

**MYTH AND MEMORY IN THE SELECTED POEMS OF CHRISTOPHER
OKIGBO**

**OKEKE PASCHALINE ONYINYECHUKWU
GOU/ U22/ ELS/ 77**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY
THINKERS CORNER,
ENUGU STATE**

JULY, 2026

TITLE PAGE

**MYTH AND MEMORY IN THE SELECTED POEMS OF CHRISTOPHER
OKIGBO**

**OKEKE PASCHALINE ONYINYECHUKWU
GOU/ U22/ ELS/ 77**

**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
LITERARY STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, GODFREY OKOYE
UNIVERSITY,
ENUGU.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE (B.A) IN ENGLISH AND
LITERARY STUDIES**

SUPERVISOR: MRS TOCHI OLAOLU

JULY, 2026

APPROVAL PAGE

This project is approved for the award of Bachelor of Arts (B.A), Degree in English and Literary Studies, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

Mrs. Tochi Olaolu

Date

Supervisor

Dr. Chijioke

Edward
Head of Department

Date

Rev. Bro. Prof. Ekene Osuji
Dean, Faculty of Arts

Date

External Examiner

Date

DECLARATION

This is to declare that this research “Myth and Memory in the selected poems of Christopher Okigbo” was carried out by Okeke Paschaline Onyinyechukwu with the registration number GOU/U22/ELS/77, under the supervision of Mrs. Tochi Olaolu. I have duly acknowledged the sources from which ideas and extracts have been taken. Therefore, this is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in English and Literary Studies.

Sign

**OKEKE PASCHALINE ONYINYECHUKWU
GOU/U22/ELS/77**

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to God Almighty for his benevolence and strength throughout the course of this research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I begin by giving all glory and honour to God Almighty, whose infinite strength and unfailing grace carried me through this academic journey. At every stage, through moments of clarity and confusion, strength and weakness, His presence remained my sure foundation. I am deeply grateful for His mercy, for surrounding me with help when I needed it most, and for granting me the courage to see this work through to the end.

My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor, Mrs. Tochi Olaolu, a pillar of support and wisdom throughout this process. Her consistency, firm guidance, and unwavering dedication ensured that I stayed focused and committed. I am also especially thankful to my Head of Department, Dr. Edward Chijioke, whose fatherly love and constant follow-up created a supportive and motivating atmosphere for me. His care extended beyond the call of duty, and for that, I am sincerely grateful.

To the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Rev. Bro. Ekene Osuji, I remain thankful for the gift of a well-structured and conducive environment for learning, one that allowed me to thrive both academically and personally. In the same vein, I am grateful to Professor Udaba, whose keen eye and personal concern helped ensure I stayed on track. Her words of encouragement and guidance were a steady light throughout my work.

I cannot speak of this journey without acknowledging the community of lecturers whose influence shaped my academic growth. Each lecture, every correction, and all the academic rigour they demanded contributed meaningfully to my formation. I am especially thankful to Miss Chiamaka, whose doting warmth made difficult moments easier to bear. Dr. Reuben Onyeishi offered not only academic excellence but also deeply insightful perspectives that enriched my understanding. I equally appreciate the dedication and commitment of Mrs. Chizurum, Mr. JT Chukwuweike, Dr. Justus Ugwu, Mr. Vitalis Iloanwusi and Mrs. Jennifer, whose intellectual guidance helped shape my critical thinking. Their collective efforts nurtured not only my intellect but also my confidence.

Beyond the walls of lectures and research, I owe special thanks to my friends who stood by me like family. I am grateful to my mom for her prayers and unwavering support and admonitions. My siblings Sister Obiageli, Brother Emeka, Brother Kelechukwu, Sister Chizoba, Brother Smith, Oluchi, my Chikeluo and Chisom for their love and support one way or another. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Vitalis Iloanwusi whose amazing companionship, scholarly assistance, my gentle reminders of strength, and my reassurance in times of self-doubt. My friends Amarachi, Vivian, Chisom, Chidiebere and Vitalis again whose presence made this journey bearable, and their friendship has been one of the sweetest gifts of my university life. I also thank Mr. Kehinde Folorunsho who has always been seeing me through; his assistance and intelligent companionship cannot be overemphasised. Lastly, I appreciate the silent hands that kept things running smoothly in the background, my secretary; Aunty Uju, whose support and motherly kindness never went unnoticed.

To everyone who has, in one way or another, contributed to the success of this work, I say thank you. I pray God rewards you richly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page		i
Approval Page		
	ii	
Declaration		
	iii	
Dedication		
	iv	
Acknowledgements		
	v	
Table of Contents		vi
Abstract		
	viii	
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION		1
1.1 Background to the Study		
	1	
1.2 Statement of the Problem		
	5	
1.3 Aim and Objectives		6
1.4 Research Questions		6
1.5 Significance of the Study		
	6	
1.6 Scope of the Study		7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW		
	9	

2.1 Conceptual Review	9
2.1.2 Memory	13
2.2 Review of Related Literature	17
2.3 Summary of Review of Related Literature	21
CHAPTER THREE: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK MYTH CRITICISM	23
3.1 Theoretical Framework	23
3.1.2 Memory Theory (Cultural / Collective Memory Theory)	27
3.2 Methodology	31
CHAPTER FOUR: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	33
4.1 Analysis	33
4.1.1 The Role of Mythic Imagery in Shaping Meaning in the Selected Poems of Christopher Okigbo	33
4.1.2 Memory as a Thematic and Structural Element in the Selected Poems	39
4.1.3 Interaction of Myth and Memory and Its Contribution to the Poetic Vision and Cultural Significance of the Selected Poems	45
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	52
5.1 Summary of Findings	52
5.2 Conclusion	54
5.3 Recommendations	55
WORKS CITED	57

ABSTRACT

This study examined the interaction of myth and memory in Christopher Okigbo's selected poems, namely "The Passage," "Lustra," "Distances," "Elegy for Alto," and "Hurrah for Thunder." The study was motivated by the observation that while Okigbo's poetry has received considerable critical attention for its mythic and symbolic complexity, insufficient attention has been paid to memory as a mediating force that activates and sustains mythic structures. Consequently, the ways in which personal, cultural, and collective memories interact with mythic imagery to shape meaning and poetic vision remain underexplored. The aim of the study was to examine the interaction of myth and memory in the selected poems. Specifically, the study analyzed the role of mythic imagery in shaping meaning, examined memory as a thematic and structural element, and explored how the interaction of myth and memory contributes to the poetic vision and cultural significance of the poems. The study was anchored on Trauma Theory and supported by Myth Criticism and Memory Theory. Adopting a qualitative research design, it employed close textual analysis of the selected poems. Findings revealed that mythic imagery functions as a major organizing principle through recurring symbols such as Idoto, the oilbean, the ant-hill, the elephant, and thunder. The study further found that memory operates in traumatic, therapeutic, initiatory, archival, and prophetic forms, thereby shaping both the thematic concerns and temporal structure of the poems. The interaction of myth and memory was found to produce Okigbo's distinctive poetic vision by linking personal experience, cultural identity, and historical consciousness. The study concludes that myth and memory are interdependent forces central to Okigbo's poetic imagination. It recommends further comparative and interdisciplinary studies on myth and memory in African poetry.

Keywords: Myth, Memory, Christopher Okigbo, Trauma Theory, African Modernism, Poetic Vision.

MYTH AND MEMORY IN SELECTED POEMS OF CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO

**OKEKE PASCHALINE ONYINYECHUKWU
GOU/U22/ELS/77**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU**

SUPERVISOR: MRS. TOCHI OLAOLU

ABSTRACT

This study examined the interaction of myth and memory in Christopher Okigbo's selected poems, namely "The Passage," "Lustra," "Distances," "Elegy for Alto," and "Hurrah for Thunder." The study was motivated by the observation that while Okigbo's poetry has received considerable critical attention for its mythic and symbolic complexity, insufficient attention has been paid to memory as a mediating force that activates and sustains mythic structures. Consequently, the ways in which personal, cultural, and collective memories interact with mythic imagery to shape meaning and poetic vision remain underexplored. The aim of the study was to examine the interaction of myth and memory in the selected poems. Specifically, the study analyzed the role of mythic imagery in shaping meaning, examined memory as a thematic and structural element, and explored how the interaction of myth and memory contributes to the poetic vision and cultural significance of the poems. The study was anchored on Trauma Theory and supported by Myth Criticism and Memory Theory. Adopting a qualitative research design, it employed close textual analysis of the selected poems. Findings revealed that mythic imagery functions as a major organizing principle through recurring symbols such as Idoto, the oilbean, the ant-hill, the elephant, and thunder. The study further found that memory operates in traumatic, therapeutic, initiatory, archival, and prophetic forms, thereby shaping both the thematic concerns and temporal structure of the poems. The interaction of myth and memory was found to produce Okigbo's distinctive poetic vision by linking personal experience, cultural identity, and historical consciousness. The study concludes that myth and memory are interdependent forces central to Okigbo's poetic imagination. It recommends further comparative and interdisciplinary studies on myth and memory in African poetry.

Keywords: Myth, Memory, Christopher Okigbo, Trauma Theory, African Modernism, Poetic Vision.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

African poetry has long functioned as a vital medium for preserving cultural memory and reactivating myth in the face of historical disruption. Within the postcolonial context, poets frequently return to ancestral symbols, ritual language, and cosmological narratives as a way of negotiating fractured identities and colonial inheritance. Myth in this sense operates not as escapist fantasy but as a living archive through which cultural meaning is continually renewed. Memory, closely allied to myth, enables poets to recover suppressed histories and personal experiences embedded within collective consciousness. Scholars have argued that modern African poetry draws its distinctive power from this interaction between the remembered past and the contested present (Yao 12). It is within this broad literary and cultural tradition that the poetry of Christopher Okigbo assumes enduring significance.

Christopher Okigbo is one of the most complex and influential poets of modern African poetry. Known for his rich symbolism, ritual rhythm, and the complex entanglements of African and classical mythologies. In Okigbo's poetry, there is no clear message to be discerned, and the symbolic layers and allusions invite the reader to be immersed in the text. Chinedu Akintayo states that Okigbo's poetic vision had an “intense mythopoetic imagination that combines personal experience with collective destiny” (6). This fusion places Okigbo firmly in the context of African modernism, and at the same time, closer to the global modernist experimentation. His poetry is, therefore, an abundant field for the exploration of the relationship between myth and memory and poetry.

Both concepts of myth and memory have been significant in literary studies since they play a pivotal role in individual and collective identity. Myths can be regarded as the repository of

cultural values, beliefs, and traditions that are passed on from one generation to the next. It offers structures of meaning and symbolism which enable societies to interpret their experiences and understand themselves in these. Memory, however, serves as a means to hold and recreate experiences, histories, and cultural knowledge. In literature, the relation of myth and memory is sometimes used to allow the author(s) to re-explore the past, yet also to comment on the present. This interaction is especially relevant in African literature, where issues of continuity and disruption of the past, and the construction of identity are still concerns.

The history and culture of Africa have been tightly linked with attempts to recover colonial-despised margins of African history and culture. The use of myth and memory as literary tools to reclaim cultural identities and/or the struggle against being erased from history has been used by many African writers. Literature becomes a place of memory, re-memory, and linkage to the present through these strategies. Myth and memory continue to play an important role in African literary discourse, which highlights their reciprocal significance as means of articulating the self and the community. Thus, researchers who investigate the concepts are addressing issues of culture, history, and identity in African societies in general.

Christopher Okigbo's poetry then, falls on its own plane in this context. The poet uses the cultural forms and ideas of indigenous Igbo spirituality and ritual to a greater degree in his work, and his use of modernist literary techniques does not conflict with the cultural forms and ideas of indigenous Igbo spirituality and ritual. This has made him one of the greatest modernist poets in Africa. His poems are often filled with mentions of gods and goddesses from his lineage, rituals, and mythic characters that come to form a distinctive poetic world that is both culturally rich and artistically inventive. His poetry is complicated and has thus attracted a continuing stream of scholarly interest and brought him to the forefront of literary criticism.

The poems chosen for this study, 'The Passage', 'Lustra', 'Distances', 'Elegy for Alto,' and 'Hurrah for Thunder', are some of the most important periods of Okigbo's poetic career. Here are poems from his oeuvre that embody common themes that recur in his poetry, such as spirituality, ritual, identity, exile, return, and social responsibility. Together, they form an interesting corpus for analyzing the modes of the expression of myth and memory in Okigbo's poetic imagination as selected. According to Kouadio Guillaume Yao, Okigbo's poems are frequently "ritual texts where memory and myth come together to dramatize inner or communal experience" (18). An opportunity for studying these poems together is to examine different aspects of these questions within the poet's career.

The Passage is of special significance in Okigbo's poetry and is credited with invoking traditional African spiritual beliefs. The poem is an introduction to themes and symbols that will be found throughout his life's work, and which have generated much scholarly interest due to its links with African cosmology and the ritual consciousness. It is one of the most talked-about poems with respect to the study of Okigbo's poetic vision.

Another important poem of Okigbo's is called "Lustra". It's frequently linked to the concepts of renewal, transition, and spiritual encounter. The poem fits into the overall thematic framework of Okigbo's poetry and reveals his ongoing experimentation with symbolism and ritual. By its presence in this study, it contributes to a wider range of information on the poet's concerns.

"Distances" is another milestone in the poetry career of Okigbo. The poem is characterized by its introspection and intricate use of symbols. It is in the middle of the discourse surrounding Okigbo's poetic style, and forms part of the scholarly discourse on memory, identity, and spiritual consciousness in African poetry.

The latter stage of Okigbo's poetry is represented by "Elegy for Alto" and "Hurrah for Thunder", which are often discussed in a historical and political context. The study of these poems has been the subject of scholarly interest due to their political, social, and national themes. Their participation in this research opens up a wider area of research and discussion because of the possibility of considering myth and memory in both personal and communal contexts.

Besides, past criticism is more likely to focus on either myth or history, or to ignore memory as an intermediate layer that lies between the two. However, memory is still a significant part of the literary representation, as it will help to preserve and transmit cultural experiences, historical events, and individuals' identities. The symbols that Okigbo creates serve as "primordial images through which personal and cultural memory is inscribed" (22), argue Akporherhe Friday, and Udi Peter Oghenerioborue. The observation indicates a need to take a more nuanced look at memory in conjunction with myth in discourse about Okigbo's poetry. A collection of suitable poems for this study, selected to represent the relationship, has been created.

Thus, the present study is stimulated by the desire to review the poetry of Christopher Okigbo in a new light, one that involves both the elements of myth and memory. The study is based on selected poems instead of collections of poems in order to show the continuity and the deviation in the poet's imagination of Okigbo. It also seeks to make a contribution to previous research on the subject by looking at the interaction between these two concepts in various poems and the development of the poet's work. As Harry Garuba has pointed out, more contemporary African poets such as Okigbo "revitalized" the myth to "infuse new life into contemporary poetic expression" (5). This is the area of memory's role that remains an important area of study.

Besides, analyzing myth and memory in some of Okigbo's poems also opens up ways to second the Afro-modernist movement and the African sense of self. Okigbo's poetry is a great example of how native symbols, when reworked through a modernist lens, can still keep their cultural import. His writings point to how traditional cultural elements are still alive and kicking in the current literary scene. Studying myth and memory can be viewed as a welcome tool to widen understanding of the multiple ways in which African poets harmonize different factors: time (past and present), tradition and modernity, and person and community.

Overall, this background not only places the paper in line with other literary research but also highlights the nuanced contribution that it makes. Delving into myth and memory in some of Christopher Okigbo's poems, this work honors and builds on criticisms that have pointed to missing links in the understanding of these two aspects in his poetry. It makes the selected poems stand out as key literary pieces, which can shed light on broader issues like cultural identity, history, and art within the African literary storyline. Through an in-depth study of these poems, the work aims to fuel the debates about both Christopher Okigbo and the larger group of African writers who blend modernism with African elements.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Christopher Okigbo's poetry has been widely celebrated for its dense symbolism, ritual intensity, and profound engagement with mythic structures drawn from African and classical traditions. However, the complexity of his poetic language has often led to critical readings that privilege myth, ritual, or history in isolation, leaving insufficient attention to how memory functions as a mediating force that activates and sustains these mythic elements. In many studies, Okigbo's poems are approached either as obscure modernist texts or as ritual invocations detached from the poet's interior consciousness and historical moment. This tendency has resulted in interpretations that overlook how personal, cultural, and collective

memories shape the mythic imagination within individual poems. Moreover, existing scholarship frequently focuses on entire collections such as *Labyrinths* and *Path of Thunder*, but this study has narrowed the analysis down to selected poems as a coherent body that reveals recurring patterns of remembrance and symbolic return. As a result, the subtle ways in which memory informs themes of origin, exile, purification, and prophecy in poems such as “The Passage,” “Lustra,” “Distances,” “Elegy for Alto,” and “Hurrah for Thunder” remain underexplored. This study addresses this critical gap by examining how myth and memory interact in selected poems of Christopher Okigbo, with the aim of clarifying how remembrance operates as a structural and thematic principle in his poetic vision.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the interaction of myth and memory in selected poems of Christopher Okigbo.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. analyze the role of mythic imagery in shaping meaning in the selected poems of Christopher Okigbo;
- ii. examine how memory functions as a thematic and structural element in the selected poems;
- iii. explore how the interaction of myth and memory contributes to the poetic vision and cultural significance of the selected poems.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. The study will be guided by the following research questions:
How does mythic imagery shape meaning in the selected poems of Christopher Okigbo?
- ii. In what ways does memory function as a thematic and structural element in the selected poems?
- iii. How does the interaction of myth and memory contribute to the poetic vision and cultural significance of the poems?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to literary scholarship as it deepens critical engagement with the poetry of Christopher Okigbo by foregrounding the combined role of myth and memory in his work. By focusing on selected poems rather than entire collections, the study offers a more concentrated analysis of how recurring symbols, ritual gestures, and acts of remembrance operate across different poetic moments.

The study also contributes to African literary criticism by demonstrating how memory functions as a dynamic process through which myth is reactivated and reinterpreted in modern African poetry. This perspective enhances understanding of African modernism as a tradition that negotiates continuity and change through symbolic recall rather than historical narration alone.

Furthermore, the study is valuable for students and researchers of poetry, as it provides analytical tools for approaching complex symbolic texts without reducing them to obscurity. By clarifying the relationship between mythic structures and mnemonic processes, the study aids in making Okigbo's poetry more accessible while preserving its aesthetic depth.

Finally, the study underscores the cultural significance of poetry as a medium for preserving collective memory and articulating communal anxiety. In highlighting how Okigbo's poems encode personal, cultural, and historical remembrance, the study affirms the enduring relevance of African poetry in conversations about identity, heritage, and cultural survival.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to a close textual analysis of selected poems by Christopher Okigbo, namely "The Passage," "Lustra," "Distances," "Elegy for Alto," and "Hurrah for Thunder." The study focuses specifically on the interaction of myth and memory as they manifest in imagery, symbolism, and thematic development within these poems.

While the study situates the poems within the broader context of African modernist poetry and Okigbo's poetic career, it does not attempt a comprehensive survey of his entire oeuvre. Nor does it engage in extensive historical or biographical analysis beyond what is necessary for literary interpretation.

The study is interpretive in nature and relies on textual evidence and established critical perspectives. Its findings are therefore limited to literary analysis and do not claim exhaustive or definitive interpretations of Okigbo's poetry, but rather offer informed readings that contribute to ongoing scholarly discourse.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

The objective of this chapter is to present a theoretical and critical background of the works of Okigbo. The chapter reviews the previous works and provides a foundation for this study. This study builds on the works of other researchers. As such, the chapter highlights some of the areas that have been overlooked in the previous studies to provide a basis for the following chapters.

2.1.1 Myth

Myth has continued to play a major role in every field of study due to its ability to express cultural values, cosmological beliefs, and a collective experience in symbolic narrative. Chinedu Akintayo says that traditionally, a myth is a story of sacred meaning that accounts for the world, natural phenomena, and human existence in a specific culture. Just as the narratives are not considered as simply false, they are also regarded as meaningful structures that represent the society's articulation of its truth, identity, and continuity. It is also argued that myths are symbolic and can be engaged with in the context of ageless issues of life, death, sacrifice, and renewal. In this way, myth is not historical, but is a universal way of expression (44).

The use of myth, ritual, and symbolism has been a subject of critical study of Christopher Okigbo's work. Yao's work has been explored in studies like *Allegory of Water* in Christopher Okigbo's Poetry and Aesthetics and *Rituals in African Poetry* that have shed light on the ritual and cosmological aspects of his poetry (Yao 29). In *Labyrinths and Other Poems* (Omoha 13), Omoha has analysed the phenomenon of persona, madness, and mythic method. Other scholars have also discussed Okigbo's hybridity of African and Greek myths, with emphasis on the latter, and his modernist sensibility (Launko and Nwankwo 8). Although these studies help to

advance our understanding of the subject, they tend to focus on the whole collection rather than specific poems as a unified work. This makes it possible to discuss the use of myth and memory in individual poems.

Over this general knowledge, scholars in various disciplines have different interpretations of the myth. Anthropologically, myth is regarded as a system of culture that maintains social values and controls communal life. From a religious point of view, a myth may be considered as a true thing that represents divine reality and spiritual experiences. On a philosophical level, myth is considered to be a symbolic way of thinking that has a meaning beyond scientific fact. Myth, on the other hand, is situated in this symbolic space by Kouadio Guillaume Yao, who stresses that it is a repository of common meanings, stemming from cultural awareness and spiritual outlook (12).

A structuralist approach sees the myth as a system of signs, made up of a series of patterns, archetypes, and oppositions, which are connected to the structure of human thinking. This view emphasizes that, despite the way in which they are expressed, mythic shapes are universal among cultures. Likewise, psychological explanations relate myth to archetypes and the collective unconscious, and view it as a symbolic expression of universal human experiences. This understanding is linked to the adaptiveness of the nature of myth by Michael Onyeisi Ejiodu, who observed that the symbolic pattern of the myth makes it adaptable in different contexts (61).

Myth also serves as a symbolic system, an organization of meaning, based on the archetypes, rituals, and recurring images. These are some of the elements that share common cultural codes for individuals to make sense of symbols in familiar cosmological contexts. Mythic symbolism is intricately linked with ritual and religious belief systems and their impact on the arts and culture. (Kouadio Guillaume Yao). Such symbolism enables myth to function in three ways:

personally, communally, and metaphysically, and thus to serve as a cultural code through which more complicated ideas and feelings are communicated (12).

Also, myth is a connecting link between the sacred and the profane. Myth is embedded in religious belief systems, but is not static over time; rather, it can change in the face of changing social realities. Myth continues as a meaningful framework to interpret and adapt both old and new experiences. This adaptability allows myth to continue to be relevant in a culture that is changing so quickly, Ejiodu points out (61).

Now that the concept of myth has been generalised and opened up to a wide range of possibilities, it is necessary to place it in literature. For literary studies, the term myth is not synonymous with falsehoods but rather with a useful form of expression for societies to communicate truths, identities, and continuity. According to Chinedu Akintayo, writers use myth to look at universal themes and relate personal experience to collective memory. Myth allows us to enter into timeless human issues and move beyond the boundaries of time (44).

In literature, in general, a myth is a story or symbol that enhances the meaning and heightens the thematic expression. The writer utilizes the mythic forms, figures, and imagery to convey current conditions and yet fosters links to the old forms and beliefs. This adaptation and hybridisation process, Michael Onyeisi Ejiodu says, brings myth into the context of contemporary literary genres. The myth remains as a connection between past and present (61) through such changes.

Poems use myth as a theme and as a structure of the whole work in order to create the artist's expression. Poets make creative use of elements from mythology to create mood, to shape a sequence of poems, and to enhance the thematic impact. Akintayo continues to discuss how modernist poetry is concerned with ordering and giving coherence to the fragmented

experience through the use of myth. Thus, in one manner, myth becomes a methodological approach and a message of ideology in the discourse of poetry (46).

The elements of myth have always been used in African literature as a way to retain their worldview. Symbols like gods, rivers, ancestors, and ritual spaces appear in various places within African texts as a means of continuity and resistance. Images like this are a place in which collective memory and cultural authority are stored, and writers are able to reclaim histories that have been forgotten, reconstructing indigenous epistemologies. Mythic imagery thus serves an artistic and a political purpose (29).

In this literary context, the role of the myth is particularly well developed in African poetry; it is employed to express the individual and collective experience. Mythic symbols are used by poets to delve into more profound existential issues: 'water', 'sacrifice', 'journey'. Yao maintains that these symbols serve not only as a vehicle for identity, spirituality, and cultural continuity, but also as a tradition with contemporary poetic issues as well (18).

The performance of ritual is also inextricably tied to myth, with many mythic stories performed symbolically in other ways, including sacrifice, invocation, and pilgrimage. The rituals are not just ceremonial but also acts of processes that help society to understand spiritual and existential truths. In the context of a myth, ritual acts as a symbolic way of facing and solving internal and communal conflicts, Bankole Idowu Akinwande et al. write. This is one of the ways that the sacred aspect of myth is reinforced in cultural expression (73).

In addition, one can't help but notice how involved people are in myth, especially in indigenous belief systems, when the deities and spiritual forces are seen as active. These mythic beings symbolize authority, continuity, and connection between the human and the divine. In invoking

such figures, Akintayo explains that this is a way for people to affirm their culture and identify themselves. Thus, myth can be a potent means of preserving cultural heritage (48).

Myth also finds expression as a way of prophecy and history looking forward in literature. Myths can be employed to explain what is happening now and to visualize what might occur in the future by using symbols. In the case of mythic images, García-Ramírez notes that they can serve as a "lens" that helps to understand social and political changes. The prophetic aspect reveals the ability of myth to transcend narrative to become more of a historical consciousness (91).

Another feature of the function of myth is that mythological patterns can be found in many literary texts, which in turn make use of more than one individual mythological pattern. This multiplies the layers of meaning and multiple symbolic constructions, with the potential to be interpreted further. Ikenna Kamalu and Oyeh Otu state that such intertextual interaction extends the reach of the myth and makes it a space of dialogue, where different cultures and myths come together. As such, myth has the power to structure and is an interpretive invitation (57).

Importantly, myth is not independent of anything; it is associated with cultural identity, and it shares the values, beliefs, and history of a people. It offers a sense of identity to societies and their position in the world. Ejiodu notes the way myth is flexible and attempts to reconcile tradition and modernity in order to remain relevant. In this way, myth becomes a basis for the continuity of a culture and for creative expressions (64).

To sum up, myth is a functional tool that is symbolic, cultural, and aesthetic in nature, that forms a human understanding of reality. It has different connotations in different contexts, but always conveys common themes and celebrates cultural identity. Suggesting that myth is a

concept by which meaning, identity, and artistic vision are formed, Akintayo leaves the reader with this impression at the end of the book.

2.1.2 Memory

Memory is an intricate and complex phenomenon that has been studied in the fields of psychology, philosophy, history, and the study of culture. Memory has the simplest definition as the ability to remember, hold on to, and reconstruct something that happened in the past, either one's personal history or shared history. Martin Dinter and Charles Guérin describe how memory is not only a set of recollections but also a set of systems of representations, whose aim is to stabilise meaning and to pass it on across time. In this context, memory is not just about what has occurred but is an active process, within context and with interpretation. It includes personal memory, social passing on, and symbolic memory, and is a key factor in the way an individual and a community make sense of their history (4).

Psychologically, memory is looked upon as a subjective process, which is controlled by emotions, perception, and consciousness. Personal memory relates to personal experiences, which are unique and influenced by trauma, desire, and identity formation. Memory is not static but dynamic, Anupama Pradhan believes: It is an active process, changing the past, depending on the circumstances. This implies that memory involves selective, rather than exact reproduction, and that memory is interpretative. Taking such a perspective brings to the fore the volatility of memory and its tendency to change over time (6).

In addition to the individual, memory also works at the collective level, as a collective repository of experiences in a community or cultural group. Collective memory is the memory of the community, the culture, and historical events, which are handed down through narratives, rituals, and symbols. In many cultures, particularly cultures that have a rich oral history, memory itself becomes a living archive that helps to maintain myths, proverbs, and community knowledge, says Isidore Diala. It is this insight that places memory in social and cultural processes, beyond its cognitive aspect (3).

Cultural memory extends this notion and builds on it by making it a part of a durable symbolic system that incorporates values, myths, and histories shared by a community. It is used in texts, images, and performance and serves societies to help them sustain themselves in the face of change. The cultural memory, for Dinter and Guérin, is a kind of 'fixative' that gives continuity to meaning over time, but can also be re-interpreted. This kind of memory provides continuity and relevance to the past in changing cultural contexts (4).

Memory is also undoubtedly related to processes of transmission and performance, especially in societies with an oral tradition. Memory is always renewed and is constantly re-interpreted through repetition, storytelling, and ritual enactment. Leo Treitler talks about memory as a storing and transmission medium that is like a score and a structuring of performance. This view draws attention to the performative aspect of memory, which involves a struggle not only with the internal, but also with the cultural dimension, in which remembering is not only an internal process but also a process that is performed in some cultural practice (11).

In literature, memory is seen as an imaginative, creative, and interpretive power that re-creates past experiences within literature. Through writing, writers can explore themes of identity, loss, continuity, and belonging through their recollections. For Anupama Pradhan, literary memory is an interactive relationship with history and a translation of it to the present. This process can help to transcend the act of recollection towards reinterpretation and meaning-making (6).

Memory is a theme that can be seen throughout the literature and is frequently used as a way of reclaiming unspoken truths and confronting unhealed traumas. It allows writers to reflect on key events and experiences and to share their own point of view or perspectives that could be missing from the official history. For Anda Kuduma, the dialectical relationship between memory and history exists in literary texts, and often a productive interaction takes place

between the subjective side of memory and the objective side of history. This tension enables memory to disrupt and highlight alternative perspectives to dominant ones (208).

Poems are especially dependent on memory; memory has a special place in poetry because of the compression, symbolism, and suggestive language elements in poetry. Poetic expression can make memory something more than merely recalling it, but something that is now imaginative. Poetic language relies on the reader's memory as the source for the multiple meanings, metaphors, and emotional responses, say Albert Katz et al. The dialogue between text and reader emphasizes the importance of memory in the process of poetry-making and in the reading and interpretation of poetry (5).

Memory is used as a structural element of poetry as well as a thematic element. Repetition, refrain, fragmentation, and circular movement are all elements that evoke the functioning of memory. Such patterns serve as 'mnemonic devices' that lead both poet and reader through the process of recalling and recognizing, Treitler says. In these structural strategies, a poem's effect on memory is not just to express what is to be remembered, but also to unfold the memory (11).

Memory plays a pivotal role in African modes of expression because of the peculiar histories of the continent and its disruption and transformation by colonization. Memorization plays a key role in the revival of precolonial traditions and indigenous knowledge systems by writers. Isidore Diala notes that African poetry is very oral, with memory being a live archive through performance, rhythm, and repetition. Here, the oral-mnemonic is a basis for African poetic memory in contrast with the purely written or archival (3).

Myth, symbol, and ritual imagery are often the tools that encode cultural memory in the poetry of Africans, where they act as collective memory for the collective experience. The symbolic forms enable poets to deal with continuity in the context of disruption and change. Kehinde

Oyetimi believes that writers can hold on to their cultural identity and still remain relevant in the contemporary world through the use of archetypal symbols. Memory thus would not be possible without the intertwining of myth, and both serve as vehicles for the transmission and sharing of cultural meaning (14).

Memory is also a crucial element in the expression of experiences of displacement, exile, and the search for belonging. When writers recreate spaces that have been lost or distant, they act as a symbolic substitute for the actual space, and are assisted by acts of recollection. In diasporic settings, when a return to a geographical location is impossible, Pradhan shows that memory becomes a tool to help maintain identity. It emphasises the emotional and imaginative nature of memory in dealing with absence and continuity (9).

Moreover, memory is a way of interpreting the history of the text, of subjectively and affectively engaging the events that are presented in the text. Memory reconstructs history from personal and cultural perspectives instead of the objective reality of history. What emerges from the interaction between memory and history, says Kuduma, is a space of dynamism, in which alternative stories can be found. In this reworking, memory turns the history into an experience (210).

To conclude, memory is a fluid and complex phenomenon that includes individual experiences, collective memory, and cultural memory. It is a cognitive process and a symbolic system in which meaning is built and maintained. Memory works over time, it's continuous, and it can be reinterpreted, concludes Dinter and Guérin. In the context of literature and poetry, memory can be an effective means of investigating identity, history, and meaning, as well as its thematic content and aesthetic form (4).

2.2 Review of Related Literature

The poetry of Christopher Okigbo has inspired critical engagement, resulting in the production of a rich body of scholarship on Okigbo's work from postcolonial, modernist, ritualistic, psychoanalytic, and stylistic perspectives. But though these investigations reveal different aspects of Okigbo's poetry, few have studied in depth the relationship of the two processes—myth and memory—in selected poems as reinforcing each other. This part of the study summarizes important empirical works and identifies the significant contributions of each of these studies while also making the points of convergence and divergence with the current research apparent.

In exploring the postcolonial legacy in the poetry of Christopher Okigbo, Chinedu Akintayo investigates Okigbo's creations as a way to negotiate postcolonial identity, national consciousness, and cultural reclamation. Akintayo highlights Okigbo's indigenous symbols and motifs as his attempts to confront colonial ideologies and assert African identity (6). Like the present study, the study recognizes the continuity and the indigenous symbolism in Okigbo's poems. The current study, however, in contrast to Akintayo's emphasis on an understanding of these symbols in the context of postcolonial resistance and identity politics, will be more concerned with how the mythic structures engage memory as a poetic strategy, rather than with the colonial history as the main interpretive key.

In the article *The Poetry of Christopher Okigbo: New Perspectives and Current Trends*, Gabriel Oche Ukah and Emmanuel Iwuoha discuss the ideas of homecoming, return to roots, and literary symbiosis in the work of Okigbo. They account for Okigbo as a part of African modernism and underscore the relevance of his Afrocentric vision (11). The present study agrees with this study on the notion of cultural memory and indigenous beliefs embraced by Okigbo. It is also different in focus and approach, with the latter two (Ukah & Iwuoha) providing a general overview of themes and considerations on the issue of the relevance of

Okigbo, while the present study provides close textual readings of selected poems and looks at the myth and memory as structuring and symbolic elements within them.

In Kouadio Guillaume Yao's "Aesthetics and Rituals in African Poetry: A Reading of Achebe, Soyinka & Okigbo's Poems", ritual is explored as an aesthetic and cultural means in African poetry. Leveraging Udentia's idea of ideo-aesthetics, Yao shows how the ritual elements of the text continue to speak about the community's values and how African poetry is being encoded into the world of art. Several of the similarities of this study with the present research will be discussed, including its focus on ritual, symbolism, and indigenous worldviews. But, as against the current study, which builds on the debate, ritual is essentially explored here as an aesthetic and ideological tool, while Yao explores the way ritualized myth works through memory to create poetic consciousness and remembrance in the poetry of Okigbo.

Kouadio Guillaume Yao highlights the motif of water as an allegory and symbol of life, trauma, divinity, and memory gaps in Christopher Okigbo's poetry (9). The study is guided by postcolonial theory and trauma studies as a lens to the interpretation of water as a figure in labyrinthine form, which is a reflection of the poet's subjective world. This research shares some common areas with the current research, such as symbolism and memory. The present study, however, takes a broader approach to the central role of the allegorical water figure by focusing on a wider variety of water images in the mythological tradition and by focusing on the dynamic qualities of the mnemonic processes and the mythic imagery in several poems.

In his paper, "Cultural Identity and Literary Form: Pedagogical Implications of Achebe's Use of Parallelism in 'A Wake for Okigbo'", Imikan Nkopuruk examines the aspect of parallelism in Achebe's elegy *A Wake for Okigbo*, highlighting how the literary device helps maintain cultural identity and oral tradition (8). While the study does not focus on Okigbo's poetry, its findings are important for understanding in Africa the nature of commemorative, elegy, and remembrance. The focus of the present study is quite distinct from the focus of the other studies

because it emphasizes the poet's own poetic practice as opposed to the representation of the poet by other poets; and because it emphasizes the centrality of myth and memory to its analysis instead of stylistic parallelism.

Akporherhe Friday and Udi Peter Oghenerioborue, in their *Psychoanalysis: Self-Writings and Primordial Images in African Poetry*, have used the theory of psychoanalysis to examine the poetry of Okigbo, Okara and Soyinka, focusing on the role of the primordial images and the unconscious in the production of meanings (14). This study shares some aspects with the current study, such as the use of archetypal imagery and an engagement with the unconscious. It is different, however, in theory and methodology since it emphasizes the author's psyche and psychoanalysis, while the present study emphasizes the collective mythic memory and cultural remembrance, not the individual psychological motivation.

Okinba Launko and Chimalum Nwankwo's "Masking the Infrastructural Frame: Christopher Okigbo and His Acolytes" look at the poetic persona, influence, and mythic stature of Christopher Okigbo within the history of literature in Africa. They focus on the mystery of Okigbo's poetry and the impact that it has had on later poets (147). This is in tune with the present study that identifies Okigbo's mythic presence and symbolic power. This current research, however, is more focused on the textual analysis and the relationship between myth and memory within the poetry itself, rather than on influence and literary legacy, as their work is focused.

This study brings into focus religious symbolism, mythopoeia, and spiritual quest in *Labyrinths* through the lens of postcolonial and religious studies with Bankole Idowu Akinwande et al.'s "A Passionate Quest for Religious Fulfilment: The Study of Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths*" (6). This study shares similarities with the present study in terms of its focus on myth and symbolism. It does so, however, in a different way: The emphasis in the present study is on

how myth functions as memory to form a poetic meaning beyond a clear religious meaning, whereas the emphasis in the former is on religious fulfillment and on spiritual synthesis.

In his study “Christopher Okigbo and the Postcolonial Market of Memories”, Maik Nwosu directly tackles the issue of memory, suggesting that Okigbo establishes a dialogic space where indigenous and colonial signifying systems interact to result in a new consciousness that lies in an African myth (78). The present study is very similar to the study I mentioned, in that it deals with memory and myth. Nwosu, however, suggests that the historic and the dialogical were the two features that need to be foregrounded and that are present in the poems in the current study, whereas the postcolonial and the exchange were features that he proposes should be foregrounded through the analysis of the selected poems, the latter of which would also be analyzed in memory as a thematic and structural poetic technique.

Nathan Suhr-Sytsma's 'Christopher Okigbo, Print, and the Poetry of Postcolonial Modernity' centers Okigbo in print culture, transnational networks, and the Mbari generation to focus on the relationship of local and global modernisms in his poetry (45). This study shares some of the same characteristics as the present study in that it recognizes Okigbo's efforts to reconcile the traditional (tradition) with the modern (modernity). It has, however, a different approach: While Suhr-Sytsma emphasizes contexts of material and publication, the present research concentrates on mythic imagery and memory as internal poetic processes.

Lastly, Christian Chukwueloka Chukwueloka's “Imagery and Symbolism in the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo”, which uses a formalist lens to examine imagery and symbolism in *Labyrinths*, focuses on close readings and textual details (19). The current study shares its methodology with this study, which is based on close text analysis. The current study, however, is different insofar as it explicitly considers memory and myth as connected processes, which are not considered by Chukwueloka.

Finally, it can be said that, up to now, there is much literature on Christopher Okigbo's poetry that has dealt with symbolism, ritual, post-colonial identity, psychoanalysis, and modernist aesthetics. Some studies address myth and/or memory; however, there are only a few studies that focus on the interaction between the two as a single analytical tool. In the current study, this gap has been bridged by studying the interplay of mythic imagery and memory in producing meaning, poetic vision, and cultural significance in some selected poems of Christopher Okigbo.

2.3 Summary of the Review Literature

A survey of the literature shows that scholars have engaged with Christopher Okigbo's poems in a variety of ways and on a large scale. His work has been read from postcolonial, modernist, ritualistic, psychoanalytical, stylistic and symbolic viewpoints, in terms of issues of cultural identity, postcolonial consciousness, ritual aesthetics, religious quest, imagery, symbolism and the dialogue between indigenous concepts and those of the modern West. Researchers generally recognize Okigbo's mythic allusion, his complex symbolism, and his modernist methods as key aspects of his poetics and place his work in the context of Africa, and global literature. Taken together, these studies make it clear that Okigbo was a poet who was extremely interested in culture, history, identity, and spiritual questions; and that the richness and critical value of his poetry to African literary scholarship is immense.

Yet, although there is a vast array of studies on hand, there are clear conceptual and theoretical gaps. Myth, symbolism, ritual, postcolonial memory and cultural consciousness are themes discussed in Okigbo's poetry, but they are seemingly isolated or reduced to the status of a secondary layer to other critical issues like nationalism, religion, aesthetics and stylistic innovation. Not many studies provide an extended analysis of the workings of myth and memory as they reinforce each other in individual poems. History, trauma, or cultural continuity are all often used as cues for memory, but rarely is memory foregrounded as an

analytical category in parallel with myth. Likewise, myth is also referred to as symbolism or ritual heritage without considering its role as a memory, which is essential in the construction of poetic meaning and awareness. On the other hand, symbolism or ritual heritage is the common term used to refer to myth without giving enough consideration to the memory role this has in the construction of poetic meaning and awareness.

There is therefore a need for the present study to take place to fill this critical gap. The study takes a more balanced approach to interpretation as it focuses on the interaction of myth and memory in some of Christopher Okigbo's poems, rather than a single theme analysis. Combining the two, it presents myth criticism and memory-oriented reading to reveal the role of the mythic structure as a symbolic system and as a repository and activator of personal, cultural, and historical memory. It enables a thorough examination of the way Okigbo's poetry addresses the themes of continuity and rupture and past and present, the individual self and collective experience.

The study locates itself in contemporary scholarship on symbolism, ritual, and postcolonial identity and proposes a further reading of such scholarship in the light of a more specific focus on the dynamics between myth and memory. The study recovers Okigbo from the category of being a "modernist, nationalist or ritual poet," to propose a reconfiguration of his poetic existence as a poetic "site" where the "mystic" and "mnemonic" meet to produce meaning, vision, and cultural significance. In doing so, it contributes a fresh perspective to Okigbo studies and to African literary criticism more broadly, reinforcing the relevance of his poetry to ongoing discussions about memory, heritage, and cultural survival in modern African literature.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the theoretical and methodological foundations upon which the study is anchored. It outlines the critical theories that guide the analysis and explains the method adopted in examining the selected texts. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the conceptual tools for interpreting the interplay of myth and memory, as well as to clarify the approach used in analyzing the poetic works.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theories that provide the analytical foundation for the study.

3.1.1 Myth Criticism (Archetypal Theory)

Myth criticism (or archetypal criticism) is a literary critical methodology that looks at texts within the framework of mythic elements, symbols, and archetypes that are thought to be universal in human experience. It is based on the assumption that there is a common pool of myths, trans-cultural and trans-historical. These myths are presented again in the written word in the form of literary images, stories, and character types that echo through time and space. Myth criticism thus does not emphasize the specificity of the historical context but focuses more on universal patterns of meaning. Prodip Kumar Adhikari's definition of myth as a "cultural network of symbols and archetypes which link the past, the present and the human or the divine (133) captures the essence of what a myth is. Prodip Kumar Adhikari's definition of myth as a "cultural network of symbols and archetypes which link the past, the present and the human or the divine (133) is a very good definition of a myth. This approach assumes that literary works are contemporary re-creations of the old myths organized into new mythic forms. Myth criticism is then a tool that helps critics to discover underlying, symbolic meaning in poetic language. It continues to be one of the essential methods for the analysis of poetry that is teeming with symbolic and ritual images.

Archetypes, one of the key premises of myth criticism, are universal patterns which exist within the human psyche. In literature, these images can be seen as recurring features like water, death, rebirth, the hero, or the sacrificial victim. These patterns are called archetypes by Carl Gustav Jung and are shared by humanity and considered to be our collective unconscious. According to Zhansaya Zharylgapov and Bibi Syzdykova, Jung's theory of archetypes is the concept of "primordial images" that come from a human being's "first encounters" with the cosmos and existence (175). These images frequently appear in literature as they reflect some of the basic issues of humans, including life, death, identity, and transcendence. The task of myth criticism thus is to find these archetypes and to try to understand the meaning of literature in terms of them. In this way, poems are read as the enactment of universal human situations.

Northrop Frye continues to make myth criticism a system, one that is primarily psychological rather than the richly satirical and poetic one that is found in other myths. Whereas Jung was the one who developed the concept of archetypes as images, or primal symbols, residing in the collective unconscious, Frye showed how archetypes are operating as structural principles in literary texts and literary traditions. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Frye believes that literature is rooted in myth and that literature continually cycles back to mythic patterns, irrespective of historical period and genre. Frye claims that narratives that develop into literature are based on myths, which are the fundamental story forms, and that literature is a "displaced, and reconfigured form of myth. He finds that there are patterns in literature, including the quest, the journey, death and rebirth, sacrifice, descent and return, which he believes create meaning in literature in all cultures. Frye also sets up a cyclical system which makes links between literary forms and seasonal myths: comedy is spring and rebirth, romance is summer and fulfillment, tragedy is autumn and decline, irony or satire is winter and disintegration. This way, the texts are not works of art in themselves, but a part of a mythological system. For Frye, archetypes in literary texts are not only psychological traces,

but also principles that give coherence, unity, and symbolic resonance to texts. According to Jamshidi, Ghasemipour, and Abshirini, archetypal criticism, and especially in the definition of Frye, in its emphasis on mythological characters, ritual patterns, and symbolic situations as organizing devices in literature, is noteworthy (27). Frye's work is especially important because it allows for the avoidance of analyses of individual symbols and for the recognition of the patterns of the whole text as a myth. The impact of this is that poetry can be read as an engagement with a grand narrative of a recurring set of myths, rituals, and archetypes, which are not merely authorial or cultural, but extend across them all. The Frye theory is still one of the most important concepts for the study of modern myth criticism, and is an excellent tool for discussing symbolically rich and mythic poetry.

Myth criticism can be useful for poetic analysis because of the ability to show the symbolism and its resonance with ritual. Poems, more perhaps than other literary forms, tend to be more mythic in their meaning, implying things from images, symbols, and allusions. Myths provide poets with a symbolism that is condensed and can communicate the subtleties of emotional and philosophical concepts. Since myths, in literature, are allegorical, they create alternative narratives as well as enhance the communicative power, Adhikari notes (135). Myth criticism is a tool that allows interpretation of poetic images like rivers, journeys, sacrifices, and divinity in terms of archetypes, rather than metaphors. This way, critics are able to make sense of layers of meaning that may not be apparent. Myth criticism is thus still very useful for the analysis of "symbol-driven" and allusive poetry. It provides a perspective on the poetry as the continuing process of man's myth-making.

Myth criticism is particularly fruitful in African poetry due to the interrelatedness of myth, ritual and art. African traditional practices have strong traditions that are oral, and the myths that form a community's values, cosmology and origins. These myths continue to be a source

of symbolic devices in written poetry, acting between tradition and modernity. Archetypal criticism can enable African poets to be seen as a modern-day remodelling of African myths. Hammoudi proves that mythic patterns provide poets the means for bringing in the local customs and universal themes and making them feel like a cultural continuity and "worldwide resonance" (214). African poetry is interpreted through this prism, as a conversation between the myth of the past and consciousness in the present. Myth criticism can therefore provide an interpretation and a connection between oral tradition and written text.

Another benefit of myth criticism is that it helps to explain why Okigbo was an experimental modernist, using form and symbolism. Okigbo's use of myth facilitates his refusal to be linked to linear narration, and makes use of cyclical and broken structures that reflect the structure of mythic time. In archetypal criticism, this fragmentation is not regarded as a darkness or a cloudiness but rather as one that is intended to call forth a sense of ritual. Hammoudi points out that today's poets turn to myth in order to go beyond history to create a symbolic universality (216). For Okigbo, myth is a language that is used to reimagine a colonial trauma and a personal crisis. Reflecting his poetry's engagement with tradition and innovation, myth criticism has shed light on it. The archetypal form accentuates the unity behind the apparent multiplicity of his art.

Although it has its advantages, myth criticism has some drawbacks, especially as regards history and memory. The approach of the archetypal criticism tends to favour the universal and to ignore the particular and the socio-political. While Jungian archetype theory has been criticized for its lack of empirical substantiation in anthropology and history (see Christian Roesler, 41), it is still widely cited and used to describe the psychological traits of millennials. Although the theory of Jungian archetypes is, according to some, lacking in empirical substantiation in anthropology and history, it remains widely cited and used to explain the

psychological characteristics of millennials. Myth criticism is dangerous if it takes the uncritical approach of considering the culture-specific experience as timeless symbols. It can be an effective way of evoking material realities of colonialism, displacement, and historical violence in postcolonial contexts. Memory is a historical thing, and cannot be understood exclusively by means of universal archetypes. This constraint is seen in the interpretation of African poetry with regard to the historical trauma.

A further objection to myth criticism is that it tries to fit the archetypal pattern it has in mind into the text. They claim that many archetypal studies are either methodologically rigid or repetitive from the point of view of the conclusions that they reach, as a result of the mechanical application of the theory (22). This can restrict the openness of the interpretation, and mute other readings. Poems that interact intimately with memory and history can be deceptive in their use of a rigid, archetypal structure to mean so much more than it may seem. Cultural memory is a particular kind of memory which might be lost in the broad categories of myth. Consequently, the way of life that is memorialized in poetry might not be fully met. This requires a more flexible and integrative critical approach.

Myth criticism does not completely explain the poet's historical sensibility and memory in the context of Okigbo's poetry. Archetypal analysis can help to illuminate symbolic patterns, but it is not enough to account for the process of memory as a response to the disruption of colonialism and loss of self. Although the universalist element in archetype theory has been discredited, the psychological aspect is still useful, Roesler argues, which is where you can find it (219). The poetry of Okigbo requires not only an understanding of his mythic symbolism, but also of his historic memory as well. Thus, though much of the benefit can be gained from myth criticism, it needs to be tempered by a theory which emphasizes memory and history.

This study uses myth criticism as a starting point, but takes it beyond the conceptual limitations of myth criticism.

3.1.2 Memory Theory (Cultural / Collective Memory Theory)

Memory theory offers an important perspective on an aspect of the memory of societies beyond the personal memory of individuals. Theories of cultural and collective memory, rather than focusing on an individual or psychological experience, adopt a more socially-oriented and culturally-contingent perspective on memory. The early formulations of Maurice Halbwachs led to the conclusion that individual memory is always constituted in social structures and that remembering is always a social process, a part of group life. This knowledge has been extended in contemporary memory research, which considers narratives, symbols and media as agents for maintaining collective memory over time. Memory isn't a repository for memory; it is an active process of selection, interpretation and reconstruction. Cultural memory is thus historically shaped and at the crossroads of history, identity and representation. This theoretical perspective is helpful in literary analysis, in which literary texts serve as places where culture is remembered.

The theory of cultural and collective memory has been based on the work of key scholars like Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann. Halbwachs' definition of collective memory is the idea that memory is determined by social groups, institutions, and norms. Jan Assmann later differentiated communicative memory (passed on in daily interactions) from cultural memory (that is stored in symbols like monuments, rituals, and texts). These differences help to understand the process of the transformation of memory from the lived to the durable cultural. In contrast with communicative memory, cultural memory shares its own elements with other generations and is institutionalized. Through literature, memory is encoded in aesthetic and symbolic forms, and plays a central role in this process. Memory theory, therefore, provides

means to examine the ways in which texts create a bridge between personal and collective memory.

Memory theory also theorizes remembering as a cultural reconstruction rather than literal recall of history. Richard Heersmink believes that collective memory is built by the assimilation of biological memory and material objects and a shared space (252). As a result, objects, texts, and culture/ways of handling memory externalise remembrance. Memory is always mediated and contingent, open to re-interpretation over time: This process is characterized by the fact that memory is always mediated and contingent. An expression of cultural identity itself is formed as people remember and re-create a common history. The memory theory, therefore, undermines the notion of historical being, which is rigidly fixed and goes without change, in favor of the dynamic construction of meaning. This enables the reader to read memory as a narrative in literature, instead of a record.

Astrid Erll continues this line of thinking by using the term implicit collective memory (ICM) to describe memory that is not conscious or remembered, but continues "undercover". According to Astrid, narrative schemata or stereotypes and patterns of perception are passed down from generation to generation without being known or explicit (14). The attitude of society towards new events is formed by these implicit memories, based on the inherited frameworks. Such hidden structures of memory can be exposed and worked over in literature. These unconscious memories are frequently invoked in poetic language, symbolism, and imagery to bring out all kinds of common cultural experiences. The memory theory is, therefore, not only about what is remembered but also how a memory, in a subtle way, shapes perception. This understanding is essential to an awareness of the power of poetry to resonate with a culture.

The memory theory is especially applicable to African poetry because the continent has a rich oral tradition and/or disruptions in historical trajectories. Collective memory has been a way of making culture accessible to society in Africa since time immemorial, through storytelling, ritual, and performance. These are all ways of transmission and have been broken apart by colonialism, and memory is a place of contestation and urgency for the recovery of culture. Poems are sometimes a subaltern archive, holding onto histories which have been left out of colonial history. Poets create mythic memory and symbolic language to recapture the pasts they can't remember. Memory theory illuminates the work of African poetry as a form of cultural testimony, as opposed to art. It puts the social role of poetry in remembrance in the spotlight.

Recent research on memory has focused on the interplay between individual and social aspects of memory. Jean-François Orianne and Francis Eustache's definition is that collective memory is the memory that operates in the individual consciousness during social interaction, and social memory is the memory introduced by communicative systems and the repetition of media (123). This is a distinction that can assist us in understanding the nature of the relationship between personal and collective stories in literary texts. Poems are based on personal memory, but create communal significance through symbols of culture. The theory of memory thus connects psychology, sociology and literary studies. It can be used by critics to follow the process of the individual's private recollections becoming culturally meaningful representations. This is an interdisciplinary strength which adds to its analytical usefulness.

The issue of meaning negotiation is also dealt with in the context of memory theory. Thomas Van de Putte shows that people can interact with different cultural discourses of the same history, depending on the context (754).

The flexible memory highlights the constructed and situational nature of this memory. Literary texts, too, evoke several memory stories, enabling readers to read about the past and understand it from various viewpoints. Poems are a dialogic space where there are multiple memories. In this sense, memory theory helps to justify readings which avoid singular and authoritative historical readings. It fits in nicely with postcolonial literary analyses, in which plurality and contestation are foregrounded.

Memory has grown to be the theory that covers the role of media and technology in collective memory in modern times. As Taha Yasseri et al. point out, this is how digital environments have changed the way that collective memory is created, preserved, and shared (205). African poetry tends to be steeped in pre-digital tradition, but is now increasingly a part of contemporary media contexts. Memory theory explains these changes by making use of the concept of adaptive memory in the face of new modes of transmission. The medium of literature continues to be a very important way for cultural memory to be “stabilized” in the face of changing technology. This flexibility further confirms the pertinence of memory theory to present-day literary studies. It enables historians to place poetry in the changing memory landscapes.

Memory theory makes an important contribution to the study of the Bible that myth criticism, which tends to focus upon common archetypes and abstract universalities, does not. Myth criticism accounts for symbolic repetition but not historical change, trauma, and rupture in the culture. Memory theory adds to this emphasis on lived experience and the disruption of history and remembrance actions. In myth criticism, it is processes of the timeless and cultural context that are emphasized, while in memory theory, it is temporal processes and cultural context. In combination, they provide a more comprehensive structure with which to analyse poetry.

Memory theory guarantees the presence of symbolism in addition to history and social experience.

One such theory is the combination of myth criticism and memory theory, which is used to allow for appropriate analysis of both symbol and memory in Christopher Okigbo's poetry in this study. In terms of imagery, the myth criticism approach sheds light on the archetypal and ritual nature of the imagery in Okigbo, while the memory theory approach allows an explanation of how the symbols serve as cultural remembrances. Whereas “mythed” is a term that Okigbo's poetry can invoke, it can also reactivate memory that has been disrupted by colonialism and lost due to cultural disruption. Readings of these invocations can be made in terms of memory theory as historically located acts of remembering. Both theories, therefore, were used to bring out the complexity of the poetic vision of Okigbo. This synoptic approach is an even mix of analysis for the study.

3.2 Methodology

The methodological approach in this research is qualitative, with the type of analysis being a textual analysis. It is based on a careful analysis of a small number of poems, and will focus on locating, recognising and interpreting the recurring patterns of myth, the archetypal symbols and representations of memory. This strategy brings the focus to language, imagery, symbolism and structure, as they apply to the creation of meaning in the texts.

The study is interpretive as it uses the principles of myth criticism and memory theory as analytical tools. It looks at how poetic expressions are symbolic and cultural artefacts, how the poems rework the myths, and how memory is represented within the poems. The method enables a thorough analysis of the thematic and structural aspects “without” turning the texts into formulas.

This study only covers a close textual analysis of some of the poems of Christopher Okigbo, such as: "The Passage," "Lustra," "Distances," "Elegy for Alto" and "Hurrah for Thunder." This study is not about myth and memory in general, but only in the ways that these two things are presented in imagery, symbolism and thematic development in these poems. The analysis of the poems is placed in the context of the other poems of the period, particularly the African modernist poetry, and within the context of Okigbo's poetic career, but it is not an exhaustive study of his work. It neither does a lot of historical or biographical background analysis beyond that of literary interpretation, nor does it indulge in long digressions or rambling. The study has an interpretive character and is based on the texts and critical perspectives. It is based on the conclusions it draws, however, that its study is restricted to literary analysis, and that it does not aim at "final" or "definitive" interpretations, but at giving informed readings, which will serve as a contribution to the scholarly discussion.

The analysis is guided by the above objectives to enable the study to examine the interaction of myth and memory in the selected poems in line with the aim of the study. The study focuses on the function of the mythic imagery in the creation of meaning in the selected poems, the function of memory as a theme and as a structural element, and the role of the interaction between myth and memory in the overall poetic vision and cultural value of the poems. Such aims guide the analytical process, keep it coherent and focused in terms of the analysis of the texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents a systematic analysis of Christopher Okigbo's selected poems based on the three specific objectives of the study. The analysis examines how mythic imagery shapes meaning, how memory functions as a thematic and structural element, and how the interaction of these two forces contributes to the poetic vision and cultural significance of Okigbo's work. Each objective is addressed sequentially through close reading of "The Passage," "Lustra," "Distances," "Elegy for Alto," and "Hurrah for Thunder," with sustained attention to figurative language and textual evidence.

4.1.1 The Role of Mythic Imagery in Shaping Meaning in the Selected Poems of Christopher Okigbo

In Okigbo's "The Passage", the mythic images act as the chief architects of meaning and give the text its collective ritual nature, while his original voice is the voice of a personal lament. The first line, "BEFORE YOU, my mother Idoto, / Naked I stand," thrusts the reader into the sacred Igbo cosmological world where the river goddess Idoto is an archetype of the mother, as well as a spiritual tribunal. The posture of the prodigal is "naked" and "barefoot," leaning on an oilbean tree, and expresses the vulnerability of his body to the power of God, but the oilbean tree itself has mythic, oracular meaning, as a place to consult. The use of synecdoche in the poem is seen, for example, in Okigbo's statement that he who waits "Lost in your legend / Under your power wait I," meaning that the poet waits in a part of the whole, namely his legend. The "watchword at heavensgate" reminds us of the boundary between the worlds of life and death, and perhaps that in order to enter a mythic realm, one must have a password that is known by the initiates. This mythic framework gives what might otherwise be an account of the author's life and experiences the quality of a universal spiritual journey from the "exile" of this world to the "return" of God. But from the point of view of memory theory, the invocation

of Idoto also is a form of cultural memory. The river goddess is a spring of collective memory that carries the memory of ancestral beliefs, communal values, and indigenous spirituality. In accordance with Halbwachs' idea of collective memory and Assmann's idea of cultural memory, the speaker's return to the place of Idoto becomes a mythic return to an archetypal source as well as a mnemonic return to a remembered cultural heritage. The poem is a recollection of an indigenous god that is tightly connected to Igbo cosmology, which helps to create a sense of community and protect the transmission of cultural knowledge. Instead of an ornamental reference to idoto, the poet would have a poem that is only a confession if he had not included it.

With “Lustra”, the concept of purification and renewal is presented in mythic images in Okigbo. The poem is inspired by parts of Igbo ritual practices, and the universal mythic theme of a trip to the place of purification leading to spiritual cleansing. These stanzas repeat a line or a repeated line, “So would I to the hills again / so would I to where springs the fountain,” rhyming like a chant, and even sounding like a ritual incantation. This repetition highlights the speaker's hopes that he once more will be in a place of renewal and spiritual restoration.

The “fountain” is a symbol for life, cleansing and regeneration. The fountain symbolizes a fountain of spiritual renewal, similar to that mentioned in “The Passage” of Idoto. But the journey in “Lustra” is different from “The Passage,” which the speaker undertakes to go to a god, a religious experience; rather, in the context of this poem, it is a more personal and individual experience. The speaker goes in search of newness, renewal, alone.

The subsequent expression, ‘body and soul / whitewashed in the moondew’ is another elaboration on the theme of purification by Okigbo. The term “whitewashed” implies both cleansing and purification, while “moondew” means freshness, purity, and spiritual transformation. Meanwhile, the word “whitewashed” can also denote washing the surface clean

or concealing something beneath the surface. This means that the process of purification goes beyond the mere elimination of things that are no longer important, and that one's past experiences live under one's newfound knowledge. In these images, Okigbo shows a process of purification as a spiritual quest and as a process of personal transformation.

The moon dew, unlike normal water, is part of the nighttime mythic realm, where the logic of the day is overpowered. The ending of the poem with the "new-laid egg" and the "white hen at mid-term" both serve as powerful mythic symbols: the egg is a symbol of potential, of a primordial cosmos, of a sacrificial offering, and the white hen is a symbol that frequently occurs in Igbo divination and appeasement rituals. In Okigbo's presentation of these images, without any explicit gloss, he hopes for associative resonance, rather than a didactic explanation to emerge from the mythic framework. These ritual images serve as a vehicle of cultural memory at the same time. The fountain, egg and white hen are all systems of knowledge that have been passed on through ritual and oral transmission. In the symbols of the poem, the poem is a space in which collective memories of purification, sacrifice and renewal are encoded and re-activated. In this way, the poem can be seen as a prime example of Assmann's theory that culture, and hence cultural memory, is maintained through symbols that persist after the experiences that gave rise to them. The mythic journey is thus an archetypal quest as well as a reconstruction of the recalled cultural practices that are part of the community's consciousness.

The mythic images in *Distances* evoke the funerary and initiatory aspects of the imagery of the cult of the dead and the journey of the soul in Igbo eschatology. The "horizontal stone" is a mythic metonym that designates the grave or the sacrificial altar, where the line between material and immaterial, flesh and ghost, becomes blurred in the first line, "FROM FLESH into phantom on the horizontal stone. The speaker declares that he/she was "the only one" who was present for the homecoming: a contradiction because homecoming generally means that the

community recognizes the event; this sense of loneliness and lack of community is the hallmark of a mythic hero's descent into the underworld. The 'inflorescence of the white chamber' conjures up both the womb and the tomb, the two mythic spaces of transformation in which identity is unmade and remade. In the middle of all that laughter, the dream came, and Okigbo writes, "paddled me home through some dark labyrinth, / from laughter to the dream," alluding to the Cretan mythology but also the Igbo belief that the spirit must traverse dangerous woods on its way to the ancestral land. The "incarnate voice of the dream" is a mythic guide or *chi* (personal spirit) that speaks to the speaker as his/her chief acolyte, an underling who serves the ritual. The ant-hill, where they were going back, is very significant because it is a place where the earth goddess, *Ala*, lives, and is a gateway to the underworld in Igbo mythology. In these multi-layered mythic images, Okigbo creates a cosmos where death is not the end, but the beginning, and the poet-priest is a privileged witness in the in-between space. From a memory perspective, the poem also represents the process of re-forming cultural memory in symbolic memory. The ancestral realm serves as a place of collective memory that allows the living to reunite with the inherited knowledge of mortality, continuity, and belonging. The dream travel is not only a mythic descent, but also a mnemonic process which recovers forgotten or suppressed cultural meanings. As memory has been theorized, then, remembering is not about reproducing the past, but continually building up the past with narratives and symbols. As a result, "Distances" makes memory a living experience of past consciousness of the people.

Although less cohesive in its current state, "Elegy for Alto" uses the mythic figures of the musician-sacrifice, which originated in the Orpheus tradition and the Igbo court musician, to depict the musician. Neither the soprano's purity nor the bass's depth, the "alto" is a mythic symbol that provides a connection of sorts between heaven and earth. The "horns" and "drums" are seen as mythic instruments; they are as powerful as the Igbo "ekwe" and "ogene" in their ability to call forth spirits and to modify time, as Okigbo does here. The image of the horn

"howling goodbye" is a personification of this instrument as a living being, the "howling" as a death wail, which is the basis for a mourning ritual. The "eagles" mentioned in the later parts of the poem act as mythic entities of war and divine justice, and are connected to both Roman associations of the eagle (aquilae) with chieftaincy and with spiritual power and Igbo connections with the eagle (ugo) to chieftaincy and spiritual power. In the poem, Okigbo writes, "THE EAGLES have come again, / The eagles rain down on us," in which the word "rain" changes the meaning of celestial birds to a meteorological disaster, thus leading the readers into a fusion of natural and mythical causes. The latter poem, "Hurrah for Thunder," is a self-portrait in which the poet identifies himself as "town-crier / together with my iron bell," a character who is akin to the *okwa*, the village crier, whose role is to embody the ancestors and proclaim communal truth. At the same time, the elegiac tone of the poem takes on the role of a cultural memory. In remembering the musician, one person's identity is lost, and it becomes a symbolic representation of communal loss. The poem is a poetic memory that holds the experiences of bereavement, heroism, and sacrifice in a collective memory. Memory theorists in this regard can be said to be a cultural archive, for individual lives are brought into the bigger stories of collective memory. The poem thus illustrates the intermingling of myth and memory and the way in which acts of poetic remembrance can help to sustain cultural identity. In all five poems, not only does the imagery fill in the background but also shapes the logic, emotional and spiritual framing of meaning.

In "Hurrah for Thunder," the elephantemantic is used in a parabolic and cautionary way because this is a mythic symbol of fallen power. The elephant is introduced as 'tetrarch of the jungle'—'tetrarch' (ruler of a fourth part) becomes another colonial term for the animal: it is surprising to find the word in the title and the animal's title given in colonial language. The canopies of trees are likened to the wings of a bird and the trunk to a hand, as Okigbo exaggerates the action of the trunk with "a wave of the hand," and he also takes two other

images from the agricultural and military sphere and combines them: four mortar legs combine the pounding of yams and the pounding of earth. The 'mythic paradox' in the refrain 'Alas! the elephant has fallen – / Hurrah for thunder' is an alternate expression of thunder, which according to Igbo cosmology is normally a sign of divine judgment and is associated with Amadioha, a God of the thunder, which is now an uncertain, possibly ironic, celebration. After killing their prey, the hunters "talk about pumpkins" and perform a sacred pattern of desecration, whereby the sacred element is annihilated by the utilitarian calculation. In his closing self-exhortation, "If I don't learn to shut my mouth / I'll soon go to hell, / I, Okigbo, town-crier / together with my iron bell," Okigbo's persona as a herald—who is charged with speaking the truth, even at his own risk—coalesces with an awareness of his own peril. The "iron bell" evokes the "ogene" (iron bell) used in the Igbo sacred rituals, and the poet's naming of himself as his own "Okigbo" is clearly cutting away the distance between mythic voice and historical person, and inviting the reader to hear his voice as the mythic object for future interpretation. The role of the town-crier is symbolic of cultural memory in African society, in addition to its archetypal significance. It is customary for the town-crier to be a repository of the community's knowledge and to keep it alive and pass it on from generation to generation. For Okigbo, the role is appropriated to make the poet the "guardian of collective remembrance. The poem becomes a cultural story that transcends social fear, political conflicts, and communal experiences. The poem thus illustrates the nature of memory as a mechanism for remembering as well as a practice of socializing the historical memory in the symbolic act.

In all the poems chosen, Okigbo succeeds in building structural coherence through the repetition of some of the symbols used, which act as leitmotifs. These images are repeated in various settings and are overloaded with meanings that are not only from one poem to the next but also within them. In the novel *The Passage*, for example, it's more than a local river goddess that Idoto is. In her presence, kneeling before her – "before you, mother Idoto, / naked I stand"

– she emerges as a motif of origin, spiritual power and memory of the ancestors. In “Lustra,” the water imagery that comes with Idoto returns in the speaker's progression toward “where springs the fountain” – the idea of search for purification/renewal is still present. The symbols are found in various shapes, but both water bodies symbolize return, purification, and reconnection to primitive sources.

Likewise, the ant-hill is a motif that can be spotted in Okigbo's poetry as a link that joins the living and the dead worlds. The image is used in “Distances” to aid in a poem's exploration of memory and spiritual journeying; to remind of the space of indigenous culture, and inherited knowledge. The symbol isn't significant because it is used only once, but because it has been used over and over again, to remind the reader of beginnings, tradition and the enduring presence of ancestors.

The egg is yet another important leitmotif. In much of Africa, the egg is a symbol that is traditionally linked to potentialities, creation and birth, and in Okigbo's poetry the egg is often a symbol of fragility and potential change. This symbolism is in its two-fold nature; it's a sign of weakness and also its inventive potential. It is a recurring theme throughout the poems chosen, and evokes ideas of emergence, rebirth, and renewal.

Similarly, in “Hurrah for Thunder,” the elephant is a recurring symbol that has a significance that goes beyond what is evident in the story itself. The fallen elephant symbolizes the end of authority, the fall of the community's stability, and the weakness of once strong institutions. The elephant plays an important role in African symbolic cultures and is a symbol of strength and leadership; thus, the destruction of the elephant becomes symbolic. The image becomes a larger reflection of themes of power, mortality, and change in history; thus a political event becomes a political moment.

All of these repeated images form a web of associations that tie the poems together and become the basis for a myth. The fountain, idoto, and the origin have been represented as origin and renewal; the ant-hill is the representation of the continuity of the ancestors; the egg is the symbol for creation and transformation; the elephant is the symbol for power and historical destiny. These symbols, as they reoccur and take on meaning and importance, serve as leitmotifs that hold together Okigbo's poetic vision without losing the memory of the culture in the whole collection.

4.1.2 Memory as a Thematic and Structural Element in the Selected Poems

Memory is wound and architecture in “The Passage” and it brings the speaker into a ritualized posture of return as it simultaneously shapes the trajectory of the poem from petition to illumination. It's like a wound, because the memory of something that was and is painful and consciousness of a separation from spiritual origins and ancestral belonging. Homecoming isn't presented as a happy return to Idoto, but rather as a time of loss, estrangement, and guilt. He says he's a “prodigal,” which means he's gone astray from the source of his identity and has to deal with the consequences of the distance. Thus, memory hurts, reminding him of the loss of his former intimacy with the Divine, his bond with the indigenous cultures and spiritualities, and the cultural disintegration that is the product of colonial modernity. Memory is also architecture, as the speaker's sense of himself and of his path back to the sacred is made possible by the architecture of memory. The palpable memory of Idoto provides the basis for the ritualistic journey of the poem and brings the speaker from alienation to spiritual recognition.

In the first speech to Idoto: “BEFORE YOU, my mother Idoto”, the goddess is not in person but in the memory of the speaker and his/her culture. The return is illustrative of Maurice Halbwachs' thesis that memory is socially framed, because Idoto is not just a personal memory, but a part of the collective memory of individuals who make up the Igbo cultural community.

The word “prodigal” evokes the biblical story of the lost son who comes back to a forgiving father, but the term is Africanized by the fact that the prodigal is not presented to a forgiving father, but a maternal god whose “weary presence” is one of disappointment, not celebration. Line “Lost in your legend” means that the memory of Idoto's mythic past is a labyrinth he can never escape from – he is remembered and he remembers: he is a part of the mnemonic process and a part that is being processed. The repetitive use of “THE ROBBERS” and “THE EAGLES” in the poem's choral interjections is similar to the way in which traumatic memory intrudes into a person's consciousness, breaking into a lyrical meditation in the middle of an historical violence without warning: the Nigerian political crises of the 1960s. The key mnemonic word is ‘again’ in Okigbo's poem, THE EAGLES have come again, / The eagles rain down on us: memory here is not of one, but of a recurrence of violence, which implies that the speaker knows this violence because he has experienced it before and will experience it again. The recurring pattern is in line with the idea of implicit collective memory developed by Astrid Erll, from which inherited patterns of perception lead to a redoing of the present understanding in the recurrent cultural remembering. The final appeal of the poem is the appeal to remember, to be free from bondage, to be the prodigal; to be the ultimate prayer of the ram to the tether, this is not to be trapped by memory but to choose one's spiritual family. In this way, memory becomes an instrument of cultural reconstruction and is a way of maintaining the identity of the indigenous people in the context of the community's memory.

The act of remembering in ‘Lustra’ is therapeutic – it cleanses the mind of the hills and fountain that have been so traumatic. The title of the poem itself has its origin in the Latin word *lustratio* (purification through sacrifice) and is set in a lyrical Igbo context. Memory is presented as spatial, directional: the hills are not only geographically in Nigeria but in a remembered landscape, which the speaker can journey back to as he or she pleases. The remembered landscape is a space of cultural memory, binding the people that remember it to meanings, as

Jan Assmann puts it, symbolically attached to geographical space. The verb "draw from" suggests that memory is a well or a spring of "replenishment" not a place where it is depleted or exhausted; this is because Okigbo writes "there to draw from and to hilltop clamber". The image "body and soul / whitewashed in the moondew" is a reference to recall as a solvent, or to memory as a cleaning fluid, to cleanse the grime of present experience, and hence the remembered moondew, a remembered natural phenomenon, is a solvent. The "mist" the speaker wants out of his eye isn't just the physical case of not seeing things clearly, it's the forgetting that is like a cataract over the vision—the forgetting which is the forgetting of memory. The final images of the "new-laid egg" and the "white hen at midterm" are objects of associative memory, i.e. a mnemonic trigger, which is an object that contains memory of sacrifice, fertility and threshold moments. These symbols also help to show how cultural memory is carried on through symbolic creation which transcends any direct experience and still carries forward the communal values from one generation to another. Memory in "Lustra" is not a traumatic repetition like that of "The Passage," but is linear and directed: the speaker remembers the hills that he wants to get back to, and he goes back to the hills for healing. This "teleological" memory structure determines the brevity and clearness of the poem; there is no labyrinth here, just the straight line of memory that brings up purification. Memory in this way becomes not only an individual but collective means of renewal.

Memory in "Distances" takes on an initiatory and oracular role, being the voice of the solo witness and becoming the priesthood of memory. The paradoxical "my homecoming" is repeated twice, with the single statement for both times following, "I was the only witness; no community validates or shares the memory. In the inflorescence of the white chamber a voice / from very far away chanted, and the chamber descanted, that voice, a voice from very far away, is a memory trace, an echo of something heard in a previous existence. This far-away sound is a memory that's not just a recollection, a memory that is being reconstructed, a past

that is always being recounted symbolically. Memory is mapped onto the journey of the body, as the poem's central action, "paddled me home through some dark labyrinth, / from laughter to the dream," is a reminder of the rhythmic stroke of memory propelling the speaker forward in the poem, through the "dark labyrinth" where forgetting and remembering struggle. The speaker, to the "incarnate voice of the dream": "miner into my solitude," uses memory as an act of excavation, proceeding through multiple layers of forgetfulness, an act of digging to expose the ore of authentic experience. The repetition of ritual is expressed in the command, "you will go, with me as your chief acolyte, again into the ant-hill": memory is not passive but active, being the re-performance of the ritual, and it involves the participation of an acolyte (the voice) and a chief celebrant (the poet). The ant-hill, as a mnemonic site, remembers the work of the earth and the constant construction and reconstruction of what is perhaps the most enduring and ever-changing site on earth—human society. It also serves as a place of symbolic memory, a place to store memory that is not only retained across generations but also across the collective community. The final "I was the sole witness to my homecoming" is Okigbo's reminder that the deepest of the memories belong to the private soul; they are what the private eye bears witness to, and only the power of memory can prove it. Even such private memories, however, are linked to larger cultural forms which provide meanings.

As with memory, "Elegy for Alto" uses memory to its musical advantage, with the fragmented structure of the poem reflecting the incompleteness of remembered experience. The word "elegy" in the title reminds us of the use of memory in poetry, and "alto" designates the voice part in choral polyphony that carries the melody, not the highest, not the lowest, but the voice part in the middle. In the line "Strains of pressed orange leaves on pages / Bleach of the light of years held in leather", the preserved leaves are organic traces that are "bleached" by the years' light, the light that is both the means of preservation and fading. The image fits well with the concept of cultural artifacts in memory theory that are external repositories of remembrance

that enable communities to maintain identity across time. The "leather" of bookbindings evokes the medieval codex: Memory needs to be written onto the surface to endure, but at the same time the very leather that guards, nonetheless, restricts. For we are listening in cornfields / Among the windplayers, where the cornfields and windplayers bring pastoral memory, a pre-colonial Nigeria where open spaces and elemental music prevail. But the windplayers are not visible, and only remembered in terms of the sound they make, and hearing is an act of re-remembering of invisible presences. The drum accompaniment of the poem (parenthetically signified) serves as an example of a mnemonic technology: genealogies, histories and proverbs are encoded in specific drum rhythms in Igbo culture and the drum becomes an archive of collective memory. This is in line with Assmann's concept of cultural memory being preserved through symbolic (and performative) imprints that carry the collective memory, transcending the boundaries of the living generation. The "old lovely fragment" the loft organ players rehearse is specifically incomplete, a fragment, because memory is never "whole"; it is not the "original event" but only the broken fragment or remaining parts of it. What Okigbo is saying is that the power of memory is that despite its incompleteness, it persists, and the organists play the fragment because they have not forgotten the rest, but the rest is unreachable, and the fragment must suffice.

"Hurrah for Thunder" is a political warning in which the remembered majesty of the elephant becomes a yardstick to the current state of decline. The poem begins with a question, **WHATEVER** happened to the elephant? which is a mnemonic question - asking the listener to go back to their memory and remember what was once glorious about the elephant. In response, Okigbo draws on his recollections of the elephant as "tetrarch of the jungle" as a reminder of the colonial administrative nomenclature, while simultaneously recalling and reflecting on the elephant in the jungle. You can see that the description of the elephant's strength: With a wave of the hand / He could pull four trees to the ground uses a hyperbole; and that hyperbole is a

mnemonic device, an exaggeration to make the realism of the elephant's absence vivid. This reference to the grass being forbidden to be there (probably a reference to the grasshopper) personifies the elephant's feet as legislators, which makes the following "Alas! the elephant has fallen" devastating because the memory is so vivid. The hunters who "talk about pumpkins" after killing the elephant are playing a politics of forgetting: the feeling of the elephant is lost in their memory; the killing is a more important focus; the utility of the killing is more important than the feeling; the distribution of the killing is more important than the feeling. So thunder, Okigbo implores, the warning is Okigbo's mnemonic injunction – do not forget to remember divine justice. Thunder, as voice of Amadioha, recalls what the humans fail to remember, and the humans who don't remember thunder will bring thunder's memory to them. In the last two lines of the poem, the poet places himself in the role of the town-crier, who is the professional caller to memory who calls his community to remembrance even if they do not want to. As a poet, then, his role is to keep the cultural memory alive; the job of keeping the people's memory alive, of preserving the historical memory, to be passed on against the risk of forgetting. It does not heal or initiate but testifies to what is missing, identifies the cause of the loss, and predicts that forgetting will bring about repetition. The poem thus illustrates the socially responsible nature of remembering instead of its being a solely personal action.

In all five poems, memory is the means of structuring the temporal organization of the poems: each one deals with past (the mythic or personal event remembered), present (the process of remembering), and future (the change that remembering brings about or threatens) moments. In terms of content, memory is presented in four different modes: in the cyclical violence of "The Passage", in the cleansing journey of "Lustra", in the solitude of the witnessing of "Distances", in the fragments and rehearsals of "Elegy for Alto," or in the political caution of "Hurrah for Thunder. From a cultural and collective memory perspective, the different expressions of memory reflect the fact that memory in Okigbo's poetry is not only personal,

but also collective, that is, communal. As in collective memory as described by Maurice Halbwachs, the experiences that are remembered in the poems are influenced by cultural frameworks that are shared, rather than personal experiences. Envoicing God and goddesses of the land, sacred places, ancestral voices, music, and community symbols all pertain to the concept of cultural memory, as defined by Jan Assmann, that is, the remembering and passing on of knowledge from society to society, by the use of symbols and images that transcend the lives of any one generation. Likewise, the poems are filled with images and narrative patterns, which are not always mentioned, but are present in the poems and have continued to influence their perception through the generations. Memory is therefore not something that merely stores up the past, but is an ongoing process of reconstruction, in which cultural identity is shaped. The poems are literary archives that carry the memories of the communities and their spiritual traditions, as well as their historical experiences, and then reinterpret them as they relate to the current realities. In this way, Okigbo brings poetry to become a tool of cultural memory, a space where the memory of the individual, the collective, and the historical come together. Instead, Okigbo does not make memory the noontide of the past, a simple remembrance of the old days, but memory that is hard, painful, fractured, and inescapable. In Okigbo's poetic world, to be human is to be a remembering being and to not remember is to not be human! The poet's role is thus not to create new realities, but to remain faithful to old ones that will be able to assess and change the current reality.

4.1.3 Interaction of Myth and Memory and Its Contribution to the Poetic Vision and Cultural Significance of the Selected Poems

In "The Passage", myth and memory combine to create a poetic image of a postcolonial Nigerian identity in a state of perpetual negotiation between its bonds to the past and an awareness of the rupture. The timeless structure is provided by myth, the oilbean by Idoto, the heavensgate by the oilbean, the memory by the robbers, the eagles, the politicians and the "iron

dance of mortars. Mythic narrative is the "legend" that Okigbo refers to, and the historical present is the "waiting" that is an integral part of the poem; from a mythic perspective, the "wait" is history and the tension between the two is the source of the poem's conflict—the speaker has no way to escape the mythic frame because his identity is defined within it, but the historical frame cannot explain the particular violence of Nigerian political life. Historical trauma: interruptions of choral "THE ROBBERS" and "THE EAGLES" interrupt the mythic invocation of Idoto like historical trauma interrupting religious devotion; the interaction is not harmonious, but rather discordant, and the result is a poetic vision of irreconcilable demands. "Earth, unbind me" is an appeal for the twin bondage by the goddess and history; by the goddess as a myth, and by history as a memory. But the plea is also a prayer, as only in the complete embrace of both captivities can the speaker attain his "prodigal" status and thereby give meaning to his return. Culturally, this comes into significance by holding up traditions and modernity, Igbo cosmology and postcolonial reality. Although Okigbo is not saying that we need to give up on the myth for memory, or memory for myth, he is dramatizing how they are necessary and how they torture each other. It was a vision that would not ease the plight of a Nigerian audience in the 1960s in the midst of civil war and political turmoil, but it was a language commensurate with that plight.

In 'Lustra', myth and memory merge to bring about a vision of purification as a return to the original wholeness, in which mythic elements of purification (fountain, hills, moondew) are provoked by the act of memory. The shortness of the poem (just fourteen lines) is important, as the poem is neither a myth nor a memory that needs an elaborate elaboration, but a form of lyrical economy of gesture. In the poem "body and soul / whitewashed in the moondew," Okigbo's whitewashed is the point of intersection of mythic (moondew, the sacred substance) and memory (the speaker remembers that he or she was whitewashed before, or remembers the act of whitewashing itself). We can hear the "So would I" as a formula of the myth, as in "So

shall it be written," and as a call to memory, bringing back a wish of the past and reigniting it now. The "new-laid egg", a reference to the potential and origin, is remembered (a new egg has just been laid), and the "white hen at midterm", a mnemonic reference to time, is in existence (at the middle point between the beginning and the end). In this interaction, the poetics of temporality are not linear, but cyclical: from the past to the future, the speaker isn't going anywhere, but from contamination to purification, from mist to clarity, and this is possible at any time when memory awakes to catch up with myth.

Culturally, what is important about this vision is that it provided ritual resources for healing from spiritual disorientation. In contrast to the torment of myth and memory in "The Passage," "Lustra" proposes that the interplay of the two can be a healing one. In a Nigeria today fastly secularizing and westernizing, "Lustra", like every other work in this series, provides a way of returning, but not reactionary (not turning away from the present) but restorative (taking the present back to the perennial). The poem's brevity also implies that purification is quick and that the instant between memory and myth is the moment that the mist dissipates and one sees.

In *Distances*, the encounter between myth and memory results in a poetic vision of the afterlife, not as a theological teaching, but as an experience, filtered through the two prisms of mythic geography and personal memory. The beginning "FROM FLESH into phantom on the horizontal stone" merges into one moment of transformation the aspects of mythic (the stone as altar or grave) and mnemonic (the speaker recalls the transition). This encounter is a private one, as it is the sole witness to my homecoming: no community has the myth, no collective memory has made the experience legitimate. The birthday of the earth, paddled me home, Okigbo writes; birthday is a mnemonic marker, a date or an anniversary, earth is mythic, the planet as goddess, as mother. The paddle which propels the speaker through the "dark labyrinth" is at the same time the mythic oar of Charon or the Igbo ferryman of the dead, and

the mnemonic movement of "recalling" each turn of the labyrinth, each previous decision that came to this one. The most interactive image in the poem is the "ant-hill," a structure of labor built over time that holds the memory of all the grains of earth that have been moved. The speaker's reference to the 'incarnate voice of the dream' as 'miner into my solitude' implies that the voice is mining the mnemonic of his or her personal memory to uncover the mythic archetypes that lie beneath. The cultural importance of this vision is both profound and significant: Okigbo is a poetics of death; neither the Christian resurrection nor the materialist extinction but a third way in which the dead remember themselves home. This echoes traditions of veneration of ancestors in which living and dead exist side by side in each other's memory for Igbo readers. "Distances" is a sophisticated literary expression of the idea that death is a journey, not an end, and that the journey can be made possible through the power of mythic memory, for a wider African readership. The poem's emphasis on the speaker's personal revelation also challenges communal norms, implying that the intensity of a spiritual experience is more important than what is generally accepted within the community.

The mixing of myth and memory—the vision of art as the space that holds cultural fragments against the tide of forgetfulness—is the theme of "Elegy for Alto". The mythic elements, the "loft organ," the "windplayers," the "horn" pawing the air, the "eagles"—are borrowed from a variety of traditions (Christian liturgical, pastoral classical, Igbo ceremonial), and form a mythic bricolage that reflects the disarticulated nature of postcolonial cultural memory. In the pressed leaves—memory of a particular tree, a particular day—the myth and memory interact; the leaves become mythic. In the leather—the codex, the book as sacred object—the memory becomes mythic. The "old lovely fragment" rehearsed by the players of the organ is a definite remnant, both mythological – the "lovely" implies aesthetic or sacred value – and mnemonic – "fragment" means something that has been forgotten. For we are listening in cornfields / Among the windplayers" is a space that exists simultaneously—real and visionary—that is

created by the interaction of the cornfields (memory of agricultural Nigeria) and the windplayers (mythic musicians who cannot be seen but only heard). The drum accompaniment in the poem is marked parenthetically and serves as the rhythmic base and foundation, in which mythic time, as defined by the drum's patterns as containing eternal truths, and mnemonic time, defined by the drum's patterns as containing specific histories, merge. The cultural relevance of this vision is the premise that the artist must play an essential role in the survival of the culture. The poet-musician saves where the politicians and soldiers have destroyed; the artist makes history again. The "elegy" form itself is the meeting of the two aspects of the convention – myth (the convention of lament for the dead) and memory (the specific dead being mourned), and Okigbo, by selecting this form, is making himself one with the long tradition of the poets as priests who sing the dead into the afterlife. In the face of the devastation of the Biafran War, for Nigerian culture in the 1960s, this vision was not just aesthetic, but moral—preserving bits and pieces of a culture was as much a military act as it was one of cultural rescue. “Elegy for Alto” one can then read as a heresy of sorts, a manifesto of the artist as archivist of mythic memory.

In "Hurrah for Thunder", the myth and the memory bring a satirical and prophetic picture of political betrayal: the mythic greatness of the past (the elephant as tetrarch) is remembered only to reveal the squalor of the present (the hunters who divide the meat, the politicians who make empty promises). In "WHATEVER happened to the elephant," Okigbo poses a riddle that requires the reader to be both mythic and collective—a mythic reader who has knowledge of the elephant as a symbol, and a collective reader who has a memory for the elephant this poem remembers. The description of elephant power, "His four mortar legs pounded the earth," plays with the mythic (the elephant as cosmic force), the mnemonic (mortars are agricultural tools, remembered from village life), and the political (mortars are also weapons, remembered from

civil war). The most complex interaction is the one between “alas” (mnemonic of mourning) and “hurrah for thunder” (mnemonic of celebration).

One might expect that an event such as the loss of power could be recalled as a tragedy (the elephant's death) or a comedy (the hunters' feast). This is an ironic oscillation between sadness and joy: the loss of power is remembered as tragedy (the death of the elephant) or comedy (the feast of the hunters). The warning “If they share the meat let them remember thunder” is a call to mind the myth that, as a form of judgment, will affect the political act of distribution. The proverbs "The eye that looks down will surely see the nose; / The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose" recall the oral memory of the Igbo and bring together a lot of information from ancestors. This is accomplished by the astonishing final lines of the poem, 'If I don't learn to shut my mouth / I'll soon go to hell, / I, Okigbo, town-crier / together with my iron bell', which fuse the role of the town-crier (sacred herald who tells ancestral truths) with the naming act of the poet himself, 'I, Okigbo'. The cultural importance of this interaction is enormous: Okigbo's performance of self as the living embodiment of the mythic crier, and his poem as the ‘iron bell’ which can be noiseless. This was a perilous and brave one for a Nigerian audience in the midst of military rule. The poem is satirical; there are promises made by politicians, and the basket that can't be full. The poem holds power to account in mythic memory, suggesting that if they forget the majesty of the elephant, they fall.

In the five poems, the relationship of myth and memory plays a part in Okigbo's overall poetic vision of the poet as *memoria dei*, gods' memory and memory of the gods made audible. This vision is both traditional (Christian, classical and modern images, as well as Igbo) and not traditional (rejecting myth for secular rationality). Rather than that, Okigbo is an artist who works in a third space, the 'African modernism' in which myth and memory are not at odds, but one and the same. Such vision is not only literary in meaning but also a part of the postcolonial

theory and practice. The issue of remembering a history and adopting a myth for a culture arising from colonialism is not only relevant, but also controversial. Okigbo is not ready to forget Africa's mythology, as demanded by the colonizers, nor is he ready to remember only one "purified" version of tradition, demanded by the nationalists. His poems evoke a plurality of myths, often conflicting, and his memory is personal, fallible, fragmented, not collective memory like the official memory, but a solitary memory like that of the witnessing poet. This is his gift to African letters: a poetics full of interaction between myth and memory, not leading to certainties but to questions with which to live and to die. The last objective suffers from a biographical resonance that no analysis can completely elide, but which must be respected by every reading of it; that is, it has a resonance that is given by the fact that Okigbo himself died in the fight for the independence of Biafra in 1967.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The final chapter of the study offers a comprehensive summary of the entire research, outlining key findings, analyses, and conclusions tied to the research problem. It is designed to address the research questions introduced in the first chapter. To achieve this, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first briefly reviews the results from the empirical investigation presented in chapter four. The second section outlines the primary conclusions and discusses both the theoretical and practical implications of the study. Finally, the third part identifies the research's limitations and suggests potential avenues for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study opted to look at the interaction of myth and memory in Christopher Okigbo's selected poems: *The Passage*, *Lustra*, *Distances*, *Elegy for Alto* and *Hurrah for Thunder*. Based on the text analysis in chapter 4 and following the text with a close reading approach, the research obtained the following salient findings:

One important aspect of the architectonic allure of mythic imagery is that it is a defining feature of meaning throughout Okigbo's chosen poems. Myth does not work as embellishment (allusion) but as the framework of the cosmos in which one's personal experience becomes transformed into archetypal drama. The study shows that oilbean (Idoto), ant-hill, egg, elephant, and thunder are recurring mythic symbols which give coherence to the structure and provide ambiguity in interpretation. The term "The Passage" evokes the personal lament into a collective ritual in invoking Idoto. In "Lustra," the path towards purification is a combination of both Igbo rites and classical traditions. Death in "Distances" is not an end, but rather a process, through funerary and initiating imagery. In *Elegy for Alto*, "the figure of the musician-sacrifice plays a role between heaven and earth. With the fallen elephant as a warning through

desecration, as in "Hurrah for Thunder. As a consequence, the logical, emotional, and spiritual architecture of meaning throughout the corpus is determined by mythic imagery.

Second, the theme of memory is wound and mechanism itself in the five poems. The study shows memory in five modes – traumatic memory in *The Passage*, in which a cyclical violence breaks out in lyrical meditation; therapeutic memory in *Lustra*, in which the memory of the hills and fountain is a healing force; initiatory memory in *Distances*, in which the memory of the witness can become the memory of the priest; archival memory in *Elegy for Alto*, in which fragments and rehearsals hold against forgetting; prophetic memory in *Hurrah for Thunder*, in which the remembered past of the elephant's majesty is the measure of the present political decline. In terms of structure, memory creates a temporal organization of the individual poems, which oscillates between past (the mythic/personal event remembered), present (the act of remembering) and future (the transformative action of remembering or the one it promises/threatens to bring). Memory is not just a vague recall of things past; it is painful, incomplete, and irresistible. It is not a simple remembrance of things past, but a refusal to forget.

Thirdly, the study demonstrates that myth and memory have a unique relationship that gives rise to Okigbo's ultimate poetic vision of the poet as *memoria dei*, the memory of the gods and the gods' memory of humanity that is made audible. In "*The Passage*", myth and memory collide in a vision of a postcolonial Nigerian identity that is defined by an ongoing negotiation between past commitments and ruptures that never takes sides between tradition and modernity. Their interaction in "*Lustra*" results in purification – in the recovery of original wholeness, mythic archetypes are activated by the act of memory. Interaction in "*Distances*" generates a poetics of death, a remembering of oneself at home, neither resurrection of the Christian god nor extinction of the materialist god. In *Elegy for Alto*, the play of interaction

generates the image of art as a space through which fragments of culture are kept alive in the face of the entropy of forgetting. The interaction in "Hurrah for Thunder" results in a satirical and prophetic theology, in which justice actively remembers mythic order, which is applied to the failure of the past.

Fourth, the study reveals Okigbo's use of different figurative devices in the process of achieving the integration of myth and memory. Among them are synecdoche (reduction to a fragment, which is absorbed into the mythic story: the speaker reduced to a fragment), anaphora (repetition of the phrase "So would I", mimicking ritual chant), paradox ("whitewashed" both cleansing and concealment), personification (the horn pawing and acting as if it was a living beast), hyperbole (the elephant pulling four trees to the ground), and irony (the ambiguous "Hurrah for thunder"). The poet also uses proverbial language, choral interjections, and material imagery (pressed leaves, leather bindings, iron bells) to make the invisible visible: to make the processes of mythic memory visible. Figurative language is not then ornamental but rather a part of meaning, allowing the poems to sustain some incompatibility.

With regard to the overall result, the results of this study have affirmed that the association of myth and memory in the selected poems of Okigbo is historically situated, culturally specific, and aesthetically sophisticated. Okigbo's incorporation of the imagery of the Igbo world into Christian, classical, and modern imagery takes him to a third space that is sometimes referred to as African modernism, and in which myth and memory are not antithetical but complementary. The poet rejects the impositions of the colonial to forget indigenous myth and the nationalists to remember only one version of tradition that has been purged of the "mischief" of the colonized. His poems recall several, sometimes conflicting myths; his memory is not a collective memory; it is a fragmentary, fallible, and personal memory, that of the witnessing poet.

5.2 Conclusion

The importance of the interplay between myth and memory in the selected poems of Christopher Okigbo is not simply a stylistic tool but the organ of the meaning, themes, and culture. Myth and memory are both forces that interrelate and build Okigbo's poetic world, and both are never just personal and political; they are always already mythical and remembered.

The study, through analysis of “The Passage”, “Lustra”, “Distances”, “Elegy for Alto” and “Hurrah for Thunder” according to the three objectives, arrives at a conclusion that the images of the myths shape the meaning; that they offer a cosmological frame within which personal experiences are elevated to an archetypal drama; that they create structural coherence in the collection through repetition of images; that they generate interpretive ambiguity, which allows for endless hermeneutic engagement; and that they locate contemporary Nigerian experience in the time of the myths, giving historical trauma the dignity of sacred narrative. Memory is both a thematic and structural force, creating the temporal architecture of the poems and manifesting in traumatic, therapeutic, initiatory, archival and prophetic modes. The interaction of myth and memory is part of a poetic vision of the poet as “one who sings the dead alive,” as one who holds power to account for remembering what the powerful wish to forget.

The study also notes that “Okigbo's poetic achievement is his inability to bring the tension between myth and memory to a neat synthesis. Rather, he conjures up the necessity of their togetherness and the torment of their togetherness. The voice of these poems is held by the goddess both in myth and by history in memory; it is only in a total embrace of both captivities that the prodigal return can make any sense. The vision is neither consolation to have a ready-made answer nor a language to fit the complexity of life in between worlds that cannot be brought together. In the 1960s, when Nigeria was at the brink of civil war and political turmoil, this was a brave and needed poetic posture on the part of Nigerian culture. This is a biographical

statement that cannot be expressed in words, only in a proper appreciation of the man who died in 1967 fighting for the independence of Biafra, Okigbo. The poems analysed here are more than just poems of myth and memory: they are poems of mythic remembering, poems performed by a poet who knew that to sing was to survive, to survive was to remember what the powerful wished to forget.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are made for future research:

Future research needs to include more poems by other African poets, e.g., Wole Soyinka, Kofi Awoonor, Mazisi Kunene and Birago Diop, to investigate the use of mythic images and memory organization in African poetry.

Comparative studies of Okigbo's poetry with other modernist poets, African and otherwise, should be pursued to explore the interrelationship and interaction between myth and memory within the different literary traditions and colonial experiences.

This will serve as a basis for further studies by other scholars on the link between Okigbo's use of Igbo cosmology and the wider process of postcolonial cultural nationalism, and the role the recovery of indigenous myth plays in decolonizing.

5. The poet can be studied for the maternal presence (Idoto, mother earth) and how the feminine image influences the poet's vision of return, purification, and homecoming in his poetry.

6. It is important to support interdisciplinary methods: literary studies, anthropology, oral tradition research, and memory studies, to gain deeper insights into the interactions between African oral, mythic, and mnemonic tradition and written poetry.

WORKS CITED

- Adhikari, Prodip Kumar. "Exploring Modern Theories and Functions of Myths." *International Journal of Humanities and Education Research*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2024, pp. 132–140.
- Akingbe, Niyi. "Locating the Sacred: 'Claimed' and 'Unclaimed' Spaces in John P. Clark-Bekederemo's *Remains of a Tide* and Harry Garuba's *Animist Chants and Memorials*." *English Academy Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2023, pp. 7–22.
- Akinwande, Bankole Idowu, Funmilayo Temitope Ajayi, Kate Rashida Igbafe, and Olukemi Morenike Olofinsao. "A Passionate Quest for Religious Fulfilment: The Study of Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths*." *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2024, pp. 1–18.
- Akintayo, Chinedu. "Exploring the Postcolonial Legacy in the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo." *Bulletin of Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2024, pp. 1–15.
- Akintayo, Chinedu. "Exploring the Postcolonial Legacy in the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo." *Bulletin of Language and Literature Studies*, 2024, journals.eikipub.com.
- Akporherhe, Friday, and Udi Peter Oghenerioborue. "Psychoanalysis: Self-Writings and Primordial Images in African Poetry."
- Assmann, Jan. *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Borysiuk, Iryna. "Poetry as Testimony: Reflections on War in Kateryna Kalytko's Texts." *Ukrainian Modernities*, 2025.

- Chawla, Louise. "Home Is Where You Start From: Childhood Memory in Adult Interpretations of Home." *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, 2024.
- Chukwueloka, Christian Chukwuloo. "Imagery and Symbolism in the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo." *Ansu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 5, 2021, pp. 1–12.
- Dinter, Martin T., and Charles Guérin. *Cultural Memory in Republican and Augustan Rome*. Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- Ejiodu, Michael Onyeisi. *Myth, Orality and the Modern African Poet*. Spectrum Books, 2019.
- Erll, Astrid. "The Hidden Power of Implicit Collective Memory." *Memory, Mind & Media*, vol. 1, 2022, article e14, pp. 1–12.
- Ernst, Wolfgang. "'Electrified Voices': Non-Human Agencies of Socio-Cultural Memory." *Memory in Motion*, 2025, pp. 41–60.
- Friday, Akporherhe, and Udi Peter Oghenerioborue. "Psychoanalysis: Self-Writings and Primordial Images in African Poetry." *Social Science Journal of Humanities and Islamic Studies*, n.d.
- García-Ramírez, Juan. "Prophecy and Violence in Christopher Okigbo's *Path of Thunder*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2021, pp. 85–100.
- Garuba, Harry. "Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society." *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 261–285.
- Garuba, Harry. Interview by Ahmet Sait Akçay. "Interview with Harry Garuba on Modernist African Poetry and His Collection *Animist Chants and Memorials*." *Social Dynamics*, 2024.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

- Hammoudi, ALHH. "Myth and Mythical Forms in the Poetry of Al-Sayyab and T. S. Eliot: Influence and Literary Archetypes—A Jungian Archetypal Criticism." *Journal of Basra Researches for Human Sciences*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2022, pp. 210–225.
- Heersmink, Richard. "Materialised Identities: Cultural Identity, Collective Memory, and Artifacts." *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2023, pp. 249–265.
- Jamshidi, Reza, Ghodrat Ghasemipour, et al. "Archetypal Criticism: Theories and Approaches." *Literary Arts*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2023, pp. 19–48.
- Jünke, Claudia, and Désirée Schyns. *Translating Memories of Violent Pasts: Memory Studies and Translation Studies in Dialogue*. Routledge, 2023.
- Kamalu, Ikenna, and Oyeh Otu. "Intertextuality and Mythic Resonance in Modern African Poetry." *Journal of African Literary Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2020, pp. 50–65.
- Katz, Albert N., et al. "On Poetry and the Science(s) of Meaning." *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2023.
- Kilag, O. K., et al. "The Pedagogical Potential of Poems: Integrating Poetry in English Language Teaching." *Journal of Education Studies*, 2023.
- Komalesha, Hassan. *Veiled Voices, Framed Verses: Women's Poetry and Cultural Memory in the Tazkira Tradition*. Taylor & Francis, 2025.
- Kuduma, Anda. "The Friction between Memory and History: A Mnemo-Historical Perspective in Contemporary Latvian Poetry." *Culture Crossroads*, no. 31, 2025, pp. 205–216.
- Launko, Samuel, and Chijioke Nwankwo. "Masking the Infrastructural Frame: Christopher Okigbo and His Acolytes." *Studies in Contemporary African Literature*, n.d.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Okigbo as Jock." *English in Africa*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1976, pp. 52–59.
- Macheso, Wesley Paul. "Queering Tropical African Heteronormativity through Spirit Worlds: Akwaeke Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji*." *eTropic*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2024, pp. 197–212.

- Mishra, Pallavi. "The Reconstruction of Myth, Memory, History and the Element of Resistant Aesthetics in the Postcolonial Women Poets of Africa." *Gendered Spaces and Ruptured Identities*, 2014, pp. 120–135.
- Nkopuruk, Imikan. "Cultural Identity and Literary Form: Pedagogical Implications of Achebe's Use of Parallelism in 'A Wake for Okigbo'." pp. 1–14.
- Nwankwo, Chimalum, and Launko Okinba. "Masking the Infrastructural Frame: Christopher Okigbo and His Acolytes." *Intertextuality in Contemporary African Literature*, pp. 145–160.
- Nwosu, Maik. "Christopher Okigbo and the Postcolonial Market of Memories." *Research in African Literatures*, 2007, pp. 70–86.
- Okigbo, Christopher. *Labyrinths with Path of Thunder*. Heinemann, 1971.
- Omoha, Owojecho. "Mind, Persona, and Poetry: Madness with Methods in *Labyrinths*." *Preprints*, 2023.
- Omoha, Owojecho. "Madness with Methods." *Authorea Preprints*, 2024.
- Orianne, Jean-François, and Francis Eustache. "Collective Memory: Between Individual Systems of Consciousness and Social Systems." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 14, 2023.
- Oyetimi, Kehinde. "Archetypes, Identity and Cultural Continuity in Modern African Poetry." *Issues in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2024, pp. 300–323.
- Pradhan, Anupama. "Poetics of Displacement: Diaspora, Memory, and Home in the Poetry of Rohan Chhetri." *North Face: A Journal of Literary Studies*, 2025.
- Roesler, Christian. *Deconstructing Archetype Theory: A Critical Analysis of Jungian Ideas*. Routledge, 2023.
- Suhr-Sytsma, Nathan. "Christopher Okigbo, Print, and the Poetry of Postcolonial Modernity." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2012, pp. 40–62.

- Treitler, Leo. "Homer and Gregory: The Transmission of Epic Poetry and Plainchant." *Oral and Written Transmission in Chant*, Routledge, 2023.
- Udaba, Regina Obiageri. "We Shall Not Let Him Die! A Linguistic Appraisal of Okigbo's 'Heavensgate.'" *University of Nigeria Journal of Literary Studies*, no. 8, 2009, pp. 75–89.
- Ukah, Gabriel Oche, and Emmanuel Iwuoha. "The Poetry of Christopher Okigbo: New Perspectives and Current Trends." *EBSU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1–15.
- Van de Putte, Thomas. "'Let Me Tell You What We Already Know': Collective Memory between Culture and Interaction." *Memory Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2022, pp. 751–766.
- Yao, Kouadio Guillaume. "Aesthetics and Rituals in African Poetry: A Reading of Achebe, Soyinka and Okigbo's Poems."
- Yao, Kouadio Guillaume. "Allegory of Water in Christopher Okigbo's Poetry."
- Yasseri, Taha, Patrick Gildersleve, et al. "Collective Memory in the Digital Age." *Progress in Brain Research*, vol. 274, no. 1, 2022, pp. 203–226.
- Yovo, Koboè, and Koffitsè Ekélékana Isidore Guelly. "Behavioural Ethics and Cultural Conflicts in the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo and Patricia Jabbeh Wesley." *Administration de la Revue Particip'Action*, no. 31, 2023, pp. 1–14.
- Zharylgapov, Zhansaya, and Bibi Syzdykova. "The Concept of Archetype in Literature and Jung's Theories." *Bulletin of the Eurasian Humanities Institute*, 2023, pp. 172–184.