

LIBERATION LITERATURE AND LIBERATION FEMINISM FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT. Modern African francophone and Anglophone Literatures date back to the era of the negritude movement. The pioneer African writer was confronted by the ugly past experiences of the inhumanity of the Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Saharan Slave Trade coupled with the degradation of the colonial period. As a result, he decided to pitch his camp with his suffering people by preferring to portray this evil in his writings, creating awareness on ways forward and calling for reforms. His tool was the sociological method. He laid less emphasis on the German *werkimmanenz*, the French *l'art pour l'art*, the Russian *Formalism* and the North American *close-reading*. The African feminist writer also turned her back to the Euro-American version of feminism and preferred the home-made ideology termed *Womanism* and her sister acronyms such as *Stiwanism* and *Motherism* which maintain that men and women relationship and apportioning of roles in the society should be complementary and not rivalry-prone or confrontational, while condemning obnoxious cultural and anti-womanist practices. Hence African men and women should concert efforts in liberating the African continent which is still suffering from modern versions of Slavery and Colonialism. This research will apply a multi-disciplinary approach and invoke the womanist, psychoanalytical and existentialist theoretical frameworks inter alia to appraise the relevant works of Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall and Ahmadou Kourouma inter alia. Through their realist portrayals, these African writers have created awareness of the injustices perpetrated by African oppressors, both Euro-Americans and their African collaborators. This research is a call on African writers for more prophetic and liberating efforts in their creative works and aesthetics. Liberation Literature should by so doing usher in a GREAT REFUSAL of the status quo and a way forward towards the birth of *the beautiful ones* in Africa who will fashion out a home-made literary, political, economic and social transformation for the betterment of not only women, but also men as well as youths of Africa.

General Introduction. The 1959 Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome was an opportunity for African writers to set standards and regulations as to the role of the African writer and critic. The Afro-centric criticism was given a vote of confidence as regards the expectations of the African reader vis à vis the duties of the writer/artist and the referee status of the critic. While appreciating the pioneering efforts of the Negritude which was not only a cultural and ideological phenomenon but also poetics, the congress committee on Literature faulted the Negritude on grounds of over emphasis on nostalgia for the African past, the romanticisation of the African poetry and the little regard for her literariness, present and future. Mostly castigated was the so called colonialist criticism, Larsonism and ethnocentric criticism. These criticisms were orchestrated by the

Europeans and Americans who applied the so called universal canonization criteria of traditional plot and structure, classical appreciation and round characterization on African literature. These applied European philosophical ideas and techniques, appreciation of the picturesque and instructive reactions. They wrote from outside Africa and in their reception theories; they targeted Euro-American readers and audience. These Euro-American writers and Anthropologists wept louder than the bereaved since they had virtually no African experience.

The post Negritude and post colonial Literature called for a realist Literature of commitment – *littérature engagée*. But after six decades of African literary exercise, the African aesthetics on the one hand and the African artist's solidarity for his people on the other hand are yet to be fully home-made and fruitful. Africa is still under new versions of slavery, colonialism and literary dependence. Papa Wemba, the Zairean creator of Lassapeur and Artist in an interview with the CNN on 9th Nov. 2012 bemoaned that after decades of the so called independence of African nations that “in every African country there is always a foreign hand dictating the law”. The foreign Hand is also in every African nation dictating the canons of every literary theory or theories of literature, theoretical frameworks, course work-development, critical approaches to literature, indexing of journals, Impact Factor, the language of artistic expression, standardization regularities at all levels. We also look up to the same hands for grants, scholarship, international accreditation, sponsorship and ranking. At the end of every month, the African scholar submits his hard earned salary so as to have his journal articles published in Europe and America because he lacks the will power and sincerity to develop genuine home-made journals.

Since he who pays the piper dictates the tone, how free is the fellow or researcher in his academic investigation and commitment to a given cause? All these challenges have occasioned my research for an alternative literature of commitment and african authenticity – *African Liberation Literature*. Such a literature will interrogate the African humanist and literary scientist on the above issues and will mobilize them to discover some durable answers. One factor is clear: African literature, nay scholarship is still in bondage. African Literature is still to a great extent an exercise in mimicry, recycling and cyclostyling of Euro-American manuals and ideas. In Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the one who mimicks or apes another suffers from inferiority complex just like the radical feminists regret that they have no *phallus* since they reason that the phallus is the symbol of masculine power. Hence the penchant for exaggerated mimicry of masculine *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*. Womanist ideology enters the stage to correct this aberration by stressing that biology has defined Gender as male and female. None should envy or ape the other. The one should complement the other.

The whole quest for an authentic African literature of commitment, combat or protest and independence takes flesh in African liberation literature. Literature in our context goes beyond literary esthetics and literary studies. We have hitherto had the ethno-centric criticism, the colonialist criticism, the Negritude, the Eurocentric criticism, the

sociological criticism, the socio-political and socio-economic criticism, the neo-marxist and the neo scientific criticism. In all these, African literature has remained a dependent literature. The need to liberate the African writer, the African critic and the African reader from the Euro-American literary canons and standardization forms part of our present exercise and is referred to as *liberation literature*. We are over due for a *Beyond Francophone and Anglophone literary aesthetics*.

Similarly liberation feminism is that version of women's consciousness that dissuades women from loathing motherhood and revelling in complaints instead of concerting efforts with the men to transform, reform the family and the community. For it is pitiful and defeatist for one to sit down producing nothing but only complaints, criticisms, murmuring and cries of woes. (Orjinta 2011:52):

Der Womanismus als Ideologie porträtiert das Bewusstsein der afrikanischen Frau, die ihre Interessen und Bedürfnisse anerkennt und dafür sehr diplomatisch und Gender-ergänzend in Anbetracht ihrer Berufung als Mutter und des Wohls der Familie (Mann und Kinder) und der Gemeinde kämpft.

Ogundipe Leslie in Adebayo(1996) brings in the idea of the *stiwa* thus: "Stiwa means social transformation including women of Africa: "I wanted to stress the fact that what we want in Africa is social transformation. It is not about warring with men, the reversal of role, or doing to men whatever women think that men have been doing for centuries, but it is trying to build a harmonious society. The transformation of African society is the responsibility of both men and women and it is also in their interest". Hence in our womanist aesthetics, we centre our attention on what the writer, male or female, is doing as regards the above issues.

Literature and Sources. For our sources we shall exhaust all materials on literature of combat and militancy in Africa such as Swingewood's *The Novel and Revolution*(1975), Fiebach's *Literatur der Befreiung*(1979), Adebayo's *Critical Essays on the Novel in Francophone Africa*, Orjinta's *Women's Experiences in Selected African feminist literary Texts and Women in World Religion and Literatures*. Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*(1963), Edith Iheakweazu's *Eagle on Iroko*(1990), Richard Right's *White man listen*(1995), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: *A grain of Wheat*(1967), Nwoga's *Achebe's vision of New Africa: Achebe as a Social Critic in Eagle on the Iroko*(1990), Opatata's *The Writer and a Sense of History*, Telwell's *Telling the Truth is the only way in Eagle on the Iroko*. Chodorow's *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989) and Nwala's *Critical Review of the great Debate on African Philosophy* (1970-1990) 2009. These sources and the ones I have already listed under Bibliography have dwelt on our theme of discourse from different perspectives. Most of these fall under the Post Colonial Literature. Their efforts have not yielded the desired goals as we can see both in the African literary and socio-political terrain. This project aims at digging deeper into the quest for a result oriented role of the African writer vis à vis his wretched society. Our attempt is surgical in that we are beginning by calling on the writer to heal himself first before healing his society. The

dependent writer or artist who suffers from colonial mentality will only engender a dependent art and aesthetics. This work calls for soul-searching on the part of the African writer as regards his sources of creativity, theoretical frameworks, methodology, stylistics, reception's theory and criticism of literature.

Methods This research, as earlier mentioned will apply a multi-disciplinary approach and invoke the womanist, psychoanalytical and existentialist theoretical frameworks to appraise the relevant works of Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall and Ahmadou Kourouma inter alia. Through their realist portrayals, these african writers have created awareness of the injustices perpetrated by African oppressors, both Euro-Americans and their African Collaborators. This humanist and society based criticism which saw the day in the 1920s began as a sociological approach for analyzing African oriented works. In the 1970s, it graduated as a neo Marxist criticism. For this criticism to be liberating enough under the conditions outlined above, it must first use ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary African philosophies like the ones of ancient Egypt (Ptahhotep 2414-2375 BC, Amenhotep IV, the Hermetian writings, Tertulian, Protinius, Origen, Negritude, Edward Wilmot Blyden's African personality, Nkruma's Consciencism and Nyerere's Uhuru na Ujamma, Nnamdi Azikiwe's Philosophy of Neo welfarism etc. for its theoretical frame-work. African philosophy revolves around the principles of Humanism, socialism and communalism as opposed to Euro-American capitalistic and individualistic ethics. Elsewhere Placid Tempels worked on *Bantu philosophy*, while William Abraham dwelt on the *Mind of Africa*. Uzodinma Nwala attempts *Igbo Philosophy* and John Mbiti laboured on *African Religions and Philosophy*. Africa has therefore a wealth of philosophical thoughts and ideologies which predate the European ones we are using. These should be dug out, developed and harnessed for literary aesthetics.

This sociological approach in particular must appreciate the African core values such as intuition, feelings, emotion, patience, simplicity, music, folklore, nature, symbolism and empathy. It must also explore the *explication de texte* where texts are interrogated to yield their meanings. The realist touch must be so cinematographic and journalistic that the art mirrors the society in toto. (Ahmadou Kourouma: *Allah n'est pas obligé, Quand on refuse, on dit non*. Heinrich Böll: *Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, Gruppenbild mit Dame, Ansichten eines Clowns, Frauen vor Flusslandschaft*)

Significance. This research is a call on African writers for more prophetic and liberating efforts in their creative works and aesthetics. Liberation Literature, as mentioned earlier, should by so doing usher in a *GREAT REFUSAL* of the status quo and a way forward towards the birth of *the beautiful ones* in Africa who will fashion out a home-made literary, political, economic and social transformation for the betterment of not only women, but also men as well as youths of Africa. African literary criticism should therefore continue in the fashion of social criticism. It appreciates works written by Africans, male and female, for Africans and with African characters (as major actors),

settings, plots and contents. According to the *Présence Africaine*(nr. 24 -25), this responsibility is spelt out clearly:

The true expression of the reality of his people long obscured, deformed or denied during the long period of colonization. This expression is so necessary under present conditions that it imposes on the Negro artist or writer a singularly specific concept of commitment. The Negro writer cannot avoid taking part in the general movement outlined above.

Plan of work and Ideology of Liberation Literature. Aside from the introduction and the conclusion, this work will take cognizance of the following guiding ideas viz. the objectives, the need for the study, the literature review and the theoretical framework. Next, the historical and philosophical background to African literary criticism will be touched. We shall also mention the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary African philosophies which have been copied or harnessed by Euro-American thinkers, repackaged and imported to Africa. Hitherto we erroneously tend to follow the Europeans by claiming that these literary theories emanated from Europe. These philosophies shall be dug out for possible use in our literary criticism, precisely in our theoretical frameworks. Thanks to the colonial master's indoctrination tactics, the African child has been brought up in schools to loathe everything African and to have long-throat for everything European. The writer Abdoulaye Sadj Abdou (1958:72) documented in this context the past mistakes of the French:

Quand l'école prend l'enfant noir, la première chose qu'elle interdit est l'usage de sa langue maternelle. Au fur et à mesure que cet enfant grandit, naît chez lui un complexe qui l'incline à préférer inconsciemment la culture occidentale, à vouloir s'identifier en tout et pour tout avec l'homme occidental. D'autre part sa civilisation propre lui est cachée. On l'habitue à penser que sa race n'a jamais rien été, que ses valeurs sont dérisoires, et qu'il n'a point d'histoire.

Similarly most African literary scholars have had their academic laurels in Europe and North America. There they were pressurized to read manuals which claimed that the commencement of virtually every discipline began in Europe. Philosophy for instance which provided the basis for most literary theories was erroneously documented to have commenced in Greece in the 6th Century B.C. African, Chinese and Indian philosophies were ignored or minimally regarded as cultural Anthropology and as such deficient to be included in the philosophical canons for literary articulation. But it has been proved that Egyptian philosophy predates Greek Philosophy (Nwala:2009:15-28): According to Bernal, ancient Greeks like Homer, Pythagoras, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc acknowledged the Egyptian origins of their birth as a people, of their language, identity, science, philosophy, mathematics, the names of their gods, their rituals, even their concepts of polis or state.(14).

ii. Egypt once colonized Greece and dominated her culture.

- iii. Many of the leading ancient Greek intellectuals studied in Egypt. These include Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, etc.
- iv. Homer credited the Egyptians with giving names to the Greek gods. Many of the Homeric myths are based on the Egyptian book of the Dead.

Liberation literature shall be seen as that way of doing literature which will impact positively on African consciousness. African liberation literature introduces a new way of reading and appreciating African novels, poems and drama with a view to exploring and monitoring if the Africans are presented by the African writer as the protagonists using the African conceptual modeling of time, space and aesthetics in poems, drama and novels. Themes and plots should chiefly mirror African worldview, past, present with a look into the future. Lilyan Kestoloot (Abia Nr 8, Fevrier- Mars 1965) noted:

Literary criticism is not only a matter of technique. Intuition and sensitivity are among its indispensable instruments and guides, and we can only love whole-heartedly and respond completely to that which is of the same nature as ourselves. One cannot judge properly except from within a situation. I am convinced that none but African critics will succeed in distilling the full essence, savour, significance and poetry, the succulence of the fruits of their ancestral heritage, for the greater glory of world literature.

This literature will take a look at the gender dimension of literature by studying the liberating and complementary efforts of women. It should see the needs and yearnings of men as incomplete without those of the women and children. Liberation literature will take us to the mediatory role of liberation literature as one can apply it also on the works of any given European, American and Asian writer like Heinrich Boell. It qualifies to be exported elsewhere. I have successfully applied womanism on selected German novels as in *Frauen-Womanistische Literatur in Werken Heinrich Bölls*(Orjinta:2012)

In conclusion we shall recall the strong argument from the foregoing that the African writer, reader and critic of literature should do a re-reading, a re-writing and a re-appreciation of literature in Africa so as to make it authentically African. Enough of the aping and mimicking of foreign lifestyles and writings as though everything must be imported from abroad for it to have value. This literature should also mirror and prophetically interrogate the African socio-political context which so far is in a dead-end and should call for a reform. The writer who is to call for a reform must first be reformed.

Main Thesis. Faced with the deluge of socio-political and literary problems still bedeviling Africa over a century since the advent of independence, this research tries to call for a re-writing, re-reading and re-appraisal of the African literature. This exercise discovers that the African literature is as dependent on foreign literary ideology, canons and criticisms as the African society is on foreign powers, economy, cultures and values. Since the African artist and critic who through their works should play the prophetic and liberating role for their people in bondage are themselves fettered and dependent on

foreign art and criticism, their role as writers, play writers, performing artists, poets, linguists, historians, archaeologists and literary critics are impaired. This work attempts to address this problem by re-examining the role of the African writer in the twenty first century. This project takes the nomenclature African Liberation Literature.

The 1959 Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome as earlier hinted was an opportunity for African writers to set the goal mouth as to the role of the African writer and critic. The Afro-centric criticism was chosen as regards the expectations of the African reader vis à vis the duties of the writer/artist and the referee status of the critic. This project frowns at the inability of the African writer and critic to achieve these goals properly and therefore aims at proposing a more surgical approach. Dependency and the absence of autarky have hitherto been the bane of our reading, appraising, acting, creating, documenting, interrogating and communicating, as well as the obstacles in Archaeology, History, Cinematography, Art and Music. L.S. Senghor (1964:34) refuses to see African literature as *l'art pour l'art*. He instead stressed that: *le mérite de l'art nègre est de n'être ni jeu, ni pure jouissance esthétique...*

Body. African Liberation Literature is literature by Africans, for Africans, in Africa and with Africans as protagonists. The plots, settings, models of time, space, plots, critics and theoretical frameworks should be Africanized. Non African characters and critics are allowed but these may play secondary roles. For the criticism to be liberating enough under the conditions outlined above, it must, as earlier hinted, first use ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary African philosophies like the ones of ancient Egypt (Ptahhotep 2414-2375BC, Amenhotep IV, the Hermetian writings, Tertulian, Protinius, Origen, Negritude, Edward Wilmot Blyden's African personality, Nkruma's Consciencism and Nyerere's Ujamma, rather than the Euro-American ones for its theoretical framework. This sociological approach must appreciate the African core values such as intuition, feelings, emotion, patience, simplicity, music, folklore, nature, symbolism and empathy. The post Negritude and post colonial Literature called for a realist Literature of commitment – *littérature engagée* following the philosophical postulations of Jean-Paul Sartre. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti, Sony Labou Tansi, Ferdinand Oyono, Ahmadou Kourouma, Aminata Sow Fall, Sembene Ousmane, Wole Soyinka, Mariama Ba, Aminata Sow Fall, Flora Nwapa etc. have written much in the area of literature of commitment. According to Chinua Achebe (1977:45), *the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march in front.* Then Alioune Diop founded *Présence Africaine* as academic tool for the dissemination of combatant ideas. Today most of our academic journals are kwashiorkored while we Academics overtake one another by engaging ourselves in capital flight, - an economic sabotage, by paying as high as sixty thousand Naira in order to get our journal articles published abroad. Shall we be prepared to commit half of such amount of money as publication fee in order to keep our journals afloat and qualitative? The bottom line is that after six decades of African literary exercise, the African aesthetics on the one hand and the African artist's solidarity with his people on the other

hand are yet to be fully home-made and fruitful. We look up to Europe and America for virtually everything. We now also look up to Asia for the canonization of our academic works. The gains of the Negritude – Negritude de source (L.S. Senghor) and Negritude de combat (Aimé Césaire) are yet to be fully harnessed. Africa is still under new versions of slavery, colonialism and literary dependence. Adebayo(1995:28) takes the African writer and critic down the memory lane thus:

Commitment and truthful account of the socio-political circumstances of the society were the keynotes to African literary criticism from the late fifties and sixties and even up to the eighties. Consequently, those who did not obey these were negatively criticized. This kind of criticism was in the first place a reaction to colonialist or ethnocentric criticism, just as Negritude was a reaction to the European's assertion that Africa had no cultures. In the second instance both writer and critic saw and still see themselves as a kind of collective conscience whose duty it was to tell the society *where the rain started to beat us*.

In Gender Studies, the African woman writer did not procrastinate in telling African women where the rain of racism, subjugation, exploitation and imperialism began to beat them, in order to fortify them against the racial deluge and its cessation as we can see shortly. African women learnt for the first time that African women's consciousness and ideology predates the debut of Western feminism (Orjinta: 2010). After all Africa was the mother continent, from where every human being owes his beginning (cf. *Theodorum Dancker: Der Kontinent Afrika 1690 –Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 25. March 2010, pg. 18). The other continents, according to the above research were inhabited by immigrants from Africa. Hence the ideology of the Womanism could not have been an appendage of Western feminism since the latter began as a reaction to a practice that has been with humanity since time immemorial, namely *patriarchalism*. This reaction which comes in various forms viz. Alice Jardine's *gynesis*, Showalter's *gynocriticism* did equally indict the hitherto women's conservative approach termed Womanism. Eagleton(1991:10) called for the banishment of men from the helm of affairs and their replacement with women – a worldwide women republic.

But Womanism as a feminist revolution, charts a more conciliatory tone that has a home-made liberating effect on African women. Thus they were properly mobilized and orientated to reject Euro-American version of feminism. Thanks to this rejection, African women did not fall into the socio-political traps that their European counterparts fell.

Womanism, Motherism and Stiwanism as African feminist Revolution per excellence.

The term revolution has always been linked to violent departure from the status quo. Though instances of *revolution* has been witnessed in the study of astronomy, economics, politics and sociology, renewed evolution in the study of the terminology revolution has led us to view every departure from the historical pattern of every human

endeavour as revolutionary. It is in this sense that one can view the courageous move by the Afro-American and African women and their male sympathizers to carve out a room of their own in the feminist discourse and praxis as a revolution per excellence. Those women led by Alice Walker refused to commit the sin of conformity as regards certain uncomfortable norms and duplicity in the mainstream Euro-American feminism. Their great refusal and prudent dissent to the complicity of their female counterparts in the evils of racism, Trans Atlantic slave trade genocide, colonialism and neo-imperialism propelled them to dig into the golden age of African woman's exploits which the advent of the colonialists rudely interrupted. This revolution has been termed Womanism. This revolution gave birth to further developments with new nomenclatures viz. Stiwanism, Motherism amongst others.

Definition and Analysis of selected relevant terms.

Feminism. Feminism understood as women studies stands on the pedestal that there is a nature-based difference between man and woman. The biological difference between man and woman makes it possible for man to complement efforts with woman to affect the birth and raising of offspring. Apportioning of roles based on gender is the handiwork of a system of male domination of the female known as patriarchy. Mainstream feminism aims at ensuring the stability, survival and identity of the female gender. However current feminism is a divided house and should no longer be referred to in the singular. What is obtainable today are feminisms. Womanism is one version of feminism. This phenomenon is as well a great revolution. Women are not yet done in their quest for Gender balance. The issue at stake here is the *female* as a biological category, the *feminist* as a political position and *feminism* as a cultural construct (Eagleton 1991:227).

Womanism.

The womanist invites the African woman to complement her efforts with those of her men for the good of the family, whole and entire and for the growth and development of the entire community. While *Motherism* stresses that motherhood is a woman's vocation which no profession or social status of the woman could negatively interfere with, *Stiwanism* aims at the social transformation of the community through the complementary and mutual roles of both man and woman. The whole idea of women's consciousness and reaction against sexism and injustice by the male dominated societies across the globe otherwise known as the great refusal against patriarchy has already been viewed as a revolution. This revolution which reached its zenith in the sixties got highly radicalized among the extremists who called for the banishment of the men folk from the center stage of all political, social, economic, literary, military and religious pedestals hitherto occupied by men, and replaces them with the women. Certain schools of the feminist movement even called for a world of only women republics. These reforms in the wider gender studies burgeoned into the revolutionary idea that even before the entry of the Euro-American feminist movement into the world Gender discourse; the African women's consciousness already existed. This paper tries to prove that these departures

from the existing historical patterns are simply revolutions. The African womanist proves that African woman's consciousness predates the Euro-American feminism and as such is no appendage or offshoot of it. The radicalized feminist postures added salt to the injury of the strange bedmate condition between Western feminists and their African counterparts. In Orjinta Ikechukwu(2008:18-20) this and other factors necessitated the urgent need for the rediscovery of an indigenous and autonomous African feminist movement:

While some African women writers like Aminata Sow Fall, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo have totally rejected such feminist tag, others like Modupe Kolawole, Molar Ogundipe-Leslie and Rose-marie Tong believe that African women's consciousness, self assertion and mobilization predate Western feminism. Hence accepting feminism as it is defined by the West amounts to parroting or mimicking other people's reality. According to Modupe Kolawole, (1997:8) "Some women see concepts such as African feminism and Black feminism as identical to singing African songs from the belly of the beast"

Notwithstanding the name-calling and labeling of these pioneer African Womanists by the West as 'champions of patriarchal values and idealistic pre-colonial era,' 'anti-feminist', 'backward' and 'unprogressive' (Athleen Ellington, Nicki Hitchcott), these courageous women succeeded in inventing home-made terminologies which capture holistic and realist African woman's world view; a worldview that is deeply family oriented, accommodating, self-healing and self-liberating. After all, African pioneer women activists and literary figures were in the main motivated not so much by the European civilization as by the traditional African Orature and the heroic lives of historic powerful African women.

In this regard, Womanism which in the words of Modupe Kolawole (1997:24) "is the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval and self-assertion in positive cultural ways" was evolved. Womanism which takes into cognisance African women's experience of patriarchy, slave trade, colonialism, racism and neo-colonialism in its post modern feminist understanding is a totally distinct and explicit way of life for and by the African woman. To this effect, our guiding definition of the emergent Womanism remains the version of Clenora Hudson-Weems in her work *Africana Womanism* as quoted by Modupe Kolawole (1997:25) which states that:

Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, African Womanism is not Black feminism or Walker's Womanism that some Africana women have come to embrace. Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and therefore it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women.

What the womanist has done with feminism is being expected from the African writer as far as African literature is concerned. It does not suffice to change nomenclatures and propound theories while the praxis remains foreign.

Revolution. The term *revolution* has roots in the social and political sciences and refers to a change in the status quo. This root goes back to Aristotle. It is in this sense that one can understand the 1789 French and the 1917 Russian Revolutions. When similar phenomena occurred within the industrial, fiscal and economic realms, one uses the same terminology *revolution* as in the case of the Industrial Revolution. The term revolution need not be restricted to political settings where socio-political upheavals have taken place. The terminology should be applied in all situations, as we have earlier hinted, where there has been a total or partial departure from the historical, economic, political and social patterns. In fact every courageous effort to effect a change in any discipline or socio-political context for the benefit of humanity whole or entire could be seen as a revolutionary step. Granted that each instance of revolution is compartmentalized, the ripple effects however touch every field of life. It is in this way that a politically motivated revolution could have its chain reactions on the economic or social life of the people. The Encyclopedia Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/500584/revolution> corroborates this view in the followings:

Revolution, in social and political science, a major, sudden, and hence typically violent alteration in government and in related associations and structures. The term is used by analogy in such expressions as the Industrial Revolution, where it refers to a radical and profound change in economic relationships and technological conditions.

Though the idea of revolution was originally related to the Aristotelian notion of cyclical alterations in the forms of government, it now implies a fundamental departure from any previous historical pattern. A revolution constitutes a challenge to the established political order and the eventual establishment of a new order radically...

In 1789 French Revolution, women took active part in liberating political prisoners and fighting for equality and freedom. Olympe de Gouges in her handout – *The Rights of Women*, noted that that revolution would be unfinished unless women became aware of their losses as a sex. The *Journal des Dames*, a women's Newspaper carried the caption in 1791 that *women has set men free*. Winslow Barbara in *Revolutionary Feminism – A Short History of Women's Liberation* (1978) documented three stages of women's revolutionary tactics. But in all, women tapped the resources of not only the French Revolution, but also of the Russian – Bolshevik revolution. Having overthrown the Tsar the seat of Russian patriarchy Winslow (1978:51-52) outlined the feminist harvest thus:

Engels and Marxist feminists argued that, in order for women to be free, not only would they have to enter the labour force on a mass scale, but also that women's subordinate position within the capitalist family would have to be destroyed. The tedium and drudgery of house work would have to be socialized. Society as a whole, would take responsibility for the function of the family – cooking, cleaning, laundering, etc. In this way, the economic functions of the family would no longer exist. The family then could become a personal arrangement based upon genuine love and respect.

In Germany, the hitherto gains of the French and Russian revolutions that spread across Europe was rudely interrupted by Hitler and his fascism. Women organizations were disbanded and replaced by the KKK-Kinder (children), Kirche (Church) and Küche (kitchen)(cf. Winslow 1978:58).

Revolution in our context pertains to the idea of a reaction against the sexist action of men in the prevailing patriarchal societies. This action had existed from time immemorial and women have been suffering in silence until they began to tear the veil of their invisibility. Gender crisis does not start from the era of the feminist movements. It is as old as humanity itself. After the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:12), the man Adam did not take full responsibility for his actions: The man replied, 'it was the woman you put with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate'. It was not long that man started seeking for one way or the other to divorce – *hire and fire* his wife. When this pressure to hire and fire became unbearable, the patriarchal society decided to bend the law of indivisibility of marital union till Death by allowing men to divorce their wives.(Deut.24:1-4).This type of treatment against women forms part of the psychological violence against them. Feminism therefore becomes a reactionary move against the action of the male gender against the female gender. Hence feminism is best studied via the psychoanalytic theory as Chodorow Nancy in her book *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*(1989:5)) would argue:

During the early period of single cause feminism, I probably would have continued to develop as a Marxist feminist if I had thought that gender inequality inhered primarily in capitalist or capitalist-patriarchal work relations. I would have learned political theory if I had thought that the State was the primary locus of women's oppression or become a cultural critique or philosopher if I thought woman's oppression was located in her otherness. I might have become an expert on aggression and testosterone or female hormonal cycles if biology seemed the key. My drawing upon psychoanalysis, in some sense the creation of single individual, during that period was itself in the context of, and remains a sort of carryover, from feminist grand theory days.

Freud, a Jew who was born in 1856 and expired in 1939 took the lead in psychoanalysis by his pioneering works and researches on the human mind and on its influence on human relations. Freud was never gender aware in his postulations but

Feminists could still use his sexist postures to advance their feminist counter cultural fight. Freud's literary criticism via Sophocles Oedipus Rex has been of immense benefit to feminist critics. In this Greek tragedy, the male child developed sexual attachment to his mother. Inversely in the Electra complex, a certain rivalry developed between mother and daughter, whereby the girl child develops the so called castration complex towards the father. In Womanism, the girl child's castration complex which her super ego has helped her to repress the attendant incestuous feeling towards the father is at best assuaged through maternity and motherhood. Freud insists that *Anatomy is power*. This power appears to be culturally allocated to the possessor of the Phallus by the patriarchal society. This research on the subconscious and the unconscious are being tapped in emergent women's writing via the instinctual drives of the id, the ego and the super ego. Women are concerned about the id's instincts of self preservation (eros) and the contrary instincts of aggression and suicide (thanatos). This comes to play in the face of obnoxious cultural practices. Similarly the ego's defense mechanisms – sublimation, repression, reaction formation, regression and compensation are tools that the African woman can exploit to steel herself in the face of psychological, physical, and cultural violence by the masculinists. The ego and the super ego are perennially in conflict resulting in inferiority nay superiority complexes, neurotic anxieties, guilt feelings, persecutory paranoia and what have you.

Feminist critics like Kristeva, Irigaray, de Beauvoir, Cixous, Maggie Humm etc have spilled a lot of ink on paper on both the positive and negative appreciation of Freud's and Lacan's contentions of psychoanalytic theory and its relation to the feminist agenda.

In every discipline today, there is always a feminist dimension and all schools of feminism are agreed that there was once an ACTION taken and SIGNAL given by the men dominated society called Patriarchy. Similarly there was a REACTION and COUNTERSIGNAL by the women. Hence gender conflict. That action that made the women to change their mind is the issue at stake. In matriarchal societies too, the women are seen as the aggressor by the masculinists. Masculinists believe that women, once entrusted with power are autocratic, subtle and serpentine. (Chinweizu: *Anatomy of Female Power, A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy* (1990). Similarly that action by the women that made men to change their mind is the agenda. We shall however not go into the masculinist contention since this is outside our purview now.

Applying Freudian psychoanalytic theory one recognizes the extreme use of violence against women in the African conceptual modeling of time, space and world view. These attacks are wars on the feminine psyche. The ultimate goal is to make her feel inferior, dependent and weak. In this psychological warfare, such a tactic is meant to clear the ground for the eventual apportioning of roles to the sexes. Hence the one who is weak,

dependent and inferior should be reduced to the domesticity, docility, invisibility, invocality, poverty and passivity. These acts of violence take various dimensions:

Physical Violence:

These could be *Matrimonial rape*: In this case wives are forced to have sex with their husbands against their will. Husbands also insist on meeting their wife sexually even when they know quite well that they have STDS or other venereal diseases. These instances could result in forced and unwanted pregnancies.

Some men beat or threaten their wives with canes, machetes, gun or, fake as though to batter or assault them. Other men abandon home and leave the children without any care or support, even if the wife is a salaried worker.

Many husbands abuse their house-help and nannies sexually and take better care of them more than the married wife. Many even end up bringing in the nannies and house-help as wives.

Cultural Violence:

Sororate which is a form of marriage whereby a man marries the sister of his deceased wife as a replacement for the dead wife, failure of which his dowry is returned to him can be considered a form of cultural violence.

The Kaatia people of South Africa are noted for the above practice. The argument for this is that marriage bond between two families cannot be severed, not even by death. A widower forfeits this right if he was the cause of the death of the wife.

Another form is *Ghost Marriage*. In this case a brother of the deceased bachelor marries an extra wife under the name of his dead brother and raises children who will bear his name. This is practiced in many African customs like among the Nuers. The woman is bought like a chattel and forced to answer the wife of a dead man she never knew or met.

Levirate can also be considered as a form of cultural violence. The Nuer in the Sudan and the Beolou in Arabia and parts of North Africa are notable for this practice. The levirate system ensures that the deceased gets children under his name even if he had none before his death. This role will be played perfectly well by the social father on behalf of the psychological father. Where however the deceased already had children, the living brother becomes the foster father of his children and the new sexual partner of his wife. So long as this is done contrary to the consent of the female partner it is violent.

Endogamy is marriage that is allowed within ones own kin-group excepting ones sister or brother or close kinsman. This is practised notoriously within the caste and sub caste groups in India. The goal is to ensure that the purity of the race, their solidarity and assets are maintained. The Osu caste system and the six-footed caste system among some Igbo communities fall within this practice. The woman in either case is forced or restricted from exercising her freedom of choice of a life partner due to cultural prohibitions. Here it is a question of sexual or racial segregation, male chauvinism, and superiority complex. The opposite of endogamy is exogamy which is generally practiced in most African cultures. *Polygamy* as earlier mentioned comprises polygyny and polyandry. The first is a

system of marriage whereby a man marries as many wives as he wants, while the second is marriage where a wife has more than one husband. Polygyny only serves the selfish interests and egoistic tendencies of the polygynist. Women and their children are not treated well under polygynist conditions. Polygamists always have preference for younger maidens. The polygynist families are generally a battle ground for feuding wives and children. The children are left under the care of their mothers while the husbands go on adding kids upon kids.

Advocates of polygyny on the contrary present such reasons as female barrenness, sickness, high maternity rate of women and high mortality rate of males due to warfare, epidemic or slave trade for the necessity of polygamous practices. In African cultures however, whether in matrilineal or Patrilineal systems, the quest for a male issue and the continuity of the lineage, the insatiable urge for sex among men, the need for helping hands at the farms, and the social status of high-society and tumultuous funerals are adduced as common factors for polygamous practices. Similarly polygynists may prefer their condition, namely bringing all the wives whether in reality or in potency under one roof or umbrella than answering monogamists but having several mistresses and concubines in different streets and tertiary institutions.

Bride Price and child marriage could also be considered as forms of cultural violence. The girl is literally sold to the highest bidder. In some African cultures like in the northern part of Nigeria, teenage girls are forced into marriage. The health hazards including Vesico Vaginal Fistulae (V. V. F) are enormous.

Mental and physical trauma during initiation ceremonies: Initiation ceremonies are opportunities for men to show their triumphalism and chauvinism. Women agents are used to execute abominable and inhuman cultural practices like female genital mutilation., fattening room rituals, preparing girls on sexual practices for the pleasure of husbands, dietary restrictions, and women having to kneel before husbands while serving them food or water (Akintunde, 2001:58-68). See Illustration C in the appendix.

Denial of inheritance rights and division of labour that subordinate women are economic violence against women and are committed in most African cultures. Women are denied rights of managing family estates and they face greater difficulties if they go in their name to acquire landed property and title of deeds. There are instances among the Lozi people of Zambia, the Igbos of Nigeria and people of the Southern Zaria in Kaduna State Nigeria (Akintunde, 2001:60). Division of labour is always tilted in favour of men. Such imbalance in sexist division of labour produced the saying: '*women's education ends in the kitchen*'. Where however men and women work side by side as in the farm, there is gender stratification in the sharing of crops and seedling: Yam, a male crop is valued more than cassava and cocoyam which are seen as female crops. Patriarchal attitudes ensured that women's roles are not costed. Since motherhood as a vocation is carried out at home, in the family, there is virtually no economic or financial evaluation for it. This is the case notwithstanding the fact that it is a highly energy sapping and time consuming undertaking. The housework and child rearing are not counted as a job. The wife must

still go to farm work, market and undertake extra economic activities for her to justify her mainstay and division of labour. Even when everybody in the family have come back from the farm or the place of work, and are fatigued, the onus still falls on the woman to go to the kitchen. She may be doing this kitchen work and at the same time be nursing the babies: one at her back, one on the ground and another in the crib. The husband reclines on a mat or bamboo bed or at best, he sits on a chair over a keg of palm wine expecting the meal which must come quick or there will be flagellation or slapping. This is culturally acceptable in Africa.

Widowhood is perhaps the worst form of cultural violence. The death of a husband ushers in a period of anguish and misery for the widow. In some cultures in Africa, like among the Yoruba's and the Igbos, there are tales of woes in the name of culture. The wife must not take her bath for about two weeks. The corpse must be washed and the widow has to drink a cup of the water so as to ascertain her innocence or culpability in the death of her husband. She must not change her clothes. The widow is expected to weep all night for one week.

In some cases she has to crawl on her knees for a distance of 200 meters. Her hairs are to be shaved and she must transfer her sleeping abode to the corpse while the corpse lies in state during the vigils. She has to inhale the odour of the decomposing corpse of the deceased husband in spite of the health hazards.

In Yoruba land for example where more than half of the married women are married into polygamous homes, the sisters and mother in-laws remain the chief agents and custodians of these obnoxious practices.

Culture has been defined as an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which (people) communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and toward life. (Akintunde, 2001:50-55).

Culture in the African context takes religion as its validator and suretee. Hence once one says a practice is our culture or is our tradition, it means the practice cannot be debated, questioned, or reformed. Those who are benefiting from African culture like the proverb, "*a river never returns to its source*". Like tradition, which comes from the Latin word *traditio* - to pass on, culture once transmitted loses all its dynamism and transformation. As the Igbos would say: "*The charcoal of fire entrusted to a child can never consume him*" or "*No responsible person allows the lantern under his custody to extinguish*", Patriarchal attitudes are entrenched in African cultures and religion has been exploited to validate them.

Critique of Womanism. Womanists stand to be criticized for not entrenching enough soul searching when it comes to certain anti-womanist practices: body bleaching, excessive perming and styling of hair, sexual promiscuity before, during and after marriage, aberrations in motherhood, women as axe people in the perpetration of all obnoxious cultural practices against women, women ganging up among themselves even

when their colleague is wrong, women's refusal to vote fellow women into political offices because of jealousy and pettiness, etc.

Camara Laye in his novel *The African Child* eulogizes his mother, Daman as the model of African motherhood. The nostalgic representation of African mother is also cited in Camara Laye (1954: 55-61). The mother gives birth to the child and helps it grow up:

Mother was very kind, very correct. She also had great authority, and kept an eye on everything we did; so that her kindness was never altogether untempered by severity... and my mother was not a very patient woman.

Laye also emphasizes mutual harmonious relationship between his father and his mother:

My father would never have dreamt of despising anyone, least of all my mother. He had the greatest respect for her and so did our friends and neighbours.

Daman equally declaims her virginity before marriage, as well as her fidelity afterwards to her husband thus:

If it be true that from the day of my birth I had no knowledge of no man until the day of my marriage; and if it be true that from the day of my marriage I have had knowledge of no man other than my lawful husband – if these things be true, then I command you horse rise up.(p.59).

What one says about oneself is the most certain representation of the person in question. Briefly put, Aminata Sow Fall says that she is Wolof by tribe, and a Muslim by religion. Born at St. Louis in the Northern part of Senegal, she attended Primary and Secondary schools and later studied modern languages. (Pfaff:1985). When asked about her literary leaning, Sow Fall stated that "*she supports programmes aimed at the emancipation of women, but she has no political commitment in the sense that she is not an activist of any political party*" When she was accused of promoting outdated values, she replied that "*she is not a feminist in the general sense of the word. She is not a militant feminist and the 1975 Women's Conference had nothing to do with her starting to write. Writing is a form of witnessing, a way of filtering the social reality of the moment*". Samba Gadjigo (1996:28) In her feminist works she satirized inter alia non gender aware and anti-womanist tendencies like women's body beautification and appearance which are mere mimicry of the Euro-American ways in the African society. Instances abound concerning certain tendencies of people who abandoned their well paid jobs just to join the fashion of the so called *being-to*.

Her social criticism and her womanism have been greatly influenced by her family background, family upbringing and her society as we could read in Kestloot Lilyan (2001:270):

Après les grandes espérances de la négritude, romanciers...tant Anglophones que francophones avaient certes rapidement dénoncé les dérives des politiciens autochtones, les ridicules et la contradiction de la

nouvelle bourgeoisie, les déceptions et difficultés des masses populaires dont la situation empirait. Mais il y restait toujours l'espoir. Saint Monsieur Baly de Williams Sassine, Xala de Sembène Ousmane ou la Grève des Battu d'Aminata Sow Fall, Le Pleurer-Rire, d'Henri Lopes, débauchaient sur une issue positive, après des situations d'affrontement.

After the great hopes of the Negritude, both Anglophone and francophone novelists were very quick in denouncing the drift of the local politicians. They frowned at the ridicules and contradictions of the new bourgeoisie, and the deception of the masses of the people whose conditions were getting worse. But there were always rays of hope. William sassine's saint monsieur Baly, Sembene Ousmane's Xala, or the Beggar's strike of Aminata Sow Fall and Le pleurer- Rire of Henri Lopes began on a positive note, after the era of confrontation.

Aminata Sow Fall's *le jujubier du patriarche*, an invitation to the reader to reminisce vistas of African glorious past positions her on the path of Chinua Achebe who after reading Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary's prejudices in *Mr Johnson* vowed to balance the account cf. *Morning yet on Creation Day*(1975):

At the university I read some appalling novels about Africa and decided that the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone no matter how gifted or well intentioned.

Achebe achieved the goal of proving that Africa has an organized social system in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. This social system had a dual sex administrative system and was on course before the European intervention rudely interrupted it. In *No longer at Ease* and *Man of the People*, Chinalumogu Achebe presents the disenchantment and disillusionment with the way the African elites who took over from the colonialists were running the affairs of the new states. Similarly generations after us may indict us for not doing enough to better what we have inherited. Hence the need for us to retreat and soul-search on the way we are doing Literature. Is our literary Science truly incarnated in African soil or is it a recycling of Euro-American manuals?

Conclusion.

From the foregoing we have tried to propose an idea for the African Humanities and specifically for the African literature. This idea follows the steps of the liberation theologians and sets the target of re-writing, re-reading and re-appreciating African literature and using this exercise to mirror the realist and cinematographic condition of the African and to call for reform, rejuvenation and stability as the case may be. This assignment cannot be achieved unless the African man and woman, following the womanist philosophy and praxis turn a new leaf by being truly free, productive, original and independent. Since the era of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and The Trans Saharan Slave Trade, Africans in general have always tried to overtake each other in mimicking and apeing the ways of the Arabs and the Europeans. We have proved that we are indeed

the most humiliated race in human history by throwing the towel of a vanguished continent. The meeting and clash of African, Arabian and African cultures took place indeed, and the African culture was vanguished, vanguished and looted by the conquering cultures. All eyes have so far been on the African Writer and Intelligentsia to show his culturally kwashiorkored people the way. With exception of a tiny minority, we all have betrayed that confidence by our uncontrolled copying and recycling of Euro-American manuals. Where does the African writer stand to satirize the penchant of the African women and men to bleach their skin and iron their hair? Where does the African writer stand to satirize anti-womanist tendencies? Can the African literary scientist criticize African elites who go abroad for every ailment? In spite of the merits of the womanist ideology, African women have been encouraged to do a soul searching as regards obnoxious cultural practices and the role of a section of the African womenfolk as axe people in their execution. Women of all social classes, from our findings maltreat their daughters in law, their house maids and their co-wives. Their girl-child maids and house-keepers have been victims of child labour, battery and exploitation. Many revel in gossips, rumour-mongering, blackmailing, husband- snatching and idleness. The womanist calls on this class of women to liberate themselves first before pointing accusing fingers at the men.

Our findings frowns at our level of intellectual squandemania and prodigality. We have, as a result, ended up an exploited, upstaged and impoverished race. Since he who pays the piper dictates the tone, our intellectual property is hardly ours. They belong to those who give us pittance and handouts, only when we dance to their tones. Hence every year for instance, lecturers engage in relay race changing virtually all their salaries into Euros and dollars and siphoning them abroad to Asia and Europe in order to have their journal articles and books published because their local journals are deep in mediocrity. Elsewhere the African scholar who has stepped into politics and governance has not shown any good example. This paper is a call for soul-searching and reform in the long awaited quest for African liberation literature. Our literary research should refine us and interrogate our ways for the betterment of our society.

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