



E-ISSN: 2706-8927
P-ISSN: 2706-8919
www.allstudyjournal.com
IJAAS 2020; 2(3): 853-856
Received: 17-04-2020
Accepted: 20-05-2020

Neelam Tandon
Associate Professor,
Department of English, Lalita
Singh Govt. Girls P.G. College,
Adalhaat, Mirzapur,
Uttar Pradesh, India

The African realism and influence in literature

Neelam Tandon

Abstract

African realism in literature refers to a style of writing that presents African life and experiences in a realistic and authentic manner, reflecting the social, economic, and political realities of African societies. It emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to colonialism and the dominant European literary traditions that misrepresented or ignored African perspectives. African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka, among others, were key figures in the development of African realism. Their works explored themes such as colonialism, identity, and the clash between traditional African values and modernity.

In addition to African realism, African literature has been influenced by a variety of cultural, social, and historical factors. These include the oral storytelling traditions of many African societies, the impact of colonialism and slavery, the struggle for independence and self-determination, and the ongoing challenges faced by African nations in the post-colonial era. African literature has had a profound impact on global literary culture, not only for its unique perspective and powerful storytelling but also for its contribution to the development of postcolonial literary theory. Today, African writers continue to produce important and influential works that explore the complexities of African life and the ongoing struggles for social justice and equality.

Keywords: Realism, world literature, African cultures and societies

Introductions

African realism refers to the literary movement that emerged in the mid-20th century in Africa, as African writers sought to depict the reality of life on the continent, often in the aftermath of colonialism. The movement was characterized by a rejection of the romanticized, exoticized portrayals of Africa that had been prevalent in European literature, and a focus on the social, political, and economic realities of African life. One of the most significant aspects of African realism was its incorporation of African oral traditions, such as storytelling, proverbs, and songs, into written literature. This helped to create a distinct African literary style that was rooted in African culture and history. The influence of African realism on world literature has been significant. African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka have achieved international acclaim for their works, which have been translated into many languages. Their writings have helped to challenge stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of African cultures and societies. Moreover, African realism has also influenced the development of postcolonial literature more broadly, as writers from other parts of the world have been inspired by the African example to write about their own experiences of colonialism, racism, and oppression. African realism has made a profound contribution to world literature, providing a platform for African writers to tell their own stories in their own voices, and inspiring others to do the same.

African Literary Style

African literary style is incredibly diverse and reflects the varied cultural and historical experiences of the continent's people. However, there are certain elements that are common to many African literary works. One of the most prominent features of African literary style is the use of language. Many African writers incorporate elements of African languages and dialects into their works, often using a hybrid form of language that blends African and European influences. This helps to create a distinct African literary style that is rooted in African culture and history.

Another common feature of African literary style is the use of storytelling. Many African writers draw on traditional oral storytelling techniques, incorporating proverbs, fables, and other forms of oral literature into their works. This helps to give their writing a distinctive

Corresponding Author:
Neelam Tandon
Associate Professor,
Department of English, Lalita
Singh Govt. Girls P.G. College,
Adalhaat, Mirzapur,
Uttar Pradesh, India

rhythm and flow and to convey a sense of the richness and complexity of African culture. Many African writers also explore the themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the legacy of colonialism in their works. They often depict the struggle of African people to assert their cultural identity and to resist the forces of oppression and exploitation that have shaped their history. This gives their writing a sense of urgency and purpose and helps to create a powerful emotional connection with readers.

African literary style is characterized by a deep engagement with African culture and history and a commitment to exploring the complex social, political, and economic realities of life on the continent. It is a rich and diverse tradition that continues to evolve and grow as new generations of African writers emerge. African literary style is diverse and reflects the different cultural, linguistic, and historical experiences of the continent's people. However, there are certain elements that are commonly found in African literature and contribute to its unique style:

- **Orality:** African literature often incorporates oral traditions such as storytelling, proverbs, and songs, which have been passed down through generations. This gives African literature a distinctive rhythm and cadence.
- **Mythology and folklore:** Many African literary works draw on traditional African mythology and folklore, which often feature animal characters and have a strong moral message.
- **Political and social commentary:** African literature frequently addresses political and social issues, such as the legacy of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the impact of modernization on traditional African societies.
- **Symbolism and metaphor:** African writers often use symbolism and metaphor to convey deeper meanings and emotions, particularly in their descriptions of nature and the environment.
- **Multilingualism:** Many African writers incorporate multiple languages into their works, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the continent.
- **A sense of community:** African literature often emphasizes the importance of community and the interconnectedness of individuals within it.

The African literary style is marked by a rich blend of oral and written traditions, a focus on social and political issues, and an emphasis on the diversity and interconnectedness of African cultures and societies.

African Literature and African Realism

African literature encompasses the various literary works produced by writers of African descent, both within Africa and in the diaspora. African literature is incredibly diverse, reflecting the diverse cultural, linguistic, and historical experiences of the continent's people.

African realism, as previously mentioned, is a literary movement that emerged in the mid-20th century as African writers sought to depict the reality of life on the continent, often in the aftermath of colonialism. It rejected the romanticized, exoticized portrayals of Africa that had been prevalent in European literature and emphasized the social, political, and economic realities of African life.

Many African writers have contributed to the development of African realism, including Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa

Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, and Buchi Emecheta. Their works often explore themes such as the legacy of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the impact of modernization on traditional African societies. They also often draw on African oral traditions, incorporating storytelling, proverbs, and other forms of oral literature into their works.

African realism has played a significant role in the development of African literature, providing a platform for African writers to tell their own stories in their own voices. It has helped to challenge stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of African cultures and societies. Moreover, it has influenced the development of postcolonial literature more broadly, as writers from other parts of the world have been inspired by the African example to write about their own experiences of colonialism, racism, and oppression.

African Realistic Writers

African realism is a literary movement that emerged in the mid-20th century as African writers sought to depict the reality of life on the continent, often in the aftermath of colonialism. Many African writers have contributed to the development of African realism, including the following:

- **Chinua Achebe:** Achebe's works, including "Things Fall Apart" and "No Longer at Ease," are widely regarded as some of the most significant contributions to African literature. He was a pioneer of African realism and sought to depict the complexities of African life and culture.
- **Ngugi wa Thiong'o:** Ngugi's works, including "A Grain of Wheat" and "Petals of Blood," explore the themes of colonialism, nationalism, and social injustice in post-colonial Africa. He has been a prominent advocate for African literature written in African languages.
- **Wole Soyinka:** Soyinka was the first African writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, and his works, including "The Lion and the Jewel" and "Death and the King's Horseman," are known for their exploration of African culture and tradition.
- **Buchi Emecheta:** Emecheta's works, including "The Joys of Motherhood" and "Second-Class Citizen," explore the experiences of African women in a patriarchal society and the challenges they face in asserting their independence and identity.
- **Nadine Gordimer:** While not African-born, Gordimer spent most of her life in South Africa and was a prominent anti-apartheid activist. Her works, including "Burger's Daughter" and "July's People," explore the themes of race, class, and identity in post-apartheid South Africa.
- **Amos Tutuola:** A Nigerian writer who is best known for his novel "The Palm-Wine Drinkard," Tutuola's works often incorporate elements of African folklore and oral tradition and explore themes such as the relationship between the living and the dead, the nature of reality, and the power of storytelling.

These writers, among others, have made significant contributions to the development of African literature and the African realism movement. Their works have helped to challenge stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of African cultures and societies.

Significant Aspects of African Realism

African realism is a literary movement that emerged in the mid-20th century as African writers sought to depict the reality of life on the continent, often in the aftermath of colonialism. Here are some significant aspects of African realism:

- **Rejection of colonial stereotypes:** African realism rejects the romanticized, exoticized portrayals of Africa that had been prevalent in European literature and emphasizes the social, political, and economic realities of African life. This rejection of colonial stereotypes helps to challenge Eurocentric views of Africa and promotes a more nuanced understanding of African cultures and societies.
- **Use of African languages and oral traditions:** Many African writers incorporate elements of African languages and dialects into their works, often using a hybrid form of language that blends African and European influences. This helps to create a distinct African literary style that is rooted in African culture and history. Additionally, African realism often draws on traditional oral storytelling techniques, incorporating proverbs, fables, and other forms of oral literature into their works.
- **Exploration of the legacy of colonialism:** African realism often explores the themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the legacy of colonialism in their works. They often depict the struggle of African people to assert their cultural identity and to resist the forces of oppression and exploitation that have shaped their history. This helps to give their writing a sense of urgency and purpose and helps to create a powerful emotional connection with readers.
- **Critique of postcolonial society:** African realism is often critical of postcolonial African society, highlighting the social, political, and economic challenges that the continent continues to face. This critique helps to hold African governments and leaders accountable for their actions and promotes a more nuanced understanding of the complex issues facing the continent.
- **Depiction of social and political realities:** African realistic works often depict the social and political realities of life on the continent, including poverty, corruption, and inequality. African writers use their works to shed light on these issues and to advocate for social and political change.
- **Use of African languages and oral traditions:** African writers often incorporate elements of African languages and oral traditions into their works, helping to create a distinct African literary style that is rooted in African culture and history.
- **Exploration of cultural identity and tradition:** African realistic works often explore the themes of cultural identity and tradition, depicting the struggle of African people to maintain their cultural heritage in the face of modernization and globalization.

African realism is characterized by its engagement with African culture and history, its rejection of colonial stereotypes, and its commitment to exploring the complex social, political, and economic realities of life on the continent. It is a rich and diverse literary movement that

continues to evolve and grow as new generations of African writers emerge.

Influence of African Realism on World Literature

The influence of African realism on world literature has been significant, as the movement has helped to challenge and subvert Eurocentric views of African culture and history. Here are some ways in which African realism has influenced world literature:

- **Expansion of the Literary Canon:** African realism has helped to expand the literary canon to include works from diverse cultural and historical contexts. It has helped to challenge the notion that literature can only be produced by Western writers and has promoted a more inclusive and diverse understanding of literary culture.
- **Exposure of Western Audiences to African Culture and History:** African realistic works have helped to expose Western audiences to the richness and complexity of African culture and history. They have helped to challenge the stereotypes and prejudices that have long been associated with Africa in the Western imagination and have promoted a more nuanced and informed understanding of African societies and cultures.
- **Inspiration for Other Writers:** African realism has inspired other writers from around the world to explore the reality of their own societies and cultures. It has helped to promote a more global and interconnected understanding of literature and has encouraged writers to engage with the social, political, and cultural issues of their time.
- **Impact on literary techniques:** African realism has also had an impact on literary techniques and styles, with many writers from around the world incorporating elements of African oral tradition and language into their works. This has helped to create a more diverse and dynamic literary landscape and has promoted a greater appreciation of the unique qualities of different cultural and literary traditions.
- **Rejection of Colonialism And Racial Stereotypes:** African realism has helped to challenge and subvert colonialist and racist stereotypes about Africa and its people. This has helped to promote a more nuanced and respectful understanding of African cultures and societies.
- **Introduction of New Themes And Perspectives:** African realism has introduced new themes and perspectives to world literature, including the struggle for cultural identity, the impact of colonialism and globalization, and the importance of social and political change.
- **Incorporation of African languages and oral traditions:** African writers often incorporate elements of African languages and oral traditions into their works, helping to create a distinct literary style that is rooted in African culture and history. This has helped to enrich the global literary landscape and to promote greater diversity in literature.
- **Inspiration for other literary movements:** African realism has inspired other literary movements around the world, including the Latin American Boom and the Black Arts Movement in the United States. These movements drew inspiration from the themes and styles

of African realism and helped to promote a greater awareness of the experiences of marginalized peoples around the world.

Conclusion

African realism has had a profound impact on world literature, helping to challenge dominant narratives and to promote greater diversity and inclusion in literary expression. It has helped to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of African cultures and societies and has inspired writers from around the world to explore new themes and perspectives in their works. Overall, African realism has played an important role in promoting a more inclusive and diverse understanding of world literature. It has helped to challenge Eurocentric views of literary culture and has promoted a more nuanced and informed understanding of African societies and cultures.

References

1. Abraham William. *The African Mind*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, A classic text of African philosophy; c1962.
2. Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet On Creation Day*. New York: Anchor Press, A lucid and representative coverage of the writer's abiding critical concerns; c1975.
3. Chinweizu Onwuchekwa Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature*. London: Routledge, A passionate call to the decolonization of African literature and criticism that has generated a lot of controversy; c1980.
4. Cooper, Brenda. *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*. London: Routledge, A ground breaking study of the concept in African literature; c1998.
5. Feuser Willfred. Wole Soyinka: The Problem of Authenticity. *Black Literature Forum* 22, no. 3 (fall); c1988. p. 555-575.
6. Garuba Harry. *Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society*. *Public Culture*. A work of profound originality on realism and the philosophy of African arts. 2003;15(2):261285.
7. Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, An important contribution to the study of African and African-American cultural theory; c1988.
8. Gugelberger Georg. *Marxism and African Literature*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, An outstanding and representative text on trends in African Marxist literary criticism; c1986.
9. Heywood, Christopher, ed. *Perspectives on African Literature*. London: Heinemann, A good source on 1960s African literary criticism; c1971.
10. Irele, Abiola. *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London: Heinemann, A rigorous sociological study of African literature; c1981.
11. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the African Mind*. London: Heinemann, A radical Afrocentric and original reading of the terms of cultural colonization as well as liberation; c1986.
12. Oruka Henry Odera. *Sage Philosophy*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, A singularly original piece of African philosophy; c1990.
13. Senghor Léopold Sédar. *Prose and Poetry*. London: Heinemann, Carefully chosen representative texts; c1974.
14. Serequeberhan, Tsenay, ed. *African Philosophy*. New York: Paragon House, An extremely useful overview of historical and current trends in African philosophy; c1991.
15. Soyinka Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, A major work of African philosophy and literary criticism; c1976.
16. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the African Mind*. London: Heinemann, *Moving the Centre*. London: Heinemann, 1993. A more universalist account of cultural decolonization; c1986.
17. Welsh-Asante, Kariamu, ed. *The African Aesthetic: Keeper of the Traditions*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, An excellent assembly of the tradition; c1993.
18. Wiredu Kwasi. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, A classic from a man who might be rightly called the father of modern African philosophy; c1980.