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THE MBARI HERITAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL LITERARY AESTHETICS: The English Language and the Achebe Tradition of Pluralilingual Significations in Nigerian Literature

By

Austin Uzoma Nwagbara, Department of English, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

Contemporary Nigerian literary art as it stands today largely benefits from Chinua Achebe’s landmark literary artistry and pioneering efforts at re-engineering the English language to accommodate African thoughts and socio-cultural experiences. Through an admixture of extraordinary linguistic talent, creative ingenuity and insights garnered from the Mbari Art and oral tradition of the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, Achebe initiated and institutionalised an indigenous model of cross-cultural literary aesthetics in Nigeria, which not only inaugurated a distinct form of literary art but also instituted a literary tradition the core of which, in my opinion, largely stems from his singular ability to synchronise the multiple influences of his indigenous linguistic and artistic values and heritage with those of western literary tradition and civilization.

This paper therefore proposes a study of Achebe’s classic tradition of art as representing a significant canon towards the definite mapping of the artistic development of Nigerian Literature particularly in relation to the interaction of indigenous and foreign influences on its linguistic and artistic fervent. The paper also proposes to undertake a research into the contribution of Chinua Achebe and his paradigmatic influence to the development of Nigerian literature since the 1950s when his classic novel, Things Fall Apart, was published. Finally, the paper would do a specific study of the linguistic and communicative dynamics of contemporary Nigerian Literature in English (prose and poetry) particularly how this benefits from the creative tradition instituted by Chinua Achebe in projecting cross-cultural significations. This enterprise would be carried out through a study of a selection of relevant writings of Nigerian Literary writers (poets and novelists) right from the publication of Things Fall Apart to present day.