

A Comparative Discourse of Afro-European Literature

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Abstract

The world, a global village, arising from globalization, has over time and space, impacted tremendously on world literatures. This paper therefore interrogates Afro-European Literature on a comparative discourse. It seeks to throw further insight into the impact of African Literature on European Literature, ranging from visual arts, performativity, total theatre, song, musical and other forms of aural storytelling, memorials/commemorations on the lives of select Afro-European literary scholars, ecocriticism, nature writing, environmental ethics, etc. to critical engagements with the conceptions of select literary writers on both sides of the divide. Our thoughtfully chosen topic reflects contemporary thinking of literary studies across cultures and thus seeks to stimulate thought-provoking discussions and exploration of new insights, while, hoping to engender fresh intellectual and artistic engagement with a range of relevant literatures as we strive to extend ongoing experimentations on Afro-European literatures and transcending the boundaries of literary genres and temporal relevant contexts. The issues for deliberation are largely drawn from the Igbo literary experiences and landscape, of the totality of cultural life of the Igbo, Nigeria, in which Achebe is the torchbearer as well as the author and finisher of Modern African Literature. The inquiry is conducted by explication of relevant literatures, while we lean on the social constructivism theoretical framework, based on the assumption that our understanding of reality is shaped by social interactions and cultural context.

Keywords: African Literature, European Literature, Igbo cultural life, genres, ecocriticism.

Introduction

African Literature, an adjunct of this essay topic *Afro-European Literature: A Comparative Discourse*, needs scope definition, so that the person, who chases a bird should name it, the particular bird, so that *Nkeli* bird, according to Igbo proverbial genre, does not run itself to death. In our own words, in the spirit of acclaimed popular exposition, African Literature, refers to literature – poetry, prose, drama – written by an

African, born anywhere on the African continent, in which its theme constitutes the primary subject matter and written in a language – indigenous or colonial western script - in which Africans write or speak. The colonial western scripts we allude to are English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese.

African Literature has a prideful history and it is robust even though the racist West dismisses anything as African Literature. To those critical of the historical and psychological reality of African Literature, who also extend same to other disciplines like History, Philosophy, Drama and Theatre, to mention no more we “say” to them, in line with the language pattern and habit of thought of the Igbo, “They don’t know their fathers!” Yes, they should go and ask their mothers who their fathers were! It is because they do not know their fathers; the reason why they, unfortunately, are unaware that in the “100 Things that You Did Not Know about Africa”, cited in Anyachonkeya (2019:55-56), we learn that:

The human race is of African origin. The oldest known skeletal remains of anatomically modern humans (or Homo sapiens...) were excavated at sites in East Africa. Human remains were discovered at Omo in Ethiopia that were dated at 195, 000 years old, the oldest known in the world.

Skeletons of pre-humans have been found in Africa that date back between 4 and 5 million years. The oldest known ancestral type of humanity is thought to have been the Australopithecus ramidus, who lived at least 4.4 million years ago (RW 2006).

Those critical of African Literature should humbly admit that African cultural imperatives place this literature of our pride and heritage at sharp contrast with European Literature. This has become expedient because what a people abhor, the others eat as food. In effect, as the west showcases their literary history and heritage, Africans proudly assert that as the mothers of their peers have come back from the market, their own mothers are there as well in the census, as we proudly showcase our heritage in the excerpt quoted above.

This inquiry is committed to unveil some aspects or features of African Literature, which place it in free variation with the literature of the West or Europe and these features are essentially cultural imperatives. So, if a person says that something is sweet, he should prove or say what it is

sweet like. We now begin to explicate our parcel without scratching it or else we run afoul of Igbo cultural lore. Put differently, we want to gradually lick *this* hot soup.

African and Western Concept of Tragedy

African concept of tragedy as well as characterization of tragic figures is at variance with European concept and interpretation of tragedy. For instance, from the Classical Period of the Greek to the Neoclassical Period, it is accepted, among other things, that the tragic hero or heroine must be of high birth; that (s)he, for instance, may be a great man or woman, a warrior, king, queen, prince or princess. The tragic protagonist or principal character is neither a villain nor a virtuous person; that (s)he must possess resilient qualities such as large dose of courage, tenacity, steadfastness or long-suffering or tenacity in suffering integrity, etc.

In line with the contrasting features of tragedy and characterization, where African Literature belongs, Anyachonkeya (2004: 428) states:

Modern tragedy differs from Greek tragedy especially on the status of birth of the protagonist, adherence to the ... unities, theme (in terms of notable or well-known stories as histories of some royal houses, tales of heroes and warriors, tales of divine intervention in human affairs – relationship between the gods and men and the Greek legends), emphasis (is) confined to narration, discussion and speculation rather than to physical action, etc.

Whereas European tragedy recognizes King Oedipus of Sophocles' *The Theban Plays*, and the Archbishop, protagonist of Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Electra in Euripides' *Electra*, etc., African plays parade lowly figures of tragic heroes and heroines in such plays as J. P. Clark's *Song of a Goat*, Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, John Munonye's *The Oil Man of Obange*, NgoziAnyachonkeya's *A Grain of Rice*, etc.

On the themes and issues that can befall the European tragic hero or heroine, such as murder, fall of the high birth tragic character from grace to grass we refer to as *hamartia*, that can evoke soul purgation, or tragic flaw or great pride or *hubris*, change in fortune of the protagonist of

the Classical tragedy we refer to as *peripatetic*, in African Literature, on the other hand, such misfortunes as *childless marriage*, *efulefu*(irresponsible children), marriage with only girls, even inability to beget “a child (well-adjusted or well-behaved)” from the first son or one of the sons, children from bad spouse, loss of parent(s) at tender age, broken home, divorce, a life of living death, begetting moronic child or children, loss of a child or children while parents are still alive, etc. could constitute tragedy for the African person. Such issues abhorred in the life of an African, which can result in tragedy, are inconsequential and no tragedy in European Literature.

To the African reader of tragedy or any reader across cultural divides, he ponders or reflects on the moral of the following poetics:

Think of the hopes that lie before you,
Not the waste that lies behind;
Think of the treasures you have gathered,
Not the ones you failed to find.
Think of the service you may render,
Not the service of self alone.
Think of the happiness of others,
And in this you'll find your own (*Anonymous*).

We turn our attention to some existential or historical imperatives that gave rise to African Literature, which are not alike in European Literature.

Impulses That Gave Rise to African Literature

It is important to ascertain the major impulses that gave rise to the development in the writing of African literature, not just prose writing. These salient impulses are western education, Christianity, Trinitarian union of religion, commerce and the rule of law or government the Transcontinental slave trade, letter writing, interest in African culture, the Second world War, biography/autobiography. African literature did not just drop or begin as the big bang theory we study the theory of Gondwanaland in Geography. Certain impulses wittingly and unwittingly contributed in the emergence and development of African Literature. We will briefly dwell on each one of them in order to illustrate the literature written in Africa across genres and cultures unique enough from the point of view of European Literature.

Second World War

During the Second World War, Africans were drafted into the armed forces of the colonial masters of Britain, France, Belgium, and Portuguese, especially in the Allied Forces of the League of Nations. Africans fought side by side with those colonial armies in Burma, India, Hungary, as well as other western nations. In the process, they discovered that the white people were people too with strengths and foibles like others including themselves, the Africans. Since the society furnishes material in the writing of written literature, Africans in those armed forces came home with those experiences, the good, the bad, the ugly, the sublime about the racist West, which served as potent impulse in the emergence and development of African Literature. War, no doubt, has always been a repository material and arsenal for literature.

Advent of Western Education

Western education came with it the western scripts of English, French, Belgian, German, and Portuguese languages, which constituted *literacy*. Those languages were metalanguages, which eventually were used to describe African languages, and which were object languages. We cannot study a language without its literature, when it comes to literacy. And so as the western world and their colonial teachers came with their languages, they also imparted their literatures – poetry, prose and drama – on the learners of the colonized lands. That was how, for instance, we came to read literary writings of Geoffrey Chaucer, George Eliot, William Shakespeare, Robison Crusoe, Charles Dickens, Arthur Miller, Emile Bronte, Adam Bede, etc.

In like manner, pioneer African literary writers wrote their literary works, some of which were translated into some colonial and indigenous languages. We read the translated works of Ferdinand Oyono's *Old Man and the Medal* from French, the original colonial language into English; *Ala Bingo*, an Igbo novel translated from its foreign western script spoken in Africa. The strides of those African literary writers produced literature we call *Literature in English*, *Literature in French*, and so on. We could not call them *English literature*, because those African literary writers used the western scripts in a second language situation and in doing this document authentic African literature that embody our geography and race, with subject matter on Africa, African culture, written in languages in which Africans write on the content of Africa.

Interestingly therefore, western education played inestimable role as impulse in the emergence and development of African Literature.

Trinitarian Union of Commerce, Religion and Rule of Law or Government

Having isolated Christianity among the impulses, we step down “religion” among this subtask and discuss “commerce” and “government.” The colonial government brought commerce along with its government. The governmental authorities gave ammunition that protected the white traders as they penetrated or ventured into the hinterland for trading activities and empowered them to enter into and conclude vague treaties with the African chiefs and rural folk. The role and activities of the Royal Niger Company that operated in Lagos Colony in the eighteenth century as well as their colonial business dealings with King Jaja of Opobo are stark cases in point, all of which ignited literary impulse and writings in the British colonial territories. In those commercial dealings the selfish imperialistic trade skirmishes came to the limelight; we can see the epitome of the selfish temper and inclination in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, the principal character that is portrayed as *an economic man*, being metaphor for selfishness in business dealings against those Crusoe engages in business dealings with.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

This factor appears the outstanding impulse that gave rise to the emergence and development of African Literature. The pioneer literary writers among Africans were diasporas, who became the unfortunate victims of the evil trade on humans. A great majority of them were in England and other European countries as well as in the United States of America. These diaspora Africans wrote their agonizing experiences of the inhuman trade. We still recall the writings of Philip Whitely in the US, OladuaEquiano’s autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of OladuaEquiano* or Gustavus Vassa, *The African*, published in 1789 as *Equiano’s Travels*, edited by Paul Edwards; even the Negritude writers in the West Indies, the outstanding example being Aime Cesaire. Indeed, it was OladuaEquiano, who became the first African and publisher to produce written prose in that work of nonfiction on himself.

Growing Interest in African Culture by Africans

Ecocriticism, cultural life and its demands, played salient role in the emergence and development of African Literature. Owing to the deplorable posture of the racist west on African culture, who saw Africans as savages, imbeciles, lower animals, incarnates of the Devil, descendants of the accursed son of Noah Harm, and portraying Africa as heart of darkness, Africans both at home and in the diaspora began to develop interest about their culture and its treasures. They fired this zeal in the three performing arts, music, creative writing and dance. In the West Indies and the US, descendants of African-Americans unapologetically displayed their cultural heritage, such Reggae and Pop singers and composers as James Brown, Jimmy Cliff, U-Roy, I-Roy, Peter Tosh, Bob Marley and the Wheelers, Michael Jackson, and back home we find their kinsmen as Fela Anikulapo Kuti in the Afro-Beat, Sonny Okosun and Ozzidi, Celestine Ukwu, Cardinal Rex Jim Lawson and Stephen Osita Osadebay, the Highlife chiefs, Bongos Ikwue, Victor Uwaifo of “Joromi” fame, as well as the fantastic MichEjiagha, the folkloric maestro, and a great many others.

In literary writing Africans wrote literary writings, in all genres, to repudiate the Western racists, arguing that it was they themselves, who would write their story, that they knew of culture before their advent on the African soil. For instance, Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* in reaction to Joseph Conrads’ *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary’s *Mr. Johnson*, whose principal character, an African, Friday, Carry portrayed as an imbecile. Many of them gave up their so-called Christian names and took up their African names that are epitome of African culture. Among those literary patriots were Chinua Achebe, who dropped *Albert*, NgugiwaThiong’O, who let go *James*, as well as this essayist, who let go *Emmanuel*, as he does not know the meaning!

Biography and Autobiography Writing

Africans especially pioneer nationalities took interest in writing their life histories. Some wrote their own life stories as autobiography, while some other people wrote other peoples’ life escapades as *biography*. Jomo Kenyata, President of Kenya wrote *Facing the Kilimanjaro*, Kenneth Kaunda wrote *Zambia Shall Be Free*; Nelson Madiba Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*; Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography*, etc. and other contemporary African trail blazers.

Letter Writing

Africans who went to school in the early part of the 18th century and later part of the 19th century utilized their literacy skill to act as intermediary between their illiterate rural folk and their relatives, who lived in the urban towns, as abroad. They skillfully, with their limited western education of Standard 1 to Standard 1V, grappled with the challenge of transmitting the oral style of their fellow illiterate rural dwellers into written form for the benefit of both the rural folk and the urban dwellers as third party. This way they could logically be regarded as the forerunners of creative writers because they became the most creative early professional group that emerged with the introduction of western education. Indeed, it was great creative imagination and endeavor that they were able to render intriguing and complex mother tongue expressions into foreign language, their mother tongue belonging to Lower Niger family of languages, whereas those of English, French or Portuguese, etc. belong to Indo-European family of languages.

Political Policies of Colonial Nations

The political policies of the colonial governments in all the blocs acted as catalyst in the emergence and development of African Literature. The Anglophone countries of Africa were faced with Indirect Rule system of governance, where the British indirectly exposed itself in divide and political gimmick, which did not go down well with the colonial lands of Africa. Coupled with the Indirect Rule policy was the criminal and rapacious impulse of the British Empire in the compulsory land acquisition of the people, introduced especially in the East of Africa as well as rejection of cultural norms of the land. In South Africa it was the obnoxious Apartheid regime, which incarcerated the political activist and lawyer, Nelson Mandela, for 27 years at Robben Island.

In such African lands as Angola and Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Sa Tome and Principe and Cape Verde (Lusophone countries), it was political deprivation/dehumanization of the colonized. The French colonial Administration tried assimilation policy; it was implemented fully in the Four Communes of Senegal, namely, of Goree, Darker, Rufisque and Saint-Louis, the purpose of which was “to turn African natives into Frenchmen by educating them in the language and of France culture and making them equal French citizens (<https://en.wikipedia.org>>A..., 5:21 pm, 27/8/24).” All these objectionable policies necessitated the emergence and development of

African Literature; being variables that are strange in the topical issues of European Literatures.

Storytelling Style – Place and Time

The story was always told of a wealthy man who set before his guests a mound of foo-foo so high that those who sat on one side could not see what was happening on the other, and it was not until late in the evening that one of them saw for the first time his in-law who had arrived during the course of the meal and had fallen on the opposite side. It was only then that they exchanged greetings and shook hands over what was left of the food (Achebe, 1986:26, *Things Fall Apart*).

That is exemplum of storytelling style, by Achebe, the master storyteller - *in character, performance* - bequeathed to Modern African Literature, garnished in the flamboyant figure of speech of hyperbole.

From the excerpt, above, we see that storytelling style has been a norm latent in African Literature, which is solidly founded in the Oral Literary experiences of the peoples of the continent. African Oral Literature, *orature*, for short, possesses all the characteristic features of written literature, the differing area being that it is not written but transmitted through word of mouth to succeeding generations. In line with tradition, stories are normally told by mothers with their children at night. So, children gather at their mothers' hearth while their mothers tell them those tales of their motherland. Children are forbidden by our lore to tell such stories in the daytime as superstition negates children, who could tell such tales in the daytime are orphans. In effect, it is a dreadful thing to lose one's parents and as a result, no child dares tell folktales in the daytime. The racist West has made frantic but fruitless attempts to dismiss and diminish the status of African orature as nonliterary (we hold this against Ruth Finnegan); but all those efforts amounted to the snake bite on the shell of the tortoise and kindergarten attempt to cover a pregnancy with the hands.

Of the three genres of Igbo Oral Literature, like its European counterpart, virtually all the genres are sipped in oral milieu, emanating from African traditional societies particularly religious ritual festivals (and their way of life), cults and observances. When we come to poetry, we see some oral traditional poetry not related to religion, which we find and may refer to here as "purpose" poetics such as work, war, play, marriage, etc. songs or lyrics, dirges, elegies, incantations, praise songs, heroic recitations and chants. These traditional poetry forms practically possess

the beauty, imagery and language of poetry when subjected to literary analysis and devices available in written literature. They fulfill the aesthetic qualities of poetry; the only seeming drawback is that it is set in indigenous African languages. We met with reasonable difficulty trying to translate them into the official language of named Western colonial language for wider audience and consumption.

Soyinka (2007:226) attempts to showcase Yoruba oral literature, the features of which share synonymous relations with the Oral Literature of the Igbo as well as the African landscape. According to him:

Traditional African poetry is not merely those verses which, being easiest to translate, have found their way into anthologies and school texts; it is not merely those lyrics which because they are favorites at Festivals of the Arts haunted by ethnologists with tape recorders, supply the readiest source-material for uprooted academics, nor is it restricted solely to the praises of yams and gods, invocations of blessings and evocations of the pristine. Traditional poetry is all of this; it is however also to be found in the very technique of riddles, in the pharmacology of healers, in the utterance of the possessed medium, in the enigmas of diviners, in the liturgy of divine and cultic. Mysteries (in addition to the language of their public address systems), in the unique temper of world comprehension that permeates language for the truly immersed – from the Ifa priest to the haggler in the market, inspired perhaps by economic frustration!

Having gone this elaborate length of our oral poetry, Soyinka cautions the Western critics with their critical blinkers:

The critic who would arrogate to himself the task of formulating an African poetics – a typical pre-occupation of the European critical tradition, by the way – had better understand this from the start or confine himself to extolling the virtues of European nursery rhymes – a field which appears more suited to the analytical capacity of our critical troika (226).

These taxonomies and categorizations of African Literature particularly in African orature are alien in European Literature; however, there is no doubt that these two world literatures may have come into terms with each other that they now constitute innovative global literature and heritage.

Other Features of African Literature Novel to European Literature

We want to dwell briefly on the other features we find in African Literature, which are peculiar to the continent and not similar or commonplace in European Literature. Let us inquire into them one at a time.

Contemporary African issues peculiar or unique to African Literature inform and shape African Literature; these significantly differ from those of Europe; and African literary writers dwell on them to sanitize their society and continent in literature of commitment and thus seek to cleanse the Augean stables of all the rot bedeviling Mother Africa. In many African lands, for example, literary writers focus on contemporary matters relating to governance of their lands and through power semantics style lampoon the political leaders for leading their people to their Waterloo instead of the political Paradise of their dream. So, they lament that democracy rather improving the lot of the citizenry lead the populace towards anarchy, through culture of impunity, executive lawlessness and unprecedented “bribery and corruption ... tribalism and nepotism” so much that the nations’ economies plunge into technological stagnation. “The political leaders adopt Machiavellian political philosophy” (blurb, Nwachukwu, 1988). This posture cuts across all the divides of African literary blocs, namely, Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone.

Of course, contemporary issues in Africa are at variance with the global literature of the West. We pick interest in studying or enquiring into the two, because in the world’s global village none of the divides will stay aloof as though unconcerned since one cold that catches one bloc will trigger runny nose on the other bloc that is hale and hearty. When we come to North African Literature, it shows a somewhat distinct literature from the literatures we find in Africa, South of the Sahara. The reasons for this are not in doubt. North African literary writers maintain allegiance with their Arab kith and kin of the Arab world or League, in terms of culture, language and religion. Talahite (2007) sheds further light on this assertion:

North African writing, covering Egypt and Morocco, offers a perspective that cannot be strictly confined within the geographical boundaries of North Africa. From a linguistic and cultural point of view, it is part of Arabic literature, a category that includes the literature from the countries both of North Africa and the Middle East. North African writing is therefore determined by the sense of belonging to an Arab nation which

shares the same language and culture, and to a certain extent, the same religion. Since North Africa became part of the Arab Muslim Empire in the eighth century, the Arabic language and the Muslim religion symbolized the force bringing the Arab people together in a common destiny. Today North African writing is largely informed by this common Arab heritage which represents not only a way of connecting with the cultural tradition but also a way of understanding the present (Talahite, 2007:39).

In effect, we include North African writing peripherally when we examine Afro-European Literature in a comparative study. We mention this bloc when we beam our searchlight on Arabic Literature but quickly mention and pass simply because North Africa occupies a chunk of the African continent but when we examine the impulses we can cite in the emergence and development of its literature, we interrogate the religion of Islam, the Arabic language, which is arrowhead of culture and Arabic cultural treasures influencing the literatures of the Arab world at large.

Lusophone Literature embraces literatures of the five African countries colonized by Portugal. These countries are Angola, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Mozambique. The literature of the Lusophone brings into African continent a literature that is characterized by *cultural revindication*, *social protest* and *combativeness*. Literary writers of Portuguese expression pursued this philosophic ideology in colonial times; their representative works gave rise to the “emergence of literary-cultural movements (Hamilton, 2007: 32).” Of this region some of those representative writers of the Lusophone include Joaquim Das Cordeiro da Matta (1857-‘94), from Angola; Rui de Noronha, a poet (1909-‘43), from Mozambique; Fausto Duarte (1903-’53, a Cape Verdian, who lived many years of his useful life in Portuguese Guinea); Mario Domingues (1899-1977, from Sao Tome); Baltasar Lopes, a Lisbon-educated philologist and lawyer, who pioneered fiction writing. Indeed, it was from the 1950s and the 1960s that the “wind of change began to blow” not just in Portuguese Africa but across the continent, that socially conscious writers challenged colonial rule, resulting in literary brand of “cultural re-vindication, social protest, and combativeness” (Hamilton, 2007:33).

The Literature of Southern literary writers based their theme on Apartheid of the White minority rule against Black majority of Africa and consequent subjugation of Africans. Thus, literary writers from South

African harped on Apartheid as a social scourge; such writers include Peter Abrahams, Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, etc.

East Africa: When we come to East Africa, we come across proponents of struggle for political freedom, land repossession, where Kenneth Kaunda, Dennis Brutus, Okot p'Bitek, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and others, wrote avidly in all patriotism through their literatures. There was even violent reaction if we recall Mau-Mau Emergency.

West Africa: The dominant theme of the West African literary writers was cross-cultural conflicts and White domination of Africans on their own land. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*; *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo, are among representative pillars of West African literary writers, who beamed their searchlight on the conflict themes, where Chinua Achebe excelled as the author and finisher of Modern African Literature. Again, Lenrie Peters, Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Kwesi Brew, John Pepper Clark, Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike, John Pepper Clark, Flora Nwapa, Kofi Awoonor, Cyprian Ekwensi, John Munonye, Elechi Amadi, Ayi Kwei Armah, David Diop, Gabriel Imometime Okara, Camara Laye, are also very active and salient dramatis personae on the West African bloc of literary writing in all genres, engaging in cultural conflict

The Negritude Movement

Another unique ideological feature of African Literature, characteristic of Modern African Literature, absent in European literature, is the *Negritude literature*, so much propagated in the poetic genre. Negritude focuses on showcasing the aesthetics of Africa and the bounties of her cultural heritage as well as her people as a people so blest, no matter the racial blinkers of the Western critics. Even though the literary ideology and movement began outside Africa, in the West Indies precisely, the fact still remains that the proponents of Negritude were or are rather Africans and Africans in the diaspora. For instance, Aime Cesaire, the author of the term *Negritude*, was a West Indian poet. About this term and ideology, an American Negro poet, Langston Hughes, states: "We the creators of the new generation want to give expression to our *black personality* without shame or fear.... We know we are handsome. Ugly as well. The drums weep and the drums laugh (cited in Senghor, 2007:195)." Senghor (2007:195) speculates that our own originality was proclaimed by Aime

Cesaire, who coined the concept and observes that Cesaire could have contributed a definition of Negritude to the Literature of the Black or African Literature. In the words of Senghor, he longs that Cesaire could “have attempted to define the concept a little more closely; to have developed it as a weapon, as an instrument of liberation and as a contribution to the humanism of the twentieth century.”

However, Senanu and Vincent (2009:53) recognize Leopold Sedar Senghor as the greatest exponent of *Negritude* philosophy in Africa. They observe:

Negritude as an ideology was first developed in reaction to the cultural deprivation and Western cultural decadence which Senghor and others experienced in Europe. It aims amongst other things to reassert and revive, through literature, the cultural values, identity and authenticity of Africans, and extol the ancestral glories and the beauty of Africa, partly through a renunciation of what is Western and partly through a re-ordering of imagery. *Negritude* has passed through many phases, partly in response to the criticisms leveled against it, especially the charge of romanticism and racism. It is now seen as a humanistic creed, an ideology that emphasises the values of African civilization and black contribution to human civilization.

And so, whether you chewed oil bean or you chewed fish, *Negritude* ideology or philosophy in literature has further rejuvenated Afro-European Literature, and in the process invigorated African Literature as well as enhanced the image and status of Africa as a people. So, we can see that colonialism, which was bent on suppressing African culture via assimilation and Indirect Rule in most places with consequent exploitation and subjugation of the colonized nations, became another salient impulse that gave rise to the emergence and development of African Literature, the type of which was nonexistent in European Literature. When we marry the literatures of the two divides – Afro-European Literature – the outcome becomes a hybrid Literature that requires re-interrogation, redefinition and reexamination.

Name and Naming – Afro-European

A name as well as the process of naming in Africa is in accord with African cultural imperatives. African names are more than tags as semiotic devices to identify and to differentiate one person from the other. African names are meaningful solidly based on the ideological culture of the people. African names are a reflection of their worldview, encapsulating their fears and aspirations, joys and hates, spiritual values as well as life escapades of parents who give their children names, for no one gives oneself a name. Achebe (1982:96), African literary Seer, elaborates the significance of names among the Igbo of Africa:

If you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to look is the names his children bear. His hopes, his fears, his joys and sorrows; his grievances against his fellows, or complaints about the way he has been used by fortune; even straight historical records, are all there. An because *chi* is so central to Igbo thought we ... also find much about it in proper names

According to Achebe, no Igbo parent will beget a son and give him the Yoruba name *Olaniyi*! To the Igbo, the name means a child that will perish! Therefore, the words and name *Olaniyi* and *Olaniyi* in both Igbo and Yoruba are false friends! And so Africans do not name their children anyhow or give meaningless names to their children. WaThiong'O (1982) lambasts his African kinsmen, who out of cultural disorientation bear "meaningless" Western names. Writes WaThiong'O:

It is not that I don't believe in names. For what could be a more ridiculous caricature of self than those of our African brothers and sisters proudly calling themselves James Philipson, Rispa, Hottensiah, Ron Rodgerson, Richard Glucose, Charity, Honey Moonsnow, Ezekiel, Shiprah, Winterbottomson – all the collection of names and non-names from the Western world? What more evidence of self-hate than their throwing a tea-party for family and friends to bribe them never to call them by their African names? It is rather that I believe in the reality of what's being named more than in the name itself.

Anyachonkeya (2019:57) argues in line with Thiong’O that “names reflect the worldview of a people” and African names make meaning unlike those of the West. Names like the people’s language are an insight into the perception of their world and how they interpret and fabricate their technologies, what the Igbo call *Uwa Ndi Igbo*, their worldview or cosmology. African names as well as process of naming has a lot of linguistic, cultural, historical, philosophic, eschatological implications, as confirmed by Essien (2004:105), who says: “(N)aming in Nigeria in particular ... can have serious linguistic, cultural, religious and even philosophical implications and therefore become a serious academic and intellectual matter.”

Implication of Findings

The essay has been arguing that globalization has over time and space influenced world literatures in no small way. Reasoning from this trajectory, the paper embarks on a comparative discourse of African Literature and European Literature with robust findings. The study unveils further insight into the impact of African Literature on European Literature, which ranges from visual arts, performativity, total theatre, song, musical and other forms of aural storytelling; memorials/commemorations on the lives of select Afro-European literary scholars, ecocriticism, nature writing, environmental ethics, etc. to critical engagements with the conceptions of select literary writers on both sides of the divide.

The hub of the paper reflects current issues in global literatures such as stimulation of thought-provoking discussions and exploration of new insights of literary thought over time and space. In the process, the investigation seeks to inspire fresh intellectual and artistic engagement with a range of relevant literatures of diverse divides in an effort to extend ongoing experimentations on Afro-European literatures and thus transcend to the boundaries of literary genres and temporal contexts. Since charity, they say, begins at home, though should not end there, the issues canvassed for interrogation are largely drawn from the Igbo literary experiences and landscape and of the totality of cultural life of the Igbo-Africa, in which Achebe is the torchbearer, the author and finisher of Modern African Literature.

Findings handled and explicated of African Literature evince that there are a lot more of issues in African Literature, which are either nonexistent or novel in European Literature, which, of course, African

Literature rejuvenates. It is just like cultural experiences, where two cultures of equal strength meet, they go into sharing of what they have, a type of moulding an embellished sculpture from the granite. Some of those findings in African Literature include African worldview of the tragic protagonist or principal character along with characterization in African Literature, which is at variance with the European Literature. This conception is firmly encapsulated in the worldviews of African cultures. The European West *cannot* twist our arms and make us accept the Classical theory of tragedy and adapt same to ours, just as today they (the European World powers) try frantically – a mission impossible – to make Africans settle for their utopian gay marriage. They did not see us!

Another interesting material issues in African Literature are the impulses that acted as catalyst in the emergence and development of African Literature as well as the diverse thrusts of literatures written and produced in the various African blocs, namely, West African, East African, South African and North African literatures, the dominant motivations being colonial policies (which happened to be a mismatch to African cultures), language, the arrowhead of culture, our cultural deoxyribonucleic (DNA) acid of culture and religion as saliently observed in the Literatures of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab countries of North Africa. The engine house of African Literature, which enables it to make worthwhile contribution, in this comparative discourse, is language, the carrier of Africa's cultural treasures. Stressing on the indispensableness of language, Elst and Bohannan (1999:57), aver as follows:

Language makes the accumulation of knowledge possible by storing it outside ourselves in ways beyond the genes or brains.... Because language lets us share experience, any human population, then or now, has accumulated an astonishingly large collection of facts and interpretations to help it survive. Even the simplest cultures contain far more information than any one person can use or even remember.

The morbid prejudice of the racist West of Africa is borne of selfish human craving arising from the spirit of the periods in the European literary history, the medieval thinking and fine-tuned in the Renaissance philosophy of inquiry that held sway in the Middle Ages, discovery, the periods that produced such great works like the anonymous Medieval

Beowulf, *Robison Crusoe* of Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* as well as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Of these periods, Vernon (2012:62) expatiates:

Renaissance man cultivated himself, and as he did so, he simultaneously defined himself over and against his medieval forebears. The schoolmen of the Middle Ages, as they were known, were weighed down by sophistry It was the Renaissance humanists who spread the rumour that scholastics spent days trying to calculate the number of angels that might dance on the head of a pin....

The scholar who defined the historical study of Renaissance, Jakob Burkhardt, summarized the shift in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*: 'In the Middle Ages ... man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, family, or corporation ... in Italy this veil first melted into air ... man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such.

Indeed, the comparative discourse cannot, of course, be exhausted in a delimited scope of this essay, having striven to provide what it believes are the bare essentials.

Conclusion

The foremost contribution of Igbo-Africa Literature to European Literature is the *storytelling* style intricately woven in the language of this fascinating people; this style is bound up with our orature, oral tradition or oral literature, which encases all forms or genres we find in written literature. This style is not quite pronounced in the literatures of the West; because storytelling culture is transmitted by our mothers at the fireside at nights and other adults during moonlight setting of our rustic countryside at nights; this partly informs Achebe's Igbo platitude, so to say, that when the moon shines, the lame becomes hungry for a work. Testifying to the fecundity and efficacy of language as culture carrier, Elst and Bohannan (1999:58), cited earlier, state:

Language lies at the foundation of culture. Without its aid in thinking, learning and teaching, our technologies and organizations could never have evolved beyond those of the chimpanzees, and our intellectual life, our ideation, would be

little better. Language, in other words, is the triggering factor behind everything that makes you more than a mere animal.

We will not hesitate to share the optimism of Elst and Bohannan about language, because it is the building block of culture, which as we have likened it to DNA to earlier. Hardly will a reader read African Literature of Igbo extraction and will not read the author, in all genres, weave in the storytelling style, either to build material foundation of a literary corpus, to entertain or for didacticism, as we may read the following pathetic case of Ekwefi, the heroine of Achebe's (1986:54) *Things Fall Apart*.

Ekwefi had suffered a good deal in her life. She had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three. As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation. The birth of her children, which should be a woman's crowning glory, became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise. The naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual. Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave her children. One of them was a pathetic cry, Onwubiko – 'Death, I implore you. But Death took no notice; Onwubiko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena – 'May it not happen again.' She died in her eleventh month, and two others after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma – 'Death may please himself.' And he did (Chapter Nine).'

This pathetic but didactic anecdote well illustrates the efficacy of storytelling in African Literature, here enacted as *performance* on the theatre stage, to drive home the dreaded existential psychological and philosophic reality of *Ogbanje*, *changeling* in English, which is also found across cultures, such names as "Abiku, Yoruba, Wabi, Fulfulde, Risa, Nyandang, Risa, Mumuye, Jobi, Koma, Urum, Chamba, Esseimana, Efik, Ibibio and Eket, Okponsanha, Annang (Anyachonkeya, 2006:48). In this tale, both the deaf and the blind can empathize with Ekwefi, the heroine of all women characters in this Igbo epic.

Through this style the reader deciphers our cultural treasures, from where we are coming and where we are bound or going, introspection in didacticism, for if you do not know where the rain began to beat you, never will you know where it stopped to dry your body. African Oral Literature unveils the impact of African Literature on European Literature, ranging from visual arts, performativity, total theatre, song, musical and other forms of aural storytelling, cited earlier. Through the narrative of African orature, we notice total theatre incorporated in certain communal theatrical performances, namely, “voice, action, costume, drum, music, (and) dance (Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya, 2008:55). A curtain must be drawn to this narrative as what has a beginning must have an end; and, as we well know, when the hunting day comes, we shall come to hunt at the backyard of grass-cutter!

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