe, 2008, p. 134). Here, spoken text (citation) and written text (narration) are linked together. Correspondingly, the following song which is rendered in Igbo language in *Things Fall Apart*, is not a character’s dialogue in itself; but it is one of the cultural materials integrated into the text – Akwanya would say, “a quoted text inside the space of a new formation” (Akwanya, 2015, p. 274):

Eze elina, elina!  
Sala  
Eze ilikwa ya  
Ikwaba akwa oligholi  
Ebe Danda nechi eze  
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu  
Sala (Achebe, 2008, p. 48)

In principle, intertextuality also refers to the relationship between individual texts; as Achebe’s novel, *Things Fall Apart*, owes its title to W.B Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming”, in which the text/title can be verified in these lines: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart; / the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”. (Achebe, 2008, p.9) Similarly, references to biblical literature are made within the text even though there are no overt citations of them. For example, it is written thus: “He should have known that the Kingdom of God did not

depend on numbers. ...To fill the Lord's holy temple with an idolatrous crowd clamouring for signs was a folly of everlasting consequence. Our Lord used the whip only once in His life – to drive the crowd away from His church" (Achebe, 2008, p. 147). This, too, is part of the essence of intertextuality.

Furthermore, in *Things Fall Apart*, for its entire claim to being a text rife with demonstrable courage in the character Okonkwo, there yet exists non-conformity between the term "courage" which essence the character Okonkwo can be said to exemplify by virtue of the life he leads and the "action" for which efforts are made to represent and symbolize it. This is because the term "courage" does not, cannot translate to the "action of courage" because it is not "knowable" and it is not "experienced" in practical terms. For instance, in the opening chapter of the novel, one learns of Okonkwo's valour as well as achievement at a very young age of eighteen by defeating a seven-time reigning wrestling champion, thereby bringing honour to his community. (Achebe, 2008, p.1)

Similarly, Okonkwo participates in the killing of the ill-fated Ikemefuna against the advice of old Ogbuefi Ezeudu and, in fact, does not see anything wrong with his action. Here is how he later defends himself: "The Earth cannot punish me for obeying her messenger' ". "A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm". (Achebe, 2008, p. 53) In addition, Okonkwo tries to rouse his fellow members of the village of Umuofia to resist the new order, which the white man is bringing to them and even though they do not feel energetic as him to do so, Okonkwo does not refrain from murdering the white man's messenger all alone. The passage reads:

The spell was broken by the head messenger. "Let me pass!" he ordered.

"What do you want here?"

"The white man whose power you know too well has ordered this meeting to stop."

In a flash Okonkwo drew his machete. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow.

It was useless. Okonkwo's machete descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body. (Achebe, 2008, p. 163)

But, although in Okonkwo there are ample illustrations of courageous actions such as the ones sampled above, these courageous actions are only words on printed pages and not the real actions outside of the novel, which is what "the Symbol as an Ideologeme" is in part about.

Unlike the non-conformity between a named object and its name within "the Symbol as an Ideologeme", two linguistic opposites, say, propriety and impropriety are clearly what they are without ambiguity in *Things Fall Apart*. Take, for instance, the fact of Okonkwo's lack of a sense of propriety and of proportion in the way he acts single-mindedly by eliminating the White man's messenger as opposed to how his friend, Obierika, embodies propriety by refusing to join the party of men who go to terminate the life of Ikemefuna, saying later when asked why by Okonkwo: "I had something better to do" (Achebe, 2008, p. 52). In fact, even when Okonkwo challenges Obierika's thinking with the following: "You sound as if you question the authority and the decision of the Oracle, who said he should die." (Achebe, 2008, p. 52), Obierika counters with an apt reply: "I do not. Why should I? But the Oracle did not ask me to carry out its decision." (Achebe, 2008, p. 52). From this exchange, one can see that "impropriety" and "propriety" are two distinct "signifying units" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38) and linguistic poles. This aspect of the theory comes properly under the "horizontal dimension" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 38) of the function of the symbol, where the symbol's ideologeme, also called its function, is one of breaking free from paradox.

### 3. Select Dimensions of Intertextuality in *Arrow of God*

As in *Things Fall Apart*, there are dimensions of intertextuality in *Arrow of God*, one of which is antithetical couplings. For instance, a dyadic relation is juxtaposed in the pattern of life Ezeulu leads in the text; namely, he is the Chief Priest of Ulu coupled with being the custodian of Umuaro and the eventual shattering of it all. In other words, the character Ezeulu is a personification of power and fragility. Indeed, the novel altogether provides a sustained account of these "antithetical semic couplings" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 48), to use Kristeva's phrasing. Hence, this passage illustrates Ezeulu's power imbued thought process:

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real. It was true he named the day for the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam feast; but he did not choose it. He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. As long as the goat was alive it could be his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know soon enough who the real owner was. No! the Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival – no planting and no reaping. (Achebe, 1986, p. 3)

This excerpt is a scene in *Arrow of God*, where very early in the novel Ezeulu engages in an interior monologue, appraising his stature as Chief Priest and the power and reach of his influence. Moreover, it is due to the fact of reaching for more power that Ezeulu sends his son, Oduche, to hobnob with the white missionary, whom he had pledged to send a son to his church. He tells initially reluctant Oduche:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow. (Achebe, 1986, p. 46)

However, nowhere is Ezeulu's display of power in flames than in his refusal to eat the last remaining sacred yam and so usher in a new season of harvest, which would save the community from famine in spite of pleadings by the elders of Umuaro and even though they are hard-headed about the performance of the ritual by the Chief Priest. This is because as Wole Soyinka explains,

He is smarting from a humiliation meted out to him by the colonial authority in the person of a Captain Winterbottom and, additionally, from a perceived slight from his community. And so, Ezeulu refuses to 'see' the new moon, whose appearance communicates to him the moment that he must eat the final, symbolic tuber from the harvest of the previous year and enable the opening of the soil. (pp. 8-9)

In the end, however, Ezeulu crumbles as pain from the death of his son, Obika, "compounded with humiliation" (Achebe, 1986, p. 229) makes him become demented. In fact, writes Updike of Ezeulu's fall:

The final developments of *Arrow of God* proved unexpected and, as I think about them, beautifully resonant, tragic and theological. That Ezeulu, whom we had seen stand up so invincibly to both Nwaka and Clarke, should be so suddenly vanquished by his own god Ulu and by something vengeful within himself, and his defeat in a page or two be the fulcrum of a Christian lever upon his people, is an ending few Western novelists would have contrived; having created a hero they would not let him crumble, nor are they, by and large, ... truthful... in their witness to the cruel reality of process. (qtd. in Achebe, pp. 56-57)

For the most part, this viewpoint, which Updike puts forward, is oriented to fragility. Hence, even Ezeulu is defeated in "a page or two" (qtd. in Achebe, p. 56) and his ruination is a truthful "witness to the cruel reality of process" (qtd. in Achebe, p. 57).

In the same vein, a dyadic opposition plays out between traditional value systems and western value systems in the text. This is manifest in the life of Ezeulu: the one being that he is Chief Priest of Umuaro and the other that he associates with the ways of the white man through his son, Oduche. And yet, when Oduche violates traditional propriety by enclosing the sacred python in a box, Ezeulu is both scandalized and incensed. "Today I shall kill the boy with my own hands" (Achebe, 1986, p. 45), he threatens. Nwaka's rebuke of Ezeulu, then, plays in place here; not only in the context that the Chief Priest has the elders of Umuaro informed of his summon by the white man:

a man who brings ant-ridden faggots into this hut should expect the visit of lizards. But if Ezeulu is now telling us that he is tired of the white man's friendship our advice to him should be: *You tied the knot, you should also know how to undo it. You passed the shit that is smelling; you should carry it away.* Fortunately, the evil charm brought in at the end of a pole is not too difficult to take outside again. (Achebe, 1986, p. 144)

No doubt, Ezeulu is a figure of "double destinations" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 43), complete with its characterization. This characterization resides in the fact that the character of Ezeulu "can be doubly interpreted" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 43).

By design, a set of irreconcilable figures, life and death, are also held together in the text. An instance of a scene of life in the novel is the following:

When Obika's bride arrived with her people and he looked upon her again it surprised him greatly that he had been able to let her go untouched during her last visit. He knew that few other young men of his age would have shown the same restraint which ancient custom demanded. ... The girls sang a song called *Ifeoma*. Goodly Thing had come, they said, so let everyone who had good things bring them before her as offering. They made a circle round her and she danced to their song. As she danced her husband-to-be and other members of Ezeulu's family broke through the circle one or two at a time and stuck money on her forehead. She smiled and let the present fall at her feet from where one of the girls picked it up and put it in a bowl. The bride's name was Okuata. (Achebe, 1986, p. 116)

In this extract, Obika, Ezeulu's son, is taking a wife and a ceremony is organized to honour the event. Thus, there is a case-by-case description of the constituents of the occasion, as the song sung, the dance, the appreciation for the dance, the name of the bride, etcetera. The passage, therefore, is undoubtedly infused with life and pride; offering experiences of African heritage that goes back in time. Another case in point of the existence of life in the text is instanced as follows:

Edogo came in dangling a calabash of palm wine from a short rope tied round its neck. He saluted Akuebue and his father and set down the calabash. 'I did not know that you had palm wine', said Ezeulu. 'It has just been sent by the owner of the door I am carving'. And why do you bring it in the presence of this my friend who took over the stomach of all his dead relatives?' 'But I have not heard Edogo say it was meant for you'. He turned to Edogo and asked: 'Or did you say so?' Edogo laughed and said it was meant for two of them. Akuebue brought out a big cow's horn from the bag beside him and held it for Edogo to fill. When he had served him he took the calabash to Akuebue and also filled his horn. ... (Achebe, 1986, pp. 96-97)

In the gaiety of friendship and playful banter between Ezeulu and Akuebue in the above extract, there can also be seen life and living in *Arrow of God*. For jokes and friendly relations are indeed characteristics of life and living.

On the other hand, one of the two opposed sets, death, occurs where after deliberation Umuaro sends three emissaries to carry a message to Okperi, and, instead, a fight ensues leading to the death of Akukalia of Umuaro. The scene of death is narrated thus:

Ebo was last to see the abomination. He had been struggling with Otikpo who wanted to take the matchet from him and so prevent the bloodshed. But when the crowd saw what Akukalia had done they called on Otikpo to leave the man alone. The two men came out of the hut together. Ebo rushed towards Akukalia and then seeing what he had done stopped dead. ... Still Ebo turned round and went into his *obi*. ... Ebo pushed him aside and came into the *obi*

with his loaded gun. At the threshold he knelt down and aimed. Akukalia, seeing the danger, dashed forward. Although the bullet had caught him in the chest he continued running with his machete held high until he fell at the threshold, his face hitting the low thatch before he went down. (Achebe, 1986, pp. 24-25)

True to the nature of things in the novel, Akukalia's death is not the only passing, as Obika's is yet another tragic occurrence. The scene of the tragedy reads:

The eight men who would sing the *ayaka* chorus were still talking where Obika left them. Ozumba had come to sit with them to await his return. ... The *ayaka* men scrambled to their feet and got ready to break into song as soon as Ogbazulobodo re-entered the *ilo*. They were all amazed that he was already returning. Had he left out any of the paths? 'Not Obika', said Ozumba proudly. 'He is a sharp one. Give me a sharp boy even though he breaks utensils in his haste'. This was hardly out of his mouth when Ogbazulobodo raced in and fell down at the foot of the *ikwolo*. Ozumba removed the necklace from his neck and called his name. But Obika did not answer. (Achebe, 1986, pp. 226-27)

When news of this occurrence of tragedy reaches Ezeulu, he is overwhelmed by it. "'My son', he cried. 'Ulu, were you there when this happened to me?' He hid his face on Obika's chest", it is narrated. Worse, "it was the constant, futile throbbing of these thoughts that finally left a crack in Ezeulu's mind. ... But this final act of malevolence proved merciful. It allowed Ezeulu, in his last days, to live in the haughty splendour of a demented high priest and spared him knowledge of the final outcome". (Achebe, 1986, p. 229) Thus, the novel ends arbitrary, in the true fashion of novelistic ending. If Ezeulu remained sane in the work, the novel would have ended in a different mode.

*Arrow of God* also links up with other individual texts. For instance, when Ezeulu engages in self-reflection; he eventually utters a statement that is reminiscent of the utterance of the Second Apparition in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* even though there is no quotation entailed in it. The one reads: "The woman who will bear the man who will say it has not been born yet" (Achebe, 1986, p. 3). And the other is presented thus: "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth" (Shakespeare, 2009, 790). Moreover, in *Arrow of God* a statement, among others, echoes the Bible as follows: "He saw his sojourn in Onitsha as a parallel to that of the Moses of the Old Testament in Egypt" (Achebe, 1986, p. 47). In the same vein, a text in *Arrow of God*: "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger" (Achebe, 1986, p. 32) is a direct reference to the same text found in *Things Fall Apart* on page 166, which is the last page of the work.

Indeed, the novel also teems with citations of texts of culture. For instance, a reference made to the term *obi* in the following sentence is actually a citation of the text of culture: "Obika's mother and all the others in the compound had now hastened into Ezeulu's *obi*" (Achebe, 1986, p. 89). However, it is not just the term *Obi* that is a cited text of culture in the sentence as there are also "Obika" and "Ezeulu" which are properly instances of texts of culture within the sentence, and, therefore, the novel. In fact, *Arrow of God* is altogether rooted in the text of culture, this being a fragment of the meaning of intertextuality. For, the novel hinges on the transitional state of Igbo culture during the period of the on-march of colonialism in Igbo land. As Lindfors summarizes the novel's sequence in his influential article:

As Chief Priest of a snake cult Ezeulu is committed to traditional ways, but just to be on the safe side he sends one of his sons to a mission school to 'be [his] eye there' and to learn the white man's ways. This action draws criticism from some of the leaders of the clan, criticism which rapidly mounts into angry protest when the Christianized son is caught trying to kill a sacred python. Ezeulu also falls foul of the District Commissioner by declining to accept an official appointment as Paramount Chief of his village. For this he is thrown into prison for two months. When he returns to his village he sees himself as an avenging arrow in the bow of his god, an instrument by which his god intends to punish his people. Ezeulu therefore refuses to perform certain rituals which must be performed before new yams can be harvested. This precipitates a crisis which results in the destruction of Ezeulu, his priesthood and his religion. (p.12)

There is much in the way of the life of the people of Umuaro who are Igbos, which together make up the novel. For example, one learns of the names of markets and of a festival among the Igbos in the following: "As he waited for it to roast he planned the coming event in his mind. It was Oye. Tomorrow would be Afo and the next day Nkwo, the day of the great market. The festival of the Pumpkin Leaves would fall on the third Nkwo from that day" (Achebe, 1986, p.3). Similarly, one also learns of the names of six villages and their religious allegiances to a god-agent within the novel in the following: "In the very distant past, when lizards were still few and far between, the six villages – Umuachala, Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu and Umuisiuzo – lived as different peoples, and each worshipped its own deity. (Achebe, 1986, p. 14) Other cultural practices include speech patterns, proverbs, meetings, and so on. For example, this is how Ezeulu salutes Umuaro when he begins to address them:

'Umuaro kwenu!'  
'Hem!'  
'Umuaro obodonesi kwenu!'  
'Hem!'  
'Kwezuenu!'  
'Hem!' (Achebe, 1986, p. 26)

This salutation is obviously one of the speech patterns that one encounters in *Arrow of God*. But also, there can sometimes be a sense of dramaturgy in the speeches within the text, as in the following speech by Ifeme, "a short, stoutly-built man who always spoke at the top of his voice as though every conversation was a quarrel" (Achebe, 1986, p. 185):

I must go, Ezeulu,' he shouted so loud that those in the women's huts heard him. 'We thank the great god and we thank Ulu that no bad story has accompanied your travel. Perhaps you were saying to yourself there: *Ifeme has not come to visit me, I wonder whether there is a quarrel between us*. There is no quarrel between Ezeulu and Ifeme. I was thinking all the time that I must visit Ezeulu; my eyes reached you but my feet lagged behind. I kept saying: *Tomorrow I shall go*, but every day gave me a different order. As I said before: *Nno*. (Achebe, 1986, p. 185)

Thus, in this speech by Ifeme, the sense of dramaturgy is most evident from the part that begins with the word "perhaps" and ends with "*Nno*" (Achebe, 1986, p. 185). Similarly, there is a generous use of proverbs in the text. For example, in the scene where Ezeulu's friend, Akuebue, intervenes in the family affair of Ezeulu, particularly in Ezeulu's discontent with his son, Obika, who is not at the time present, Akuebue makes use of several proverbs as he admonishes the children, saying:

...I know how often your father has pleaded with Obika to leave his friendship with Ofoedu. Why has Obika not heeded? It is because you all – not only Obika but you all, including that little one there – you think you are wiser than your father. My own children are like that. But there is one thing which you all forget. You forget that a woman who began cooking before another must have more broken utensils. When we old people speak is not because of the sweetness of words in our mouth; it is because we see something which you do not see. Our fathers made a proverb about it. They said that when we see an old woman stop in her dance to point again and again in the same direction we can be sure that somewhere there something happened which touched the roots of her life. When Obika returns tell him what I say, Edogo. Do you hear me? ... (Achebe, 1986, pp. 99-100)

In the scene from which there is the above, comes one more proverb. However, this is no longer addressed to the children, but to Ezeulu himself. See how Akuebue puts it: "I have spoken to the children and I shall not be afraid to speak to you. I think you are too hard on Obika. Apart from your high position as Chief Priest you are also blessed with a great compound. But in all great compounds there must be people of all minds... That is why we say that whatever tune you play in the compound of a great man there is always someone to dance to it." (Achebe, 1986, p. 100) Further, meetings are also part of the text of culture within *Arrow of God*. This is, of course, an apt reflection of a key aspect of the cultural life of the Igbo people. For in reality when meetings hold among the Igbos, usually on Sundays, issues are discussed.

In the three meetings held in the novel, Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, and his arch-enemy, Nwaka, are all present and front-line deliberators. In the first formal meeting, the matter over which elders of the community of Umuaro deliberate is whether or not to send messengers to Okperi to choose between peace or war on a lingering land dispute between the two clans – that is, whether or not a certain piece of land belongs to Umuaro or Okperi, a neighbouring clan. Ezeulu stands fast for the truth, counselling that the land in contention belongs to Okperi and that Umuaro's god, Ulu, would not fight a war of blame, thereby registering his disavowal for Umuaro to send emissaries to Okperi to offer them a choice between peace or war over the land in disagreement. As he says, "If you choose to fight a man for a piece of farmland that belongs to him I shall have no hand in it." (Achebe, 1986, p. 15) To which Nwaka provides repudiation, voicing the following: "Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own. Knowledge of the land is also like that. Ezeulu has told us what his father told him about the olden days. ... But we also know that the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers. ... Elders and Ndichie of Umuaro, let everyone return to his house if we have no heart in the fight." (Achebe, 1986, p. 16) Against the advice of Ezeulu, therefore, emissaries are dispatched to Okperi the next day to broker peace on the one hand if the people of Okperi are in agreement with Umuaro's terms of condition or accept war as an option on the other hand. But, instead, a fight ensues between Akukalia of Umuaro and Egbo of Okperi during which the latter murders the former. It is this manslaughter that precipitates the second formal meeting in the text of the novel. In fact, writes Achebe: "Four days after Akukalia's death criers went through the six villages at nightfall" (Achebe, 1986, pp. 25-26).

In the second formal meeting, then, the matter for discussion is naturally the murder of a kinsman. Some elders in the assembly reason that although it is not good to speak ill of the dead, it must be said that their kinsman, Akukalia, is gravely at fault for destroying Egbo's *ikyenga* by splitting it in two and as such it is best to forget the matter altogether. However, others, whose leader is Nwaka, remain obstinate, in fact, swear vengeance, and say that they would not be alive and witness Umuaro insulted. In the end, the meeting ends in pandemonium, but Nwaka and his followers hold another meeting shortly after the general one in his home and declare, "we shall fight for our farmland and for the contempt Okperi has poured on us." (Achebe, 1986, p. 28) Hence, this eventuates in a war between Umuaro and Okperi that should have gone on had the white man, Captain T.K. Winterbottom, not send soldiers to put a stop to it.

In the third formal assembly, the reason for gathering as well as the subject of discussion by the elders of Umuaro is the white man's summon of Ezeulu at Government Hill, the seat of his administration and the place of his dwelling. It is a serious matter, because by tradition Ezeulu, the Chief Priest, does not leave his hut, and he conveys this to the Court Messenger of the white man, saying in no uncertain terms: "You must first return... and tell your white man that Ezeulu does not leave his hut. If he wants to see me he must come here." (Achebe, 1986, p. 139) Consequently:

As soon as the messenger and his escort left Ezeulu's hut to return to Okperi the Chief Priest sent word to the old man who beat the giant *ikolo* to summon the elders and *ndichie* to an urgent meeting at sunset. Soon after the *ikolo* began to speak to the six villages. Everywhere elders and men of title heard the signal and got ready for the meeting. Perhaps it was the threat of war. But no one spoke of war any more in these days of the white man. More likely the deity of Umuaro had revealed through divination a grievance that must be speedily removed, or else... (Achebe, 1986, pp. 140-41)

The excerpt above clearly speaks to a communal pattern of life as lived in the past. In it, one can see a mode of communication among members of the six hamlets. In fact, one also learns that the *ikolo* was not an ordinary instrument of communication. And, as such, “was not beaten out of season except in a great emergency – when as the saying was an animal more powerful than *nté* was caught by *nté*’s trap. (Achebe, 1986, p.141) This, then, goes to show just how serious and grave Ezeulu’s summon to appear at Government Hill in Okperi by Winterbottom was. For the Chief Priest of Ulu knew how powerful the white man was and the in-roads he was making into the lives of the natives. During the meeting, therefore, Ezeulu first appreciates his kinsmen for gathering for the meeting at a short notice, tells them the reason why he calls them together, and then concludes:

‘My kinsmen,’ he said in conclusion, ‘that was what I woke up this morning and found. Ogbuefi Akuebue was there and saw it with me. I thought about it for a long time and decided that Umuaro should join with me in seeing and hearing what I have seen and heard; for when a man sees a snake all by himself he may wonder whether it is an ordinary snake or the untouchable python. So I said to myself: *Tomorrow I shall summon Umuaro and tell them.* Then one mind said to me: *Do you know what may happen in the night or at dawn?* That is why, although I have no palm wine to place before you I still thought I should call you together. ... (Achebe, 1986, p. 142)

Of course, the Chief Priest tells Umuaro that the colonial administrator, Winterbottom, has summoned him, much to his dislike and abominable to tradition, to appear before him at Government Hill at Okperi. And the seriousness of the matter is here again evident in the quoted excerpt prior. “So I said to myself: *Tomorrow I shall summon Umuaro and tell them. Then one mind said to me: Do you know what may happen in the night or at dawn?*” (Achebe, 1986, p. 142), Ezeulu says. Nwaka first replies to the Chief Priest’s utterance from which the above is extracted, and he is sharp with Ezeulu, saying: “The white man is Ezeulu’s friend and has sent for him. What is so strange about that?” (Achebe, 1986, p. 143) Nwaka, who, doubtless, gains the support of the majority at the assembly, would later voice the following, a greater part of which is quoted earlier:

‘What I say is this,’ continued Nwaka, ‘a man who brings ant-ridden faggots into this hut should expect the visit of lizards. But if Ezeulu is now telling us that he is tired of the white man’s friendship our advice to him should be: *You tied the knot, you should also know how to undo it. You passed the shit that is smelling; you should carry it away.* Fortunately, the evil charm brought in at the end of a pole is not too difficult to take outside again. (Achebe, 1986, p.144)

In the end, this third meeting ends in division with Ezeulu having resigned to answer the call of the white man. Indeed, the Chief Priest’s resignation to go and see the white man at Government Hill, and all alone, is more out of manly defiance to make a statement of self-reliance than out of a sense of propriety. This is because his people do not side with him over the matter.

From the samples of the texts of culture, it is clear that *Arrow of God* derives from the way of life of the Igbo people, especially in an earlier period. What this means, therefore, is that in their relations, both the literary text and the text of culture rob off on each other; the latter being a source of materials for the former’s production whereas the former incorporates the latter in its domain.

#### 4. Conclusion

Thus, in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* dimensions or aspects of Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality as the intersection of citation and narration within the novelistic text; “dyadic figuration” and “arbitrary closure”, the relationship between the literary text and the text of culture, the figure of double destinations, two distinct “signifying units” under the “horizontal dimension” of the function of the symbol, the non-conformity between a named object and its name within “the Symbol as Ideologeme”, and the interrelationships of individual texts (books) are isolated and examined and their structures or compositions discovered and comprehended.

Again, ‘citation’ means the quoted speech of the character in a novel, whereas ‘narration’ is the writing of the author or narrator within a novel. “Dyadic figuration” is a case of two oppositional events, which resolve in an arbitrary manner, precisely by the choice of one event over another, as in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, where by the novel’s end Okonkwo is seen to choose to die than to live. If Okonkwo had chosen life over death, the novel would have ended differently to the way it does. The relation between the literary text and the text of culture quite simply signifies that the literary text is a bearer of the broad text of culture and the text of culture in turn serves as source from which materials are extracted for the production of a literary text. The figure of double destinations is a thing interpreted in two distinct ways, as exemplified in the character Ezeulu in Achebe’s *Arrow of God*. For, on the strength of Ezeulu’s association with the ways of the white man, coupled with his position as custodian of the values and customs of his people, the Chief Priest of Umuaro, Ezeulu is without doubt a figure of double destinations. In the horizontal dimension of the function of the symbol, the expression of signifying units as bravery and cowardice do not contradict themselves, as they are two linguistic entities. Within the same dimension of intertextuality –the symbol as an ideologeme, there is no agreement between the name of a thing and the thing itself, say, courage, because the appellation does not accurately represent the actual action of “courage” because although the term occurs within language, the very “action” so described finds expression or exists outside of language. With respect to the relation between texts (books), it is a dimension of intertextuality implicated in the theory in principle, and it simply means the intersection of texts (books) like *Things Fall Apart* and the Bible, *Arrow of God* and *Macbeth*, and so on.



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