

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## TWO OF A KIND – MOTHER AFRICA AND WOMANHOOD: LOCATING A COMMON SOLUTION TO A COMMON PROBLEM OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

PERP' ST.REMY ASIEGBU (Ph.D)

Department of English Studies

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

[perpstremy.asiegbu@gmail.edu.ng](mailto:perpstremy.asiegbu@gmail.edu.ng)



### ABSTRACT

The enigma that gnaws at the emergence of woman to the realization of her full potential has a disturbing similitude to the multi-faceted masquerade that dances attendance to the mysterious spirit of underdevelopment in Africa. Given the numerous attacks on history, tradition and patriarchy, by the feminist; given, also, the multiple arrows pointed against history, colonialism and the Western world, by the Africanist, it is worrisome that underdevelopment and marginalization still remain major setbacks in the worlds of these groups. This paper, therefore, suggests retrospection and introspection as necessary tools to tackling these age long issues with emphasis on the advancement of African literature and writers. It broaches the feminist struggle from within the feminists' camp and marries it with the issue of underdevelopment in Africa thereby intensifying the call for Africa and woman to look inwards for the much needed solution to the problem of marginalization and underdevelopment. Facts derived from texts, and questionnaires prove that a relatively unconscious dislike for self and the denial of shortcomings inherent in the house stampede any other effort towards an appreciable level of development for womanhood and Africa. An unbiased and critical look at self, therefore, exposes disturbing weaknesses, hitherto ignored as insignificant, which are at the core of the stunted growth experienced by these groups. The experiences shared by these entities in widespread discrimination, enslavement and underdevelopment make them, interestingly, comparable in a paper such as this.

Key words: Africa, Womanhood, Underdevelopment, Feminist, Self, Writer, Literature.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

...The Makerere conference of 1962 was therefore more than a warning about blundering blindly into a cactus fence. It was indeed like a first seismic thing on a fresh new planet, a muted great tremor warning that in the new Africa there was trouble, and that that trouble will persist, before any cooling, in the growth of the African consciousness. (Chimalum

Nwankwo. "Reflections & Retrospectives,"  
1)

It is *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Chinua Achebe affirms and goes on to observe a tentative definition of African literature as, "Creative writing in which an African setting is authentically handled or to which experiences originating in Africa are integral" (92). While this definition is not generally accepted as

covering the whole essence of African literature, there is no denying the fact that there has, since, been an epoch of beautiful creations in the landscape of African literature. Chinua Achebe, with other predecessors, positions African literature in a vintage point with well packaged literary productions that extol the dynamics of African culture. This milestone reverberates in the works of the contemporary African writers even though most of their works do not embody the indigenous flavour that distinguishes the works of the early writers of African literature. This is a problem. The relative stagnation of African literature, in spite of the volume of recognition that it has enjoyed internationally and locally, is the major fuss from where this trouble derives its essence. However, this is a miniature, though significant, part of the major problem of underdevelopment in Africa which has a worrisome similarity to the hassle of underdevelopment of womanhood, not just in Africa, but in the globe.

Suggesting a common solution to these underdevelopment issues becomes the major focus here. It is posited that the way forward is for Africa, as well as womanhood, to retreat and look inwards, self-appraisal and enhancement becomes sine qua non to a sustainable development for these entities. And though this opinion is not, altogether, new in these fields, it comes to intensify the need for Africa and womanhood to step back from casting aspersions upon external forces and, instead, seek redress from within themselves as individuals and as groups. African literature becomes the confluence where Africa and womanhood meet for a holistic study.

Walter Rodney excites us with his book, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (1972). The widespread acceptance of Rodney's points is evident in the works of most Africanist writers, in various disciplines, as they vent their anger on colonialism and the West for what Africa still suffers. They trio of *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) spare no saliva as they spit their venom on the West for the deplorable state of African literature. Wollstonecraft presses the alert button over the discrimination of women with her book: *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Her

observations attract a great number of support all over the world, the harsh criticism of feminism, by the patriarchal society, notwithstanding.

This paper does not question the truth inherent in the claims of these critics. However, what is worrisome, almost irritating, is that many years after the celebration of these works and after the establishment of the negative roles of colonialism, tradition and patriarchy in the plight of Africa and womanhood, the situation remains almost the same if not worse, in some cases. Has Africa or woman any part to play in their individual plight? How far can the anger over the enemy go in re-writing the history, for instance, without a deliberate effort, by self, towards instituting the much needed change? Is it OK to sit back like a stagnated pool and emit irritating odour, satisfied that the offensive human carcasses are afloat? These are some of the questions that this paper seeks to address.

#### **Africa: Tracing the Root of Underdevelopment**

"What became of the Black People of Sumer?" the traveller asked the old man, "for ancient records show that the people of Sumer were Black. What happened to them?"

"Ah", the old man sighed.

"They lost their history, and so they died."<sup>1</sup>

Africa has a long history of marginalization and underdevelopment. This has been blamed on the invasion of her world by the Europeans. Africa was, hitherto, a continent rich in culture, arts and sages who carried the wisdom and stories of outstanding victories in battles from one generation to the other. She had a traditional religion that ensured relative justice and fairness to all and a communal or monarchical system of government that maintained order and peaceful co-existence among members of a community. There was the Oraeze Nri<sup>2</sup> (Nri Kingdom 948-1911) of Igbo, Nigeria, whose priest-king, Eze Nri, ruled in a system that was more democratic than what is obtainable in most African 'democratic' states today. And this is unusual at that time as the system of world government then was, largely, dictatorial. This is one out of the many kingdoms of ancient Africa.

But, with the invasion of the Europeans, Africa, as it were, lost her pride. Her rich culture, tradition and artifacts were trampled upon and looted respectively. Her strength was sapped in the wake of slave trade as the strongest of her lot were carried away and made beasts of burden on whose aching back the economy of the Western world was built. Her powerful, highly influential and sacred monarchs were brutally disgraced out of their thrones and a good number of them were sent on exile.

The beauty and strength of Africa has been sung, the brutality of Western invasion has been rejected and decried by a number of Africanist writers cutting across different generations and genres. Shall we call to mind, the poem of David Diop, "Africa?" Do our lips not still shine from the oil with which we relish the delicious yam of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*? May we not forget in a hurry the beauty and rich culture of Kunta Kinte's village, his courage, brevity and vitality before he was abducted and carried away into slavery.<sup>3</sup> How about the blood-heating and inspiring books and works of Kwame Nkrumah, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Olaudah Equiano, Amiri Baraka, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frederick Douglass, Leopold Sedar Senghor, René Maran, Thomas Mofolo, Julius Nyerere, Richard Wright, Marcus Garvey, Leon Damas, Langston Hughes, Amilcar Cabral and a host of other writers.

Arguably, the Africanist of old is more concerned and proud of Africa than the present day Africanist. Clearly, there are things about the ancient Africa that makes the early Africanist proud, that cause those carried away into slavery to tell the beautiful tale of Africa over and over again to their children and grandchildren. But, quite regrettably, the Africa of today cannot even be said to be a skeletal representation of the old Africa of proud warriors, mighty kings, priests and princes; of rich tradition and culture; of good governance, relative fairness and justice; of surplus food; the Africa which rejected gifts of arms and paraphernalia of Western technology in order to protect her pride; the Africa that fought back Western invasion to protect her tradition, people and culture. The modern day Africa

is much too lame, too distraught, too diseased, too poor and too backward to elicit a true, heartfelt pride. But, this will not be told, in all its rottenness, by the Europeans writing about Africa because they are careful to retain their 'friendship' with Africans and their 'love' for Africa as careers in Africanism must be advanced and 'aids' rendered to Africa on a never ending bases. Commenting on his initial contact with Africa, Richard Dowden notes:

My diary from my first months in Africa shows an obsessive campaign to join African society, become part of Africa. 'Everyone seems to have accepted the prison the Africans made for the *wazungu* (white people) here and everyone is continually playing to an African audience,' I wrote after one month. 'I certainly intend to test the walls of the prison to check for myself if they are solid but it is hard to confront Africans without insulting them or losing face and therefore their respect.' (17)

Obviously, the truth about the present day Africa can, only, be told either by Africans themselves, or the likes of a certain distraught, though disenchanting, American politician<sup>4</sup>. The United Nations Economic and Social Council Economic Commission for West Africa (2014) reports:

"Africa's growth slowed from 5.7 percent in 2012 to an estimated 4.0 percent in 2013...Africa's output gap – the difference between actual and potential real output as a percentage of potential output estimated using the Hodrick-Prescott filter – was generally negative over the period 2000-2013, signifying that African countries were underperforming. (3)

The relevance of statistics and reports to the understanding of the state of affairs in Africa is minimal. The overwhelming deplorable condition of most African states is stark evidence of the mournful situation in Africa. What with the diseases that ravage the nations of Africa and the fact that there are no medical plans to take care of these; how about the hunger that has made Africa the face of poverty; shall we forget the insecurity that is a result of too many idle youths whose governments have

denied opportunities to contribute their quota to the development of their countries; let us not forget the general atmosphere of abject poverty that assails Africa so that Africans live in squalor and in conditions not fit for the beasts of the earth.

Colonialism, no doubt, trampled on African culture, tradition and indigenous system of government, with reckless abandon, but, it also built on the existing civilization in some African kingdoms and modernized many African communities. There is a level of infrastructural, educational and political development that is bequeathed to Africans at the end of European invasion. What has Africans done with those developmental projects? Colonialism, undeniably, is at the root of the degradation of African culture and tradition. But, underdevelopment in Africa, arguably, has its root in the actions and inactions of African leaders from the independence of individual states till date. The greed, insensitivity and corruption at the core of the shrub of African leadership find many stems in her people and, now, bear much fruits of underdevelopment in all the sectors of the society. Greg Mills quips: "African leaders have become adept at externalizing blame, holding others responsible for Africa's failings. Yet, African leaders – not lack of capital, access to world markets, or technical expertise – are to blame for the continent's underdevelopment" (1).

#### **Womanhood: Having Similar Issues with Africa**

Womanhood has an identical history of marginalization and underdevelopment as Africa. Women's world has been such that is filled with age-long discrimination and subjugation. History has it that tradition and patriarchy see the woman as an inferior being and this misconception spurs the society to unleash terrible measures against the woman. The ancient tales, myths and beliefs about woman inform this wrong notion of her. Eve, the first woman, as recorded in the Bible,<sup>5</sup> is one significant and outstanding figure whose characteristics are used in describing the rest of the women's world. Yet, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is highly venerated and regarded by even the worst of the misogynists. Geoffrey of Vendôme, an eleventh century abbot, writes:

The (female) sex poisoned our first ancestor, who was also husband and father (to the first woman); it strangled John the Baptist and delivered brave Samson to his death. In a manner of speaking, it also killed Our Savior (sic): for had (woman's) sin not required it, Our Savior would not have had to die. Woe unto this sex which knows nothing of awe, goodness, or friendship, and which is more to be feared when loved than when hated. (qtd. in Dalarun 19)

As a result of this terrible massacre of the personality of woman, she suffers seclusion, degradation and all manner of ill-treatment from man.

There is a load of criticism challenging this discrimination against women. Mary Wollstonecraft champions it with her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan come up much later with their books, *The Second Sex* (1949) and *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) respectively. These books re-awaken the quest for women emancipation and many more books and opinions follow amidst fierce criticism of the feminists and their quest. Thus, there is this conviction, among feminist writers, that the "society is organized in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women; that is, that it is patriarchal" (Mill 3). This protest leads to female liberation, relatively. Women now occupy significant offices as presidents of countries, chief executives of companies, administrators of various establishments, highly successful artists, athletes and more.

However, womanhood has a long way to go. The marginalization of women is still rife in many countries including the highly developed nations - physical and verbal assault, gender discrimination in job allocations, sexual harassment, objectification, denial of certain rights, misconception of the woman as inferior to man, preference of the boy child over the girl child, horrible widowhood rites - the list is endless. It is disturbing that with the volume of protests coming from feminists, womanhood is yet to experience a level of growth that is generally appreciable and commensurate with the outcry. What is even more aggravating is that the

development of womanhood is experiencing an avalanche - female discrimination is springing up in modernized patterns. Take the objectification of women as an example; there is an alarming use of women as sex symbols, as objects to be used and discarded with little or no regard. Men amass wealth with the naked pictures of women; there are reality shows that present women as weaklings desperate for the love and acceptance of men<sup>6</sup>; sex trafficking is at its peak and women are at the receiving end of it all. Another worrisome aspect is that notable women that are outstanding in their chosen fields, especially those in the entertainment industry, give in to the use of their bodies for men's merriment. Is this the freedom agitated for? What is the use of female emancipation if women are caged, in freedom, by their own sentimentality and men's manipulating ropes? The Playboy Magazine announces recently that it will no longer feature naked pictures of women! Reason?

Its executives admit that Playboy has been overtaken by the changes it pioneered. "The battle has been fought and won," said Scott Flanders, the company's chief executive. "You're now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free. And so it's just passé at this juncture."<sup>7</sup>

Note that the Playboy Magazine is described as "The American men's lifestyle and entertainment magazine."<sup>8</sup> It is embarrassing that Hugh Hefner has entertained the American male public and made millions for himself, over the past sixty-two years, on women's nude pictures. Gloria Steinem's protest of this in 1963, through the publication of an article, "A Bunny's Tale,"<sup>9</sup> lacks adequate support from other feminists over the years. Hence, Hefner had no serious opposition and, therefore, was not compelled to stop. The fact that he, finally, stops this degrading objectification of women because it is now bad business shows his intent, in the first place. Just in case women have kept mute on Playboy, and the likes, in the misplaced belief that they are furthering women's freedom, Hefner's recent decision is a beam as well as a smear on women's well made-up faces. And some women try to explain away posing nude for Playboy by claiming that they do it for charity! The greatest weapon men use in

getting women to, not only condone but, also, contribute to this reckless assault on their sexuality is by creating the impression that those women who succumb to their wiles are the sophisticated, liberated women - the models that other women should aspire towards. How the image of a stripped woman becomes the symbol of women's liberation is a question for another topic.

Is it surprising that the use of women as sex symbols has gone viral in the internet? Women, in their generality do not object strongly, some notable ones aid the objectification of women, so, greater evils arise against the female sex and more follow - sex trafficking of little girls, child pornography and skyrocketing increase in rape cases, especially of babies and children, to name a few!

The number of women forced or sold into prostitution is estimated at anywhere between 700,000 and 4 million per year. Between 120,000 and 500,000 of them are sold to pimps and brothels in Europe alone. Profits from the sex slavery market are estimated at US\$7-12 billion per year. In some countries (such as Moldova) sex trafficking has reached proportions that threaten to destabilize the population equilibrium - with potentially devastating long-term consequences (*Women in an Insecure World 2*).

I do not mean, even in part, to throw my support behind those who argue that when a girl is raped, it is her fault because she dresses in a provocative manner. No, that is the misogynist's attempt at explaining away his evil on the female sex. My point is that when a woman offers herself, for free or for money, to be snapped in all her nakedness or highly provocative postures; when the activist condone this by not doing enough to stop the likes of Hefner from using women as sex symbols in their magazines and other entertainment media, the prevalence of such becomes widespread and innocent women and children become the target of the male beasts whose appetite have been watered by such images. Relatively, the actions of certain women towards their own sexuality and the reluctance of female activists to make strong cases against the objectification of women contribute largely to the

preponderance of sex crimes in the society. History, tradition and patriarchy may be the root of female discrimination. But, the failure of womanhood to reach its full potential is traceable to the inability of feminists and female activists alike, to challenge, unanimously and fiercely, certain actions – by men and, indeed, women - against the female sex.

**African Literature: A Reference Point**

Chinua Achebe recounts an encounter with a stranger:

In the fall of 1974 I was walking one day from the English Department at the University of Massachusetts to a parking lot. It was a fine autumn morning such as encouraged friendliness to passing strangers. Brisk youngsters were hurrying in all directions, many of them obviously fresh men in their first flush of enthusiasm. An older man going the same way as I turned and remarked to me how very young they came these days. I agreed. Then he asked me if I was a student too. I said no, I was a teacher. What did I teach? African literature. Now that was funny, he said...It always surprised him, he went on to say, because he never had thought of Africa as having that kind of stuff, you know. By this time, I was walking much faster... (*An Image of Africa* 1)

Decades down the line, such a reaction, at the mention of African literature to an international audience, is bound to re-occur. Africa parades a host of giants in literature; men and women whose works are internationally recognized and acclaimed. We will not forget in a hurry, Chinua Achebe, the author of the classic, *Things Fall Apart*, which has made and still makes great ripples in the sea of world literature. Will our memory fail us to mention the great literary achievements of Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Amos Tutuola, Flora Nwapa, Nadine Gordimer, Christopher Okigbo, Nurudin Farah, Ayi Kwei Armah, Efua Sutherland, Elechi Amadi, Andre Brink, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Bâ, Denis Brutus, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Ousmane Sembene, Es’kua Mphahlele, Bessie Head, Lauretta Ngcobo, Okot p’Bitek, Ben Okri, J.M Coetzee, Buchi Emecheta, Tsiyi Dangarembga, Binyavanga

Wainaina, Kofi Awoonor, Alex la Guma, Athol Fugard and a host of others. The younger writers are not forgotten, Chimamanda Adichie, Chika Unigwe, Helon Habila and many others.

With this intimidating number of literary stalwarts, many not named here, it is a shame that Africa does not have an established literary institution that celebrates these writers and their achievements and serves as a tarmac for the flight of the new and aspiring African writers to gain speed and take off. Little wonder the concept of an African literature course in the United States elicits mockery from a passerby. Africans are in the best position to celebrate and promote African literature. While recognition and appreciation are extended to the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company (LNG) for the giant step it is taking in promoting literature in Nigeria<sup>10</sup> (and there is, most probably, more of such activities in other African countries), it is worthy of note that a project or competition that is indigenously African, which is promoting African writers and their works in a large, all-encompassing scale is yet to emerge. There are no major creative writing schools in Africa to teach creative writing in the African context.

When will it be morning yet on self-appraisal and enhancement day? When will there be literary competitions for African talents in Africa? Is it not high time we had a yearly competition tagged, perhaps, “Africa’s Got Writers” and afterwards, publish and promote the winners? The average African writer gets internationally recognized only if they are living in Europe or America, so that the chances of being read as an African writer writing from within is, indeed, very narrow. What follows? Because we have left the promotion of African writings and writers to the West, they call the shots. They dictate what is acceptable and what is not, so that most of, if not all the writings of the new African writers are cross-breeds; their works sit on the fence between indigenous African and Western literature. This has always been part of African literature since we write in foreign languages and, sometimes, feature white characters. But, in recent times, the prevalence of the techniques of Western literature is, embarrassingly, very significant as we

see in the works of modern African writers. Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubiike observe:

But African literature is an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures. It has its own traditions, models and norms. Its constituency is separate and radically different from that of the European or other literatures. And its historical and cultural imperatives impose upon it concerns and constraints quite different, sometimes altogether antithetical to the European. These facts hold true even for those portions of African literature which continue to be written in European languages. (4)

Before this call to develop African literature is faulted on the grounds that Africans do not read - a fact we are not proud of - let me remind us that in my country, for instance, people, on a large scale, did not watch films before the early 90s. The few that took interest in films were, mostly, the youths craving for romance and action in American, Indian and Chinese films. But, a man, Kenneth Nnebue, gathered his empty foreign cassettes and used them to produce the film, "Living in Bondage" (1992). The uproar from this film and the popularity it enjoyed encouraged other individuals who had hidden talents in film making and production. Everyone started watching films - the great grandfather in his wheelchair, the grandmother and the grandchild on her laps, the nun in the convent, the chief executive, the imam, the priest, the herbalist - all manner of people. Why? Because the stories of the films address issues that are true to their world as Nigerians, as Africans. As at 2014, the Nigerian movie industry, Nollywood, is worth N853.9billion that is \$5.1billion dollars according to the exchange rate then. It is the largest movie industry in Africa and second largest in the world, after Bollywood, pushing Hollywood to the third place (in film production).<sup>11</sup>

The same holds true for the Nigerian Music industry; D'Banj, a Nigerian musician, won Africa's best-selling musician for the year 2014.<sup>12</sup> Today, Nigerian actors and musicians win international awards and feature in international films and music videos. If they are not discovered, promoted and

celebrated in their own country and continent, it would be toilsome, almost impossible for them to make headway in the international film and music industries. Interestingly, most African films and, specifically, Nigerian films and music are authentically African and they enjoy local and international recognition. The same is possible for African literature and writers. The conditions are not the same for movies, music and literature, no doubt. While the first two can be purely for entertainment purposes, the third one hangs somewhere between entertainment and enlightenment. Hence, a level of literacy is required to appreciate it. However, the same effect can be achieved within the confines of the literate.

#### **Striking The Trouble Against A Possible Solution**

Retrospection and introspection become essential tools towards a solution to the problem of underdevelopment for Africa and for womanhood. There is a need to think back and review the level of achievements recorded by these groups through criticisms against their perceived enemies and weigh it against the enormity of their existing woes. As has been argued here, there are certain things within the confines of self that limit the pace of development of these entities to the realization of full potential. A study carried out in the course of this research, shows that majority of Africans are averse to anything Africa. They prefer European products, goods and services. Of the 100 questionnaires sent out to ascertain how Africans feel about themselves, 78% of the respondents agree that there is a preference for anything European over that of Africa; Africans opt to live and work in Europe, pay for European products among other things. Over 65% of this figure blames it on inferiority mentality. The same number of questionnaires is used to rate women's relationship with other women. 85% agrees that women do not carry on well with other women, they do not like one another that much; 35% of this statistics believes that this is caused by envy, 33% blames this on the unhealthy competition among women, 30% thinks that this is due to inferiority complex which, in turn, produces certain hostile attitudes.

The above statistics reveal a lack of appreciation and regard for self, as individuals and as groups, which is

not unconnected to the negative imaging of Africa and woman. Misconceptions about woman have eaten deep into the fabrics of the society so much that it affects not just how man conceives and treats woman but how woman perceives and regards herself. Woman has unconsciously imbibed those labels of inferiority and inadequacy so that whatever she does points to proving to the man that she is worth more than he thinks. Thus, instead of working for self-fulfillment and growth, she aims for man's acceptance and recognition. This puts her at his mercy as she falls for every of his whim and wiles thereby losing her self-esteem and pride in search of his approval. And because this does not satisfy her deepest needs, she is frustrated and agitated at the 'devilish' man.

The reason Playboy Magazine succeeds, immensely, in the use of naked pictures of super models, outstanding actresses and widely acknowledged female singers to attract a very large market is, most probably, because of this desire to impress men and the unhealthy competition among women fuelled by a feeling of inadequacy. As such, a woman who is divorced by her husband poses nude for Playboy to prove to the male world, as well as her female competitors, that she was not dropped for lack of 'it'. Woman will not realize her full potential as long as the belief that her worth is tied to men's appreciation or acceptance blurs her thoughts and informs her actions. Speaking on the woman who is driven by her quest for external acceptance and appreciation, Colette Dowling writes:

Unconsciously, the whole life of an overachieving woman is devoted to the creation of what psychologists call an "idealized self"...*Who she is* is no longer as important as *how she appears*. This shift in emphasis is pivotal in the psychological development of an overachiever. Her need to make an impression leads, finally, to her losing the ability to distinguish between the feelings and beliefs that are really hers and those that are artificial, to distinguish what's real from what is empty image. Once she reaches this point, she's (sic) lost the only thing that can possibly make her

feel secure: her connection with her true self. (71)

Woman's failure to consciously deal with the offshoots of the negative labels and discriminations causes her to be averse to her own kind. An average woman, rather than throw her weight in support of another's accomplishment, keeps mute or worse still, distances herself by going a different direction even though the new path will end in the same destination as the other woman's. This is seen in the numerous views and ideologies being propounded on feminism. There are so many branches of feminism that feminists, themselves, have lost count. And I do not mean to see anything wrong in propounding new theories or having a contrasting opinion, after all, such is what advances scholarship. Moreover, this writer, in another study, is proposing a new theory of self-acceptance, appraisal and enhancement (selfism). The point here is, if lady B's opinion is very much like the one already given by lady A, would it not be better for lady B to express herself under Lady A's platform and afterwards add her own idea and make her point? In trying to carve out a feminism that fits into the African tradition, for example, African female critics have come up with different ideologies. We have womanism, Nego-feminism, Stiwanism, Motherism, Sisterhood etc. All these can come under the umbrella of womanism thereby giving it more weight to push the course of African feminism. Charles Nnolim criticizes this trend:

The contours of the feminist literary landscape in Africa, in general, and Nigeria in particular, present a panorama of undulating topography- It is a house divided against itself and at present looks discomfitingly like the leaning tower of Pisa. With a house so divided, there is little wonder the brood is scattered leaving the activists clucking like hens after a swoop from a menacing kite. (250)

African women writers protest the male critics' failure to give them recognition in their critical works. This is quite understandable especially with Aidoo's explanation, "What we are saying though, is that it is especially pathetic to keep on writing without having any consistent, active, critical



intelligence that is interested in you as an artist (creator)" (514). However, Chimamanda Adichie, a contemporary African female writer, is enjoying great recognition in the literary world today, how many renowned female critics have written in support and appreciation of Adichie and her works? This is a discussion for another topic.

The same thing holds true for Africa. Because the Western world sees Africa as a dark continent and Africans as apes, Africans have unconsciously accepted the labels as true. Hence, Africa finds herself in the defensive instead of the offensive. The African continually looks up to the white man for ideas, acknowledgment, job, education, food and even for arms to fight his own brother. He is yet to realize that within him as a man and within Africa as a continent, everything he needs to square up with the white man, and possibly overtake him, is inherent. It has become natural for the African man to concede the first position to the white man even in situations that he should and ought to take the lead. In literature, as an instance, Most African critics are skeptical about discovering a new talent. They are reluctant to review and critique the works of new African talents writing from, and publishing in, Africa. White critics seem to have the prerogative of approving new talents first, only then will the African critic pay them any attention. There is this unspoken rule that the white critic must, always, take the lead. In a well-written and *star-studded* anthology of criticism in African literature edited by Africans, the first four chapters are intentionally reserved for the white critics, yet, in the same book are impeccable essays by renowned African writers and critics.<sup>13</sup>

It is high time the African faced the realities of her own self-imposed problems. Granted that the colonialists labeled her primitive and imposed a foreign culture and system of government on her, is it impossible to redefine herself and come up with an alternative system of government that will ensure positive result for Africa and her people? Dowden observes that running the hitherto self-ruled states of Africa with the Western system of governance is "trying to herd cats with a dog training manual" (4). Has any African, individual or group, fashioned the cat's manual yet? Insanity has

been described as the act of doing the same thing over and over again, through the same process, and expecting a different result. As earlier mentioned, we fall in love with Rodney for stating that Europe underdeveloped Africa; we read from his book that Africa is rich in natural resources, but, I wonder, did we see this observation with the main point intentionally italicized by Rodney? Or, are we seeing it as addressing, only, the colonialists and not the Africans? Perspective makes the difference.

*Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature.* Every continent independently participated in the early epochs of the extension of man's control over his environment – which means in effect that every continent can point to a period of economic development. Africa, being the original home of man, was obviously a major participant in the processes in which human groups displayed an ever increasing capacity to extract a living from the natural environment... (11)

#### Conclusion

Solution to the problem of underdevelopment for Africa and womanhood is found within the borders of these groups as the problem is, significantly, embedded in self. The root of the marginalization of these entities is traceable to external forces, but the failure to reach appreciable level of development is internal.

Obviously, Africa has become comfortable with blaming colonialism for the embarrassing underdevelopment issues that still plague her. And as long as Africa does not see herself as an integral contributor to the trouble, she may never rise to an enviable position among the world's best economy. The same thing is applicable to womanhood. The continuous casting of aspersions upon the man for the woes that increasingly befall woman is an aberration, relatively. There is little argument that patriarchy and colonialism have been at the core of the problem with Africa and womanhood; man's discrimination against woman and the white man's subjugation of Africa, creates a feeling of inadequacy on members of these groups. However,

narrowing the fight to an external camp and bearing, still, the negative labels imposed by patriarchy and colonialism is detrimental to the struggle. There is a dire need for self-cross examination, -rediscovery and -acceptance. An exhaustive overhauling of self is, therefore, strongly suggested for a positive rebranding of the continent and womanhood.

As the showcase for indigenous African culture and tradition, African literature is a significant aspect of the continent which, expectedly, shares in the trouble with Africa. The white critic has, for a long time, judged the African writer and, consequently, directed the steps of African literature. Hence, the works of most contemporary African writers falls somewhere between European and African writing. Except Africans are actively involved, African literature cannot fully evolve. The furtherance of the crossbreed literature is very likely to result to the loss of African literature's core essence. And, expectedly, *well-sculptured* critical works will come up accusing the West for shoving their pattern of writing down our throats! Now is the time to prevent international conspiracy from stampeding the growth of authentic African literature. And until that is achieved the present status quo dominates and we all, in Leopold Sedar Senghor's words, remain "cultural half castes" (qtd. in Lindfors 23). Elsewhere, Lindfors observes thus, "It is towards the reunification of Africa tomorrow that Africans must work today if they wish to repair the damage done yesterday. History is a... guide to a better future"(qtd. in Ogwude 98).

For more recognition and promotion of women and female writers, women authors and critics in Africa and beyond must repair their leaking roof. There is a need to shun envy and unhealthy rivalry in order to form a formidable force that will ensure full emancipation for not just the African woman but for the female sex, generally. Africa and womanhood must draw a line between apportioning blames and drawing attention to their challenges. The former has outlived its usefulness.

Simply put, the maggot that eats up the substance of an apple lives in its very core. To get rid of the worm through any means other than from

within, amounts to totally dissecting the apple. Africa and woman must fight the battle from within, through a stringent self-appraisal and enhancement measures.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>A Sumer legend. See Chancellor Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilization Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C to 2000 A.D.* Third World Press, 1987.

<sup>2</sup>See [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom\\_of\\_Nri](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Nri).

<sup>3</sup>See Alex Haley's *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. Doubleday. 1976.

<sup>4</sup>Donald Trump comments on the backwardness of Africans, a rather arrogant and aggravating statement, but, bears in some part, the truth. See [www.politics.co.ke/news/some-africans-are-lazy-fools-only-good-at-eating-lovemaking-and-stealing-donald-trump-2/](http://www.politics.co.ke/news/some-africans-are-lazy-fools-only-good-at-eating-lovemaking-and-stealing-donald-trump-2/).

<sup>5</sup>See Genesis 2:21-23; 3:1-12.

<sup>6</sup>See [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Bachelor\\_\(U.S\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bachelor_(U.S))

<sup>7</sup>For more on this consult <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/13/business/media>

<sup>8</sup>See above.

<sup>9</sup>For more on Gloria Steinem, see [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria\\_Steinem](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Steinem)

<sup>10</sup>See <http://www.nlng.com/our-CSR/pages/The-Nigeria-Prizes.aspx>

<sup>11</sup>See <http://www.herald.ng/from-nollywood-to-new-nollywood-the-story-of-nigerias-runway-success-lizelle-bisschoff/>

<sup>12</sup>See <http://africanspotlight.com/2014/05/29/db-anj-wins-best-selling-african-artist-at-2014-world-music-awards-see-full-list/>

<sup>13</sup>See *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Ed. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell, 2007.

#### Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. Doubleday, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. *An Image of Africa and the Trouble with Nigeria*. Penguin, 1977.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. "To Be an African Woman Writer – an Overview and a Detail." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Ed.

- Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell, 2007. 513-19.
- "The Bachelor." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.. n.d. n.pag. 7 Nov. 2015.
- Bisschoff, Lizelle. "From Nollywood to New Nollywood: The Story of Nigeria's Runway Success." *The Herald*. The Herald. 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016. n.pag. 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016.
- Chinweizu., Onwuchekwa Jamie and Ikechukwu Madubuike. *Towards The Decolonization of African Literature*. Fourth Dimension, 1980.
- Dalarun, Jacques. "The Clerical Gaze." *A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Age*. Ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. Harvard University Press, 1998. 15-42.
- "D'banj wins 'Best Selling African Artist at 2014 World Music Awards." *Web Master*. African Spotlight. 29 May 2014. n.pag. 7 Nov. 2015.
- Dowden, Richard. *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*. Portobello. 2008. Dowling, Colette. *Perfect Women*. Summit Books, 1988.
- "Gloria Steinem". *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.. n.d. n.pag. 25 Jul. 2016.
- Haley, Alex. *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. Doubleday. 1976.
- Kingdom of Nri. *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.. n.d. n.pag. 15 Nov. 2015.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Politics, Culture and Literary Form." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Ed. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Blackwell, 2007. 22-30.
- Mendoza, Christine. "Some Africans are lazy fools only good at eating, lovemaking and Stealing." *Authorbytes*. Politica. 25 Oct. 2015. n.pag. 7 Nov. 2015.
- Mill, Sara. *Feminist Stylistics*. Routledge, 1995.
- Mills, Greg. "Why is Africa Poor?" *Development Briefing Paper*, no. 6, Dec., 2010, pp. 1-7.
- "The Nigeria Prize for Science and The Nigeria Prize for Literature." *LNG*. n.p n.d. n.pag. 25 Jul. 2016.
- Nnolim, Charles. "A House Divided: Feminism in African Literature." *Feminism in African Literature*. Ed. Helen Chukwuma. New Generation, 1994. 248-64.
- Nwankwo, Chimalum. "Reflections & Retrospectives." *African Literature Today*, vol.30, 2012, pp. 1-7.
- Ogwude, Sophie. "History, Progress & Prospects in the Development of African Literature." *African Literature Today*, vol.30, 2012, pp. 98-107.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972.
- Somaiya, Ravi. "Nudes Are Old News at Playboy." *The New York Times*. 12 Oct. 2015. n.pag. 7 Nov. 2015.
- United Nations Economic and Social Council Economic Commission for Africa. *Overview of Recent Economic and Social Developments in Africa*. 27 Feb. 2014. n.pag. 23 Nov. 2015.
- Vlachovd Marie and Lea Biason. Ed. *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women* \_\_\_\_\_. *Facts, Figures and Analysis*. Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005.
- Williams, Chancellor. *The Destruction of Black Civilization – Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C to 2000 A.D*. Third World Press, 1987.