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Abstract

In general terms, Nigerian poetry in English before the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was marked by an excessive preoccupation with private grief and emotions over and above societal tragedies and triumphs, undue eurocentrism, derivationism, obscurantism and private esotericism. This tendency may be attributed to, among other factors, the fact that until the Civil War, Nigeria had no major public historical rallying point. The colonial struggles were waged by the various tribal kingdoms with little or no inter-ethnic co-operation; amalgamation was carried out by agents of an external force; the struggle for independence was neither violent nor concerted on a national scale; and independence itself was merely another gimmick for entrenching a few greedy members of the native élite.

death. See John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1970), pp. 195-216.

9. Achebe, Interview, *Meanjin*, 39, 1 (April, 1980), p. 37.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
11. See Maureen W. Lewis, 'Priest of a Dead God', *African Studies Association of the West Indian Bulletin*, 7 (1974), pp. 39-53.
12. Hugh R. Brown, 'Igbo Words for the Non-Igbo: Achebe's Artistry in *Arrow of God*', *Research in African Literatures*, 12, 1 (Spring, 1981), pp. 79-80.
13. Achebe, 'Lament of the Sacred Python', in *Beware, Soul Brother*, p. 49.
14. T.O. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 166.
15. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987).
16. Achebe, 'The Igbo World and Its Art', an address given at the University of Guelph, Ontario (1984), unpublished.

FUNSO AIYEJINA

Recent Nigerian Poetry in English: A Critical Survey

In general terms, Nigerian poetry in English before the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was marked by an excessive preoccupation with private grief and emotions over and above societal tragedies and triumphs, undue eurocentrism, derivationism, obscurantism and private esotericism. This tendency may be attributed to, among other factors, the fact that until the Civil War, Nigeria had no major public historical rallying point. The colonial struggles were waged by the various tribal kingdoms with little or no inter-ethnic co-operation; amalgamation was carried out by agents of an external force; the struggle for independence was neither violent nor concerted on a national scale; and independence itself was merely another gimmick for entrenching a few greedy members of the native élite. The Civil War on the other hand was a crystallizing experience as it was the one time when virtually every Nigerian was forced by the nature of the issues at stake to take a stand, primarily, a

public one. It should, therefore, not be surprising to find that the temper of Nigerian poetry has been altered drastically by the events of this period in the history of the country.

More than anything else, recent Nigerian poets of English expression seem to have moved from the obscurantism of their forerunners to the writing of accessible and socially anchored poetry. The move towards the demystification of Nigerian poetry in English had been irrevocably started by the pre-1966 coup crises in the country. These events inspired Christopher Okigbo to write his most lucid and accessible poetry ('Path of Thunder') which set the tone and texture for a lot of recent Nigerian poetry in English. On both sides of the war, many came face to face with death, dehumanization and various forms of betrayal. There was a physical, spiritual, and psychological brutalization of the nation on an incomprehensibly large scale. In such a 'season of anomy', the poets could no longer afford to speak in inaccessible riddles and occult tongues. New and strident voices were needed for the immediate and unambiguous expression of the nation's tortured and fragmented psyche. The shells and the bullets made sure that there were no closets left from which the closet-poets could operate. The physical destruction of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, remains the most vivid poetic metaphor for the death of ivory-towerism in Nigerian poetry in English. In addition, the pervading aura of danger and death, especially in Biafra, made directness and 'immediate delivery' the *sine qua non* of the poetry of this period.

The Nigerian Civil War was, however, not the only modifying influence on Nigerian poetry in English. Since independence, the geo-social bases of this poetry and the consciousness of Nigerian poets of English expression have been modified in accordance with the new realities of the country. There has been a proliferation of universities in the country and such universities have usually tended to become additional breeding and practice grounds for prospective poets. In addition to this geographical expansion, a few poets have also emerged from outside the university system, especially from the Armed Forces who, though still at a fledgling state, will hopefully bring a new social perspective to bear on Nigerian poetry in English and join many of the recent university-groomed poets in the demystification of this poetry.

As an important corollary to the expansion of the geo-social context of Nigerian poetry in English, it should be noted that it has become more difficult for any single view of literature or culture to exercise a stranglehold on this new poetry in the same manner that Leeds single-handedly played the midwife to the poetic endeavours of the first generation of modern Nigerian poets, inculcating in them an Anglo-modernist sensi-

bility and a lopsided application of the universalist-individualistic approach to literature.¹ Duality, or even a multiplicity of views and ideological cultures now seems to be the defining factor in most of Nigerian educational institutions. At Ife, Ibadan and Zaria, for example, radical scholars have made a significant impact on both staff and students alike, and it is to be expected that the new poets emerging from these campuses would consciously or unconsciously reflect the dialectical relationships which are germane to the right-left ideological debates in their communities.

The prophetic and lucid example in Okigbo's 'Path of Thunder' became a model for the younger poets at Nsukka who have now matured to become the legitimate heirs to the Okigbo mantle. In documenting the emergence of the post-Okigbo poets at Nsukka, Chukwuma Azuonye suggests that post-Okigbo poets were informed by a 'mood of utter disgust over the incipient brutalization of their country'² and that their reaction was a 'wounded outrage ... against the crisis and war that threatened, and restively still threaten, the future of our people'.³ One of the most tragic repercussions of the coup and counter-coup of 1966 was the civil violence which led to the cold-blooded massacre of Easterners in several parts of Nigeria, especially in the North. In the words of Olusegun Obasanjo, a one-time Head of State of Nigeria, these events 'altered the political equation and destroyed the fragile trust existing among the major ethnic groups'¹⁴ in the country. The dehumanization which resulted from the violence led many Easterners to flee from the North to the East in search of refuge. They went to the East

by air, land and sea, in pathetic and shocking conditions. Most of them had one or the other part of their bodies either broken or completely missing. Thousands of children arrived, some with severed limbs and many others emasculated. The adults bore the full brunt of the killings and very few arrived from the North unharmed. Those whose limbs were not severed, brought them back shattered and had to be amputated anyway. Many others had their eyes, nose (sic), ears and tongues plucked out.... Women above the age of ten were raped and many of them came back on stretchers.... There was hardly a single family which did not suffer a loss through these massacres.⁵

Predictably enough, Enugu as the political capital of Eastern Region and Nsukka as its only university town, functioned as the centres for the political and intellectual debates about the future of the violated Easterners. While the political debates crystallized into the declaration of the

independent Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967, the creative energy unlocked by the nightmarish events found expression in the vibrant poetry of young poets such as Chukwuma Azuonye, Kevin Echeruo, Ossie Enekwe, Dubem Okafor and Obiora Udechukwu.

Whether as a reaction to the orgy of blood consequent on the massacres and the Civil War or as a reaction to the failure of the Biafran ideal, the poetry of this generation of young men has logically been threnodic both in tone and content. The mangled limbs and dismembered bowels of the victims of the crises and the frustrated hopes of the people have metamorphosed into images of death, aridity, decay, putrefaction, betrayal and hypocrisy. The mournful tone of the dirge has thus become the dominant mood of the poetry by the post-Okigbo 'Nsukka poets'. The poetry of Pol Ndu, Ossie Onuora Enekwe and Obiora Udechukwu displays the profound anguish which has emerged as the defining characteristic of the poetry of this generation.

The *dance macabre* which characterised Nigerian life, especially on the Biafran side, has been lyricised in Pol Ndu's *Song for Seers* where he explores the ambivalence, the dilemma and the frustration which define the awakening creative spirit caught in a cauldron of chaos. *Song for Seers* is suffused with images of death, void, decay and aridity and it presents a picture of modern Nigerian life as a wasteland where the only consolation remains the immortal song of the poet who is the 'dying immortal'. The gory details of war, its accompanying misery and despair are evoked in 'Reflections' when Ndu affirms that 'smiles have fled men's faces/ drawing wry skin over dry bones'⁶ and the communality of the tragedy finds poetic expression in 'Reburial of the Dead' where the poet vicariously experiences the plight of 'heads severed in seven nights on seven stones/ ...awaiting the planting season/ resting on seven palms'.⁷

Enekwe's *Broken Pots* opens with the poet as an exile speaking to his host audience about himself and his perception of his sanctuary ('The Joker'). This opening prepares the ground for those poems which focus on non-Nigerian subjects and which demonstrate that the modern African psyche is, of necessity, nomadic. But more specifically, they inspire questions as to why the poet has abandoned his land 'where the sun smiles in the day,/ the moon at night/ and (where) *electric* has not killed the stars' for a sojourn in a land of bitter cold where 'all shoot white clouds through their nostrils/ into the mist like pipers in a crowd'.⁸ The reason for the poet's exile is to be found in the social, political and economic realities of Biafra both before and after the war. In articulating these realities, Enekwe ventures beyond the immediate and the parochial by universalizing the sentiments which inform the Biafran ideal.

In the title poem of this volume, Enekwe, employing the folkloric mode, evokes the picture of a confrontation between innocence and experience — a confrontation which inevitably leads to the souring of innocence by experience as was the case in the confrontation between the innocent ideals of Biafran youths and the stark realities of the Civil War. The poet-protagonist goes to the top of a neighbourhood hill with his sister in search of the king of animals only to be confronted with ‘The voice of a virgin/ whose pot of water/ has slipped and crumbled’. The virgin with the broken pot of water becomes a symbol for all those whose dreams of a better future have been cannibalized and consigned to the rubbish heap of the present. Such frustrated hopes are amplified in sharper relief in this volume through the poet’s focus on the absence of good things, the permanence of the ugly and the bad, and the pervading presence of fear and death.

The magnitude of the Biafran tragedy is most evident in the cluster of poems which celebrates the victims of the war. In ‘No Way For Heroes To Die’, Enekwe laments the loss of ‘those who died to be forgotten —/ carcass of heroism stung by rainbows,/ stung till blanched, it was abandoned by flies’ and in ‘To A Friend Made and Lost In War’, he captures the tragic loss which accompanies civil strife and wars.

Throughout this volume, Enekwe finds himself returning again and again to the premature termination of the life of members of his generation; young men and women who pass away,

like comets in the gloom.
Awful to watch them go!
Friend in dry and wet season,
foes of all that would torment me
die like wax light in a storm.

In spite of the personal and the collective tragedies which characterized Biafra, however, Enekwe suggests that the only way through which we can transform our past tragedies into a positive future is by being guided by the courage, dedication and love of the martyrs of our past and not by building a fence between the dead and the living. It is in the spirit of this philosophy that he celebrates the patches of love in our scorched wasteland.

To move from Enekwe’s poetry to that of Obiora Udechukwu is to move from the literary but direct to the traditional and oblique. While the threnodic tone in Enekwe’s poetry is recognizably that of the poet: realistically portrayed, sombre and depressing, the predominant poetic voice in Udechukwu’s *What the Madman Said* is that of a light-hearted,

licentious, illogical (but by no means irrelevant) mad persona. Udechukwu is primarily a visual artist — an exponent of the *uli* tradition of line drawing — but he believes that ‘the painter should also be a poet and that all arts are somehow interlinked’.⁹ Like his paintings and drawings, his poems make poignant satirical social statements in defence of the underdog. The Prologue to *What the Madman Said* crystallizes the major preoccupations of Udechukwu, who in the face of the ‘scarlet sorrow’ and the ‘faded laughter’ of our age, would wish for songs of courage which will propel us past present obstacles into a brighter future. He wonders, rhetorically:

For when the agonies of a generation are measured
And the tree-trunks of the people laid out
shall there

in the bayonet-fenced field be left
voices to raise a song
for the totem lost in the whirlwind?¹⁰

The unvoiced answer is, of course, in the affirmative. His poetry and that of the other ‘Nsukka poets’ can be regarded as songs raised to Biafra — ‘the totem lost in the whirlwind’.

What the Madman Said covers the theme of the Civil War as well as our twentieth-century maladies. In a manner similar to Enekwe’s, Udechukwu pays homage to some of those who made personal sacrifices, including the supreme sacrifice, for the Biafran cause. For example, he portrays Okigbo as the one

who changed your lunar flute
for a gun
that future generations
might not bite sand.

The ‘ashes of the sensual years’, he concludes, have left us searching for shelter from the rains and for shields against the storms which continually threaten our every forward step.

The war is only a distant echo in the second part of *What the Madman Said*. The poet’s major preoccupation here is with the more immediate realities of social disruptions, political betrayals and economic exploitation. He is direct in his indictment of our ‘heroes’ whose ‘promises are baskets of water/ ...are words spoken to the wind’.

In many regards, Udechukwu’s poetic sensibility is as sharp and imagistic as Okigbo’s. His madman persona, while recalling the

enigmatic madman in Achebe's short story 'The Madman', is a composite of Okigbo's Jadum and Upandru and, like them, he is vociferous in his unabashed and unrestrained condemnation of our alienated and deluded leaders:

Promises and three-piece suits
Cannot climb palm trees
Briefcases and files
Cannot plant cassava
Ora Obodo, can one eat yam with petrol?

I am the one speaking
If I do not wake the cock
The cock will not wake the sun.

In both his subject matter and style, Udechukwu displays a concern for the poetic tradition of his people and succeeds in conveying his themes through appropriate and graphic images and metaphors in a manner reminiscent of Okot p'Bitek and Okigbo. The sense of loss and hope which characterizes the poetry of Pol Ndu, Ossie Enekwe and Obiora Udechukwu is also present in many of the other post-Okigbo poets from the eastern part of the country. Even in Chinweizu's *Energy Crisis and Other Poems* which is predominantly set in the West and permeated with its soggy and sentimental sexual obsessions, the Nigerian Civil War features in a few poems which, incidentally, are the more eloquent and significant ones in the volume. In these poems, he suggests that the Nigerian Civil War, like any other war in Africa, is a tragedy which must be blamed on our leaders and their foreign (mis-education):

Son, should they ask why we died,
Tell them:
Our leaders were paralysed
By festering greed
By ethics and statecraft mislearned
From alien lands.¹¹

In addition to the Nigerian poets on the Biafran side, the crises and the war left their imprint on other younger Nigerian poets who did not necessarily witness the actual war. While the 'Nsukka poets' who were directly involved in the war expressed disgust at the massacre of their people in various parts of the country, jubilation at the birth of Biafra, and frustration at the failures of their new nation, drawing on the details

of the Biafran tragedy as the raw materials for their poetry, the other Nigerian poets saw and used the war as a concrete metaphor of the nightmarish state of the nation. Like the 'Nsukka poets', these other young Nigerian poets were set to make poetry as relevant to the realities of their daily existence as possible: no more the pursuit of the clever and esoteric lines of Soyinka, the latinate phrases of Okigbo and Echeruo or the Hopkinsian syntax of Clark.

Odia Ofeimun (*The Poet Lied*), Niye Osundare (*Songs of the Marketplace and Village Voices*), Harry Garuba (*Shadow and Dream*), Femi Fatoba (*Petals of Thought*) and Tanure Ojaide (*Children of Iroko*) are some of the major new poets who have emerged from outside of what was Biafra. The first important observation about these poets, who incidentally are all connected with the University of Ibadan in the same way that the 'Nsukka poets' are connected with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is that they are neither homogeneous in their style nor have they been 'victims' of the same literary influences. The monolithic presence of Okigbo which is discernable in the 'Nsukka poets' is absent from the work of these new 'Ibadan poets'. The nearest to a monolithic influence on their poetry may be that of the radical perspective which has made substantial inroads into some of our university communities.

The rigorous self-criticism to which these poets often subject themselves and their country may be illustrated with Ofeimun's poetic reaction to the Civil War, the military in Nigerian politics and the relationship between the artist and his society. The tragic experiences of the Civil War find expression in Ofeimun's violent images and in his implicit references to the details of the 'senseless abattoirs' and 'unhealthy hate' which have come to characterize Nigerian life style. The title poem indicts opportunistic pro-establishment artists, who, in spite of the evident brutalization of the masses, choose to camp at the foot of the high table of power, waiting for the crumbs from the plates of those whose praises they have condemned themselves to sing. It is callous, Ofeimun insists, for such artists to use the suffering and dehumanized members of their society as mere ornaments in their fables when they should be fighting physically or metaphorically for their liberation. For any such artist,

...as for the many handy serfs
to whose lot it fell
to whitewash the public idols
with termite-eaten insides,
there was no place for raised fingers

even when human adders
gobbled the peace of the market place
even when famine snaked through
his neighbours' homesteads¹²

Ofeimun's concern for the oppressed, his anger at and impatience with opportunistic artists, public morality, cultural inadequacies, economic mismanagement and his acknowledgement of the few positive archetypes are qualities which he shares with Niyi Osundare whose two published volumes — *Songs of the Marketplace*¹³ and *Village Voices*¹⁴ — by their very titles, proclaim the public slant of his poetry. The public with which he is obsessed is a clearly defined one — the oppressed peasants who may be found in our marketplaces and villages. Osundare's poetry is the best Nigerian example (in English) of the poem as song and performance. His poetry is

not the esoteric whisper
of an excluding tongue
not a claptrap
for a wondering audience
not a learned quiz
entombed in Grecoroman lore.

Poetry, for him, must be a direct descendant of

the hawker's ditty
the eloquence of the gong
the lyric of the market place
the luminous ray
on the grass's morning dew

i.e. 'man meaning to man'.¹⁵

In Osundare's poetry, one confronts an understanding and internalization of the contrastive and convergent cultures and ideologies which shape our daily lives. These contradictions are, as a result of the poet's ideological choice, resolved in favour of the masses. As in Ofeimun's poetry, a justifiable anger is present in his work, in addition to an abundance of humour and satire. With an eye to the absurd and the grotesque, Osundare caricatures members of our ruling/ruining class while providing very sympathetic views of the masses whose fates are determined by the policies and antics of the leaders. Apart from the social relevance of Osundare's poetry, his work is distinguished by its sustained lyricism and the use of the dramatic tone, both of which are reminiscent of the oral traditions of Africa. The banter of the market place, the

garrulous and living voices of street fighters, the spontaneous wit of touts, and the poetic work-tunes of farmers are encapsulated in Osundare's poetry. The various drums in 'A Dialogue of the Drums' become characters in a well-orchestrated symphony of the pains, poetry, prophecies and hopes of the people. Their conclusion that 'the people always outlive the palace' stands out as Osundare's thematic and ideological creed. Without any doubt, Osundare is the public poet, the town-crier, briefly glimpsed in the Okigbo of 'Path of Thunder'.

The return to roots which is evident in Osundare's poetry is also manifest in the poetry of Tanure Ojaide and Kemi-Atanda Ilori. Both of these poets can be classified as neo-traditionalists. Ojaide, like most of the new Nigerian poets, empathises with the downtrodden and employs a poetic style which is, as in the case of Osundare, derived from an indigenous poetics. His poetry is marked by the generous presence of sonorous phrases, parables and rituals and the absence of the obscure. He uses traditional forms to achieve poetic validity, intensity and relevance.

Kemi-Atanda Ilori's *Voices of the Hurricane*¹⁶ shows that he is a poet whose sensibility is firmly rooted in the Yoruba culture. In his use of cumulative details and fragments, he recalls Fagunwa's repetition of situations and motifs to underscore major thematic preoccupations. Kemi-Atanda Ilori's bias is that of a neo-traditionalist dirge chanter who revels in the incantatory, the gnomic and the expansive.

Kemi-Atanda Ilori's love of the expansive contrasts sharply with Femi Fatoba's economy of language and emotions. In *Petals of Thought*,¹⁷ Fatoba examines the familiar terrain of the decadent political and religious arena of contemporary life with specific emphasis on the falsity of the Nigerian scene. Deceit, cynicism, corruption and false starts are the hallmarks of the land/man-scape which emerges from Fatoba's poetry. Whatever his theme, he always seems to be able to introduce an original and witty perception and assessment. The humour often takes the bite out of his indictments while, ironically, also making them more memorable and enduring. His language is subtle, impersonal, occasionally mischievous (with his chuckling voice in the background) and his images are bold and vivid. Fatoba's brand of poetry, despite the pervading grim realities, is light-hearted without being irresponsible, terse and crisp without being obscure.

Thus far, it is obvious that public-spiritedness is one of the defining qualities of new Nigerian poetry in English. However, to move from poets like Osundare and Fatoba to Harry Garuba is to move from the basically public to the basically private. Garuba's *Shadow and Dream* is informed by a reclusive intelligence: an alienated psyche which is set

apart from its society. Garuba's poet-protagonist is the ear which hears the unspoken and weaves webs of dreams out of such celestial materials. His poetry is devoid of that essential anger which keeps rebels and those on the fringe alive and active. His is the calm reflection of a retiring philosopher who has

...learnt without the beard of age,
to shelter it all within the shell of my life
for the spider has woven my broken shell
into a web of fantasy in which is contained
the metaphoric lore of all my journeys.¹⁸

Riddles, gnomic phrases, romantic tragedy and fantasy are the central attributes of Garuba's poetry, and except in a poem like 'To all Compatriots', he is a prisoner in his castle of dreams. Not so Idi Bukar, the author of *First The Desert Came and Then The Torturer*. In the best tradition of revolutionary poetry now gaining currency in Nigeria, Idi Bukar, one of the few substantial poets of English expression to have emerged from the northern part of Nigeria, is an explorer of the collective psyche of the people. He constructs an elaborate parable of a neo-colonial nation which is presided over by aridity, uncreativity, brutalization, mediocrity and death-inducing leadership. His Torturer and Death 'are both real life and metaphorical forces of infertility and destruction, and they symbolise the threat of a transition through hunger from dependent capitalism to dependent fascism'.¹⁹ Can such a pessimistic view of life be revolutionary? Yes. For, to ask the right question in a season of fear and lurking death is a revolutionary gesture, but Bukar takes the debate beyond the asking of the right questions and presents the image of a revolutionary who is courageous enough to challenge the hunger-inducing, the labour-exploiting and cliché-ridden leadership of the nation. Bukar's Dan Foco is Dedan Kimathi, Patrice Lumumba, the *Agbekoya* and all of Africa's revolutionary guerrillas reincarnated. He is the undying moving spirit herding the people toward their liberation:

When the paid news reader was announcing he was dead
someone noticed him watching the screen
someone glimpsed him on the bush road
someone was listening to his lecture before
a rag-and-kerosine-lit backboard.

How could they have expected to kill him?

Idi Bukar's revolutionary message is a logical extension of Niyi Osundare's unambiguous identification with the oppressed. That is the major

concern of contemporary Nigerian poetry in English, be it in the fiery lines of Idi Bukar and Niyi Osundare or in the sensitive stance of Catherine Acholonu who, sadly enough, is the only female Nigerian poet of any significance to have emerged in recent times. Acholonu's poetry focuses attention on the plight of the twentieth-century African. Her parables about ancestors who have 'lost track of their graves/ In a strange land',²⁰ of a goddess who is entrusted with the task of bringing beauty to an ugly world and of the creative water women are, in essence, parables about our precarious modern existence. Acholonu's poetic persona reminds one of Garuba's introspective protagonist but her personalization of the poetic voice does not lead to closet-poetry. Rather, her poetic persona portrays experiences which it has vicariously undertaken on behalf of the community; it is thus at once personal as well as communal.

The shift from the obscurantism and eurocentrism of most of the first generation of modern Nigerian poets to the preoccupations of the present crop of poets whose focus as well as literary antecedents are more indigenous than foreign, can be said to have signalled a much desired alter/native tradition in Nigerian poetry in English. There is, of course, still a lot of scope for development, even in the application of this alter/native tradition. Individual poets would, for example, be expected to evolve, through experimentation with the component forms of this tradition, distinctive personal styles which, while being personal to them, can also be traced back to the base tradition. As one waits for the inevitable maturation of some of the poets whose works have been examined in this survey and other up-coming poets such as Besong Bate, Ishola Dina, Ada Ugbah, Teju Olaniyan, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, and the handful of soldier poets like M.J. Vatsa and Pater Atuu, one hopes that many of them would succeed in extending the frontiers of Nigerian poetry in English to new technical and thematic limits so as to reinforce and invigorate the emergent alter/native poetic tradition.

NOTES

1. See Chinweizu *et al.*, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).
2. Chunkwuma Azuonye, ed., *Nsukka Harvest* (Nsukka: Odunke Publications), p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
4. Olusegun Obasanjo, *My Command* (London: Heinemann, 1980), p. xi.
5. Alexander A. Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), p. 84.

6. Pol Ndu, *Songs for Seers* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1974), p. 29.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
8. Ossie Onuora Enekwe, *Broken Pots* (Greenfield Review Press, 1977), p. 1. All other quotations are from this volume.
9. 'An Interview with Obiora Udechukwu', *Okike*, 20 Dec. 1981, p. 66.
10. Obiora Udechukwu, *What the Madman Said*, ms. All other quotations are from this manuscript.
11. Chinweizu, *Energy Crisis and Other Poems* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1978), p. 53.
12. Odiá Ofeimun, *The Poet Lied* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 26.
13. Niyi Osundare, *Songs of the Marketplace* (Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1983).
14. Niyi Osundare, *Village Voices* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria) Limited, 1984).
15. Niyi Osundare, *Songs of the Marketplace*, pp. 3-4.
16. Kemi-Atanda Ilori, *Voices of the Hurricane* (Ile-Ife: Ife Monographs on Literature and Criticism, n.d.).
17. Femi Fatoba, *Petals of Thought* (London: New Beacon Books, 1984).
18. Harry Garuba, *Shadow and Dream* (Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1982), p. 50.
19. Idi Bukar, *First the Desert Came and then the Torturer* (Zaria: Rag Press, 1984), Blurb. All other quotations are from this volume.
20. Catherine Acholonu has published in several journals including *Afa*, which she edits, and *Okike*.

TOLOLWA MARTI MOLLEL

A Night Out

For a long moment, Mika sat awkwardly, without his usual self-assurance, despite the alcohol singing in his veins. But suddenly feeling a fool for his unease, he cleared his throat, a trifle too loudly, and ventured: 'What's your name?'

'Mama Tumaini.' (Mother of Tumaini)

She did not lift her eyes but went on busying herself with putting the child to sleep on the mat on the floor; quite unexpectedly, the child began to cough, a violent, racking outburst that threw his little body into spasms.