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FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE
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DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES
STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE
OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**Blending Orality and Modernist
Narrative Forms in Jennifer
Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014)**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in
Literature and Civilisation

Candidate
Ms Intissar KIBOUCHE

Supervisor
Dr Bachir SAHED

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled; “The Fusion of Orality and Modern Narrative Forms in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi’s *Kintu*” is my work and all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Dedication

And thus concludes a lengthy journey, time has come to turn the page and close this chapter.

This work is dedicated to my family:

To the one who taught me that girls can save the world, my father;

To my very first teacher and learning career maestro, my mother;

To my long-life friend, my little sister;

To my flashlight, and most stressed periods' healer, my full-time therapist;

To my second home, my uncle's family and beautiful cousin;

To that group chat that kept me alive;

To the little 10 year old me.

Intissar

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Abstract

This study explores the blending of African oral traditions and modernist narrative techniques in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's novel *Kintu*. It investigates how Makumbi blends traditional oral elements, such as myth, song, refrain, repetition, hyperbole, and indigenous language, with contemporary literary methods, particularly fragmentation and stream of consciousness. The research aims to examine how this stylistic integration contributes to the preservation of African literary traditions and the affirmation of cultural identity. Using stylistics as the conceptual framework, the study analyses the narrative strategies employed in *Kintu* to show how oral and modern forms coexist and enrich each other. Through this fusion, Makumbi not only maintains the vitality of African storytelling but also reclaims and redefines cultural expression within a postcolonial literary context.

Keywords: Stylistics, Orality, Modern Narrative techniques, Cultural identity, *Kintu*

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Introduction

Western writers have frequently criticized and discriminated against African literature, accusing it of being primitive and devoid of the Western intellectual sophistication found in the more developed Western countries. This position reflects a colonial attitude that devalues non-Western cultural manifestations and ignores the richness, diversity, and depth of African storytelling traditions. Birago Diop, a Senegalese poet, storyteller, and diplomat, stated that “truth depends not only on who listens but on who speaks” (cited in Julien 294). This quote shows that the inferior perception of African literature and its disregard by Western authors is clouded with biased colonial perspectives, and that this form of literature should be viewed neutrally to fully understand its depth and appreciate its richness. This quote also highlights the significance of perspective in determining the narrative regardless of its origin or its cultural background, and that it should be acknowledged for its value and impact.

Hence, judging African literature to lack the intellectual depth and sophistication based on the discriminatory views of the Western colonizer proves to be a biased prejudice and prejudiced or narrow-minded assessment of a large and rich cultural heritage that has its own moral values and ethical issues to be transmitted through the works of literature. To truly appreciate African literature, one must transcend stereotypical frames and understand that intellectual depth is determined by a work’s capacity to capture the diversity of the human experience, rather than by its adherence to Western norms. Therefore, a more inclusive, complex, and egalitarian global literary environment is necessary for accepting African writing on its own terms and interpreting its themes based on neutral and bias-free lens.

Tanure Ojaide added that “Africans had an indigenous literature before Europeans came to colonize the continent and the tradition continues to thrive to this moment” (3). This statement highlights two aspects regarding African literature. First, it shows that African

literature predates the British colonialism that is claimed to bring civilization and intellectual enlightenment to the African colonies. Thus, this claim is false and it is not proven that Africa had no literature of its own before the colonialism; it rather had a native kind of literature that characterized the region and defined the identity of its people. Second, the statement also reveals that African literature is different from the British one through the use of the word “indigenous”, which implies that Africa had its own form of literature that is distinguished from other forms and genres. In fact, Ojaide further elaborated that African literature is distinguished with its orality and narrative form (3). This shows the basic and fundamental difference between classic or standard literature and the African one; while literature at the time of colonialism or even before that period is known with its conformity with the written form, the African one is narrated and practiced through oral storytelling and narration. Thus, it was transmitted through oral narration between groups and generations.

Therefore, African literature is a diverse and rich genre that combines the traditions of various ethnic groups, languages, and cultures across the continent. Moreover, this genre is deeply rooted in the oral narrative tradition, which emphasizes the oral storytelling as a means of preserving history and connecting the past with the present. Furthermore, because African literature relies on oral transmission of knowledge rather than written texts, it might be argued that orality is what prompted Western writers to reject it and view it as inferior to or unworthy of Western writing. Given that using the oral form in literature is discouraged and seen as being less sophisticated than writing, this could also suggest that Western societies view writing as a medium of literary authority and intellectual creativity. Consequently, orality is argued to be an undermining feature of African literature. It is found that orality and mythology are the two main features that characterize the non-literate society (Finnegan 29).

This illustrates how orality has been closely associated with ignorance and a lack of knowledge, a connection often exploited by Western authors to discredit African literature

and justify the colonization of African tribes under the pretext of spreading knowledge, education, and literature to so-called primitive and illiterate populations. However, modern criticism and studies reveal the rich and complex nature of orality that requires accurate awareness of the language, audience and timing, in addition to strong memory and narrative performance. Thus, it became evident that orality is more sophisticated and requires more intellectual capacity that Western authors claimed.

Many African authors received their education in early 20th century in Western institutions that enhanced their intellectual capacity and produced an educated class that could contribute to the field of literature through their writing (Yakubu10). Thus, the British colonialism succeeded in educating African individuals and equipping them with their own form of literature. However, most of these authors returned to their native countries and documented their nations' journeys of colonialism, independence and post-colonial reality through their works of literature. These authors did not reject their oral heritage or narrative literary traditions, but they succeeded in combining them with more acknowledged writing devices that are recognized in Western norms and traditions. Thus, it could be stated that the modern African literature may have developed as a result of African authors' education in Western colonial institutions. However, their embrace of their own oral narrative traditions in their writing style reflects their attachment to their cultural identity and their pride in their ancestral storytelling techniques.

Examples of authors who have used orality in their writing as a form of political and cultural expression include Lillian Allen, Marlene Nourbese Philip, and Clifton Joseph (Adu-Gyam 3). These authors used their writing to express their cultural belonging and identity through the use of orality that is frowned upon in Western cultures. However, their use of this technique, despite their education and their mastering of the more Westernized writing style, these authors chose to adopt this literary technique in writing their books and novels to

express their African identity and their pride in their ancestors' oral heritage. These authors' works produced a hybrid style that blended written texts with oral tradition, which was likewise met with disapproval and criticism. However, others viewed it as an opportunity to develop a new literary discourse, one that breaks free from colonial literary norms and rigid textual conventions, empowering writers of African descent to advance their cultural and political objectives (Adu-Gyam 2). In other words, this new form of hybrid literature allows African authors to both express their cultural belonging and authentic African identity, and to challenge the colonial writing norms and standards as well. This defiance is part of their rejection of colonial supremacy and dominance that was rooted in their mindsets as a legacy of the colonial era.

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi is one of these authors who was born in Uganda, she is educated in the United Kingdom, but writes in a style that reflects her African heritage and cultural background. This author is praised for her ability to blend traditional African storytelling with modern narrative techniques. Born in 1967 in Mengo, Uganda, Makumbi is known for her best literary work *Kintu*, which was published in 2014. This novel secured her place in the literary world, particularly in the area of fiction or historical fiction. She was educated in the UK and graduated from Lancaster University with a PhD. She currently teaches creative writing at Lancaster University and resides in Manchester. She is a well-known author and is renowned for her strong academic credentials, which allowed her to land a position at one of the UK's most prestigious colleges.

More importantly, *Kintu* is a testament for this ability and serves as an evidence of the power of storytelling in highlighting the past and bridging it with the present in order to improve one's future. It is a story that combines the past with the present and myth with reality. The novel tells the story of an African curse and its impact on an African society that is governed by myth and folktales. It begins with the tale of Kintu, which is an African tribe

in the 1700's Uganda, highlighting Kintu Kidda, the clan elder, and his love story that resulted in him marrying two twin sisters and starting a family. After having children from one of the wives and adopting another son with the other, this was an act of defiance to the ancestral customs and African traditions. Moreover, the father of the adopted son is the one responsible for cursing the family because Kintu accidentally killed him when they were on a trip. As a result, Kintu's wife died and he lost his sanity due to this curse. Thus, the novel recounts the various Kintu bloodline generations and how the curse affects them throughout their lives.

The book is divided into six smaller books or parts, each of which focuses on a distinct generation of Kintu ancestors. The starting point of the story and the original Kintu Kidda narrative are revealed in the first volume. The second book is on Suubi, a young woman who was severely abused and neglected as a kid following the untimely death of her twin sister Ssaynu. She also repressed her feelings and internal conflicts into memory. The protagonist of the third book is Kanami Kintu, a devout Christian who struggles with his religion and confidence in God. The fourth book is dedicated to Isaac Newton Kintu, a youngster who suffered from poverty and psychological problems after being ignored and abandoned by his mother. He was also the victim of sexual assault.

Miisi Kintu, who had been raised in Europe and returned to be the clan's successor, is the subject of the fifth book. In the last book, the four of the major protagonists meet up in their native country to talk about the course, locate the remains of their ancestors, and make peace with the past. In a spiritual ceremony that is performed at the end of the book, the curse that was originally placed on them by their great ancestor Kintu is revealed, and everyone is healed from their past.

In fact, several studies examined the African oral literature, but it is rare that researchers examine the fusion between both traditional African oral literature with modern narrative forms, emphasizing how this blend can serve in creating a unique and innovative literary voice. In his article, “African Oral Tradition: The Strength of Modern Literature”, Hadjoui Ghouti, explored the African oral traditions and the development of this genre into modern oral narrative. The study revealed that traditional oral narratives are considered to be more authentic and reliable in narrating the stories of the past than written texts and documents. It also showed that orality serves as a common and successful means in giving people the motivation and understanding they require to comprehend their fate, which requires understanding their past, present, and their potential future as well (Ghouti 609). This study confirms the role of African oral narratives in bridging the gap between the past, the present and the future through storytelling, but it does not examine the fusion between oral narratives and modern written forms.

Moreover, the novel selected, *Kintu*, has also received scarce attention in the field of literary analysis. One of the few studies that examined this work and the themes it represents was conducted by West-Pavlov in 2021 which is entitled “Proximate Historiographies in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi’s *Kintu*”. This study examines the proximate historiographies in the novel, which highlight the historical narratives or interpretations that are closely related in time, geography, culture, or perspective. The study shows that *Kintu* (2014) by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi examines historical causality in pre-colonial Buganda by contrasting magical and verbal-incantatory ideas with European historicism, and that a universal worldview of reciprocity and fluid duality is reinforced by the novel’s exploration of the entanglement of several historical temporalities inside fiction. In other words, the study highlights the differences between African and European historical thinking and

understanding of history through the themes of myth and belief in the past that were represented through the novel.

Moreover, another study that was conducted by Joseph Kwanya in (2017), entitled “(Re-)Mythification of (B) Uganda in Jennifer Makumbi’s *Kintu*”, explores the theme of mythology that was heavily portrayed and emphasized through the novel. The study may not have examined the use of orality in a direct manner, but it represented one of the main aspects of traditional African storytelling, which is myth. The study uses Jennifer Makumbi’s novel *Kintu* to examine how Uganda has been mythified and re-mythified. It demonstrates the veracity of myths and how they relate to the *Kintu* myth in Uganda. It shows that Makumbi creates a new nation-state in which ideas are like stories by tying Buganda’s mythological past to post-colonial Uganda. Post-colonial Ugandans’ conflicted attitudes towards traditional beliefs show that myths are only beneficial when they serve social, cultural, and political objectives. By portraying women as essential to the rebuilding of a contemporary country, Makumbi challenges the myth of *Kintu*. Neo-traditionalists like Miisi and Muganda further Makumbi’s societal vision as a result of this ambivalence (Kwanya 7).

There is another study conducted by Hans Schoenmakers in (2017), entitled “The Story of *Kintu* and his Sons: Naming, Ethnic Identity Formation and Power in the Precolonial Great Lakes Region of East Africa”, explores the naming tradition, ethnic identity formation, and power in the precolonial Great Lakes Region of East Africa through *Kintu*. The historical context of ethnic division in Western Uganda, which is a component of East Africa’s Great Lakes Region, is examined through this study using *Kintu* as a reference for the analysis of the state of the country in different phases of history. This work shows that the existence of ethnicity is viewed from two different angles: one contends that it is an old phenomenon, while the other contends that it was a creation of colonial administrators and ethnologists (Schoenmakers 3). Since identity development is linked to societal power dynamics that were

imposed on the Ugandan population after the colonial era, the study promotes more interdisciplinary research on ethnicity in precolonial times in order to examine more profoundly the ethnic existence before the interference of the colonial powers in pre-colonial contexts.

As such, no previous study has examined the fusion between orality and written narratives in *Kintu* despite the fact that Makumbi employs powerful and distinguishing writing techniques that reflect the act of mixing of forms. Therefore, her ability to master this fusion is something to be acknowledged and recognized through research. As a result, the present study aims to fill in this gap and examine this writing technique that is based on the use of both orality and writing devices in Makumbi's *Kintu*.

The aim of this study is to explore how Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi blends elements of African oral tradition with contemporary narrative techniques in her novel *Kintu*, and to examine how this fusion contributes to the preservation of African literary traditions and the affirmation of cultural identity. To achieve this aim, the study focuses on several key objectives. It seeks to examine how Makumbi incorporates oral elements such as myths, songs, refrains, repetition, hyperbole, and indigenous language into the narrative. It also aims to analyse the use of modern Western literary techniques, particularly fragmentation and stream of consciousness, and how these interact with traditional oral forms. Moreover, the study evaluates the extent to which this integration of oral and contemporary techniques serves to sustain and promote African literary traditions and cultural identity.

As such, this study seeks to answer the following main question: How does Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi blend elements of oral tradition with contemporary narrative techniques in *Kintu*? To explore this, the main question is divided into three sub-questions: How does Makumbi incorporate myths, songs, and other forms of orality into her narrative? What

modern Western literary techniques does she use alongside oral traditions? And to what extent does the fusion of orality and modern narrative techniques in *Kintu* contribute to the preservation of African literary traditions and cultural identity?

This study adopts stylistics as its conceptual framework to examine how oral literary devices—such as myth, song, refrain, repetition, hyperbole, and the use of indigenous language—are blended with modern narrative techniques like fragmentation and stream of consciousness. The aim is to explore how these stylistic elements work together to preserve oral tradition and reinforce cultural identity within the contemporary narrative structure of *Kintu*. By focusing on the stylistic features of the text, the study highlights the ways in which Makumbi bridges traditional African storytelling with modern literary forms.

The dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter presents the historical and theoretical framework of orality and modern narrative forms. It highlights the concept of orality and its origin. It highlights the key storytelling elements in fiction—such as theme, setting, characters, plot, point of view, and style—while also examining the oral techniques employed in traditional storytelling, including parallelism, repetition, refrain, and hyperbole. In addition, this chapter also highlights the modern narrative techniques that are used in modern writing, which include mainly fragmentation and stream of consciousness.

The second chapter presents the analysis of Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu* and the author's fusion of orality and modern narrative forms in this work. The chapter offers a detailed biography of the author, her literary achievements and her writing style. It also presents a summary of the novel and its background context for more in-depth comprehension of the writing style and techniques used by the author. Following this theoretical background and contextualization of the novel, an analysis of the narrative forms employed by Makumbi is presented, highlighting the themes of the novel, its language and style, the use of refrain,

repetition, hyperbole and point of view to depict the oral narrative forms in *Kintu* and their significance in literature. Furthermore, the chapter shows how Makumbi was able to achieve the fusion between oral narrative techniques and modern narrative forms in her novel to preserve decaying traditional African norms of storytelling in literature.

Chapter One: Historical Context and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The fusion of orality and modern narrative in literature creates a unique mixture between traditional forms and modern devices that could combine the past and the present of storytelling. This chapter sheds light on orality and its African origins as a means of expressing identity and cultural belonging, and also highlights modern narrative as a way of transmitting and interpreting cultural traditions through the lens of fragmented characters in literary texts and narratives. This chapter presents storytelling as a main technique in oral literature, and highlights its elements that frame the process of narration. Moreover, it also illustrates the oral techniques and devices that are used in fiction, such as parallelism, repetition, refrain and hyperbole.

In order to depict the contrast between the oral and the written literature, the chapter also demonstrates the modern techniques that are used in modern literature, which mainly include fragmentation and stream of consciousness. It also highlights the contrast between the past and the present in order to provide the foundation for the analysis of the fusion between these two concepts in Makumbi's *Kintu*.

1. Orality as a Medium of Transmitting Culture

Orality is the contrast of writing in literacy studies. It is explained as an identifying feature of the primitive oral cultures that were not introduced to the art of writing to verbalize their customs and traditions (Ong 1). Therefore, it could be inferred based on this brief description that orality is how some cultures used to express their identity through oral speech and through the transmission of oral stories and tales through generations to preserve their heritage. In fact, this form or genre in literature contrasts with the English form of writing and documenting history and arts. Moreover, orality dates back to the colonial era, when English

writers immersed themselves in orality to record the unique African features of the local African tribes' customs and traditions in English literature. These features include folktales, ballads, proverbs, riddles, and ritual chants, antiphonal call-and-response patterns, as well as formulaic, repetitive, rhythmic, and digressive language use patterns (Adu-Gyamf 1). This explains the distinction between the more formal, written English techniques of documenting history and the arts and oral traditions in literature. Storytelling, history, and cultural knowledge were transmitted orally, through voice, performance, and ritual, instead of in writing in many African civilizations. Therefore, these civilizations could be described as the source of orality in literature.

However, it should be noted that English writers transcribed these oral traditions through the lens of the colonizer, emphasizing their perceptions of Africans as primitive and uncivilized individuals, which may have influenced their interpretation of these customs and traditions. This description of African tribes and their traditions by Burton, a British explorer, army officer, orientalist writer and scholar, confirms the discriminative British perceptions of the African cultures. He states that “the savage custom of going naked’, we are told, ‘has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions” (qtd in Finnegan 29). This statement represents the collective mindset of colonialism that viewed African cultures as inferior and devoid of the complexity of thought, passion, and art that Europeans appreciated. His criticism indicates the European colonialists’ general tendency to ignore or misrepresent the rich oral traditions of African civilizations. As a result, African orality was often criticized for possessing only crude and uninteresting forms not worthy of systematic study by the serious literary or sociological student (Finnegan 29).

Consequently, orality turned into a form of resistance that is used by African writers to defend their cultures and express their identity. Chinua Achebe is one of these authors who

used orality in their work to express their African identity through his novel *Things Fall Apart*. This novel is an emotional narrative of the bravery of a man named Okonkwo, who ultimately failed in his attempt to persuade his countrymen to resist the attack of the colonial invaders (Dorothy 55). To highlight the intricacies of Igbo culture in Nigeria, Achebe employed the oral storytelling technique, which places a strong emphasis on rhythm, repetition, and proverbs, all of which are essential components of African oral storytelling traditions. In other words, Achebe chose to present his novel using African oral tradition in order to express the identity of the African individual and their literary form, defying the formal writing style that is representative of the English culture.

2. Storytelling Elements in Fiction

Storytelling is one of the main features or techniques of oral literature and traditions. This technique is identified as a means of communication to appreciate, share, and learn from people's knowledge and experiences (Serrat 839). More importantly, storytelling emphasizes human emotions and demonstration of compassion as its main themes, which makes this technique stand out in the field of orality and differentiate itself from written literature. This point is confirmed through this quote by Lugmayr *et al.*, "a fundamental aspect of storytelling is the emotions, thus cognitive aspects that the story evokes in its audience" (2). The argument present behind this claim is that emotions provoke the engagement of the brain in mental and intellectual activities. Therefore, storytelling is considered as a means to create emotional engagement of the audience or the readers and to enhance their interest and attention towards the piece of literature presented to them through storytelling.

Moreover, it is claimed that words uttered through storytelling have more impact on listeners than written ones. The spiritual power in spoken words and active memory that is lost in contemporary literature is the main emphasis of orality techniques (Jenkins, qtd in

Sharma 269). Therefore, it could be inferred that storytelling requires a strong memory in order to be able to retell the events of past experiences and parts of history. Moreover, this technique allows for more emotional engagement as the act of storytelling provides more contextual depiction of meaning and feelings through the tone, rhythm, and expressions of the characters. This point is confirmed by Basil Johnston, a Canadian writer, who stated that writing is insufficient to capture the essence of the Ojibway people and their character, nor to demonstrate the breadth of their sense of wit and humour (Eigenbrod 92). This criticism was provided after he viewed the short stories *Moose Meat and Wild Rice* (1978) in both their written and oral form. Therefore, this testimony provides a solid evidence of the importance of orality in telling the story in a vivid and realistic manner that ensures the readers' emotional engagement and attachment to the events.

In terms of the elements of storytelling, they normally include the theme, the setting, the characters, the plot, the point of view and the style (Lewis University Library 1-4). Starting with the simple elements, the setting is the place and time of the story that are normally presented at the beginning of the story to provide context. The theme represents the general topic of the story. The characters are the parties involved in the story; they could be the main characters such as the protagonist and the antagonist, or the subordinate characters that play a minor role in the story. In terms of the plot, this element could be described as the conflict of the story, which characters encounter throughout the event of the story. It is reported that Booker's taxonomy of plots is one of most popular models that are taught in the field of arts and literature. This model highlights overcoming the monster, rags to riches, the quest, voyage and return as the main plots that are used in literature, with both its forms written or oral (Blyth 3). Defeating monsters entails the process of the series of conflicts that the protagonist goes through to kill a threatening and dangerous monster, such as the story of Beowulf which is classified as a classic in English literature and storytelling. From rags to

riches depicts the long journey of the hero in moving from poverty to richness such as the story of Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. The quest on the other hand is the theme of a long journey through which the protagonist learns valuable lessons and ends with achieving a goal, while the voyage and return journey entail the story of a protagonist who leaves his home, travelling to far lands, encountering challenges and trials and at the end, returning home with glory or richness.

Evidently, these themes are often depicted in literature. Unferth's storytelling of the story of Beowulf is a depiction of the theme of conquering the monster that is considered as part of the oral literature that was passed through generations to tell the story of a brave warrior who was able to kill a mighty beast (Thomson 159). This story is an epic poem that describes the bravery of this young man and his heroic deeds through oral description and depiction of his life and conquest. This story was told in the old tongue and was subjected to many variations and modifications. This shows one of the limitations of oral literature, which is the accessibility to change and alteration through the retelling of the story by different individuals.

For the point of view, this could be simply described as who is telling the story and to whom. In fiction, it is defined as the act of telling or recounting by the presumed author or addresser who is the narrator (Brown 4). Thus, the point of view represents the person who is telling the story and who is depicted as the responsible of the narration, he could be one of the characters, an outside narrator or multiple characters as well. Evidently, it is indicated that the point of view could include first, second and third persons (Brown 5). If it a first person, this means that the narrator is one of the characters, normally the protagonist, who would use subject pronouns referring to himself and other characters. This point of view is described as somehow subjective since the story is told through the perception of one person, neglecting the other characters' points of view (Brown 6). However, this subjectivity is reduced when it

is a second person narrator, who narrates the tale from the viewpoint of the reader or a distinct character that enables the reader to become fully engaged and actively participate in the narrative (Lewis University Library 3). In terms of third person point of view, the storytelling uses a character, typically the protagonist, to tell the story from an external point of view, referring to the main character as “she” or “he” and describing thoughts, actions, and events (Lewis University Library 3). It is true that the narrator could be restricted by the selection of one character, but his telling of the story is not clouded by the persona point of view of that character. Therefore, it could be described as less subjective than first-person narration.

It should be noted that the point of view plays a major role in setting a tone for the story and representing the topic based on the one who is telling it. Moreover, it is reported that in contrast to written and visual/graphic discourses, which merely convey a fixed, descriptive meaning or perspective, this storytelling technique places a higher priority on the narrator-listener relationship and gives greater weight to the narrator's present intention in conjunction with the narrative and the audience offer (Maharana 480). Therefore, the use of the point of view allows the narrator to build an emotional closeness with the listener or the reader that may enhance their engagement in the storytelling and their reaction to the events presented.

3. Stylistics and the Power of Literary Devices

Oral literature has unique features and techniques that make it different from written literature. Many argue that it can be just as rich, deep, complex, and engaging in language as written texts. Its use of improvisation helps keep it lively and full of energy. Oral literature also shows vivid imagination and creativity, which add to the beauty of its performance. Because of this, it is flexible and dynamic, not fixed or rigid like written literature. (Emezue 6). Therefore, it could be stated that the techniques used in this form of literature makes it

more creative and engaging for readers through the lively depiction of the events and the speech of the characters.

This technique is defined as a device in which the sentence's components are similar in construction or grammatically identical (Cook & Licciardi 1). Stated differently, it is the use of identical sentences or parts of language that are similar in structure and grammatical function. They could be sentences, words or even phrases. Neil Armstrong's first words as he first landed on the moon are told to be "That's one step for man, one giant leap for mankind". This shows how this sentence is reinforced with parallelism through which the language structure is the same in the two phrases. Therefore, this technique is demonstrated to create a rhythm that makes listeners remember the story or the information they heard.

Repetition is another oral technique that is used in oral literature. It is believed that repeating speech is a human tendency to express feeling and emotions, therefore, repeatedly pounding the same problem in the same way and with the same words, noises, etc. is claimed to be a genuine method of easing inner pain or expressing happiness (Emezue 8). It is added that repetition is also used as a persuasive tool that is used to convince listeners of particular points of views, feelings or actions (AL-Muslimawi 1). Therefore, this technique entails the act of repeating a word, a sentence or a phrase for several times to emphasize a point and draw listeners' attention to it for the aim of convincing and persuading them. Therefore, it could be inferred that this technique is used in oral literature to draw listeners' attention and enhance their ability to remember key points in the story narrated.

Refrain could be described as another form of repetition. However, this form is used in songs. It is used when the main performer in the storytelling sings a part and other singers join in, including the crowd, who often know how to sing the song, they join in on the chorus and mimic the lead singer's sounds (Emezue 9). Therefore, it could be stated that this technique is

exclusive to signing in oral literature, which implies that music is a major aspect of this type of literature.

In fact, it is documented that songs and chants are characterizing features of the African identity (Ibekwe 1). Therefore, considering the fact that African traditional cultures are the source of the art of storytelling and oral literature, it is inferred that song is an integral part of oral literature and storytelling. More importantly, it is also associated with the theme of dancing in these cultures. It is claimed that dancing serves as a means of communication among African people, as it also allows them to express their emotions through body movements (Ibekwe 3). Thus, aspects of song, rhyme, rhythm, refrain and repetition are all part of the devices used in oral literature because they represent an integral part of the theme of music in storytelling. This technique is employed to help the narrator deliver more emotions to the listeners and attract their attention to the story being narrated.

The hyperbole is another stylistic technique that distinguishes oral literature. This technique entails the excessive exaggeration that aims for emphasis or creating an effect during the storytelling process (Mora 1). This technique is used in describing characters, events or plots where the narrator uses clear forms of exaggeration to convey the message he intends to deliver. This technique may not be present in written literature, but it is a characterizing feature of oral literature and storytelling.

4. Modern Narrative Techniques

Modern narrative techniques are different from traditional oral ones. Since there is more emphasis on written texts and less focus on oral literature, new techniques are used and employed by authors in their writing. One of the most dominant theme in modern literature is fragmentation. In fact, modernism is a global literary and cultural movement that peaked in

the first half of the twentieth century; this movement emerged as a reaction to romanticism and realism and relates to the twentieth-century conviction in the benefits of technology, science, and the deliberate control of societal change (Taha 4). This movement is related to the advancement of technology and science, and the impact of this advancement on social norms and structure. This movement's opposition to romanticism and realism illustrates a rejection of the romanticism era's idealization and contempt for human emotions. The complex nature of contemporary life and its fragmented character also demonstrate how modernism represents people's yearning for innovation and a disengagement from human idealization.

An accommodating literary genre known as modernist literature also developed simultaneously with the modernist era. This phrase describes a certain genre of contemporary writing that is distinguished by complexities, ambiguity, stream-of-consciousness, and fragmentation (Kurbanbaeva & Alimova 428). This shows that fragmentation is a characterizing feature of Modern literature that contrasts with the traditional oral literature that frequently relies on recurring patterns and a sense of coherence that holds the story together. Therefore, authors of this era often move from one idea to another without context or introductions that could reduce readers' confusion. Two significant pioneers of literary fragmentation were T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, whose writings, including *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, respectively, demonstrated the use of non-linear narrative frameworks and fragmented storytelling (Almaarroof 4).

Stream of consciousness is another modern literary technique that is used in modern literature. The term was first coined by William James to refer to the mental process of psychological aspects of fictional characters (Humphrey 1). This concept describes the flow of ideas, emotions and perceptions in the human mind and their representation through characters' speech. It is explained through more scholarly resources that the stream of

consciousness refers to the unfinished and limitless flow of thoughts and feelings within the characters' minds (Rohimmi et al, 107). Therefore, the modern literature puts more emphasis on the inner dialogue of the characters that informs the reader of the endless thinking process that the characters experience in the literary work. This technique provides more context to the characters' behaviors as it also creates connection between the reader and the text through witnessing the inner conflicts and thoughts of the characters. This feature is a newly emerged concept in modern literature that may have provided more vividness and depth to characters' inner worlds that was often described as rigid compared to oral literature in the past.

Conclusion

Oral literature has shown to be a traditional means for the transmission of African history, identity, and collective memory. This form of literature may not be recognized by the English class of intellectuals, but it remains a medium that is used by African authors to express their rejection of colonial discrimination and prejudice and show solidarity and cultural identity. Techniques like parallelism, repetition, refrain, and hyperbole are considered characterizing features of this type of literature that evokes emotional engagement and human empathy through the process of oral storytelling. With music, rhythm, and group participation playing crucial parts in the narrative's delivery, these elements build a very intimate bond between the narrator and the listener. Modern narrative on the other hand, reflects the fragmented character of the individual and the complexities of his nature in a world that rejects traditions and ideals. The stream of consciousness technique that has been demonstrated through this chapter provides a small window for the reader to witness the complexity of the modern existence and the loss of beliefs and social norms that used to characterize the traditional society. Therefore, the contrast between the oral and written modern literature

highlights the historical and cultural evolutionary shifts that impacted the way narratives are delivered and how they are received.

Chapter Two: The Fusion of Orality and Modern Narrative Forms in

Makumbi's *Kintu*

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a theoretical background regarding the use of orality in modern literature as a form of African traditions and a representation of the African identity. It also showed the characterizing literary devices and techniques used in this form of literature to depict the traditional oral narrative of traditional African storytelling. The present chapter proceeds to examine the use of these techniques in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's novel *Kintu*, and their impact on the African storytelling, themes, and cultural representation in the novel. The chapter begins by providing a biography of the author and her achievements, emphasizing her cultural background and origins to provide a more comprehensible insight into her character and writing style.

Moreover, the chapter provides a summary of the selected novel and the historical context in which it was written to offer a clear foundation for the analysis. It also examines the literary techniques and devices used in *Kintu*, focusing on the novel's themes, language and style, narrative structure, and the narrator's point of view and its influence on the storytelling process. Furthermore, the chapter explores how various devices, such as refrain, music, repetition, and hyperbole, are employed to reflect Ugandan identity and traditional African storytelling methods rooted in oral literature.

1. Overview of Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu*

The author of the novel selected in this study is Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi. She is an African author who was born in Mengo, Uganda, in 1967. She gained her position of the field of literature, specifically the fiction or the historical fiction genre through her best work

Kintu that was published in 2014. She received her education in the United Kingdom and got her PhD from Lancaster University. Currently, she lives in Manchester, and she teaches creative writing at Lancaster University. She is an esteemed figure in literature and recognized for her high academic qualification that enabled her to obtain an academic post in one of the most elite universities in the UK.

Kintu, her first book, was the “Kwani? Manuscript Project” winner in 2013. In the spring of 2019, she released *Let’s Tell This Story Properly* (for US/Canada) and *Manchester Happened* (for UK/Commonwealth), her second book, which is a collection of short stories. It made the Harper's Bazaar shortlist for The Big Book prize. Moreover, Autumn 2020 saw the release of her third book, *A Girl is a Body of Water* for the USA/Canada and *The First Woman* for the UK/Commonwealth (Makumbi 1). Her achievements stand as testimonials of her creativity and literary talent.

The majority of Makumbi’s writing is derived from oral traditions. She realized that all of her writing, regardless of subject, shape, or genre, could be framed by oral traditions since they were so extensive and capable of bringing depth and special connection than other forms of literature. This means that this author emphasizes oral narratives and oral forms of literature which form the subject of the present study. This also explains the selection of this author and one of her works to be analysed. Makumbi’s use of oral forms in her writing enables the research to examine the fusion between orality and modern narrative forms. Proverbs, folktales, colloquial language, and collective ways of speech and discourse are all frequently used in her storytelling and characterizing her writing style. This style also reflects the traditional African communication and preserves it through modern times. In addition to preserving cultural memory, this integration reimagines the ways in which African stories might be told in modern writing, which represents a new perspective of traditional African storytelling in the modern context of written literature.

Oral literature is used to express African identity and the people's pride in their cultural heritage and sense of belonging. Thus, it could be inferred that Makumbi is one of the authors who use this literary technique to express their African identity and belonging even though she was raised and educated in the colonizer's social and cultural environment. Aaaron Bady comments on the work, stating that,

Kintu flowed out of a desire to give Uganda a taste of their own long and complicated history, to do for Ugandans something like Chinua Achebe novels did for Nigerians in the 1960s: to make them look at a hill, for example and know that the Ganda have been climbing it for centuries. To remind them that Uganda's history did not begin in 1962. (13)

This shows how the novel is characterized by its representation of the African history in Uganda and how it expresses a sense of cultural pride and identity. It also shows how the novel was written for the aim of showing the long history of Uganda and the state of the region before colonialism, highlighting the fact that this place already had a rich and culturally-diverse history that existed before the arrival of the British forces and their influence. It has been already discussed in the introduction of the dissertation how Western view that Uganda's or Africa's history started with colonialism that contributed to educating the primitive people of the continent. Thus, this novel rejects this claim and shows evidence of its illegitimacy.

The novel tells the story of an African curse and its impact on an African society that is governed by myth and folktales. It begins with the tale of Kintu, which is an African tribe in the 1700's Uganda, highlighting Kintu Kidida, the clan elder, and his love story that resulted in him marrying two twin sisters and starting a family. After having children from one of the wives and adopting another son with the other, this was an act of defiance to the

ancestral customs and African traditions. Moreover, the father of the adopted son is the one responsible for cursing the family because Kintu accidentally killed him when they were on a trip. As a result, Kintu's wife died and he lost his sanity due to this curse.

Thus, the novel follows the story of different generations of the Kintu bloodline and how they are affected by the curse in their life. The book is divided into six sub-books, each of them tells the story of a different generation of the Kintu's descendants. The first book unravels the original story of Kintu Kidda and the beginning of the course. The second book follows Suubi, a young woman who experienced significant abuse and neglect in her childhood after the tragic death of her twin sister, Ssaynu, and her suppression of emotions and inner struggles into her memory. The third book follows Kanami Kintu, who is a pious Christian who faces an inner battle with his faith and belief in God. The fourth book is devoted to Isaac Newton Kintu, a child who was a result of sexual assault on the mother and his struggle with poverty and psychological issues after he was abandoned by his mother and neglected in his childhood. The fifth book unravels the tale of Miisi Kintu, who was raised in Europe and returned to be heir of the clan. Finally, the last book reunites all the main characters of the four books in their homeland to discuss the course, find the remnants of their ancestors and reconcile with the past. The novel concludes with conducting a spiritual ritual that reveals everyone's curse and heals them from their past, breaking with it the original curse that was cast upon them through their great ancestor Kintu.

Regarding the context of the novel, it explores Uganda through different times. The first book, highlighting Kintu's story and original curse, started in 1750, which is a time when Uganda was still ruled by Kingdoms and divided into clans before colonialism. This section of the novel is dedicated to highlight Uganda and its traditions during the pre-colonial era that was characterized by the authentic practices of the Ugandan tribes and the traditions of their people before the interference of Western people and spreading their foreign influence.

The second section highlights the following generations whom their stories take place in colonial and postcolonial Uganda. The second book, following Suubi's story, reveals the changing dynamics in the Ugandan society with the arrival of the British colonialism and the shift in the traditional political system and social environment. These changes represent an immense shift in Ugandan society, altering social conventions and political power while also igniting conflicts between modernity and tradition.

The following sections of the book highlight the story of the other descendants of the Kintu bloodline, which are portrayed in the postcolonial era. These sections portray the challenges and boundaries of the post-colonial rule and the consequences that colonialism left which affected the both the social, economic and political state of the country and its residents. These challenges encompass the dissolution of traditional norms and cultural practices, the political instability of the country and identity conflict that hinder the Ugandan people from establishing clear and stable representatives of their cultural belonging.

Analysis of the Narrative Forms in Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*

Oral narrative is the main literary technique that Makumbi used in her writing of *Kintu*. The author uses storytelling as a powerful tool to narrate the story of the Kintu bloodline and connect their past with their present through several generations. This technique is identified as a means of communication to appreciate, share, and learn from people's knowledge and experiences (Serrat 839). However, Kemboi adds in her analysis that storytelling is used by Makumbi as a connecting link between myth and reality, emphasizing that with its ability to connect the past with the present, storytelling enables the myth that was seen in the far past of the family's tree to be connected with the present of the characters and their current life events (26). Not only that, but oral narrative also enables the characters or the descendants of the Kintu lineage to reunite with each other in the present through the bond

that they shared through their joined and mutual past. This shows that storytelling is a powerful literary tradition in the African culture that was presented by Makumbi as a legacy of her origins and as a means to show the potency of their culture in connecting the past with the present and myth with reality in a seamless manner.

1.1. From curse to catalyst

It could be observed that one of the main themes that were depicted in *Kintu* is the importance of the past in shaping both the present and the future. The story and its closure highlight the importance of acknowledging the past in order to be able to reconcile with the present and to build the future. Throughout the novel, the story of Kintu was repeatedly recounted and emphasized as a main cause behind every protagonist's failure in life and challenge that they encounter.

Hope is another important theme portrayed in *Kintu*. Although the story begins with dark and unfortunate events, including the curse placed on the Kintu family, the character of Suubi provides a sense of hope throughout the novel. Her presence suggests that the curse can be broken and that healing is possible if the characters are willing to face and reconcile with their past. This theme is reflected not only in Suubi's actions and attitude but also symbolically through her name, which means hope, "My twin. She was named Ssanyu, which means 'happy.' I was named Suubi which means 'hope' because I was so scrawny at birth that they could only hope that I would live" (Makumbi 40).

This quote shows the representation of the theme of hope through the name of the character Suubi. Suubi means hope in the Lugandan language, which is one of the most spoken languages in Uganda. From her birth, she is shown to be a symbol of hope, her ability to define the circumstances of her birth and live despite the unlikely speculations compared to

her sister, prove that her name serves as hope for life, for change and for resilience as well. Therefore, the name of this character is used as a symbol of hope in this novel and a desire for change for all characters involved. It serves as a symbol for a shared need for recovery, renewal, and new opportunities after decades of hardships and conflicts.

In terms of character, Suubi showed throughout the novel her desire for healing and her aspiration for a better future, a future that is free of the past's burdens and the ramifications of others' sins and faults. Her journey for self-discovery, at a time that is characterized with the impact of colonialism and its influence on the shifting dynamics of the Ugandan society, reflect her desire for establishing her cultural belonging in a changing environment. Moreover, her inclination to reclaim her familial heritage, which no other character showed any interest in doing or acknowledging, reflects her desire to reconcile with the past of her ancestors and make peace with the history of the family in order to break the curse and move on with her life. Her decision revealed her faith in her cultural legacy and identity despite the shifting values and traditions of the Ugandan society in post-colonial Africa due to the influence of the Western modernization and education. Thus, this character serves as the best example or the best model for the representation of hope in this novel.

Madness is another pertinent theme in the novel. This theme is associated with the curse that the novel highlights, which was cast upon the Kintu clan and their descendants. This theme is a result of the psychological pressure and the traumatic experiences that some characters experienced throughout their lives in different generations. Madness is a mental consequence that results from the suppressed emotions and the oppression of one's feelings, emotions and identity. According to Thomas S. Szasz, a Hungarian-American academic and psychiatrist, madness encompasses a wide range of feelings and actions, either verbally or more frequently nonverbally; they include rage, aggressive behaviour, dread, frustration, confusion, exhaustion, isolation, narcissism, cowardliness, and difficulty getting along with

others (qtd in. Ussher 1112). All these symptoms reflect the unstable mental state of the human mind, which lead a person to commit strange and unjustified behaviours, such as anger tantrums, excessive fear and anxiety, and more importantly, isolation.

Freud's psychoanalytical perspectives can further confirm this analysis through his perception of the human mind, its layers and its effects on human behaviours. He believed that the human mind is divided into the conscious and unconscious mind, emphasizing the role of the unconscious mind in reflecting or expressing the suppressed emotions of the individual through shameful thoughts and actions (Sibi 77). Madness could be considered as one of the mental reactions of the subconscious mind that is manifested through abnormal behaviours, such as fear, aggression, and isolation. Psychologist Phyllis Chesler explained that "depressed and terrified women are not about to seize the means of production and reproduction: quite the opposite of rebellion, madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation" (1). Chesler expands the scope of Freud's theory by emphasizing that internal psychological struggle is not the only cause of madness, especially in women. Rather, it frequently shows a frantic reaction to patriarchal and social oppression. It is observed that while Freud views madness as a consequence of suppressed emotions, Chesler provides another view of madness, depicting it as an outlet for women's loss of their agency and power and their protests against patriarchal dominance and control. This analysis is not limited to women but it was more related to this gender because females were more recognized for their oppression compared to men in Western societies. However, in the context of colonial and post-colonial analysis, it could be stated that this diagnosis is applicable on both genders. The following characters in *Kintu* prove that men can be equally traumatized and oppressed as well as women. They also show that the impact of madness is parallel as well.

This theme is clearly depicted through the first character Kintu Kidda, the first Kintu elder who suffered after his adopted son dies and he is cursed by his travelling father. After this event, his life takes a turn to the worst, which makes him live under a significant psychological pressure and trauma, which eventually led to his loss of sanity, “Oh yes; you see, Ntwire thought that by trapping him on earth, Kintu would miss being a spirit—you know, not worshipped or offered sacrifices?” (Makumbi 11). This passage at the beginning of the second book telling Suubi’s story, depicts the end of Kintu Kidda who lost his sanity after all the losses he endured after he killed the little boy unintentionally and was cursed.

The second character through which the theme of madness was reflected was Suubi, the first descendant of Kintu Kidda in the novel. Makumbi used this character to depict the emotional and psychological struggle that she inherited from her ancestors through the curse and its impact on her life. Suubi shows through the book to suffer from hallucinations and lack of mental stability. The following passage is taken as an example to illustrate this point:

Naiti’s eyes were estranged from her face. At first they floated in the air. Then suddenly they darted here, there, like insects. Then they multiplied and grew bigger. They started to menace. They were coming for her, forming more eyes, growing larger. They dashed like millions of bats, screaming. Now the eyes surrounded her and then lost shape. They were a thing but were still eyes and millions of them but the thing was leaping. She sat up, gulping for air. All the servants were in her room. They stared. Their stares were worried. Naiti was talking. “What is it? Why did you scream?” “Your eyes; they are fine now but they tried to kill me.” She collapsed back in bed. She intended to keep her eyes open and look out for the eyes but then she was sitting up in bed. Naiti knelt beside her. “You screamed again.” “I did not. I was awake,” but she was breathless as if she had been running. (Makumbi 15)

This quote shows the psychological challenges that Suubi encounters in her life due to her suppression of her emotional problems and difficulties. This suppression combined with her feelings that she is haunted by the curse, lead to her partial loss of sanity in many occasions or situations. In this context, Suubi is having irrational fear of invisible threats that were trying to kill her. The intensive experience of these hallucinations even leads her to lose awareness of her own actions and behaviours, committing actions that she does not acknowledge or even know that she is committing and acting in a manner that reflects her inner conflict and struggle. It could be also stated that Makumbi highlights the theme of trauma and psychological struggle in modern times through her depiction of characters such as Suubi and Isaac, who is the fourth protagonist in the fourth book after Kintu, Suubi and Kanami.

There is another character through which madness was depicted as a theme in this novel, which is Miisi. Miisi is one of the descendants of Kintu who also suffered from trauma and identity crisis. This character is depicted to face many hardships with his feelings of alienation, disillusionment and confusion in establishing his identity in the postcolonial era. These feelings represent the general struggle of the Ugandan population after the decolonization of their country and the inability to maintain their authentic national identity after being influenced with the Western British colonization. This struggle is portrayed through the loss of sanity that this character experienced at a later and advanced age through his life. The following passage highlights this theme more clearly.

“Father?” “Shhh, they’ll hear you!” “Father, it’s me, Kusi.” Miisi hesitates, then shakes his head. “How can I be your father? I am just a child.” The woman becomes agitated. She leads him to a double-story house. Mourners stare. Others are still crying for his father. “Don’t cry for him,” Miisi shouts at them. “He was going to kill me too.” Another woman, old, joins them and

leads him through the back door, through a dining area, and up a staircase.

“Where are you taking me? Are you in league with him?” “No, he’s dead,” the old woman says, but the woman who had been holding his hand is crying.

(Makumbi 39)

This passage shows how Miisi is confused between the past and present, unable to recognize that he has a daughter and a family by confusing himself to be a child in his early life. This reveals that Miisi is still trapped in his childhood and surrounded by the limitations that were imposed on him at that phase of his life. His reaction in his father’s funeral and his statement “He was going to kill me too”, indicate his long suffering and the abuse he received on the hands of his father and how his oppressed emotions toward him led him to a state of denial and anger that prevent him from even grieving the death of his parent. Based on Freud’s psychoanalysis, it is inferred that madness is a result of the suppressed emotions of fear, abuse and injustice that Miisi suffered from in his childhood on the hands of his father, which lead him eventually to lose his mind and sanity even after his abuser’s death.

The story of Isaac provided another example of trauma and its long-term psychological effect. This character is abandoned by his mother in childhood and is left to be raised by his grandmother. The abandonment he receives as an innocent new-born child leaves an ineradicable mark on his soul even after forty three years of his life has passed. This passage shows the missing piece in his soul after meeting his mother after forty three years when she comes back for him, and his longing to be raised by her in his childhood.

Isaac stifled a cynical laugh. At forty-three, he was finally going to be mothered. He had long made up his mind that nature was a woman. She stands at the gate of the world and as souls step in to start life, she hands them a bag of tools—loving parents, a stable home, health, brains, good looks, luck, and opportunities. But when he came

along, the woman was in a foul mood. She tossed him a bag almost empty, and still he had made life out of the nothing she gave him. But just as he was beginning to make something of it, the woman had snatched his life back. (Makumbi 24)

Isaac is shown in the novel to suffer from paranoia and anxiety, which could be also signs related to the theme of madness that is portrayed throughout the novel as a result of the curse. His madness, however, is also associated with the treatment he receives in his childhood, some of it is depicted through the following statements

Isaac sat naked on the floor. His buttocks were numb from sitting too long on a cold concrete surface every day. His chin dug deep into his chest as he leaned forward to see past his distended belly.”, “She let Isaac’s body fall back into its shit. The pain cut through his numb buttocks. A sharp breath escaped his mouth but he sunk his chin into his chest and strangled the cry. He had not felt his body defecate. “You’re going to sit in that shit for the rest of the day.”, “Can’t we throw him into the latrine with his dung?” Isaac flinched: falling through the latrine-hole was his nightmare. He had no doubt that Tendo would do it when his grandmother was not watching. He imagined himself spending the rest of his life in the ponging darkness with people dropping dung and susu on top of his head and shivered. (Makumbi 24)

This shows the depth of Isaac’s suffering on the hand of his grandmother and his older sister in association, and the impact of his childhood trauma on the development of his identity and psychological state in the future. It also reflects the theme of trauma as a central theme in the novel.

Myth is another predominant theme in *Kintu*. The entire story of the novel is based on a curse that controls people’s lives for several generations in different places and social contexts. This theme is interwoven into the fabric of the plot that is inseparable from the main

events of the story. It has been discussed earlier how the storytelling technique combines the past with the present, integrating the element of myth as an integral representation of the African culture in modern narratives. Therefore, this theme is central to African oral literature, and therefore, it is highly emphasized by Makumbi in her work. Similarly, a study conducted by Kemboi (2020) demonstrates that *Kintu* is a novel that portrays the story of a nation, employing myths as a representation of the Ugandan people by weaving them into the past and present of its people (4). This blend shows that the theme of myth in *Kintu* is not just vital in the portrayal of the characters' lives and experiences, but it is also significant in the depiction of the African traditions and values through written and modern literature.

3. Oral Narrative Techniques in Makumbi's *Kintu*

The language and writing style that Makumbi uses in her novel *Kintu* is considered as a distinctive blueprint that first originates from the African culture, and second, represents Makumbi as a unique author with a unique writing style. Chukwudera, an African novelist and a journalist, explained that the novel *Kintu* could seem alien and incomprehensible for readers who are foreign to the African culture. This lack of comprehension is caused by the foreign words, expressions and cultural references that break the conformity and clarity of the standard English language. This quote provides an example for the use of African linguistic and cultural features in her writing:

“Who am I, who am I?” The woman was very angry. “I am Ssanyu, Ssanyu Babirye, you chameleon! Stop telling lies.” “What lies? I don’t know you,” Suubi tried to say but could not. Somehow the woman had heard. “You’re my Nnakato.” Suubi tried to shake her head to say that she was not a twin but could not. And how could Ssanyu hear her thoughts? (Makumbi 11)

This quote shows how Makumbi used foreign words that are only comprehensible for African natives. The use of the word “Nnakato”, which means a twin sister, marks the text as culturally oriented and directed to a specific audience. However, through the discourse and the context of the word, the author enables the reader from non-African backgrounds to understand the meaning of this word. Therefore, it could be stated that the use of this word, and similar others throughout the novel, is not intended to confuse the reader or cause miscomprehension, but rather to symbolize national belonging and Ugandan identity. Makumbi is able to easily use the word twin sister to make her text easily understood by different readers. However, she chooses to use Nnakato instead, which implies that this word has more depth in her original culture than the target culture or language. Jenkins confirmed this aspect through the examination of his statement in the first chapter, emphasizing that the words used and uttered through storytelling have a spiritual power that leave more in-depth impact in the reader than contemporary literature. Therefore, the use of foreign words that represent the Ugandan traditions and cultural aspect is strategic and aims to provide more depth to her story and its writing style.

In relation to this interpretation, Adeniyi explains that through the use of regional terminology and cultural terms in Europhone African works, Makumbi is able to establish African identity and introduce indigenous knowledge into the mainstream, reinforcing Universalist inclinations and marginalizing other forms of literature (87). This statement confirms that the use of African traditions and cultural references in her work, Makumbi expresses her native African identity and her Ugandan belonging with pride, realizing that her work will be read and examined by non-African natives and a plethora of European readers. Despite this fact, she chose to include foreign words, proverbs, metaphors and even language structure in order to achieve her aim and represent her national identity.

The use of refrain is another characterizing element of the storytelling technique in oral narrative or oral literature, which has been used in the novel to reflect the African traditions. This passage from the second book of Suubi illustrates this element.

It was treacherous and took a long time to cross. When it flooded, the Nile would yira-yira, rumbling like Kiyiraaaaa, Kiyiraaaaa, Kiyiraaaaa. Suubi would join in singing, Bwowulira enyanja bweyira, yira, yira, nyabo! (Makumbi 11)

This quote shows the use of refrain, which is defined as a form a repetition that is used in songs. Thus, the use of this singing technique in written literature reflects the African oral narration and highlights the African storytelling that is distinguished from other types in written literature. In addition to being a musical device, the repetition of sounds like “yira-yira” and “Kiyiraaaaa, Kiyiraaaaa, Kiyiraaaaa” invokes the emotional and ritualistic intensity of African storytelling, which has its roots in song, rhythm, and group participation.

This participation is not limited to the characters in the novel, but it also extends to the audience who is stimulated to engage in singing through active listening or active singing with the novel as well. This leads to creating a deeper emotional connection between the reader and the characters in the story. Therefore, once again, Makumbi shows through her writing style and literary devices that she is presenting her cultural belonging and Ugandan identity through the words she writes on paper.

It could be also argued that this unique writing style and integration of song in writing is what makes oral narrative unique and characterized with in-depth and emotional engagement of the reader in storytelling. It has been illustrated that emotions provoke the engagement of the brain in mental and intellectual activities. Therefore, storytelling is considered as a means to create emotional engagement of the audience or the readers and enhance their interest and attention towards the piece of literature presented to them through

storytelling. This explains the use of Makumbi of refrain in her writing to provide more cognitive and emotional involvement to the reader with the novel's characters and their oral discourse.

The use of repetition is another indicator of oral narratives through storytelling in African literature. Repeating speech is a human tendency to express feeling and emotions; therefore, repeatedly pounding the same problem in the same way and with the same words, noises, *etc.* is claimed to be a genuine method of easing inner pain or expressing happiness (Emezue 8). Thus, the use of repetition is more emphatic and expressive of human emotions than simple structured texts and written speech. This could explain why oral narratives are distinguished from written literature and are described to have more depth and emotional involvement of the reader. The simple use of these techniques, such as repetition, refrain and music makes the reader more cognitively invested and emotionally engaged with the events of the story and the experiences of the characters. The following passage demonstrates the use of this technique and its impact on written discourse in literature.

“Nonsense, o Lwera is never cold.” “But I am, I am.” Kalema was close to tears”,
“Did you see me today, did you see me? Haaa, I was tall.” As if realizing his father’s
lack of enthusiasm, Kalema added miserably, “People say I am not your son.”
(Makumbi 6)

The quote demonstrates Kalema's emotional fragility as his repeated words and phrases convey his sentiments of uncertainty, despair, and fear. His constant questioning and inquiries “Did you see me today, did you see me?” and “I am not your son” reflect how much he needs his father's approval. It also reflects his deep emotional struggle with the fear of not gaining recognition or acknowledgement from his father. Therefore, he seeks confirmation and validation through his repeated questions and statements. Therefore, it could be stated that

repetition in this context not only serves as a means of emphasis, but it also evokes feelings of abandonment and dread. Hence, this technique is used to deliver these feelings with accuracy and precision to the readers, who would feel the boy's panic and his need for validation through the repetition of his words and questions. The repeated question "did you see me today?" also reveals the boy's insecurity and his need for his father's attention. As it could be observed, all these detailed interpretations of the boys' emotional state and conflict are derived from this simple technique of repetition that engages the reader's cognitive or critical analysis of the speech and the emotional comprehension of these feelings through stimulating their empathy and human compassion.

Moreover, the use of repetition in "But I am. I am" reflects the boy's attempt to gain his father's sympathy through emphasizing that he is cold and lying on a cold floor. This shows that the repetition technique is effective in emphasizing statements that may not be believed if uttered for only once. Consequently, this technique serves as a means of confirmation that makes the reader believe the uttered statement with certainty.

The hyperbole is another stylistic technique that distinguishes oral literature, which entails the excessive exaggeration that aims for emphasis or for creating an effect in the narrative (Mora 1). Thus, the hyperbole is used as an exaggerated form in oral narratives to amplify and maximize the emotional effects of the story and its events. This form has been excessively used by Makumbi in her writing to amplify the impact of the curse on the lives of the descendants of Kintu. The following passage shows an example of this exaggeration through the use of the hyperbole literary technique.

"What did Ntwire do when his son died?" Child, what does a leopard do when its cub is taken? "Ohhhh! It will not stop until it gets its cub back!" Exactly! Ntwire, in his anguish, decided to flee Buganda. But as he left, he looked back at Kintu and said,

“Kintu, I am leaving Buganda. One day, you and your descendants will search for me to undo your suffering but you’ll never find me.” Kintu, knowing how hard it is to break a foreign curse, apologized and implored and pleaded and begged, “Ntwire, please, stay. I’ll give you whatever you ask for.” But Waa! You know how vindictive foreigners are—Ntwire was inexorable.”...“Soon enough, his life unravelled. His children died. His wife committed suicide and he lost all his wealth. When Kintu died, he did not join the family spirits. He is still trapped here with us. (Makumbi 11)

At the beginning of the quote, the use of the rhetorical question “what does a leopard do when its cub is taken?” serves as a means to express the intensity of the situation and the magnitude of the curse that was cast on Kinu by a wounded and grieving father. The response of Suubi “Ohhhh! It will not stop until it gets its cub back!” Exactly”, shows that this technique has fulfilled its aim through the apparent emotional engagement of this character with the events of the story that is evident through her excitement and exclamation. Moreover, the depiction or the assimilation of Kintu’s speech in this quote “Ntwire, please, stay. I’ll give you whatever you ask for.” But Waa! You know how vindictive foreigners are—Ntwire was inexorable”, shows the exaggeration of this character in retelling an old story that was passed through generations by word of mouth. For an outsider who is ignorant about this character and its background, it would seem that she was present the day Kintu was begging Ntwire to spare his life and refrain from cursing him. However, knowing that she was a distant relative, separated from Kintu through generations and generations in between them, this shows that exaggeration in recounting the events of the story and the moment Kintu was cursed is aimed to express the intensity of the situation and its grave impact on the following generations of Kintu’s lineage.

The point of view forms an integral part of the storytelling technique in oral narrative. It represents the narrator of the story and who is depicted as the responsible of the narration,

he could be one of the characters, an outside narrator or multiple characters as well. Evidently, it is indicated that the point of view could include first, second and third persons (Brown 5). In the case of the selected novel, it is observed that the point of view or the story is narrated by third person. The selection of this point of view is justified with the aspect of narrating the story from the character's or the protagonist's point of view from an external perspective that helps reducing bias and subjectivity in the narration process.

It was odd the relief Kintu felt as he stepped out of his house. A long and perilous journey lay ahead. At the end of the journey was a royal storm—the princes had been fighting for the throne again and weapons had not yet been put away. He could be carried back, his head severed from his shoulders—commoners tended to lose their heads when royals fought. Yet, Kintu Kidda, Ppookino of Buddu Province, was glad to step away from his home. (Makumbi 2)

This quote shows how the author uses the third person to narrate the events of the story from the protagonist's perspective, but still maintaining a neutral and objective stance towards the story. Therefore, she uses the pronoun he to refer to the character and his actions and thoughts throughout the story. Moreover, it should be noted that the point of view changes from one book to another with the shift to another member of the Kintu bloodline through the following generation, depicting the shift in the protagonist of the story. Not only that, it only shifts from one character to another within the same book in order to provide different perspectives from different points of view and offer a broader comprehensible context for the story.

Now she searched her mind for any other reminiscences from her childhood but there was only blankness. Her grandmother was a morsel of memory hidden in a crevice somewhere in her mind. It felt as though someone had come with a broom, swept

away all her childhood recollections, but missed her grandmother's voice. She could not even remember why she lived with her in the first place or when she left her. She could find no face, no house, no daytime activities, or even dreams from that life in her memory: just the voice telling that story and the tree they sat under when the sun glared. (Makumbi 11)

The second quote shows how the point of view changes for the story to be narrated by another protagonist Suubi, who is a descendent of Kintu in the 21st century, who plays the protagonist in the first book. Therefore, this shift in the point of view reflects the generational struggles and their unique perspectives. Moving from one character to another through the six books also marks the passing of time and the changing psychological, emotional and cultural conflicts that each character encounters in each generation.

4. Blending Oral Tradition with Modern Narrative Techniques

Despite the heavy emphasis on orality and the use of narrative techniques in her writing, Makumbi also incorporates many modern narrative techniques and forms. One of which is the fragmented writing style and the non-chronological timeline. Fragmentation has been shown to be one of the characterizing features of modern literature. The style of writing in this literary era is distinguished by complexities, ambiguity, stream-of-consciousness, and fragmentation (Kurbanbaeva & Alimova 428). This was depicted mainly through the main structure of the novel, which tells the story of the curse from multiple perspectives without any clear guidance or introductory statements about the identity of the characters and their relation with each other. The novel is divided into six books, and the author moves from one protagonist to another in different timelines and settings without transitional explanation or organization. This reflects the fragmentation of the narrative and the use of this literary technique as a representation for modern narrative forms and devices.

Moreover, the stream of consciousness is also evident in the narrative through the flow of ideas, emotions and perceptions in the mind of the characters and their representation through their speech. It is clear through the narrative and the third person point of view used by the author, that she provides a window into the inner thoughts and conflicts of the characters. For example

There was a knock. Kamu's woman woke up and climbed over him to get the door. She picked a kanga off the floor and wrapped it around her naked body. Sucking her teeth at being disturbed so early in the morning, she walked to the door with the annoyance of a proper wife whose husband was at home. (Makumbi 1)

This passage at the beginning of the novel reveals the inner dialogue of the character that goes through her head and shows their flow of emotions. In this quote for instance, the character is believed to be bothered by the knock at her door in the early morning. This idea is formed in the reader's mind through Makumbi's use of stream of consciousness in her writing. This was depicted through the narrative of the entire novel, where this stream reflects the flow of thoughts and emotions of different characters across the six books. This technique is a characterizing feature of the modern literature that enables the reader to get a glimpse of the characters' inner thoughts and feelings through their inner dialogues. The use of this technique in the novel reflects the author's adherence to modern writing norms that are combined with traditional storytelling in the novel.

In summary, it could be inferred that Makumbi uses an eclectic approach in her writing of *Kintu*, combining both traditional oral narrative techniques with modern writing forms to produce a hybrid text. This fusion of both literary forms or techniques allows the author to preserve both the depth and emotional complexity of oral narrative through storytelling and enables the exploration of psychological and emotional themes and events of

the story. This fusion also honours the African narrative style and tradition and shows the possibility of maintaining this legacy through intertwining it with modern narrative form and technique. This fusion gives African writers the opportunity to challenge colonial literary conventions and standards while simultaneously expressing their cultural identity and sense of belonging. This resistance is a component of their rejection of imperial rule and supremacy, which is ingrained in their attitudes as remnants from the colonial era. Therefore, Makumbi succeeded in mastering this hybrid genre of literature that enabled her to blend traditional oral narratives with modern writing devices and express her identity, heritage, resistance to Western writing supremacy and dominance at the same time.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided practical analysis of the novel *Kintu* and the use of the author of oral narrative style through storytelling to narrate the events of the novel. The novel tells the story of a curse that lived through many generations and caused the disruption of many families' stability and mental health. It has also highlighted the significance of reconciliation and facing the past in order to build one's future. Through this narrative, Jennifer Makumbi highlights the traditional storytelling style that reflects African oral traditions, using it as a way to express her Ugandan identity and pride in her cultural heritage. Her depiction of themes such as myth and curses reflects the rich mythology of the African culture and its strong connection with people's past, present and even forming their future. Makumbi emphasizes the cyclical nature of history, the psychological challenges passed down through the generations, and the timeless influence of myths in forming both individual and collective identities by fusing the past and present through the use of oral storytelling techniques in her writing.

Moreover, her use of oral literary devices, such as the use of refrain, repetition, hyperbole, and indigenous language, demonstrates how these devices enrich the narrative and enhance the readers' emotional and cognitive engagement with the events of the story. Consequently, this leads to the development of a deep connection between the reader and the characters. More importantly, Makumbi also combines the use of modern narrative forms with traditional orality through her use of fragmentation and stream of consciousness to show that African oral traditions can be successfully preserved through their fusion with modern narrative seamlessly.

General Conclusion

The study has examined the fusion of orality and modern narrative forms in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu*. The primary goal of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how oral literature was adopted and preserved as contemporary narratives emerged. *Kintu* expresses a traditional means for the transmission of African history, identity, and collective memory through the description of Uganda and its cultural heritage that is left as an identifying feature after the colonialism era.

As a means of expressing her Ugandan identity and her pride in her cultural heritage, Jennifer Makumbi draws attention to the traditional narrative form that embodies the African oral narrative style. The rich mythology of African culture and its close ties to people's history, present, and even shaping their future are reflected in her portrayal of themes like myth and curses. The novel tells the story of a curse that followed the descendants of the Kintu clan and influenced their lives in modern times in different ways. The story, told through the storytelling technique that represents the traditional African orality, indicates the author's expression of her cultural identity and heritage that were influenced with the white supremacy mindset that was brought about by British colonialism and shaped the identity formation process of African individuals even after years of the decolonization phase.

This literary style is in opposition to the modern narrative form, which becomes a worldwide literary and cultural movement in the first half of the twentieth century as a response to realism and romanticism. It also has to do with the twentieth-century belief in the advantages of science, technology, and the conscious management of social change. In the West, this literary movement, linked to scientific and technological progress, is perceived as more advanced, rational, and universal. However, Makumbi, with her advanced educational background in the country of the previous colonizer (United Kingdom), and her academic

advancement, she is able to fuse her ancestral storytelling techniques and devices with modern narrative forms through her use of fragmentation and stream of consciousness to show that African oral traditions can be successfully preserved through their fusion with modern narrative seamlessly. By combining the past and present through the use of oral storytelling techniques in her literature, Makumbi highlights the repeated nature of history, the psychological challenges that have been passed down through the generations, and the timeless significance of myths in building both individual and collective identities. Furthermore, Makumbi exemplifies how oral literary devices, including refrain, repetition, hyperbole, and indigenous language, can improve the narrative and increase readers' emotional and cognitive involvement with the story's events.

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة التفاعل بين التقاليد الشفاهية الإفريقية والتقنيات السردية الحديثة في رواية كينتو للكاتبة جينيفر نانسوبوغا ماكومي. وتبحث في كيفية مزج ماكومي للعناصر الشفاهية التقليدية ، مثل الأسطورة، والأغنية، واللازمة، والتكرار، والمبالغة، واللغة المحلية ، مع الأساليب الأدبية المعاصرة. وخاصة التفكك وتيار الوعي. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل كيف تسهم هذه التكاملات الأسلوبية في الحفاظ على التقاليد الأدبية الإفريقية وتعزيز الهوية الثقافية. وبعتماد الأسلوبية كإطار مفاهيمي، تحلل الدراسة الاستراتيجيات السردية المستخدمة في رواية كينتو لتُظهر كيف تتعايش الأشكال الشفاهية والحديثة وتثري بعضها البعض. ومن خلال هذا الدمج، لا تحافظ ماكومي على حيوية السرد الإفريقي فحسب، بل تعيد أيضًا امتلاك التعبير الثقافي وتعيد تعريفه في سياق أدب ما بعد الاستعمار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية، الشفاهية، التقنيات السردية الحديثة، الهوية الثقافية، كينتو