

A Marxist Study of Ogaga Ifowodo's *Madiba*

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Abstract

Poetry is no doubt one of the indigenous art forms of the African people and African poets substantiate their poetry with the indigenous art forms of their people. Some even use these oral art forms as vehicles for paying tribute to the heroic deeds of personalities. The purpose of this study was to foreground the relationship between oral tradition and African poetry as vehicle for socio-aesthetic vision. The marxist approach was adopted as a theoretical framework. Ogaga Ifowodo's collection, *Madiba* was selected for analysis. Part of the findings of this study is that tribute poetry is a functional aspect of African traditional archive used to restore cultural expectations and fulfillment. It is also a literary avenue for enhancing individual manpower within social dictations rules and regulations. From the analysis of the selected tribute poetry, one can deduce and reconstruct the sociological content and credentials of the apartheid South Africa.

Key Words: Tribute Poetry, Marxist Theory, African Poetry, Praise, Oral Art, South Africa, Madiba.

Introduction

As a mark of departure from the old generation of poets, the young generation of African poets are precise in their choice of words and use of oral forms that are close to the heart of their people. For instance, OkinbaLaunko's exposition of Ifa Oracle in poems, Ezenwa Ohaeto in Night Masquerade and Akeem Lasisi rendition of the hunter's dirge called Iremoje in *Iremoje: Hunter's Dirge for Ken Saro-Wiwa*. We mentioned audience due to the fact that most of the young generation of poets anticipate the performance of their works while composing it and as such build it with performative qualities; some of which are character interaction, specialized scenery, music, dance, movements, gestures, facial Expressions, vocal expression among others.

No wonder Ogaga Ifowodo's "Madiba" in Madiba, the collection under Study, collates the elements of praise in his tribute poems, *Madiba* for Nelson Mandela of South Africa setting. South Africa experienced the most-brutal and inhuman form of colonialism with the apartheid system of the colonialist; a system of government of panic amenity in terms of social, political and economic degradation. Hence, great political activists like Mandela would not tolerate this. As such, his struggles against the regime are reflected in

various South African literatures.

Owomoyela asserts that: "South African poetry is inevitably concerned with protest against the ugliness of apartheid and its inimical effect on African lives" (69). It is this inimical effect of apartheid that people like Mandela revolted against and that brought the subsequent fruit of freedom after many years of toils and hardship. No wonder Mandela is celebrated worldwide today. For instance, the current South African president, Jacob Zuma, urged the South Africans to mark Mandela's 67 years of public services with 67 minutes of charitable acts. Also, the United Nations in November 2009 declared that Mandela's annual day should be celebrated every July 18.

It is against this background that we shall examine the socio-political and economic struggle of Nelson Mandela as contemporary personalities in Africa and the aesthetics deployed. Two collection of poems will be considered. These are Ogaga Ifowodo's *Madiba* (2003).

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts Marxism as the theoretical frame work of the study. The Marxist theory upholds that there are two classes of people in every society; the oppressors (bourgeoisie) and oppressed (peasants). It thus calls for collective revolutionary struggle of the peasants/masses

against the oppressors in order to challenge the status quo and change their lives for better.

The theoretical approach analyses both social functions in literature and how literature functions in society. The concept of Marxism therefore presents ways in which social, economic, and political ideological are presented as one. The preoccupation of Marxism therefore is to understand the ways in which these levels of social, and in literature come from Karl Marx and English' political, social, and economic postulations. Society is perceived to have a number of some levels of social practices, is in relation to the economic, political and ideological one. The preoccupation of Marxism therefore is to understand the ways in which these levels of practice relate with another within the frame work of concrete historical societies. Marxism thus, refers historical and materialist approach to the study of literary texts.

Literature is seen as a product of history. In other words, the Marxists believe that literature is not created out of vacuum but given shape and direction by the society. Historical effect of a work of art which cannot be measured with reference to its formal or the linguistic form. It thus requires an examination of the concrete and function which the text fulfils in the real social process. In other words, the quality or worth of a work of art can be measured by its ability to influence social change. The Marxists are also of the opinion that for a living society to survive, changes are Roger Webster corroborates to this when he says a literary theory as:

a complex and shifting area, unlike some previous critical orthodoxies characterized more by debates and geographical differences between societies and consider the discourse of literary theory as a double-edged weapon. A literary theory should demystify and challenged some of the implicit values through infinite activities of appraisal and reappraisal of terms through self - consciousness and self—reflexivity (44).

Thus, a Marxist work is ideologically formulated to attack, indict or criticize the socio-political and economic ills of the society. Hence, Marxism is

one of the literary aims at challenging some of the dominant ideological blocs in the society in ignite the consciousness of the peasants to act. Terry Eagleton says:

Marxism is a scientific theory of human societies and of the practice of transforming them; and what that means, rather more concretely, is that the narrative Marxism has to deliver it's the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and expression (Gbilekaa 40).

It is thus a revolutionary theory' in service of social and political revolution: it is revolutionary in its approach to defining problems. Revolution according to the Marxists springs up as a result of inequality in wealth and power. Some group comes to dominate and other to win for themselves a disproportionate share of the society's wealth, power, and privileges. The ultimate aim of the Marxists therefore is a classless society; a society: which all enjoys more or less equal wealth and power.

In the Marxist world, it is believed that a society is divided into two classes of the people Bourgeoisie (the owner of wealth or the ruling class) and the proletariat (the masses, unemployed). The bourgeoisie are consistent in their use of power as an instrument to oppress, deny, brutalize and subjugate the masses. According to Trainer "major social change is not possible without revolution. Bourgeoisie revolutions overthrew feudal society... Marxists insist that dominant classes will not voluntarily give up power, wealth and privilege. Their control has to be taken away from them and this be taken away from them, and this might have to involve violence".

The Marxist ideology does not believe in the theory of art-for-art-sake. takes literature as a viable instrument of change. Marxism offers a dialectical 'l literature by providing opportunity to interpret and evaluates literature in history. It enables researchers to relate the ideology of the author to historical The point is that one can not appreciate the style of a creative text in isolation instances in which such work is produced.

Marxist like Bertolf Brecht, Walter

Benjamin and Terry Eagleton, literature way any ideology does, signifying the imaginary ways through which people perceive the real world. Marxism holds that aesthetics and politics are symbiotic. The theory equally stipulates that the political events are due to the conflict of social forces from economic conditions. In view of this, Onoge, asserts that:

Given this revolutionary understanding of the dialectical relationship between literature and society struggle, Marxist critics do not conceive activity with abstract justifications. Marxist critics are necessarily class partisan (472).

In marxism, the material, the economics and social relations are referred to as the base while the superstructure consist of law, art, religion, morals and science among others. Thus marxism does not subscribe to philosophy of art-for-art-sake. Lenin according to Gbilekaa (1997: 41), argues that literature should not be an undertaking that would bring material benefit to groups in fighting the cause of the proletariat. In other words, the politically conscious artist should chart the cause of the revolutionary struggle. Revolutionary struggles thus become a dominant feature of contemporary African literature. Nigerian writers like their predecessors applied the dialectical materialist approach of Marxist ideology in their poetry. They have taken a definite ideological in their campaign against the vices of post-colonial politics in Nigeria. According to Gbilekaa, the socio-political and economic development in the post-Nigeria civil war for further enlarged the gap between the privilege and the unprivileged. This development brought about a shift from literature of cultural materialism ideological literacy practice. Stratification of society based on class structure is done on the basis of natural acquisition.

The Marxist is interested in literary analysis from the historical, material and dialectical point of view. Hence, the aim is to destroy capitalism so as to establish a new community of people that is free from oppression and exploitation.

It must be noted at this juncture that the application of the Marxist theory to Ifowodo's

Madiba is justified because Nelson Mandela is a symbol people's collective wish and the struggle for the attainment of justice in an unjust of apartheid society, polluted by oppressive and exploitative white minority. In this sense, *Madiba* captures the socio-political conflict between two warring classes; the peasant's bourgeoisie. True freedom of peasants means also the control of political power as well as the means of production. But this can only be achieved through protests and violence. Once this is done, justice will be restored and men will be free to direct their lives without fear of intimidation from the whites.

Poetry and Poets

Poetry plays an important role in the life of a man and his society from time immemorial and even till the present. In the literate Africa traditional society, poetry was the vehicle of man's history and philosophy. It helps him feel at home in his environment and it was the social cement between man and his fellow human being. For instance, "Ijala Ode" is Yoruba occupational poetry of hunters under which so many events and issues of historical deeds are revealed. Lullaby as a poetry also further treats the societies between a nursing mother and his son or daughter.

Poetry is first and foremost, an oral art, viewed as songs and associated with dance and music. Its rendition by poets is always emotionally inclined. F.B.O Akporobaro quoted Watts Dunton saying "absolutely poetry is the concrete and artistic of human mind in emotional and rhythmical language" (13). He sees poetry as a work of imagination work triggered by human's feelings, with words arranged in a rhythmical pattern. Mathew Arnold defines poetry this way; "poetry is a criticism of life under the condition fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and beauty" (qtd. In Akporobaro 13). Poetry here is seen as an artistic work of criticism, criticizing life in general bearing in mind all poetic rules and writing. It is man's perception and of event in his environment that are verbalized. Cuddon sees it an "superior form of creation" (520) and further states that, it is "a comprehensive term which can be taken to cover any kind of metrical composition" (520). Hence "it has become difficult to give an accurate response" to the definition of poetry. Bodunde further argues

that:

What poetry is and the functions it is capable of performing depends on the attitudes, ideas and beliefs of the poet and varies from one tradition to the other (230)

Hence, there is no singular definition of poetry and what poetry is can only be determined by one's ideological posture to life. It would be seen from the definitions given by different scholars that poetry speaks about life in general but in a poetic pattern. However, the emergence of modern poetry is tied to the colonial encounter that is associated with several factors. It is important to know that while oral poetry is to a large extent communally owned at the level of production and consumption, modern African poetry on the other hand combines oral tradition with literary tradition. There are several writers who have supported this claim. Tenure Ojaide stresses the following:

You have writers who are indebted to the oral tradition because they grew up in that tradition. Most grew up in the rural environment and again, most of them have conducted researches on oral tradition (4)

He further opines that Soyinka:

For instance, makes the Ogun myth the core of his art. Okinba Launko (Femi Osofisan) explores the Ifa myth as means of social mediation.... Kofi Anyidoho's employment of funeral dirge. Ojaide's use of Udje, the Urhobo satirical song and EzeuwaOhaeto's transfer of masquerade chant into space of the Voice of the Night masquerade (5).

These poets are noted for the oral tradition peculiar to them but it is also worthy of note that Niyi Osundare explores various oral Yoruba traditions like proverb, myth, invocation, music, among others. Again, Wole Soyinka in *Mandela's Earth* and other poems (1989) make use of tribute/praise poetry genre, so also is J.P. Clark's *Mandela and Other Poems* (1988). It is then not surprising that the selected poet (Ogaga Ifowodo) makes use of praise/tribute poetry to project the deeds of the

contemporary like Madiba in his collections. Having learnt about this oral tradition in their oral societies, he therefore exploits it in his artistic work under study.

Political Prisoner Poetry

A literary writer, most especially a sociological writer cannot sit on the fence. He has to take side. He is either on the side of the "haves or that of the have-nots". African writers/poets are sociological writers exposing the social ills of their respective milieus. Some even stretched it by indicting the government of their time as a result of ideological differences or totalitarian and militarism of the governments. The result of this is always political incarceration of such writers or political activists.

The enthusiasm that preceded the political independence in African countries dampened independence. Some African countries experienced series of oppression during colonialism and this posed many ideological questions by political activists as they wrote in an atmosphere of social, political and endemic economic situation. The preoccupation of the poetry of these periods (colonial and post-colonial era) pointed at castigating the colonial and new breed of political leaders and nationalists who are indifferent to the endemic poverty of the masses.

It is this injustice the political prisoners reacted against. A political prisoner is someone imprisoned for his political activities, particularly his opposition to or criticism of the government of his country. The political prisoner in particular, especially when he or she is also a public intellectual and for a writer, is often preoccupied with continuity of struggle inside the prison and with sustaining communication with the world outside. Prison is thus an unfinished journey, and the prison experience is usually utilized as a means of reinforcing the cause for which the political prisoner is imprisoned.

Wole Soyinka is a political prisoner during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon (1967). His imprisonment gave birth to the poetry collection *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1967). The poet wrote a tribute poetry for Mandela titled; *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1989).

Notable in South Africa during the apartheid era was Dennis Brutus. Brutus was an

anti-apartheid activist imprisoned at Robben Island with Nelson Mandela in the mid-1960s. His activism led Olympic officials to ban South Africa from competition from 1964 until apartheid ended nearly 30 years later. Jack Mapanje and Ngugi WaThiong'o were also imprisoned in their respective countries.

Political prisoner poets also include the likes of Ogaga Ifowodo and Ken Saro-wiwa. The duo faced the wrath of General Sani Abacha's regime. The prison experience of Ogaga Ifowodo however contributed a lot to his ability to picture vividly prison life of Nelson Mandela in "Madiba".

The Poetics of Oral Transference in African Poetry

The need for oral transfer in both Nigerian and African poetry has been long clamoured for and anticipated by African critics. This is because the early African poets especially the Nigerian poets have long time aligned themselves to euro-modernist techniques. First instance, poets like Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo have in their early poetry been obsessed with modern styles and as such modeled their poetry on that of their euro-modernist teachers.

Chinwezu et al, in their book titled *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) condemned the undue obsession of the pioneer African writers like Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo with euromodernist techniques. They argue and maintain that "Traditional African poetry speaks a public language" (188). As such African poetry must be devoid of "obscurantism" and "privativism". They however cite example of African poems that is indebted to oral tradition:

Like "Path of Thunder", Okot's Songs — Songs of Lawino, Song of Ocol, Song of a prisoner — deal illuminatingly with matters of central importance for contemporary Africa. And they do so using authentic African imagery, proverbs, laments, invocations and curses, thereby successfully rooting the modern in the traditional (195).

They maintain further that "the problem facing the Nigerian writer is not in transferring from

"indigenous" to modern poetry" but in transferring from the "modern" which he has been educated and which he has practised to the traditional modes of poetic expression" (209). This statement wrongs the action of some African poets in their works mingle both African traditions and modern tradition professionally". Hence, if a poet wants to use 'modern' in European sense, he or she should stay clear without exploiting oral tradition wrongly. They call on African poet to desist from being a messenger to the West because if we must reconnect poetry with the past and that of the present, our poets must begin to include themes and forms peculiar to African society in their works. They opine that:

Some central concern of experimentation from decolonization of our prose and poetic techniques would be the continuation of traditional forms with a pouring of little wine into old bottles The employment of traditional devices in saturating quantities that will impact on African tone of the literary products (261).

In an essay, "New Trends of Modern African Poetry" (1994) Tanure Ojaide notes the argument of Chinwezu et al about the incorporation of indigenous art forms into the contemporary African writing professionally. He observes that "there is a general recourse of old and younger poets to oral poetry techniques" (12):

Unlike in the late 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s where western modernist influences were strong, in their desire to be more culturally relevant, African poets from the mid-1970s have turned to use indigenous African poetic techniques (12).

This means that African writer/poets before the publication of Chinwezu et al's critical work have been working underground in their various artistic works to incorporate oral traditions in their works. Hence, there appears to be a symbiotic relationship between the oral and the written in modern African poetry in which the poetic aim, vision and practice have merged to bring about poetry that is unique

in orality through written. Ojaide further opines that:

Modern African poets, especially the younger ones, desirous of large audiences, are adapting their poetic techniques to the growing influence of broadcast media and public performance (12).

Gabriel Ajadi in "Tradition and Modern African Literature" (1994) also discusses the importance of Traditions in modern African literature. He proclaimed that what is own to be modern African literature today is indebted to oral tradition. He illustrates this with reference to folklores, folktale, proverbs, epic in the area of narrations, Ijala (hunter's songs or chants), rara (eulogy), Ekun. Iyawo (Nuptial wailling or chants), Oriki (epideictic oratory), Ewi poetry etc in the general poetry; Egungun festival (masquerade), Oro festival, marriage ceremony in the area of drama. The "African oral tradition is very important in the life of an African, the more he is informed about his tradition, the better operates and is socially appreciated, his thoughts, language, and behaviour, shaped by tradition. His creative imagination, mental operation and education should be informed by his culture and tradition as well" (Ajadi 123). Thus, the poets, Akeem LasisiIfowodo whose works are under consideration use tribute/praise poetry genre in their which is in a way influenced by their cultural tradition.

Looking at the contemporary modern African writers, Ajadi opines that they can be classified into two broad divisions; those that follow western tradition and those that wrote with little or no traces of the awareness of the presence of western tradition. He argues that:

Those who wrote with the awareness of the western incursion upon our culture and tradition wrote to defend our culture and sought to protect our tradition from being eroded by the western hegemony (123-4)

In line with the above assertion, reference can be made to Ohaeto's *Voice of the Night Masquerade*, Osundare's *Village Voice*, Soyinka's *Ogun Abibiman*, Okinba Launko's *Dream— Seeker on Divining Chain*, Lasisi's *Iremoje*, Ifowodo's

"Madiba" etc. which are embellished with oral traditions thereby promoting the rich African cultures.

Many of the contemporary African poets were born and brought up in their traditional societies and some have even undergone extra studies on their cultures, hence it is easy to identify with those oral traditions. Isidore Okpe who asserts thus: "The basis of exploitation of oral literacy tradition by modern African writers lies in the understanding that time have changed" (90).

Racial politics and oppression in Ifowodo's "Madiba"

Every society is inhabited by individual and an individual reacts one way or the other to the happenings in his or her society. Fried Mortan defines a society as: "a group of human beings sharing a self-sufficient system of action which is capable of existing longer than the life span of an individual, the group is being recruited at least in part- by the sexual reproduction members" (35). Taking from this assertion, it becomes clear that a society will continue to exist unlike the individuals who either impact on their society positively or negatively and eventually die.

It is this individual action(s) in the society that writers write about because the writers or artists live and react to the societal process: this is so much so that the various events that surround the society become the artistic materials the artists use for their creativity. Ifowodo sees the need to bring into limelight, the socio-political and economic struggles and revolts of Nelson Mandela against the apartheid regime in the poem titled "Madiba" in his collection, *Madiba*. Thus, both the collection and the poem's title are geared toward honouring Mandela who is seen as a legendary figure. In an interview with Ogaga Ifowodo, he states why he chose to celebrate Mandela:

I want to do so from the perspective of a young man, a member of the stillborn generation as opposed to Soyinka's "Wasted generation" a young man searching for a visionary leader, a man of courage and principle in his own country and across the African continent. (Interview)

Mandela is a man of courage and principle that is

why he was held prisoner because of revolutionary struggle against apartheid. Mandela says apartheid is a:

new term but an old idea. It literally means "apartness" and it represented the codification in one oppressive system of all the laws and regulations that had kept Africans in an inferior position of whites for centuries....The premise of apartheid was that whites were superior to Africans, Coloureds, and Indians and the function of it was to entrench white supremacy forever (III).

He opines that the term apartheid has long been in existence because it is "an old idea" only that people did not know and it literally means "apartness"- isolating one thing from the other.

Tribute: Madiba, South Africans and Revolutionary Motive

The various socio-political and economic problems in African countries brought about the emergence of contemporary personality like Mandela who revolts against the socio-political structure of his society. He fights against injustice which is apartheid; suiting to alienation of individual either economically, socially or politically.

Ifowodo writes "Madiba" around Mandela's autobiography titled *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994). In sonnet 1, the poet paints the picture of Nelson Mandela as a visionary leader who inspires South Africans to act against injustice perpetrated by apartheid

He widened the arc for the multitude
gathered today not for the plenitude
of anger to share, buy or explode
but to witness the stunted bud unfold (Madiba 38).

The sonnet's atmosphere is that of joy as the South Africans are gathered to protest against apartheid system. This is further reflected in "The millennial tears, the heavy vapours / of death that dimmed the light, stalked house and sheet" (38). The line is reminiscent of the long-time sufferings and untold hardships of the South Africans.

South Africa is a country of many races like Zulu, Xhosa, Coloured, Indian, and the White settlers who ruled the country. Talking about his bail over a protest, Mandela asserts in *Long Walk to Freedom* that the bails show the rank scale of races in the country:

Bail was another example of the sliding

scale of apartheid: £250 for whites; £100 for Indians; and £25 for Africans and coloured even treason was not colour-blind (205).

Madiba is an internationally acclaimed hero, championing the cause of many races home and abroad. All races become unified force to renounce and fight the apartheid system regardless of individual's identity:

His baked feet found the road to Sisulu
He saw the white sun burn them all (Zulu
Xhosa, Coloured, Indian, White friend) and light
the fires for the first communal fight (Madiba 43).

He refers to these races as "the white sun burn them all" because of the dehumanization races encounter. Thus, Ifowodo sees Mandela as a revolutionary leader who conscientise his people to act against the unjust system. In Mandela says: "In South Africa, to merely achieve fairness, one had to destroy apartheid itself, for it was the very embodiment of injustice" (176). This is his line with the poet-persona's statement that:

"No smooth climb for the branch to kiss the sky,
the ocean-bound river must foam and (42). Hence the South Africans must fight for their freedom which is captured thus:

With immediate deeds, they would claim their earth.
With a firm foot, they would stand their ground first
Or die than the law without them triumph (Madiba 48).

Ogaga Ifowodo in "Madiba" pictures Mandela's heroic struggles in sonnet 6 ways:

Snakes traps and ambush: anguish marked his road,
He would not wed with royal fiat. A toad
Choked and seared, leaping from the burning bush,
encountered the famished python's blind push
for food. The enchanting city of light darkened the
near
and the distance view (Madiba 42).

The poet-persona says despite the fact that the white supremacists plan series of attack, ambush and kidnapping, Madiba still forged ahead in his fight against apartheid. Also be in prison, Madiba for "Years and years and years stitched end to end/ marked daily with hammer on stone" (49). And in order to keep the memory of his loved ones, "He warned his cells with a picture" (49). Not only is Mandela's heroic deed pictured but so that of his wife, Evelyn who continues to champion Madiba's cause while in prison:

her who saved my heart from desolation.
She beams quietly her light upon the World.
She saved my wounds who once nursed a nation
and nurses now the children of war
and want- she who gives words their human core!
(Madiba 56)

As a nursing mother, she cares for the young and the old who suffer the wrath of the white apartheid. The South Africa landscape during the apartheid era is known for protest. In fact at a particular point in time, Madiba believed violence was the only means through which his people can be liberated and condemned the government for its ruthlessness and lawlessness”:

I said the time for passive resistance had ended, that nonviolence was a useless strategy and could never overturn a white minority regime bent on retaining its power at any others are “crammed into jail, children quenched thirst/drinking rage in every (48) Even though they are harassed and molested by the state police, “they would their earth” (48).

The picture is painted of South Africa who are ready to die for Freedom of their country as they embark on mass protest even at night. The South are referred to as seeds that germinate on an infertile ground. Thus, they are children hope. The poet-persona captures their protest this way:

On the candle light processions, look to them!
From storm to storm. No sleep! Raise the anthem.
The seeds grew and flourished in thorny ground.
Hail the children in whom a new hope is found
(Madiba 48).

Apartheid: The Plights of Imprisonment

It is the series of unrelenting protests and demonstrations by South Africans championed by Nelson Mandela that led to Mandela’s imprisonment. He is seen as a eat to the apartheid system. He is imprisoned and experienced series of tortures. Prison tortures are devastating. He and other prisoners work at quarry site. This is evident in sonnet 10:... Even though this is a place of lesson for him, it also darkened his mood as he was caged like a bird. But Mandela devised a means to keep himself and they manage to communicate with newspapers. Ifowodo captures Mandela’s plight thus:

He mended rags in prison with same care
As a healer of heart blessing what hands dare
touché in free or forced toil. Old bags that shunned
their aching notes he and his comrades turned
news bag to shake thirst for the torturer (49).

Mandela served twenty-seven year with hard labour on Robben Island. Robben land is a correctional centre bedeviled with “segregated hate/ and made monks of married men” (49). It is a macrocosm of South African society because one rarely sees coloured or black man as a warder. Thus, there is segregated hate among monks of married men, denial of marital sexual obligations and rank scale of punishments are melted out to the races. According to Mandela, “we regarded the struggle in prison as microcosm of the struggle as a whole. We would fight inside as we had fought outside. The racism and repression were the same; I would simply have to fight on different terms (Mandela 390). Mandela experienced in prison “long nights, darker than cold/colder than dark” (49) with “No embrace to unfold” (49) which left his “heart buffeted by walls and worry” (49). Thus, it could take a prisoner to receive a letter, a year or more depending on the prisoner’s personalities and relationship ‘with the warder. Even if one receives a letter, it would have been censored to the extent that, it is left only with salutation and minor things.

The horrific nature of the Robben Island is further pictured in sonnet 27 with the poet’s words and images, like “the rain-leveled”, “grave”, “gun, leg-iron” etc., which themselves are frightening. The prison is described as “poisoned Island that frothed” (64): “Its white venom/cured by the sweat of forced labour” (64). The black South Africans incur the wrath of the warders who are white. The landscape of the Robben Island is marked by death, sorrow, violence, suffering:

The plain sad song, the rain-levelled
little grave, the booming of guns, the clang of leg-
irons, the scream and the blood-soaked spittle,
(Madiba 64).

The poet-persona praises Mandela’s selfless leadership trait and says: “You were most fried, you were chosen! (63); “You were chosen to suffer” (63) yet “You were pure of heart” (63). He experienced all these so that “the sorcerer’s spell be broken” (63). In other words, so that black.

South Africans can be freed.

Ifowodo sees Madiba as a legend because of his landmark achievements in South Africa. In the face of apartheid, he widens the hope of South Africans and makes it materialize. The poet says “he widened the arc for the multitude” (38); “he took the step none would dare at Fort Hare” (42). Fort Hare is one of the cities in South Africa where Madiba led many people to protest in the face of danger:

Gashed and bruised, he bled his wound on the bare
and bitter road of invisible gain, the path of the fortress of
private pain (Madiba 42)

White in prison, Mandela together with his comrades hold series of meetings to renew the depilated foundation of ANC party that is being swung by apartheid system:

Denied the open air, they held meeting
Wherever wind or smuggled not could fool
the warder...

... They pitched with atop a stool
and raised the weakened arm of the AC.

Groomed for counsel at Mqhekwezeni (Madiba 47).

ANC means African National Congress; “the main black political body, which was now reawakening from a long slumber.... The ANC had been set up in 1912 by a Zulu lawyer, Dr. Pixel Kseme, in direct response to the creation of the union of South Africa in 1910, which had brought together the Afrikaners and the British” (Samson 39).

Revolution; The Birth to Freedom

Subsequently, the South Africans and Madiba gained freedom. This is evident in sonnet 27 as “The gates of the Island fell” and Mandela “lit a lamp/for the free road” (64). This calls for celebration and he are celebrated by the poet-persona in the following lines “And I dance, my breast heavy/with twenty-seven visions for the century” (64).

This joyful mood and atmosphere are still sustained in sonnet 2. Mandela “threw out his arms, frill of song, charmed/the air as he sang with the bell the banned” (39). The condemned “song of terror” by the apartheid, “now anointed/anthem in open air” (39). He implores people;

“Dance/with me, beloved stars of Sharpeville”, (39). The poet- persona says:

...this day
Is not blood nor dirge but mother's kisses
on the waiting cheek, answers, answers and tears
(Madiba 39).

In a joyful mood Mandela, celebrates his people who had long been facing the wrath of apartheid which the poet persona refers to as “the bell the banned”:

Historical allusion is used in the poem; this means an implicit reference to what has happened in the past to what is obtainable in the present. In sonnet 2, historical allusion is made to Luthuli and in sonnet 6, it is made to Sisulu. The former was one-time president of ANC party in South Africa while the latter was their ex-secretary. They played active roles in the realization of the party's goals. The persona says “the moment of memory's pain and pleasure: / Dance with me Luthuli” (39); for this is a joyful moment when the party's long dream come through. The reference to Sisulu should be seen within the context of these personalities' struggles: “His baked feet found the road to Sisulu /He saw the white sun burn them all” (43).

Allusion is also made to some cities in South Africa like “Sharpeville”, “Soweto” and “Fort Hare”. These three cities are cities of protest during apartheid regime. But having achieved freedom, Madiba says ; “Dance I with me, beloved stars of Sharpeville,” (39); this is the same mood found in Soweto's reference; “Follow the exchanged wind's steps and / sway — you who died dancing in Soweto” (39).

In view of the aforementioned, it is apparent that Madiba is a committed poet. He displays his creative intelligence and channeled it towards reflecting issue on sociopolitical problem of the then South African society. Hence, not only has Ifowodo is not blood nor dirge but mother's kisses reflected this issue but uses tribute sub-genre as a vital tool in exposing them. He reflects the dialectical relationship between Nelson Mandela and the South African Apartheid era in the poem “Madiba”.

Conclusion

The personality under study suffers the same of imprisonment in his socio-political terrain. Nelson Mandela spends twenty-seven years in prison with hard labour in his quest for equity and justice in the

apartheid regime of South Africa. Unlike Akeem Lasisi, Ogaga Ifowodo served jail terms in Nigeria because of his open criticism of the General Sani Abacha's regime. He was arrested November 6, 1997 while heading back to Nigeria from the commonwealth summit in Edinburgh. With this experience, Ogaga Ifowodo is able to picture vividly Nelson Mandela's agonies in prison and even prison's picture. For instance, how he struggles to keep himself sane in the face of toils in Robben Island with picture of his family pasted on walls, ANC activities in prison and the periodical letters rolling in from family and friends among others.

The poet is a writer of commitment, poetry of engagement encompassing the aspiration of the oppressed. The poets ridicule sycophants in power. Through this, the poets pinched tent with Marxist ideological position. They believe that selfish, greedy, powerful ones of this world will never willing relinquish the undue privileges they enjoy in the society. Thus, the possible alternative is to revolt and attempt a violent overthrow of the ruling government. The poet uses poetry to make dialectical commentaries on the socio-economic and political experiences of the society they pictured. The selfless leadership struggles of Nelson Mandela to revolutionalise the socio-political and economic plights of his people for their betterment is one that should serve as metaphor and be emulated by Nigerian and African leaders at large.

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