

Acta
Universitatis
Danubius



COMMUNICATIO

Exchange of Intellectual Jabs: Could National Literature Controversies End?

Anthony Njoku¹, Juliet Elikwu²

Abstract: The yardsticks for ascension to national literature in Africa characterized by multiethnic compositions, cultural and linguistic differences remain controversial. The problem as it were has become a sore spot in African literary scholarship. The language factor seems to be the most critical in the entire polemics while the potential loss of works cast in the modes of European languages prone to disqualification is nightmare dreaded by writers. African intellectuals occupy two distinct semi-circles of opposition camps i.e. those who argue that works in ethnic languages (vernacular literatures) are national literature and those who insist that it is rather those in European languages. African literary scholars have therefore found themselves on the crossroads. Are Vernacular literatures or works in European languages the true national literature? Can intellectual tirades and altercations cease if a neutral stance is taken in the herculean task of founding national literature? This prescriptive essay followed the qualitative approach using Earnest Renan's "What is a Nation?" as its theoretical framework to carry out the enquiry. It tackled the questions raised in the background and came out with the results that there is national literature module one and module two which neologisms also remain its recommendations. This order derives from the fact that there are two legitimate concepts of nationhood according to Renan. The essay proffers these as solutions to unending and contending sheds of opinions, arguments and controversies on the subject matter that is ever dogging the African literary circle. The study consequently recommends that these two terms be used to separate African literary scholars exchanging intellectual jabs.

Keywords: National literature; Vernacular literatures; Literatures in European languages; Modules one and two

¹ PhD, Comparative Literature Programme, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Address: Local Government, Abuja Campus, University of, 500272, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Tel.: 08030849163/07064323729, Corresponding author: anthony.njoku@uniport.edu.ng.

² PhD, Department of French and International Studies, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria, Address: Igantius Campus, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, E-mail: julietelikwu@yahoo.com.

Introduction

The fact that African literature keeps taking giant strides since its inception does not mean that it is not still grappling with problems such as the difficulty of defining its full identity. This affirmation is directly linked to the crises that besiege the originality of African literature given its periodic dedication to a motley of accidental ideologies arising from unforeseen histories such as slavery, racism, negritude, pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism, colonialism, post-colonialism; post-Africanism, disenchantment, victimhood and anti-globalization. If other obstacles militating against its existence and survival are surmounted, it is still not certain that African literature in its effervescence could defeat in the offing the teething problem posed by national literature. Literary pundits who find themselves in collision course, owing to myriads of views on what national literature should be, have continued to incessantly unleash intellectual tirades on one another in a bid to deploy superior logics. All efforts to bring them to a consensus have proved abortive. This situation has stoked controversies on which Peters (2005, p. 82) bases these comments:

“We can also reaffirm that the itinerary of African Comparative Literature is littered with polemics, booby-traps and obstacles, constituted by the various positions being held by African intellectuals on the issue of African National Literatures, which should form the cornerstone of an eventual African Comparative Literature”.

Consequently, it is plain that any time a definitive stand eventually emerges from the jumble of ideas on national literature, a gulf separating literary scholars and critics, who clamour for African literature to distance itself from Europe despite historical links, will have been significantly eliminated. This call, probably, to those, especially African writers of works in European languages, who dread a clean break would presumably punctuate their individual achievements, a dead loss, appears like a red rag to a bull. Nevertheless, African literature, with robust national literature in place, will get its roots firmly fixed, ready to serve as launching pad for growth and progress. The issue of discordant voices on national literature borders on authorship and all-important factor of language of expression. Before we take a position in this paper on the twosome criteria, it is pertinent to trace an undercurrent of opposing forces—which works should or should not form the bulk of national literature. Certain works written in European languages by Africans like Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Armah, Camara Laye etc. as national literature have been discredited by critics; they are even rejected as African literature. This confusion necessitated the search for true national literature. What is not certain is the kind of

nomenclature that may be given to those that will not fall within this category. Literature serves as a medium for portrayal of a people's conscience. It is the identity enshrined within it that becomes a defining emblem in the global cultures and both national and ethnic literatures can afford to represent Africa's identity as this is literature's intrinsic value or role. On account of this, Nnolim (1992, p. 6) makes this motivating declaration.

It is now commonplace knowledge that contemporary African Literature cannot be properly understood and appreciated as an isolated expression but must rather be viewed as part of the totality of human experience. As a literature of a people, it cannot be fully understood by the simple separation of form and content, for literature is part of a social situation and must be approached primarily as a mode of collective belief and action.

Nnolim's view is that African literature is a repository of past and present historical experiences of the people which are their contributions to the universal silo of human experiences. Literature cannot be sifted out of such experiences that animate it and in the course of which it projects the people's world view through their actions and belief system. All literatures brandish these characteristics and whether it bears national or ethnic tag, literature is literature and will not find it difficult to accomplish this task. That is why, probably, the search for the criteria for national literature might not make so much difference.

The same situation applies to the concept of a nation for there are two schools of thought in the definition of nationalism; one rooting for ethnic nation and the other for nation-state. A common notion about a nation is that which denotes a geographical entity with historical, linguistic and cultural homogeneity and it is associated with nuances of ethnicity and allusion to sectionalism. Secondly, a nation is an ambitious territorial construct marked by heterogeneity of cultures and identities which are bound by official independence and government. It is a mythical nation, composed of many ethnic nationalities and marked by complexities and this is called the nation-state. Udumukwu (2007, p. 313) recognizes it as a bridge and its modus operandi consists in linking cultures:

Another way of looking at the image of the bridge is as an instrument that reconfigures pristine cultural practices and which has succeeded in effecting of cultural hybridity which allows diverse cultures to mingle. In political terms, also, the concept of bridge breaks down ethnic national limits and pave the way for the nation-state.

From all available data, it sounds eloquent that the nation-state is an amalgam found mainly on the African continent as a result of history and the balkanization of Africa by the European powers under the auspices of the historic Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Due to so many loose ends and inequalities inherent in the kernel of its structure cum formation and coupled with a kind of tyrannical Gestapo administration over its component units it treats like subjects or vassal states, Ekpo (1999, p. 10) describes this albatross as an empire state due to its disposition to force as a major tool in its weaponry and insists that it has imperial attributes. Just as it is not yet done with, he sculptures on this frail and fragile clay of criticism another metaphorical monster for it:

It may be a matter of the systemic rationality of running and preserving incongruous political agglomerations which in terms of the cultural come structural grammar of known nations, are no more than 'dinosaur state', that is a harsh assemblage of asymmetrical forces and unsynchronisable elements. And since the maintenance of such a dinosaur system is always being seriously threatened by the uncontrollable explosion of these asymmetrical forces that make it up, tyranny—dictatorship, violent rule, rule at gun point—appears not to be caprice, but the product of a systemic stimulus for control, stability and order (Ekpo, 1999, p. 10).

Joubert (Nnolim, 2012, p. 62) in *Pensées* had insisted that “Force and right are the governors of this world; Force till right is ready”. So, with a brand of violence, the nation-state forces its quasi-colonies to cower and reestablishes its stability in times of crises. The nation-state therefore is always fighting to sustain its nationalism because of the instability enshrined in its intrinsic nature and multivalent composition. In spite of all that, its legitimacy, like in the case of the ethnic nation, is incontestable. To this end, this paper is going to propose two national literatures to the ethnic nation and the nation-state respectively. But before that the paper has to look at the scholarly debates under some sub-titles by exploring various arguments and positions on national literature, starting with vernacular literature in Africa. It also will involve breaking down the complex logics of the English speaking and French speaking African writers and summarizing the opposition against writing in European languages.

Vernacular Literature

Much attention has not been formally devoted to vernacular literature in the critical arena for a couple of reasons. The domination of works written by Africans in European languages is one; the overshadowing presence of such languages and their permeation into every facet of the social, political and economic life of the continent account is another. The unabated and Westerncentric out-pouring of aspersions, disdain, denigration and derision on some aspects of African culture deters most writers who are gripped by the fear of playing second fiddle in the international arena from making the choice of indigenous languages. It is clear enough that Dathorne's extensive research in this domain has shown that the African continent had a deep-rooted culture of writing in indigenous languages. It had witnessed the affluence of vernacular literatures at a period that predates the contemporary times and which could be candidly termed a golden period, marked by effervescence of great literary fire-works produced in African languages. The coming of Christian missionaries in Africa inspired the establishment of individual religious presses publishing in African languages. Dathorne (1974, p. 1) relives the flamboyant spirit of the time in this declaration:

The process of change is noticed throughout Africa; beginning as didactic sermonizing in which [as in Oral literature] the individual is inarticulate, the literature developed to such an extent that many vernacular works can stand qualitatively side by side with any of the writings in European languages.

However, Hale (Emenyonu, 2000, p. 14) reiterated this fact by clearly stating the time when the boom of vernacular literatures was first seen in Africa, he affirms: "Writing in African languages expanded in the last half of the millennium with the creation of literatures in Hausa and Fulani in West Africa and in Swahili in East Africa, all using Arabic script". Clement Maganga (Timothy-Asobele, 2016, p. 110) broadens the argument when he reviewed Kiswahili literature of the 18th and 19th centuries, thus:

On examining the tenzi writings during those centuries, one discovers that they fall into two major categories: those that explain Islamic teaching and belief and those that relate historical events. In the first case, the writer chose some theme from the Koran and developed it using the power of his poetic art and eventually claiming that the work is his.

Above all, it is a fact that vernacular literature really flourished in Africa once upon a time and the question is why not now? Reasons have been adduced from different

quarters for the dwindling fortune. Again, with the progressive advancement of colonization then at the same rate European languages were growing socially, politically and economically on the African soil, the gains made by vernacular literature automatically was lost. It is evident that new generations of African writers write in English or French.

Anglophone Writers and National Literature

Going back to the criteria for national literature, it is clear that we have reached a point of intellectual impasse. Some critics insist that whether works dedicated to African affairs are created by Africans or not, it is not worth the trouble; they must conform to linguistic requirements by being written in indigenous languages in order to pass the crucial test of national literature. However, this view is countered by another group which asserts that national literature is that which is written by Africans in European languages that eventually become our *Lingua franca*. Some take this assertion too far, and with little or no regret; others are remorseful, but have no option. It is a historical fact that the stimuli which provoked major writings in English and French were the need to obliterate the white man's racial prejudices and drum it aloud that the African has intellectual faculty. Such inadvertent reaction, thanks to pioneer writers, gave no chance to Africans to have a second thought; and assuming they had, there were no languages to transmit the absolute pressure and message except European languages. From all indications, it appears that even if other factors in the arguments are settled, it could still prove an arduous task to control the factor of language in the quest for genuine national literature in Africa. African writers therefore want to be heard by all, accepted by all and belong to the global world. Wa Thiong'o (1981, p. 7) clarifies this fact by citing Achebe: "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it". This is ultimately the yoke borne by African writers using expatriate languages as their modes of expression. Achebe himself offers further reasons of extended readership because these languages are counted as *Lingua franca* in Africa and he complains of ethnic literatures which have not gained wide audience. Another point he raises is that the multiplicity of ethnic languages even constitutes a hindrance to the development of ethnic literatures. By implication, all works in Twi, Ewe, Bambara, Wolof, Zulu, Kikuyu, Ewondo, Targui and numerous others do not qualify to be called national literature of their different

nations. Again, Wright (1973, p. 4) cites Okpaku who in turn speaks of Soyinka, a literary juggernaut, who says that we do not want to be African writers but writers. From all indications, this statement meant to explain away the hard truth is not different from Achebe's which is rather direct. The poet displays another lexical rigour which is reminiscent of his mind-boggling style. However, the group of writers comprising Achebe, Armah, Soyinka, Okara, Laye, Ola Rotimi, Kourouma, Elechi Amadi etc. claims that their works constitute national literature in view of the fact that they are written in languages that have apparently assumed the status of Africa's national languages. The group also underscores the fact that by virtue of their writing, specialized lexical structures in the two leading European languages which reflect African sensibilities have evolved over time. Infused in the structures are African proverbs, myths, tales, anecdotes, songs, riddles and other genres of oral literature, which action is aimed to bridge a yawning gap. This language indigenization has got soothing effect to serve as adequate compensation for the painful and ineluctable departure from mother tongues. Many readers and critics encourage this peculiar style, believing that works crafted in such garbs are qualified to be the repository of our customs and tradition. So, their role as the custodians of norms emitting rudiments of didacticism and unarguable advocacy is incontrovertible; they could pass for reservoir of the African heritage. Such writers have their sympathizers and Chukwuma (1991, p. 10) seems to be one when she declares:

In this regard, Chinua Achebe's stand remains valid and reasonable at the present time. He states that the English language which he inherited not out of choice must be made to carry the peculiar burden of conveying his sensibilities and he owes no one any apology for this.

Although there is a tinge of ego in this position, as a result of what is at stake, yet one can clearly see reality in Achebe's point of view.

Francophone Writers and National Literature

African writers of French and English expressions, especially, do not ever think they have derailed and therefore betrayed their cultural identities. They insist these languages are the only media for easy and wider communication among ethnic nationalities of any given African nation; and they are therefore the languages of national integration. The Algerian writer and critic, Mammeri writes:

French language is, for me, not at all a shaming language of an enemy, but an unparalleled instrument of liberation, of communion with the rest of the world. I feel that it sells us infinitely more than it betrays us (Mérad, 1976, p. 148).

The quest for indigenous languages brews discontent among French speaking intellectuals of North Africa, especially in Algeria and Morocco. The adoption of French, some claim, is an estrangement of the culture and identity of the people which at the same time does not enhance an integrated audience since larger populations of these countries speak Arabic and native tongues. Jean Déjeux reports that Mostefa Lacheraf while discussing the future of Algeria's culture emphasizes that the boom which French enjoys in the works of the country's nationals is in futility given that the people are not a part of it. The criticism spans to Morocco where Abdellatif Lâabi, the editor of *Souffles* magazine denounces the literary style that depicts a colonial vestige; and which is solely written for the consumption of strangers. The crucial role of national literature in the achievement of a truly independent state occupies the central idea of Charles Bonn's insights which he attributes to Robert Escarpit in the following enunciation: "It is difficult to conceive of a country which has her cultural autonomy in the world we live, without possessing a national literature that will attend to its needs" (Mérad, 1976, p. 12).

Escarpit argues that a national literature that responds to the needs and aspirations of the people resounds a million times, provided it is not in any way a remove from what it is all about ... voices in native tongues. Besides, *Souffles* in an essay portrays works in French in this light: "Flourishing of alien literary currents which thrive in delightful imitation of imported literary habits without real intimacy with deep realities of our countries" (Mérad, 1976, p. 14). Critics like Ghani Mérad, who are in favour of national literature in ethnic languages acknowledge that only Kabyle, Targui, Berber, classical Arabic and others are indigenous tongues of the Maghreb and their national literature should find expression in them if it is to be the vehicle of their culture and identity. Haddad, Mammeri, Dib, Yacine Kateb and so on, like their counterparts in the sub-Sahara Africa, as writers of this geographical entity, assume the onus of self-defense in the same manner of people who have no apology for the choice of French, a language that has given them literary clouts. Moreover, they adduce reason that there is a plethora of ethnic languages. Mazouni (Mérad, 1976, p. 150) declares:

On my part, I do not write to be read by my great grand fathers who did not speak French, but who by letting the door open partly become responsible for what I taught them. I do not write also for my grand children who may not speak French, but may

likely speak classical Arabic. None grieves me. It is necessary to live in one's own time and for it. Our desires ought to be for the need of the living, neither sacrificing the immediate future, nor the immediate past.

Assia Djébar innocuously toes the same line with Mazouni when she considers the French language as a protective veil in her writing carrier, which shields her in anonymity in the task (course) of unveiling (which writing is all about) the conditions of women in the Arab-Berber culture. Aremu (2010, p. 146) cites her:

I wrote my novels in French language because it was the only language I had, it was not because I had chosen the French language. The language to which others joined took over me, right from infancy, while I dressed in Nisus's Tunic, a gift of love from my father who every morning held my hand on the way to school. A little Arab girl, in a Sahel village of Algeria...

Currents against Writing in European Languages

Many schools critical of literary writings in European languages have emerged in recent times. In their characteristic manner and style, they vehemently denounce the practice by African writers and refuse to imbibe any logic in favour of the choice as we have seen above. Maduka (2005, pp. 23-24), for the sake of argument, picks hole on English when he cites Adekunle for having said that English is spoken by 12% of the population and cannot be addressed as Nigeria's *Lingua franca*. Adekunle concludes thus that based on this salient fact, English as a foreign language lacks what it takes to be a national language capable of reflecting our cultural identity. Maduka (2005, pp. 23-24) completes the mordant criticism by condemning Shakespeare's language with severe and heavy strokes:

English cannot serve as the language of our national integration. In fact, in the contemporary society, it is used as the language of mass deceit, hypocrisy and national betrayal, for most Nigerians use it when they want to mask their feelings in public but switch over to their mother tongues whenever they want to discuss issues that touch them deeply with members of their ethnic kindred.

It seems reservations and query for the continued use of English and some other European languages by African authors will not cease. So much as it has become a quagmire for unbending, caustic critics, the situation hinges on the fact that time for protest has gone and so Africans should go back to themselves for soul-searching to rediscover the resonance of self-consciousness, and only literature in mother tongues

could facilitate this. The scenario, they think, will assign to the Whites the task of studying the African afresh to be able to understand him better, rather than sum him up with despicable prejudices from a linguistic distance created by his works in alien languages, which so much deplete his faculty and personality. The writers themselves appear to align with this tinge of reason as most of their thematic messages are more of inward thrusts into Africa's experiences particularly after independence. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, *Les Soleils des indépendances*, *Allah n'est Obligé* and *A Kind of Fool*, to mention only a few, serve as glowing proofs. Young (Wright, 1973, p. 30) is one out of many intellectuals who share this position:

But didacticism and propaganda have become decreasingly outwardly directed, and Achebe's projection of his image of the Ibo past towards Ibos and such internally preoccupying political concepts as Pan-Africanism in such novels as William Conton's *The African* [1963] have begun to replace the inevitably outward-directed propaganda of anti-colonialism.

In "A quelle langue se vouer?" Jean Savry expresses the concern and opinion of many intellectuals, especially those of African extraction, that European languages lack the adequate linguistic malleability and resourcefulness to vividly convey the African vision and experiences in history. His visceral attack particularly on English further includes the fact that the African writer using English has on him or her, the demand of that wider global exposure outreach that takes one to especially Europe and America at the same time besides putting one's identity at stake. Again, the dialect brought by the colons, it is believed, is not bedecked with literary aesthetics that conform to the oral tradition typical of the African culture because it is a metropolitan dialect and it is this kind that was bequeathed to the colonized Africans. The result being that it cannot fit into the African literary fabrics without much friction. The critic notes:

For an African Anglophone writer, to take a pen is not always an easy thing. It is tempting to write in English because one can enter into communication with the Anglophone world, be it in Europe, in Africa or in the United States. But this language is that of the former colonizer. To dwell in it means to perhaps take the risk of playing with one's identity. A language is not a free entity since culture is all implied in it. Besides, English is often completely inapt at expressing African sensibility and spirituality in their specific nature. Thus, the African writer finds himself boxed up in a linguistic dilemma. In the end, the Queen's subjects only brought along with them urban language; and with this same mode of expression,

they imported a literary vision, a written thing with its aesthetic cannons, its styles, its literary genres which very often do not correspond at all to the formal conventions of the oral and collective speech. Now, what is striking to notice is the varieties of responses designed by writers in order to pull themselves from this bad patch (Huannou & Bogniaho, 2002, p. 169).

Writing in European languages has given Europeans the opportunity of misjudgment and down-grading of works of African authors as long as their parameters remain arbitrary. Much as they are expected to be rational and fair in judgment, Europeans did not arrogate to themselves the right of those languages ... they inherited them from birth. The result being that Africans will not have enough grounds to refute any assessment of their works by European critics. It is as irrational as uncanny to argue over a man's handling of his own native tongue when he has invented exclusive linguistic yard-sticks to keep the foreign author at bay. The moral authority to engage in this kind of debate does not exist. All these informed Ekpo's disagreement with Achebe as he portrays not only him but other African writers of his kind as those whose opposition to the antics of the white man is impotent and baseless.

A writer and critic like Achebe has already opted for the acquired written form, but also the tongue of Conrad, along with the logocentric constraints woven into it. Having made that choice, Achebe has ipso facto surrendered *Things Fall Apart or Arrow of God* not only to the arbitrariness of interpretation but to the infinite changeability of interpretations. What the victor is saying in his so-called postmodernist era is precisely that any text written in his tongue and in accordance with his cultural codes becomes automatically a free, unprotected floating signifier liable to infinite, context-free interpretations (Ekpo, 2005, pp. 117-118).

Ekpo's implicit view on the matter is that if written in indigenous languages, works of African creation will be spared the nightmare because European criticism must lose its *Locus standi* and translations might be flawed. Ekpo does not in any way suggest a return to ethnic languages, but that the African writer should be patient rather than kick at the criticisms or see the white man's criticisms as destructive.

On the other hand, some critics who are for vernacular literatures deride the idea of African sensibilities being borne by European languages, which notion they see as a triumph of illusion, an attempt to derail the frantic efforts of exponents of vernacular literatures, who treasure the total return to our glorious past, the retrieval of the lost cultural identity. An illusion of a sort, and if European languages could be well structured to become adept at and worthy of, without being found wanting,

transmitting the feelings, thought and philosophy of Africans and replace the tongues of initiation, it betokens mere aberration. The critics argue that to theorize that such languages have the capacity to bear the temperament of the African made inconsolable by the experiences of chequered history is, moreover, mere deceptive travesty of judgment. However, to be fair to the European audience, the existence of certain twisted tropes in such works of African writers in English and French, serving the indigenes as esoteric codes, has a mandate to generate disorder in communication. This statement credited to Gabriel Okara (Wa Thiong'o, 1981, p. 8), for example, suggests that this might be true.

I have endeavoured in words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people.

That is why Ekpo surrendered the right of arbitrariness to European critics as exclusive preserve of a people whom others have adopted their languages; and he cautions Armah, Achebe and others to recognize this weapon in the white man's arsenal of criticism of African works. As a result of these precarious circumstances, Maduka (1994, p. 17) is blunt in his conviction that Achebe and others are sitting on the fence. "Neither Achebe's works nor Awoonor's works have yet acquired any distinctive characteristics derived specifically from the socio-political experiences in Nigeria or Ghana". Maduka contests the fact that works written in ethnic languages should be subsumed under the tag of ethnic literatures, whereas those in English and French expressions should be addressed as national literature. To this end, Maduka's camp chides the opposing group for this opium of a statement and misleading hypothesis and thereabout stresses that works in ethnic languages of African countries constitute *de jure* national literatures for those countries as opposed to those written in European languages by her citizens. Austen-Peters, in *Topic in Comparative Literature: A Handbook for University Students* (2005), buttresses this point by taking the mind back to the dictionary meaning of nation although he reserves sympathy for Achebe and his accent on audience coverage. Helen Chukwuma (1991: X) also shows that tendency when she refers to English: "This is certainly a solution for now and which in future will prove inadequate".

The two parties, nevertheless, highlight in unison one common problem of ethnic literatures which is the fact that ethnic nationalities across the continent overlap as a result of the balkanization of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884 without procedure and considerations of ethnic boundaries. Peters (2005, pp. 82-83) asserts that:

For example, the Hausa tribe is not only found in Nigeria, but also found in countries like Ghana, Mali, and Niger. And the Yoruba tribe can be found in not only Nigeria, but also in the Republic of Benin. The same can be said of Bambara in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. It is for this reason that Maduka (1982, p. 14) calls for the recognition of Edo national literature, Igbo national literature, Hausa national literature and Yoruba national Literature, to mention but a few.

And again, the smaller the linguistic group, the less the propensity for the development of its literature (P'Bitek, 1973, p. 33). Be that as it may, these factors could not prevent the development of ethnic literatures from blossoming into national literatures and many share this view. Maduka (2005, p. 8) explains the almost incomprehensible and complex mental attitudes that produce the unyielding resolve of users of European languages, the hallmark of which is the resounding echo of economic dependence. "The mentality of consumerism now pervades the consciousness of the African peoples, hence the phenomenon of their uncritically assimilating the ideologies and currents of ideas beamed on them from the West". This situation is depicted by Mazouni's cynical posture which grossly demonstrates his insensitivity as well as his pledge as notable African writer of French background to continue writing in foreign language rather than in native tongue. Achebe might have known how to tone down the sarcastic and remorseless vow, for which reason some critics have made certain concessions to him, but Mazouni, Mammeri and Soyinka, for instance, have not. It is for this tough stance that Nnolim (2000, pp. 1-10) speaks:

Granted, we can do little to dismiss the use of the English language in the immediate future, but knowing the importance of language in nation-building, must the Nigerian nation surrender to an eternal bondage to the English language?

In the worst-case scenario, critics argue that it may be better that vernacular literature be given a chance to survive while the gradual phasing out of literature in European languages keeps pace with it, so that a change of baton will eventually take place. This is what Nnolim's declaration entails when he explains:

A young Japanese student revealed recently that in looking over undergraduate notes taken by his ancestors in Japanese Universities since the 1850s, he noted that his grand-father took all his notes in English, his father half in English and half in Japanese, and his own notes are completely in Japanese.

Renan's Nationalism as Theoretical Framework

It was on the 11th of March, 1882 at the Sorbonne that Ernest Renan read his paper entitled "What is a Nation?" (Forest, 1991, p. 22) and pronounced his love for nationalism. Renan recounted the history of the formation and dissolution of ancient empires and kingdoms as evolutionary metamorphosis which gave rise to the modern nation, mentioning the social and political forces responsible for such evolution. What informed Renan's interest in the quest for a nation is his great love for humanity and social order and stability as opposed to instability and anarchy, a passion he inherited from such great thinkers as Pascal and Montaigne (Forest, 1991, p. 12). Damian Opata (Emenyonu, 1989, p. 39), in a compendious manner, cites Ernest Renan's metaphysical definition of a nation which could serve as the basis of legalization and legitimization of two types of nation in this discourse:

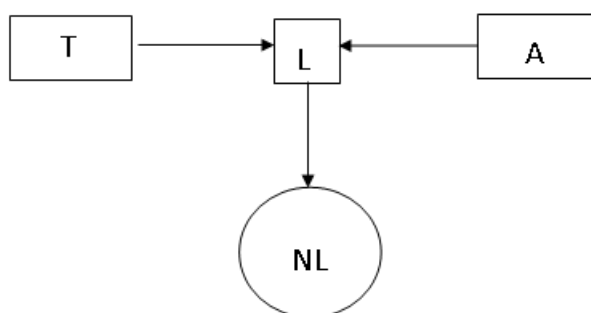
A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which are really one go to make up this soul or spiritual principle. One of the things lies in the past, the other in the present. The one is the possession in common of a rich heritage of memories, and the other is actual agreement, the desire to live together, and the will to continue to make the most of the joint inheritance. Man cannot be improvised. The nation, like the individual, is the fruit of a long part spent in toil, sacrifice and devotion... To share the glories of the past, and a common will in the present; to have done great deeds together, and to desire to do more—these should be the capital of our company when we come to found a national idea.

Renan's declaration, as implicit as the idea appears, is in strong agreement with the hypothesis of this prescriptive essay that there are two types of nation. First, he refers to them as "two things that are really one" before differentiating them as "possession in common of a rich heritage of memories" and "actual agreement, the desire to live together". Renan enriched his language with very effective and powerful metaphors so that the reader could easily deduce from his diction and the rhythm of his mind that the first description goes for ethnic nation and the latter for nation-state. Renan simply attributes the success of either of them fundamentally to devotion and will power on the part of statecraft men. Through this pragmatic approach, he ascribes legitimacy to both and so his shrewd and conservative definitions strikingly become a decisive victory to both sides of the coin. It is based on this tacit acceptance of the two as veritable and functional social institutions and infrastructures upon which society could be built and humanity could base her symbolic existence to make progress that this paper hopes to advocate two legitimate national literatures.

National Literature Module One and Module Two

In the main, there are two types of national literatures based on the fact that there are two types of nation. Both of them are officially recognized given the fact that in spite of its sprawling nature, the nation-state in definition survives. And if we accept the nomenclatures of **national literature module one** for ethnic nation and **national literature module two** for a nation-state, let us examine the criteria for each of them.

Criteria for National Literature



T = THEME

L = LANGUAGE

A = AUTHUR

NL = NATIONAL LITERATURE

Figure1. Scheme of Determinants of National Literature

Module One

The most contentious issue over the quest for national literature is the language of expression. For an ethnic nationality which has a mono-identity of language, its national literature should be written in its language and the authorship should be open to anybody and the theme should be diverse. In other words, the language is a constant while the author's nationality and the theme are variables. These conditions are represented in the diagram above. Literature written in ethnic languages offers good leisure and helps in the preservation of a people's language and identity, especially now some languages are reportedly dying worldwide. This situation is what Adewoyin (2010, p. 25) recognizes in the following comments as he urges

society to learn and use ethnic languages and never think of total elimination among the youth because it portends severe consequences:

Many Nigerians speak English because it is the country's *Lingua Franca*. But some parents are carrying dependence on the language a bit further by insisting that their children speak only English, thereby foreclosing the learning or use of indigenous languages by these children. Some stakeholders are however of the opinion that this practice is harming local languages and can lead to identity problems if not checked.

Module Two

Scholars no doubt have made concerted efforts to establish the legitimacy of the national literature module two. It is for the apology of nation-state that Lere Adeyemi conceptualizes the idea of diverse ethnicities and cultures as he writes: "Many historians say it was the official policy of many empires to tolerate diversity of cultures, languages and ethnicities" (Laditan & Adegboke 2011, p. 180). Furthermore, he, like Udumukwu, conjectures the concept of multiethnic cultures with a metaphor of bridge and finally draws from the theory of multiculturalism which justifies the tolerance of cultural differences in a poly-ethnic system to formulate the idea of national literature. On the other hand, we suggest that the language of national literature module two should be the *Lingua Franca*. The authorship should be restricted to the nationals, but where a foreign author writes about the nation in its *Lingua Franca* affirming her values, culture, history or economy, excluding negative stereotype as it is in literary reception, the authorship should be extended. Given this caveat, the authorship and theme are once again variables as it is in module one if we accept these hypothetical suppositions. The figure above also provides ample conditions and determinants of national literature module two. Hence, *Il n' y aura pas de paradis* (Kapuséiński 2003) which is based on the crises that besieged African countries at independence, except on translation to English is a national literature not to Nigeria or Ghana, but to the DRC and Algeria. Albert Camus's works on Algeria could have dual nationality because of language factor, a little to the interests of Algeria and a little to the interests of France. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which implicitly deals with exploration should be considered English rather than Polish national literature since it heralds British colonial historical experiences and it is written in English. Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* is not Igbo national literature until it is translated to Igbo. Contrarily,

Caitaani Mutharaba ini or *Devil on the Cross* as a result of translation are both Kenyan and Kikuyi national literatures. There are cases that abound.

Conclusion

This essay has brought to our knowledge the fact that there are two types of nation: one defined by the dictionary known as the ethnic nation and the other, a realistic and empiricist coinage and product of philosophical and ideological postulations of men of intellect which becomes the nation-state. This situation has automatically given rise to two types of national literatures. Consequently, this essay has therefore, tactically and technically too, annulled all contending arguments about national literature because it has avoided the channels of controversies by choosing a neutral ground upon which it formulates its blue print. It could also proved to be perhaps one of the few logical solutions to the age-old controversies surrounding national literature. The language factor has been conceded, rather not cowardly, to those scholars who would like to stake their integrity and entire scholarship on it. The two variables, theme and author, on the other hand, are very vital and logical to complement the criterion of language. So the idiom, hard and simple in its ample texture, is that as far as a work maintains the constant plus the variables, it is automatically one national literature or the other. This paper hopes to lay to rest the seemingly unending contentions over national literature. It has vitally saved African works in European languages and their authors from total annihilation were they to be disqualified as national literature and writers of national literature respectively. It has as much given vent to vernacular literatures, a sense of belonging, a pride of place in our literary tradition and their authors some reasonable motivation. The expressions **national literature module one** and **national literature module two** are neologisms. They could be considered the next level in the conception and study of national literature in Africa. We hope that this essay therefore finds the audience well as the arbiter in the duel between works in African languages, those in European languages, authors and critics who have ignited the African literary scene with an array of rhetorical blasts. The process of phasing out works in European languages could only be underway if two National Literatures are allowed to flourish and that provides a solution to the nagging problem of the language of African literature. Let us therefore borrow a leave from the Japanese experience and give this hypothesis the benefit of doubt.

References

- Adewoyin, L. (2010). A Case for Indigenous Languages. *This Day*, 15th May, p. 25.
- Aremu, Y.O. (2010). (Dé)voilement de l'Écriture féminine francophone de Maghréb: Le cas de Djébar, l'évadée incarcérée. *ANEUF*, vol. 1 No. 7.
- Asobele-Timothy, S. J. (2016). *Littérature Nigériane Une Encyclopédie en Français*. Lagos: Upper Standard Press.
- Austen-Peters, O. (2005). *Topic in Comparative Literature: A Handbook for University Students*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers
- Bonn, C. (1974). *La Littérature Algérienne de la Langue Française et Ses Lectures*. Ottawa: Naaman.
- Chukwuma, H. (1991). *Accents in the African Novel*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Dathorne, O. R. (1974). *African Literature in the 20th Century*. USA: University of Minnesota.
- Déjeux, J. (1978). *Littérature Maghrébine de la Langue Française*. Sherbrooke: Edition Naaman, 2^{ème} édition.
- Ekpo, D. (2005). Any European Around to Help me Talk About Myself? The White Man's Burden of Black African's Critical Practices. *Third Text*. vol. 19, Issue 2. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, pp. 107-124.
- Emenyonu, E. N. (1989). *Literature and National Consciousness*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Emenyonu, E. N. (Ed.) (2000). *New Directions in African Literature*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Huannou A. & Bogniaho A. (2002). *Littérature Africaine*. Porto –Novo, Les Editions Infree
- Laditan, A. O. & Adegboku, D. (2011). *Enseigner le FLE, Former les autres En Hommage au Professeur Emmanuel Nwiah KWOFIE*. Lagos: Villademic.
- Maduka, C. T. & Ekpo, D. (2005) (eds). *Compass: Essays in Honour of Willfried Feuser. Kiabara Book Series*. Port Harcourt: Grand Orbit.
- Maduka, C. T. (1982). 'Comparative Literature: Concept and Scope', in *Comparative Approach to Modern African Literature*. Asein S.O. (Ed.). Dept. of English, University of Ibadan, pp. 9-23.
- Maduka, C. T. (1994). *Across Frontiers: Comparative Literature and National Integration*. (Inaugural Lecture). Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Merad, G. (1976). *La Littérature Algérienne d'Expression Française*. Paris: P.J. Oswald.
- Nnolim, C. E. (1992). *Approaches to the African Novel: Essays in Analysis*. Port Harcourt: Saros Interantional Publishers.
- Nnolim, C. E. (1992). *Literature, the Arts, and Cultural Development*. Port Harcourt: Pam Unique Press.
- P'Bitek, O. (1973). *Africa's Cultural Revolution*, Nairobi: Macmillan.

Udumukwu, O. (2007). *Nigerian Literature in English: Emerging Critical Perspectives*. Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communications.

Wa Thiong'o, N. (1981). *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Currey.

Wright, E. (1973). *Critical Procedures and the Evaluation of African Literature*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

<http://classiques.uqac.ca/inter/benevoles.php>.

http://classiques.uqac.ca/nous_joindre/classiques_nous_joindre.html.