

Major Tenors in Nigerian Literature: Creative and Critical

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Brief Introduction

This article is essentially an offprint, a brief part of a series – components of a larger research project that deals with performance poetry. The main thrust of the larger project (not this article) is to apply theoretical models I have propounded earlier (“universalist relativism” and “praxiphonoaesthetics”) to performance poetry of especially the spoken word variant in modern Nigeria. This larger project also looks at traditional minstrelsy and chants as modern revamps and revivals and how they operate alongside spoken word in a digitally enabled new (social) media world. This segment here deals briefly with the major trends witnessed in Nigerian literature since the late colonial and postcolonial era as a broad background that chronicles the robust literary scene that has propped Nigerian writers. It has two parts: the first that deals with creative impetuses while the second handles the major critical waves so far. Though basically an offprint to aid in awareness and possibly engender critical interaction about the main project, this article has the almost complete independence to stand alone, hence its publication and does not lay claim to being exhaustive on the said subject matter.

Major Concerns of Nigerian Creative Literature

The historical colonial period in Nigeria as is already known ended officially with the attainment of independence in 1960. As usual, Nigerian literature has always mirrored the Nigerian society continually with its nascent days of skirting around and darting across issues that ranged from expressionisms, tall-tales, pulp (popular literature) fiction of the Onitsha Market pamphleteering sub-genre, city and everyday life chronicles, indigenous languages imprints, pan-African and nationalist writings, independence-themed literature, etc. – all in around and a little beyond the first half of the twentieth century.

The first deep-layered and serious literature of the novelistic convention remains Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, published two years to the 1960 independence year. The existing colonial picture of Africa and Africans (albeit unsavoury to the natives) had to be overturned. Edgar Wallace’s *Sanders of the Rivers*, John Buchan’s *Prester John*, Joyce Cary’s *The African Witch* and *Mister Johnson*, and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* had to face the onslaught of what Emmanuel Obiechina calls “cultural nationalism”. This drive to revamp African cultural dignity eroded by such books as those mentioned earlier according to Obiechina, “developed side by side with the nationalist movement for freedom from colonial rule” (24). Allwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu have this to say:

Chinua Achebe, probably the most famous of African novelists, made perhaps the strongest point in this regard with the publication of the epoch-making *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, a novel which not only targeted to restore the bastardized sanctity of African cultural practices but also indicted the colonial enterprise for destroying these ways of life. (59)

In this endeavour of cultural nationalism and traditional representations, Achebe had “disciples” and followers who churned out works that had nearly the same content and intent

of African culture and tradition and their projection. The most prominent of the disciples are John Munonye, TM Aluko, and Onuora Nzekwu – some also add Elechi Amadi. Charles Nnolim captures it succinctly:

In Nigeria, there grew up a crop of novelists whom we must call the literary sons of Achebe – John Munonye in *The Only Son*, T M Aluko in *One Man, One Wife*, Onuora Nzekwu in *Blade Among the Boys* - (74)

Achebe continues in his *Arrow of God* (1964) in educating the world better on the African society irreparably changed by colonialism and again showcased his expertise in another sub-genre of the novelistic tradition – the situational novel. Nnolim presents this aptly and mentions Achebe's followers once more:

Achebe is also a pioneer in another kind of novel – the situational novel... (it) exists to present a group-felt experience. For example, what happens to Okonkwo, in *Things Fall Apart*, echoes what happens to Umuofia as a community. In *Arrow of God*, the voice of the community is clearly heard, and Ezeulu mirrors that community. He is the collective consciousness of Umuaro and his own disintegration in the end mirrors the disintegration of Umuaro as a community. The voice of the community is clearly heard in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and *The Great Ponds*, in Onuora Nzekwu's *Wand of Noble Wood*, and Flora Napa's *Efuru*. (74)

However, it would not take long for thematics of Nigerian literature especially in the novel tradition to shift after the attainment of independence. Writers, like most of the citizenry got disenchanted with the way the rulership of the new country and its affairs were being handled. They became more interested and worried about the issues of governance and the corrupt practices blatantly displayed by the indigenous politicians who took over from the colonial masters. Literary texts in all the genres populated the scene with subtle and not-so-subtle titles indicative of the times: *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *A Man of the People* (1966) by Chinua Achebe; *The Interpreters* (1965), *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *A Dance of the Forests* (1960/71), *Season of Anomy* (1973) by Wole Soyinka; *Casualties* (1970), *Song of a Goat* (1961), *The Raft* (1964) by J P Clark-Bekederemo; *The Voice* (1964) by Gabriel Okara, *Path of Thunder* (1971) by Christopher Okigbo.

Soyinka had the ominous foresight to have seen the shape of things to come in his *A Dance of the Forests*, being the play for the country's Independence Day celebrations. According to Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, "as post-independence disappointment gradually set in, the kernel of the message of Soyinka's rather absurd drama hit Nigerians" (62). They continue:

The truth is, Soyinka may have been asking Nigerians on this important day of their history to be wary of a repeat of the kind of tendency that we were refusing in rejecting colonial government. However, it took Nigeria a couple of years after 1960 to fulfil Soyinka's prophecy. (62)

Two years on, it was one crisis after another to the extent that Achebe's *A Man of the People* which ended with a military coup uncannily coincided with a real-life coup in Nigeria of the sixties. Things got worse and the civil war erupted in 1967.

The war of 1967 – 1970 was a catalyst for extra literary production and has not stopped doing so. As Nigerian writers represented the unfortunate carnage, it is important to note that some novelists viewed the conflict from the Nigerian side while others did from the secessionist Biafran side. Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* (1976), Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1973) and

Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986) saw the war from the Nigerian side and according to Onukaogu and Onyerionwu "the likes of Chukwuemeka Ike (*Sunset at Dawn*, 1976), INC Aniebo (*The Anonymity of Sacrifice*, 1974), Cyprain Ekwensi (*Survive the Peace*, 1976)" (64) saw it from the Biafran angle. Nnolim is magisterial and unsparing in his assessment of the overall output:

There is a new crop of war novels each of which gives and insight into the internecine conflict. Nearly all of these novels just give a nodding concession to fictionality. Most are bland, reportorial, journalistic, with no message, no lessons to impart, and no thematic concerns to espouse. The titles merely show their topicality: *The Anonymity of Sacrifice*, by INC Aniebo; *Survive the Peace*, by Cyprain Ekwensi; *A Wreath for the Maidens*, by John Munonye; *Forty-Eight Guns for the General*, by Eddie Iroh, and *The Last Duty*, by Isidore Okpewho. None of these novels has gone beyond the reportorial present to embrace cosmic implications or lessons drawn from war. None has been able to sketch for us a lost generation (78)

However, Nnolim extols the innate and thought-provoking thematics and styles employed by Okara and Soyinka in *The Voice* and *The Interpreters*, respectively, as novels that ask(ed) troubling questions in the sensitive times between independence and the unfortunate war. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu offer a list of other notable texts in other genres:

In poetry, Wole Soyinka's *A Shuttle in the Crypt* and *Idanre and other Poems*, JP Clark's *A Decade of Tongues*, Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths*, Chinua Achebe's *Beware Soul Brother*, Ochia Ofeimun's *The Poet Lied* and many others were collections devoted to the Nigerian Civil War. In drama, there are Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Elechi Amadi's *The Road to Ibadan*, Catherine Acholonu's *Into the Heart of Biafra*, Afam Ebeogu's *The Mad Major*, Onyebuchi Nwosu's *Bleeding Scars*, etc. (64)

After the war, the prolonged effects of the (mostly despotic) military leadership of the seventies, eighties and nineties with only a four-year civilian spell (1979 – 1983), on the socioeconomic fabric of the Nigerian society guaranteed and supported the production of a unique body of literature befitting the vagaries of the times. The socioeconomic and political tragedy inherent in the system brought about novels such as Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), which painted a grim picture of despotism and poets such as Ezenwa-Ohaeto who wrote satires against the military in power with the pidgin poems *If to Say I be Soja* (1998) and *I Wan be President* (1988). Iyayi's *Violence* (1979), and Ben Okri's *Flowers and Shadows* (1980) and *The Landscapes Within* (1981), all portrayed in diverse but hard-hitting styles, the tenor of the polity. The unending crises in almost all sectors of the Nigerian society such as labour strikes, electoral impropriety, university workers strikes, extra judicial and government-sanctioned killings, police and military brutality, massive unemployment, decayed infrastructure, constant closure of schools, non-functioning utilities, seemingly unending tyranny, etc., characterised the nineties and even into the 2000s and naturally propelled writings with similar thematics and subject matters. Quoting Jessa Espinosa's undated essay at length,

Prominent writers (of the period) are Akin Adesokan (*Roots in the Sky*), Maik Nwosu (*Invisible Chapters*), Helon Habila (*Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*), Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*), Sefi Attah (*Everything Good Will Come* and *Swallow*), Adimora-Akachi Ezeigbo (*House of Symbols*), Biyi Bandele (*The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams*, *The Man Who Came in From the Back of Beyond*, *Burma Boy*)... Ogaga Ifowodo (*Mandela and Oil Lamp*), Remi Raji (*Web of Remembrance* and *A Harvest of Laughters*), Ahmed Yerima (*Hard Ground*)... Tess Onwueme (*The Reign of Wazobia*), Ben Okri (*The*

Famished Road...), Emman Shehu (*Questions for Big Brother*), ... BM Dzukogi (*These Last Tears*) and others. And they all speak with the same angry voice.

The general tone, tenor and texture of literature coming out of and about Nigeria in the 2000s to present is faithfully representative of movement without direction – the aimless drift the country is apparently swaying to. Of this, while addressing fiction specifically, Nnolim says that “there is a corruption of the Nigerian dream, there is absence of a national ethos, there is a sense of estrangement, of cultural disinheritance...” (217). Nnolim had earlier labelled contemporary Nigerian writers as “the fleshly school of writers...authors whose main characters are in dire pursuit of the flesh...” (208) as he identifies the debauchery in society glistening in the accompanying fiction. He also singles out Maik Nwosu’s *Alpha Song* (2001) as the poster child for representation: “(it) sets the tone for contemporary Nigerian fiction in which characters engage themselves in ‘seeking a great indefinable essence but finding only small definable pleasure’” (208) – and this portrayal of aimless drift and disconnect in literature is symptomatic of the Nigerian society.

Nigerian Literature and its Major Post-colonial Critics and Criticism

The Nigerian literary scene apart from the considerably robust creative output it is home to, also boasts of a formidable slew of critical and theoretical corpus. In Nigeria’s postcolonial literary array of critiques and critics, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* though both creative proeses are intrinsically nodes of “write-back” critical responses to Eurocentric portrayals of the continent. But in pure critical fashion, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” is Achebe’s savage dissection of Joseph Conrad and his classic about Africa, Africans, and the supposed “savagery” inherent. In the 1975 essay, he holds up the Eurocentric misconception that Africa is merely a place of customs and superstition lacking history and literature. Achebe maintains the view that the West *needs* this backward, negative and primitive view in order to psychologically shore up their image. In his view there is “the need in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (2). He equally is more concerned in his criticism by his choice of Conrad’s “classic” because it is regarded as one of the greatest short novels in English therefore being taught, reviewed, and evaluated continually. Part of his disagreement with Conrad’s book is that it “projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world’ the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality” (2) and goes ahead to point out in the novel where the African characters are stripped of human qualities and imbued with those of animals.

Apart from calling Joseph Conrad “a thoroughgoing racist” for painting Africa as a despicable “other world”, the essay, a part of the collection, *Hopes and Impediments* (1988), is considered an important component of the critical postcolonial (literature) movement texts, serving also as part of Achebe’s “write-back” tradition arsenal where distorted views and slights are tackled and righted. In this practice, the real African image is projected not necessarily as an untainted idyll but as very far from the negativities such as found in *Heart of Darkness*, which his *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* effectively do. Part of the method is in the domestication (Africanisation) of the colonial English language in order to better convey the native sensibilities and ontologies of Africans and Achebe in pursuance, practice and defence of this, says on his abrogation and appropriation of “standard” English:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his

message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. ("The African Writer and the English Language", *Morning Yet On Creation Day*, 61)

The need to be African and authentically so is the somewhat vitriolic palaver between the Nigerian Euromodernist poets: Wole Soyinka, JP Clark, MJC Echeruo and (the earlier) Christopher Okigbo, and their relentless and unsparing critics led by Chinweizu (with Ihechukwu Madubuike and Jemie Onwuchekwa). Starting from the mid-seventies and coalescing in the 1980 book, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics*, the important critical war raged and just as the Achebean write-back tradition, it left considerable impression on the Nigerian scene, eliciting responses, arguments and effecting changes.

The trio were of the view in their 1975 article (first published in *Okike* and *Transition*) and later in the 1980 book that these older Nigerian poets write with

Old-fashioned, craggy, unmusical language, obscure and inaccessible diction; a plethora of imported imagery; divorce from African oral poetic tradition, tempered only by lifeless attempts at revivalism. (165)

The language of the critics and the importance of the message raised considerable controversy. Wole Soyinka, who was heavily criticized by the trio called them "neo-Tarzanists" calling for "the poetics of death and mummification, not of life, renewal and continuity" (68) in "Aesthetic Illusions: Prescriptions for the Suicide of Poetry" (*The Third Press Review* I, 1975 and later in *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*, 1988). Critics took sides in the intellectual fray and while Donatus Nwoga chided both sides for overstatements and overreactions, Chidi Amuta in *The Theory of African Literature* is more caustic and dismissive:

Chinweizu et al have had only a nuisance value in African cultural scholarship. Nor could they be said to have influenced any writers or critics of note. Their book is ultimately mythic and its brand of myth-making is good only for (the) Black Power mongering.... (49)

To counter Amuta's position, especially on the claim that their offering has only nuisance value, Roger Berger in "Contemporary Anglophone Theory" says this:

Nearly all critics of African texts, whether or not they agree with Chinweizu, have read (or are in some way familiar with) Chinweizu's criticism. For this reason, the criticism of African literature can never be the same as it was before the appearance of Chinweizu's book. (148)

More critics and writers expressed views contrary to Amuta's. One of the then contemporary Nigerian poets who bought into the key elements in Chinweizu's stance is Niyi Osundare who became famous as a proponent of the "Alter-native" tradition. In an interview with Frank Birbalsingh he declares the poetry of the Soyinka group (Soyinka and Okigbo especially) difficult:

Our enthusiasm fizzled out. When I started writing, this negative influence was in my mind and I felt it was the duty of the new generation of Nigerian poets to bring poetry back to the people. Since everything about our culture is lyrical and musical, how come, when we put this in written form, we alienate the people who created the material in the first instance. (97)

It is presently common literary history in Nigeria that the movement that followed in the eighties catalysed partly by the military in leadership and other socio-political peculiarities, found a large part of its seminal turning (or starting) point in Funso Aiyejina's "Recent Nigerian Poetry in English: An Alter-Native Tradition". This essay is a manifesto of sorts presenting a rejection of the Soyinka-Okigbo-Clark poetic tradition for alternatives rooted in the people, their lore and ontologies.

Other poets and critics such as Obiora Udechukwu and Tanure Ojaide credited simpler, traditional poetry as bulwarks and influences on their own output in obvious tandem with the type of ideas postulated by Chinweizu and co. Nevertheless, the critics Lewis Nkosi and Ken Goodwin caution against possible monotonicities, repetition and uncritical use of traditional elements, and what Goodwin claims to be situations of "sharp breaks in tone or sudden switches in material, so that in extreme cases the lines may seem almost atomic..." (xv), as a result of poetry strongly influenced by African orature. However, Isidore Okpewho weighs in and is of the view that there is not much to worry about because;

The basis of exploitation of the oral literary tradition by modern African writers lies in the understanding that times have changed. Although they are driven by cultural pride to identify with the legacies of their people, the painful facts of contemporary life require that they re-order these cultural legacies in a way that represents sometimes a slight, sometimes a radical, departure from tradition. (316)

Essentially, this wave initiated by Chinweizu et al's critique of the Soyinka-Okigbo-Clark-Echeruo group/era of poets developed and coalesced into an enduring poetic tradition that dominated the eighties, nineties and beyond in Nigerian literature. From this movement, forms and techniques dependent and deriving from traditional methods of orature saw many interesting kinds of use amongst poets; what Ezenwa-Ohaeto terms a poetics of orality:

These new forms and techniques decipherable in contemporary Nigerian poetry are part of the poetics of orality which is hinged on the acceptance of the view that there is the employment of the principles of traditional aesthetics and the rhetorical devices of the oral mode in the written poetry. (18)

Soyinka's role in the waves of criticism has been more or less enormous – whether through his style and critics' reactions to it or conceptualisations and attendant commentaries that follow. In drama, his forays in presenting the artist as the societal voice through protagonists that self-sacrifice, for instance Eman and Demoke in *The Strong Breed* and *A Dance of the Forests*, respectively, is intertwined in his belief in the mythic figure of Yoruba pantheon's Ogun – his questing kindred-spirit god. Interestingly, there are similarities in the social functions of his characters of this make, himself and his mythic "doppelganger", Ogun. Brian Crow believes that Soyinka has "visionary commitment (which) has given his work a dual aspect" (62) – "(as) his sense of this primal metaphysical reality (of man in nature regulated by natural phenomena) endows much of his drama with a mythic and mystical quality" (62). Crow also mentions Soyinka's art's "formidable symbology (which dramatizes) psychic states and conflicts" (62). Soyinka in essence does not use historical events and when he rarely does (*Death and the King's Horseman*), "his interest is less in the political realities of colonial history than its potential for an exploration of what he regards as basic spiritual realities" (Crow 63). On the other hand and far away from the mists of myth-making, Soyinka is well known as an acerbic satirist with unwavering focus on socio-political contemporaneity – but according to Crow, he also plies the middle part that interestingly combines both: "The two strands are not mutually

exclusive: the satirist and the dramatist of the mystical quest come together... *The Road and Madmen and Specialists*"(63).

The issue of power and its use for either good or bad, poeticisms of dramatic ritual action, militant revolution against tyranny, and the perpetual conflict between oppressive political power and revelatory spiritualism have always been at the centre of Soyinka's drama. He has also in addition through outspoken criticism been a national figure in Nigeria. But there is an irony which Crow describes aptly:

Given his activism, and his assertiveness about the social function of the writer, as well as his description of himself as a revolutionary humanist socialist, Soyinka's work had become, in Nigeria, the focus of sharp and sometimes vitriolic criticism from the Left, much of it concentrated on the two plays discussed above and another product of his Cambridge sojourn, his book of literary criticism and philosophical reflection, *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Increasingly, a younger generation of Nigerian critics has portrayed Soyinka as a brilliant but ultimately reactionary romantic, and his plays have been unfavourably compared with the 'committed' art of Senegal's Sembene Ousmane, Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o and younger Nigerian dramatists such as Femi Osofisan and Kole Omotoso. Soyinka has in turn defended himself vigorously against this criticism and, as we shall see, whether by coincidence or design, his drama has concentrated since the late seventies on topical political and social satire, sometimes in popularly directed agit-prop form, virtually to the complete exclusion of metaphysical themes. (65)

The basic charge against Soyinka is his reactionary romanticism borne out of his overarching mythopoeticism at the expense of realistic engagements with the grind of quotidian existentialism. Biodun Jeyifo takes it further as he comments on Soyinka's basic conceptual view encapsulated in his *Myth, Literature and the African World*, by pointing out the folly of looking forward or towards the hollow promises of Europe instead of hearkening and leaning on "(that) African culture, (which) before the long night of its historic subjugation, already contained the seeds of its future regeneration" (15). He avers in a not-so-oblique reference to Soyinka's Eurocentric eclecticism: "We may borrow judiciously from the vast storehouse of the world's cultures, but the first priority of the day is now 'self-apprehension' or 'race retrieval'" (15). The major critical grouse Jeyifo has with Soyinka according to Crow is "the entirely unrelieved idealist foundation and direction of his argument" (65); and in Jeyifo's words:

Notions, conceptions, symbolic actions and relations are all lifted clean from their material, historical contexts and fused into an ideal worldview whose coherence is purely conceptual. (15)

Worth mentioning is Yemi Ogunbiyi, also a leftist critic who believes that Soyinka is both ambiguous and lacking in enough commitment to which of course Soyinka responds to all criticisms with equal measure in addition to labelling "Leftocrats". All the same, as mentioned earlier, a shift in Soyinka's drama has been noticeable and it has been less of his previous mythic preoccupations and more realistically topical.

"Drama wars" were neither concentrated nor peculiar to writers of western extraction or bent in Nigeria at about that period. The east was conceptually and theoretically boiling likewise. MJC Echeruo in his "The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual" (1981) raised critical dust when he decided that Igbo traditional performance generally and the ancestral mask theatre particularly

does not constitute drama. For him, they represent “festival”. In the essay he points out the lack of plot and the preponderance of myth-based rituals erroneously dubbed drama by scholars. However, he agrees that the dance, song, and costume elements of the performances fall short of drama but remain festival. For Echeruo, they remain festival because of their lack of “elaboration of action, whether or not this action is supported with dialogue (as distinct from speech)” (139), and he arrives at his conclusions by the results of analogous comparisons drawn from between Greek and Sumerian traditions. He does this while judging and comparing the Igbo traditional settings to Apollonian and Dionysian orgies and revelries. In his words,

A New Yam festival, for example, is a great ritual and festive event. Behind the ritual activities of the festival is almost certainly a mythos of a returning and beneficent god who is both welcomed and propitiated. But the festival, itself, together, with all its associated ritual acts, is not drama.... The masquerade, for example, which has strong roots in Igbo land is drama only to the extent that its mime element carries with it a narrative or plot content. (139)

Echeruo is magisterial in his opinion that Igbo traditional spectacle is still trapped in ritual: “Ritual is and has always been a dead end. It cannot grow. It only shrinks steadily into inevitably, inaccessible (though powerful) symbolism. The Igbo should do what the Greek did: expand ritual into life and give that life a secular base” (147). This school of thought shared also by scholars such as Kalu Uka and Ruth Finnegan became known as the evolutionary school. Opposing them with cogent and interesting stances are the relativists consisting Ossie Enekwe, Emmanuel Obiechina, Meki Nzewi and Emeka Nwabueze.

In “Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igboland” (1981), Enekwe presents Obiechina’s summary of Echeruo’s argument thusly:

Professor Echeruo uses the Odo festival to illustrate his thesis. His central proposition is that the Odo festival, like the Greek Dionysian and Apollonian festivals contains dramatic elements capable of future development into full-bodied drama. Ritual and myth, in his view would first of all, be shorn of their coagulating sacredness...for use in a secular drama.... (149)

The relativists maintain that ritual festivals such as is in the example and elsewhere in Africa are full-fledged drama in their own right, thereby rejecting opposing the evolutionary stance. Obiechina is of the opinion that “ritual festivals in Africa represent full and authenticated drama that should be recognised as such; that they are communal dramas which differ from secular, individuated modern drama...” (qtd in Enekwe 149). Obiechina wonders why the Greek paradigm should be applied elsewhere and in his “Literature – Traditional and Modern – in the Nsukka Environment” has this to say: “the evolutionists have been misled on their too great reliance on writings and the facilities it provides and too little confidence on the oral tradition” (30). Chike Okoye in “The Igbo Mask as Solo Performer” captures other views of the relativists:

Meki Nzewi, paraphrased by Enekwe, “has noted that there is no reason why ritual should be forced to yield its story, except to serve audiences that are strangers to the latest nuances and symbolism of Igbo rituals” (130). Enekwe on his own part argues against Echeruo by opining that “myth is the soul of drama, pointing out that drama does not have to evolve from myth, and that if it contains elements of myth, the myth is...for social restructuring”. (36)

Concluding Remarks

The critical, conceptual and theoretical formations that have been surveyed here do not by any means attempt an exhaustively representative body of the robust stream of critical ideas that have remained flux in the ever-dynamic literary scene of Nigeria. What unique contribution this article offers is that it brings together in one piece the major creative and critical waves Nigeria has witnessed in the literary scene. It is a concise package ideal for any literary historian in search of a hands-on grasp of such a view. Though quite limited in scope, it is more functional and wholesome in the part it plays in the larger book project it belongs to as an offprint. As for the critical issues featured here, it is however the view of this author that these stand out most basically because of the persons involved, the quality and merit of ideas and concepts espoused, the furore and influences generated, and the paradigm shifts witnessed and linked to these critical waves postulated and experienced. Others are however equally important but not exactly germane to the intents and purposes of the larger thesis of this study. Again, in the run of this project, more will be touched upon and relatively refocused to fit into the contexts of discourse.

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