

SATIRE IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S *VILLAGE VOICES* AND SONGS OF THE
MARKETPLACE

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project with the title: SATIRE IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S *VILLAGE VOICES* AND SONGS OF THE MARKETPLACE was written by **EKHATOR, NANCY** of the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City.

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PROF. KOLA EKE

(Project Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God almighty for His provision, wisdom, and favour all through
the course of my study.

And to my family.

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I am highly appreciative to God Almighty from whom I found the inspiration, wisdom, and energy to create a project of this nature.

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how satire points out social issues in Niyi Osundare's poetry collections entitled Village Voices and Songs of the Marketplace. It also illustrates how satire enhances the poet's functional status as critic of the social, political, cultural, religious and educational facets of the Nigerian nation. The two collections were closely read and qualitatively analysed through the use of the theoretical framework of New Historicism developed by Stephen Greenblatt. The study shows that, through the employment of satire in Village Voices and Songs of the Marketplace, Osundare criticizes the political hypocrisy, educational decay and societal negligence ravaging the Nigerian nation and also uses his poetry to express hope in having a classless society that treats all human beings equally, with all the barriers of wealth, class, rank and ambition displaced for the good of humanity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This study is aimed at looking at how satire points out social issues in Osundare's poetry collections entitled *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace*. It will also illustrate how satire enhances the poet's functional status as critic of the social, political, cultural, religious and educational facets of the Nigerian nation.

1.2 Scope of Study

The especial focus of this study is on the employment of satire by Osundare in *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* in criticising the moral and social vices that pervade the socio-political and educational atmosphere of Nigeria.

1.3 Methodology

The qualitative research methodology is adopted in this study. The texts will be closely read and critically re-read in a bid to draw out inferences of satire and the social, political, cultural, religious and educational issues the texts emphasise on. Osundare's poetry collections entitled *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* serve as the primary texts for evaluation in this study while consultations are also made from secondary texts like journals, books and the net.

1.4 Theoretical Background

1.4.1 New Historicism

The theoretical framework upon which this study is based is the New Historicism developed by Stephen Greenblatt in his writing *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* in 1980. According to Anne B. Dobie, readers started applying New Historicism to texts in the late 1970s and early 1980s (177). New Historicism is an approach concerned with investigating the human past. It is an aspect of cultural studies that is still experiencing changes and developments and makes inter-textual references to diverse disciplines and fields that may appear to have so little shared details apart from their interest in the study of cultures. In this way, New Historicism has affiliations with sociology, psychology, or economics; this is so because the area of coverage open to new historicists for examination cannot be restricted to just one field of study as these different fields view all aspects of a particular culture as forming and/or being formed by one another complexly such that, picking only one approach will be insufficient in supplying a full image of what has occurred or what the event means (Dobie, 177).

The proponents of New Historicism oppose the formalism attributed to the New Criticism. Instead of evaluating a literary text in isolation from its historical context, the proponents of New Historicism pay attention to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also to the conditions of its later critical interpretation and evaluation (Abram and Harpham, 244). According to Abrams and Harpham, new historicists think of a literary text as “situated” within the totality of the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes (244).

Not only do New Historicists oppose the fundamental assumption of New Criticism that asserts that the text is an autotelic artifact, they also reject the assumption of Liberal Humanism that a text possesses timeless significance and universal value. As suggested by

Louis Montrose, New Historicism deals with the “textuality of history and the historicity of texts.” In this usage, the textuality of history has to do with the idea which upholds construction and fictionalization of history, while the historicity of text deals with the inevitable inclusion and embedment of a text within the socio-political conditions of its production and interpretation. New Historicism is poststructuralist, even though it does not align with most of the poststructuralist tenets, for the fact that it rejects the basic idea that the author, characters and readers all share a common human nature. It rather adopts the belief that identity is plural and hybrid.

Mambrol states that New Historicism as a discipline has been affected by Althusserian concept of ideology; Derridian deconstructionist idea that a text is at war with itself; Bakhtinian dialogism which posits that a text contains a multiplicity of conflicting voices; and most prominently affected by Foucauldian Power/Knowledge and discourse. While analysing the nature of power, Foucault exposes that Power defines what truth, knowledge, normalcy (np) is. New Historicism agrees with the Foucauldian idea of the “capillary modes of power” that interrupts the lives and actions of the citizens.

New Historicism is preceded by Traditional Historicism. They are different from one another in their assumptions and principles. While traditional historicists regard history as facts and as the background/foreground to the text, New Historicists regard history as fictionalised and as a “co-text.” This tendency is motivated by Foucault’s archeological concept of history as archive.

Part of the distinctions between New Historicism and traditional historicism lies in the denial of traditional historicism’s assumption that anyone can ever know exactly what happened at a given time and place, by New Historicism. It is believed that a person or a people can only know or perceive information that have been transferred to them via artifacts and lore, thereby making history a narration and not a pure, undiluted set of accurate

observations. History is therefore known subjectively and transferred, tailored by the context of the culture of the detailer. In her comment, Dobie points out the fact that the transference or recording of history is often done by a person of power who is capable of leaving untold the stories of those who are powerless (178). When this happens, the person who does not have power but has stories to tell is left with the option of passing down his bit of history as separate discourses, formal or informal. The new historicist would be interested and open to hear all the stories and recognize all the voices.

Osundare's poetry collections entitled *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* takes the narration of the common men, the persons without power and the seemingly "losers" in the Nigerian society and gives a voice, lyrically, to the plights and ills they have had to endure over time in history and still endure in the present. The poems in the collections are written to satirise the corrupt and exploitative socio-political atmosphere of the Nigerian nation that has prevailed right from the days of postcolonialism. This study thus takes the New Historicism approach in order to understand the intensity of the satirical stance Osundare takes in his poems. Hence, it is imperative to discuss satire as the major concept of this study.

1.4.2 Satire

Satire is a literary or dramatic genre whose works attack and ridicule human behaviour. It combines both humour and exaggeration in denouncing social vices. According to Abrams and Harpham, satire is described as "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (353). This process of derogation and ridiculing is intended to be adopted as a corrective measure of human, social and societal vices.

Also serving as a working definition of satire is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's assertion that "satire takes for its province a whole society, and for its purpose, criticism;" and "the satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standards and share the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's failings. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious, laughter" (55). In G.G. Darah's opinion,

...[T]he satirist is seen as a defender of communal norms and virtues." This image of the satirist has led some students of the genre to discriminate between satire proper, on the one hand, and pseudo-satire or lampoon, on the other. According to this view, a lampoon is a descriptive portrait that relies on invective rather than objective and sophisticated analysis. By contrast, it is argued that satire avoids opprobrious terms and achieves its aim through what the eighteenth century English satirist, John Dryden, called "The fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place (22-23).

Abrams and Harpham further made a distinction between how writers use satire in their works by commenting that

Satire occurs as an incidental element within many works whose overall mode is not satiric—in a certain character or situation, or in an interpolated passage of ironic commentary on some aspect of the human condition or of contemporary society. But for some literary writings, verse or prose, the attempt to diminish a subject by ridicule is the organizing principle of the whole, and these works constitute the formal *genre* labeled "satires" (353).

Osundare's *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* are examples of literary writings whose organising principle of the whole is the attempt to diminish a subject by ridicule. The subjects in the two texts range from the government to the citizens, the educational and the religious institutions.

1.5 Review of Related Literature

Niyi Osundare's poetry has gained so much attention and has been put under scholarly scrutinisation by various researchers. This section contains a review of some of the scholarship on Osundare's poetry.

Niyi Akingbe's paper makes an examination into the use of satire in the works of contemporary Nigerian poets such as Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Chinweizu, Femi Fatoba, Odia Ofeimun, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Obiora Udechukwu, and Ogaga Ifowodo, emphasizing the role of these poets as synthesizers of, and conduits for, the concerns of the Nigerian society for which they claim to speak (183). These poets represent the conscience and voice of the society on one hand and the critic of the society on the other hand.

Luga also points out that Osundare's poetry has contributed to the growth of modern Nigerian poetry. Her work analyses Osundare's use of the oral artistic technique and the imagery of nature in his poetry. She notes that "...his (Osundare's) celebration of traditional art forms is unrivalled yet in modern Nigerian poetry even though he faces the limitations of mediating the essential oral using the written form, his use of nature imagery in poetry is a breakthrough" (8, emphasis mine).

In another study, Maiwada (148) elaborates on Osundare's ideological stance in *Village Voices* regarding the dialectics of materialism. Maiwada evaluates Osundare's representation of the rural communal voice as being aware politically and able to engage in a high intellectual analysis by supposing that there "... is indeed an intervening consciousness (voice) not just the pure voice of the villagers..." This holds true to certain degrees for the

fact that the recreation of the performance of orality attempted by the poet has been effected by the written form.

Commenting on Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* Bamikunle says it has some similarity with *Village Voices* by virtue of its celebration of "the rural life and ethos in its purity" prior to the debilitating colonial heritage, although it is the poet that now becomes the "observer celebrant" not the voice of the community (123). This same idea is shared by Aiyejina in submitting that *The Eye of the Earth* is autobiographical in nature; even though he insinuates that the autobiographical view point of view the poems capture is "communal rather than personal" (112-128).

On another level, Osoba's paper focuses on the use of sound patterns for aesthetic and communicative purposes in Osundare's *Songs of the Market Place*. The paper is thus a practical analysis of poetry based on sound effects. He focused on two essential patterns: alliteration and assonance with the aim sensitizing the reader about various important artistic and message-enhancing phonological features necessary for the understanding of a lyrical text (2).

Applying the methods of discourse analysis, Nwagbara carried out "an examination of poetry as a form of conversation and an interactive discourse which involves communicative exchange and social interaction between a set of interlocutors for the purpose of sharing information" (104-105). The implication of the study is that poetry is not absolutely monologue. It is an imaginative dialogue that artistically performs the action and interaction necessary in the process of communication ensuing between speech participants in and out of the lyrical text. It could be regarded as an embodiment and projection of several forms and tactics of interaction and linguistic employment that are compositional parts of human conversation. The scope of the study stretched between Niyi Osundare's and Tanure Ojaide's

poetic art in order to show the significance of the use of the technique of conversation and other forms of communicative interaction in their works.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that Niyi Osundare's literary writings have been successful in getting the attention of readers, critics, lovers of literature as well as statesmen. However, this current study seeks to build on existing scholarship by looking into the employment of satire in *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* combined in one study.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Through the employment of satire in *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* Osundare criticizes the political hypocrisy, educational decay and societal negligence ravaging the Nigerian nation.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL HYPOCRISY

2.1 Forms of Hypocrisy

Osundare in *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* refuses to be a hypocrite by tolerating hypocrisy. Thus, he lends his poetic voice in criticising hypocrisy, especially in the political sphere of the Nigerian society.

In “Feigning Rebel” in *Village Voices*, political hypocrisy can be deduced from the poet’s choice of words in entitling the poem as “Feigning Rebel.” An atmosphere of pretense is already established. A rebel is a person who resists an established authority, often violently. How does one then pretend to be a rebel who resists established authority? In the poem, we find that the act of pretense is carried out by the political hypocrite in the presence of the people or the electorates in a bid to cause disaffection towards the established authority and ultimately bring about the dislodging of the one or group of people in authority.

The poem begins with a rhetorical question aimed at the pretending persona who is so interested in leading the people in the matters of government:

Tell us
Are you real revolutionaries
Or are you feigning kings
Waiting for crowns? (20)

Through Contrast, a discrepancy is made between reality and the deception of appearance. The speaking voice in the poem wonders if the personae – the political hypocrites – who are canvassing for support are “real revolutionaries/or feigning kings/waiting for crowns.” This rhetorical question points out the fact that these politicians canvassing for support from the people talk, act, and appear like revolutionaries but cannot be certified to be real. They only feign the posture and traits of real revolutionaries while their personalities are really those of kings “waiting for crowns.” This is a display of political hypocrisy. These political hypocrites possess two personalities. On the one hand, while seeking for the support of the people in achieving their ambitions of political leadership, they take on the personality of revolutionaries. They present themselves to the people as their fellow labourers, colleagues, and compatriots in the struggle for the dividends of democracy. While on the other hand, they have the personality of kings. Of course, this second personality is not shown to the people while they are seeking for supporters.

The speaking voice in the poem is able to recognise this duality in the personality of political leaders and political aspirants through observations from experience and therefore satirises political hypocrisy for how it makes the people appear to be vulnerably ignorant people. He says in stanza 2,

We have been roused
 Countless times
 By masked rebels of the night
 Telling us the system is bad
 And the only way it should go is
 Down. (20)

The imagery of darkness and uncertainty created by the metaphors of ‘masked rebels of the night’ shows the politicians’ cunningness in concealing their true nature from the people. Thus, the night is symbolic for the period during political campaigns for votes before elections are conducted. It will only take an observant person, one who is not naïve, to be able to discover the true identity of the masked rebel after the night.

The political hypocrite therefore comes with the tactic of ‘rousing’ the people into resisting the established authority by “telling us the system is bad/and the only way it should go is/down”. So he comes as a revolutionary who wants to bring down the bad system but what he does is to rouse the people into bringing down the established system by themselves through their votes. In this way, he feigns a rebel in order to make rebels out of the people. Hence, political hypocrisy is deployed in causing disaffection in the populace towards an established authority in order to topple or dislodge such an authority.

Political hypocrisy is sustained by pretense, the promise of false hope and the negative advertising of political opponents in the pursuit of power and votes. Through pretense the political hypocrites appear to be

...here at last the friends of the poor

Who know the price of food

In the markets

What it means to wake up

Without a penny

To live without a roof

In a family of disease and misery (20)

Through this conception of deceit political hypocrites win the solidarity of the people by making the people believe they are “friends of the poor” who have the same experiences the

people have had, who have felt what the people have felt, who have seen what the people have seen, and still know and share in the people's present sufferings and struggles.

Through negative advertising political hypocrites deride their political opponents before the people by speaking to expose the inevitable double standards of their rivals. In other words, political hypocrites try to damage the reputation of their opponents by painting their opponents as hypocrites. It is therefore both a verbal and a situational irony for the political hypocrites who feign to be rebels to be labeling their political opponents as hypocrites. Osundare satirizes this display of political hypocrisy by using the metaphor of "seductive dew of a dawn of ambition" to tag the act.

Osundare points it out that the populace or the electorates only become aware of the deception that has been played on them by the political hypocrites "by daybreak". Here, the image of time and setting captured in daybreak is symbolic for the period after which elections have been conducted and the electorates now wait for the dividends of democracy they were promised. It turns out that the people will only wait in vain because they were merely fed with false hopes. Now the people see the real faces of the political hypocrites that were "masked" at night. The mouths of these faces no longer speak with the fire with which they once spoke before elections because they have now achieved the power and votes their ambition was going out for. They now realise that there is really a divide between them.

This divide between the political hypocrites who now possess political power to lead, obtained through the people's votes, and the people who voted them in is vividly captured in "Siren", another poem in *Songs of the Marketplace* where

Siren Siren Siren

Police acrobats on motorbikes

Wielding whips with consummate dispatch

The road must be cleared at once

For which worthy ruler

Ever shares the right of way? (21)

Once they have secured the power to rule the people these politicians now put on an air of superiority. The provisions of power now blind them to the initial claims of friendship and solidarity with which they had patronized the people for their votes and support. The people now realize that they only have promises to feed their memories with while, day by day, their hopes are dashed down.

For almost all of the period of their stay in power these political hypocrites live their lives detached from the people, only to return again by the end of their terms to play hypocrisy again before the people so as to secure their hold to power and wealth. This is highlighted in the penultimate stanza of “Feigning Rebel”:

By noon

The timbre is scorched

By the sun of cant

Our hopes dash down

Like melons on a harmattan twig

Our memory is a track of

Throwers of dumb bombs

Promise peddlers

And prostrating apostates

Tiptoeing back to murmur

‘good evening’

Where once they shouted

‘good night’ (21)

Osundare satirizes the return of these hypocritical politicians to the people in order to patronize them again as a shameful act. They can only afford to ‘tiptoe’ and ‘murmur’ this time because they are aware of the tension their act of political hypocrisy has stirred up within the people.

In “The Politician’s Two Mouths”, another poem from *Village Voices*, political hypocrisy is satirized through the repeated use of images of animal instincts and death conveyed through simile in comparing the politician, his mouth, and his deeds with a sword, a lying wolf, a hungry dog, and the white man’s razor respectively. Again, as it is with hypocrisy, the politician’s mouth possesses a dual nature that contains death at both ends. He uses his mouth as skillfully as a swordsman wields his sword in trying to bring down an opponent or win a melee. Through the employment of synecdoche the image of the mouth represents the whole of the politician’s being. Osundare satirizes politicians as untrustworthy personages of dual personalities that are built on pretense and deception.

Because he is interested in having the people’s votes, out of hypocrisy the politician “prostrates”. He takes on a false countenance of humility on the outside and breeds his real countenance of defiance on the inside. Osundare therefore makes a direct assault on the political hypocrite by writing that “whoever believes what the politician says/his ear is blocked by the carcass of truth.” By this we see that political hypocrisy is accompanied by lies. These lies are delivered in order to create false hope in the electorates. Sometimes, these lies are not originally intended as lies but as simple projections of ambitions. But, once elected, politicians often seem to develop a form of forgetfulness as soon as they get into seats of power that turns them against the words they initially fed the people’s sensibilities with. When this happens, their words turn out to be lies eventually. They even cease to speak about the promises and agenda they outlined in their manifestos to the people. As in “Siren”

they see “kwashiorkored children/waving tattered flags” but are not moved as they visit the rural areas.

...Even on highways where potholes

Snail the jaguar

They manage not to see

A land debowelled by erosion

Cornfields withering

And yam tendrils yellowing

On tubers smaller than a palm kernel

Blind are they

To the seeds of tomorrow's famine (22)

Osundare employs refrain in “Siren” in satirising Nigerian leaders’ attitudes of degrading and dehumanizing the common people. Osundare seeks to emphasise on the consistent despicable habit that politicians display in pretending to be ignorant of the peril of their suffering populace. They are aware of the fact that the people do not have good schools, equipped hospitals, motor-able roads, but they do not care.

CHAPTER THREE

GRADUAL DECAY OF EDUCATION

3.1 Educational Decay

Niyi Osundare indicts the structures of government, educators, administrators and stakeholders in the Nigerian educational system in *Village Voices* and *Songs of the Marketplace* as contributors to the gradual decay of the system of education in the Nigerian society.

Firstly, he addresses educators and their administrators in the poem “Publish or Perish” in *Songs of the Marketplace*. The subject of the poem entitled “Publish or Perish” is the fictional Professor Ajijepepa, a Yoruba appellation meaning “one who wakes to eat papers.” This is pieced towards lampooning the administration of the system of education in the tertiary institutions of Nigeria and its administrators who have hinged the condition of promotion for lecturers on the number of papers they are able to submit in the course of their profession. Thus, lecturers are not sure of receiving promotions and recognitions for their humanitarian service if they do not write and submit papers after papers. For the lecturers to meet this condition they have to compromise in their obligations to the students. They would not be able to give proper attention and tutoring to their students. Hence, the students turn out

to be impoverished of knowledge to a high degree, except for those who go the extra mile to teach themselves or to enroll in extra classes with external tutors.

A brief criticism of the mentality of colonialism that effects the designing of the curriculum of English departments where the foundation of English literary studies are laid and centered on Chaucer or Shakespeare while the pioneers of African literature are considered inferior. The system also shows bias towards journals made in Nigeria. It regards journals that are referred, printed, and published in New York, Yokohama, and London as superior to those published here in Nigeria.

The poet employs sarcasm in mocking the sickening request for papers upon papers by the Appointment and Promotions Committee that does not care if the papers be “Syndicated”, “duplicated”, “pirated”, “plagiarized” or contain ungrammatical expressions inasmuch as the expressions are foreign.

The Appointment and Promotions (Committee) is satirized for its adherence to archaic ideas and dogmatism. It does not accept change and therefore gives no room for development. It clips the creativity and ingenuity of new authorities in the various fields of discourse contained in the papers submitted. For instance, the persona fears that the current paper about to be submitted will not be accepted because

...there are only a dozen references

Footnotes don't wind across pages

The bibliography says nothing about

Plato and Thucydides

Aristotle and Pythagoras (24)

Knowing that the committee may reject the paper because “there are only a dozen references” indicates that the writer may be moved to falsify references just so as to make up for the shortage to be noted by the committee.

The system is also satirized for its preference for high-sounding words and foreign borrowings over a paper written in simple language.

The language, watery
 No “ab initio”, “ceteris paribus”
 “Horribile dictu”, “mutatis mutandi”
 To think of a learned paper
 In this unattic idiom (24).

It is so myopic to reject a submission simply because it is written in simple understandable language not composed of high-sounding dictum.

Connecting this to the line of thought in “At a University Con-Gre-Gation” which immediately follows “Publish or Perish” in *Songs of the Marketplace*, it becomes evident that this myopic view of giving preference to papers of high-sounding verbal contents over simplicity is part of the reasons

Jargons take over the podium
 And slogans rumble
 The belly of the hall
 Fustian grenades detonate
 And eggheads explode
 With barren approbation (28).

Osundare also includes lecturers and educators in general in his indictment of the decay in the educational system. Lecturers and educators have allowed the myopic view inherent in the Appointment and Promotions Committee to become part of them too. He notes that the educational system of the nation and the output quotient of the nation’s tertiary institutions are not improving or advancing but rather, they are depleting, retrogressing, and decaying because “Jargons take over the podium”.

The use of the slang imagery of ‘jargons’ to refer to lecturers, educators, administrators, political leaders, public speakers and whoever is able to pay for honorary awards even if they are not competent in the field within which they are being awarded, shows the poet’s disregard for such figures or personalities as fit for celebration. They are “jargons” because their speech and their deeds are incomprehensible, unintelligible and/or gibberish. The poet is outraged by their output and delivery that is so short of what is expected of the hallmark of learning, development and leadership.

He employs warfare imagery to show how some of these lecturers, educators, administrators, political leaders and public speakers use words wrongly and out of place to cause confusion amidst the congregants who make ‘slogan rumble’ as ‘jargons take over the podium’. There are those who may not understand any part of the speakers pompous, inflated or pretentious speech but would go on to ‘explode with barren approbation’, hailing the speaker. The scene created can be likened to having a blind man lead a group of blind people.

Further, the poet lampoons the educational system for failing to use its power, presence, and efficiency in engaging the national leaders in being accountable and responsive to the people so as to foster development. Rather, the system is run by

Narrow minds wide follies

Spectacled eyes

Afraid of veering beyond the nose (28)

who would simply “explode with barren approbation”. The biological imagery of barrenness employed shows the unfruitful end of the education sector’s inefficient and inappropriate response to follies, errors, pretensions and eye-services.

The display of eye-service and “barren approbation” by entities in the education sector in the presence of inefficient political leaders is also captured in “Publish or Perish”.

These inefficient political leaders are represented as the “editor”. This act of patronage makes them

Grovel before the editor

And dust his shoes

Don't miss his birthday

And his daughter's too

Pawn your wife for a promisory[sic] note

Acceptance letters are legal tenders

On our promotion market (25).

Thus, the education sector and its system are not accorded the amount of attention and respect they deserve. This disrespect and deficiency in attention even reflects in the nation's budgetary allocation to education because some of the principal personalities in the system have sold themselves to the political leaders already. Take for instance the one month warning strike declared by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities on the 14th of February 2022 while pressing on the Federal Government of Nigeria to honour the agreement that was reached in 2009 between the two parties. It was negotiated and agreed that the sum of 1.3 trillion naira would be paid to the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities in installments over a number of years beginning from 2009 but the Federal Government of Nigeria had not honoured the agreement as at the 14th of February 2022. The warning strike thus became imminent in getting the attention of the Nigerian government again. In response to the strike action by the Union, Nigeria's labour minister, Sen. Chris Ngige called the strike action illegal, saying that the lecturers were just on leave because the federal government was not informed of the proposed strike action. The minister of education Mal. Adamu also walked out on the National Association of Nigerian Students' leaders and delegation in the course of deliberations concerning putting an end to the strike action. Later on, the federal

government decided to set up another panel to re-negotiate the already agreed upon negotiation of 2009. Sadder it was that the chairman of the newly set panel was a former vice chancellor of a Nigerian university, in the person of Sir Alex Ekwueme. One would have thought that the veteran would decline the offer and be on the side of the university body for the fact that he had been part of the system, at one point in time, rather than agree to be used by the federal government in trying to boycott the original agreement of 2009. This is an instance of the disrespect that has been measured out upon the education sector and its system in Nigeria by the nation's leaders.

Moreover, Osundare did not forget to hint on poor funding and lack of adequate infrastructural facilities as factors causing the gradual decay in the education sector and its system. In "Publish or Perish" he further writes

The typist may stumble
 Stencils may run short
 NEPA's epilepsy may last a month
 And offices roast inmates
 Like berbecued[sic] hogs
 Laboratory chemicals may run dry
 And equipment antedeluvian[sic]
 The bookstore may go empty
 And the library turn archive
 In dated acquisition
 Teaching load may hunch
 Your horse's back
 But churn them out in dizzying quantum
 How else is a true genius known

But by making paper bricks

Without straw (26).

Part of the recommendations made by the United Nations (UNESCO) is that every country should allocate at least 26 per cent of their budgetary allocation to education. Nigeria has not implemented this recommendation and this keeps affecting education in the country. Poor funding and lack of adequate infrastructural facilities affects education in more ways than one in Nigeria. First, the inadequacy of infrastructural facilities leads to inefficiency in the teaching process. A classroom that can comfortably contain only seventy students is used by over two hundred and fifty students at the same time. Some are sitting, others are standing. Some are even left outside the classroom for want of sitting or standing space in the hall. The lecturer/educator is unable to keep everybody's attention and get feedbacks that would enhance the learning process. Because the learning environment is not adequate for the number of students present, a public address system becomes necessary. Out of poor funding, the classrooms are not equipped with sound systems and so, students will have to be the ones to purchase mobile public address systems and go along with them to classes.

Due to the inadequacy of the infrastructural facilities in the university setting, students no longer attend classes knowing that they would either have to stand throughout the period of class(es) or would not hear anything the lecturer would say in the course of the lecture(s). Some end up misusing their time on social media or on other frivolities. At the end of the day, the quality of graduates produced by the epileptic system of education in Nigeria turn out to be half-baked, unprepared, unemployable, and a direct representation of the system that produced them. Some may even turn out to be uninterested in matters of national development and values because they already have a dissatisfying experience from their time as 'Nigerian students'.

Also, as a result of poor funding, the cost of education rises every year in Nigeria as schools have to devise ways to generate more incomes to be able to fund projects and meet some of the needs outlined by Osundare represented as ‘stencils’, ‘electricity’, ‘laboratory chemicals’, and updating libraries. In the long run, the high cost of education makes it difficult for the children of the common man to obtain proper education.

Lastly, Niyi Osundare does not just stop at indicting educators but also calls them to wake up to the realisation of their power in the society. He does this in the poem “Listen, Book Wizard” in *Village Voices* where he metaphorically equates the pens of scholars to spears and their ink to a stench so powerful enough to get the attention of all tiers of government and keep their attention on the things that matter in national development. The image of the ‘spears’ seeks to establish a combatant demeanour in educators and scholars; for it is only a combatant and courageous fighter that takes up his spear to fight against an opponent that appears to be more powerful.

The poet therefore encourages scholars and educators to endeavour to put their crafts, skills, critical thinking faculties, writings, submissions, and instruments into proper and consistent use in serving as check and balance for political office holders, religious office holders, and even for academic stakeholders too for a greater societal good.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIETAL NEGLIGENCE

4.1 Societal Negligence

Osundare is of the school of thought that considers tolerating hypocrisy as a hypocritical act in itself. One should be concerned about exposing and eradicating hypocrisy as one is concerned about dealing with prejudice in one's life and about how others treat them. The Nigerian society tolerates hypocrisy; political hypocrisy especially, tolerates unaccountability, tolerates oppression, and tolerates retrogression. The tolerance of all of these ills and more is a reflection of the people's negligence in matters concerning their nation state, concerning the future of their children and concerning their values inasmuch as they still have food on their tables, no matter how small. Tolerating hypocrisy of whatever kind can therefore cause real harm. Osundare uses his poetry to demonstrate that societal negligence is a consequence of tolerating political hypocrisy and the consistent failures of the government by the people and to rouse the people into active participation in the affairs of their nation; its development, its leadership and securing a better future in it for their children.

He adopts a defiant tone in "Dying Another's Death" in *Village Voices* in order to show his intolerance of the perpetuation of political hypocrisy, oppression and the elitists' importunate application of the children of the common man in wars and societal ills that the elitist incited while their own children sit in comfort and are uninvolved in such struggles.

The poet uses the plural pronoun “we” to capture, associate with, and join the common people in refusing to be used by politicians and elites as baits, sacrifices and stepping stones to securing comforts for themselves and for their children.

The poet makes a transliteration of a colloquial Yoruba verse of prayer into English in the first and last stanzas of the poem to establish the identity and setting of the people and to give the interest he projects a communal sense of belonging:

We will not go
 On another’s day
 We will not die
 Another’s death (55).

This goes to prove that although the people may choose to be quiet about the ills in the society, they are not ignorant. They are aware of the unproductive decisions and the public insincerities of their bad government and elitist influences. Their silence is not ignorance. Although the political hypocrite is thriving in his or her scheming, the people are not ignorant. Although the elitist is increasing in his wealth as a direct result of using the poor, the people are still not ignorant. Their silence is not ignorance. But sometimes, silence is taken as a sign of consent. The poet has observed that the silence of the people is often exploited in conscripting them and their children into ‘manufactured wars,’ so he rises as a voice from among the people to break the people’s silence and end their exploitation by political hypocrites and selfish elitists.

The pejorative imagery of ‘maggoty trails’ indicts leaders who wield power negatively in trying to cover up their misdeeds by creating more misdeeds. They

...manufacture wars to turn eyes away
 from dunghills in the streets (55).

In Nigeria, political leaders are very often in the act of laying blames on previous administrations before theirs. They make sure to attribute all the failures and shortcomings the various sectors in the nation encounter just so as to exonerate themselves, cause the people to have intense hatred for those who are being blamed so that they would not think of returning them or anyone affiliated to them to power, and ultimately so that the people will not focus on the “dunghills in the street.”

The poet seeks to infuse his defiance into the people so that they would stand for themselves and not fall for the “ruse of tyrants.” He urges the people to demand accountability from their leaders:

Ask emergency patriots

Who now summon you

To instant death

Where they were

When

Worms colonized your children’s bellies

And your tin roof was sieved

For the year’s rains

How was it spent

That million million billion

Which sweetened the budget song?

That roads are still dust

And polluted water distributes dysentery

In every home (55).

People do not get answers because they do not ask questions. Yet, sometimes, when questions are asked, the process is not followed up to the end and those who embezzle “that million million billion/which sweetened the budget song” ride and fly around the nation freely.

Osundare finds it appalling that people will not follow up such issues when their leaders engage in embezzlement and other unaccountable acts but would follow it up, harass and carry out jungle justice on an ordinary person like Sule in the poem entitled “Sule Chase” in *Songs of the Marketplace*, who only steals ‘a rumpled three kobo loaf.’ It is ironical that people will show or display a high thirst for justice when a common man or woman defaults in the society but will display unconcern or a zero level of thirst and quest for justice when it involves their leaders, whether political, by social class or religious. Osundare satirizes the hypocrisy of double standards that people adopt at such instances.

In “Sule Chase”, everybody is interested in catching and prosecuting and achieving justice against Sule:

The race gathers more legs
 In every lane
 Tailors with giant scissors
 Permsecs with PENDING files
 Barristers with dusty wigs
 NEPA experts with fused bulbs
 Telephonists in dead head-sets
 The doctor with a coughing stethoscope
 The don with his chair aloft
 The sergeant just gone to inspect
 His tenth mansion (you can never trust

Contractors: they've grown so smart
 Since the first battalion of oil rigs
 Besieged our shores)
 The housemaid with the W.C. broom
 Reuter agents dying not to miss
 The show (its cinematographic
 Recreation is fortune across the shores)
 All skinning each other's heels
 Surging for the virgin blow (16-17).

Sule is wounded by 'brute missiles', stabbed by everybody in the chase and eventually dies. Even after his death his corpse is still arrested. But this is not the same energy with which a failing, defaulting political leader or political office holder is followed up. Those who spend 'that million million billion/which sweetened the budget song' they cannot account for are only questioned by panels – if they are ever questioned – and still go free. How about the one whose microphone had to be put off because he was choking on his own lies before a panel of inquiry! Sule choked to death from being hit by 'brute missiles' and from being metaphorically stabbed by the tailor's 'scissors', the NEPA's 'bulb', the doctor's 'stethoscope', the sergeant's 'belt', the housemaid's 'broom', the don's 'well enunciated epithet', and the lawyers condemnation. All of these instruments are symbolic for points of views.

Once it is a commoner that is at fault everybody develops a point of view. They do not stop at developing their points of view they also go all out to air, publish and demonstrate their points of views. But when it is a leader – political, by social class or religious – they become unopinionated for various reasons of fear, hypocrisy, 'loyalties howling like wolves

of the jungle', wanting favour, etc. only the fearless can be as defiant as the poet in rising to question his leaders.

In defiance, Osundare boldly airs, publishes and demonstrates his point of view as an indictment of selfish and inhumane leaders who only use the children of the poor to amass wealth, fortify themselves and ensure their own comfort.

Countless times
 We have murdered our dreams
 Chasing the nightmares
 Of power monsters
 Crushed in fiery columns
 We have forged gold
 For those who coin profit
 From fallen skulls (55).

The beastly image of 'monsters' depicts the ruthless, inconsiderate and deadly nature of selfish leaders and elites. They care more about themselves and their children but do not care about the common people and the children of the common people. They seek to secure a comfortable nation for themselves and their children alone by using the strength, might, blood, and lives of the children of the poor. Osundare indicts such leaders with the submission that their children should be put to such use instead:

Let this war be fought by
 Presidents' children
 Governors' children
 Senators' children
 Bankers' children

Bishops' children (56).

His indictment is a double edged sword that touches on the leaders on one hand and on the common people on the other. He incites the people to not allow their children to be used as touts, goons, trucebreakers, trouble rousers and political thugs by leaders who are out for their personal selfish gains.

Again, it is the one who asks questions that will receive answers in the long run. In “Feigning Rebel” as well as in “Dying Another’s Death” the poet leads the way in showing the necessity of asking questions for the purpose of clarity and accountability. It is tenable for a society to become unconcerned with the affairs of governance due to the spate of corruption, political hypocrisy and neglect they have experienced over the years. People in this situation would willingly sell their votes or agree to vote for a candidate because they were given sachets of salts and sugar and some naira notes to that end.

It is not that the people are unaware of the deception of hypocritical and selfish leaders and the divides they create, for, in deed the poet declares in “Unequal Fingers”:

Let no one tell us again
 That fingers are not equal
 For we know
 How the thumb grew fatter
 Than all the others
 The funds for our community centre
 Built your palace
 The funds for our rugged roads
 Bought your car
 The funds for our water scheme
 Irrigate your banks in Europe (60-61),

and in “A Villager’s Protest”

they come more times
 than the eye bats its lid
 when they need your vote
 at cockcrow
 at noon
 at sundown
 when red rays
 are bidding farewell
 to the western sky (47).

The common man knows of the ills orchestrated by his political leaders that plague his life and society but, sadly to his woe, the common man never speaks out in confrontation or to question his leaders. The common man eventually becomes negligent in the affairs of state. Thus, he gives these political leaders the power to keep deciding his life for him. By the politicians’ decision or indecision the common man’s child may not be able to get proper education with the constant strike actions in the education sector arising from poor funding of the sector by the government while the children of political office holders enjoy uninterrupted education outside the shores of the Nigerian nation. The common man may not get proper healthcare services because the hospitals and clinics in the country are not well equipped by the government who would rather prefer to go for their own treatment in European and American well-equipped hospitals.

Instead of negligence, therefore, the poet advocates for participation and a show of concern from the people in matters that touch on their lives, families, their societies, and the Nigerian nation at large.

In the final part of *Village Voices* the poet declares in “A Grass in the Meadow”:

Let me be
 A grass in the meadow
 Matching heads with others
 To repel oppressive storms
 With stalks steeled by shared resolve

Let me be
 An active grip
 In a hand of equal fingers (62).

He sees the acceptance of equality of lives as a solution to the dehumanizing attitudes political leaders show to their subjects. When there are no more such binaries as the ruler and the subject, the rich and the poor, then there would be no oppressor and oppressed; no suppressor and suppressed.

With the acceptance of the equality of human lives would also come equitable distribution of wealth. This would cancel out the monopoly of wealth ownership creating barriers between people and there would be a classless society such as the one Marxists envisage.

It is with this hopeful tone that Osundare also ends *Songs of the Marketplace* in “I Sing of Change”

I sing
 Of the beauty of Athens
 Without its slaves

 Of a world free
 Of kings and queens

And other remnants

Of an arbitrary past (89).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework of New Historicism developed by Stephen Greenblatt in his writing *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* in 1980 upon which this study is based made the examination of the employment of satire in the selected poems from Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace* and *Village Voices* possible. This concluding chapter is a summary of the discussions that have been carried on from the previous.

Osundare's poetry has been attended to by various critics but there has been none who has scrutinized the selected poems studied in this research through the lens of the political hypocrisy, educational decay and societal negligence ravaging the Nigerian nation. In this way, we have endeavoured to see the imagistic representation of the issues breaking down the Nigerian nation.

The research shows Osundare's employment of satire in enhancing his functional status as critic of the social, political, cultural, religious and educational facets of the Nigerian nation. Osundare refuses to tolerate hypocrisy and thus speaks against it in *Songs of the Marketplace* and *Village Voices*. He astutely engages in lampooning political hypocrisy in the Nigerian society. He reveals himself as an advocate of the common people.

Osundare uses satire to expose the attitude with which Nigerian leaders degrade and dehumanize the common people under their jurisdiction. He further seeks to call attention to the recurring disgusting habit that politicians exhibit in feigning to be ignorant of the plight of their suffering masses and still go on to patronize the people for political support and power.

Also, Osundare delineates governmental, educational, and administrative structures in the educational system of Nigeria as contributors to the decay that is gradually eating up the system of education in the Nigerian society. He satirizes the way in which the condition of

promotion for lecturers is made to be dependent on the number of papers lecturers are able to write and submit without considering their main obligation to the students.

Part of the poet's criticism is on the educational system's failure to use its power, presence, and efficiency in engaging the national leaders in accountability and response to the people in order to foster development.

Included in the poet's lampooning is the Nigerian government that poorly funds the education sector and leaves the educational institutions with inadequate infrastructural facilities and uncondusive learning environments. The poet lends his voice in urging educators to put their professions and office to better use in the service of humanity all time.

In conclusion, Osundare uses his poetry to express hope in having a classless society where all human lives are treated as equals and all barriers of wealth, class, rank and ambition are broken down for the good of humanity.

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