

J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada's *Bomblast Or Breakfast?: A Metaphor of Social Awareness and Conflict Resolution*

David Ifeanyiichukwu Nwakanma

Department of English and Literary Studies
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike
Email: david.nwakanma@funai.edu.ng

&

John Amarachukwu Egole

Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: aj.egole@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

A metaphor is an expression that relates something or objects to another or object in way that the sense realised from such comparison helps in manifesting meaning clearly. Metaphor gives a writer the audacity to portray non-familiar ideas and situations in a way the reader is made to understand an intended meaning by comparing unknown things with known ones. It involves the deployment of language in a distinctive manner that words are used outside their conventional environment to express similar ideas or concepts. This paper examines Nwachukwu-Agbada's *Bomblast or Breakfast?* as a metaphor for social awareness and conflict resolution. Applying the textual interpretation approach, this paper observes that metaphor as a strong creative technique is deployed constructively to awaken the mental consciousness of the reader. Through the theorist, Kenneth Burke's Rhetorical Criticism, the paper investigates how the poet deploys metaphor as a veritable device to express his historical, cultural and socio-political value system of his society. The paper also uses this approach to describe, analyse, interpret, and evaluate hidden messages and meaning in the collection, thereby domesticating any claim that metaphor is a veritable literary instrument writers aesthetically and stylistically apply to engender social integration and national development. This study will also enable readers appreciate the detailed use of metaphor in *Bomblast or Breakfast?*, and how to apply such device in creative expressions.

Keywords: Conflict, Peace, Resolution, Metaphor, Social Awareness, Nwachukwu-Agbada

Introduction

In contemporary criticism of Nigerian literature, Nwachukwu-Agbada is a writer and critic whose social, economic and political awareness of his environment is apparently unquestionable. His poetry collections significantly depict the above assertion. He is mostly appraised for his grassroots advocacy and social reforms at large for instance, critics have praised his concern for his society, which is endangered by political unrest and rascality, exploitation, terrorism, kidnapping, wars, poverty and other social vices. His deployment of metaphor on the verse genre to chart, document and reflect the contemporaneous history of his immediate environment, thereby creating awareness of impending doom, shows a writer who remains socially relevant to his people and society at large. The poet understands that the society is to a writer what the laboratory is to a scientist; hence, he mirrors the society through his poetry collection *Bomblast or Breakfast?*

In *Bomblast or Breakfast?*, metaphor, language and other poetic devices are used to tell the tale of the recent Nigerian history and other African countries as well as to advocate peace and national integration. As watchdog and conscience of his society, the voice persona in the collection also creates a social awareness of what is to come if the society does not abhor chaos, hatred, political bigotry, all mannerisms of terrorism and bad governance, and embrace oneness and peaceful co-existence. According to T.M.E Chukwemezue et al, quoting Soyinka, "when the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognise that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post mortem surgeon" (*Perspectives*, 1). In *Bomblast or Breakfast?* the poet creates a voice persona that fits into Soyinka's 'conscience in his society'. Therefore, metaphor is used extensively in the collection to establish the perspective to peaceful co-existence.

Lynne Cameron and Graham Low posit that “metaphor is central to our understanding of how language, thought and discourse are structured. Consequently, the study of metaphor has been of interest to scholars in a wide range of disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, philosophy and literature” (x). What this means is that metaphors aid scholars to be imaginative and creative in their scholarly discourse irrespective of discipline. Also, metaphors have attracted more philosophical interests and provoked more philosophical thoughts and controversy than any other traditionally recognised figures of speech. For S.I Hayakwa, “metaphors are not ornament of discourse, but direct expression of evaluation and are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express”(i). M.H Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham assert that “in metaphor, a word or expression that in a literal usage denotes one kind of thing, without asserting a comparison... Metaphors are essential to the functioning of language and have been the subject of copious analysis, and sharp disagreements, by rhetoricians, linguists, literary critics, and philosophers of language”(130 – 131).

Metaphor is fundamental to the way language systems are developed over time, structured, as well as the way individuals fuse, broaden their thoughts about themselves, their dealings and their awareness of the universe. Abrams and Harpham further note that metaphor can be viewed and discussed from diverse viewpoints of discourse. It can be discussed from the similarity view which seems to be the traditional way of analyzing metaphors since the fourth century BC when Aristotle introduced it until the recent past. It can also be discussed from the interaction viewpoints. I.A Richards in Abrams and Harpham describes metaphors as bringing together the disparate ‘thoughts’ of the vehicle and tenor so as to effect a meaning that “is a resultant to interaction” and that cannot be duplicated by literal assertions of similarity between the two elements (212). He further asserts that “metaphors cannot be viewed simply as a rhetorical or poetic departure from ordinary usage; on that it permeates all language and affects the way we perceive and conceive the world” (213).

There is also the pragmatic view of metaphors in which Donald Davidson in Abrams and Harpham mounted a challenge to the standard assumption that there is metaphorical meaning as distinct from literal meaning. “Metaphors, he claims mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, meaning, and nothing more ...” (213). Metaphors can also be viewed from a cognitive standpoint. The cognitive view is also known as the conceptual view. The conceptual view of metaphors became prominent in the 1980s by rejecting the assumption in many earlier theories that the ordinary, normal use of language is literal, from which metaphor is a deviation for special rhetorical and poetic purposes. In its place, it claims the ordinary use of language is pervasively and indispensably metaphorical, and that metaphors have persistently and profoundly structured the ways humans perceive what they know, and how they think. From the above assertions, one can suggest that metaphors as literary device, have both denotative and connotative meanings. The assertions also entail that metaphors cut across disciplines and are part of everyday life as well as academic discourse.

Attempts have been made to give insight into other views of metaphors but the conceptual view of metaphor will be extensively used to do textual interpretation of social awareness and conflict resolution in *Bomblast or Breakfast?* This is because from the conceptual viewpoints, metaphors are witty sayings that can be used for the realisation of truth and social change. Metaphors, in their implied and conceptual senses exhume wisdom and creativity. In relation to wisdom and creativity, Min Xiaomo suggests that “Metaphors help disputant and observers understand and communicate to others about things that are happening or recurring issues in a way that is appealing to their own worldview” (2).

Social Awareness and Conflict Resolution

Social awareness may be referred to social consciousness. It entails reawakening and enlightening the people. Social consciousness is the ability to understand and properly relate to both broad problems of society and interpersonal struggles. In its broad sense, being socially conscious relates to being aware of one’s environment; what is around one, as well as being able to accurately interpret the emotions of

people with whom one interacts. In furtherance, social consciousness is the ability to take the perspective of, as well as to empathize with others including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour and to recognize family, school and community resources and supports. Anita Hummel asserts that “social consciousness is about being aware of the problems and injustices of society and then trying to do something about it. It is about leading with moral and ethics and looking to do good” (1). From Hummel’s standpoint, social awareness is all about having a voice to speak against the evils in the society, and stand for what is right. It is leading a life as a watchdog and the consciousness of the people, and helping the people to move out of an impending danger. It is for these reasons that poets are social crusaders; talking about every sphere of human existence for the purpose of social recuperation. Kenneth Ndubueze Kanu succinctly points out that “... poets are sociologically and ideologically determined. Literature to them should not only entertain; its primary virtue should lie in awakening the people’s trust. It is an ingredient which is vital, which should teach a serious lesson to mankind” (*NKA* 7, 50).

From Kanu’s views, poets use their writings as a way of mobilizing and conscientizing the masses. In doing so, poets use materials, incidents and things appealing as well as familiar to the people to convey their message. They also use metaphor as extended proverbs and allusions to create social awareness amongst the people. Thus, they interrogate their society and things happening around them. Conflict has come to assume a social norm, its place and history is not in doubt. According to Ho-Won Jeory, “conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end. Our survival on this planet earth hinges on how we manage the various features of conflict that is fuelled not only by seemingly incompatible interest and values but hostilities” (1). In fact history has proven conflict to be part and parcel of social development as it has become largely inevitable among individuals and nations. Resonating this view, Dora Nyiykighan Mbu succinctly explains that:

... human beings as social animals have always been embroiled in temporary and continuous disputes and fracas collectively called conflicts since time immemorial. This comes in the form of individuals against each other, families against families, kingdoms against kingdoms and more contemporarily, countries against countries ... (*New Frontiers*, 209).

Like in all human societies, it is empirically provable that conflicts were a basic necessary part of native African communities but poets, among other writers seek for diverse ways of resolving them through their verses, in most cases satiric verses. More so, in most African societies, social harmony, peace and order are emphasized as the principal creed of social control, thus poets often remind the society through their poetic verses that we are all humans simply because we all belong to, participate in, and have stakes in our respective human societies. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to maintain the trajectory of positive social relations by always resolving our inter and intra human differences. Hence, conflict resolution becomes imperative.

Conflict resolution is any reduction of the severity of a conflict. It may involve conflict management, in which the parties continue the conflict but adopt less extreme tactics; settlement, in which they reach agreement on enough issues that the conflict stops; or removal of the underlying causes of the conflict. According to Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and High Miall, “conflict resolution implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and transformed” (31). This implies that conflict resolution is a call to give peace a chance within the socio-political structures and affairs of man and society. In relation to literary texts, the ethics treasured by members of a community, including conflict resolution are interwoven into literature in form of songs, storytelling, drama, poetry and other literary means of transmitting information. Those things that foster the peace and unity of the community are also emphasized. The stories about African heroes and the self-sacrifices of these heroes in the community as well as the struggles and gains of the community are told or sung for the benefit of the community to know how far they have come and what they have being through. Thus, the social consciousness of the people is awoken through poetry and other genres of literature as would be seen in *Bomblast or Breakfast?* Subsequently, we shall explore the use of metaphor in

creating social awareness and conflict resolution using some selected poems Nwachukwu-Agbada's *Bomblast or Breakfast?*

The Use of Metaphors to Create Social and Conflict Awareness in *Bomblast or Breakfast?*

Nwachukwu-Agbada echoes the voice of a prehistoric bard in this award winning poetry collection *Bomblast or Breakfast?* (2017), x-raying the precedent and current social unrest in his society. The collection is sub-divided into eight sections with forty-one poems. In the first poem of the collection, "Ode to War", which is under the section "Introit", the poet remembers those who in one way or the other have been victims of war and martyrs of modern Nigeria. Nwachukwu-Agbada does not fritter away time to enlighten his audience that he is about taking us to a metaphoric expedition through times as the title of the poem says it all. It is therefore not out of place to wonder why the poet eulogises war as 'ode' is a form of lyrical stanza that is elaborately structured in praise or deification of an event, individual or thing. But our bard has a different and implied thought, so he intones:

to those who smitten by fun spool for war who
triumph only when others swoon they who plot
their plunder in wound. I offer this slice of Ode
soled to war (3).

Not only is the poet's 'ode' referred to as a sliced bread, he also calls out those who rejoice and exalt conflicts that often result to war; they are happy when they see humanity robbed in wound because it makes them feel like champions. For them, conflict is like "a slice of bread which they eat and get satisfied" (3).

In stanza two of the poem, the poet takes his audience back memory lane when these heartless humans started to "toy with humanity's jaws" (3). The poem is not in praise of war but a strong warning to humanity, especially the political leaders who engage in matters that result to adverse conflict, that they have done enough in the extermination of social, political and moral peace and order brought upon human kind. Nwachukwu-Agbada goes on to express the grief which war generates in the society. Instanzas 6 and 7 we read thus:

Upon hearing the anthem of war blast
saints and, solemn appear by their tombs
Fortune hunters leap over their breakfast
and do a believe of weird marital tunes

At the sight of blown bombs in war
inconsolable mums strop & scream
And war itself like a wanton whore
Dozes as in a dissonant dream.(3-4)

The poet uses the metaphor 'fortune hunters' to refer to those who feed off conflict and are always happy at the misfortune of the downtrodden who cry uncontrollably especially during social unrest. In Nigeria today, it is a case of terrorism sponsored by political godfathers who enrich themselves as the clear expense of the people's lives and peace. The poet points out a major consequence of war, the loss of life of self or loved ones, as war often tears individuals, families, societies, nations and nations apart. Thus, during wars "inconsolable mums" cry their hearts out as they lose their husbands and sons who are either killed or recruited to join the military which in most cases they never return. Women and their daughters are forced to rape and other dehumanizing subjections. Also, during war there is usually a gross scarcity of food and other social amenities. War is the absence of peace, and the absence of peace means conflict often engineered by some avaricious individuals. And in conflicts "fortune hunters leap over breakfast" because they do not care whose ox is gored. "Breakfast" as used in the poem is a metaphor for wealth which the war mongers amass during conflicts while the poor's dreams and aspirations are botched. The last stanza of the poem tells of difficulties, "jamb of the wooden door" meted on the less privileged in the society by the "wanton whores". "Jamb" is an acronym for a Nigerian entrance examination board for tertiary level institutions which most candidates see as very difficult and an impediment and criteria to their gaining admission into the

tertiary schools. It is used here as a metaphorical illustration of the untold hardship created in the society due to the insensitivities of those opposed to peace.

In “Our Hate”, the poet turns his attention to citizens who abuse themselves in all sorts of verbal and non-verbal insults– hate speech. Hate speech is abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation. The poet attempts to awaken members of the society especially the poor masses, not to allow the elites use them to fight their wars whilst the political leaders who instigate the conflict go out there to revel in the romance of politics in tandem to their popular mantra, “there is no permanent enemy in politics.” The poet creates a social awareness that “our hate” which sometimes results to ethical and religious conflicts is significantly unnecessary and unhealthy. Hence, the poet admonishes that the citizens should desist from certain unwholesome activities that would not improve social, religious or ethnic communality among the people,

Each time, provoked, I toy with your threat
For reasons not far from tongue or tone
I’ve always heard behind us a loud guffaw
Oh fellow chasers of the gadfly & flea.
Breaking fast on a menu of palm & kernels
You who’d embrace the brewers of our hate.
Haters and loathers who hurt like vampires
Vampires like umpire who blow the whistle.
March to the periphery of the circle
And yet converge at the centre. (8)

From the above stanza, the poet feels the urgent need to conscientize the ignorant masses of what transpires within their country. His remarks of the people who “toy” with one another’s “throat”, is a clear warning that the people must desist from those activities that do not ensure peaceful co-existence because the brewers of the conflicts laugh aloud at their ignorance. The poet reminds those who fight themselves for the oppressors share the same fate because they are “...fellow chasers of the gadfly & flea” who struggle to make ends meet, thus they seldom have enough to eat as their meals are merely “palm & kernel”, the concept of the “palm & kernel” as meal is a metaphor for hardship, poverty, hunger, lack and want. The poet further refrains “when they toast to the health of one another/ We won’t be there/ When they sign contracts with their toes/ We won’t be there” (8). Yet the ignorant poor go out there to eclipse their day with bloodbath for those who do not care about their wellbeing. As a social crusader, Nwachukwu-Agbada proposes an end to any form of crime because obviously those who are used to perpetrate conflict at tribal and religious lines are the real and biggest losers. He informs his audience that they are “yet to learn the tricks of dogs or cats at play” (8). He therefore admonishes:

Children of my scattered father
Brothers who come from another mother
Can I whisper into your mishearing ears?
The shepherd will not dine with his sheep
Nor the slave dealer with his luckless serfs
For all drovers speak the languages of whips. (9)

Here the poet calls for conflict resolution through social engineering and makes his audience also know that they are one in struggle, and therefore should not attempt to kill one another for the elites who are not worth dying for because, “the shepherd will not dine with his sheep” (9). He also intones “when they plan to ‘ear – mark the cake/ When they meet to share the loot/ We won’t be there” (9). He therefore urges the masses to henceforth adopt the donkeys intuition, warning that for the politicians, “... they’ll prompt us to their polluted ponds/ We shall padlock our mouths/ To their deal of dung” (9). To emphasize the huge the unenviable gap or difference between the rich and the poor in his society, the poet uses the metaphor of a shepherd and sheep to draw the line as well as inform his audience to understand that no matter how familiar the sheep thinks she is to her shepherd, for the

shepherd will never condescend to eat grass with her. Deeply rooted in his socio-cultural environment, the poet uses proverbs as an extended metaphor in his description of the relationship between the shepherd (the elite) and the sheep (the downtrodden). It equally shows the deep rooted socio-economic and political dichotomy that exists in the class stratification which largely manifest in the livelihood of the different classes.

In the poem “Nuclear War” which is the first in the section “Motley Wars”, Nwachukwu-Agbada assuming the significant place of the prophet forecasts the gloomy future, especially the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine which he warns against because those who sing songs of war seem to have forgotten the telling effects of war,

Nuclear war, nuclear war
For now forgotten after the unjust war
Shelved away in the library of war-rest
Awaiting mourning on the morning after
To be remembered again when a rebel roars
Gas-masks and all. (17)

The poet reminds all that the issues that resulted to the previous wars could have been averted as the war was “unjust”. He informs us that the only thing the war brings is war museum which is supposed to be a reminder of the destructive nature but these sad memories are soon forgotten only to be remembered again after another war “when the rebels roars.” This is a sarcastic warning to all African societies that they should not enjoin world powers to go to war if they chose to because Africa does not have the capacities to sustain and contain the pressures of war. In a metaphorical sense, African’s warring capacity is compared to *ulaga* and *ojionu*; adolescent mask or masquerade type among the Igbos, known for their singing and prancing about but lack the strength and vigor to challenge bigger masquerades. “... Here, our masks are only those of *ulaga* and *ojionu* /they are mere masks of art and artifice/not those of sci and tech” (17).

In another attempt to reawaken the spirit of social consciousness and sensibility of all members of the society, the poet poses certain salient (rhetorical) questions thus: “which rich man’s cow & poor man’s goat graze on the same field at the same time?/Isn’t it only trees with fruit that receive/clods of stones?” (17). Here, the proverbial questions do not need answers but a call for social consciousness and national integration. In the last stanza of the poem, the warning is repeated as an emphasis and shows a proof that war should be avoided at all cost “Nuclear war, nuclear war/please look at my sore!/when elephants tremble and pause/aren’t the grasshoppers free to curse?” (18). Words like “cow”, “elephants”, “goat”, “grasshoppers”, *ojionu* and *ulaga* are symbolic metaphors for bourgeois and proletariats.

In “Royal Shell Meets Kenule”, there is an attempt to inform the masses and keep them abreast with the events of the past. Through metaphors and other literary techniques the poet tells the tale of Ken Saro Wiwa, a writer and activist who was killed by the military regime alongside other eight activists on November 10, 1995 in what is known today as ‘the Ogoni 9’. The poet intones thus:

A hectic time it was, feisty if you ask me
Being a season of warm, muggy weather
The white man, his sweaty and tanned
Pointed to the vat of palm oil in the hearth.
Why not? The people reasoned
A loose change here, a prettysum there
A little more than cowry shells & manilas
Exchanged hands, white on top black
Oneday the white friend lowered his gaze
After surveying the top of the palm tree
And trained it on the earth’s bowel
Like a dibia in quest of a child’s iyi-uwa
He saw buried there barrels of gold in crude...

The people raised their ear-lobes in the air
Like a threatened rabbit would & watched
Then in his frenzy
The foreigner flung out his exploration organ
And urinated spills into the people's stream
discoloured & upset the calm response of rivers
Defecated on the land refusing to flush ... (19)

The social awareness and the use of metaphor abound in the above poem written in form of a monologue. According to Abrams and Harpham, "a monologue is a lengthy speech by a single person" (94). Dramatic monologue is a poetic form in which a single character, addresses a silent audience at a critical moment. It was perfected by Robert Browning whose poems are known for their irony and dark humour, as well as historical and challenging vocabulary. In the above poem, dark humour and irony are employed by the poet to readily inform us of the historical moment in Ogoni land, south-south of Nigeria. Not only was Ogoni land explored and exploited, there was also the antics by which the people were cajoled into thinking that the exploiters meant well. The exploiters came as friends but explored and polluted the people's source of livelihood, "urinated spills into the people's stream." The expression "white on top of black" is a metaphor for the superiority exhibited by the Westerners. While 'white' is a representation of shell, an oil company owned by expatriates, 'black' is a representation of the owners of the land; the Ogoni people. There is also a metaphor for a few dollars paid to the people which cannot quantify the gains and damage caused by the exploiters. "The foreigner flung out his exploration organ/And urinated spills into the people's streams" (19) suggest metaphors for damage, degradation, pollution and the desecration of the people's source of sustainability. Water is life, and stream (river) is very symbolic and largely significant to Nigerians living in the riverine areas of the south. For them, river is not only a source of wealth, but also a spring of life.

But this source of life and wealth, which is also a symbol of their cultural heritage, has been decimated by the oil explorers. And when the people realised how they have been played, they decided to make efforts to reclaim their land. Some elites led by Saro Wiwa were at the forefront but were hastily arrested in a military tribunal and eventually killed,

A wise man called Kenule, the people's Ken rose in his
diminutive height to ask questions/ The prowler told them his
name was shell/ a royal name from the royal realm/ Still the
white man was not understood. Then the impostor mentioned
at Government/ Government motioned at Government pick in
richly clad in the green garments of camouflage (20)

The poet narrates the ordeal of citizens who are denied their fundamental human rights by the use of force from those in power. The continuous (military) force used on the defenseless masses becomes apparent as they "raced into their backyards/and moulded maddened men into militants/who would burst pipes, search for the promise" (20). The poem is also encourages government to address the problem of oil spillage and environmental degradation caused by oil exploration.

In the poem "There, That's Their Biafra," one of the verses in the section "Biafra Testament", a section aimed at creating awareness on the mishaps of war, especially the Nigeria Civil War, the poet takes us into another metaphoric but historic journey. The civil war was as a result of the Federal Military Government and the Eastern Nigeria Government to resolve their differences, which arose particularly as a result of the failure to implement the Aburi decisions, led the East to secede on 30 May, 1967. Barely one month later, precisely 6 July, 1967, the Federal Government declared war on secessionist Biafra. According to T. Akachi Ezeigbo.

The Nigeria – Biafra conflict proved to be one of the most serious and devastating crises that Africa had ever experienced. The conflict has been described as the 'consequences of a severe set of contradictions which existed... between the two belligerent groups. It is only ironical that rather

than remove these contradictions, the war only succeeded in accentuating them in addition to generating its own contradictions. (39)

Naturally, war situations are very fertile atmosphere for the practice of propaganda and other atrocities, and the Nigeria civil war was no exception. In the poem, "There, That's Their Biafra," Nwachukwu-Agbada warns against the danger of feeding off conflicts as well as remaining unconcerned when there is conflict in another part of the society, country or world at large. The poem suggests that such attitude cannot bring national integration or social development if we do not show any sportsmanship and spirit of fellow feeling: "Wherever war has purred or whirred past/there, that's their Biafra/there their world breaks out/like a peeping – tom of a sun in the morning/release rays blood & marrows in bones ..." (33). This is a call for national concern and unity because war is an ill wind that blows no one any good irrespective of the part of the country where there is conflict for it is a matter of time before it becomes a national tragedy.

The poem is also a reminder that when the civil war broke out, we all were casualties of the war because like a whirlwind it gradually spread to every part of the country, and the effect was also felt by those who were living abroad as at when the war broke out. During any war, people become refugees in their own country. As Frederick Forsyth puts it,

There was hardly a village or town, family or compound in the Region that did not take into its fold one of the refugees and listen to what he had to say. Thousands of the refugees were maimed for life by what they had gone through either mentally or physically. Almost everyone was penniless ... Houses, businesses, prospective earnings and salaries, savings and furniture, cars and concessions – for many people the sum total of a lifetime of effect, all had to be left behind ... (81)

Pointing to the above, the poet makes factual references to known places affected by the civil war, as he laments thus "... At Opi/the battle at Ugba/or that engulfing Nkpor/between Oba and Obosi/and in Abagana/the boom of doomed guns boomed ..." (33). The crisis started at a place, it gradually spread to other parts of the country, especially the East. The poet therefore reminds that "... When B-26 sowed fear in the forest of moaning minds/in down town Warri/Sapele/Ore/and Okitipupa/men& women ran for cover/in trenches of treason/At Gokem, there landed a fifty-pound bomb ..." (34).

Lack of concern for one another in times of conflict has been one of the reasons for lack of national integration. Chinedum Nwajiuba asserts that:

The issue of inter-group relations among the Nigeria people has also been a source of conflict since colonial times. It was a major factor in the causes of the war. In other words, the inability of Nigerians to manage the crises arising from the competing and divergent interests of the various groups in the country caused the nation. Matters have not even improved. (8)

It is Nwajiuba's view therefore that for matters to improve, Nigerians must bury every hatchet of religious and ethnic differences and animosity, and rise to the occasion whenever there is conflict in any part of the country. So, as a pan-Nigeria, the poet cries that we should be our brothers' keeper to ensure that there is peace because "where there were no guns anymore/or where bullets made gun-bearing/... wherever war has whored or whirred past .../... there things take a turn, then a tainted turn ..." (35). This is a call for resolving whatsoever differences and embrace peace.

In most poetry collections that address the aftermath of war such as Niyi Osundare's *Songs of the Market Place*, Ezenwa-ohaeto's *I Wan Be President*, Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*, among others, one encounters the ravages done to the psychological landscape of the nation by many years of undemocratic leadership. Sunny Awhefeada asserts that:

The poets took poetry seriously as a wholistic criticism of all facets of life, public and private. Their poetry is suggestive of different levels of commitment, and in it one finds a combination of combative vigour and a taunting lyricism. In addition to the failure of political leadership, which resonates in the poems, the hopes and fears of the oppressed masses are palpable in them. (*AfricanArts*, 380)

In Nwachukwu-Agbada's *Bomblast or Breakfast?*, the poem "Bomblast or Breakfast?" which is eponymous to the volume's title and the first in the section "An Eye For The Unsetting", best represents the spirit and temper of bad leadership in the country. The poet questions the intentions of political office holders who are described as "war-lord & war-witch" (49). The land has been saddled with different indices of hardships that people find it difficult to live and move freely without fear of the unknown. Aside kidnapping, terrorism and other social vices which are gradually becoming a way of life in the nation, there is another kind of war that has ravaged and endangered the masses' existence – the war of poverty. War as seen in the verse is a metaphor for bloodshed, hunger, violation of human rights, etc., which on the other hand are conflicts that must be resolved. The poet questions the leaders if what the masses voted for is for them to be sent into early graves by the politicians. "... a bomb/lands/or the dining table of a throaty mound/round and rotund ..." (50). This statement is metaphor for insecurity, whereby bombs replace food that is supposed to be on people's dining tables. It has gone so bad that bombs land in people's houses even when they are struggling to put a meal on their tables. This situation calls for concern, and the poet calls to awaken the people's consciousness to question their leaders' credibility:

We must now ask the bomb-maker
Or death-maker for the matter if bombs can cater
For our breakfast & brunch
Shouldn't we ask the bullies of Oregon or Utah
About those moaning underground mills
Making arsenals of men with barns arsenal
To extinguish love? (51)

The "bomb makers" or "death-makers" are metaphors of the political elite whom the poet wonders why they must serve the citizens bomb rather than food. Why should they continue to inflict all round drain and hardship in the lives of the downtrodden? The poem therefore is a call for national integration through collective process. Indeed, the poet informs his audience that the political elite have given the common people bomb-insecurity, unemployment, political impunity under the guise of political immunity, disregard for rule of law, lack of healthcare, lack of quality education orchestrated by incessant interruption of the education system, rather than food, security, healthcare, quality education, employment, etc. And there is need to call for explanations in order to resolve the conflict which the creams of the crop have created. Nwachukwu-Agbada intones:

If bullets may hang around necks
And we still go to bed hoping to earn a sleep
Can we ask the pilots of aversion in the aerial zone
If the shrapnel of their explosives
Those large, lurid eggs of metal
Map feed the multitude of men
Like it was on five loaves & two fish
Let us ask the artillery man
Hunched behind his bazooka platform
If those cannon balls he blindly pumps into air
On the table of a hungry humanity. (51-52)

"Pilots of aversion", "artillery man", "bazooka platform", etc. are all metaphors for authority and privileged positions whose occupants have only used to bring about pain and hardship on the masses. Thus, the persona arouses the interest of the masses that have bullets hanging round their necks to rise up to a crucial challenge.

In "Question Time", one of the poems in the section "Five Haikus for African Hollow Men", the poet continues to interrogate those in authority about the welfare of the people whom they are called to serve. These elites, whom the poet refers to as 'General' having imposed themselves as lords over their subjects, cause mayhem that results in crisis and wars, then revert to seek international help for

ammunition to fight wars they instigated. The poet in disbelief intones “foreign help is fine/General sir, what of aids?/I beg your pardon!” (78). There is a sense of misplaced priority by the leaders in the poet’s society; rather than provide support and relieve for the people, these political leaders go abroad on personal interest.

In “Peace Sake”, there is a call for all and sundry to embrace peace, especially those in authority whose major responsibility should be to foster and sustain peace in the country, rather than instigate conflicts. “Disarmament talks/Enthused, the General signs/A gun on his waist!” (79). There should be peace in the land with open arms and open mindedness, not with “a gun on his waist”. Having a gun hidden in any part of the body during peace talks simply depicts lack of trust. It entails that those who set the precedent are not ready to embrace peace in its totality. In “Footnote”, the poet warns; “listen, you traitors/the right of my Human Right/ Dreads the active left!” (80). The poet warns that the downtrodden shall rediscover their voice enshrined in Human Right and challenge their oppressors to either rise to their responsibility or vacate their public offices. This prophecy was fulfilled three years later, precisely in 2020 when the EndSARS movement which completely decentralized social activities and mass protest against police brutality held the nation strong bound. Amongst other things, the EndSARS movement demanded for good and accountable governance.

In “Butter, Not Bullet”, the poet also calls for peace and love because they are the panacea to national unity and development. Effiok B. Uwatt opines that “National development cannot be right by viewed except in terms of welfare or well being. The elements of national wellbeing can be economic, social, political, ethical, etc. (*African Arts*, 429). In this vein, the poet makes a clarion call for resolution of all differences and socio-economic welfare of the citizens thus:

Butter, not bullet
Let’s choose chocolate, not cartridge
Between arms & the man I’ll rather say a farewell to arms
Shelving away my quiver of arrows
Better anchored in a bow of hope
For slow play of lights will do
As fruit falls on the dark garment
Covering your black skin
What quickly breaks out is light
Cast into warm wind
If twilight comes
Let it come in letters scribbled in smoke
Then I’ll be lost in the frock of your dark hour
When dusk descends on a vast view of the vines
For after all the sound of bitter kola is one;
Its taste is another. (117)

As seen above, there is a call for peace, and say farewell to arms. The poet tells all citizens to embrace Sgt. Bluntschli’s attitude and choice of chocolate (peace) over cartridge (war) in George Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* (1894). The poet makes a metaphoric allusion in which humans represent peace, while arms represent crisis or conflict. He promises to choose man over arms; this is a call for the disorientation of social discord. In peace, there is hope and harmony, “slow play of lights will do”. In his quest for peace, the poet yet again intones

Let me settle for the lights
Lifted from the veil covering your twitchy eyes
Ignited by a quiver of brambles buried in my soul
From where I distill candy granules
Not gun-powder, you know not gun powder ... (117)

The persona is willing to bury the hatchet and thus craves that everyone does same. This is because maintaining social harmony, peace and order should be a concern for everyone. Therefore, the poem

suggests that there should not be any reason for gun-powder– a metaphor for crisis, hence the emphasis on gun powder through the device of repetition.

In “African Spring”, Nwachukwu-Agbada continues to admonish peace, therefore there is hope in Africa despite her checkered experiences through colonization; wars, slavery, hunger, military regime, insecurity, terrorism, coup d’état, etc. The poet makes a direct comparison to spring, a season that is seldom experienced in Africa. Spring in this context is a metaphor for rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal, resurrection and regeneration,

Africa spring
Shall spring in May
When fire flies
Shall fly at the dusk of day
And the flora & fauna
Are fed with the husk of lay. (119)

Nwachukwu-Agbada sees a rejuvenated nation that will “spring up the spring, the dwelling place of princely pearls” (119). One cannot but envisage a new Nigeria in this beautiful verse. The reference to “Africa” that “Shall spring in May” in the above poem could refer to the significant place of May 29 in the democratic history of Nigeria. The poet foresees a situation where the old and corrupt order shall give way for a new political, structure which the nation is at the brink of witnessing this crucial election season. Thus, it is a clarion call for everyone to be at their best to make the country and continent work again. “Spring” here however also implies peace, order and tranquility; an egalitarian state in which everyone must play important role for the attainment of political rejuvenation and social recuperation.

Conclusion

The assertion that “African poets, as purveyors of this socio-aesthetic consciousness, thus write about those things which are meaningful to the African, both as a private individual and a member of a social community...” (*Art*, 15) is laden with profundity in the collection under study. This is given credence by the way metaphor in *Bomblast or Breakfast?* is used to interrogate salient socio-economic and political issues, thereby creating awareness for conflict resolution. Through the medium of literature, the histories or stories become sources of pride to the members of the community. It gives them collective solidarity and unity of actions as Chinua Achebe succinctly puts it, “a major objective was to challenge stereotypes, myths, and the image of ourselves and our continent, and recast them through stories – prose, poetry, essays ...” (53). Thus, poetry as a genre of literature is not only a tool for patriotic struggle and cultural resurgence, but also a metaphorical experimentation of the tool for constructive and positive social awareness.

In *Bomblast or Breakfast?*, there is a careful deployment of metaphor for social awareness. Through textual interpretation of the poems in the collection, it has been demonstrated that metaphors conceptually aid writers to use materials and events within their environment to canvass for peace, thereby awakening the revolutionary zeal of the downtrodden. Metaphor as seen in *Bomblast or Breakfast?* is capable of not just playing the basic role of creativity, but also representing abstract ideas, the conveyance of mood and tone, as well as being a fertile ground for other literary devices to play upon. Thus, in *Bomblast or Breakfast?*, Nwachukwu-Agbada affirms an urgent need for social consciousness of a people that would instill national peace, unity and development through the use of metaphor and other literary devices.

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