

Literature - A Powerful tool for Advancing Cultural Globalization and Universal Understanding in the Modern Era.

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Abstract

This paper titled: Literature – A Powerful tool for Advancing Cultural Globalization and Universal Understanding in the Modern Era is to explain the significance of literature as a topic of study and its benefits to humanity. The reader is empowered linguistically and given a civilizing value, which improves his ability to operate socially, morally, and intellectually in the human world. This occurs against the backdrop of imperialist critics who denigrate African literature based on race and claim that its concepts are universalism. This reflects the mindset of Western Europe, which believes that any concept that does not come from them lacks universalism. Using the opinions of African authors, this essay denounces the unwholesome mindset of Western Europe and makes the case that universalism may originate anywhere in the world. This paper also shows that concepts with worldwide relevance can only be discovered through an open-minded approach to literature from all around the world, not only Western European masterpieces. Second, literature is seen as a powerful medium for enhancing universal truths and the human experience. Additionally, literature can be valued for the inherent aesthetic qualities of its original locations. The study ends with the conclusion that literature is a powerful tool for promoting cultural globalization and universal understanding both today and in the future.

Keywords: Cultural globalization, universalism, negritude, aesthetic values universal truths.

I. INTRODUCTION

To literacy scholars, it would appear unnecessary to begin this paper with a definition of the term: Literature. For one thing, there are almost as many definitions of literature as there are writers. Another thing is that assumedly, everyone in the literacy studies knows what Literature is and can attempt a functional definition of the term. However, for a common understanding and, to give us a working definition, we shall adopt the definition of Literature as:

“written material such as poetry, novels, short stories, essays etc, especially works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by general or enduring interest (Soile, 1998).

We chose this definition because it is flexible enough to account for the majority of different interpretations of the term. Nonetheless, literature may be defined as the finest possible use or use of language to examine human experiences in a variety of contexts. Without examining the literature component of a language, it is impossible to do an empirical study of it using this method. In a given language, literature is often the creative output of the brightest minds.

Given the aforementioned, the study of a language as a communication tool that connects us to the outside world is the primary reason literature is valuable. Since language affects both our bodily and spiritual well-being, this is essential. Second, unlike what researchers from non-literate backgrounds have frequently thought, literature has a civilizing role that opens our eyes to the common human experience when we encounter timeless truths. Thirdly, literature's positive impact on our outlook on life can help us become better citizens. This is significant because it can teach our brains to accept contradictory ideals. This is essentially where literature has evolved into a true component of cultural globalization, particularly for Africa, whose literature has long been disparaged and rejected by Western critics on the grounds that it does not strive for ideological universalism, which they assert is exclusive to Western literature at the expense of works by other races.

Key Pillars in the Study and Inscription of Literary Works

Literary works are rooted in three basic pillars:

- The background of the author
- The historical antecedents of the setting and / or plot, and
- The creative spirit under whose influence or inspiration the writer is working at a particular time.

Taking a quick look at the aforementioned components, the writer's background encompasses his cultural orientation, his education or training, and his unique personality, character, or outlook on life. The source of his story and the reason behind his selection of a specific story or anecdote are determined by the historical context of the work's setting or narrative. Lastly, the muse (or genius) that guides or motivates his mind during creative moments is the creative spirit. Shakespeare seems to have created a connection between man and the genius, for instance, in the play "King Lear," as the artist is not always cognizant of his creative process. To emphasize elements he would not often perceive in his everyday existence, the genius takes control of the creative process or the creator's mind. Generally speaking, artists are well aware of how the genius, or creative spirit, intrudes into every creative endeavor. The creative process is comparable to the Almighty God's creative labor on the cosmos. Since we are all gods in our own right, by participating in the creative process, humanity is enriching the planet in his own unique way and sharing in the divine creative qualities. In the process of creating art, man seems to lose himself in a delusion that dominates his mind and awareness. The genius creates this illusion in order to increase their capacity for creativity. Thus, it is stated that the artist has characteristics with the lover and the delusional maniac during creative times. To appreciate an artistic creation, one must be aware of this creative process.

LITERATURE AND LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The influence of literature on language development is well established. For example, Chinua Achebe's unusual translation of native Igbo phrase into English has introduced the literary world to a novel linguistic phenomenon that quickly gained popularity among African writers. Achebe's awareness that no foreign language can adequately convey or represent the ideas of a distinct civilization whose native tongue is different gave rise to this linguistic emergence. Achebe's successful transliteration in his novels enable readers to understand the thoughts expressed as they are rendered originally and also carries the reader along; despite the fact that arch – linguists and conservative Western Imperialist critics saw Achebe's work as an attempt to corrupt the *"well established English language that had for many centuries impeccably fostered and provided leverage and direction to human thoughts and expression, as well as the intellectual development"*.(Woakes, 1981:37).

When Wole Soyinka translated D. O. Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Demons* from Yoruba, the book's native language, to English, he also experimented with the translation process. Soyinka wanted non-Yoruba speakers to be able to appreciate Fagunwa art. Since some of these works have been translated into several foreign languages, translation—and in reality, transliteration—has generally given African literature and African ideas a strong platform to be read and enjoyed by people worldwide. From this perspective, we need to recall that Chinua Achebe, who writes mostly on African themes, has exported African culture to all nooks and corners of the earth where it is now read about with better understanding.

LITERATURE AS A VEHICLE FOR CULTURAL DISPERSAL

Only Western literature was acknowledged and studied for intellectual and academic advancement until recently; African literature, which was relatively new, had not been considered a discipline worthy of serious consideration or study. The effects of Western imperialism were so great that European literature and history were used to denigrate the history and literature of the conquered countries in order to solidify imperial dominance in their minds. This disparagement stemmed from the Western Universalist view that all Western ideas and thoughts were superior to those of all other races on Earth. Only Western literature was acknowledged by these Universalists as having universal truths and human experiences.

Therefore, literature from Africa, which was seen as an expression of the developing world, was not given any consideration. Since the majority of what was considered African literature had its roots in oral tradition, there were even debates in certain places on whether or not Africa had literature. As part of their literary contributions to the independence of Africa, Said (1961) and Fanon (1971) both effectively encapsulated the Western universalistic notion in *The Wretched of the Earth*. These publications provide a thorough approach to examining the phenomena of resistance, dominance, and conquest in formerly colonized countries.

However, when anti-colonialist works in African literature exposed the imperialist myths about Africa and its traditions, the imperialist literary tendency began to wane. One such attempt to reveal the Western powers' imperialist intents was Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's impulsive reaction:

The history of Africa as presented by European scholars had been encumbered with malicious myths. It was even denied that we were a historical people... Such disparaging accounts had been given of African societies and their culture as to justify slavery; and slavery posed against these accounts served as positive deliverance of our ancestors. (Kwame Nkrumah, 1957:18)

Europe used the accounts given by their explorers and early sojourners in Africa as bases to justify slavery and, thereafter, colonialism, with all the evil trails of dehumanization and truncation of many nations to satisfy the imperial interests of these European powers. As a reaction against his imperialist world is attitude to the African, Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 and explained the purpose for his work as follows:

... a purpose implicit or expressed, to correct the distortions of West Africa cultures, to recreate the past in the present in order to educate the West African reader and give him the confidence in his cultural heritage which had been eroded by colonialism, and also in order to enlighten the foreign reader and help him get rid of the false impressions about the West African cultures acquired from centuries of cultural misrepresentation. (Obiechina, 1972:244)

Achebe's attempt at re-educating his audience is through Literature which can be seen clearly as a potent tool to correct all the racial misrepresentations intended to establish the assumed cultural superiority of one race over the others as exposed in the concept of Western universalism. As for the allegation that West African people had no culture before the advent of the white men, that what the West Africans have today was as a result of Western influence; Achebe, through his early works – *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* points out clearly that West African people did not hear of culture first from the white people; that the people had well established cultural and social organization which the Europeans met on the ground on their arrival. This kind of cultural and historical orientation has been accomplished by means of Literature.

Additionally, Sol made an attempt. T. Plaatje to refute the colonial fabrication of South Africa's Barolong traditional existence. "The concern of Plaatje is and only to defend the custom and the traditional life of the Barolong," Couzzens noted in the preface to *Mudhi*. "To a certain extent, he is also intent on re-interpreting history from the point of view of his own people." *Mudhi* (1930:10). The aforementioned illustrates the real necessity for literature to rectify racial misrepresentation by dialectically presenting opposing viewpoints, rather than only via polemics.

Oke (1972) in justifying the role of Literature in exploring universal truths about a man explained that: ... Literature is the total expression of the universal man, of eternal truths, not just a chronicle of a civilization.

Furthermore, Achebe sees Literature as incorporating storytelling, from the perspective of creature. He emphasizes the use of story-telling for educational purposes:

... it is only the story can continue after the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war drums and exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not the others that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence ... the story is our escort; without it, we are blind (Anthills of Savanna, 124)

African writers were on the front lines following the fight for independence in the early 1960s. In addition to the previous writings of Sol. T. Plaatje (*Mudhi*) and Gustavus Vassah (*Equiano's Travels*), additional anti-colonial literature flourished, particularly in West Africa, to bolster the decolonization efforts. Perhaps as a result of France's "assimilation policy" in their African colonies, French-speaking West African writers became more active in this movement than their English-speaking counterparts. Nonetheless, the fight against imperialism gave rise to the Negritude movement, which was distinguished by the following traits:

- A rejection of white culture
- A fresh and sympathetic look at the African culture
- A cultural unity of all the black people
- Link with the mother Africa; and
- Assertion of the African humanity. (Soile 1998:16)

African authors' acceptance of these characteristics as a tenet eventually led to the creation of the Black and Africa Festival of Arts and Culture, which united all Black people, first in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and subsequently in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1977. In addition to strengthening black unity, this gave South Africans who were still struggling under the Apartheid regime support and esprit de corps. It is evident from the aforementioned literary achievements of African authors and their success in overthrowing imperialism in Africa that literature has been a powerful instrument for globalization and cultural emancipation worldwide. It is in tune with the role that Literature can play in opening up better literary and cultural understanding, and Achebe feels that the cultural richness of mankind distributed by nature can be realized: Let every people bring their gifts to the great Festival of the world's cultural harvest and mankind will be the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offering (Achebe, 1979:18)

In order to fairly understand the ideals of works from other civilizations and the truths inherent in and flowing from such works—even if they do not align with one's own beliefs—literary works should be seen with a great deal of openness of heart. In this sense, such literary works will start to show signs of universalism.

II. CONCLUSION

The conversation above demonstrates how valuable literature is and how it can contribute significantly and powerfully to global knowledge and intellectual advancement. In addition to being a tool for linguistic growth, it also helps to elevate humanity intellectually and ethically, making him wiser and a better global citizen. Given that the world is becoming a global village, everyone should start showing a common readiness to view things from a broad viewpoint as members of a single, sizable human community rather than from their own limited perspectives.

It is from this perspective of Literature that the world could become a better place for mankind to live in and be able to function safely, generate and galvanize knowledge, peace, and understanding and enhance better human relations on the global scale.

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