

Narratives and the African Experience: The Dialectical Consideration of the Writings of First and Second Generation African Writers in Africa

by

Solomon Awuzie, Ph.D.
awuzie.solomon@edouniversity.edu.ng
Department of English
Edo University, Iyamho
Edo State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper analyzes the narratives of first generation African writers to reveal how Africa is defended and praised; and discuss the narratives of second generation (post-1960) African writers in how they depict Africa. The paper concludes that the narratives respond to the experiences of the different generations in Africa, and therefore, they cannot escape the joys and the woes of the times.

Keywords: Narrative(s), Africa, society, experience, poetry, generation(s)

Introduction

Narratives of the world are as old as the existence of human beings on earth. This is because the narratives of the world are about the human experience as it affects the world. Since human experience cannot be quantified, that same way “the narratives of the world are numberless” (Roland Barthes, 556). Barthes is of the view that “all human groups have their narratives” (557) in that they do not all experience life the same way. He goes further to argue that “narrative is present in every age, in every place, [and] in every society” (557) and that every age, place or society has narrative that is distinctively hers and that defines and distinguishes it from the rest of the world. This is so because the narratives emanating from a place, society or age communicate the progress and movement of the people of that place, society or age (Leo Tolstoy, 406). It depicts the enjoyments and the troubles of such a society or age “which are often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural background” (Barthes, 557).

This way, the narratives emanating from Africa have represented Africa in a way that is distinct from every other continent in the world. Different narratives have been used to communicate the ways the Africa people have lived, enjoyed, cried and mourned from the early times to the present age. With this in mind, FBO Akporobaro is of the view that narrative produced in Africa and about Africa “is an exercise that demands the continuous invention of exciting and highly memorable experiences, situations and characters” (101). He argues further that it is intended to teach morals and to educate its audience about African “cultural norms as has often being said”. It “is often primarily intended to create suspense, to generate an imaginatively enthralling experience through which the narrator seeks to stimulate the emotions and imagination of his audience”(101). Abiola Irele also points out that “the purpose of all forms of narrative, whether fictional by design or ‘factual’ in intent, is [...] the reformation of experience in such a way to endow it with a large significance”(159). Through the narratives produced in Africa and about Africa, Africans have been able to perceive “all the feelings experienced by their predecessors and those felt by their best and foremost contemporaries”(Leo Tolstoy, 406). Africans have also been privileged to have observed how people from other continents perceive Africa in the early times and what Africa has suddenly turned.

As Chinua Achebe rightly re-echoed in *Anthills of the Savanna*, the narrative is “our escort; without it, we are blind” (124). William Wilson corroborates this view that “narratives will tell us much more about those who relate them than they will about the event they recount” (64). There is a sense in which these views of narrative balance with “Paul Ricoeur’s conception that narrative is a problem in social organization” (Onyemaechi Udumukwu, 1). Abiola Irele provides reason why this is so. According to him, narratives, whether history or fiction, are the “necessary function of the imagination in its organizing relation to the actualities of existence”(159). He argues further that it is the formal equivalence between the different narratives that “accounts for the incessant traffic that takes place between them”(159). Paul Ricoeur has also shared a similar view with Abiola Irele but unlike Irele, Ricoeur insists that what is “ultimately at stake in case of the structural identity of the narrative [...] as well as in that of the true claim of every narrative is the temporal character of human experience” (Onyemaechi Udumukwu, 1). However, it is this knowledge of the importance of narrative to the development of any people that triggered the productions of most of the African colonial narratives of the 1950s and 1960s, where Africans were portrayed as inferior, subhuman and people without culture and the counter-hegemonic post-colonial narratives where Africans challenge colonial narratives about Africa. And as Barthes rightly observes, narrative is “a prodigious variety of genres” and has to do with any material “fit to receive man’s stories” (556), we will be drawing most of our examples from the narratives of the poetry genre. The reason for this choice is, as William Wordsworth has noted, “poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge” (267) in that “its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, [...] truth which is its own testimony” (Wordsworth, 266). Hence, using these narrative poems we depict the changing nature of the narratives that have been produced in Africa and about Africa.

It is important to note that African writings have been divided into three major generations: the first, the second and the third generation (see Donatus Nwoga 1967; Funso Aiyejina; Toyin Jegede 2003; Charles Nnolim 2009; Sule Egya 2012; Isidore Diala 2015; Solomon Awuzie 2016). While the first generation pioneered the course of African narrative fiction and “brought it to limelight” (Solomon Awuzie, 13), the second generation introduced and promoted sociological and ideological literature in African narrative fiction. They wrote literature “for social equality [and] for feminism” (Nnolim, 229). The third generation in their narrative focused on the military involvement in Africa body politics and the current corrupt political activities in Africa (Sule Egya, 426).

However, it is pertinent to note that examining the production of narratives in these different generations “is also a way of drawing attention to the current complications” and yet “speculative but necessary attempts” at the “reconstruction of the development of African literature” (Diala, 8). Harry Garuba has frequently been quoted among the most vocal scholars who criticized the “use of generation as a *marker* of the positioning of writers in time, given its ambiguity, instability and covert deployment as a definitive *marker* of literary periodization” (Diala, 9). Garuba argues that “the ambiguity heightens when writers said to belong to one generation are still active and producing work two or three generations after the one to which they are said to belong” (2005:52). Like Garuba, Biodun Jeyifo pejoratively equates the concept of “generation” with age-grades in a village setting. He deliberately exaggerates it to make it a laughing stock. In response to their arguments, Diala points out that there may be a discernable African way of emphasizing the term that does not “have to assume a negative connotation” since it is used “as a signpost in mapping the terrain” of Nigerian as well as African literature. Diala posits further thus:

Typically, driven by a common purpose in their participation in the political and social life of their communities, age-grades are *makers* of history; equally, providing cultural leadership, for example, by forming influential art groups, they are also *markers* of historical milestones in oral cultures. [...] There is surely a sense in which Soyinka’s generation differs from that of the group of writers born mainly after 1960, even if the Nobel laureate is still active in writing and producing literary works. Categorization of writers in generations enhances their location in time and equally sets in relief, at least provisionally, a kinship of aesthetic principles and trends. Periodization invariably requires the wisdom of hindsight and literary periods typically cut across several generations. But as a temporary road sign, perhaps no word embodies the idea of provisionality more provocatively than “generation” itself, which highlights not only human mortality but even more crucially human transience. Garuba’s objection to the use of the term is ultimately a criticism only of its misuse. The continuities between the poetry of Osundare and that of the generation after him foreground correspondences that justify categorization across generations, even while also highlighting discrepancies in generational temperament and aesthetic principles. (9)

Hence, this paper analyzes the narrative of the first generation of African writers to reveal how Africa is defended and praised. It also discusses the narrative of the second generation (post-1960) African writers in how they depict Africa. It explains how things went wrong; how the new narratives emanating from Africa now deride Africa and describe it as a place of poverty and the home of corruption.

European Narratives about Africa and the Defense of Africa: First Generation African Writers

Most historical narratives describing Africa before its contact with Europeans depict a continent that was going through substantive progress and development. According to A.G. Hopkins, “generations of Africans enjoyed congenial lives in well integrated, smoothly, functioning societies. The means of livelihood came easily to hand for food-stuffs grew wild and in abundance” (10). Kofi Awoonor is also of the view that the “Africa’s ‘pre-European’ history provides some evidence of continuity, with occasional catastrophic interruptions, in human activity on the continent”(7). He states further that a “continuum exists in the cultures of the African people” and that “it is this that was the most resilient feature of precolonial Africa” (7). The Colonial Report on Nigeria for 1914 also confirms these claims with the statement thus: “The people of Nigeria are by nature very keen traders and agriculturists” (7).

But in order to justify the colonial subjugation of Africa, colonial narratives promote the myth of African primitivism and inferiority. The colonial narratives, such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson*, about Africa depict Africans as inferior, subhuman and people without culture. According to Chris Osuafor, the myths of inferiority and subhuman as contained in their narratives are “used to justify the dispossession of the Africans of anything fit for superior European other and thus of colonial subjugation and enslavement”(33). Isidore Diala writes that “the ideological necessity of these negative images, of course, was to push the black beyond the pale of humanism’s grace, to render him inaccessible to the ethical prescriptions of humanism”(301). As Chinua Achebe, one of the leading writers of the first generation, surmises in *Anthills of the Savannah* it is with the use of narratives the racist colonial myth of African inferiority and subhuman is fought and won. This is because it is “only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story [...] that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. [...] Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us”(124). Achebe insists that Africans fight this ideological battle through the use of the story in that that is the only way the erroneous myth of African inferiority, subhuman and lack of culture can be corrected. And as Irele reminds us “all history begins as story: the narrative element is the point of departure” (157).

However, the subsequent narratives that emerged from Africa of the first generation bask in a deep sense of African history. They explore the African condition having their settings in “the pre-colonial era in order to position what went wrong- the popular technique of short-cutting the future through the windows of the past” (Osuafor, 40). The narratives “recapture the myth, folklore and the sum total of African cosmological perspective in their works in order to make Africans regain confidence in themselves”(40). The poets of the first generation translated African narrative poems about rural life and African belief system. A typical example is the narrative poem entitled “The myth of the Bagre” (see Senanu and Vincent, 15-17). The poem “is a long narration of nearly 12,000 lines which unfolds and accompanies the ritual processes of the initiation of young men and women of the LoDagaa in the North Western region of Ghana” (Senanu and Vincent, 18). The narrative poem is about the young men and women’s initiation ceremonies back into the society. It details the creation myth of the people and “unfolds the tribes’ wisdom concerning the origin of things” (Senanu and Vincent, 18). The poem is divided into two halves. While the first half is called “The White Bagre”, the second half is called “The Black Bagre”. Senanu and Vincent explain the two halves of the poem thus:

About half of the narration, called *The White Bagre*, outlines the procedure of the ceremonies, the announcement of the ban, the initiation ceremony, the gathering of the crops and the preparation of the beer from the grains. The beer becomes the ritual poison from which the initiates die, to be later reborn into the group.

The other half of the myth, called *The Black Bagre*, embodies creation stories, such as the meeting of the first ancestors, called the elder and the younger brother, with God and with the beings of the wild. It tells of the knowledge which man acquired from these beings. (18)

Another example is the Fulani creation narrative that was also translated into English. The narrative violates the poetics of the Biblical Genesis thus:

At the beginning there was a huge drop of milk
The Doondari descended and he created the stone
Then the stone created iron
And iron created fire
And fire created air
And Doondari descended the second time.
And he shaped them into man
But man was proud
Then Doondari created blindness and blindness defeated man

But when blindness became too proud,
Doondari created sleep and sleep defeated blindness
But when sleep became too proud
Doondari created worry and worry defeated sleep
But when worry became too proud,
Doondari descended for the third time
And he came as Gueno, the eternal one
And Gueno defeated death. (Osuafor, 40)

These kinds of narratives prevail in most African pre-colonial societies and were not newly created. Their “existence predates colonial contact” and recreating them is a “special effort of rediscovery” (Osuafor, 41). This goes a long way to show that “the pre-colonial African society before it was invaded by Europe was not a directionless and empty society. Rather, it was one society within which there was order, earnestness, poetry and freedom” (Okonkwo, 79).

There were some other narrative poems that were not translated but created in the tradition of European modernist poetry that go out of their ways to reveal that African before European contact have culture that were in no means inferior to the European culture. Among these narrative poems are those of Christopher Okigbo, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop, Okot p’Bitek, Kofi Awoonor and many others. For instance, in the poem entitled “Idoto,” Christopher Okigbo who had been a Christian “saw himself as a prodigal who had left his indigenous religion and culture for foreign ones. Now, like the prodigal son of the biblical parable, he decides to return to the goddess of his indigenous religion” (Romanus Egudu, 13). In the same manner, Leopold Sedar Senghor in his poem entitled “Nuit de Sine” presents Africa night in contrast to the European night. In the poem the African nights –the stars, the moon, the trees, the quiet villages and the familiar scenes that are associated with them – are represented as beautiful and containing unique and wonderful fragrance. In “Vanity”, Birago Diop captures the aspect of African culture that emphasizes the need for Africans to learn from the wisdom of their ancestors. The poem reveals that Africa is left rudderless and defenceless because Africans neglected the warnings, advice and values of their forbears. Hence, there is no need for Africans to bemoan the fate of the African continent or indulge in self-pity on the continent. It is Africans “vanity- typified by our empty pride in European ways which we do not quite understand and disregard for our ancestral voices- that has led to our misfortune” (Senanu and Vincent, 34).

David Diop’s poem entitled “Africa” also captures similar view about Africa. Unlike his contemporaries, Diop’s “Africa” depicts the three stages of the history of the continent: the pre-colonial stage, the colonial stage and the post-colonial stage. The pre-colonial stage represents the days of Africa “proud warrior tribes”. This is then followed by “a realistic picture of Africa’s experience of bitterness, despair and mockery under colonial rule”. The last presents “a future of hope built on some of the realistic elements of colonial experience: Africa as a young tree patiently springing up and gradually acquiring ‘the bitter taste of liberty’” (Senanu and Vincent, 69).

124.6

In all of these poems, despite the fact that the poets of the first generation reveal that Africa has gone through bitter and despairing experience, they do not only present their nostalgic feeling for Africa, they also attempt a way forward for the continent - as typical of the popular Igbo proverb *Onye ajuru adighi aju onwe ya* which means “he who is rejected does not reject himself.” In the course of our discussion, we will see whether the act of using narratives to defend Africa and to properly position it for growth and development as evident in most of the narratives of the writers of the first generation is carried further onto other generations. In order to do this, we will take a cursory look at the narratives produced in the second generation about Africa.

African Narratives about Africa and the Challenge of Nations Building: The Second Generation African Writers

The tradition of using African narratives to counter the European narratives of African inferiority, subhumanism and lack of culture soon gave way to a new set of narratives with mandates to focus on African realities for the betterment of the African society. This new African narratives were launched and promoted by the writers of the second generation led by Kole Omotoso, Niyi Osundare and Femi Osofisan (see James Currey, 52). According to them, the narratives of the writers of the first generation “had been too concerned with explaining Africa to Europeans”(52). Hence, the new narratives would be concerned with Africa’s “contemporary social and political reality and must explain Africa to Africans” (Currey, 52). Achebe had also supported this move by the writers of the second generation with the statement he made while giving a talk at a Political Science Seminar at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda, thus: “It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant – like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames” (78). Wole Soyinka has also noted in a public lecture he delivered at the Swedish Institute thus: “When a writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon” (20). Like these two writers, Titi Adepitan had also argued that:

The 1980s and 1990s heralded the arrival of a new breed of African writers who in ordinary circumstances would be described as constituting a new generation. But they came laboring under too many anxieties. The political landscape was becoming more and more desperate; before they learned to write many were co-opted into the vanguard of literature as an instrument of protest and that was all they wrote. (25)

Hence the narratives that were subsequently produced in the early period of the age capture the lived experience of the people. They present the landmark historical African experience as subject matter of the narratives. According to Charles Nnolim their narratives “fought ideological battle for social equality” (3). They were used to identify the African problem while some are used as tools to solving the problem (see Solomon Awuzie, 15). The narratives were also used to capture the pains, worries and effects of Africa’s regional and civil wars. Writing about how the narratives of this age were used in relation to the civil war, Chinyere Nwahunanya stresses that the narrators or authors of this age wrote war narratives “because of the sheer urge to record, as truthfully as possible, an excruciating indelible, visceral experience which the author has been physically and emotionally involved in” (109). A typical example is evident in Ossie Enekwe’s poetry and the poetry of other poets of the Nsukka school of poetry who wrote volumes of poetry about the Nigerian civil war and the people’s experience. Douglas Killam and Alicia L. Kerfoot write about Ossie Enekwe’s poetry thus: “the Biafran experience is the main theme of his early writing while in his later work metaphors of liberation dominate his poetic vision. He is dedicated to poetry as an oral art, and his work is characterized by its commitment to human dignity” (124).

However, the narratives of the later period of the generation are preoccupied with political discourses and environmental issues. According to Charles Bodunde, the narratives of the age deployed images to “emphasize the idea that human right struggle is imperative in seeking to restore the people’s well-being” (195). Bodunde posits further that “the dominate aesthetic strategy noticeable from the onset is the appropriation of the physical environment as an object in the portrait of the decline in the people’s well-being” (195). For example in *Waiting Laughters*, Niyi Osundare highlights the problem of corruption and goes ahead to represent it as endemic in Africa and among the African politicians. In the poem, he hopes for change which from the tone of the poem is not attainable. Through his juxtaposition of the two key words in the collection, Osundare’s persona posits that anticipating a turning point in African history is a sheer waste of time and energy. This is because the society has been entrusted into the hands of the wrong people. In one of the early poems of the collection, Osundare’s persona carefully and tactically revealed that though he is waiting while anticipating the needed change but he is as well aware that that change would never come:

Waiting,
Still waiting,
Like the strident summon of hasty edicts,
Bellowed by the smoking lips of vulgar guns,
Signed in blood, unleashed in the crimson spine
Of trembling streets
And the winds return,
Laden with adamantine thou-shalt-nots
Of green gods;

A jointless fear gosesteps the compound of our minds
With epaulettes of night, belts of fuming cobras;
Purple swaggers manacle our days
And trees swap their fruits for stony orders (1990: 49)

In the poem, the persona points to the reasons our “waiting” for change would amount to a waste of time. Prominent among these reasons is the fact that Africa is peopled by corrupt and wicked leaders who enact strident laws that instead of help the continent, end up plunging it into both political and economic chaos. From the time of their independence to date, most African countries have experience one form of dictatorship or the other and this has rendered the continent venerable economically. As the persona rightly observed, “A jointless fear gosesteps the compound of our minds”, it is natural for any African who is confronted with these challenges to be consumed by a kind of fear that results in hate instead of love or nostalgia for the continent. Osundare’s persona goes further to debunk the messianic myth of the long incursion of the military in Africa body politic. He reveals that most claims of the military after each coup that bring them into office are hypocritical: “But are these the messiahs/who came four seasons ago/with joyful drums and retinues of chanted pledges?/where now the aura,/ where, the anointed covenant of eloquent knights” (1990: 50).

In one of the poems of *Waiting Laughters* entitled “A tongue in the crypt” the persona challenges the kind of laws that were produce by dictators. It appears that the laws are actually intended to rope some targeted people in while protecting the corrupt leaders against criticism and condemnation. Isidore Diala provides an example of such law with reference to the promulgation of military Decree No 4 of 1984 and Decree 35 of 1993 “which infringed on freedom of speech”. According to him, “Dubbed ‘Public Officers (Protection Against false Accusation) Decree 1984,’ Decree No 4 is curiously worded to have a latent capacity for subjective interpretation specifically aimed at insulating public officers from any form of scrutiny or interrogation whatsoever” (13) and it states thus:

Any person who publishes in any form, whether written or otherwise, any message, rumour, report or statement, being a message, rumour, report or statement which is false in any material particular or which bring or is calculated to bring the Federal Military Government or the Government of a State or a Public Officer to ridicule or disrepute, shall be guilty of an offence under this Decree. (cited in Diala 13)

Hence in the poem, Osundare reacts with the following lines: “Countrymen/Behold your tongue/Sealed up in this iron cage/ For public safety/ And the national interest/ For permission to use/ Apply to:/ The Minister of Whispering Affairs,/ Dept. Of Patriotic Silence,/ 53 Graveyard Avenue/ DUMBERIA” (127).

We have also seen this kind of bitterness running through Tanure Ojaide's poetry. In *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*, Ojaide expresses a lot of pain about the continent. The collection touches on every aspect of the African society and goes ahead to express hopelessness towards them without any reservation. In one of the poems of the collection entitled "What poets do our leaders read?" for instance, Tanure Ojaide's persona stresses that Africa has so degenerated to a continent that houses corrupt and wicked leaders. In the poem, he describes African leaders with all sorts of pejorative names and with disdainful animal symbols such as "vulture", "ostrich", "Bedbug" and many more. This is done to stress his bitterness at what has become of the continent. Our worry in the poem and even in the entire collection is that it seems that the persona's bitterness has been pushed to the extent that one begins to perceive it as hate not just for the African leaders but for the continent itself. In one of the stanzas of the poem, Ojaide's persona depicts that his worry about African leaders is that they enjoy listening to sycophants- even when they know the sycophants. This is why instead of helping to improve the lots of the African people, they have ended up impoverishing them. Of course, in a situation where such happens, the sycophants would not be blamed but the leaders would: "When the ostrich heard the kingfisher's song/It swept to the stream to pick the blues/To redeem its ugly head, but drowned;/The wind, bearer of tales, wasn't accused of murder/But settled to whistle a dire [...]" (6). One can say that in the poem, Ojaide's persona loses hope on African leadership and the continent. This is evident in the fact that the poem contains no word or expression of hope for the continent.

In such other poems as "The music of pain" and "When soldiers are diplomats", the persona lashes out at the continent- while believing that his poetry can cause a turnaround in the manner in which things are done in the continent. While in "The music of pain" he reveals that the state of African society is bad. This is evident in the line thus: "excoriate the land's scurvy conscience" (2) and goes ahead to believe that the poem can cause a turnaround because "they have the bite of desperate ones" (2). In the entire poem, the persona represents the continent as a home of pain occasioned by poverty and corruption. And as a matter of fact the only "music" which the continent is so used to is "the music of pain." In "When soldiers are diplomats" he depicts why the change that is so needed in the continent would take eternity to be achieved. The reason is simply because the people who are representing Africa are not those who are supposed to do so. This is because African so-called diplomats are nothing but "the bedbug, that smug cannibal,/ [who] doesn't care for the rank smell of blood" (5). Ojaide's persona loses hope of better African society under the military leadership, hence he states further: "But put a savage in a suit,/ know him by his blood-tinted teeth./ you will always know the whore/ pacing the globe in a plaited gown/ selling smiles, lip-cheap wares" (4-5). In "Compatriots!" the persona addresses the African leaders as his "worst enemies" because their ritual killing activities are no secrets to all and sundry:

What does not know their ritual murders;
 Who does not know that they fortify themselves
 With vicious charms
 To live beyond their tenure? (13)

The persona notes further that “As soon as they had their hold on the land/ they upset the customs of truth” (13). In the poem the persona finds no consolation in the kind of things that are happening in the continent. In almost every poem that makes up the collection, the persona depicts that the continent is populated by blood seeking soldiers in the form of politicians and civilian politicians who have vowed to remain leaders unto their death. Hence, while they remain as leader they continue to suck their people and the land dry. This accounts for the reason the persona describes them as “vulture” an animal symbol of an individual who waits for something terrible to happen so that he can capitalize on it for personal gain. And in another case, he describes them as “bedbugs”, whose sole interest is to suck one’s blood dry no matter the teste, hence in one of the lines contained in the poem entitled “When soldiers are diplomats” he notes “The bedbug doesn’t care/ for the teste of your blood” (4). In “Unsubjected pride” the persona further tells of African leadership with some sort of hate. In the poem, African life has been made unentertaining and it has been devoid of the love for it- the love which ought to bring all together. This is evident in the manner in which the poet picks his words all through the lines of the poem. In the poem the view of Africa life is one of disdain and contempt for the ‘low life’ because the high and mighty only thinks of himself.

Conclusion

As Achebe rightly argued, the narrative of any people is a very important contributor to the growth and development of that people. It goes a long way to condition the way the people see themselves and the way other perceive of them. This is the reason Achebe goes further to propose that it is important that a people tell their own story, in that, in telling their story they are able to capture when “the rain began to beat them” and how to go about solving their own problems. In other to live up to his argument, when the early European narratives questioned the humanity of the African people, Achebe and his contemporaries of the first generation responded with narratives that affirm the fact that “Africans are people”. Through their narratives, Achebe and his contemporaries of the first generation stress that African “societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty”: that “it is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period” and “it is that they must now regain”. Unfortunately, the narratives that are now being produced in Africa and about Africa have failed to continue in the struggle to promote Africa and to make the African people regain their self-esteem. Their narratives have ended up deriding Africa and describing it as a place of poverty and the home of corruption. This has, as a matter of fact, affected the way Africa is viewed over the years. It has also got to a point where Africans now think in that line. Like the narratives themselves, the Africans too are now maligning the continent: they do no longer see anything good in the continent’s past and its future.

However, in reaction to this new narratives produced by the writers of the second generation, it is important to share in Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike's observation while referring to some Africa writers that "the attitude exhibited towards" Africa in their narratives is "not of acceptance or nostalgia but of ironic mockery". An African can only talk of the African leadership system and the entire society like that, "after he has thoroughly imbibed imperialist prejudices against African savages"(198). It is also important to add that most of their "treatment of the African fauna is equally colonialist" (198). It is as if the writers of the second generation have developed "the eyes and ears and fears of a Joseph Conrad" (198). This is because that is the only reason why "rather than contest" their "alienation and transmutation of their sensibility, rather than contest the Joyce Caryan view the way Achebe did," the writers of the second generation internalized and "imbibed its imperialist sensibility and were gladly mocking their rural and urban compatriots with self-satisfied Anglo-Saxon relish" (199).

Though there have been arguments that these narratives are only responding to the modern African experience and cannot escape the joys and the woes of the times (Solomon Awuzie, 19), there are still things that need to be done. Africa has been through a lot over the years and its experience can make any writer of African origin want to describe the continent with disdain. There is a way an African writer can capture the African social and leadership challenges and still retain his nostalgic feeling about the continent: which in most cases can be "infectious". This is to emphasize the fact that nostalgic feelings about Africa are lacking in most narratives that are produced in Africa and about Africa of the second generation. Things have gone so bad that one can say, as Anna Eerika Poysa rightly observe, that African narrative is also under foreign domination (48). To share in Chinwezu, Jamie and Madubuike's view, in producing narratives about Africa, African writers should imbibe the culture of writing that will "destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality", that will create love for the continent and will also "map out new foundations for an African modernity".

Acknowledgements

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the International Conference "Creative Writing and Creative Reading: The Challenges of Cosmopolitanism" organized by London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (LCIR) on 4 November, 2017 in London, UK.

The grant received from the management of Edo University Iyamho made it possible for this paper to be presented at the International Conference. I sincerely wish to thank the management of Edo University Iyamho for the grant.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann, 1977
- Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann,
- Adepitan, Titi. "Issues in Recent African Writing." *African Literature Today* 25 (2006) 124-128
- Akporobaro, FBO. *Introduction to African Oral Literature: A Literary-Descriptive Approach*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing Company, 2006.
- Awoonor, Kofi. *The Breast of the earth*. London: Nok Publishers International, 2005.
- Awuzie, Solomon. *A psychoanalytic Reading of the Poetry of Okigbo and Ojaide*. Germany: Scholar's Press, 2016.
- Barthes, Roland. "Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narratives" *Criticism: The Major Statement* Charles Kaplan (ed) New York: St Martin's Press, 1986 (555-589)
- Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980
- Currey, James. *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series & The launch of African Literature*. Ibadan: HEBN, 2008
- Diala, Isidore. "Bayonets and the Carnage of Tongues: The Contemporary Nigerian Poet Speaking Truth to Power". *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 2015 (1-23)
- Diala, Isidore. "Mistah Kutz: He Dead" English and the African Writer" *Concepts and Issues in Language Studies*. Anyanwu P.A and Otagburuagu E (eds) Owerri: Spring Field, 2002.
- Egudu, Romanus. *The Study of Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2007
- Egya, Sule E. "Historicity, Power, Dissidence: The Third-Genneration Poetry and Militaray Oppression in Nigeria." *African Affairs*: 2012 (424-441) doi:10.1093/afraf/ads025
- Garuba, Harry. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being: Re-figuring Trends in Recent Nigeria Poetry." *English in Africa* 32(1), 2005: 51-72
- Hopkins, A G. *An Economic History of West Africa* London: Longman, 1967.

Irele, Abiola. "Narrative, History and the African Imagination" *Narrative*. Vol 1, No 2 (May, 1993), (156-172)

Jeyifo, Biodun. "The Younger Generation is Living up to Expectation" (interviewed by Onyerionwu E) In: Onyerionwu E (ed) *Nigerian Literature: The 21st Century Conversation*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2012, 171-181.

Killam, Douglas and Alicia L. Kerfoot. *Student Encyclopedia of African Literature*. London: Green wood Press, 2008

Nnolim, Charles. "Contemporary Nigerian Fiction" *Issues in African Literature*. Yenagoa: Treasure Resource Communications Limited, 2009

Nwahunanya, Chinyere. "War as Communal Tragedy: The Nigeria War Novel" *Nigerian Literature in English: Emerging Critical Perspectives* Onyemaechi Udumukwu (ed) PortHarcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communications Ltd 2007 (108-133)

Nwoga Donatus. *The West African Verse*. London: Longman, 19

Ojaide, Tanure. *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd, 1990

Okonkwo, C. "The African Writer as a Teacher" *Journal of Educational Studies*, Owerri Vol. 1 2002

Osuafore, Chris. *The Colonial Experience and African Literature*. Owerri: Amvaly Press, 2003

Osundare, Niyi. *Waiting Laughters*. Lagos: Malthouse, 1990

Poysa, Anna Eerika. *Decolonisation in Mozambican Literature*. Coimbra: University de Coimbra, 2014

Senanu, KE and T Vincent. *A Selection of African Poetry*. London: Longman, 1976

Soyinka,Wole. *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*. Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1988

Tolstoy, Leo. "What is Art?" *Criticism: The Major Statement* Charles Kaplan (ed) New York: St Martin's Press, 1986 (405-418)

Udumukwu, Onyemaechi. *A Guild to Narrative Fiction and Drama*. Port Harcourt: Emhai Printing and Publishing co 1997

Wilson, William A. "The Folk Speak: Everyday Life in Pioneer Oral Narratives" *The Marrow of Human Experience*. Jill Jerry Rudy and Diane Call (eds). Colorado: University Press of Colorado, Urban Institute, 2006 (62-80)

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" *Criticism: The Major Statement* Charles Kaplan (ed) New York: St Martin's Press, 1986 (256-275)