

Introduction: Special Edition on Nigeria

by

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"I look for a concept and then build a story around it. For instance, this [*The Family*] is population control, tradition. Then you look for a story. I usually make sure that my stories are from Africa or my own background so as to highlight the cultural background at the same time as telling the story."

-Buchi Emecheta

Introduction

The critical question of the African's role in Africa's global development is at the center of this special edition, from the perspective of Nigeria's cultural, social, environmental and political milieus. Primarily steeped in the veracity of Nigeria's neocolonial socio-political reality imbedded in Nigerian literature, this body of work surely addresses and challenges the current status of Nigeria's development by unearthing its social nuances, modern consequences of historical events, political, economic and environmental affairs, and the lived experiences of diverse Nigerian peoples. All the while, collectively the articles of this special edition on Nigeria offers not only detail to the current affairs and historical accounts of a country, but do so in ways that map innovative and pragmatic methods of implementation towards holistic solutions.

In the edition's first article, Nigeria's Vice President Oluyemi Oluleke Osinbajo defines *the African century* as a critical time in which Africans must determine their part in shaping global development for the tremendous role the continent plays in fueling the world through its resources. It is a hopeful call towards a Pan African reality of self-determination, yet a cautionary tale if Africans fail to take advantage of its untapped potential and resolve the issues impeding its progress. Vice President Osinbajo outlines these "fly or fail", "for good or for ill" situations in four salient components:

- world population – acknowledging Africa’s rising population and the effects of a faster rising unemployment rate amongst the continent’s youth (i.e. social unrest, migration, participation in extremist groups);
- environment and climate change – extreme consequences of global warming on Africa’s environment and ability to feed its people (present and future), as well as the world’s, while at the same time taking advantage of land not yet cultivated to meet this;
- production – within areas of agriculture, manufacturing and technology while attending to the necessity of job creation; and
- inequality and social exclusion – eradicating these ills as they exist from country to country but overall especially as it comes to illiteracy, child malnutrition, extremist groups.

Many of these components are addressed in some shape or form, going further to address the complexities of social and political life in Nigeria, within this transdisciplinary collection of works by Africa-based authors about Nigerian realities. Vice President Osinbajo specifically offers a green economy of a means for African to see growth in all of these areas, and envisions environmental sustainability (i.e. solar panels and alternative energy towards job creation) as a way to achieve this end. The authors of this special edition offer relevant and diverse solutions such as combining tertiary education with social media for knowledge exchange, methods of quelling brain drain of skilled labor, developing equality along oppressive divides created by ethnic diversity, outlining the salient role of literature in social commentary, and content and discourse analysis of literature towards conversations for solutions to societal ills and political corruption.

Themes Towards Nigeria’s Truths, Development, and Unity: Past, Present, and Future

Fiction Mapping Reality, Reality Mapping Fiction

The arising theme of Nigerian literature portrays the salient role fiction has in its ability to paint vivid imaginaries realistic in nature, at times accurate in accounts of Nigeria’s recent history, and envisioning Nigeria’s future. The works of Nigeria storytellers, and analyzed to extract social, political, and environmental scenarios parallel to that of Nigeria and Nigerians, offer realistic hypotheticals to how events play out when certain characters (e.g. heroines, politicians, teachers, everyday people) are guided down an author-paved path based on their morality, traditions, or beliefs.

In the essay's epigraph, Buchi Emecheta – a novelist and sociologist – suggested such an objective when she said her novels are stories steeped in scenarios from her own cultural background (as Igbo, Nigerian, Black, and woman). She understood that a fictional story can be created around real concepts telling real experiences and beliefs of a people through her characters envisioned from her own social experiences. Many of the articles that do not center Nigerian literature or film follow similar course, making efforts to correctively describe the reality of diverse Nigerians and Nigeria's political and social truths to reach the same end of supporting Nigeria's nation unity and effective development.

Emmanuel Chibuzor Okereke's article "Destructive Ethnic Consciousness and the Search for National Unity in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Iska*" echoes Emecheta's connection between stories and culture by examining the role literature has in creating discourse for the social challenges of Nigeria. The paper analyzes political corruption using sociological criticism to assess the creation of "destructive ethnic consciousness" amongst political, and ethnically divided (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) characters in the novel *Iska*. From the novel, he echoes the probability of its solution to such divides as useful to resolving issues in the real Nigeria (i.e. inter-ethnic marriage and cultural exchanges). Rotimi Adeforiti's "Implications of Ethnic Identity for National Integration in Nigeria" also addresses the issue of ethnic differences, faulting the polarization of identity and not ethnic identity, as the major factor impeding national integration. Historicizing inter-ethnic relations, Adeforiti addresses not only the complexity of any given identity but how a pre-colonial Nigeria saw ethnic cultures run as separate ruling states. Some of the issues that quell efforts for national integration today include the government's inability to resolve the issues of ethnic divide caused by the development of Nigeria, which in part may be due to the "personal ambitions" of the nation's leaders.

Ifediora Okiche's "Tripartite Reflection on Nigeria: A Postcolonial Criticism of Uche Peter Umez's *Aridity of Feelings*, Isidore Diala's *The Lure of Ash* and Chris Ngozi Nkoro's *Trials of a Distance*" also contributes social commentary through postcolonial criticism of the selection of poetry to reveal the modern effects of colonial and continued underdevelopment of Nigeria, Africa's "sleeping giant", towards suggestions for cultivating and electing substantial leaders that can not only eradicate corruption in Nigeria, but be a model for the rest of the world. Okoro Paul Mmahi and Akunesiobike Adindu Chibueze's "Youth Resistiveness and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Case of Illegal Oil Bunkering and Violence in Igbo-Olomu Community" draws connections between youth resistiveness, failures of a society, and oil theft in the Igbo-Olomo community. The topic of illegal crude oil siphoning is central in a discussion about the fatal effects of these actions amongst community members, while recognizing the conditions that lead to youth resistiveness in this situation but in general – society's lack of job creation that give youth legal means towards success.

The lived experiences of the Igbo-Olomo community are privileged in this article to provide community-based perspectives of the cause, effects, and solutions of oil bunkering. Mmahi and Chibueze end with recommendations based on research gathered such as making crude oil accessible at fair prices to decrease theft, job creation, and community policing, amongst others. Many articles that discuss inequality or societal exclusion focus on ethnic differences, however Andrew Eromonsele's "Cultural Tolerance in the Face of Universally Held Gender Based Violence: Implications on Marriage Institution Among the Esans of Edo State, Nigeria" focuses on gender inequalities – based on who's perspective is privileged – in the form of intimate partner violence among the Esan. Ermonsele is intentional about centering the perspectives of Esan women, versus global social norms regarding intimate partner violence, by using Cultural Relativism theory to emphasize the salience of centering a community's norms and value systems when evaluating their culture. This said, the article examines the cultural belief amongst the Esan that intimate partner violence is socially acceptable as a means for a husband to attain corrective behavior from a wife. Here Eromonsele reveals the stark difference between reporting amongst the Esan, versus reporting abuse globally, and further uses these women's lived experiences to descriptively narrate how various women perceive intimate partner violence as well as the stigmas attached to opposing it.

Damilola Dorcas Fagite's "Nigerian Nurses on the Run: Increasing the Diaspora and Decreasing Concentration" empirically outlines the brain drain phenomenon in Nigeria, specific to its nurses. Migration is central in this piece, revealing the need of nurses outside of Nigeria, yet still within, encourages them to leave Nigeria for what is perceived as more stable work conditions. Nigeria, which Fagite states is in need of more nurses and professional health labor, loses its nurses due to social and political factors such as "low prospect of professional growth and development", "social unrest", "understaffing", eroding wages and salaries", to name a few.

Sankofa: Historical Accountings to Pave Paths to the Present

In a similar breath as the previous section, attention to historical events are used by authors in an attempt to create social commentary on the present state of Nigeria and its people. Truly the philosophy of the Akan people, Sankofa – go back and fetch it – occurs here where the past is evoked in order to understand the present before one can even conceive steps towards a future. Otokpom Charles Asuk's "Historicizing the Phenomenon of Arms Race in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" provides a historical accounting and analysis of the arms race – attaining a mass of weaponry between two or more opposing states for competition and security – over access and control of crude oil in the Niger Delta.

Asuk details how the arms race becomes an example of the interrelatedness between trade and war, and can be categorized within Nigeria as emerging and persisting from agendas of foreign capitalist powers in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post colonial eras. Especially during the colonial era, the effect of such an effort is the polarization of communities and peoples that persists today in the form of, for example, social conflict, underdevelopment, and “sustained insecurity.”

Kalu Wosu’s “Writing and Discourse: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Civil War Narrative” shifts the reader into a conversation about the relevance and accuracy of a historical novel in providing social commentary to Nigeria’s past events (Nigerian-Biafran Civil War) towards understanding its contemporary consequences. Wosu reveals Adichie’s efforts to create fiction around real events, people, and situations leading, during, directly and after the Civil War from the perspective of the Igbos. He argues that Adichie’s ability to write “in situation” allows her to contribute to a discourse through her own cultural and ontological positioning as Igbo. The importance of language in provoking literary creativity is highlighted to reveal how the novel’s narrative detail is critical to its ability to persuade an audience around a desired response.

Everyday Heroes, Heroines, and Emetteurs

Who is a hero, and if we look in what is the nature of her or his “cosmic inspection”, or “cosmic reality that allows them the apprehension of the self and the purpose of their existence in the world”? Khedidja Chergui’s “Wole Soyinka’s ‘Retributive Regenerative’ Model of African Tragic Heroism: Insights from *Death and the King’s Horseman*” questions the nature of the hero through Wole Soyinka’s theory of a Yoruba African tragedy which involves, in part, this question of cosmic inspection when a hero is faced with making decisions that benefit the individual versus the community. Using a ‘retributive/regenerative’ model of the tragic hero with *Death and the King’s Horseman*’s Elesin Oba as an example, his moral compass is assessed to reveal his capacity to overcome his “inner inadequacies” to make an ultimate sacrifice for his community. Simultaneously, Chergui argues that such an assessment can provide parallel commentary on what moral codes are necessary for African leaders to make favorable decisions towards the continent’s future.

As a continuation of the hero in African literature, and in contrast to the tragic nature of male heroes, Salawu Olajide’s “Alpha Female?: Redefining Heroism and Environmental Sustainability in Jeta Amata’s *Black November*” engages female heroism, and the “Alpha Female”, to re-envision the African hero in the film *Black November*.

Unlike Soyinka's *Elesin Oba*, Amata's *Ebiere* and her activism towards environmental justice in the Niger Delta leads to a crossroads where she makes an ultimate sacrifice for the betterment of her community. Olajide argues that *Ebiere*, and other heroines like her in literary or filmic spaces, challenge their role as subservient to the patriarchal normalcies of men, specifically male heroes in fiction. The nature of the hero is challenged by the way women's morality may lead to a different set of outcomes than those that make a hero tragic.

Perhaps the idea of the hero can be loosely tied to the idea of the *recepteur* within African literature for their role in influencing new generations of African authors. Gladys Agyeiwaa Denkyi-Manieson's "Recepteur and Emetteur: A Case Study of Paternity in the Works of Chinua Achebe, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" provides a telling analysis of how early postcolonial African writers directly or indirectly influences the work of contemporary artists, by drawing connections between emmitters (those who do the influencing) and receptors (those who are influenced). By doing so, Denkyi-Manieson reveals inter-generational ties salient to understanding the trajectory of narration of modern African literature. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel *Purple Hibiscus* becomes a vital example, drawing direct and inferred connections between storyline, characters, their morality and experiences to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.

Centering Africa for Methods and Means for Education and Knowledge Production

Lastly, two of the special edition's articles focus on outlining new studies that develop methods of implication that are African-centered by their process of formation – both by engaging African ontologies to query their subject matters in order to determine natural solutions to everyday situations. Chinedu Nwadike's "Citations Styles: Towards a Scientific Model Proposed as Nsukka Multidisciplinary Style" offers an African-centered and African University – University of Nigeria, Nsukka – specific scientific approach to developing a citation style by arguing that there are many referential styles but none coming from Africa. By seeking a new way of referencing texts, or referential arbitrariness, Nwadike uses the Order of Thought theory to use natural, realistic, and everyday methods of inquiry to develop the Nsukka Multidisciplinary Style (NMS). Unlike the ways that Western citation styles organize referential data, the NMS seeks to consider how one would query and determine the contents of a text in everyday interactions and transposes such a method into this citation style.

Another innovative study comes from Eucharika Chinwe Igbafe and Chinekepebi Ngozi Anyanwu's "WhatsApp at Tertiary Education Institutions in Nigeria: The Dichotomy of Academic Disruption or Academic Performance Enhancer?". In this study, the authors seek to find supportive means to integrate a popular intergenerational social media platform into tertiary education.

They posit that WhatsApp – a multimedia mobile messaging application – has positive and negative effects on tertiary education students’ education progress. They recognize the application’s potential to provide substantial educational support through digital spaces, and interview students in order to determine the extent to which they use the app, how they use it, and what is their perceived outcome on their academic studies.

Conclusion

This special edition on Nigeria offers re-examined and new ways of describing and revising various discourse around the topic of Nigeria’s historical and present underpinnings, undertakings, and lived experiences. Each in their own way, through fiction or non-fiction, theory or method, past or present, are holistically positive in intentionality, that is to say they can be read as providing salient data to supporting Nigeria, Africa, and the world through contributions to global development. Envisioned within a nation’s imperative, and as a supportive case study for the rest of the African world, we hope the special edition inspires and contributes to existing ideas, research, and social engagement useful especially to Nigerians but to Africans globally.

Work Cited

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