

THE HOOD IN NOSTALGIA (A POEM)

Ifeoma Ezinne Odinye, PhD

Department of Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Email: ifeomaodinye@gmail.com
ie.odinye@unizik.edu.ng

The wind sings dirges
 of ancestral savannahs
coloured in green and grey
 on wet bellied soil with
exhausted antennae.

The Hood, my former earth
 had a smile like the twilight
yearning in desire to meet
 the dodging sky every night—
A natural gesture wheeled by fate
 in a widening gyre of pure innocence.

In Hood's stead, Anyanwu, the Sunshine was before noon
 bearing a shower of warm beaming rays.
It gave Hood's children a push onto their knees.
 This push lifted their hands and legs to grab the best of the land
The land they gently nurtured in God's muse as seasonal visitors;
 A joyful season; an expression of exceeding luck for harvest.

The Hood was a system with life
 where everything was moving in lines
Shedding ceremonial roles,
 Afternoon respected the Morning
Evening honoured the night.
 Plants fed continents with
roots and primaeval fruit.
 Perfection stood in white robe
The past with memory.

The Hood had merry beings and warrior friends
 incubated in Iroko—the strong gaint
Udala, the mother of many children that breastfed all with her juicy milk
 Nkwu, the special one that graced every homestead like ancestral warriors
Uni, the sweet one coloured in ripened yellow apparel
 Akpu, the benevolent one that fed millions without complaint
Ji, the King of foods who graced many ceremonies with grand aura of a kind
 A memory clouded in sweet reality.

The Hood had an aura of royalty
 A palace decorated with nature's flowery friends, roots and nuts
The feeble Nchuanwu scented the meandering pathways
 accompanied by Ugu, Mgbolodi and Arira
Onugbu, the bitter one graced every pot with special taste for meals
 Akwu coloured the soups in milky reddish yellow
Ede thickened water to coat the balls of fufu meant for throat journey
 A special memory—the one flavoured by Ogili and Ugba.
The Hood had sailed with her league of friends for decades
 until she stretched her hand to welcome a stranger from far land.

Under Hood's silent watch
 future coiled in the air
Uncharted, hearts are notched
 with kindred spirits of baobab
and obeche trees yoked in crafted jealousy,
 a totem of gentle civilization
silenced by ferocious invaders.

Dark powers stood in the way of the Hood,
 armed with unusual sense, iron and powder
A sensual fear; a metal fear in python-like coil
 throbbing the heart of the Hood
in chains of dark clouds.

Fate and faith played in swirling vortex
 Innocence and maturity fought in solitude
tangled in a long witted battle—
 a long tale sprayed in inhibition.
The passage with memory.

Now, time stagnates here, retiring goodness to rest in the morning;
the goodness Amadioha sentineled the east in past glory
until justice, unity, peace and love were wrenched on dark alters
occasioned by undelightful company of unchained barking dogs
The flowery palace was replaced with hardened gaint bricks in all corners
Sugar replaced Uni in sweet savory taste
Plastic, rubber, paint, chemicals and chaff became special delicacies!
Everything embraced a new lyric; a new dance!

Now, Hood's children are coloured in a new ascent
masked with concentrated madness in the world, a pattern with no
pattern
Hood's life is deformed; the body is severely damaged with deep wounds
The Okro stem is now tougher than its owner
The once tender yam tendril can no longer be guarded
Rain falls amidst sunshine
Things fall apart, the old and young dance together in nakedness
Both slavered into modernity of a joke!
There are no adults; there are no children
All foods are for all—sweet, bitter, sour, tasty, tasteless!

Blowing the thought-pipe,
memory rolls the picture of the past with clouded innocence:
Men and women joyous in sacred gatherings free from mischief
Kings robed in justice smiling in satisfaction
Boys and girls in meandering lonely paths laughing without insidious intent
caught in between exhausted shivering
after a long fatigued dance under the cool blazing Sun;
under the dazzling watch of Amadioha, the All seeing, the All
knowing!

Now, the rhythm has changed
The fear of Amadioha no longer stirs the pudding of the heart
Hearts stare downward in cloned worship
Children sing like adults glued in praise
Men and girls stand here and there stirring the chocolate pot that doesn't burn
in the open
Women and boys agitate in motion bustling in active service
A claim of modernity cowed into grace!

Now, the Hood's map is lost
The leaders are standing still at the centre
Parents are driven by the wind in continental drive
Children spread in surfaces of different shapes—
So free moving up and down; down and up!
There is no direction!
Everyone, a master on elevated social standing;
slaying alone in elevated thoughts of the known and unknown.
Peace sleeps without waking!
Trouble plays without resting!
Murmuring covers everywhere—a pandemonium!

Memory slipped in at intervals gracing Hood's children with deep thoughts
about past and present
Souls stared in heavens indulging in fantasy of the past
mind strolled to futile hope
holding tightly to the best in the past hood
when deep dimples graced young cheeks frequently
after rattling in groups with friends under the cold rain.
The silvery drops of rain glowed their hearts into one
leaving pieces of joy sparkling in their hearts.
Like the green forest, their hearts widened
like giant grasses catching fun in freedom.

Now, they have deserted the Hood;
they are blinded by dazzling energy of making giant strides
A modern effort that almost blinded their eyes by force in far cities—
a money call with sharp cannibal teeth;
A fast life with fancied security cloned in black countenance.

In reluctance, they smiled broadly
recollecting the golden path graced with purity
The thought of Hood suppressed their pain of seclusion;
Children forced out of the Hood in search of self and future.
Mixed up in feelings, they scooped up their emotions to follow the future
refreshing their joys of Hood journeys in endless giggle
to re-open the moments that melt the heart.
A dream to catch the fallen star after escaping the prison!

(GLOSSARY OF IGBO WORDS)

Akpu (Cassava):	A tropical root plant which is the source of tapioca. A staple food common among Igbo people
Akwu (Palm Nuts):	The edible seed of <i>Elaeis guineensis</i> , the palm oil
Amadioha:	A deity (god) in Igbo religious worship
Anyanwu (Sun):	The star that the Earth revolves around and from which it receives light and warmth
Arira:	Slimy edible green plant rich in vitamins
Ede (Cocoyam):	The edible root of the plant malanga used in thickening local soups
Iroko:	African hardwood obtained from several African trees of the genus <i>Chlorophora</i>
Ji:	The edible, starchy, tuberous root of that plant, a tropical staple food
Nchuanwu (Scent leaf):	Special naturally scented leaves for cooking special food in Igbo land
Nkwu:	A tree of the family <i>Arecaceae</i> usually characterized by having a single stem or trunk, directly from which several leaves or fronds give a shape like an outstretched hand
Ogili:	A special native dark condiment made from edible seedpods mixed with other local ingredients for cooking delicious Igbo soups
Onugbu (Bitter leaf):	Special edible green bitter plant used in making local soups in Igbo region of Nigeria
Udala:	African star fruit known for its sour taste. It is believed to be a friend of all; a potent source of childbearing

Ugba: A local delicacy made from cutting edible seedpods mixed with local ingredients

Uni: A small yellowish oval-shaped fruit commonly known for its long lasting sweetness on the tastebud. It is called a sugar fruit.