

A Psychoanalytic Criticism of Ifesinachi Nwadike's *How Morning Remembers The Night*

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Abstract

In recent times, it appears Nigerian poets are influenced by changes in the country's social-political and economic landscape to such an extent that their artistic expressions are thought to have tilted towards psychological dimension. This observation transcends the social commitment and ideological inclinations often identified with the poets in the past. Therefore, this paper attempts a psychoanalytic criticism of Ifesinachi Nwadike's poetry, *How Morning Remembers the Night*, focusing on the instances of psychosocial disorder as an association of socio-economically induced psychological conditions that find expression in the collection. Conceptualising this condition, the study adopts a descriptive research method premised on critical analysis in which attention is given to symptomatic elements like the persona's recollected experiences, tone and cathartic disposition. Here, a synthesis of the theoretical paradigms of psychoanalysis proposed by Sigmund Freud and Erich Fromm is found rewarding in providing a framework for the conception of the poetry as the persona's dream text. The study discovers that the psychosocial disorders identified in the collection symptomatically find expression in the poetic persona's tone in form of emotional disturbances and that they are triggered by memories of societal failings. Consequently, the persona displays the identities of an aggrieved songbird and a griot whose memory is clouded by grief and anguish in reaction to societal foibles. The paper concludes that certain psychosocial disturbances that are noticeable among Nigerian citizens under the same unfavorable societal conditions have permeated Nwadike's poetry.

Keywords: psychosocial disorder, psychoanalysis, dream text, Nigerian poetry, *How Morning Remembers the Night*

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Introduction

Besides the social commitment of Nigerian poets at various times in the development of Nigerian poetry, studies have been conducted to examine the ideological instincts underlying the evolution of the thematic focus of Nigerian poets and their choice of techniques. It can be inferred from the kind of ideological instincts and techniques observable in Nigerian poetry that the poets fall within the spectrum of the modern African poets described by Osagbemi as “a signpost of colonial manifestations in character and outlook” (2013:44). In relation to this opinion, some scholars have argued that the artistic ingenuity found in Nigerian poetry is stimulated by “intellectual Marxist combative struggle against the agents of reversed colonialism, neo-colonialism, and capitalism” vis-a-vis the plight of the masses under postcolonial hegemony (Fashina, 2005:154). Some other scholars consider their posture as emblematic of the “civil action” trailing the failure of succeeding Nigerian leaders (Okunoye, 2011:66). In his study of Ademola Dasylva’s *Songs of Odamoludje* as one of such contemporary Nigerian poetry spurred by the socio-political and economic failure of the Nigerian society, Solanke considers the collection as “a fete of lamentations”, a combo of social protest and resistance, seeking “full and positive participation in the polity and development of the country by both the leaders and the led” (2017:72). Similarly, in his study of the poetics of resistance in Tanure Ojaide’s poetry, Nwagbara buttresses that Nigerian poetry has been “a medium of engagement, decrying colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic oppression and political tyranny” (2010:17). Ogunrotimi and Omotunde specifically point out that that “the pre-war carnage (of the Nigerian civil war) and its attending traumatic effects (also) galvanised writers’ social commitment and intensified their criticism of the political and military class” (2018:40). Amidst these notions, there is a need to further adopt a psychological dimension to the understanding of the nature of the emotional temper that is observable in the writings of some Nigerian poets, particularly in contemporary time. Hence, from a psychoanalytic lens, an attempt is made in this paper to examine psychosocial disorder as an association of psychological conditions that find expression in Ifesinachi Nwadike’s poetry, “*How Morning Remembers the Night*”.

Basically, the term psychosocial suggests “the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of a person, where one influences the other” (IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, 2021:11). This relationship is an indication that social factors can influence mental health. In this regards, a state of stable mental condition surfaces when a psychologically harmonious relationship exists between both dimensions. On the other hand, when the relationship is conflicting, disorder, emotional disturbances or upset are inevitable. In order to investigate the aetiology of psychosocial disorder as an association of emotional disturbances and conceptualise it as a neurotic condition, different propositions have been made by social and clinical psychologists. While behaviourists like Alfred Adler, Eric Erikson, Sigmund Freud, and others have identified biological factors expressive in certain instinctual drives and human developmental stages as symptomatic to psychosocial disorder,

dynamists such as Erich Fromm and Carl Jung perceive it as a condition influenced by a collective association between biological and sociological factors. In an instance where Freud argues that ‘anxiety’ as a form of neurotic condition is a product of the frustration resulting from incomplete discharge of sexual orgasm, dynamists like Fromm posit that anxiety sprouts “out of the need for closeness and approval and the need for independence” - influences that are rudiments of social interactions (Asch, 2004:99). Corroborating the dynamists’ position, other studies by Harper et al, have also traced socio-economic condition to adult psychosocial functioning. Annotating adult psychosocial functioning through such “scales measuring cynical hostility, hopelessness, and depressive symptoms”, Harper et al hold the view that certain socio-economic conditions are capable of constituting risk factors to “adult levels of cynical hostility and hopelessness” (2002:395) and that “patterns of adult depressive symptoms were much more sensitive to current socio-economic circumstances” (2002:399). In their study, Agu, Ezenwakwo, Nwafor & Onyemaechi highlight such social factors to include “family background, socioeconomic status, peer pressure, and interpersonal relationship”. They equally identify the psychological traits of individuals to include “personality, cognition, emotion and behavioural processes” (2022:2). A state of psychosocial disorder emerges when a conflicting relationship exists between the social aspect and psychological trait of a person. Going by this understanding, Nkomo considers this relationship as a “social and psychological dysfunctions which affect the mental health condition of humans” (2020:4305). It is implied therefore that social conditions have the propensity to impact mental health, and it can be inferred from this association that emotional stress, emotional upset or disturbances are imminent in situations when social conditions are incongruous. Therefore, from the standpoints of clinical and social psychologists, our understanding of psychosocial disorder in this study includes behavioural or mental conditions that are incited by the socio-political and economic realities of the society and that are expressed in the Nwadike’s poetry.

In his book, *Sociology of Literature*, Bamidele identifies some representations of such behavioural conditions (psychosocial disorder) as “loss of self, anxiety state, anomie, despair, depression, depersonalization, rootlessness, isolation, pessimism, loss of faith, belief and values” (2003:89). Others that may come to the fore in this paper include: anger, recklessness, grief, confusion, alienation, vexation, distress, nostalgia, worry, fear, disillusionment, dejection, rage, frustration, mockery, guilt and loneliness (Afolabi, 2019:26).

Before now, studies have shown the level of social commitment of Nigerian poets at various periods in the historical experiences of the nation. However, in recent times, Nigerian poets are influenced by changes in the country’s social-political and economic landscape to such an extent that their artistic expressions are thought to have tilted towards psychological dimension, transcending the social commitment and ideological inclinations often identified with them in the past. Recognising this trend generally in the African space, Osundare observes that “this generation shocked African literature with a combativeness and radicalism never experienced before” (1996:27). In Azuah’s remarks, additional explanation is found for this aggressive

stance as he asserts that “contemporary Nigerian poets have had to deal with disillusionment in every aspect of the Nigerian state, especially political” (2005:24). This most likely influenced Brown’s recognition of “confrontational attitude to authority” as a distinctive feature of Nigerian poetry in English (1995:58). These observations show that the commitment of contemporary Nigerian poets seems to be taking a psychological dimension as the society struggles under many socio-political disorders and an unsustainable economic structure against the people’s expectations.

The reactionary changes observable in the works of contemporary Nigerian poets are apparently impacted by societal ills and systemic failures, which are having a multiplicative effect on the people’s lives as individuals are adopting a variety of reactionary stances in an effort to survive the widespread anomy. These reflexive stances appear to pierce every facet of the people’s lives, including literature. Bamidele corroborates this assertion as he observes that “the disintegrating phases of contemporary society have affected the form, style and content of modern literature” (2003:89). Thus, the enormity of the weight of unsuitable memories of socio-economic realities is not only capable of inspiring social consciousness in the works of Nigerian poets, but also emotional disturbances expressive in their statements, diction, thoughts, tone, mood and style. In the light of this, this study aims to explore how psychosocial disorders are portrayed as an association of socio-economically induced psychological conditions in Nwadike’s poetry, *How Morning Remembers the Night*, and to identify such societal conditions that are responsible for their expression. This collection is purposively selected based on the indications of such emotional temper observable in the poetic persona’s disposition.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs psychoanalysis as a philosophy of inquiry into human mental condition and combines a synthesis of the theoretical paradigms of psychoanalysis proposed by Sigmund Freud and Erich Fromm towards conceptualising and identifying the representation of psychosocial disorder in the selected collection. A blend of these theoretical paradigms enables us to conceive the selected collection as the persona’s dream text in which we find expressions for his conflicts or desires repressed in the unconscious mind.

As a practice, psychoanalysis typically offers explanations for “human behaviour and human mental functioning” (Mann, 1973:xi). Eagleton buttresses this assertion as he affirms that “psychoanalysis is a theory for the understanding of the human mind and for the revelation of man’s unconscious motivations or behaviour” (2008:159). Thus, through its many therapeutic theoretical models, psychoanalysis provides explanation to human neurotic situation by attempting to determine its pathogenesis. Accordingly, psychoanalysis is considered applicable in understanding literature as a feature of human nature and a byproduct of the human mental process because of this view of the human condition as a neurosis and the efforts to determine the pathophysiology of the condition. Going by the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, we find psychoanalytic approaches valuable “in the interpretation of literature”

(Barry 1995:96). In this regard, this study is conceptually positioned within the Freudian psychoanalytic dream model and Erich Fromm's socio-economic determinism of human behaviour.

Freudian Dream Model

As recorded by Barry, Sigmund Freud holds the opinion that "a dream is an escape-hatch or safety valve through which repressed desires, fears, or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind" (1995:99). He shares the view that people are motivated by suppressed sexual and vicious instincts in their unconscious minds. Therefore, he conceives dreams as a symbol of those deeply suppressed unconscious motives, desires, and thoughts. Asch corroborates that dream is considered "a kind of catharsis of the residues of past painful experiences" (2004:4).

Sharing his view on *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis*, a treatise published by Sigmund Freud in 1910, Fancher affirms that Freud identifies two major "components of dreams" in his interpretation of the content of a dream. These components are tagged "the manifest content and the latent content". While the former is the "remembered dream experience which consists of the actual images, thoughts, and contents" there in the dream, the latter signifies the "previously unconscious meaning of the dream", the buried source of meaning (1998:34). Barry elucidates that dream's manifest content "are represented in a very 'literary way', involving the translation of abstract ideas or feelings into concrete images" (1995:98). The manifest content of a dream is, therefore, representational and symbolic. Cracking its meaning is essential to discovering the dream's hidden significance.

We discover a connection between dreams and literature in these two dream components. Literature, like the manifest substance of a dream, "cannot speak directly and explicitly" but instead uses "symptomatic places" such as images, symbols, emblems, and metaphors, as well as distortions, ambiguities, absence, elisions, mood, and tone to convey meaning (Barry, 1995:102; Eagleton, 2008:182). Hence, the application of the Freudian dream model is relevant in recognising the representations of psychosocial disorder in Nwadike's poetry as evocative in such symptomatic motif such as the poet's tone.

Erich Fromm's Concept of Socio-economic Determinism of Human Behaviour

Social psychologist, Erich Fromm, is among the neo-Freudians who hold that social and cultural factors also influence human behaviour and personality. According to him, societal drives as well as innate instincts combine to define human nature. In his view, "there are the rational and the social elements in the making of man as well, and these are important in human existence" (Fromm, 1970:xix). From this vantage point, Asch clarifies that Fromm thinks that "man gets into neurotic difficulties as a result of the new needs created in him by his culture as well as the deprivations and frustration of the potentialities forced upon him by it" - i.e. imposed upon him by his culture (2004:163). By combining Marx's socio-economic

determinism of human behaviour with Freud's biological determinism and adding the concept of freedom to this combination of two deterministic systems, Fromm offers a distinctive basis for this belief. In this philosophical blend, freedom denotes free will, or the capacity to exert autonomy and make decisions free from outside influences. Based on Fromm's idea of "escape from freedom," it is inferred that attempts to flee a harsh socio-political or economic environment stimulate psychosocial demeanours. In this way, the need for human independence from alienating socio-political and economic forces provides justification for the understanding of human's emotional disturbances. While Fromm's model on the socio-economic determinism of human behaviour offers insight into the societal condition that informed the psychosocial disturbances expressed by the persona in Nwadike's poetry, the Freudian theoretical model helps in identifying such "symptomatic places"—tropes, tone, distortions, and diction—in the collection that convey the unconscious meaning of the persona's dream texts and disturbances.

As noted by Joshi, "a poet cannot express any such emotion in the form of poetry as he himself has not experienced" (2014:279). This implies that poetry emerges from a poet's memories or life experiences, which find emotional expression in their compositions. Poetic expression, like a dream in psychoanalytic term, becomes a catharsis of the remnants of past traumatic experiences and a conduit for the release of such emotions that have been repressed in the unconscious mind of the poet. From this perspective, Kekeghe makes it clear in his analysis of "creativity and the burden of thoughts" in Wumi Raji's poetry that "the notion of dream in a text foregrounds the floating mindscape of a poet as he recounts different experiences of distress in his social milieu" (2017:49). Therefore, in order for us to comprehend the content of the dream text, we must look at the symptomatic features that can provide an explanation for the mental or emotional state of the poet.

It is in view of these above observations vis-a-vis the psychoanalysis theoretical framework that this paper explores the representations of psychosocial disorder in Nwadike's poetry with a focus on the persona's distressing memories of the socio-political and economic realities of his home country, Nigeria, and the catalytic import of same on his psychosocial well-being. Here, Nwadike's poetry is explored as the poet's dream text, giving attention to symptomatic elements such as the persona's tones that depict his emotional condition or psychosocial behaviour.

Tone as Symptomatic to Psychosocial Disorder in Poetry

The nature of tone, its categories, markers, and its function as an indicator of persona's emotional attitude in poetic expression have gained the opinions of literary scholars. This explains why tone is described by Sharma as "the author's implicit attitude toward the reader, subject, and/or the people, places, and events in a work as revealed by the elements of the author's style" (2019:44). While tone is defined by Harmon as "the attitude toward the subject and toward the audience implied in a literary work" (2009:523), the concept is considered by Cuddon as "the reflection of a writer's attitude, manner, mood and moral outlook in his work"

(1999:920). More succinctly, Dasylyva and Jegede describe tone in poetry as “the attitude of the poetic voice (persona) to the subject matter” (2005:22). These ideas highlight how tone, as an attitude, in poetry not only conveys the persona’s mood but also symptomatic to the persona’s emotional behaviour and attitude toward the object or subject that serves as the thematic focal point of a poetic work. Consequently, tone, conceived as emotional behaviour or attitudinal reaction, can be identified through a temperamental display of a persona and the stylistic components of poetic expression.

With the understanding that persona’s attitude and stylistic features determine the nature of tone and the medium by which it is expressed, Sharma has classified tone into the following self-descriptive clusters: “positive tones, negative tones, humorous and ironic tones, and neutral tones” (2019:44). With this categorisation, it is inferred that the nature of tone exhibited by a persona in a poem is a function of his/her emotional response based on his/her life experiences. Put another way, a poetic persona’s emotional state or psychosocial behaviour can be implied by his/her tone, which is his/her attitude towards the poem’s subject. This understanding provides the basis for the focus on tone in the examination of how psychosocial disorders are represented in Nwadike’s *How Morning Remembers the Night* in this research. Utilising a psychoanalytical discursive methodology, we examine how the persona’s tones convey emotional disturbances that are indicative of the psychosocial disorder sparked by the persona’s distressing experiences and memories.

An Analysis of Ifesinachi Nwadike’s *How Morning Remembers the Night*

Nwadike recounts stories of those difficult times recorded in Nigeria’s new democratic regime in his collection, *How Morning Remembers the Night*. Published in year 2020, more than 20 years after Nigeria’s democratic transition to power, the collection focuses on the poet’s painful memories from the civil rule era. The “morning” and “the night” in the title allude to the poet’s depressing experiences and his ability to remember. While “the morning” in the poetic persona’s dream text symbolises the remembrance of such memories, “the night” symbolically denotes memories of the dark age of national socio-political and economic abnormalities, similar to the recollection of troubling dream experiences. Chika affirms in an interview with Nwadike that “the persona takes the role of a man who sits on a morning after some terrible event and remembers what has passed through the night before” (2022). This remembered experience is comparable to what Fancher describes as the “manifest dream-content, which we remember in the morning only confusedly”: such an encounter that includes the real thoughts, images, and dream content (1998:29). Accordingly, the collection’s diction and tones are thought to be indicative of the persona’s emotional state of mind, which manifests itself as a psychosocial disorder in the recollection of his recalled experiences.

In “Introit: My Memory Is a Deluge of Grief and Anguish”, a poem in the first movement of the collection, the persona’s overall disposition and his emotional reactions to the upsetting memories are established. As this title suggests, the persona metaphorically compares the

flow of his psychosocial disturbances to a deluge -a massive and uncontrollably great sadness and anguish that pour like torrential rain- because the grief and anguish arising from these experiences are so onerous. The avalanche of sorrow and anguish within this persona who portrays himself as a “Horseman of memory” and a “Songbird in the noon time” in lines 25 and 26 of the poem becomes obvious when he personifies his “Grief” in a way that communicates his worries and the underlying sadness in his heart:

“Grief came knocking on my heart’s door
With sorrow stained knuckles
Barging in,
They embraced the bosom of my soul

Wrapped in the anguished of fellow countrymen
Buried in coffins levitating in the sky
Laid bare on highways and roadside carnages

Grief of a comrade, in a hurry,
No goodbyes,
The sunsets on an empty market
Of activists, nationalists, patriots
Whose bloods, their nation’s roots spout in

Of jungle justice
And innocent bloods gobbled up
In barbaric congresses

II

I, Horseman of memory
Songbird in the noon of time

My tongue, a compass
In the sky of remembrance
From the cave of silence, I mine my words
On their fleeting waves, I find my rhythm

For memory is a wooden cross
Heavy on the shoulders of pilgrims
Who journey on its path of solemn remembrances”. (11 -12)

In addition to indicating the persona’s emotional state, the excerpt above offers a glimpse into some of the more upsetting memories, including accidents brought on by the collapse of social order, the brutal murder of fellow citizens, jungle justice, kidnapping, and other related socio-political and economic crises resulting from the ignorance and incompetence of the

ruling class. In this way, the persona remembers a few of the tragedies that have hit the country as a result of structural flaws and the negligence of the political leaders.

In “Where Coffins Fly?”, the persona alludes to aircraft accident episodes and deploys an extended metaphor to describe the nation’s airspace as a place where coffins fly -a place of horrifying mortality. The persona represents aircraft, which are generally regarded as the safest means of transportation, and their components as “coffins” (burial boxes for the dead), “joy for pallbearers,” “technical dooms,” “brutal beasts,” “doomed tags,” and “a final rite of passage” as he recalls the fatal crashes involving the Bellview aircraft on October 22, 2005; the Sosoliso aircraft on December 20, 2005; and the Dana airline on June 3, 2012. The government’s alleged disregard for the aviation industry and its inability to conduct regular performance evaluations of aircraft operators have been attributed to several of these fatal incidents. Through the persona’s portrayal of the airplane and several crash sites, he conveys his anguish and sorrow in a sardonic tone and diction:

“In hangers,
The coffins lie seductively,
Its cozy interior lure passengers in –
Joy for pallbearers

Exotic frames, technical dooms
Brutal beasts, Boeing to blazes

Tickets, doomed tags –
Stairs, a final rite of passage

Lisa, Port Harcourt, Iju-Ishaga
Bellview 117, Sosoliso 108, Dana 163
Souls engulfed by the flames of the coffin

The sky is of flying coffins
Of grief, requiems, black roses.” (15)

“Death Came Calling in the Guise of Pleasure” touches on memories of sexual molestation and rape which have become commonplace social vices in the nation. Here, the persona addresses the late Ochanya Ogbanje, a thirteen-year-old student at the Federal Government College in Gboko, Benue State, in a threnodic tone. It is claimed that Ogbanje was sexually assaulted by her guardian’s husband and son, which ultimately caused her death. Ochanya becomes an avatar of the many other victims of rape and sexual molestation whose lives were covertly ended by the nation’s dysfunctional social structure, which no longer ensures the protection or dignity of its residents. This incident has motivated “a red song” in the persona’s “throat”, especially since the victim’s case has been taking a long time to get justice. As the girl’s “ghost reminds us of other Ochanyas” who are “groaning in anguish under the weight of molestation,” the persona claims that Ochanya has now transformed into “the light of our

secret.” (Stanza 6). The persona’s tone in his apostrophic address to Ochanya in this poem depicts his lamentation:

“Ochanya,
Against your will death came calling
in the guise of pleasure

for four rains
you bore the brunt of brutality
from high he-goats
tethered to the bamboo-pole of your thighs
They bleat the refrain of rebuke

memory in these verses
inscribed on a slim wooden cross
and placed beside a black rose
on the headstone of your tiny grave

this is a red song
hatching in my throat
watch me spill the stanzas
on the floor of their conscience

these verses are the footfalls
of a Horseman
marching in solidarity,
seeking justice for your spirit”. (27-28)

To this end, the second movement of the collection, “Miner in the Cave of Silence”, comprises poems that lampoon the excesses, carelessness, and rots of the ruling elite. In this movement, the persona takes on the role of a miner to exhume memories of the leaders’ despicable and corrupt actions. His subtle aggressiveness against the memories of robbery, greed, oppression, and deceit associated with the political leaders is evident in the rhetorical and audacious tone with which he confronts us in the opening poem in this second movement, “They Have Not Stolen?”. Using neologisms and long metaphors like “polithievians” and “goat” in a way that is symptomatic of his aggressiveness, the persona ridicules the leaders’ dishonourable deed and the serious setback they have brought to the country:

“They have not stolen?
These honourable polithievians
who shot their pens,
public vault emptied

No one has stolen?
Here, where corruption runs a relay race

Clutching the baton of greed?
So no one has stolen here, even when
Maikontri is now a forerunner
In the grand march to backwardness?
Are we yet to learn
How not to buy a goat
Only because of its voice?" (43)

Likewise, in "Vision Infinity," the persona satirically reminisces about the recurrent developmental visions and agendas frequently set by Nigerian governments from the country's independence in 1960 to the year 2020, in what appears to be a poetic dialogue with the Head of Government. Noting that "aggression constitutes satire's indispensable component" (Njogu, 2001:3), the persona's deployment of satire to make fun of the numerous complex and unrealistic vision statements that have been set for a timeframe around six decades after the nation's independence is emblematic of his aggressiveness towards the leadership lack of direction and disoriented priorities. The persona's confrontational and satirical tone in the penultimate stanza, when he asks, "But His Excellency, what if we can't wait?" is indicative of his anxiety and dissatisfaction with the fragile, never-ending, and hopeless developmental agenda that has been based over time on platitudes and unachievable economic policies. The persona's insightful query and His Excellency's answer reveal even more of the leaders' extreme inhumanity and heartlessness and the persona's disillusionment:

"Vision 1960:
"Independence for everyone."
"Freedom for everyone."

Vision 1970:
"Reconstruction for everyone."
"Rehabilitation for everyone."
"Reconciliation for everyone."

Vision 2015:
"Quality education for everyone,
One university to one citizen."
"Improved transportation for everyone,
One car, one train, one ship,
And one jet to one citizen."

Vision 2020:
"Patience for everyone."
Understanding for everyone."

But, His Excellence, what if we can't wait?

Vision Infinity

“One grave to one citizen.
and to those that died waiting
one hell to each of them.” (51-52)

Beyond the lawmakers' lackluster leadership and the leaders' overall ignorance, “Who Says We are Corrupt?” describes in detail the many guises of unethical behaviour exhibited by the country's leaders and a few other vile people who use the country's socio-economic decline as a pretext to exploit the citizenry. The poem, according to Nwadike in an interview with Chika, “exposes the people's collective hypocrisy and their continuous attempt to create alibis for their corrupt practices by giving such acts some funny names that attempt to trivialise their enormity” (2022). The persona touches on a number of unethical acts, including money laundering, hiring quacks for contracts, extortion, extrajudicial killings, bribery, human trafficking, rent increases, kidnapping, commercialisation of religion, and artificial scarcity. He does so repeatedly in a rhetorical and sarcastic tone. In this poetic rendition by the “Songbird,” the rhetoric refrain “Who says we are corrupt?” is not only created for musicality or rhythmic essence; it also serves to reinforce and express the persona's emotional resentment in an ironically confrontational manner:

“Who says we are corrupt?
Is it when they stash trillions in foreign accounts
and deal us with AIDS?
Kai! That is called “saving for the future”
and “taking proactive measures”.

Who says we are corrupt?
Is it when civil slave ant and pain-shunners
Go unpaid for months?
Hey! That is called “Heavenly reward”.

Who says we are CORRUPT?” (48 – 50)

In the above poems, we find expression for the representations of psychosocial dysfunction in the persona's tones in his recounting of the vile memories of the nation's socio-political and economic experiences. Venting these psychosocial dispositions in his tones, the third movement of the collection titled “Songbird” projects the emotional state of this persona who has identified himself as a “Songbird,” a “Horseman of Memory,” and a “Miner in the Cave of Silence” with a memory full of sorrow and anguish. As revealed in this movement, the persona's thoughts are stimulated by other poets whose poetics have elevated public awareness and aspirations for the masses.

The poem “On this Eve of Sprouting Madness” (To Isidore Diala) in the third movement is a homage to and exhortation to the renowned African literature researcher and critic Isidore Diala. In this poem, Diala is urged to mold the persona’s ideas and control the “shadow” aspects of his personality and psychosocial disturbances, before they escalate. This is because the persona, going by his tones, appears to be emotionally overwhelmed by the painful memories of the socio-political and economic realities of his country and he is, therefore, seeking self-realisation and rejuvenation like the persona in Christopher Okigbo’s “Mother Idoto”. In this instance, Diala morphs into an emotional force for the anguished songbird, acting as a sort of “anima” trait of the persona’s make-up that balances his ego and psychosocial disturbances:

“My mind struggles to keep pace
 With the uneven fecundity
 Of its children

 Comers at the threshold
 Of your legend
 Songbirds stands, courting incisions
 Longing for the saving baptism

 Shape my thoughts now
 On this eve of sprouting madness
 Before it reaches into the marketplace.” (57)

The persona in “As Leak-proof as the Scrotum” (To Niyi Osundare) clearly succumbs to the influence of other poets and critics, such as Niyi Osundare and J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada. These figures hail from the post-civil war era and are well-known for their stance in oral poetic techniques and socialist consciousness, which are expressed in their attempts to “reflect, refract and depict the reality of excreting poverty, diseases, sickness, social decay, oppression, suppression and general lack of freedom...in the Nigerian society” (Dasylva and Jegede, 2005:156). Lyrically referring to the duo’s artistic and polemical inspiration as his personal “Pentecost,” in which their songs become the “tongues of fire” that ignite his poetic mentation and emotional condition, the persona conveys his creative naivety and mindscape (Stanza 5, lines 2 and 3). By implication, the songbird’s reference to these individuals suggests that he is a person grappling with the burden of his freedom and trying to find a means to cope with the “existential anxiety” (the anguish, grief and pains) that stems from his socio-economic condition (Pekkola 2010:70). As a result, the persona turns to poetry as a solace for his psychosocial stresses in addition to his emotional desire to be “as leak-proof as the scrotum” by being flawless, unruffled and resilient in the kind of poetic art dedicated to resistance against bad governance, the insecurity of human lives, and social failings:

“Niyi
 Your words

Broke the virginity
Of my curtained eyeballs

A
Green songbird
My lyrics were a poor
Babble

Till
Agbada* reshaped
This nest, from where
I sing.

If you were my Pentecost
Your songs
Were the tongues of fire” (58-59)

Supporting the idea that poetry provides a remedy for person’s psychosocial condition, Kekeghe illustrates that “the poet may reduce the sense of isolation triggered by despair or passion by translating his mood into invigorating art; (hence) the act of scripting the feverish impulse of love or sadness becomes a therapeutic process” (2017:49). In keeping with this, the persona finds further solace for his mental distress in “Sweet Scent of Citrus,” the final poem in the collection, a poem dedicated to his confidante and soul mate, Munachimso Jennifer Azubuike (Nwadike, 2020:66). Here, Munachimso turns into the persona’s object of affection, causing him to experience emotional catharsis as he compliments her lovely feminine features in a way that evokes succor and admiration:

“Melanin face
Like the harmattan of the sun

Ebony eyeballs
Like a full moon night

*You are the
Sweet scent of citrus
In my twitching nostrils...*
Your hips
Are the canvasses on which I plant my emotions

You’re my cannabis
My chronic addition – mama sativa” (63-64)

As pointed out by Asch, “society makes man increasingly unhappy” (2004:112). Under such conditions, the people seek “various ways of enduring it”. Some “superior souls”, like

the poets, they psychologically turn to “sublimation” as a coping mechanism. In this way, these individuals are “able to diminish the pressure of the instincts by conversing them into socially acceptable behaviour”. Some other people also find equal comfort in “substitute gratifications” such as religion, love, drinking or any other similar behaviour (2004:112). Consequently, it is hypothetical to conclude from the psychoanalytic reading of *How Morning Remembers the Night* that while the poetic expression in this case represents the persona’s “displaced neurotic conflict,” or psychosocial disorders, it also acts as a “consoling illusion” and a means of bringing the persona’s repressed psychosocial conflicts to the surface.

In the final extract, the persona’s metaphorical depiction of his tender feelings for Munachimso represents the height of his cathartic relief. Munachimso appears to take on the role of a “narcotic” or “substitute gratification” by appealing to the persona’s “twitching nostrils” with a “sweet scent of citrus,” relieving him of his psychosocial disturbances. (Awuzie, 2017:75).

Conclusion

In this paper, a psychoanalytic interpretation of Ifesinachi Nwadike’s *How Morning Remembers the Night* demonstrates how the poetic persona depicts psychosocial disorders through the different tones that are evident in the resources of language exploited in the poetry in relation to the persona’s emotional attitude. Following this approach, some of the representations of psychosocial disorder in the collection are identified to include the following: grief, sorrow, lamentation, worry, delusion, bitterness, anguish, trauma, sadness, resentment, agitation, aggression, naivety and hopelessness.

These representations of psychosocial disorder, as portrayed in the persona’s poetic statements, are largely sparked by his experiences with Nigerian civil rule, which is marked by corrupt and poor leadership, bad governance, collapsed social systems and infrastructure, insecurity, unfavourable economic conditions and unrealistic developmental visions, injustice, and general failings of the society. The persona’s identity presents him as a person who is battling the burden of freedom and looking for a solution to deal with the “existential anxiety” resulting from his psychosocial deposition in line with Fromm’s idea of socio-economic determinism of human behaviour. (Pekkola, 2010:70). Nonetheless, through the persona’s objects of admiration in the dream text, he finds expression and emotional release for his suppressed memories, conflicts, and desires. Apart from adding to existing knowledge in the study of Nigerian poetry, the paper brings attention to how certain psychosocial disturbances that are noticeable among other Nigerian citizens under the same unfavorable societal conditions have permeated the works of contemporary Nigerian poets.

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