NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: ENG 114

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO NIGERIAN LITERATURE

ENG 114 **COURSE GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION TO NIGERIAN LITERATURE II

Course Developer/Writer Mr. Anthony C. Oha
Department of Arts
English Unit
Benson Idahosa University
Benin City

Course Editor Prof. M.E.M. Kolawole (Sabbatical)
National Open University of Nigeria

Programme Leader Dr. Christine Ofulue
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator Mrs. Onyeka Iwuchukwu
National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2009

ISBN: 978-058-259-2

All Rights Reserved

Printed by:

CONTENTS **PAGE**

Introduction…….…. 1
Course Aims……..… 1
Course Objectives……..… 1
Working through the Course…… 2
Course Materials……... 2
Study Units…… 2
Textbooks and References ……. 3
Assignment File …….. 3
Tutor-Marked Assignment…….……..… 3
Final Examination and Grading…… 3
Course Marking Scheme…… …….. 4
Presentation Schedule……..…… 4
Course Overview ……... 4
How to Get the Most from this Course……. 5
Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials…….. 7
Summary…….……. 7

Introduction

Welcome to ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature II

ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature II is a 3 credit one semester undergraduate course. It comprises 25 study units subdivided into 5 modules. The materials have been developed with Nigerian context in view. This course guide gives you an overview of the course.
It also provides you with information on the organization and requirements of the course.

Course Aims

To expose students to the concept of Nigerian Literature in English
To make the students understand the genres of Nigerian Literature
To give students insight into the structure of Nigerian Literature
To improve students' knowledge of Nigerian literature
To acquaint students with the thematic thrusts of Nigerian Literature

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims above, we have some overall objectives. Each unit also has objectives. These will guide you in your study. They are usually stated at the beginning of each unit and when you are through with studying the units go back and read the objectives. This would help you assimilate the task you have set out to achieve. On completion of the course, you should be able to:

a) Trace the history of Nigerian written literature in English
b) Understand the rise of Nigerian written Literature
c) Discuss the major themes in Nigerian Literature in English
d) Recognize the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian Literature
e) Realize the reasons for the emergence of neo-colonial Nigerian literatures
f) Explain the major thematic thrusts of the new Nigerian writers
g) Appreciate the form of Nigerian literature in English

Working through this Course

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a notebook, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

1.0 Course guide
2.0 Study units
3.0 Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit
4.0 Assignment file
5.0 Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are 20 study units in this course as follows:

Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Transition from Orature
Unit 2 Market Literatures
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature
Unit 4 Literary Journals
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama

Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry

Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre

Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English

Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature
Unit 3 The New Nigerian Poets
Unit 4 The New Nigerian Novelists
Unit 5 The New Nigerian Playwrights

Textbooks and References

Certain books are recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading

Assignment File

An assignment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignment file itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

You will need to submit a specified number of the Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best four (that is, the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total work. Assignment questions for the unit in this course are counted in the Assignment File. When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with the TMA (tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor.

Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination of ENG 114 will be of three hours' duration. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will also find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments (Best three Assignments out of Four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%s
Total	100%

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date for completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activities	Assessment (End of Unit)
Course Guide			
	Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature		
1	Transition from Orature	Week 1	Assignment 1

2	Market Literatures	Week 1	Assignment 2
3	Nationalist literature	Week 2	Assignment 3
4	Literary Journals	Week 2	Assignment 4
5	Performance/Theatre to Drama	Week 3	Assignment 5
	Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature		
1	Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature	Week 3	Assignment 1
2	Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria	Week 4	Assignment 2
3	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry	Week 4	Assignment 3
4	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Prose	Week 5	Assignment 4
5	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Drama/Theatre	Week 5	Assignment 5
	Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature		
1	Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism	Week 7	Assignment 2
3	Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War	Week 8	Assignment 3
4	Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour	Week 9	Assignment 4
5	Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English	Week 10	Assignment 5
	Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers		
1	Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature	Week 11	Assignment 1
2	Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	The New Nigeria Novelists	Week 13	Assignment 3
4	The New Nigeria Poets	Week 14	Assignment 4
5	The New Nigeria Playwrights	Week 15	Assignment 5
Revision		1 Week	
Examination		1 Week	
Total		**17 Weeks**	

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item

is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from your course guides. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it. Follow the following advice carefully:

1) Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.

2) Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course Overview for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit.

3) Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.

4) Turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit.

5) Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.

6) Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

7) Review the objectives for each unit to inform that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

8) When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

9) When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.

10) After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

11) Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and retuned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

1.0 You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
2.0 You have difficulty with the self-tests exercises,
3.0 You have a question or problem with assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to- face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

This course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature 2 introduces you to the major genres of Nigerian literature and the socio-political conditions that have influenced their development. Attention is drawn to the changes in scope and pre-occupation of the Nigerian artists over the years.

Course Code ENG 114

Course Title

Introduction to Nigerian Literature II

Course Developer/Writer Mr. Anthony C. Oha
Department of Arts
English Unit
Benson Idahosa University
Benin City

Course Editor Prof. M.E.M. Kolawole (Sabbatical)
National Open University of Nigeria

Programme Leader Dr. Christine Ofulue
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator Mrs. Onyeka Iwuchukwu
National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2009

ISBN: 978-058-259-2

All Rights Reserved

Printed by:

Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature ……..… 1

Unit 1 Transition from Orature …….…… 1
Unit 2 Market Literatures …… 7
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature…….. 18
Unit 4 Journal Literatures ……. 26
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama ……... 35

Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature …… 45

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature ……. 45
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria ……. 52
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry … …… ……. 61
Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose ……. 69
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre ……. 77

Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature … 85

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society …… 85
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism 98
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War ……110
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1:
Local Colour ……122
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2:
Pidgin/Special English …….…130

Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers ……152

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature …….....152
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature……....162
Unit 3 The New Nigeria Poets ……... 173
Unit 4 The New Nigeria Novelists ……..... 184
Unit 5 The New Nigeria Playwrights ……..... 194

MODULE 1 THE RISE OF WRITTEN NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Transition from Orature
Unit 2 Market Literatures
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature
Unit 4 Journal Literatures
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama

UNIT 1 THE BEGINNING OF WRITTEN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Orature in Nigerian Literature
3.3 Orature in and as Early Nigerian Literature
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will study the beginning of written literature in Nigeria. This unit links us with Introduction to Nigerian Literature 1, where we examined all aspects of orality that culminated in the rise of written literature in Nigeria. In the course preceding this we studied the types and the various influences that led to the emergence of Nigerian literature. Nigerian oral tradition carries the Nigerian storytelling tradition with it. It embodies the beliefs and general attitudes to life. They transmit and store the values of their experiences by telling the tales to the younger generations as guide. In this unit, we will look at the beginning of written Nigerian literature in all genres as influenced by the preceding oral traditions. Forms like the folktales, fables, proverbs, clichés and idioms in order to establish the true development of Nigerian literature after the emergence of writing through colonial education.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

recognize orature as part of Nigerian literature
establish a link between the orature and written Nigerian literature
accept that oral narratives are in the written Nigerian literature
explain that early Nigerian literature owe a lot to oral narratives.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In the colonial period, some Nigerians exposed to English language began to write literatures in English. Nigerian writers in this period wrote both in Western language (notably English) and in traditional Nigerian languages. One interesting thing about these early works is the absorption of the oral arts in them. D.O. Fagunwa pioneered the Yoruba language novel. In 1938, Fagunwa wrote his Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo *Irunmale, the first novel written in the Yoruba language and one of the* first to be written in any African language; Wole Soyinka translated the book into English in 1968 as The Forest of A Thousand Demons. Fagunwa's later works include Igbo Olodumare (The Forest of God, 1949), Ireke Onibudo (1949), Irinkerindo ninu Igbo Elegbeje (Expedition to the Mount of Thought, 1954), and Adiitu Olodumare (1961). Again, Fagunwa's novels draw heavily on folktale traditions and idioms, including many supernatural elements. His heroes are usually Yoruba hunters, who interact with kings, sages, and even gods in their quests. Thematically, his novels also explore the divide between the Christian beliefs of Nigeria's colonizers and the country's traditional religions. Fagunwa remains the most widely-read Yorùbá-language author, and a major influence on such contemporary writers as Amos Tutuola. Amos Tutuola's The Palm wine Drinkard was also written based on the style of African Orature. In Igbo area, Pita Nwana wrote *Omenuko which is regarded as the first Igbo epic. The same occurred in* the Hausa literature especially the works of Samanja Mazan Fama, and Karo-da-Goma. In all these early written literatures in Nigerian languages, we see the re-enactment of the oral narrative power of Nigerian. We see the mystical and the mundane intermingling in many ways. We see the supernatural forces determining the fate of humans, humans marrying strange beings and other mythical realities. Nigerian Orature is richly drawn from the people's way of living and belief system which form the basis for the moral undertone of oral tales which are evident in the early written literatures. Western education enabled the African people the opportunity to put down their oral narratives into written words.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain how orature metamorphosed into literature in early Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Orature in Nigerian Literature

Nigerian oral literature, like other forms of popular culture, is not merely a form of entertainment but a medium for commenting on contemporary social and political events. It can also be a significant agent of change capable of storing the people's historical experiences. This is how myths and legends emerged. Myths are stories of origin or creation. They are stories about the beginning of a people, a race or a community. Many communities attribute their greatness to their beginning. Legends are records of a community's heroes. They are stories about those who founded a community and how brave they were. Ruth Finnegan (1980) expresses that myths and legend capture the most valued history of a people by tracing how they began and how their beginning affected their situation. It also traces the beginning of traditions, cultural rites, worship and the discovery of food, craft, and other lore. We also have different forms of myths and legends recounted in most African novels set in the rural backgrounds. Myths and legends are fictional but have traces of reality as each of them has a physical referent in the real world. This referent guides the members of the community in certain observances. Myths and legends help to store or preserve a people's cultural beliefs about nature and their natural habitats. This is one of the sources of truly African novels as one of the earliest novels to have come out of Africa called The Palmwine Drinkard by Amos Tutuola which is truly an embodiment of African orature in the written form. Myths have often occurred in African novels such as the origin of Ulu in Arrow of God, the exploits of the great Umuofia men in Things Fall Apart, the story of Osu Caste in No Longer at Ease etc. It seemed impossible for the early Nigerian writers to extricate themselves from the clutches of Orature.

Folktales are animal stories. They are stories about select animals personified to carry certain human attributes in order to play out a needed role for moral lessons. In folktales, there are heroes and villains. The heroes are human or animals that play the major roles. A common type of Nigerian folktale is also called the "trickster" story, where a small animal uses its wits to survive encounters with larger creatures. Some animal tricksters include Ijàpá or Mbe, a tortoise in Yoruba or Igbo folklore of Nigeria. One interesting thing about the folktale is the manipulation of animals as humans playing out their political, sociological and cultural roles in a fictional community. We have seen the folktale forms occurring in African novels. In folktales the essence of poetic justice is expressed and this is a recurring feature in some African novels. D.O. Fagunwa's My Life in a Forest of a Thousand

Demons is purely a written folktale, similar to the form in Amos Tutuola's The Palmwine Drinkard. The form of the folktale has a great influence on the present form of the Nigerian novels. The folktale form is arranged in a manner that there is a beginning in a distant land with different wrongs being committed by a given animal at the end of which poetic justice occurs. This thematic form is often the structure of most African novels. The effects of oral narratives on the written literatures in Africa are mostly structural and thematic.

There seems to be the impossibility of discussing the African story without a link at the traditional values. These values are stored in the various tales: myths, legend, oral narratives of different sorts, songs and acts. The early African writers attempt in various ways to blend these oral values in the written contexts. It seemed to work. This is because it helps in marking out a true African literary tradition where the written absorbs the unwritten values in the quest for making literatures the totality of the people's rites of passage.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

How does the folktale tradition influence the writing of African novels?

3.3 Orature in/as Early Nigerian Literature

Orature occurs in various ways in early Nigerian literatures. Unlike the western literature, African literature contains the oral heritage of the African people. In Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, we have various oral heritage of the Igbos in the novel. There is the form of drama which manifested in the form of wrestling and the Egwugwu Masquerade group. We also see the belief in the existence of changelings as revealed in Ezinma's search for her iyiuwa. There are sessions where folktales are narrated and various songs are rendered according to the required circumstance. These are oral narratives manifesting in the written literature. The same occurred in other novels especially in novels set in rural background in Africa. In Achebe's Arrow of God, we see the tradition of religious worship, how gods are created and how poetic justice prevails in a community. Elechi Amadi's The Concubine presents a typical eastern Nigerian village with all their arts: stories, songs and dances. There is the typical exposition of the traditional belief regarding the intermingling of humans and the supernatural forces.

Considering the root of the Nigerian writers first as Nigerians brought up in the Nigerian society and secondly as the fortunate recipients of western education, they can not avoid expressing their art forms in their new found form of expressing art. The resultant effect is that they represent the Nigerian personality and culture. Some of them who could

write in their native languages using English alphabetic forms attempted original works in their first languages as can be seen in Fagunwa and Nwana. Although, English served as the only language that could make their message reach wider audience, the writers try as much as possible to incorporate the oral literary forms in their works. It is not surprising though that the early literatures in Nigeria are mostly works generated from the oral tradition of the people. We see this strongly in the works of Fagunwa, Tutuola, Amadi, Achebe and Soyinka, among others.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how oral traditions manifested in and as early Nigerian literature

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear that Nigeria has a rich oral tradition. Besides, there are patterned literary forms akin to the western types in Africa. The difference is that African literature then was oral. Western education marked the rise of African literature. There was a smooth transition from orature to literature. Africans did not hear of literature for the first time from the Europeans. The three genres of literature also manifests in African orature in various forms. The epic and legends of Africa have often occurred in the written literature. The other forms like songs, masquerades, rituals, incantations, folktale narration, the application of proverbs and anecdotes amongst other African oral heritage have become a regular form in African novels. All these reflect the influence of the oral tradition in the Nigerian literature. In the beginning, after the encounter with western education, the early Nigerian writers began with the writing of orature as literature. The works of Fagunwa, Tutuola, and Achebe among others reveal a leaning towards the oral art as an expression of a true Nigerian literature. The application of these forms has been tagged 'local colour tradition' by critics of Nigerian literature. They are local colour because they capture the original oral art in its entirety in the written form. We notice today that Nigerian literature is identified mainly by the oral forms and inherent lore. There are elements of orature in most genres of Nigerian literature and the Nigerian literature embodies all the genres as the storyteller uses every means to reach out to his immediate audience.

5.0 SUMMARY

Orature is African heritage in storytelling, songs and masquerades. It is the most significant ways of transmitting cultural values and belief systems of the people. Orature like literature has several genres. These genres manifest in various forms. African writers imbibe the oral tradition in the writing of literature. Early novels began as a revisit of the African tradition. This is evident in the works of the early Nigerian writers like Fagunwa, Tutuola, Achebe and Amadi among others. They reflect the African oral tradition in their works. It is thoroughly evident that Nigerian literature began from the oral literary tradition of the Africans. We have the application Nigerian myths and legends, folktale forms, fable forms, proverbs, idioms, dance, songs, incantations and masquerade forms in African novels. This is because a writer is a product of his environment and reflects that in his works. Western education only prepared the African writer for the task of transmitting his cultural values to a wider audience beyond his immediate environment. Quite often, not surprising though, the Nigerian literature still reflects the Nigerian orature in various forms to reflect a true Nigerian literature.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

12) Explain the various effects of orature in Nigerian literature.
13) How does Nigerian orature manifest in Nigerian literature?
14) Explain why orature has been termed ‘local colour tradition’.
15) Must Nigerian literature be written in Nigerian languages?
16) Discuss the link between orature and literature in Nigerian.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Finnegan, Ruth (1980). Oral Literature in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in the *West AfricanNovel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

Taiwo, Oladele (1976). Culture and the Nigerian Novel. London: Macmillan.

UNIT 2 MARKET LITERATURES

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
  3.1 General Overview
  3.2 Market Literature
  3.3 Onitsha Market Literature
  3.4 Kano Market Literature
  3.5 Transition from Pamphlets into Full Literatures
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine critically the way the early educated Nigerians were able to write creatively. Most of them had no university education and it is only those who had the opportunity of attending the then University College Ibadan that really turned their creative sketches into full blown literatures. At that time, pamphlets of all types in all literary genres flourished and were sold to interested members of the public for entertainment. The first set of Nigerians that came in contact with European education was excited about the discovery and attempted several experiments through writing. These group of Nigerians were actually not well educated as most of them had little education, especially the type that allows them write and work as civil servants. They had middle level of education equivalent to the present secondary education. We will study the historical development of pamphlets and how they contributed immensely to the development of Nigerian literature. Most of the writers were civil servants and traders. They were concerned with expressing themselves in pamphlets as means to counselling, guiding or entertaining the people. However, some intellectuals like Cyprian Ekwensi among others started writing through pamphlets. The pamphlets were not really published but were printed without ISBN numbers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand pamphlets as one of the beginnings of Nigerian literature
trace the beginning of pamphlets to western education
appreciate pamphlets as motivation for full literature
see market literature as the end product of pamphleteering
explain how pamphlets transited into Nigerian literature
recognize Onitsha Market Literature & Kano Market Literatures as the most popular in early Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

A pamphlet is an unbound booklet (that is, without a hard cover or binding). It may consist of a single sheet of paper that is printed on both sides and folded in half, in thirds, or in fourths (called a leaflet), or it may consist of a few pages that are folded in half and stapled at the crease to make a simple book. In order to count as a pamphlet, UNESCO requires a publication (other than a periodical) to have 'at least 5 but not more than 48 pages exclusive of the cover pages'; a longer item is a book. Pamphlets can contain anything from information on kitchen appliances to medical information and religious treatises. Pamphlets are very important in marketing as they are cheap to produce and can be distributed easily to customers. Pamphlets have also long been an important tool of political protest and political campaigning for similar reasons. The storage of individual pamphlets requires special consideration because they can be easily crushed or torn when shelved alongside hardcover books. For this reason, they should either be kept in file folders in a file cabinet, or kept in boxes that have approximately the dimensions of a hardcover book and placed vertically on a shelf. The word pamphlet means a small work issued without covers. Pamphlet coined from ‘Pamphilus’ was derived from Greek, meaning "loved by all". It has the modern connotation of a tract concerning a contemporary issue. By the end of the seventeenth century the most effective means of persuasion and communication in the world was the pamphlet, which created influential moral and political communities of readers, and thus formed a ‘public sphere’ of popular, political opinion. In Africa, pamphlets were used for political campaigns and as guides. In Nigeria, the use of pamphlets was popularized through the consistent use of it by market traders. The most popular are the Onitsha and Kano Market Literature which flourished so much before the emergence of regular literatures. They were pamphlets dealing with various issues: some literary, some political, some religious and some pedagogical. Some of

them are used as satiric attack on the frailties of man in his society. It is interesting to note however, that People of the City regarded as the first African novel per se published in 1945 was written by one of the Onitsha Market pamphleteers called Cyprian Ekwensi.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain thoroughly the major difference between a pamphlet and a book.

3.2 Market Literature

A market literature is a consistent form of writing popularized by traders in a given market place or by people living and working in a given commercial centre. Market literatures are printed as pamphlets. They have no standard form or guiding rules covering the subject matters. Most of the subject matters go from moral to amoral, from sacred to profane, from political to apolitical and from pedagogical to generalities.
They are usually written with less commercial intention. The authors have the joy of being read by others and being classified among the circle of writers. The pages are usually very few and written in very simple and transliterated English forms. The language of market literatures is usually entertaining and the lexical selection is usually unconnected but creates fun in the reading. Market literatures are regarded as popular literatures. The Kano Market writers wrote mainly in Hausa with just a handful in English. The critical question has been: was the popular pamphleteering in Nigeria a success or a failure? The obvious answer is that it was a big success. There are several factors which contributed to the success of these market literatures. In 1946, the colonial government of Nigeria sold their used printing presses and shortly after, the local market places were flooded with romantic novelettes and chapbooks. Many traders in Onitsha bought these discarded machines. Cheap production costs also made it possible for large print runs to be produced. There is the fact that the authors had declared that their main concern was not to make money from their writing but that also meant that the publishers had a free hand to fix cheap prices for the pamphlets.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate between a market literature and a real literature

3.3 Onitsha Market Literature

Onitsha Market Literature is a term used to designate the popular pamphlets that were sold at the large market in Onitsha, Nigeria, in the middle decades of the 20th century. Written by and intended for the "common" or "uneducated" people, this literature covered a range of genres including fiction, current events, plays, social advice and language study. Starting in the 1960s, European and American scholars began to take an interest in this form of popular literature, especially insofar as it reflected African social conditions. It is not known whether any individual or group of people ever came together, sat down, planned and worked out the details of what they wanted to do in advance before they started publishing and selling pamphlets in the Onitsha market literature series to the public. However, what is known is that, according to Emmanuel Obiechina, the first pamphlets in the series were published in 1947. It could be said that the first publications in the Onitsha market literature were written by Cyprian Ekwensi, who later became a famous Nigerian novelist. The titles of the pamphlets written by Ekwensi were "When love whispers" and a collection of Igbo folktales called "Ikolo the wrestler and other Igbo tales". All these were published in 1947. Another factor which spurred people on to writing the chapbooks was the end of the Second World War. The Nigerian soldiers, who fought in India and the Far East, came back with copies of Indian and Victorian drugstore pulp magazines which served as models for the pamphlet literature.

It has been said above that a good number of young people with the minimum educational qualification of standard six found their ways to Onitsha either to trade or to work as apprentices in various trades and professions. It was this group of new literates, school leavers, school teachers, low-level clerks, artisans, provincial correspondents of daily newspapers who now devoted their time to writing the Onitsha market pamphlets. Most of the authors of the Onitsha chapbooks were amateurs rather than professionals. Another group of people who wrote the Onitsha market pamphlets were local printing press owners, booksellers, journalists, railway men, traders, and farmers. Some of the pamphlets were written by grammar school boys who wrote under pseudo names so that their school authorities would not identify and then punish them.
Most of the pamphlet authors maintained that financial gain was not their reason for writing the pamphlets. The authors already had full-time employment from which they earned their living and they merely took up writing as part-time and for the joy of it. Consequently, even if they earned little money from their writing, that was regarded as a supplementary family income. A good number of the authors wrote a preface to the finished work in which they gave biographical details of their lives. Usually such a preface gave the details as to how and why the authors came to be personally involved in pamphlet writing.

The strategic position of the city of Onitsha on the eastern bank of the River Niger also contributed to the success of the market literature. Onitsha is easily accessible from all parts of Nigeria and people come from all parts of the Federation and also from other countries in West Africa either to buy or sell their commodities at Onitsha. The pamphlets were sold in various bookshops in Onitsha as well as in the open markets. Roadside hawkers as well as peripatetic booksellers helped to sell thousands of copies of the pamphlets. Travellers passing through Onitsha boasted of buying copies of the cheap chapbooks to show to their relatives and friends at home. Onitsha town has a large home-based market and many educational institutions. There are thousands of traders in the Onitsha market and also thousands of grammar school boys and girls in Onitsha who bought copies of the pamphlets.

The publication and distribution of the pamphlets coincided with the period when many people were becoming educated in Eastern Nigeria. Even the Onitsha traders who were not educated decided to go to the night schools to learn how to read and write. By so doing, they were able to read the stories by themselves. Some illiterate traders who bought the pamphlets but decided not to go to the night schools, availed themselves of the services of the Onitsha public scribes. These were educated people who had it as their full-time job to read or write letters as well as read stories from books to illiterates and charge them for the service.

There were still other factors which helped the success of the market literature. By the time the first set of pamphlets was published in 1947, public libraries did not exist in Eastern Nigeria. The market booksellers concentrated their efforts in selling prescribed school textbooks and not popular fiction and general trade books. The people had nowhere to go when they wanted to read some light materials. This meant that for many years, Nigerians were suffering from book hunger. Consequently, when the Onitsha market pamphlets were issued, the people were happy and the cheapness of the retail price enabled them to buy the copies in large numbers. As already stated, the 5-year period, 1958 to 1962 may be described as the heyday of the Onitsha market literature pamphlets. During that period, one could easily go to a bookshop and select up to 200 titles. The popularity of the chapbooks quickly spread from Onitsha to Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Port Harcourt, Calabar and other cities and towns in Eastern Nigeria. From the East, it spread to the West, Northern Nigeria and to Lagos, to Cameroons, Ghana and other countries in West Africa. As Onitsha could no longer cope with the popular demand, the printing and production were now contracted to companies based in Aba, Port Harcourt, Yaba in Lagos, Enugu and Owerri. The average Onitsha market pamphlet sold 3000-4000 copies per title. There were two titles which sold over 30,000 copies each.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Trace the historical development of Onitsha Market Literature and the factors responsible for its growth.

3.4 Kano Market Literature

Due to historical peculiarities, the Hausa-Fulani comprising all the tribes that speak Hausa language as a first or second language, were less enthusiastic in the pursuit of western Education right from the colonial periods up to the present time. Consequently, several methods that can appeal to their understanding and comprehension were devised to enlighten them on government policies and programs. This gave rise to a medium of mass communication like Town Criers and Drama Series which became very popular as a result of its acceptability among the generality of the people. In that golden period, monetary consideration was never a factor in gauging the success or otherwise of the actors/actress, it was more or less voluntary. The main objectives were simply to enlighten the public, with strict adherence to the rules and regulations which guard against anything that will torch our sensibilities. This ensured the protection of our cultural norms and values jealously over the years. The thespians were just happy and contented to partake in a venture that will lead to the general understanding of government aims and objectives on several issues.

The many prominent personalities that took part in the drama series of this early phase include the following: Kassimu Yero, Kar-Kuzu, Late Alhaji Buguzun, Dan Hajiya, Dan-Magori, Hajiya Tambaya, Me Ayah, Late Mallam Mamman, Golobo, Samanja Mazan Fama, Late Karo-da-Goma, Barmo and several others too numerous to mention. They used their God given talent effectively in mass mobilization and enlightenment and for that, we are very grateful indeed. What is now known as Kannywood, evolved partly out of the booming Kano Market Literature (KML), which made some of the writers instantly famous. The success recorded, made some exuberant youth to begin the conversion of the content of their 'soyayya' books into films. Subsequently, what started as a small private affair suddenly metamorphosed into a full-blown money spinning venture and the rest is now history.

With the government's inability to cater for its citizens' needs, coupled with the opulent life style of these writers, in addition to endemic poverty; film making readily become a veritable source of employment and instant fame and wealth. This induced mass exodus of all characters from every part of the North and even neighboring countries to Kano, to

the ready embrace of the stakeholders in the industry. Many boys and girls in their teens therefore migrated to Kano, leading to the resurgence of divorce cases in many parts of the north.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What are the major thrusts of Kano Market Literature?

3.5 Transition from Pamphlets into Full Literatures

The first book in the Onitsha market literature series was published in 1947. This was quickly followed by other titles some of which were so slim that they numbered less than 20 pages each. In a relatively short time, these chapbooks and novelettes became popular in Eastern Nigeria especially among secondary school boys and girls and among thousands of traders in Onitsha market. From the Eastern Region the popularity spread to the Cameroon, Ghana and other West African countries. The 5-year period, 1958 to 1962 may be described as the heyday when the total number of books published each year was near the 50 titles mark. The language used in the books was suitable for most of the people in the society because not many of them were educated to primary and secondary school levels. By the time the Biafran war ended in January 1970, the publication and selling of the Onitsha market pamphlets and chapbooks was dying a natural death.

The same period in history also marked the transition from writing novelettes with semi-literate population in mind to writing serious trade-books, both fiction and non-fiction, for highly educated people. By general trade books we mean those books written for the general public, mainly the adult population, and published by a commercial publisher. Such books are written for the non-specialist reading public, such as biography, novels, literature, belles letters, etc. Incidentally, these are the kind of books which people usually buy for their intrinsic merits, and they read them for their own sake.

Despite the popularity which the Onitsha market literature enjoyed for nearly a generation, by the year 1975, that literary phenomenon had ceased to exist. To many people, especially those who enjoyed comfortable living as a result of this special book trade, the demise came rather too quickly and too unexpectedly. Why was this the case? One obvious answer is that the Biafran war of July 1967 to January 1970 had abruptly halted the progress of the pamphlet business. At the end of the war, when people came back to Onitsha, what they saw was a city which had been systematically destroyed. It was like a ghost town. There was little or nothing left for them to use in starting a new life. This state of affairs led to frustration, hopelessness and despair. People even turned

round and started blaming their fellow Onitsha inhabitants for being the cause of their woes. The spirit of comradeship, for which the inhabitants of Onitsha were known, had gone. People did not trust one another any more. Rather they started being cagey and secretive. The informality and the openness of life in the Onitsha market had gone. People were no longer prepared to tell their fellow traders the truth.

However, there were people who loved the Onitsha market literature so much that they were determined to reactivate their business. Before long, they discovered that they were facing many odds. Their printing presses and other production equipment had either been stolen or destroyed beyond repair. Buying new machines would obviously cost them more money. Moreover, the resumption of the production of new pamphlets was capital-intensive. The cover price for each new title produced would be increased considerably. Some of the well-known pamphlet authors had disappeared from Onitsha, and some even lost their lives. Obiechina stated clearly that one of the famous pamphlet authors, Chike Okonyia, the author of Tragic, Niger Tales was killed during the war.

The whole fabric of society and the special characteristics which distinguished Onitsha from other cities in Igboland had gone. Thousands of people decided to leave Onitsha for good and set up new lines of business in other cities like Enugu, Aba and Port Harcourt. Before the war, some traders were prepared to buy every new pamphlet title published. After the war, the same traders decided not to purchase the publications any more, partly because they had no money, and partly because the new retail prices were too high for them. Few years after the war, even those who thrived on the pamphleteering business had no alternative than to give up the trade. Consequently, it can be said that by the year 1975, the Onitsha market literature had ceased to exist. The people of Eastern Nigeria had to look elsewhere for their reading materials. The disappearance of this literary genre was a loss not only to the Igbos and to Eastern Nigerians but also to the whole of Nigeria and to some West Africans. The Biafran war had changed the philosophy of life of the Igbo people of Nigeria.

Between 1950 and 1970, a period of 20 years, some classic novels written by Nigerian authors were published. The same period coincided with the time when the Onitsha market literature was in vogue from 1947 to 1975. Some of these novels were The Palm-Wine Drinkard by Amos Tutuola (1952); People of the City, by Cyprian Ekwensi (1954); *Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe (1958), and One Man One Wife* by Timothy Aluko (1959). These represent what Oyekan Owomoyela called the First Wave Writers of West Africa. Their works also represent a transitional period from the novelettes and chapbooks of the Onitsha

market literature, to serious fiction written by intellectual authors. One Nigerian novelist who may be said to have spearheaded the transition was C.O.D. Ekwensi. He wrote for the Onitsha market literature as well as serious novels for the more sophisticated readers. As Obiechina has rightly observed, both the pamphlet writers and the intellectual West African writers used their writing as media to provide insights into the contemporary West African life. The pamphlet writers concerned themselves with surface appearances, while the intellectual writers tried to dig deep into underlying causes and explanations.

We have already seen how serious fiction was being published almost side by side with the pamphlets of the Onitsha market literature. Those novels were written by first wave intellectual writers from Nigeria. During the Second wave, we had Wole Soyinka's novel The *Interpreters (1965) and Gabriel Okara's novel, The Voice (1964). It was* during the Second Wave that Chinua Achebe published his two next novels – No Longer at Ease (1960) and Man of the People, (1966). Elechi Amadi's novel, The Concubine, was published in 1966. Achebe's *A Man of the People dealt with corruption, and ended with violence and* a coup. It was during this Second Wave that some of the novels of the pioneer Igbo women writers were published. The first was Efuru, by Flora Nwapa (1966), and Idu (1969). The other female novelist, Buchi Emecheta, published her autobiographical novels, In the Ditch (1972) and Second Class Citizen, (1974).

The writers of the Third Wave were young people writing for an African audience and not for the Euro-Americans as was the case with the first Wave authors. These new Third Wave authors sought not only to entertain like the Onitsha chapbooks, but also to edify and instruct, as well as to forge a common cause with ordinary people. Some of the novels of the Third Wave are One is Enough, by Flora Nwapa (1981); Kalu Okpi's The Smugglers (1978), Zaynab Alkali's The Stillborn (1986) and Abubakar Gimba's Trail of Sacrifice (1989).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Explain thoroughly the factors that led to the demise of pamphleteering

4.0 CONCLUSION

No doubt, pamphleteering constitutes a very important aspect of the development of the African novel. From the above excursions into the development of pamphleteering and the emergence of market literatures, Onitsha and Kano, it is clear that they represent one of the first attempts at writing and publishing what is real literature. This development process is not an African thing. Early literature writers in Europe and America started through pamphleteering. American literature began as pamphlets which still represent an important aspect of their literary heritage. The works of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson were mainly in pamphlets and they are one of the most revered documents in American literature today. However, the pamphlets of Africa unlike the revolutionary aspects of Europe and America constitute attempts by the half literate Africans at expressing them in the printed words. It represents a beginning that actually saw literature beyond the ordinariness of the spoken words. It elevated the orality of literature to the status of the printed matter. It brings African novels to the realm of the printed words.

5.0 SUMMARY

Pamphleteering developed to market literature in Nigeria. This is because most of the pamphlets were written by traders and people living in the two most commercial areas in Nigeria: Onitsha and Kano. They are middle educated members of the society that for fun and belongingness to the circle of writers. The quantity of works produced is enormous and represent many aspects of man's developmental needs from the physical to the spiritual. The quality reveals beginners with no clear-cut genres, themes and functionality. The works reveal the budding desire of young half educated Africans who wrote to bring African orality into the print. The market literatures marked a real phase in the development of printing in Africa. Thus, pamphlets led directly to the real publishing of African novels and other genres.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. What factors led to the emergence of pamphleteering in Africa?
2. Differentiate critically the thematic differences between Onitsha and Kano Market Literatures
3. Explain the basic contribution of pamphlets to the development of the African novel.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Furniss, George (1996). Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1971). Literature for the Masses: An Analytical *Study of Popular Pamphleteering in Nigeria. Enugu, Nigeria:* Nwankwo-Ifejika Publishers.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in the *West African Novel. London: Cambridge University Press.*

UNIT 3 NIGERIAN NATIONALIST LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nationalism and Early Nigerian Literature
3.3 Literatures of Identity and Personality
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine the beginning of written literatures from the contributions of Nigerian nationalists. Many African nationalists, that is, those who fought for the independence of their countries were mostly educated Africans who were trained abroad as there were no universities in Africa to produce graduates then. They used everything at their disposal in the fight. They used propaganda, journalism, literature etc. They used literature mainly to sensitize the Africans about their personality and the destruction of inferiority complex. They contributed in the development of African literature. Many of these African writers present the African society, culture and personality in such manners that reveal the totality of African values. The issues of equality, cultural values and social mores are presented in manners that show the placement of attitudes and societal requirements for greatness. The values of leadership are also examined using the African leadership parameters as yardsticks. In Nigeria, most of the nationalists used literature as tools for their nationalistic messages.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand that Nigerian literature was a tool of nationalism

explain the need for nationalist literature
relate the Nationalist literature to Nigeria's struggle for independence
see Nationalist literatures as part of early Nigerian literature
distinguish nationalist literature from negritude literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Early Nigerian poetry in English was an anti colonial, mobilisational poetry. It was one of the weapons used by nationalists to fight the British colonial administration in Nigeria and sensitized the people to the injustices of colonialism. This anti colonial poetry movement was West Africa wide. R. E. E. Armattoe, Michael Dei-Anang and Benibengor Blay, all of Ghana; Crispin George of Sierra Leone; and, Roland Tombekai of Liberia, are the prominent names. In Nigeria, the important names are Dennis Osadebay and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Literary arts were part of the colonial educational structure which had as its basic end, the incorporation of Africans into the orbit of Western Civilization. In the European Colonization of Africa, commerce, Christianity and civilization were a three – legged relay in which Christianity was always either first or second baton (after commerce). Both combined to produce colonialism and the sum total of all three was the imposition of Western civilization on Africa. Of all the contacts with the Europeans, the most decisive of them all is the evolution of the modern Nigerian state as a colonized entity in the late 19th century. Although Africans had been writing in Portuguese as early as 1850 and a few volumes of African writing in English and French had been published, an explosion of African writing in European languages occurred in the mid-twentieth century.

In the 1930s, black intellectuals from French colonies living in Paris initiated a literary movement called Negritude. Negritude emerged out of “a sudden grasp of racial identity and of cultural values and an awareness of the wide discrepancies” (Gerard 39) which existed between the promise of the French system of assimilation and the reality. The movement's founders looked to Africa to rediscover and rehabilitate the African values that had been erased by French cultural superiority. Negritude writers wrote poetry in French in which they presented African traditions and cultures as antithetical, but equal, to European culture. Out of this philosophical/literary movement came the creation of Presence Africaine by Alioune Diop in 1947. The journal, according to its founder, was an endeavour "to help define African originality and to hasten its introduction into the modern world" (Owomoyela 39). Other Negritude authors include Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire, and Leon Damas.

In the mid-60s, Nigeria replaced French West Africa as the largest producer and consumer of African literature, and literary production in English surpassed that in French. Many Nigerian nationalists, like Dr.

Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Denis Osadebey and Chief Enahoro among others were products of Western Education and they recognized the power of literature in the achievement of their goal for Nigeria's independence. They constituted the nationalist writers. Their literary motive was akin to that of negritude. They emphasized African culture, personality and value system. They believe that giving attention to everything Africa is one of the basic tools of their agitation. Large numbers of talented writers in Francophone Africa came to occupy important political and diplomatic posts and gave up creative writing.

The vastness in size and population of Nigeria gave it an advantage over smaller countries. In the 1950s, a large readership made up of clerks and small traders and a steadily increasing number of high schools students developed in Nigeria, and this readership enabled the emergence of market literatures. Even Ibadan University College, founded in 1948, produced some of the writers that came to the forefront in the 60s. The encounter with Europe through trade relationships, missionary activities, and colonialism propelled the wave of literacy in Nigeria. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, literary activity in the British colonies was conducted almost entirely in vernacular languages. Missionaries found it more useful to translate the Bible into local languages than to teach English to large number of Africans. This resulted in the production of hymns, morality tales, and other literatures in African languages concerned with propagating Christian values and morals. All these helped in the propagation of nationalism which culminated in the independence of the country.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the importance of Nigerian literature in Nigerian nationalism

3.2 Nationalism and Early Nigerian Literature

Nigerian literature of the early 50s and 60s were more of journalistic and nationalistic. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was a journalist and a nationalist. He, like his peers, wrote poetry and other forms of literature to express his Africanness as a way of killing the inferiority complex always expressed by the Africans. Most of these nationalists suffered much racism in their studies abroad. It was these racial experiences that sparked off their agitation for independence. However, their creative works were not allowed in the curriculum of schools. The same western education curriculum prevailed in the British colonies. The curriculum of western education was largely made up of European texts and authors. Admittedly, at the inception of tertiary education in Nigeria in the 1950s, authors of African origin had not written many texts. But neither literature written in the indigenous African languages, nor the traditional

artistic practices were considered of significance enough to merit attention in scholarly investigation of literary experience, presumed when convenient, to be universal. Thus, until the postcolonial agitation for artistic and cultural decolonization impacted on the academia, African literature was like an inconceivable possibility or at best, a shocking novelty. Given the above, it is not surprising that the curriculum of literary studies in Nigeria as it obtained in many parts of colonized Africa was fashioned in the image of metropolitan derivation. Primary texts and authors studied, the critical and theoretical approaches adopted in textual interrogations were largely Euro-American. Where the continent features as subject, it is done with a view to underscore its significance as we see in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Shakespeare's Othello and Tempest, Sir H. Rider Haggard's King *Solomon's Mine, etc. No indigenous poet had presumably emerged to* rival Thomas Wyatt, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Alexander Pope, William Blake, and T.S. Eliot among others.

The indigenous imagination was seen as incapable of producing such epical compositions with the rhetorical grandeur exhibited in Beowulf by the Anglo-Saxons or works of arresting suspense and didacticism as exemplified in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales. In terms of drama, African ritual performances and festivals, myths, legends and other narratives of the people wherein lie the seedbeds of African drama earned no place in the curriculum fashioned in the main and ab initio from the metropolitan centres. Thus, the historical trajectory of literature in Nigeria shows that it was part of the embracing marginalization of the colonies.

By the 1960s, there was a gradual legitimation of African oral literature as a worthy subject of literary inquiry. Thus, traditional rituals, festivals and indigenous poetic chants became worthy subjects for learning. Nationalism had the conscious drive to put Nigerians on the self appraisal of their personality and culture. These works, mainly poetry, are written in simplified syntax with the aim of communicating ideas. The poems read as discourse projecting the need for understanding and appreciating the black race.

By its very nature, this poetry had a public tone. It was confrontational and defamatory, and was meant to be hurled at the white opponent as a counter to his negative assumptions about African culture. It was also a highly affirmative poetry, often taking Africa as a monolithic entity and singing her praise to the high heavens. This posture must have been justifiable at the time, given the sustained denigration of Africa by whites who were either ignorant of the real situation in Africa or were simply malicious.

Dennis Osadebay was the leading Nigerian poet of the mobilization era. In 1952, he published a book of poems entitled Africa Sings which, in many ways, is typical of the mobilisational mode. In the poem "Who Buys My Thoughts", for example, the emphasis is on the throbbing soul of Africa, an Africa that is still hungry, naked and sick, but whose youth are already awake, restless and questioning and who by this very fact are going to make significant achievements in the future. But Osadebay was also a poet with an ambivalent disposition towards the West; for, while he may condemn the West for some of the cruder features of colonialism, he nevertheless sang the white man's praise unabashedly for what he called the benefits of western civilization, namely schools, hospitals and the like.

Perhaps the poem that is most typical of him is "Young Africa's Plea" in which he seeks a synthesis of black and white values especially in the following lines:

Let me play with the Whiteman's ways
Let me work with the Blackman’s brains
Let my affairs themselves sort out
Then in sweet rebirth
I'll rise a better man
Not ashamed to face the world.

This consciousness of Africanness elevates the thought-system of the Africans and creates a superior sense of their existence among mankind. Nationalism was seen as a way of asserting their integrity and modified to carry the tones of Anglo Nigerian experiences.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Many Nigerian nationalists believe that our literature should dominate our education. Explain why it should be so.

3.3 Literatures of Identity and Personality

The 50s in Nigeria were also the time when the ferment for freedom was at its highest. India was independent, so it was only a matter of time for West Africa to be free. The Second World War was fought for freedom as they told Africans. They were asked to collect palm kernels for the war effort. They were told that each one would put a nail on Hitler's coffin. Nigerians returning home from the war asked, 'where's the freedom we were told about?' So the two issues were together: the political ferment and the revolution in the classroom. The Nigerian elites were angered to see that they were deceived into fighting a war they never knew how it began. They never knew Hitler and were amazed that

a man they never knew and who never offended them turned out to be their enemy. The enlightenment from those ex-servicemen, who actually fought in the battle front with the whites, discovered that they were stronger than their white counterparts at the warfront. The myth about white superiority began to wane in their mind. They began to teach Nigerians at home on their return from the war that the colonial masters were not superior to them. This resulted in the publication of pamphlets and papers on the need for African independence. In Nigeria, many of these ex-servicemen who later joined the Nigerian armed forces began to spread information on the possibility of self governance in the country.

For the elites, the educated Nigerians at the forefront of the battle for self governance, the need to implant the consciousness about the superiority of he black person over the whites began as a necessary independence slogan. They wrote poems, short stories and historical account of their encounters with the whites. They painted gory pictures of racism and instilled in the educated few, the need for their self aggrandizement in the face of all odds. Unfortunately, most of these nationalist works were never in complete books as most of them were products of the immediate necessity or the situation that that gave rise to them. They were usually published in newspapers like The West African *Pilot which had the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the editor at the time* Nigeria's agitation for independence was at its peak.

In most of these literary works, the nationalists emphasized national unity, identification with the struggle for independence, the elevation of the African personality and the destruction of inferiority complex.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the factors that led to the realization of African identity and personality during the struggles for independence

4.0 CONCLUSION

Nationalism paved the way for the appreciation of African oral arts. Apart from the significant interests shown in indigenous oral literary and artistic traditions, by independence, the nation had produced writers who were significant in many ways. The literary field witnessed expansion in the list of works written by educated Nigerians, whose sources of artistic influence were not only the classical European literature to which they were exposed in the course of their education, but also their indigenous oral and performance resources in Nigerian culture. These were writers whose mastery of poetic, theatrical and narrative skills were acclaimed beyond the shores of Nigeria. These writers include Gabriel Okara

whose collection, The Fisherman's Invocation, was and is still regarded as the trailblazer in true poetic expression in Africa. Okara uses indigenous materials in capturing his ideals while painting the metaphors of truth using his environment as proper poetic tool in his craft. His novel, The Voice, an experimental work written with the transliteration of Ijaw language into English makes a case for the appreciation of the linguistic beauty in African languages. The Voice, apart from its linguistic properties carried more message of nationalism as it examines Nigeria beyond Independence. Independence is a goal but he believes that the success of independence rests with the individuals who must work with clear conscience in order to pilot Nigeria towards worthy ends.

5.0 SUMMARY

The little literary products of the nationalists paved way for the arrival of serious literatures attacking the excesses of colonialism and neocolonial mentalities in Nigeria. The arrival of Chinua Achebe's novels (Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, No Longer at Ease and A Man *of the People) strengthens the nationalistic themes in Nigerian* literatures. Achebe's novels cleared certain complexities about the African continent and personality. His first novel Things Fall Apart was a reaction to the distorted pictures of Africa by the Europeans. More so, Wole Soyinka's plays (A Dance of the Forests, The Strong Breed, The *Lion and The Jewel, Kongi's Harvest and The Road) use the theatre as* another avenue for the same nationalistic ventures; even J. P. Clark in his Ozidi, Song of A Goat, The Raft, among other plays elevated the African personality and redirected the Nigerians adrift. On the feminine angle, Nigerian women contributed to the nationalistic consciousness. Writers like Flora Nwapa, Mabel Segun and Zulu Sofola towed the lines of the men in the same nationalistic concern. They rested their art on the need to embrace openness in the society by avoiding sexual segregation. Though many people saw their works as European ideals but others believe that African culture like every other is dynamic and must follow change. Their works fuse elements of the indigenous and Western literary traditions. Although, many of the works of the early nationalists like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dennis Osadebey among others were not really published as books because they appeared as pamphlets and in newspaper; but some of them have been collected recently in anthologies such as West African Verse edited by Donatus Nwoga who categorized their works under pioneer poetry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. Discuss the importance of literature in Nigeria's struggle for independence
2. Nigeria's nationalists were products of western education. How did that aid them in writing literature?
3. What are the major thrusts of nationalist literatures in Nigeria?
4. Relate the concern of Negritude literature with those of Nationalist literature in Nigeria
5. Explain the major factors that led to the emergence of nationalist literatures in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Gerard, Albert (1990). Contexts of African Literature. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi.
.

Harrow, Kenneth (1994). Thresholds of Change in African Literature: *The Emergence of a Tradition. Portsmouth and London:* Heinemann and James Curry.

Owomoyela, Oyekan (1979). African Literatures: An Introduction. Waltham, Mass, African Studies Association.

Nwoga, Donatus (1980). (ed.) West African Verse. London: Longman.

Senanu, K. & Vincent T. (1977). A Selection of African Verse. London: Longman.

UNIT 4 LITERARY JOURNALS IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Horn/The Black Orpheus
3.3 The Mbari Club
3.4 Okike and Other Journals
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the emergence of journal literatures in Nigerian premier universities which helped in grooming Nigerian writers. The University of Ibadan, which was the university college affiliated to the University of London, produced the majority of Nigerian writers because of the literary consciousness in the university that resulted from the existence of literary journals on the campus. These journals, which were products of the Nigerian students, started with the advice of the European teachers in the university. The journals were edited by the Nigerian students themselves. We will study the origin of these journals, the effects of the journal in the training of Nigerian writers and the effects in the development of Nigerian literature in all ramifications.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the meaning of journal literatures
assess the importance of journal literatures in the development of Nigerian literature
discuss journal literatures as Nigerian literatures
see the emergence of great Nigerian writers through journal literatures
distinguish journal literatures from other forms of literary expressions.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In search of a new policy on higher education, the Colonial Office set up the Elliot and Asquith Commissions which recommended the creation of a university college at Ibadan. According to Adewoye (1973), the founding of the college in 1948 "represented the fulfillment of many years of aspiration by Nigerians for the establishment, locally of an institution of higher education." The British, however, entrenched their cultural hegemony in the new college by specifying that it should have British universities as its model in order to maintain a high academic standard. The college was affiliated with the University of London in what was termed a "special relationship." This, in practice, forced the University College to adopt the curricula of the said university until 1962 when it became autonomous and came to be known as the University of Ibadan. The residential nature of the college made it possible for it to create intellectual elite in Nigeria. The college was the first institution of higher learning to bring such a large group of talented young men and women from various parts of the country together. Takena Tamuno wrote that the plan to make the college residential was fully thought-out.

The Asquith Commission favoured the principle of residential universities for a number of reasons: the unsuitability of off-campus accommodation and the necessity to supervise the health of students closely; the widely different backgrounds of the undergraduates and the need to promote unity; the opportunity offered for broadening their outlook through extra curricula activities. The social climate within the university easily created avenues for interaction and mutual edification among the students. This was evident in the growth of campus publications including The Bug, Beacon, The Eagle, The Sword, The *Weekly, The University Herald, The Criterion, and The University Voice* which served as the official organ of the students' union. In the sphere of extra-curricula activities, the Arts Theatre was a major catalyst and it enjoyed the patronage of the small university community. Geoffrey Axworthy of the English department, who was responsible for creating the Drama Unit in the department, also directed plays at the theatre. The experiences of the students in their new environment and the prospects of university education engendered in them an awareness of their status as privileged members of the society with unlimited opportunities in the emergent nation. They were not only fascinated by, but also celebrated their encounter with, the prevailing intellectual attitudes in Europe. Some of the students saw the university campus as a world on its own. Most of the activities that enlivened campus life at Ibadan in those early years originated from students in the humanities.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the factors in the university which led to the establishment of campus journals.

3.2 The Horn/ Black Orpheus

A major development in campus journal was the establishment of The *Horn, a poetry magazine in the Department of English in 1957. Martin* Banham, a young lecturer in the department who was also a fresh graduate of Leeds, suggested the creation of the magazine to John Pepper Clark, then an honours student in the department, who later started and first edited The Horn. Banham's proposal was borne out of a desire to experiment with what was obtained at Leeds University, where *Poetry and Audience, a student-run magazine with the same orientation,* was stimulating poetic creation. Interestingly, the official involvement of the English department in this development was minimal because the idea was novel in the university.

W.H. Stevenson, who was part of the department, explained that The *Horn started when John Pepper Clark gathered a committee of three* including Higo Aigboje and John Ekwere and so in January 1957 the first issue of The Horn appeared. There were no funds available for such a venture. Martin Banham himself provided enough cash to start it; the English Department provided paper also the printing equipment. But funds had to be raised, and so The Horn was sold at two-pence a copy (raised after the third issue to three pence, a price maintained until the end). It could not afford to appear in any but the most modest from which was probably just as well if it were to remain a genuine student magazine. The pioneering role of The Horn is often acknowledged but within the few years in which it appeared was due largely to the effort of individuals who were interested in giving impetus to the literary renaissance that it initiated.

After Clark's editorship, it became a rule that only third-year students would edit it. But this never worked. Between January 1957 when its first issue was published and 1964 when it last appeared, The Horn only had five editors: J.P. Clark (1957-58), Abiola Irele (1958-60), Dapo Adelugba (1960-62), Omolara Ogundipe (1962-63) and Onyema Iheme (1963-64). Despite its short lifespan, The Horn gave exposure to many student-poets and served as a forum for discussing issues related to Nigerian writing. Even though copies of the journal are no longer easily accessible, some poems published in its first three years have been collected in Nigerian Student Verse, an anthology edited by Martin Banham. Curiously enough, Clark objected to being represented in the anthology on the grounds that he was not writing "student verse". The

few contributions of Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo were also not included in the anthology. They had both left Ibadan and had contributed from Leeds University and Fiditi College respectively. Of the thirteen student-poets: Mac Akpoyoware, Minji Karibo, Pius Oleghe, G.A. Adeyemo, Gordon Umukoro, Yetunde Esan, U. I. Ukwu, R. Opara, Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, B. Akobo, A. Higo, J.D. Ekwere and Abiola Irele, whose works constitute the twenty-seven poems that form Martin Banham's anthology, only Frank Aig-Imoukhuede has since published a personal collection - Pidgin Stew and Other Poems (1982).

If The Horn mainly served the Ibadan student community, Black *Orpheus, another journal started at Ibadan in September 1957, was more* ambitious. It was committed to promoting cultural activity in the entire black world. It was also a brainchild of expatriates - Ulli Beier, a German attached to the extra-mural department of the University, and Janheinz Jahn, his compatriot, who did not reside in Nigeria but showed much interest in black arts and culture. The special interest of the founders of Black Orpheus in poetry is reflected in its name and the journal made a stronger impact in the society than The Horn not only because it had a broader vision and wider circulation but because it also enjoyed the financial support of the Paris-based Congress for Cultural Freedom and the government of the old Western Region.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What are the major reasons for the establishment of The Horn magazine and what is its focus in literature?

3.3 The Mbari Club

The cultural currents stirred by the intellectual elites at Ibadan came to a climax in 1960 with the formation of the Mbari Writers' & Artists' *Club, an organization that soon charted a direction for African arts and* letters. The Mbari complemented the role of the Black Orpheus in the sense that some of those who formed its nucleus were associated with the journal. The cosmopolitan character of the first Mbari Club is illustrated by some of its founders. These included: Chinua Achebe (Igbo); Frances Ademola, (Ghanaian); Mabel Aig-Imoukhuede (now Segun), (Bini); Ulli Beier, (German-born British citizen); John Pepper Clark, (Ijaw); Mercer Cook, (African-American); the late Chief D.O. Fagunwa, (well-known Yoruba writer); Begun Hendricks, (South African Indian); Vincent Kofi, (Ghanaian); Christopher Okigbo (Igbo); Ezekiel Mphahlele (South African); Demas Nwoko (Igbo) and Wole Soyinka (Yoruba).

The Igbo name Mbari, suggested by Chinua Achebe, has its roots in the Igbo religion where it refers to a house built for, and dedicated to, Ala, *the earth goddess. It denoted any act of creation in which the light of the* gods is reflected in the work of man. The name perhaps bestowed an African essence of the creative enterprise inaugurated at the Mbari centre which was located at the heart of Ibadan. Naturally, the activities of the group led to the formation of similar clubs at Oshogbo and Enugu. Besides the creative ambience it provided for writers, the Mbari centre was also used for art exhibitions, dramatic performances and the training of promising writers. The club became a major cultural institution, strong enough to take over the publication of Black Orpheus in partnership with Longman in 1962. Mbari's success may be seen in the light of its popularization of African writers and their works. Because the club ran a small press, it performed on a large scale what the journal could attempt or only do on a small scale.

The Mbari, for instance, published the first volumes of a number of African poets. Among these were Clark's Poems (1962), and Okigbo's *Heavensgate (1962) and Limits (1964). The club promoted the emergent* art of these writers through its encouraging exposure of their works. It is important to note that the writers and artists in the Mbari were not all based in Ibadan. Okigbo, one of the frequent contributors, for example, was teaching at Fiditi College -about twenty miles away from Ibadan. Early Ibadan poetry is conceived here as the totality of the output of the poets, ranging from their juvenilia in student publications in the fifties, to their poems written just before the civil war, when with the maturation of some poetic voices and the assistance of the Mbari, individual collections had begun to appear. Works published during the period may be seen as unified by certain tendencies, such works being a product of the shared experiences of the writers. At the same time, the works of Achebe, Clark, Soyinka and Okigbo represent both in quantity and enduring merit, the best produced at that period. There is a need to examine the manner in which the syllabus of the English department at Ibadan in its early days in particular influenced the creative expression of her products who, understandably, constitute the majority of our writers even in this contemporary dispensation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Critically assess the role of the Mbari Club in the promotion literature and arts in Nigeria

3.4 Okike and Other Journals

With the establishment of Nigeria's first indigenous university at Nsukka, some of the scholars from Ibadan trooped en mass to the new university. Most of them decided to create a university of excellence by improving on the standard set up at Ibadan as a college of the University of London. University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960, some years after the graduation of the excellent literary scholars like Achebe, Soyinka, Clark, Segun and Okigbo among others. The Department of English at Nsukka under the headship of Chinua Achebe began the publication of Okike which he called "a journal of new writing". He was the Founding Editor for several years before leaving Nsukka. Okike was created to cover issues beyond literary works. It covered such areas as creative works, meta-criticism of literature, language and other issues relevant to literary discourse. The other universities which fall into the first generation universities include the University of Ife, Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Lagos also has established literary journals in their departments of English.

Okike became a mouthpiece for several literary scholars within and outside Nigeria. Some prominent African scholars like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Taban Lo Liyong, Dennis Brutus among many others contributed to this journal. Many prominent scholars and writers in Nigeria began their literary productions from being published in Okike. The journal created the opportunity for literary expressions in many forms. Unlike the Ibadan journals which concentrated mainly on poetry and prose, Okike gave voice to dramatists because Achebe encouraged the inclusion of plays in the journal. Many known literary critics in Nigeria like Obi Wali, Abiola Irele, and Biodun Jeyifo among others expressed some of their critical discourse in Okike. The journal served in various forms to promote literary discourse and later became a reference point in world literature. Okike experienced an interregnum when Achebe left Nsukka. Okike is now being edited by Prof. Ossie Enekwe. It was and still is a respected journal in the field of literature today.

With the multiplication of universities in Nigeria came the multiplicity of literary journals like Kiabara, Kakaki, Gong, Tablet, etc. Most of these universities in Maiduguri, Kano, Port Harcourt, Benin, Calabar etc. started various literary journals in the departments of English and Drama which aided in the development of literary consciousness in Nigeria and Africa at large. However, with time, these journals metamorphosed into pure academic journals with the sole aim of publishing critical works instead of literary works. Although, the students' associations in most departments of English in Nigeria still float literary journals edited by students under the tutelage of a lecturer

in the department. These journals now serve the function which The *Horn and The Beacon in Ibadan served. Some students' clubs like 'The* Literary Club', 'Creative Writers' Club' and 'The Creative Discourse Club' among others serve like the then Mbari Club but the issue of inactive sensibility and consciousness have drained the keenness expected in creativity among literary students today. Yet, many young writers emerged from there.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss in details what distinguished Okike from the other literary journals in Nigeria

4.0 CONCLUSION

Early Nigerian writers like Achebe, Clark, Soyinka and Okigbo, for instance, manifested peculiar traits which were best understood in relation to the preference and growth of each of them. Early Clark was representative of the poetry of his era in the sense that some of the best and the worst tendencies in early Ibadan poetry were present in his poems collected in Poems. He appeared to have been incapable of refining borrowed methods. His best poems, "Ibadan," "Night Rain" and perhaps "Abiku", were therefore those not stained by technical appropriations from his imitation of the style of Hopkins, Yeats and Eliot. Clark's early poems were generally marked by a nostalgic strain which betrayed his alienation from his people and their culture. If his poem "Ivbie" then made a case for his violated people, "Agbor Dancer" projected his own quest for reunion with the same people and their heritage. Thus, the unnamed dancer merely provided him an occasion for personal reflection. He compensated for his technical dependence by frequently adopting a familiar locale as the setting for his poems.

Clark wrote that their training affected both their understanding and practice of poetic craft in an essay entitled "Another Kind of Poetry" (1966). Apart from the fact that the Ibadan poetry of this period is largely derivative, the medium employed by the poets, especially Okigbo and Soyinka, evinces what, for want of a better label, one may call 'arrogant complexity'. Intended complex effects best confirms the elitist orientation of their art. It is safe to assume that their audience was, in the main, the few university-trained art enthusiasts at Ibadan at that moment who were already furnished with the skill and learning needed to penetrate their work. Okigbo had been termed obscure. He had said that his poetry was not for non-poets. Soyinka's poetry, like Okigbo's, ranks among the most complex literatures in Africa. Chinua Achebe's novel fashioned in line with the style of the British novel reads quite

simple because his prose was not poetic; the British writers he read wrote in simplified prose to convey their message.

5.0 SUMMARY

Martin Banham explains in his "introduction" to Nigerian Student *Verse, that the influence of European literature on Nigerian literature* was unwholesome for the growth of Nigerian literature. He explains, "Some of the verse presented here shows only too clearly how deep is the influence of the alien verse of English romanticism upon aspiring Nigerian writers. The more Nigerians can be encouraged to write as Nigerians, about Nigerian themes, for Nigerian audiences, the better for the development of a healthy literature in Nigeria." Chinweizu and his colleagues clarified this observation in Towards the Decolonization of *African Literature. They highlighted the "failure of craft" in the works* of the Ibadan poets, tracing the problem to what they saw as "a divorce from African oral and poetic traditions". But the truth is that this imitative tendency was a betrayal of the deeper anguish of Nigerian writers at that historical moment. The writers, part of emergent elite incapable of authentic self-expression, were caught in a crisis of identity. It was almost inevitable that they would borrow idioms rooted in European literary traditions to convey African experiences. Wole Soyinka has drawn attention to the fact that a purist outlook on the African imagination was unrealistic. He maintained that it was impossible to kill impulses generated by the contact of Africa with the non-African world, as "individual writers," in reality, "make their creative emergence from the true and not the wistful untainted backcloth" ("From a common backcloth..." 1963).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Discuss the foundation of journal literature in the University College Ibadan
2. What are the major thrusts of The Horn and The Black Orpheus journals?
3. Assess the influence The Mbari Club in the development of Nigerian literature
4. There were marked relationship in the style and language of the Nigerian and British writers as discovered in Nigerian Student *Verse. What led to this unfortunate identity?*
5. Distinguish the literature of the early Ibadan writers with that of the contemporary Nigerian writers
6. Differentiate between Okike and the other literary journals in Nigeria

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Aig-Imoukhuede, Frank (1961). Pidgin Stew and Suffer Head. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Aig-Imoukhuede, Mabel. On being a West African Writer. Ibadan 12 June (1961): 11-12.

Banham, Martin (1961). Nigerian Student Verse. Ibadan: U.P.

Chinweizu, Jemie, O. & Madubuike I. (1980). Toward the *Decolonization of African Literature Vol. 1. Enugu: Fourth* Dimension.

Lindfords, Berth (1979). Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literatures. London: Heinemann.

Soyinka, Wole (1967). "From a Common Backcloth: A Reassessment of the African Literary Image." The American Scholar 32, 3. 387-396.

Stevenson, W. H. (1976). "The Horn: What it was and what it did." In *CriticalPerspectives on Nigerian Literatures. Berth Lindfords* (ed.) London: Heinemann. 209-233.

Tamuno, Tekena (1973). The Formative Years in the University of *Ibadan: 1948-73: A History of the First Twenty-Five Years.* Ibadan: UP,

--- --- ---. "Mbari -The Missing Link". Phylon XXVI, 3 (Fall): 247-254.

UNIT 5 PIONEER DRAMA/THEATRE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Performance Drama/Theatre
3.3 Dramatic Arts
3.4 Drama and culture
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine the emergence of Nigerian theatre/drama. Africa is a rich theatrical environment. All aspects of the people's culture: birth, death, ritual and all rites of passage have theatrical basis. The history of theatre in Nigeria traces back to then hey days before the advent of colonialism. The traditional artist is a complete theatre in practice. In orature, the folktale narrator is regarded as a complete one man theatre. We will study the development of the theatre and the literary drama in Nigeria. We will also take an incursion into the various factors that led the development of the genre in Nigeria over the years.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

trace the origin Nigerian theatre and literary drama
discuss the emergence and role of mobile theatres in Nigeria
relate the thematic focus of the early theatre practitioners with the present
see the early Nigeria theatre as a product of necessity
assess the thematic concern of the early and current dramatists in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

It is difficult to imagine any respectable assessment of contemporary Nigerian art, drama in particular (being more indigenous than other art forms, like the novel) without a consideration of its fountain, and in particular those images, tropes and usages which continue to run through every stage and subsequent development of the drama - from the traditional and trado-modern theatre through the literary theatre (especially drama of English expression), to the Community theatre, the Cinema and its now ubiquitous successor, the 'Home' Video Film, sometimes contentiously referred to as "Nollywood." It is these archetypal tropes deriving from traditional modes of theatrical expression that also continue to provide the mark of authenticity in contemporary Nigerian drama. This authenticity includes but also transcends the question of language or verbal deployment, to encompass the gamut of theatricality. What we find in contemporary Nigerian drama is a continual projection of the past into the future at every level of theatrical expression.

The emergence of drama in Nigeria through the agency of the numinous is well established. Anthropomorphic representatives of ancestral spirits – egungun in Yoruba, egwugwu in Igbo, masquerade in English – emerge during funeral rites or other rituals around which festivals and myths have been constructed in the indigenous communities. Theatre emerged from the imitation of the egungun display and the appropriation of the ritual motifs for popular cultural ends. Total theatre in the Nigerian contexts is defined in terms of the relative degree of approximation of these motifs of the egungun festival - mask, dance, drumming and singing, drama, audience participation. In contemporary Nigerian theatre output from stage and literary theatre to video film we find a continued quest to represent the cultural nuances of traditional Nigeria in the drama.

A parallel development from about the middle eighties was the rise of English theatre professionalism which had begun to take the theatre of English expression out of the University. Before then, theatre outside the university and school system had been the main preserve of the indigenous language theatre, with the major Nigerian example being the Yoruba Travelling Theatre. By the early 80s some teachers and students of theatre had begun to seek outlet outside the walls of the university. Notable examples were John Pepper Clark who set up his PEC Repertory theatre in Lagos in 1982 and Bode Sowande who retired from the University of Ibadan at a fairly early age to concentrate on his Odu Themes Meridian Productions. The heydays of the rise of

professionalism of drama of English expression in Nigerian were in the mid-eighties.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lagos, a theatre tradition developed featuring well-known English and European musicals, concerts and operas. The actors, concert groups and clientele of the foreign tradition were the new, Westernized elite. The artists featured included Handel and Mozart. Similar concert groups were set up in lbadan and Abeokuta. Soon, there was a clamour for works based on indigenous Nigerian subject matter, and one D. O. Oyedele is said to have written a play entitled 'King Elejigbo' (1904) in response to the call. The play cannot now be traced, but there are references to it in the Lagos theatre reviews of the period. This theatre tradition did not last beyond the first decade of the twentieth century. Politics was already in the air in Lagos and in other parts of Nigeria, and many of the leading spirits behind the Lagos Theatre Movement, like Herbert Macaulay, soon found politics more attractive than the theatre. For about forty years after the play 'King Elejigbo', there was no notable development, in the Nigerian Theatre until Hubert Ogunde came to the scene in 1944.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the transition from the traditional theatre to the elite theatre in Nigeria

3.2 Performance Drama/Theatre

There was a gradual development of the performance drama or theatre in Nigeria. Alarinjo, the traditional Yoruba theatre so well espoused by Adedeji (“Alarinjo”) is direct ancestor of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre which flourished from the late forties well into the late eighties before its practitioners and their descendants dispersed into television, film and video productions. At its zenith, the Yoruba travelling theatre assemblage had some two hundred different theatre groups criss-crossing the length and breath of the country Nigeria. The major personages of the Yoruba travelling theatre in its formative years were the acknowledged “father of Nigerian theatre”, Hubert Ogunde, and his contemporaries Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola. They constituted the ‘trinity’ of the indigenous mask idiom in the Nigerian theatre, the defining mark of their vocation being the representation of an irreducible Africanness in language and histrionics. Performances were always preceded by the ‘opening glee’ which comprised traditional drumming, dancing and invocation of the metaphysical realm and pertinent deities. Duro Ladipo’s forte was the ritualised stage in which Yoruba deities such as Sango, Oya and Moremi thundered back to life and electrified stages across the globe. Ladipo was singularly

responsible, with the collaboration of transnational culture worker Uli Beier, for bringing the myths of Sango and some other Yoruba deities to the international stage. The theatres of the trio were mutually reinforcing

Hubert Ogunde, who wrote both in English and in Yoruba, more than any one else, created the awareness of the modern theatre tradition in Nigeria. His was an operatic travelling theatre, and he took his plays to various parts of the country, and also to other West African countries, particularly Ghana and Sierra Leone, for about forty years. Ogunde's plays have religious, social and political themes and titles such as *Garden of Eden, Nebuchandnezar's Feign, Herbert Macaulay, Journey to Heaven, Tiger's Empire, Strike and Hunger and Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba rethink). Occasionally, he came into confrontation with the political authorities and had his plays banned. Hubert Ogunde was professionally remarkable in another sense.

Early in his theatre career, he confronted the problem of the frequent resignation and departure of his actresses, especially as soon as they got married and their husbands objected to their wives continuing as actresses because of the stigma attached. Ogunde then solved this problem in a practical way by marrying virtually all his actresses. This stabilized his performing company such that he often had too many actresses and sometimes made some of the women to perform male roles. Ogunde was the first professional theatre man in Nigeria who lived entirely by the art and, indeed, for it.

Ogunde had many followers and imitators, and there is now a flourishing art of the popular theatre. Biodun Jeyifo (1984) listed over a hundred such theatres in Yoruba land alone. They are popular with the masses because they use the local language, and their operatic mode (a balance of speech and music) endears them to the people. Indeed, the ordinary Nigerian is hardly aware of any other modern theatre form.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically assess Hubert Ogunde as “father of Nigerian theatre”

3.3 The Literary Drama

Apart from the popular travelling theatre of Ogunde and his followers, there is also literary drama, largely university-based and elitists. One of the first practitioners of this mode was James Ene Henshaw. He wrote several plays including This is Our Chance, Children of the Goddess, *Medicine for Love, and Dinner for Promotion. These plays are* commentaries on social and political life in Nigeria in the years just before and after independence. They treat issues of culture contact and

conflict, of the problems of building a coherent nation out of diverse ethnic groups, and of morality in social dealings. The plays were popular in schools and other literate circles in the 1960s and early 1970s, and were the first diet of many budding Nigerian playwrights.

By far, the dominant personality in Nigerian literary drama has been the Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, who has been in active theatre, both inside and outside Nigeria, since the late 1950s. He produced and published many plays. Early in his artistic career, he established the Orisun Theatre Company and the 1960 Masks from which literally flowed a stream of truly remarkable plays. He has a background which includes the University of Leeds and the Royal Court Theatre in London, university jobs in Lagos, lbadan and lfe and reasonably well-equipped theatres in lbadan and lfe. Thus, Soyinka was well prepared for an outstanding career as a playwright and theatre-practitioner.

Soyinka has tended to write two types of plays; first, the relatively easily comprehensible play in which he is dealing with a single issue or a limited number of issues in plain language; and second, the more ambitious, full-length play in which he is dealing with a wide array of issues in complex language, often loaded with abstruse imagery and symbolism, and for which he has acquired the reputation of being a difficult writer. The easier plays include The Lion and the Jewel, The *Jero Plays, Kongi's Harvest and A Play of Giants, while the more* abstruse ones include The Road, The Strong Breed, Madmen and *Specialists and Death and the King's Horseman. In content also,* Soyinka has tended to write two types of plays, viz; the political play and the social/metaphysical play. In the political plays, Soyinka exposes the bizarre, insensitive and bestial nature of governance in contemporary Africa. In the social/metaphysical plays, he explores, often in a satirical vein, issues like prejudices, religious hypocrisy, and futurology, or he probes the nature of sacrifices, conflict, the transition from life to death, and the inscrutable supernatural forces which control the universe.

John Pepper Clark is another important playwright. He has published seven plays, namely, Songs of a Goat, The Masquerade, The Raft, Ozidi, *The Boat, The Return Home, Full Circle and The Wives' Revolt. The* first four belong to the 1960s, and the last four to the 1980s. As in his poetry, Clark's setting is the ljaw Delta environment and his universe is one of storm and tide, of sandbars, boat capsizes and drowning, and the human tragedy enacted therein. The plays, with the exception of Ozidi which is Shakespearean in style, have Greek models and seem organized into two sets of trilogies.

Ola Rotimi, who started his writing career in 1966, has been a well-rounded theatre man and a first rate play director. He has published

about six plays, namely, The Gods Are not to Blame, Kurunmi, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, Our Husband has Gone Again, If…Tragedy of the Ruled, and Holding Talks. Rotimi's major pre-occupation in his plays* is with history conceived as tragedy either in metaphoric or in plain expository terms. The Gods are not to Blame , for example, is a Nigerian adaptation of the 'Oedipus theme' in which Rotimi uses the metaphor of communal dispute, self-love and ethnic pride to symbolize the problems that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. Thus, it is not the gods who are to blame for Nigeria's national tragedy, but the people themselves who led their nation to disaster through their incautious actions and aggressive self-interest. In Kurunmi and Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi, the message is even less ambiguous: it is the case of a people* who plunge themselves into tragedy either because of the excesses of their leader or the limited vision of the people themselves.

There are several other playwrights in Nigeria who belong to this liberal-conservative ethos, notably Wale Ogunyemi and two women playwrights, Zulu Sofola and Tess Onwueme. Ogunyemi's landscape is similar to that of Ola Rotimi. His ljaiye War, for example, is earlier and uses basically the same material as Rotimi draws on for his Kurunmi. Ogunyemi has published many other plays, including Eshu Elegbara, and Obaluaye.

Zulu Sofola, the first Nigerian woman playwright, has been writing plays for over twenty years. Her titles include Wedlock of the Gods (1972), King Emene (1974) and The Disturbed Peace of Christmas. Her forte is tragedy put in domestic or two ritual setting with human error, insensitivity or crime as the tragic flaw. In Wedlock of the Gods, her first play, a girl was bundled off to marriage because her parents needed money from her dowry to pay medical bills for her sick brother. She considers herself as being in bondage for three years the marriage lasted, and then the husband dies. Rather than wait for three months as stipulated by custom or agree to the obnoxious custom of leviration, she becomes pregnant for her former lover. Custom is broken, the consequences are severe - the plot thickens as the tragedy unfolds.

By contrast, Tess Onwueme started writing in the early 1980s. Her plays include A Hen Too Soon (1983), The Broken Calabash (1984), The *Desert Encroaches (1985), The Reign of Wazobia (1988) and Legacies* (1989). Unlike Sofola, her vision is not predominantly about the past; rather she moves across temporal and cultural frontiers with relative ease.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Critically assess the thematic focus of most Nigerian playwrights.

3.4 The Emergent New Playwrights

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, a group of young people started expressing unease about the prevailing liberal-conservative ethos in the Nigerian theatre. They were mostly former disciples or admirers of Soyinka, but who were no longer fully satisfied with his vision of society. While still paying respect to his great artistic skill, they suggested that he was not giving the adequate leadership in his plays about what the people ought to do to alleviate their social and political problems. With varying degrees of sophistication, they expressed their desire to see the theatre in the vanguard of the search for solutions to society's problems and as a propaganda machine designed to achieve this purpose. Some of the prominent names in this socialist alternative are Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Tunde Fatunde, Olu Obafemi, Sam Ukala and Kole Omotoso.

Osofisan has published more than eleven plays, the most important of which are The Chattering and the Song (1977), Who is Afraid of *Solarin? (1978), Once Upon Four Robbers (1980) and Morountodun* (1982). Bode Sowande's plays include The Night Before, Farewell to *Babylon and A Sanctus for Women (1979). Fatunde has No More Oil Boom (1985), Blood and Sweat (1985), No Food, No Country, (1985)* and Oga Na Tief Man (1986). Obafemi's publications include three short plays: Night of the Mystical Beast (1986), The New Dawn (1986), and *Suicide Syndrome (1988). Omotoso wrote the play The Curse (1976).*

All these plays in various ways protect the socialist vision of the Nigerian society. At its most competent, for example in Osofisan's plays, the vision is realized through carefully woven plots mediated by limit-credible characters and situations. Some of the playwrights, however, give the impression that their works have been hurriedly put together to catch the moment. Such plays are little more than topical social and political tracts with only a thin veneer of fiction.

This succeeding generations of dramatists of English, for which Femi Osofisan and Bode Sowande remain frontline representatives were not as tired of the gods as they had proclaimed, even if they do seem occasionally wary of their ‘inviolability’. Also literary in orientation, their work is however marked by ideological departures, and a toning down of sacred idioms of the numinous in favour of a more secular verbal engagement. The gods continue to appear in the plays of Osofisan, allegedly only as ‘metaphor’ rather than in their full mystical significance as potent, real or functional personages of the metaphysical world. The distinction between the deployment of the numinous as myth or as metaphor had been subject of scholarly exchange. What is crucial to the current engagement however is the continued appropriation of

tropes of the traditional theatre for contemporary dramaturgy in their works.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Most Nigerian playwrights acknowledge Soyinka's influence. Explain why some dramatists towed a new direction

4.0 CONCLUSION

Apart from the traditional folktale narrator and Yoruba Travelling theatre groups at the early state of theatre, theatre in Nigeria was largely university-based and elitist even though the question of authentic representation of indigenous theatre aesthetics was more prominent. The drama of frontline playwrights like Soyinka, John Bekederemo-Clark and Sofola acquitted themselves well in their deep-structure representation of the Nigerian worldview and aesthetics. Soyinka proved also to be consistently master translator of the indigenous ritual stage, with metaphysical confrontation deployed as metaphor for the understanding of life's critical moments in his major works from Dance *of the Forest (1960) to Death and the King's Horseman (1975). His* plays are drawn into the arc of post-coloniality not on account of being post-independence per se but also because of the debates and issues they deliberate set up in opposition to colonial experience and European postulation of epistemological and cultural superiority. Confrontation is usually achieved at two structural levels of drama and dialogue, first by pitching the Yoruba metaphysical world-view in direct confrontation with western/colonial epistemic or ontological systems, and second through telling, reality invoking dialogue.

The late matriarch of the literary stage of English expression in Nigeria, Zulu Sofola, herself a theorist of the African stage, explores the realm of the tragic and ritual as representational idiom in both her Wedlock of the *Gods and King Emene (The tragedy of a Rebellion). She is also known* for her gender-centred plays. In her work, tragic conflict consists on the one hand in a confrontation with temporal and super-temporal powers beyond one's full understanding and grasp, and on the other hand in her immersion in her dual Igbo (Isele Ukwu) and Yoruba traditional heritage.

The other playwrights and theatre practitioners have been in the vanguard of addressing socio-political issues in Nigeria through the theatre. They have been realizing the odds of the Nigerian state in various forms on stage. Unlike, the histrionic concerns of Hubert Ogunde's art, the later dramatists aim more on the correction of political odds, social vices and culture destruction.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Nigerian state has been affecting the Nigerian theatre and drama. What was more difficult to survive was the grip of the Nigerian political economy and its aftermath, which has proved an even greater test for the resilience of the tenets of traditional drama aesthetics. The downturn in the Nigerian economy from about the early eighties had a direct impact on the literary theatre as on various other intellectual sectors. The departments of English and theatre in Nigeria, which had been the nursery of the important dramas, began to suffer severe brain drain and creativity fatigue. Promising playwrights had their attention divided by the sheer need to survive economically and began to turn their creativity into other, occasionally and not so noble, spheres. The commitment of students who were the mainstay of the literary theatre productions (as cast and crew members and as consumers) could no longer be guaranteed. Many outstanding students could not secure graduate assistantship in university departments where they could have honed their talents. The relative economic security and political stability that produced the great literary works of the first and second generation playwrights had suddenly vanished. Related to this was the problem of dictatorship, the clamp-down on the Nigerian intelligentsia from where came the most vociferous opposition to untoward government policies left the university in droves for either the private sector or the intellectual pastures in Europe, America and even some more favourable climes in Africa such as South Africa where the radical dramatist Kola Omotoso, and more recently the poet and literary critic Harry Garuba reside. Even Soyinka left Nigeria at the height of the draconian experiences. Theatre/dramatic literature in Nigeria is long history of upheavals.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. Trace the emergence of Nigerian theatre from the time of orature
2. Discuss the role of Yoruba Travelling Theatre in the development of Nigerian Theatre.
3. Carefully assess the influence of Wole Soyinka in Nigerian Theatre practice.
4. What factors led to the emergence of anti-Soyinka playwrights?
5. Highlight the major thematic focus of Nigerian theatre artists/dramatists since the late 80s.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Adedeji, Joel (1978). "Alarinjo: Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre," *Theatre in Africa. Ed. Oyin Ogunba & Abiola Irele. Ibadan:* Ibadan UP, 27 – 51.

Adelugba, Dapo (1978). Wale Ogunyemi, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi: "Three Dramatists in Search of a Language". Theatre in Africa. Ed. Oyin Ogunba & Abiola Irele. Ibadan: Ibadan UP, 201 – 220.

Clark, John Pepper (1985). "Aspects of Nigerian Drama" in Drama and *Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book. (Ed.) Yemi* Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.

Jeyifo, Biodun (1984). "The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria". in Dramaand Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source *Book. (Ed.) Yemi Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.*

Osofisan, Femi (1982). "Ritual and the Revolutionary Ethos: The Humanistic Dilemma" in Nigerian Theatre." Okike 22 (1982): 72 – 81.

Soyinka, Wole (1982). "Theatre in African Traditional Cultures: Survival Patterns." Art, Dialogue and Outrage. 190 – 203.

MODULE 2 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry
Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre

UNIT 1 ANTI-COLONIALISM AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Basis of Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature
3.3 The Influence of Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the effect of colonialism in the development of Nigerian literature. All Nigerian writers are products of western education. It is this western education that armed Nigerian writers with the linguistic tool to write literature in English. Colonialism has positive and negative effects. However, most Nigerian writers attack the negative effects of colonialism. There is the general belief that Africa's woes result from colonial experiences and that the present African leaders are practicing the colonial method of administration. We will study how the Nigerian poets, novelists and dramatists presented colonialism, attacked colonialism and/or praised colonialism

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

understand colonialism as theme in Nigerian literature
appreciate the theme of colonialism in Nigerian literature
identify the Nigerian literature treating colonial themes
distinguish between anti-colonial and pro-colonial Nigerian Literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Colonialism according to the Advanced Learners Dictionary is an act of settling in a country or territory by migrants from another country, controlled by it (Hornby, 2000:p.196). Colonial rulers were agents in the promotion of Commerce and Christianity. The purposes of colonialism included economic exploitation of the colony's natural resources in any possible way. In colonial Nigeria, British rule dominated the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and imposed socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures. According to Irvin Markovitz, "colonialism was only one expression of an ever more encompassing capitalism" (1977:p.58). Colonialism was often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. The ideas were propagated through schools and mission houses. British colonial rule in Nigeria was described by Frederick Lugard as 'indirect rule' in which the natives acted in the name of the Governor- General who approved actions of all native officers (Lugard, 1970, p.268). Indirect rule was also described by Temple (1968) as a system of administration which allows European influence to bear on the native indirectly as though he was ruled by their chiefs (30).

European attempt to propagate and integrate their ideas created two enclaves of domination and submission. This perhaps was not deliberate as the dynamics of domination paved way to doldrums. The distance from colonialism to civilization became infinite bringing along with it new patterns and ways of living including corruption, and sometimes near anarchy following the dismantling of the indigenous fabrics of societies. Indigenous administrative machineries were tampered with like all other facets of organic structures. Replacements were neither new nor old as the pot-pouri released the good, the bad and the ugly sides of two cultures. It was in the light of this that warrant chiefs were appointed by British officials on the basis of "make me believe that you can do the job". On the other hand the peoples' rulers were moved to pave way for individuals who gained by the European presence. According to Afigbo (1974, even when the British administration sought to undo the harm believed to have been done to the indigenous society in the era of the warrant chiefs the effort was a failure (11). British rule was corrupt and as such pragmatic. What was pragmatic to the Europeans was seen as an act of corruption by the natives. As a result, age sets, a form of pre-colonial organization was replaced by native executives many of which positions did not have any historical antecedents in the culture of the people.

British colonial rule led to significant changes in Nigerian societies. With colonial rule, initiation into the fullness of a tribe and manhood which was important for good conduct became irrelevant in the burgeoning urban centers of Lagos, Calabar, Lokoja and Benin to mention just a few places. Rites or knowledge of passage from one generation to another was abandoned. Urban people became individuals, with overt ideas that were uncanny to collective efforts or communalism. At the same time the competitive urban environment of the colonial period threw up new challenges where only the fittest survives. Old and traditional rules lost significance. Traditional refuge gave way to individualism. There was apathy. The drift was significant. There is delusion. By 1960, it became normal to find men and women that would otherwise have been protectors of the young, old and members of their societies engaging in various acts inimical to real growth. Communal roles became antiquated as moral consciousness gave way to personal needs. British colonial rule changed old ways. Violence and corruption were enthroned.

The Nigerian writers have been writing to address these issues in various forms. It becomes a commitment and a protest. It becomes a way of redirecting the Nigerian people towards reflecting on the beauty of original Africa before its corruption by the imperialists. These anti-colonial works have been addressing various salient issues that have formed the bane of Nigeria's underdevelopment since the evacuation of the imperialists.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the major characteristics of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.2 The Basis of Anti-Colonial Literature

The Nigerian writers tell stories to entertain and educate the people in a way they understand. Nigerian literature shows how economic, political, religious and social situations relate to pre-colonial Africa, colonialism, neo-colonial independence, and indigenous situations. Thus, the themes dealt with by Nigerian writers include art, religion, urban-life, tradition and culture, ironies of life, and pre-colonial, colonial, and neo-colonial realities. Just as the common storyteller of old, the contemporary Nigerian writer aims at helping his/her society to change while retaining the best features of authentic Nigerian cultures.

The bases of anti-colonial writings from Nigeria can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is to correct the ill-pictures of Africa in those literatures written by those Europeans who claimed to have written African literatures even when they were never African. The fact is that

some literary writers who wrote about Africa during the colonial era were not Africans. For instance, Joyce Cary wrote Mister Johnson, a story about eastern Nigeria. It was this novel which prompted the writing of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. According to Achebe, *Mister Johnson contained distorted pictures of the Nigerian society* which he tried to correct in his novel, Things Fall Apart. More so, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is also a 'racist' story about Africa and the African People. The ugly picture about Africans painted by the western writers, made the early African writers struggle to face the theme of identity and the personality of the African people. To classify Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad as African writers and to call their fictions African fictions becomes a major problem in the polemics of definition of African fiction. Fiction is an imaginative recreation of real life experiences. This means that the subject matters in every fiction must reflect the experiences of the society from which it emanated. One very important fact here, being that every fictional work must show realism not mere fabrication of unrealities purposely designed to distort the history of a people. Chinua Achebe made a proposition that fictional works about Africa written by non Africans tend to rewrite the history and culture of African people in very bad manner and intentions.

The second reason is the need to expose the ugly mode of governance of the imperialists and the effect on the Nigerian people. Early historians gave distorted history of Africa. They saw Africa as a continent of barbarians and animal-like humans with four legs without any form of culture or religion and this historical distortion has often influenced the western judgment of Africa and Africans. So, the imperialists treated their subjects like animals. The used them as beasts of burden, as slaves, as servants, as second-class humans, as idiots and as cultureless humans. Hence, we do not expect a better literature from non-Africans about Africa since they already have a distorted history about Africa. The anti-colonial Nigerian literatures are assertive about the African personality, the Nigerian identity and universal appeal of the Nigerian psyche.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

With adequate examples, explain the major thematic concern of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.3 Nigerian Literary Form as Anti-colonial

Chinua Achebe explained in his collection of essay Morning Yet on *Creation Day that African things are not accepted in the writing* literatures. He said that he was scolded by his teacher for writing a poem about Harmattan, instead of summer, winter or fall. In unit 1 of this course, it was clearly stated that, Nigerian literature owes much to the

Nigerian oral tradition. On the sub-unit on the influence of journal literature, we read how the editor of Nigerian Student Verse decried the imitation of western writers by the Nigerian students who contributed in the anthology. He called it an unfortunate development which impairs the positive development of a true Nigerian literature. We see the effect of this negative influence in the works of Okigbo, Soyinka, and some other writers.

Later, however, there is a hinge on traditional oral values of Africans in the later works of these writers. Soyinka turns to the myth of Ogun in his works. He romances freely with the African values and in some cases we see him infusing western values in his African milieu. Many other writers like Okigbo draws his metaphors from his town Ojoto in Anambra State of Nigeria while J.P. Clark writes freely about the Ijaw region of Nigeria, romancing with the sea and marine metaphors. This shift is deliberate because it marks the renaissance of Nigerian literature where Nigerian cultural values and Nigerian milieu are good subject matters for literature.

In their seminal critical volume Towards the Decolonization of African *Literature Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike outline three major* tendencies discernible in African poetry in English one of which is the Euro-modernist tendency to 'ape' the practices of 20th century European modernist poetry. They repeatedly name Soyinka's, Clark's, and the early Okigbo's poetry as notorious examples. They believe that the trio never believed in their Africanness hence their leaning towards the style and mode of western literature. They believed that using western literary style, conceit or mode of literature does not improve the existence of a true Nigerian literature.

In contemporary Nigerian literature, there are deliberate attempts to use the Nigerian historical experiences in expressing the literary ideals. This leaning towards everything African in recent literatures from Nigeria marks a deliberate shift away from the western literary pattern thus undermining the use of English to achieve wider readership.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Clearly state the effect of Nigerian cultural milieu in Nigerian literature.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Anti-colonial literature in Nigeria is a protest type of literature revealing the odds of colonialism and the effect of neocolonialism in the country. This theme has been more prevalent since the publication of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart. The Nigerian writers treating this theme have often*

contested all the experiences of Nigerians: economic, socio-cultural, psychological and the political dimensions of colonialism. When Chinua Achebe explains in his essay "The Novelist as a Teacher" that Africans did not hear of culture first from the Europeans, he meant that Africans were really treated as uncultured beings. This makes anti-colonial Nigerian works of literature strive to correct these misconceptions about the African personality and milieu. The question of audience comes in here. Many critics have wondered whom anti-colonial Nigerian literatures are meant for. Is it meant for the Nigerian people who are worried about the experiences of the past or is it meant for the Europeans who should understand that the experiences of Africans (Nigerians) had during the colonial days were not according to Achebe (1975), "one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them". The fact remains that anti-colonial Nigerian writings are meant to teach the Nigerian or European readers about the ugly sides and the effects of imperialism.

5.0 SUMMARY

Anti-colonial themes are common in Nigerian literatures because the experiences are still relevant and the relics of colonialism are around us. More so, the prevalent neo-colonial attitudes of Nigerian political rulers points to a reminder in the experiences of the ugly past. Nigerian writers act as "sensitive needles" in reminding the people and the politicians on the need to shun everything that will take the country back to those experiences of colonial trauma. It is true that the present form of written literature in Nigeria is an offshoot of Western literary style infused in the western education pattern in Nigeria but is it possible to have Nigerian literature in a pure Nigerian form that is without any hinge on the western form of writing? This may seem impossible since the literature writers in Nigeria make use of western style in their craft. However, Nigerian literature, in its basic form, is oral. So, written literature echoes western values but the infusion of the oral artistic forms in Nigerian literature has helped in the indigenization of Nigerian literature in form and style.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the main ideal in anti-colonial Nigerian literature
2. Discus the anti-colonial themes in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall *Apart*
3. How does Nigerian literary style contribute in anti-colonialism?
4. What factors have been responsible for the continued production of anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria?
5. Assess the importance of ant-colonial literature in Nigeria

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1982). Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1982). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Aiyejina, Funso (1985). 'Recent Nigerian Poetry in English: An Alternative Tradition,' The Guardian. Lagos.

Chinweizu, Jemie, Madubuike (1980). Toward the Decolonization of *African Literature. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.*

UNIT 2 TYPES OF ANTI-COLONIAL LITERATURE IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

6.0 Introduction
7.0 Objectives
8.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Type 1: Anti-Colonialism on Society
3.3 Type 2: Anti-Colonialism on Culture
3.4 Type 3: Anti-Colonialism on Politics
3.3 Type 4: Anti-Colonialism on Form
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will be looking at the different types of anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria. By types, we mean what they focus on in the treatment of the theme of colonialism. Some anti-colonial Nigerian literatures focus on the effects of colonialism on the Nigerian society, some on the effects of colonialism on Nigerian culture, some on its effect on the political development of the country while some focus on the change in literary form: structure, language and theme, as a way of driving home the points about avoiding colonial mentalities in Nigerian creative writing spheres. We will study various anti-colonial Nigerian literatures as possible explanation of these types of anti-colonial works in all literary genres.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students will be able to:

understand the various types of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

appreciate the themes in anti-colonial Nigerian literature
discuss the various types of anti-colonial literature in Nigeria
distinguish the types of anti-colonial Nigerian literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Anti-colonial literature in Nigeria is a vast phenomenon. However, that magnitude is perhaps the least of the difficulties facing the critic in attempting to give a fair view of this ever-growing phenomenon. A more formidable problem arises from the fact that Nigerian writers are writing two different kinds of literature. The first is the social-realistic literary convention that has been familiar to readers and still exists. The second is the kind in which a new language prevails; this is relatively unfamiliar to many – perhaps even most – readers. This is premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between Nigerian literature and its historical context(s). The multiple paths that are followed include a thorough examination of the ideologies and context(s) within which the work was produced, the consideration of the expression of life of disenchantment and pain in the literature. All lead to the unmasking of Nigerian literature as a socially symbolic act, that is, a reflection of the problems of the writer's immediate society, in particular, and the African continent in general.

Many Nigerian writers have been termed anti-colonial because of the manner in which the colonial experiences are attacked. It also exposes the traumatic effects of colonial power on Nigeria's development. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and a host of other writers from Nigeria have often been described as anti-colonial writers because they have often chronicled the experiences of Nigerians during the colonial days. They write to draw sympathies from the people, especially the non-African consumers of Nigerian literature and to direct Nigerians properly in avoiding the repetition of such experience. One characteristic feature of anti-colonial Nigerian literature is the detailed exposition of the negative experiences of Nigerians during the colonial period and avoiding any positive impact they may made on the African continent. These writers prefer painting gory pictures of slavery, imposition of taxes and levies, the destruction of African culture and the abuse of their fundamental human rights. Anti-colonial themes occur consistently as protest literatures against the excesses of colonialism.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the major characteristics of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.2 Type 1: Anti-Colonialism on Society

Many anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria focused on the effects of colonialism on the social lives of Nigerians. Nigerian society before

imperialism is ordered within a cohered society. The rural set up is made up of people with communal laws and ethics. Justice was fearlessly dispensed and leadership is left in the hands of monarchs and most of them through the process of primogeniture that is by inheritance. The northern Nigeria, through the effects of Islam, established a standard form society enmeshed in the rubrics of Sharia laws and living. The monarchs occupied religious and political positions. The southern axis has divided societies. The Yoruba in the south, like the Hausa in the north, also maintained a society with standard laws, mythical practices and political stability. Except the eastern Igbo, which had no established kingship, the role of the select members of the community in the administration of social justice, parliamentary roles and religious affinity is quite commendable. This was the society met by the imperials. For the Hausa north and Yoruba south, the singleton of their monarchy made it easy for the imperials to impose and administer their colonial agenda. The Igbo south was not easily ruled by the imperialists. There was no single political leadership to hinge on. This issue is recalled in Achebe's Arrow of God, where the colonial administrator, Captain Winterbottom, tried forcing Ezeulu, the priest of Ulu into performing the role of a Warrant Chief. This was rejected by Ezeulu and was subsequently imprisoned by Winterbottom. The entire society is destabilized with famine and religious riots.

With the increasing effect of colonialism, urbanism became a focus. The Colonial masters were busy developing a new type of settlement for themselves and the educated Africans. T he rural setting became undeveloped because attention is paid to the city. The city embodies everything ugly: armed robbery, stealing, prostitution, suicide, manslaughter and other negative vices which the rural areas are not always known for. Withthe arrival of electricity and other communication gadgets, the city became a haven for the educated and the foreigners. Cyprian Ekwensi P eople of the City published in 1954 was the first book by a Nigerian writer to garner international attention. Ekwensi tries to examine the urban society in Nigeria during the colonial days in comparison with the rural setting which still has elements of true Nigerian society since at least there are still some aspects of the society under the control of the people with their laws and ethics still being observed. This novel was the first novel, telling the true Nigerian story beyond the earlier mythical and legendary stories of Fagunwa and Tutuola.

In People of the City, Ekwensi examined the life of the urban dwellers and the effects of colonialism on the Africans. One fascinating thing about these urban novels is that they try to juxtapose the rural setting with the urban setting in order to assess the rural and the urban lives as it affects the Africans. His most successful novel was Jagua Nana (1961)

which was about a Pidgin-speaking Nigerian woman who leaves her husband to work as a prostitute in a city and falls in love with a teacher.
He also wrote a sequel to this, Jagua Nana's Daughter. Most of these urban novels especially Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Jagua Nana's *Daughter explored deeply the negative imports of urbanization on* Nigerian society

Chinweizu's Energy Crisis (1978) is a collection of poems which introduced the stirring of cultural and artistic sensitivity in an artiste whose roots were beset with problematic responses toward a hollow but endemic frippery of twentieth century western modernism in Nigeria. It left the artiste with the choice of either furthering the prevalent vision of self promotion or joining the bards of ancestral days in elucidating a community aesthetic. One can see this tenuous struggle in Energy Crisis which seemed torn between the poet's obsession with self and for his people – his folks – with all their mannerisms and idiosyncrasies as reflected in their social conditions and responses to society. Those poems had come to reflect an artistic awareness and adaptation of his African– contrasted with a powerful but close-minded Western– world to his choice responses to social experience. It saw the articulation of vision which initially had started jaggedly as of a raconteur, who eager of merit, initially betrays a floundering that nevertheless recedes with one bold proclamation after another.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss any Nigerian literature text that attacks the effect of colonialism

on Nigerian society.

3.3 Type 2: Anti-Colonialism on Religion/Culture

The traditional African religion is embedded in African culture, so both are intertwined. In their practices, missionaries regarded indigenous names, religion, arts and music as signs of paganism that must be wiped out. Through their teachings and practices, they won converts who formed the nucleus of early Christianity in most urban areas. Even when they preached a gospel of equality in all men they were the new elites within the new society. They trained teachers, catechists, clerks and many that were in the literary professions. With some impact this gesture could not completely change the peoples' perception that authority came from the white man and not from his God. Consequently, imitation of the white man's ways penetrated into the fabrics of the society. In other words, through missionary influences many people began to accept what normally would have appeared bewildering and unacceptable to them. For instance the indigenous setting would never

have allowed the sale of land which was held in trust by the elders for the dead, the living and the yet unborn.

The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) among other missionaries established several stations where the intensities of Christian religion were being administered to the people. One can not also underestimate the role of the converts in the spread of western influences. Singing songs like "Onward Christian Soldiers marching on to war", they led converts to destroy shrines and all images which they considered were idolatrous. In the same vein indigenous relics and totems were destroyed as a sign of the outward appearances of conversion. We see this also in Achebe's Arrow of God where Oduche, Ezeulu's son, tries to imprison the sacred python of *Idemili as a sign of his new Christian faith. This single act brought lot* reactions from the people against their chief priest who should have protected their culture. Even in Achebe's No Longer at Ease, we see how Obi Okonkwo went against his culture by marrying an Osu. His behaviour is a consequence of his Christian background and his western education.

Conversion into Christianity was marked by baptism. In the process of baptism indigenous names that had meaning in the indigenous setting were discarded for Christian or Biblical names like Paul, James, Peter or Andrew. As the people embraced Christianity and early churches began to get fuller, the people ensured that loyalty to customs and beliefs changed. In spite of the efforts of missionaries, Christianity did not suit the every day life of the people and as such frustration gave vent to mischief. The destruction of indigenous ways of life led to an attitudinal somersault that paved way for corruption and delusion.

Christopher Okigbo's poem 'Fragments out of the Deluge' in Labyrinths laments the European imperialist exploitation of the human and material resources of Africa and the colonial conquest. The colonization of the continent is imaged as a deluge that erodes the very foundation of African societies, for the 'gods lie in state', abandoned and unsung (p. 34). The poet represents the possessors of power who rape Africa and violate her gods and goddesses as predatory eagles in whose talons young birds wobble and utter the cry of death. The use of animal images to express the poet's vision of Social Darwinism signifies that Western civilization or industrial capitalism is cannibalistic and its purveyors are savages. The attainment of Independence by African countries does not change their dependency status. The suffering of the people continues unabated. The dream of Independence fades; another 'big white elephant...'(p.26) appears to continue the mayhem.

James Ene Henshaw wrote several plays including This is Our Chance, *Children of the Goddess, Medicine for Love, and Dinner for Promotion.* These plays are commentaries on social and political life in Nigeria in the years just before and after independence. They treat issues of culture contact and conflict, of the problems of building a coherent nation out of diverse ethnic groups, and of morality in social dealings. The most important of all is that these plays never relented in pointing directly towards the imperialist's direction for whatever has been the basis of all these traumas in culture clash.

The issue of the effects of colonialism on African culture has been of concern to most anti-colonial Nigerian writers. Many people still believe that African culture is dying because of the various ways by which the imperialists imposed certain rules that almost destroyed Nigerian cultural heritage. Chinua Achebe in his artistic creed emphasized that the wrong presentation of African culture in European literatures was responsible for his venturing into creative writing in order to give the correct picture of things.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Using any Nigerian literary drama, discuss the attack on the colonial effect on Nigerian culture and religion

3.4 Type 3: Anti-Colonialism on Politics

Most Nigerian literatures seem to be an attack on the ruling class who are direct descendants of the imperialists. Since independence the question of leadership has been a very sensitive issue in Nigeria. The Nigerian writers have been commenting on the bad administration of the country. In 1966, Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People, was described as a prophetic novel because it predicted the first ever military coup in Nigeria. It was glaring as at that time that the civilian government in Nigeria was very corrupt and that military intervention was the only option.

Nigerian literature manifests the struggles of a people whose country is undergoing the painful process of transformation from colonial through neo-colonial to wholly self-determining nation. After a bloody fratricidal war (1967-70), immediately followed by an ill-managed oil boom that, in turn, created social and political dislocations that the nation has yet to overcome, it was inevitable that Nigeria's artists would fulfill the pre-colonial definition of the artist as "town crier," to borrow that fine expression from the late poet Christopher Okigbo. They have made Nigerian literature, in its many forms, a social act against the wantonness of the new society.

The tradition of protest poetry in Nigeria began with Okigbo's "Path of Thunder," which marked the first significant step by any Nigerian literary poet to transcend the usual "quarrel with the self" of poetry and the bemoaning, in personal terms, of the griefs and failures of the commonwealth. This poem was a forewarning of the cataclysm that was to envelop Nigeria in the mid-1960s, culminating in the civil war that tragically claimed the life of Okigbo himself. In this poem, Okigbo aims at a direct attack on the imperialists with their imperial political system being practiced by Africans and which has been the bane of wars and unrest in Africa.

In many literary dramas and the theatre, there are anti-colonial themes meant to guide Nigerians and to expose the ugly effects of colonialism on Nigeria's political structure. For instance, in Ola Rotimi's *Ovoranmen Nogbaisi, the British conquest of Benin Kingdom which led* to the ostracizing of Oba Ovoranmen Nogbaisi is re-enacted. The play attacked the imposition of strange laws on the society and the attempts at destroying the primogeniture patterns of Benin monarchy. This also reflects the British attempts at imposing their kind of politics on the Nigerian nation, the major problem which has even led to wars.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Assess the vast anti-colonial political themes in Nigerian literature

4.0 CONCLUSION

Many critics of Nigerian literature consider anti-colonial themes as the most prevalent and consistent in most literatures written within the post-independence era. These writers emphasize that the problem with the country began with British imperialism: new laws, new politics, new people, new education, new religion and new modes of thought. The old values have been thrown out while the alien values are being inculcated on a people who do not even understand why they must tow the line. Nigeria is a country with multifaceted people and culture. This complex nature of the country was not even considered by the imperialists in their attempts at exploiting Africa. This is a major problem. Nigerian writers have been recording history through literatures. They have recorded the past and the immediate traumas of the Nigerian people as a result of colonial experiences. Some critics of Nigerian literature believe that English Language is an imperial language representing colonialism in all its facets. They advocated that Nigerian writers should use their native languages in writing literatures. It looked as if there was no compromise in this direction because the Nigerian or Africa stories must be read beyond Africa; after all, the true picture of things must read by the world that Nigeria's history was an ugly paradigm of imperialist's ideals.

5.0 SUMMARY

Nigerian literature has a tradition of protestation. The literatures written before colonialism harmers on the essence of cultural cohesion but the ones written during and after colonialism are with the undertone of disillusionment. Nigeria as a country never existed before colonialism but the British partitioning of Africa created the country with less consideration on the complex linguistic and cultural make up of the people. It has been cries if woes. With the recent discovery of oil in large quantities, imperialism continues, this time being administered from Scotland Yard and the White House. The Nigerian writers have seen the need for cohesion in the country. They write literatures with a common voice to correct the ills and to fight a common enemy. So, we have many literatures in Nigeria with anti-colonial themes: on the Nigerian society, Nigerian politics, Nigerian religion and Nigeria culture.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain the major concern of anti-colonial literatures
2. Discuss any Nigerian literature attacking colonialism
3. Using any Nigerian literature of your choice, assess the imposition of British culture on Nigerians
4. Distinguish the anti-colonial themes in Chinua Achebe's Things *Fall Apart from that of Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman*
5. From what perspectives do the Nigerian writers attack Christianity as a tool of imperial evil?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1958). Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1972). No Longer at Ease. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1966).A Man of the People London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1963). Arrow of God. London: Heinemann.

Ekwensi, Cyprian (1954). People of the City. London: Heinemann.

_____. (1972). Jagua Nana. London: Heinemann.

Markovitz, L. I. (1977). Power and Class in Africa: An Introduction to *Change & Conflict in African Politics. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:* Prentice-Hall Inc.

Soyinka, Wole (1985. Death and the King's Horseman. London: OUP.

Temple, C.L. (1968). Native Races and their Rulers. London: Frank Cass.

UNIT 3 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN POETRY

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Poetry of Okara and Clark
3.3 The Poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will concentrate on the study of anti-colonial poetry. When we talk about anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria, we are referring to a vast collection of poetry dealing with anti-colonial themes in Nigeria. Anti-colonial themes occupy many streams of Nigerian poetry from the pioneer poets through to the journal poetry of the Ibadan school, the Mbari club and the other poetry groups within the colonial and the post-colonial times. Nigerian poetry is a complex phenomenon that began with the imitation of the western models down to the recapturing of the rich Nigerian orature in the poetic process. We will study the poetry of two Nigerian poets who have commented bitterly about the odds and effects of colonialism on Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

appreciate anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
understand the major thrusts of anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
assess the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian poetry
discuss the factors that led to anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
comment on the effect of the theme of anti-colonialism in the development of Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Colonialism did more than corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of the Africans (Nigerians), it filled him/her with abnormal complexes which de-Africanized and alienated him/her from the needs of his/her environment. Colonial education thus dispossessed and put out the control of the Nigerian intellectual, the necessary forces for directing the life and development of his/her society. The European exploiters, oppressors and grabbers use Christianity as a tool to explain the manifest contradictions portrayed in African literature because of the working out of broader historical forces. The relationship between culture and colonialism, explores the relationship between culture and social class. Nigerian literature is understood by putting into its proper historical perspective the crisis of identity and its implications portrayed artistically by them. Culture as the result of economic and political activities as they appear on the ideological and idealist levels is perceived by Nigerian writers. Culture has its basis in a society's level of productive forces and in the character of the dominant mode of production. Culture may be dynamic, but only in the sense of being a continuing record of a society's achievements and an important element in sustaining resistance to foreign domination.

Colonialism, however, denied Nigeria the right to cultural development and self expression and set up a state of siege that it justified with theories about cultural assimilation. Liberation struggle rejects cultural domination by the foreign power by denying the culture of the oppressor. Thus, the tie between a people's identity and the reproduction and maintenance of the social system of a specific set of institutions affects both culture and the people's intimate sense of selfhood. Colonialism by denying to the dominated people their own historical process, necessarily denies their cultural process.

The 1950s was the decade of hope during which most African countries gained independence as anti-imperialist movements triumphed. Nigerian writers born in this decade had an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, yet hopeful mood, which explains the assertive and optimistic nature of the writing of the period. Colonialism had tried to justify its oppression and exploitation by resorting to claims of racial superiority. The new Nigerian writer countered such claims by producing artistic works that showed that Nigeria had its own history, culture, and civilization that were equal if not superior to that of the imperialists. The writers saw their societies, according to Achebe (1975) “put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement imposed on them by colonialism"

The age of independence also witnessed the emergence of social classes and class contradictions- a development that disappointed and shocked many Nigerian writers, who created artistic works expressing disillusionment with postcolonial Nigerian society. At this time, writers therefore saw their role as that of transforming society (and its leaders) by means of moral enlightenment. The works of this period thus subscribed to a liberal humanist ideology that pleaded with the oppressed. The writers of this period intended the pathos and emotive power of their works to instigate the oppressors to initiate a political and economic reorganization of society in the interest of the oppressed. The despair that pervades these anti-colonial works, which portray the oppressed as trapped and helpless, arises in the writers' perception of the gloomy years ahead after the effects of colonialism.

Nigerian poets were among the most vocal in Africa; attacking all the odds of colonialism. The nationalist poets began the trend in Nigeria which poets like Okara, Okigbo, Clark and Soyinka among others continued in their attempts presenting the odds of the past and need for a newer perception and development of the country.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Comment on the effects of colonialism on the sensibilities of Nigerian elite and/or Nigerian writers.

3.2 The Poetry of Okara and Clark

Gabriel Okara and John Pepper Clark are amongst the earliest anti-colonial poets from Nigeria. With them, Nigerian poetry in English has matured and taken a big leap forward. Gabriel Okara is a very unique writer. He has obviously brought himself up most creditably and his works show a close awareness of English Romantic and nature poetry as well as some modernist traits. An important theme in Okara's poetry is culture contact/culture conflict. It is expressed metaphorically in "The Snows Flakes" in the imagery of "uprooters" whose spades are dented in the process of trying to uproot traditional African culture. In "Piano and Drums", the poet expresses his perplexity and confusion at being caught between conflicting Western and traditional African cultures. And in "The Fisherman's Invocation", the argument is whether the Back (traditional African culture) should be taken along with the Front (the imported Western ways) to form the Child-Front, which is the new projection for our contemporary situation. Thus, although Okara expresses ideas and sentiments which are similar to those of the mobilisational poets, he does so in a totally different manner, cultivating a private tone and using fresh imagery of water, fishes, birds, uprooters and diggers, piano and drums instead of the clichés of his predecessors.

His kind of anti-colonial poetry is mixed in a manner that questions the suitability of western culture in Nigerian terrain. He celebrates Nigerian landscapes: rivers, mountains and forest. His poetry protests imperialists' odds while painting beautiful scenes in his country and at the same time satirizing the ugly trends of colonialism.

John Pepper dark's poetic landscape is similar to that of Gabriel Okara. Both of them are ljaw and they use coastal and riverine imagery copiously in their poetry. Clark has published three volumes of poetry, namely, Poems (1962), A Reed in the Tide (1965), and Casualties (1970). One of Clark's achievements as a poet is that he directs our attention to the details of the physical environment, and his poetry has a ring of authenticity. Early poems like "Night Rain", "Streamside Exchange" and "The Year's First Rain" provide ample illustration of this point. He is, in this respect, a great scenic poet and his poems "lbadan", "Agbor Dancer" and "lbadan Dawn" provide further proof of his descriptive power. There is also evidence of great sensuality and compassion in his poetry. In the poem "Olokun", there is a play on the senses, especially the sense of feeling and touching, aroused by the seductive mask of Olokun, the goddess of the sea. And in "Abiku" based on the spirit-child who undergoes a perennial cycle of births and deaths, the poet's posture is one of compassionate appeal to the child to break the vicious cycle. By celebrating African landscapes, by romancing with Nigerian cities and dancers, by appreciating Nigerian culture and religion he totally abhorred imperialism and emphasizes the belief that Nigerian cultural space is better than any one being imposed on the people through colonial might. His poems are usually symbolic as each of his poems transcends beyond the immediate semantic realizations.

Clark is also a poet of warfare and its dire consequences on the society. The poems in the volume entitled Casualties were inspired by the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. In them, Clark writes of particular events during the war, of friends lost in the war, of remote and immediate causes of the war, of trickery and broken promises, and of the moral and ethnical collapse of the citizenry who are the real casualties of the war. In this collection also, he emphasized the ugly hands of the imperialists in the inferno. He believes that the war a mastermind of the western powers.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the identical anti-colonial themes in Okara and Clark's poetry

3.3 The Poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka

Christopher Okigbo (1932-67) wrote five sequences of poems entitled "Heavensgate", "Limits", "Silences", "Distances" and "Path of Thunder", respectively. They were published at different times between 1962 and 1968 and were later put together in one volume under the title *Labyrinths in 1971. Okigbo has the reputation of being the most* technically accomplished, the most tuneful, and the post eclectic and allusive of Nigerian poets. In the first four of the sequences, Okigbo is the poet of private sensibilities, par excellence, with a persona who has been a prodigal seeking re-entry, being initiated and then taking part fully in the ceremony of cultural and spiritual rejuvenation. Each sequence is a variation on that same theme. In "Path of Thunder", on the other hand, the poet drops his private tone and goes public. He is a town-crier with a message of great importance for the survival of his community. The message is about imminent war and the great destruction that will come in its wake. All of this is worked out in appropriate imagery so that the dancer is referred to variously as thunder, iron-dream, and a 'nebula immense and immeasurable'; the country as the elephant; the combat machines as iron-birds; and the catastrophe itself as the elephant being struck by thunder (i.e. lightning) and falling. Poetry is conceived by Okigbo as ritual, or, as a sacred duty that demands total commitment. It speaks a cultic language that can be understood only by the initiate. This conception of poetry partly accounts for the arcane nature of his poetry.

Even the poetry of life is comprehended by only a tiny percentage of humanity! The poems themselves are conceived as sacrificial offerings to the poet's goddess or Muse in more or less the same manner that man is presented in Christianity as a living sacrifice to God. Okigbo disclosed that the 'new laid egg' and the 'white hen at midterm' in 'Lustra' were actually new poems that he had just written in his official capacity as the priest of Idoto. He is truly a visionary poet: a poet-prophet. Enhancing the ritual character of his poetry is the use of repetition and variation. One recurrent image or personage takes on diverse identities. 'Mother Idoto', for example, appears variously as a 'water-maid', as a 'white goddess', as a 'lioness', and as a 'white queen'.

The critical reception of Okigbo's poetry has been paradoxical: a mixture of condemnation and praise. The technical strategies that are most celebrated in the poetry, for example, the sacrifice of limpidity of meaning and style in an attempt to perfect form and achieve a rare lyricism, are ironically the most vilified. However recondite the poetry may appear to detractors, it is not bereft of human interest or meaning. 'Lament of the Drums', a song of exile, depicts the parlous state into which Nigeria has fallen. It thematizes the rape of democratic values by

the military and their opportunistic civilian collaborators, the perversion of justice, the underdevelopment of the country through the wanton waste of her human and material resources, and the overall degeneration of the land. The neo-colonial African politician- civilian or military- continues with the structures of exploitation and privilege erected by the white conquerors in the colonial period.

Wole Soyinka's poetry is characterized by two related phenomena. First, early in his career, Soyinka adopted Ogun, the Yoruba god of metallurgy (iron), as his personal muse and the inspiration for his poetry. The presence of the god has given focus and coherence to a great deal of his poetry. Second, since Ogun is himself a heroic being, Soyinka has found himself writing, inter alia, epic poetry in celebration of his god, unlike most of his contemporaries. Soyinka's poetry is, thus, broadly of two kinds, namely, poems of various life experiences and Ogunnian poems. The poems of the first category include “Telephone Conversation”, (an early light hearted response to racial discrimination), some of the poems in Idanre and Other Poems (1967), and most of the ones in A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972), (his prison notes when he was detained during the Nigerian Civil War). The poems are a good index to Soyinka's humanity. They are about births and deaths (the most important being his "Abiku" poem) in which he dwells on the inscrutable nature of the spirit of death, about strange coincidences as in "A First Death Day", when a child dies exactly on her first birthday anniversary, about grey seasons as metaphors for rust, ripeness and decay, and about lone figures and the messianic plight of some of them. Many of the poems in A Shuttle in the Crypt are even more private in tone because of their genesis. They are the meditations of a man in confinement whose active mind wandered far and wide, about people in similar plight in history, about nature, and about the fragility and transience of life.

The Ogunnian poems include poems about death on the road and about the massacre in northern Nigerian in 1966. They also include the epic poems “Idanre” and “Ogun Abibiman” (1977). All these poems are celebrations in a contemporary context: of the mysteries of Ogun, the god of contraries, who is both destructive and creative and, therefore, whose unlimited resources can be used for good or for ill. The road and massacre poems showed Ogun in his most negative aspects that is, metaphors for man or man's weapons of destruction eating up fellow men.

They are Soyinka's way of commenting on the senseless slaughter and wastage of human life in moments of carelessness, hatred and ethnic intoxication. In “Idanre” and “Ogun Abibiman”, however, Soyinka goes beyond the merely negative features of Ogun. In the former, he seeks a

new order that will further split the Ogun godhead and release the creative flint that will be used perpetually for man's benefit. In the latter, he enlists the co-operation of Ogun to commit his unlimited resources to the liberation struggle in South Africa. By celebrating and imbibing the Ogun myth in his works, he directly rejects the western god and their values.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

There are marked cultural/religious themes in the poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka. Discuss this consistent trend

4.0 CONCLUSION

Nigerian poetry, from the onset, has been in the vanguard of protesting against colonial odds in Africa. Even beyond colonialism, they have not failed pointing out those residues of colonialism which have impinged on the proper development of their societies. One way forward is for them to betray the colonial mission in Africa by speaking with the voice of a prodigal rejecting all the odds of imperialism. That is, colonial subservience to the bourgeoisie of Nigeria and the exploitation of the people leads to a psychic split. However, there is a gradual and consequent disappearance of this type of poetry which resulted from the individualistic nature of poetry, the declining attractiveness of anti-colonial themes and the increased emphasis upon the pursuit of sectional interests. In the light of this, there developed the formation of organic intellectuals and writers who are in touch with the masses as opposed to the traditional intellectuals of the ruling class who write from sequestration.

5.0 SUMMARY

The study of Nigerian literature has witnessed tremendous growth since its inception. Literature was a vital component of scholarship in colonial education. However, the point needs to be made that when it started, literary arts was part of the colonial educational structure which had as its basic end, the incorporation of Africans into the orbit of Western Civilization. Both combined to produce colonialism and the sum total of all three was the imposition of Western civilization on Africa. Nonetheless, the increasing call for the de-westernization of African literature expressed has been of a major concern to African writers. Apart from the significant interest shown in indigenous oral literary and artistic traditions, by independence, Nigeria had produced writers who have had the genuine interest of abhorring all the bad sides of colonialism. This theme witnessed expansion in the list of works written by educated Nigerians, whose sources of artistic influence were not only

the classical European literature to which they were exposed in the course of their education, but also their indigenous oral and performance resources. These were writers whose mastery of poetic, theatrical and narrative skills were acclaimed beyond the shores of Nigeria. They include Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo, J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka among others. Their works fuse elements of the indigenous and Western literary traditions. They were able to pin-point the ugly sides of colonialism, the effects of colonialism and the need to help Africa (Nigeria) build a viable society where natural African (Nigerian) laws and ways of life prevail. The poetry has the undertone of protest but with a focus on the avoidance of neo-colonial experiences.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the effects of colonial education on Nigerian writers
2. Gabriel Okara's poetry is a comment on the confused Nigerians who are hesitant about which culture to follow. Discuss this theme in his poetry
3. J.P. Clark uses his locale as avenue for commenting on anti-colonial issues. Explain this aspect of his poetry
4. Perceiving the later effects of colonialism in Nigeria, Christopher Okigbo predicted the later story of Nigeria. Comment on Okigbo as poetic prophet
5. By embracing the Ogun myth, Soyinka outrightly discarded the European gods. Discuss the anti-colonial religious themes in Soyinka's poetry.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1973). "The Novelist as Teacher" in African Writers *on African Writing. (ed) Killian, G. D. London: Heinemann.*

Fraser, Robert (1986). West African Poetry: A Critical History. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Lindfors, Bernth (1979). "Early Writings of Wole Soyinka". In Critical *Perspectives on Nigerian Literatures. Ibadan, London:* Heinemann Educational Books. 165-190.

Obuke, Okpure (1978). "The Poetry of Wole Soyinka, and J.P. Clark: A Comparative Analysis". World Literature Today 52, 2 (Spring) 216-223.

UNIT 4 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN NOVEL

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Achebe's Arrow of God
3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Iyayi's Violence
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine anti-colonialism as themes in Nigerian Novels. Most works of Nigerian literature in all genres have the thematic perspective of revealing mostly, the negative import of colonialism. Most elite Nigerians have come to realize that colonialism affected almost every aspect of Nigerian culture and sociology. There are reasons to believe that the educated Nigerians who embraced European values and attitudes have started retracting their colonial mentality and thereby exposing the evils associated with colonialism. Nigerian writers have been at the fore-front of this retraction. They have often exposed the evils of colonialism and have strongly proved that the anomalies in Nigerian politics stems from European indoctrinations. They have often attacked the Nigerian politicians, leaders, intellectuals and other people who practice European ideals against their rich Nigerian values. We shall use Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God and Festus Iyayi's Violence in treating this theme.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

understand the reasons for anti-colonial themes in Nigerian novels

appreciate Nigerian novels with anti-colonial themes
discuss anti-colonial subject matters in Nigerian novels
realize that Nigerian literature is often a reaction to historical experiences
assess the basic historical reasons for anti-colonial novels.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Nigerian novelists have been at the forefront of satirizing and criticizing colonialism in all facets. Even though Nigerian novels today treat vast themes, one still senses the underlying sarcasm that everything bad that happens to Africa (Nigeria) has an imperialist link. Chinua Achebe set the pace in these anti-colonial sarcasms but other Nigerian writers have shown disgusts in several ways against colonialism. These themes have been treated in several ways. However, the magnitude is perhaps the least of the difficulties facing the critic in attempting to give a fair view of this troubling theme. A more formidable problem arises from the fact that Nigerian writers are writing two different kinds of anti-colonial fictions. The first is the social-realistic narrative convention that has been familiar to readers and still exists because it attacks the known colonial problems. While the second is the socialist realistic category in which a new language prevails which attacks colonialism by attacking the institutions that emanated from it. Both are prevalent in contemporary Nigerian novels. This is premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between Nigerian literature and its historical context(s). The multiple paths that are followed include a thorough examination of the ideologies and context(s) within which the society is built, the consideration of the expression of life of disenchantment and pain in the polity. All lead to the unmasking of the novel as a socially symbolic act, that is, a reflection of the problems of the author's immediate society, in particular, and the Nigerian society in general.

Many Nigerian novelists have been termed anti-colonial because of the manner in which the colonial experiences are attacked in their works. It also exposes the traumatic effects of colonial power on Africa's development. Chinua Achebe and Festus Iyayi have often been described as anti-colonial writers because they have often chronicled the experiences of Nigerians during and after the colonial days. They write to draw sympathy and direct Nigerian properly in avoiding the repetition of colonial experiences or practicing colonial ideologies in their new or nascent polity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

It is the duty of the writer to direct his society properly. Explain how anti-colonial Nigerian novels try to achieve this.

3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Arrow of God

Arrow of God centres on Ezeulu, the Chief priest Ulu, the god that protects the whole villages of Umuaro. Ezeulu has been very careful in the management of the affairs of the village since his position as the Chief Priest bestowed on him powers akin to that of a political head in village. Ulu the god is seen as the great protector of the village, revered and feared, so its priest is respected beyond the usual spiritual control to a political height. He determines the day for the new yam feast as he meticulously eats each of the select 12 yams at the appearance of every new moon. The eating of the last yam predetermines the date for the new feast.

Umuaro village is in peace until the arrival of the colonial masters into the hinterlands of Nigeria. Ezeulu saw the whites as people with high wisdom. He sees their religion as something powerful. He decides secretly to send his son Oduche to the church in order to acquire their power. He was challenged by his arch-rival, Nwaka, of Umunneora village. Nwaka, the Chief Priest of Idemili, senses that Ezeulu's decision might affect the efficacy of Ulu. He openly challenges Ezeulu on the matter. The rivalry becomes severe when Oduche imprisoned a python in a box. He was attempting to kill the highly revered snake which is the symbol of worship of Idemili. More so, Ezeulu's insistence that the land, which was in dispute between Umuaro and Okperi, belonged to Okperi sparked more trouble for him. Although this sincerity on the land issue drew him closer to the colonial administration in charge of the area, Captain Winterbottom, little did he know that it would cause much harm to the village of Umuaro. Captain Winterbottom had no option but to appoint him a Warrant Chief because of his sincerity and integrity. He refused the offer and was held in Winterbottom's custody for three months within which period he could not eat three sacred yams. He expected that his people would come and rescue him from the Whiteman's grip but they never budged. He was really provoked and vowed to make life miserable for them. He was expected to eat the three sacred yams he missed as a result of his arrest but he refused insisting that he would begin his count from the day he was released. Ezeulu's stubbornness led to famine and starvation in Umuaro Village because he refused to name the day for the new yam festival. In all the confusion, he lost his most beloved son, Obika and even went mad in the process. The confused villagers had no option but to go to the Christian god for solace and protection.

The novel is anti-colonial because it exposed the inconsiderate attitude of the colonialists who believe that the Africans have no mind of their own. Imagine the detention of Ezeulu for refusing to accept an appointment from Winterbottom. He was treated with disrespect and unnecessarily detained which led to the famine in the land. Laws are

imposed on the Africans as if they have no human rights. More so, the use of arms in settling local conflicts was intimidating. Africans were meant to believe that they were inferior to the whites.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Ezeulu and Captain Winterbottom represent two different cultures. Explain Achebe presented them with regards to their sense of politics and religion.

3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Festus Iyayi's Violence

Festus Iyayi has been interested in exposing the after-effect of colonialism on the social and economic well being of Nigerians. Socialist realism as exemplified in Violence questions an existing social order and articulates a revolutionary option. Capitalism is an economic system in which the factors of production are concentrated in a few hands resulting in the alienation of property from the direct producers - the workers. Capitalism was the imperialist's tool of discord in Nigeria.
The means of production thus shifted, become the property of the capitalist - the movers of the bourgeois society. The direct result of this is apparently a dichotomy between two classes - the labourer (the worker) who receives his means of subsistence in exchange for his labour-power, and the capitalist who receives the worker's labour and appropriates all the proceeds arising from it. The worker only receives an insignificant portion of the proceeds only for survival. Social crisis is therefore bound to arise as a reaction by the exploited workers who are in the majority.

The worker in the capitalist society is an exploited and alienated worker.
He is without capital or investment or ground rent and lives entirely on his labour. He is used "just like a horse needs only receive so as enables him work" He is not considered for leisure as a human being and rather than fulfill himself in the work, he does deny himself. He does not develop freely a physical and mental energy but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. While at work, the worker feels homeless because the work is not his own. Since he works for someone else, he does not belong to himself but to another person. These conditions are the consequent creation of the capitalist society as portrayed by Iyayi's *Violence.*

In the story, Idemudia struggles with unemployment and poverty in a social background of class intolerance. The masses are depicted in a dilapidated tent in a shanty slum. Idemudia unfortunately ends his secondary education in class four when his father could no longer pay his school fees. He is alternatively thrown into the labour market

unprepared. He fails to secure employment after many years. Marries and has a son, he sends the child to the village. He is forced to hang around Iyaro for hire as a common labourer - a life of agony of having to feed a loyal and determined wife who grows increasingly bitter because of their condition. Iyayi portrays Idemudia's dilemma as not only arising from his poor education, but also lacking an opportunity to improve himself through his labour. In the Nigerian capitalism, even the educated are unsafe from exploitation. The bourgeois take advantage of Idemudia's unskilled labour to exploit him, so that though he works hard, he is underpaid and his condition suffers consistent degeneration. Idemudia, his wife and his three friends, (Osaro, Omoifo and Patrick) represent the Nigerian worker. Their social dilemma and deprivation are the subjects of Iyayi's criticism in Violence.

This explains his argument that capitalist ideals, a result of colonial enculturation, alienates and dehumanizes the Nigerian worker. An indebted Idemudia and his wife cannot pay their debts yet the man works hard but is paid so little – a paltry sum of N5 at the end of the month. Iyayi postulates that there is too much injustice in the system. The Nigerian employer who Queen Obofun represents is constructed as a slave driver who is insensitive to the basic needs of workers. She is ever ready to extort and exploit especially those who lack the guts to say No! And Iyayi calls this violence.

> When a man is denied opportunity, of being educated, of getting a job, of feeding himself and his family properly, of getting medical attention cheaply, quickly and promptly, the act of violence is committed against him (193)

An overt contrast to this condition is the world of the opulent depicted by Obofun and his wife, Queen, whose ill-gotten affluence places them on the apex of the society. The Obofuns whose wealth is accumulated through fraud in collusion with the government live in sheer luxury, own a fleet of cars, and own a chain of hotels. While Idemudia is so poor that he cannot even replace an old broom in his room, the wealthy Queen (his employer) throws away left-over food in her refuse bins. The employment of labourers in her construction company is to save her low-cost housing contract which the government had threatened to terminate for her delay in executing the project. At the work-site, work condition is extremely unbearable. The workers are slave-driven, sacked at will, intimidated and denied the opportunity to negotiate for a higher wage. This condition eventually forced Idemudia and his co-workers to embark on an industrial action. And Iyayi argues that physical violence is a moral option against psychological violence.

Class dichotomy in a capitalist society generates class discrimination and breeds hostility. In Violence, class intolerance affects even the running of the hospital. Idemudia's illness and subsequent admission to the hospital reveals class consciousness in the administration of the hospital. Idemudia can only go a lower Ogbe hospital where the general wards are so congested that patients are paired up in beds irrespective of the nature of their diseases. Unlucky patients are forced to sleep on the bare floor along the corridor in front of the wards. "Senior service" wards are for the rich and in most cases the executive wards are virtually empty, because the rich who seldom fall sick have the best hospital facilities reserved for them while the poor who are prone to frequent ailments have no hospitals. Iyayi portrays this situation as injustice against workers. Idemudia and Osaro sell their blood to a man in a Mercedes Benz car, showing that capitalism saps the last drop of blood of the common man and rapes his manhood.

In the mock-drama embedded within the plot of the novel, also titled "Violence", the Defence Counsel puts the whole society on trial and postulates that the society lacks moral qualification to punish crimes. Iyayi through the Defence counsel argues that every form of sabotage, crime or prostitution in the society is a direct consequence of lack of opportunity propagated by irresponsible government as well as intolerant class stratification. The lack of privilege and opportunity to the worker is a greater violence than whatever reaction the aggrieved worker might project. Here again Iyayi insists that it is the social institution that makes the man and determines his level of morality. In fact, through the Defence Counsel, Iyayi calls to question the moral eligibility of judges; because individuals are no more responsible for their actions than the society conditions them. Iyayi insists that it is the poverty of Idemudia's family, the lack of food and the lack of money to pay Idemudia's hospital bill that drive Adisa to adultery. Adisa must convince herself that her poverty justifies her offering her body as a way of solving her material problem. Festus Iyayi sees the Nigerian capitalist society as committing various forms of violence against the masses. To him capitalism is violence, and violence should be answered with violence. He advocates for a mass revolt which hopefully would usher in a new socio-economic order that is basically Nigerian. Thus, he wishes that the true African ideals of justice, fair play and compassion should be practiced against the hard imperialist capitalism that extorts and exploits innocent Nigerians.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how Iyayi attacked colonialism in contemporary Nigerian state.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the two novels under study that Festus Iyayi and Chinua Achebe have revealed to a large extent, the negative influences of colonialism on the Nigerian society. They have explained how Nigerians were made slaves in their own country and how customs and traditions were manipulated to suit the interest of the colonial master and the new bourgeoisie and elite class. African people were given the orientation that they were inferior to the whites. They were told that African religion was fetish while the European religion was the only key to meeting God Almighty. They were taught that African culture and systems of government were impracticable and should be discarded. All these issues and more were attacked in the two novels under study and these are anti-colonial elements.

5.0 SUMMARY

Anti-colonial novels are reactions by Nigerian novelists to the challenges of colonialism. Chinua Achebe stated in his authorial creed that he "would be quite satisfied if his novels especially the ones he set in the past could do no more than teach his readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery by which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them". He explained that Africans did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans. His novel Things Fall Apart was a direct reaction to Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson which was a novel filled with ugly pictures about Africa and the African people. Chinua Achebe, Festus Iyayi and most Nigerian writers have been writing anti-colonial novels as a reaction the ugly presentation of Africa (Nigeria) by European writers. Most Africa's problems emanate from colonial times and there are evidences of European manipulation of African governments in order to have positive gains while imposing negative vices like war and injustice on the people.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain the attack on Christian religion as presented in Arrow of *God*
2. Defend the statement by Achebe that Africans did not hear of culture first from the Europeans
3. If anti-colonial novels attack colonialism, what do they teach Africans?
4. Is it possible for a novel to be anti-colonial without discussing colonialism?
5. Discuss capitalism in Iyayi's Violence as anti-colonial issue.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1968). Arrow of God. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1975). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Iyayi, Festus (1989. Violence. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 5 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN DRAMA

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi*
3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Femi Osofisan's Midnight Hotel
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the thematic treatment of anti-colonial themes in Nigerian dramatic literature and theatre. In Nigeria, many writers major in almost all the genres hence the sameness themes in all their works. Wole Soyinka is known more as a dramatist/theater practitioner but he is also a very popular poet and novelist. He is at present the only writer in Nigeria with the longest series of memoirs. Chinua Achebe is best known as a novelist but he also writes good poetry. His collection of poetry, Beware Soul Brother, won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize when it came out. John Pepper Clark is known better as a poet but he is also a well respected playwright whose works have been given world acclaim. In all these writers, we see the consistency in the manner with which they treat their themes while the anti-colonial themes are mostly prevalent. We shall use the works of two Nigerian playwrights: Ola Rotimi and Femi Osofisan, to study the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

- realize that anti-colonial themes run all genres of Nigerian literature
- appreciate the use of anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama/theatre
- understand the dramatic techniques used in projecting anti-colonial themes
- see the Nigeria playwrights as writers preach for change in society
- discuss anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama/theatre.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In Nigeria, drama/theatre is a reflection of life. Right from the pre-colonial, pre-literate days, it has been in existence and it is reflected in the people's festivals, rituals, mythology and other forms of social engagements. It is a medium through which he reaches out to, or better still, courts the supernatural world and certain enigmatic developments or phenomena of life in order to transcend them. However, the African man's contact with the colonial world has eroded some of the importance attached to certain African values. Exposure to education and other seemly more refined religious practices has diminished, significantly, the importance that was once attached to certain beliefs and notions. Today, the story has changed. Nigerian playwrights in the years before and immediately after independence wrote to correct certain misconceptions about her people. Others wrote to magnify and eulogize those aspects of the Nigerian culture that promote good will and social harmony. So much has been said about the origins and development of dramatic and theatrical activities in the Nigerian society that dwelling on it here would amount to a mere rehash of ideas of some sort.

Ogunbiyi edited a book entitled Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A *Critical Source Book (1981) which turned out to be a compendium of* essays on dramatic and theatrical activities in certain festivals and rituals among certain Nigerian ethnic sub-sets, Ogunbiyi had argued that it is rather a misnomer or better still, a falsity to refer to "Nigerian drama and theatre" since the theatrical vaunting of the country rests on dramatic and theatrical activities in the many ethnic groupings that constitute the Nigerian nation. The book was also written to correct certain notions about earlier Eurocentric theatre critics, especially in the West, who had written "books" on "Nigerian and African theatre and drama" practices, based on knowledge that were grossly inadequate, thwarted and lacking in hindsight.

Three years earlier, precisely in 1978, two foremost Nigerian theatre and drama critics, Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele, had made a similar and remarkable attempt in their brilliantly edited book, Theatre in Africa. Since then, a good number of books have been written and essays have either been published as articles in books and other learned journals, or as project dissertations and theses locked up in many institutions of higher learning across the Nigerian nation. One of such remarkable essays is Dapo Adelugba's "The Development of Drama and Theatre in Nigeria". His disputation was that Nigeria's development in drama and theatre has taken many forms. Dramatic and theatrical activities in Nigeria is, indeed, very robust, vibrant and dynamic. Dapo Adelugba's translation of Bakary Traore's thesis, titled "The Black African Theatre and Its Social Functions" is a worthy testimony to this. Other

noteworthy testimonies include Biodun Jeyifo's The Yoruba Popular *Travelling Theatre of Nigeria, Onuora Ossie Enekwe's Igbo Masks: The Oneness of Ritual and Theatre, Ebun Clark's Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre and a host of others. All these are academic* endeavours towards explicating the trend of dramatic and theatrical activities in the Nigerian society.

In the same vein, books have been written on "the masters of contemporary Nigerian dramas" and on their art. It is, however, a sad commentary on the Nigerian literati that efforts of our literary critics have been directional, focusing on the old generation of writers like the Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, and the world acclaimed novelist, Chinua Achebe, even long after the former had won the laureate and the later has been over-exposed internationally. Not even their contemporaries like the chemist novelist, Cyprian Ekwensi and the domestic dramatist, James Ene Henshaw, to mention a few, have enjoyed half the kind of attention which they have commanded. The argument may be that there is always something new to talk about in their work. However, there has been the consistent attack by the dramatists and theatre practitioners on the bad effects of colonialism on Nigeria. Even the neo-colonial attacks have been hinged on the negative effects of colonialism on Nigeria.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Nigerian drama/theatre has consistently attacked imperialism at various stages of development. Discuss this trend.

3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi*

Ovonramwen Nogbaisi by Ola Rotimi begins with Oba Ovonramwen's tasks of controlling a growing rebellion within his kingdom. There is a confrontation between him and some of his rebellious chiefs and, most importantly, the British and French Governments who were searching for economic domination of many parts of Africa and the rest of the world too. This historical play is divided into three Acts, with a prologue at the beginning and an Epilogue at the end. Act One establishes Ovonramwen's revenge and judgment on his two chiefs (Obaruduagbon and Esasoyen) that both of them must die for killing Uwangue Egiebo, Ovonramwen's Chief Adviser, as a result of the political fall-out for the political soul of the Benin Kingdom. This action is followed by the visit of Itsekiri Traders who come to beg Ovonramwen for shortchanging the Benin people. Uzazakpo (the aged court jester) also admonishes the King to beware of people, especially his Chiefs, and to also seek the loyalty of Ologbosere against the growing hypocrisy of his Chiefs. Ifa priest also warns Ovonramwen to be careful: "Oba Alaiyeluwa, Ifa has

sent me to deliver the word – Caution. I have delivered the word. Caution. My lord… Oni of Ife sends you greetings." (16)

This warning is overtaken by the visit of two white men; Hulton and Gallwey who bring a Trade Treaty document to the King to sign and which the king refuses to sign. Hulton is surprised. This Act ends with Ovonramwen instructing Ologbosere, his third-in-command, to lead the Benin army to Agbor to teach the people there some lessons because "the people of Agbor, of late have been getting too hot for our peace".

Act II starts with a dramatic celebration of one of the Benin's traditional festivals, the Ague (igue) festival, and the unceremonious invasion of the Benin Kingdom by white men under the control of Acting Consul-General Phillips. Okavbiogbe, the Chief Policeman of the Benin Empire, warns the white men of the danger inherent in seeing the Oba during the Ague festival and his encounter with Phillips sets the conflict of this play. Phillips goes on to state the intention of the British Monarch: "what then are we in Africa for? What object brings us here? Commerce, gentlemen! Commerce brought us to Africa; commerce determines our actions in Africa!" (32).

Obaseki and Oshodin (Benin chiefs) meet Acting Resident Roupell in Act III of the play and they promise to locate Ovonramwen and give him up. The King, however, gives himself up and Roupell demands that he surrender to the British Authority and after serious persuasion from his Chiefs, Ovonramwen removes the crown on his head and surrenders to the British Monarch; an act which Roupell confidently and heroically celebrates: "From this day, this land of Benin belongs to her Royal Majesty Queen Victoria!" (54)

The chiefs are tried and seven of them are to die for killing seven white men. Obayuwana (a Benin Chief), however, refuses to be shot, instead he heroically stabs himself and Ovonramwen leaves for Obaseki's house to re-strategize for the continuation of the war against the white imperialists. Ovonramwen hides and sleeps in the bush with Uzazakpo, the Court Jester who makes things easy for him on their way to Okemue to meet Ologbosere and before they could reach Okemue, Roupell and his soldiers apprehend Ovonramwen and he paradoxically rejoices with the white men on their success in capturing Benin: "Not much. Tell Queen Victoria that at last the big pot of corn has been toppled; now mother hen and her children may rejoice!" (78)

This play is totally anti-colonial. It reveals the destruction of one of the strongest monarchs in Nigeria. It reveals the imperialists invasion of Africa using commerce and Christianity as yardsticks. It reveals the downturn in the history of Nigeria as the political, cultural and religious

aspects of the people are infected with colonial intrusions that destroyed the system.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the Various anti-colonial dramatic elements in Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi.*

3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Femi Osofisan's Midnight Hotel

Osofisan is a playwright critical of a Plethora of social vices in contemporary Nigeria. Midnight Hotel is a work of satire which concerns corruption and decadent political culture. It questions the credibility of Nigerian law makers and touches on political intolerance and religious charlatans in the society. The prevailing immorality, hypocrisy and flirtatious tendencies of highly placed persons are aspects of the national psyche which he subjects to criticism. All these mannerisms and characteristics are offshoots of colonial education and exposure. Nigerian culture was a morally based one before colonialism.

Femi Osofisan is of the view that nepotism, corruption and favoritism have gone deep into the Nigerian political system as a result of the imitation and adaptation of the imperialists system of politics and justice. The point of corruption is driven home when Awero, the only female Member of Parliament decides to take Pastor Suuru to a hotel so that she could "sample" him before he is given a contract since, according to her; male MPS do this to the opposite sex. But when Suuru does not compromise with her she says: "For Christ's sake, what's wrong with you? I'm telling you its regular practice in parliament. All the male MPS are doing it even to their own nieces and cousins: every one in our contracts and award committee is taking some member of the opposite sex somewhere or the other before jobs are given out. They call it "sampling" the goods…" (Midnight Hotel, 13) In response to Suuru's question Awero says, "Why not? Once you cooperate and I sample… once you stop making a fool of yourself: and not only Abuja the new capital, I assure you. Depending on you, your company can bag ten, fifteen contracts in a week: our committee has far ranging powers over contracts from Aladja to Ajaokuta, to Warri to Apapa you name It" (Midnight Hotel, 19). The picture painted reveals that our leaders are politically myopic, ideologically visionless and morally bankrupt. For Osofisan, Nigerian leaders subordinate the common man's welfare to their selfish, avaricious and hedonistic tendencies. And all these are reflective of the imperialists' capitalists tendencies.

Apart from his attack on the political system and its operators, Osofisan also criticizes political intolerance and victimization of political opponents. Political opponents in Nigeria are perceived as enemies. The government in power victimizes members of the opposition and denies

their communities basic amenities. Victimization in Nigeria is forcefully demonstrated in Midnight Hotel when the headmaster (Alatise) who also lost the governorship election also lost his school to the winning party. This led to Alatise's impoverishment and his subsequent search for refuge with his daughter in Lagos, listen to Alatise as he narrates his ugly experience to Awero: "You know, since the new government came in, it's been hell for me. They took over my school, my land and here I am, jobless, homeless, and hungry." (Midnight Hotel, 34) Femi Osofisan criticizes and condemns this "winner take all" syndrome, in Nigeria's political system which negates the democratic principle. For him, winners should be magnanimous in victory, while losers should accept defeat and work in partnership with the winner in order to ensure a harmonious co-existence in the society. Osofisan's search light in the play is also directed at prostitution, another social malady. Immorality and sexual perversion is another subject of attack because of its effect on our national psyche. Although he is quite critical of prostitution among the women in the society, Osofisan attributes the persistence of prostitution to people's avarice and desire to get money at all cost. The playwright was unrelenting in his attack on religious leaders' whom he regards as charlatans and hypocrites.

In Midnight Hotel, Osofisan takes a swipe at these religious leader's clandestine activities, their moral filth, and their deceitful pronouncements which run counter to their divine calling. The character that embodies this negative aspect of the men of God is Pastor Suuru who shamelessly allows himself to be "sampled" in a hotel by Awero. Suuru is also a liar having falsely claimed to have been robbed by armed robbers. Osofisan therefore criticizes religious leaders for their failings and castigates them for misleading their followers. Commercialization of chieftaincy titles in communities did not escape Osofisan's criticism and derision. In traditional Nigerian societies, chieftaincy titles were conferred on people of proven integrity. It was not for sale as is the case nowadays. Presently, fraudsters and the so-called philanthropists who have money and the wherewithal to "buy" the title are respected. This has resulted in the bastardization and commercialization of traditional institutions in Nigeria. This situation is driven home as Osofisan 'tells' how one Jumoh is made an Asiwaju of Ifeko for his humanitarian services. Jumoh sells his belongings to earn that chieftaincy title. What a shame.

Every aspect of Nigerian politics, social malaise, religious bigotry, corruption and all aspects of cultural degradation are all a result of the colonial education, colonial influence and the imitation of the imperialist's ideals. This work is a satire on the imitation of European values against Nigerian moral culture.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the various behaviours of Nigerians in Midnight Hotel that are offshoots of colonial influence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

On the whole, Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Osofisan's Midnight *Hotel are dramatic works which explored situations and incidents that* reveal Nigeria at the grip of colonial mentality. The playwrights in one form or another ridicule Nigeria's politics culture, religious leaders, their leadership styles, and other social vices. Ola Rotimi's play is a historical jab at the imperialists imposition of alien cultures in Nigeria. It attacks the destruction of culture and monarchs. Osofisan's play laughs at and also makes us laugh at the society's failings as a result of neo-colonial assumptions and aspirations. By examining the Nigerian history and attacking Nigerian society, Rotimi and Osofisan are using their artistic creation to bring about social change, a reconstruction of values and the need to go back to Nigerian roots in all ramifications. Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Osofisan's Midnight Hotel share a lot of* things in common in terms of the way they explored the Nigerian society vis-à-vis the influence and effects of colonialism.

5.0 SUMMARY

There is also a great element of verisimilitude in the two plays as far as the themes of anti-colonialism are concerned. In Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, we see a culture collapsing because of British invasion. The people's culture becomes a bet for the imperialists whose intention was to use commerce and religion as tools for destroying Nigeria. In Midnight *Hotel, Suuru is a Christian, a cheat and a destroyer of cultural values.* The political leaders are corrupt. The religious leaders are corrupt. The anti-colonial elements are glaring as each play takes both historical and sociological jab at the influences colonialism have on the entire well-being of Nigeria as a nation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the major thematic pre-occupation of Nigerian playwrights.
2. Discuss the anti-colonial themes in Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi.*
3. Assess the effects of colonialism in modern Nigeria as revealed in Osofisan's Midnight Hotel.
4. Identify the key issues that Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi tries to reveal about colonialism and Benin History.
5. It is believed that colonial education is the bane of colonial mentality in Nigeria. How true is this in Osofisan's Midnight *Hotel.*

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

'Biodun Jeyifo (1984). "The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria", in Nigeria Magazine, Lagos .

Ebun Clark (1979).Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre. London: Oxford Univ. Press.

Ossie Onuora Enekwe (1987). "Igbo Masks: The Oneness of Ritual and Theatre", in Nigeria Magazine, Lagos.

Osofisan, Femi (1985). 'Midnight Hotel', in Morountodum and Other *Plays. Ibadan: Longmans.*

Rotimi, Ola (1981). Ovonramwen Nogbaisi. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.

Yemi Ogunbiyi (1981). Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical *Source Book. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.*

MODULE 3 MAJOR TRENDS AND TYPES OF NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English

UNIT 1 NIGERIAN LITERATURES AND NIGERIAN SOCIETY

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Religion as Social Reality: Elechi Amadi's The Concubine
3.3 Social Issues in Nigerian Poetry: Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures*
3.4 Nigerian Drama and Social Realities: Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall examine the concept of social reality in Nigerian literatures. Social realities include those prevalent behavioral and social factors that reveal to a large extent the social make-up of the Nigerian people. One of these strong social realities is religion. Religion is a key factor in the definition of Africa's social development. Other social realities include politics, rites of passage like birth, death, marriage, community relations and cohesion. Most Nigerian literatures focus on these issues and more in order to expose certain facts about Nigeria to her social structure and existence. We shall use Elechi Amadi's The *Concubine (Novel), Tanure Ojaide's The Fate of Vultures (Poetry) and* Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again (Drama) in treating the social realities in Nigerian literatures.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

recognize Nigerian literatures treating social realities as themes
identify political realities in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again
appreciate traditional religion as social reality in The Concubine
discus politics, religion and marriage as social realities in Ojaide's poetry
assess social mores as essential realities in Nigerian literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Religion and politics are two social factors that affect the social structure of any society. They are both linked and are tied to the proper management of the spiritual and spiritual well-being of individuals in a community. Religion is the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life. In the beginning of history, it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected and which in the course of further evolution underwent the most manifold and varied personification among the various peoples. At a still further stage of evolution, all natural and social attributes of the numerous gods are transferred to one Almighty God, who is but a reflection of the abstract man. Within a purely African philosophical context man is a political animal embellished in religious thought system. If we assume that the religion of any population have become co-coordinated to individuals and the various levels of grouping that include them as a result of a process of selection or politics based on perceived relevance to particular goals at particular levels of structural reference, we can expect to find meaning in the existence of the people as some implication of relevance in the particular social context where it has become fixed. So politics and religion are interlinked in the development of every nation and African states are part of these developmental frameworks that shape the social realities of the people and development.

Most Nigerian literatures have elements of religion and politics in them. The reasons are not far-fetched. African states before the advent of colonialism had strong religious and political structures that were strong and made the inversion of colonialism difficult at the early stage. There was resistance because there was a structure on ground. Africans have strong religious and political structures that worked for the people. Chinua Achebe tried to a very large extent to reveal these structures in *Things Fall Apart as a reaction to the insinuations by the Europeans that* Africans did not have culture, religion or political structure before

colonialism. And in his subsequent novels, he gradually exposed how colonialism destroyed these structures in Africa. We shall use Elechi Amadi's The Concubine, a novel set in pre-colonial times, to examine the true structure of religion in Nigeria before colonialism while we use Tanure Ojaide's The Fate of Vultures (Poetry) and Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again in examining the political structure of* Nigeria after colonialism. Thus, a comparative presentation of Nigerian religion before colonialism and Nigerian politics after colonialism would be thoroughly exemplified for proper understanding of Nigeria's historical experiences and the writers' burden of transmitting these social values for her posterity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discus religion and politics as basic social realities in Nigerian's development as applied in Nigerian literature

3.2 Religion as Social Reality: Elechi Amadi's The *Concubine*

Elechi Amadi is a Nigerian educator, novelist and dramatist, writing in English. Amadi has interpreted in such novels as The Concubine (1966), *The Great Ponds (1969), and The Slave (1978) the life and values of the* traditional village society. His stories often deal with people who try to change their course of life but fail in it. Amadi's early novels, like Chinua Achebe's, are set in his traditional African world, but they deal with timeless societies which are not poisoned by the effects of colonialism, rationalism, or modern change. Amadi's first novel, The *Concubine, was published in 1966, six years after Nigerian* independence.

The story was set in the area near Port Harcourt. It starts out as a depiction of village life, its conflicts, ancient customs, and gods, but then it proceeds into mythological level. Ihuoma is the most desirable woman in Omigwe village and the tragic heroine, whose well-fed look does a great credit to her husband. He dies, but she has won the heart of the hunter Ekwueme. They deny their love so that Ekwueme can marry another woman, to whom he has been betrothed since birth. At the end Amadi reveals that Ihuoma is actually the wife of the Sea-King, the ruling spirit of the sea, but she had assumed the human form.

The first half of the book pays particular attention to the religious institutions of Omokachi village and demonstrates by aid of apposite narrative incidents the central place these institutions occupy in the daily life of the Omokachi villagers. The opening action focuses on the fight between Emenike and Madume over a piece of land. This conflict sets

the realistic tone, and maintains it over the new elements that result from and amplify the dispute. Having defined a realistic frame of reference at the social level, Amadi then injects the religious element into it:

> Madume was relieved when he heard that Emenike was back home. It was true he was in very bad shape himself, but the possibility of killing a man filled him with fear. The cost of the rites of purification was prohibitive and even after that he would still be a branded man (3)

Here is revealed in a nutshell the religious basis of Omokachi's social organization: it is not the possibility of a court trial that fills Madume with fear but the looming threat of divine chastisement. A man who kills his kinsman has wronged the gods primarily and must seek absolution in purification sacrifices commensurate with his crime.

Emenike's illness after the fight with Madume provides the occasion for ritual intervention, in the course of which the religious fabric is given sharper scrutiny and exposition. Anyika, the central religious personage comes into view, and so too do the attributes of his office: "Anyika the medicine man was sent for… to the villagers he was just a medicine man and a mediator between them and the spirit world" (5–6). This presentation is then substantiated by the practical exercise of his office, in which he is seen pouring libation and hanging amulets on doors to keep away evil spirits. The exposition is progressive and judicious. The reader is being introduced to the main corners of the stage, and concurrently to the principal actors. Anyika's libation shows man, the gods and the ancestors communing in a spirit of sacred and secular harmony. The gods are not far; they are near. Invisible physically, they fill man and object with their spiritual presence, and partake of human action in ways that are essentially concrete. Amadioha is king of the skies; Ojukwu is the fair, and the other gods have dominion over the Night, the Earth, and the Rivers, elements through which man comes into permanent experience of the divine presence and influence.

The ritual act performed by Anyika is part of a complex structure of religious observation defined by rules and ordinances. When Ihuoma proposes a sacrifice to Amadioha on her sick husband's behalf, the god's priest Nwokekoro answers: "My daughter, that will be on Eke, the usual day for sacrifices" (9). Details of this kind demonstrate a religious order with a solid internal logic and organization. The priests too are men chosen for their integrity:

> The next caller was Nwokekoro, the priest of Amadioha the god of thunder and of the skies. He was a short fat man, old but well preserved and had an easy-going

> disposition. He never seemed to be bothered about anything. He had no wife and no compound of his own. His small house was in his junior brother's compound. He was getting too old for active farming, so his yams were few and he owned very little property. He was friendly with everyone and was highly respected. His office as high priest of the most powerful god lent him great dignity (8)

The gods are brought down from their remove and presented at work among the villagers. Mini Wekwu, for instance, curbs evil both within and between the adjoining villages, thereby promoting good neighbourliness. The gods of Omokachi are deployed in a hierarchic order that points ultimately to the superstructure of Omokachi's religious belief, culminating as it does in Chineke, "the creator of spirits and men" (59).

The review of the village pantheon ends with Amadioha, Omokachi's principal deity, first among "God's associates" (The Concubine, 75). Ruler over the skies and purveyor of rain and sunshine, Amadioha is the most feared and the most venerated of all the gods, a deity whose name no man can invoke when guilty. He holds his worshippers in chaste fear through which they acknowledge the god's supreme authority and their own inferior humanity. But the villagers' relationship with Amadioha, as indeed with all the other deities of the local pantheon, is one of concrete communion. Worship at his shrine therefore takes on the nature of a close personal dialogue between god and man, through which complaints are resolved, wishes met, and during which the god reveals himself to men so that they can better testify to his existence:

> After the main rites Nwokekoro built a fire from a glowing orepe brand which one old man had brought along. The cocks were killed according to ancient rites and boiled with the yams. Before any part of the meal was touched, the priest cut off one wing of the chicken and threw it casually to the right side of the temple. The old men were evidently used to this and did not watch his movement… in a matter of seconds a huge grey serpent crawled out from behind the shrine and began to swallow its share of the feast. It showed no fear and the old men bowed their heads in reverence. The god having been fed, the men fell on the remains of the feast (17–18)

This worship scene closes the first half of the novel's action, but no mention has as yet been made of the sea-king, the principal actor in the collective drama of the village. The reader has been made familiar with the sea-king's other divine peers, their powers, and method of

retribution: perjury exposes its perpetrator to Amadioha's thunderbolt; anti-social behaviour to Ojukwu's smallpox; and witchcraft to extermination by Mini Wekwu.

This religious activity comes against the background of Emenike's illness, and more especially against that of his marriage with Ihuoma. Emenike dies unexpectedly shortly hereafter, and veers the dialectical significance of structuring unto its main course. A solid religious foundation has already been laid, so that when the sea-king finally appears, he is accepted for the same reasons that the other deities were accepted; that is to say as a living force within the specific socio-religious context of Omokachi.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Assess the implication of religion in determining marriage, conflict and death as applied in Amadi's The Concubine

3.3 Social Issues in Nigerian Poetry: Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures*

Of the new generation of African poets and their poetry, there are only a few that one would read and return to. Nigeria's Tanure Ojaide belongs to those few. What makes Ojaide's poetry appealing is not only its technical qualities but its cultural integrity. Ojaide is not the type of poet one remembers only by one good work; he is prolific, and his writings are consistently rich and deeply rooted in the Delta region of Nigeria. He has published more than five books of poetry, including Children of *Iroko and Other Poems, Labyrinths of the Delta, The Eagle's Vision, The Endless Song, and The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems. If there is* a persistent and unifying theme in most of his works, it is a single-minded detestation of tyrants combined with an obsessive commitment to social justice. His poems resemble what Soyinka, citing the poet Ted Jones, calls "shot-gun" poems - they are meant to be detonated immediately on the complacent bottoms of enemies. "Shot-gun" poems are aimed at a target - in Ojaide's case "Africa's or Nigeria's malevolent dictators" - and they have a reason. This consuming theme of rebellion against tyranny and injustice, recurrent in much of his poetry, he has made inimitably his own. In The fate of vultures, where we get images stacked with insular density, representing the poet's powerful plea for accountability for public money from politicians who have gone hopelessly out of control, indeed beyond ministration:

O Aridon, bring back my wealth
From rogue-vaults;
.....

blaze an ash-trail to the hands
that buried mountains in their bowels,
lifted crates of cash into their closets.
(The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems 11)

He equates the corrupt, self-gratifying breed of Nigerian politicians with "vultures," a biological symbol that is both ominous and sinister. But it is a contextually relevant symbol, implying both the disappearance of "life" and the appearance of political "carcass." In a sense, the withering away of classical public service, where the pursuit of the public good is perceived not only as individually wise but selfishly remunerative, has given birth to the stench of that sinister force - private greed. Ojaide is ready to call a "spade a spade," or more aptly, "a vulture a vulture," for he sees little virtue in obfuscating the ignoble scavenger-role of politicians in Nigeria's contemporary body-politic. For when those charged with duties for guarding public patrimony abrogate their responsibilities, then society is forced to take notice. In the above poem, Ojaide demonstrates, like Camus, that good poetic artistry must be inserted in the dramas of history, not as mere picture-postcard documentation but as a mirror of those corrigible frailties of the human condition in the hope of alerting the "movers and shakers" of the Nigerian polity to do something about it.

In Ojaide's works, political concerns abound, but they are handled with the reasoned devotion and care of a seasoned craftsman. The poet obviously demonstrates that he cannot afford the luxury of "art for art's sake," or pretty musings created to serve the genteel lifestyles of a moribund African parasitic class. He uses politics to invigorate his art but is careful not to let his artistry suffer from political bad breath. Ojaide is as much suspicious of politicians in those elevated seats of power as he is of people who feast on resources they did not work for.
He believes that "freedom" for Africans carries with it a price which implies hard work, discipline, and commitment to moving society towards desirable social goals. So he sings:

You can tell
when one believes freedom is a windfall
and fans himself with flamboyance.
The chief and his council, a flock of flukes
gambolling in the veins of fortune.
Range chickens, they consume and scatter.... (Vultures 11)

Empty flamboyance, to him, is a sign of lack of sincerity to self and to others. When powerful politicians steal public funds and waste, they violate the public's sacred trust. So, as poet, he is ready to skillfully use

poetic license to satirize the corruption under Nigerian presidents like Shehu Shagari. In a clever play of poetic pun, he contrasts ordinary Nigerians' deprivation of essential things like food - "garri" - and the billions of nairas which went into the building of Abuja with all the attendant corruption in the allocation of contracts. As he puts it:

Shamgari, Shankari, shun garri

staple of the people
and toast champagne;
Alexius, architect of wind-razed mansions,
a mountain of capital
Abuja has had its dreams!
(Vultures 11-12)

Why is it that former head of state Shagari and his cohorts shunned the basic needs of Nigerians - Ojaide's "garri" (such as access to decent food, clean water, shelter, etc.) and wasted the country's oil money on lavish imports (of champagne, Mercedes Benzes, etc.) and on grand, unproductive public schemes nationwide (which Soyinka has humorously ridiculed as "Quadruple A": Ajaokuta steel mill, Abuja, Aluminium, and the Army)

The poet, being an honest skeptic, thinks that political and economic grandstanding has been pursued, in many cases, at the expense of the basic development of Nigerians. The pun with words such as "mountain of capital" - Abuja as a monumental "capital city" being by a mountain and a place where monumental public money was spent shows the poet's shrewd ability to convey multiple meanings through the ambiguity of images. "Alexius" refers perhaps to Alex Ekwueme, then Vice President, who, as an architect, was one of the major contractors who built Abuja.

But what is Abuja really? Could it be the "elephant dreams" of a nation with excess petro-dollars (or petro-nairas) gone sour? Or could it be a centrist concession - a megalopolis designed to assuage the bitter memories of a much villified (but perhaps redeeming) civil war? Abuja is perhaps both - an elusive quest for the "true African soul" of Nigeria. We should concede that Nigeria is a domain of contrasts: black Africa's giant tormented by unresolved puzzles. Large and wealth- endowed, it has a dynamic and resourceful population. However, it suffers from some of the worst symptoms of the "big country syndrome." National cohesion is at best aspirational, and the country strives continuously to transcend the self-limiting, feet-shooting defeatism of ethnicity. An ethos of "cheat or risk being out-cheated" has crystallized since independence, which has made public trust and public good words only in the lexicon of idealists. Lagos - that quintessential mirror of what is

wrong with Nigeria - i.e., squalor and individual disparities in wealth and social status, ethnic disharmony disguised into religious and sectarian tensions, degenerate opportunism reinforced by a self- seeking social ethics, and a rowdy but humorous and open attitude to self-criticism - all these made it necessary, if nothing else, for Nigeria to opt for fresh lease on progressive nationhood. A new capital perhaps serves as a first step. Surely, Abuja - despite all the waste which went into her construction - could serve that real need for unity of a potentially great nation.

In Ojaide's poems, "Where everybody is king," we are confronted with a theme which has larger significance for contemporary Africa. The setting of the poem is Agbarha, and the poet employs the lyrical qualities of traditional Urhobo poetry (the ethnic group from which he hails) to shed light on some self-defeating attitudes characteristic of some contemporary Africans:

Come to Agbarha
where everybody is king
and nobody bows to the other.
Who cares to acknowledge age, since
power doesn't come from wisdom?
And who brags about youth
when there's no concession to vitality?
You just carry your head high.
And do you ask why
where nobody accepts insults
doesn't grow beyond its petty walls? (Vultures 58)

The humor of the poem is in its sarcasm. The Urhobo town of "Agbarha" could be any place in Africa - it is a symbolic place of "larger Africa" written small. The poet, in some sense, laments contemporary African attitudes which show no respect for traditional African authorities and institutions. Foolish pride becomes very self-destructive if it does not make concession to the wisdom of elderly experience and the vitality of youth. The poet is even more pointed in his public indictment of the indolence of some of his people when he states:

When you come to Agbarha
mind you, the town of only kings,
there are no blacksmiths, no hunters;
you will not find anybody
doing menial jobs that will
soil the great name of a king - nobody
ever climbs the oil-palm
nor taps the rubber tree.
Everybody is as bloated

as a wind-filled bag. (Vultures 58)

In short, foolish pride - Ojaide's "wind-filled bag" - is no substitute for humility to one's manual trade and hard work. This could, of course, be said for many places in Africa where the culture of consumption has outstripped that of production, resulting in a grave economic and social crisis in the continent. Ojaide sees that some parts of contemporary Africa are "basket cases" precisely because the pre-colonial attitudes of hard work, fending for oneself, and engaging in food production and artisan activities have increasingly been unfortunately displaced by a dangerous craving for consumerism and flamboyance. The role of the state and some external "do-gooders" have not, many times, helped either, by their adverse policies and actions, which have served to tax heavily rural producers to appease politically more vocal urban consumers.

The imagery, the terseness of the message, the humor - all point to Ojaide's view that even dignity has to be earned. What the above poems demonstrate, as indeed most of Ojaide's poetry, is that his artistry is largely informed by a deep and unabashed interest in the events and direction of his society. In this sense, the poet is not ashamed to evoke images from within his own local universe. Corrupt politicians and their religious co-conspirators take carnivorous traits - "hyenas" or "vultures" - or the poet retrieves murderous tyrants such as "Ogiso" from his Urhobo past and transposes their roles to fit modern tyrants. All these are the socio-political realities in Nigeria (Africa)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Comment on the political realities of Nigerian society as portrayed in Ojaide's poetry.

3.4 Nigerian Drama and Social Realities: Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a satire, because Rotimi, critical of the ills in the Nigerian society, is out to condemn them through the vehicle of laughter and mockery. It is a comic or mild satire because the events characterized the actions of some of the characters in the play which make us laugh. Individuals, institutions and the society as a whole are ridiculed. However, the major object or subject of attack and derision in the play is Lejoka-Brown (the hero). In making fun of his hero, Rotimi is indirectly mocking the Nigerian society as a whole. The playwright lampoons his hero's idea about politics.

In the discussion between Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo, the former has

this to say why he takes to politics: "Are you there…? Politics is the thing, no in Nigeria mate, you want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop life? No, no… you want to chop a big slice of the national cake? Na politics" (Our Husband, 4). Lejoka-Brown's motive in joining politics is not dictated by his sense of patriotism and service but he sees politics as a means to an end. He is certainly myopic, ideologically barren and too ridiculous to be a leader of the nation. In exposing Lejoka-Brown's motive, Rotimi is subtly indicting the decadent Nigerian political activists. By making jest of Lejoka-Brown, Rotimi is indirectly attacking our greedy, selfish and pleasure seeking leaders in Nigerian society. Hear Lejoka-Brown: "It is a war, politics is war. Ooo I am not taking no chance this time I took things slow and easy and what happened? I lost a bye election to a small crab". (Our Husband, p. 7)Certainly, Lejoka-Brown's statement evokes laughter in us. Yet, it goes to show how crude and ruthless he is. If Lejoka-Brown is taken as a symbolic representation of Nigerian leaders, one can then say that the playwright is criticizing Nigerian leader's use of brute force to achieve political ambitions. Lejoka-Brown's surprise and attack campaign strategy elicits the playwright's mockery. Although, Lejoka vigorously explained to his party members the nature of his military strategy, he only succeeded in dramatizing his hollow mentality. He says: "Gentlemen, our election campaign plan must follow a platform of military strategy known as surprise and attack…" (Our Husband, p. 50) From Lejoka's campaign plan, he exposes the fact that he is incredibly ridiculous. Rotimi portrays him as a man who fails to understand the difference between a politician and a soldier.

Polygamy – a system of marriage in Nigeria did not escape Rotimi's ridicule. The playwright dramatizes the incessant quarrels and arguments between Sikira and her co-wife Liza, live a dog and cat's life, constantly fighting one another. Sikira and Liza's relationship is that of fear and mutual suspicion. Sikira fears that Liza might overshadow her. Secondly, Sikira thinks that Liza being more educated than herself would make the latter more domineering and overbearing than herself. In order to forestall such a situation, Sikira picks quarrel with Liza at the least provocation. Lejoka-Brown's household is in reality a fictional representation of what actually happens in most polygamous families. In directing his satire at such a home, Rotimi is indirectly cautioning prospective polygamists of the consequences of such a marriage.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Elechi Amadi's The Concubine presents pure Nigerian religious realities before colonial times. We see a society that is enmeshed in religious beliefs about everything around them. Everything within the Nigerian society has religious attachment which determines the way the people

react to their environment and to their social cohesion. Nigerian religious rites of passage are a social factor that brings the people together in all their beliefs and practices. This novel exemplifies this social reality. Tanure Ojaide's collection of poetry, The Fate of *Vultures, examines the state of governance in Nigeria as it affects the* Nigeria society. This collection demonstrates the back and forth of Nigeria's history, and locates the solution to the imperatives within the Nigerian society. Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again takes a critical look at the Nigerian family and the distancing effects of politics, the issues of polygamy, the deceits of the political class and the social trauma of political make believe. In these works, we see the social factors that have been the bane and stronghold of the people's social being.

5.0 SUMMARY

The three works studied here in the three genres reveal various aspects of Nigerian social milieu. We see religion, politics, and marriage, among other issues as social realities in Nigerian society. All aspects of traditional religious beliefs are revealed in The Concubine by Elechi Amadi. We see a people with defined religious beliefs in God, gods and other elemental forces. There are patterned modes of worship. There are natural phenomena which have meaning in the religious lives of the people. In Tanure Ojaide's collection of poetry, The Fate of Vultures, and Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again we see pictures of the inevitable traumas of the people where politics and other decadences try to outsmart the people's social standing. Here, the social realities are rehashed as the people's ways of lives are exposed. These works have shown to a large extent, how the Nigerian writers have recorded the social realities of the Nigerian people from different dimensions.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. What are the basic reasons for reflecting social realities in Nigerian literature?
2. Explain religion as a social force in Amadi's The Concubine.
3. Appreciate Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again as revealing political/marital realities in Nigeria.
4. Assess the treatment of social realities in Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures.*
5. Discuss the effectiveness of Nigerian writers in reflecting the Nigerian society in their works.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Amadi, Elechi (1966). The Concubine. London: Heinemann.

Ojaide, Tanure (1990). The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems. Lagos: Malthouse.

Rotimi, Ola (1982). Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 2 NIGERIAN HISTORY AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE 1: MILITARISM

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Militarism in Nigerian Novel: Achebe's Anthills of the *Savannah*
3.3 Militarism as theme in Okigbo's Labyrinth
3.4 Militarism as theme in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone *Mad Again*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will examine the theme of military and other political issues in Nigerian literature. Military politics is one of the unfortunate offshoots of colonialism in Africa and consequently a recurrent theme in the African novel. In African culture, there are people traditionally trained to fight wars in case of external aggression. These trained men are often seen in the time of need. They obey those occupying political or tradition executive powers that they vowed to protect. They do not imagine themselves occupying the political positions as heads of government or heads of their communities. However, when the colonial powers came into being in Africa, they trained Africans in the art of their kind of wars. They exposed Africans to wars by recruiting them into fighting the first and the second world wars. These African military men encountered European soldiers in battle field. They learnt new logistics of military intelligence. We shall study the treatment of these themes in Nigerian literature using some Nigerian literary works s yardsticks.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand military and political themes in Nigerian literature
assess the use of military and political themes in Nigerian literature
appreciate the use of militarism as theme in Nigerian literature
discuss the use of militarism as theme in Nigerian literature

identify Nigerian literatures with military politics as subject matter.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The military rulers who tasted power never wanted to relinquish power. For instance, since Nigeria's independence 48 years ago, the military have served the political arena for over 30 years. The military rulers held on to power with endless promises of democracy. Many Nigerian writers who wrote about militarism have presented them as being corrupt more than the people they are supposed to correct. Most of them developed into dictators like Muamar Ghadaffi of Libya and the late Sani Abacha of Nigeria. Many African countries are still under the grip of militarism because it is either their leaders are military rulers or ex-military. One still sees the same military politics even as the people are hopeful of a democratic government in place.

Many Africans believe that military politics was a reaction to the corrupt practices of the political class. For instance, Chinua Achebe's A Man of *the People was described as a prophetic work because it was launched* almost at the brink of the first military coup de tat in Nigeria. Chinua Achebe believed then that the corruption going among the First Republic politicians in Nigeria might trigger off a possible coup as a corrective measure. However, this dream of correction turned into pure anarchy as the military leaders projected their militarism as tactics in governance. These military rulers siphon the people's economic base and save huge sums of money in foreign accounts. They turn the country's treasury into their personal accounts. The situation seems very pathetic.

The theory of military intervention in politics in Africa and other third world countries is a catalytic post-colonial discourse. In Nigeria, the inability of the political elite to give the young nation the needed creative force to move forward and the employment of political institutions to serve the whims and boisterous accumulative urge of sectional leaders created the chasm that heralded the first military coup in 1966. Thus, in the wake of the first coup d'état and counter-coups in Nigeria (nay Africa), the men in uniform had at various times, unimaginatively harped on the same tune as the motivation for their over-throw of legitimate governments, that is, 'the love for country'. Unfortunately, the soldiers have never achieved the litany of objectives that brought them to power. Some of the social decadence that they sought to eliminate includes corruption and outright embezzlement, the quest for genuine federalism, the promise of more inclusive

arrangement, political stability, reduction of poverty level, safety and security of life, and better health facility.

The military by nature rules by command and obedience; thus no room for opposition that would have guaranteed checks and balances of any sort, and the gulf they tried to fill, by and large, encouraged unrestricted access to the national resources which they expended so unsparingly, irresponsibly and inefficiently. Thus, the mottled gangsters' circuit show became a centrifugal force which drew the whole military institution from its lofty ideals of professionalism, national security and loyalty; and the military's longing for stable polity became a chimera in an induced culture of violence which became a nucleus of incoherence with the embezzlement of public funds heightened only by degree as the Nigerian military produced a nest of millionaire and multi-millionaire generals. Thus this economic war of looting waged on Nigeria plundered its resources while the impoverished citizens live in squalor and abject poverty and the purportedly 'redemptive missions' led to 'ruinous mission' as the military grew into a mildew and ominous albatross on the political terrain, emphasizing only its oppressive endowments; the archetypal characterization and role possessed at the early morning of colonial irruption on the continent

Some theorists and politicians have however carved a specious argument and an Alice-in- Wonderland theory of a northern oligarchy of the Hausa/Fulani, whose nomenclature changes according to the fancy and degree of mystifications and political bruise sustained by lachrymal scholars and political victims. Thus the Kaduna mafia is thought to be the manipulating force behind military rule in Nigeria in a votary of castigated hegemonic philosophy of the caste, Maitama Sule Dan Masani Kano, which nearly lent credence to this myth when he freely uncovered a clandestine enterprise in one of his numerous interviews, stating that: a directive was issued to all the ministers in Sardauna's cabinet, that each time any of them, was on tour they were to ensure that they visit schools and recruited people into the military. The occasion and motivation for this surreptitious gang up, was the bestial treatment meted to political elite in Iraq at the dawn of the country's first coup.

Maitama Sule's confessions, like the legendary confessions of a prodigal acolyte before mother "Idoto" in Okigbo's poem, a necessary ritual for his baptism into statesmanship seems so wild, narrow and arrogant, seeing the ruinous consequence of the perverse vision on Nigerian political and economic epistemological space: one discovers an oppositional algebraic sum that only points at the "narrowness of vision" of some self-seeking and self-opinionated bunch of ethnic chauvinists who laundered themselves to power through their surrogates and thus violently and relentlessly maintained a vertical network of personal and

patron-client relations. Thus the military's troublous (mis)adventure in politics drew Nigeria to the fringes with the dubious regimes of Babangida and Abacha (1985-1998) as the worst period of crisis and military dictatorship in the entire post-independence period and as the time tickled away, the juntas and the whole military institution drifted and lost their sense of direction. And second, the greed of the military dragged the nation by degrees, slowly but surely away from the project of nationhood, and thus by the end of almost forty years of military rule, Nigeria was far more fragmented than it was in January 1966, when they first seized power.

Thus, the pains and frustration of military rule equally foregrounded the realities of some post-colonial literary texts in (African) Nigeria, whose grains include anguish, privation, fatalism and cynicism. Who is the Writer? A writer may be protean in nature, depending on the perception and context of his/her conception or cognition. Within general academic province, she/he is an intellectual in a field of knowledge. But significantly, she/he is a member of the society. More specifically, however, the writer in this context as a member of society and like any member of society partakes of the observable experience(s) of the society. In the universe of this discourse, the writer, unlike other members, is conceived as one who portrays and examines these experiences in: a specialized creative manner and with the sole aim of sourcing for relevant materials from the pool of experiences. The selected materials (experiences) he/she interprets, recreates imaginatively, and reflects or refracts, depending on his/her level of consciousness and degree of commitment. The writer is therefore a true artist, always wanting to create works answering the most urgent questions engaging the contemporary mind. One significant feature of the writer in this context is not only his cognition of life but also an aesthetic interpretation and artistic revelation of cultural environment to yield the link between art and life that queries the mode or medium of transmission.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the role of the Nigerian writer in the correction of militarism in Nigeria?

3.2 Militarism as Theme in Achebe's Anthills of the *Savannah*

The novel starts out by describing a Cabinet meeting. After the session is closed it turns out that outside the palace there is a crowd of people from the province of Abazon who try to get to meet the President. The people are dissatisfied because, as it later turns out, Sam has caused

them to suffer by shutting down water-holes in the province, which are dry as a result of the drought. He refuses to meet the delegation. After this event, Ikem goes to meet the delegation. It turns out that he is in a way one of them, born and raised in Abazon, and has come to be greatly respected by the Abazonians as the famous editor of the National Gazette. When he leaves the Abazonian delegation that day, he is stopped by the traffic police because of some misdemeanour. It is later revealed that he was followed by State Research Council agents who needed proof that Ikem had actually visited the delegation in order to be able to accuse him of treason for siding with the rebellious Abazonians. Some time after this, Ikem is fired from the National Gazette by orders from the President, who thinks Ikem's writing in the Gazette is too critical of his "administration". The President actually wants Chris to do the firing, but he refuses. After being sacked, Ikem makes a radical speech at the University of Bassa (the capital of Kangan). The speech is purposefully misquoted in the Gazette the next day, giving the impression that Ikem wants the President dead. He's charged of treason and conspiracy, soldiers come to pick him up from his home and shoot him dead, claiming it was an accident.

After this episode, Chris feels he can no longer work under President Sam as Commissioner for Information. He is afraid he is going to wind up like Ikem, and goes into hiding. A while later, he too is charged with treason and becomes a fugitive for real. After a couple of weeks hiding, he decides to travel away from the capital to the province of Abazon. When he reaches the province, it turns out that there has been some kind of a coup d'état and the President has fled the country. Upon hearing this he joins a celebration on the street and meets a drunken policeman. By accident, the man shoots him dead.

In Anthills of the Savannah, Chinua Achebe writes about the problems facing newly independent African states. The prevailing theme and the most visible one of these problems is the corrupt, dictatorial rule set up in Kangan (Nigeria) and most of the other "new" African states that let down the dreams and hopes that were associated with independence. Although the rulers were no longer European, and although they were a lot closer to the people than their European predecessors, they fairly soon distanced themselves from the people. The first instance of this alienation in the novel is the way Sam deals with the problem of the Abazonian delegation. Instead of going out to meet them by himself, he assigns someone else to do it. The fact that he's built himself a luxurious lakeside mansion is another representation of this. There is also the theme of oppressive dictatorial rule. The way Sam deals with Ikem is reminiscent of traditional totalitarian states, especially the Latin American juntas. This is also the case with freedom of speech in Kangan. The paper, apparently the only one in the country, is censored

and orders regarding its contents often seem to come straight from the President.

Another theme of the book is described in Ikem's peculiar dilemma. Despite his position as editor of the Gazette, he wants to appear like just another Kangan worker. Therefore he doesn't ride a company car to work, but drives by himself in an old beat-up car. The dilemma is pointed out to him by a taxi driver: by driving himself, he is taking away a job opportunity from some poor Kangan chauffeur. The larger problem here is the position of the black, African elite in the new African countries, where the elite has traditionally been of European origin. There was no elite class in the pre-colonial period in Africa. The novel also deals with the theme of being a been-to, an African who has come back to his country after a longer stay in the West. The main characters are all been-tos and this is reflected in the ways in which they try to position themselves in relation to the "common" Kangans. An example of this is how Chris relates to Emmanuel, a university student leader; and Braimoh, a cab driver.

There is a direct reference to the West in the scene in which Beatrice goes to a party that Sam has organized to impress an American journalist. The journalist wraps the President and the whole Cabinet around her finger, lecturing them about how Kangan should take care of its foreign affairs and debt. She represents the attitudes of the West to the African countries in general and their unequal standing in world politics. According to Walter Rodney the colonial machinery created a military elite that later became military dictators in the post-independence era. A good example is Sam, the military despot in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically explain how Sam, the military president, exhibited dictatorial

governance in Kangan

3.3 Militarism as Theme in Okigbo's Labyrinths

In 'Lament of the Drums', one of the segments in Okigbo's Labyrinths, a song of exile, depicts the parlous state into which Nigeria has fallen. It thematizes the rape of democratic values by the military and their opportunistic civilian collaborators, the perversion of justice, the underdevelopment of the country through the wanton waste of her human and material resources, and the overall degeneration of the land. The elegy ends with:

The wailing is for the Great River:

Her pot-bellied watchers
Despoil her... (p.50)

The river, of course, is the Niger from which the country derives its name. The ellipsis indicates that the destruction of the land shall be a continuous process. As aptly predicted by the poet, the Nigerian Armed Forces that are supposed to protect the land lay siege to it, fall upon its fat like robbers, and strip the people of their laughter. Okigbo brings back the image of the predatory eagles in 'Elegy for Alto' to express the idea of a second conquest, but this time around the usurpation comes from within:

THE EAGLES have come again,
The eagles rain down on us -
POLITICIANS are back in giant hidden steps of
howitzers, of detonators, (p. 71).

The neo-colonial African politician - civilian or military - continues with the structures of exploitation and privilege erected by the white conquerors in the colonial period. Although Okigbo hailed and praised the architects of the first military putsch in Nigeria, the Majors' coup-of January 15, 1966, he recognized the danger in the Armed Forces perceiving themselves as politicians and warned the self-acclaimed saviours against the temptation to loot the nation's treasury and thereby commit the mistakes of civilian politicians. He intones:

Alas! the elephant has fallen -
Hurrah for thunder -
But already the hunters are talking about pumpkins:
If they share the meat let them remember thunder.
The eye that looks down will surely see the nose;
The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose.
Today - for tomorrow, today becomes yesterday:
How many million promises can ever fill a basket... (p.67)

It is fruitless counting the number of military coups - botched or successful - that have been reported in Nigeria. The same facile explanation of saving the people from themselves and from evils of maladministration and economic mismanagement and returning the country onto the path of true democracy is proffered by the coup plotters. It is sad to note that the promise has so far remained unfulfilled. The intervention of the military in the politics of the nation is a total disaster. The most urgent task that confronts the Nigerian people is how to deliver their country from the death-clutch of its greedy Armed Forces. The joy that attends the poet's homecoming, like the ephemeral euphoria at Independence, is deceptive and ironic. Correctly

apprehended, it is the joy of freedom from being. The poet's homecoming is celebrated in terms that suggest the Worship of Death:

> Death herself,
> the chief celebrant,
> in a cloud of incense,
> paring her finger nails...
> At her feet rolled their heads like cut fruits;
> She bathed her knees in the blood of attendants;
> her smock in entrails of ministrants... (p.55)

The images remind us of the pogrom in which thousands of Igbo people lost their lives in the Northern part of the country and the waste of lives during the Civil War. Nigeria is portrayed as mother-earth that consumes her own children but, unlike earth-mother, the country continually fails to profit from the promise of procreation and regeneration and, therefore, remains a waste land. The picture of a hecatomb and horror is relatively the same for most post-Independence states of Africa. Carnage, a regular feature in modern African history, continues to rage in Algeria, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia. The continent bleeds and bleeds again from self-inflicted wounds, as if to prove the veracity of Yambo Ouologuem's thesis that she is bound to violence. Her poetry is an unbroken paean to Moloch. The poet's homecoming reminds us of Thomas Carlyle's Worship of Sorrow. The current political debacle in Nigeria is a re-enactment in its horrendous detail of the tragic events that led the country to the path of war in the late sixties. The detention of M. K. O. Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the June 12 1993 presidential election, is analogous to the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo on treasonable felony charges. 'Both parts of Silences', Okigbo wrote in the ‘Introduction to Labyrinths’, 'were inspired by the events of the day. ‘Lament of the Silent Sister’, by the Western Nigeria Crisis of 1962, and the death of Patrice Lumumba; ‘Lament of the Drums’ by the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo, and the tragic death of his eldest son.' (p. xii)

It is not an exaggeration to assert that Nigeria's season of anomy started barely two years after her attainment of political Independence. Despite the long period of doom, there is still not even a shadow in the horizon of the possibility of relief for the suffering of the people. The flowers of the nation, the minorities, and the multitudes of pariahs - all aliens in their own land, like 'the drums' (the ancestors) - 'sense/ With dog-nose a Babylonian capture' (p.46) and shriek in the agony of despair as they lament daily their predicament and watch their supposed protectors usurp their being, make a mockery of their sacrifice, and stifle their seeds to death. They either embrace revolutionary violence, as Okigbo did, or continue to moan in despair, or go into exile. It is thus clear that

the-dream of freedom is still a tantalizing mirage as Nigeria persists in treading the path of thunder.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how Okigbo captures militarism in his Labyrinths

3.4 Militarism as Theme in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone

Mad Again

Again in Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, we see attack on the ex-military personnel in Nigeria attempting to go into civilian politics with the same military mentality. The drama is a satire, critical of the ills in the Nigerian society. The major object or subject of attack and derision in the play is Lejoka-Brown. He was ex-military personnel, a veteran who believes so much in his military intelligence in outsmarting everybody. Rotimi makes fun of Lejoka-Brown because of military madness. The playwright outrightly lampoons his hero's idea about politics with military intelligence. In the discussion between Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo, the former has this to say why he takes to politics:

> "Are you there…? Politics is the thing, no in Nigeria mate, you want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop life? No, no… you want to chop a big slice of the national cake? Na politics" (Our Husband, p. 4)

Lejoka-Brown's motive in joining politics is not dictated by his sense of patriotism and service but he sees politics as a means to an end. He is certainly myopic, ideologically barren and too ridiculous to be a leader of the nation. In exposing Lejoka-Brown's motive, Rotimi is subtly indicting the decadent Nigerian political activists. By making jest of Lejoka-Brown, Rotimi is indirectly attacking the greedy, selfish and pleasure seeking leaders in Nigerian society. Hear Lejoka-Brown:

> It is a war, politics is war. Ooo I am not taking
> no chance this time I took things slow and easy
> and what happened? I lost a bye election to a small crab.
> (Our Husband, p. 7)

Certainly, Lejoka-Brown's statement evokes laughter in us. Yet, it goes to show how crude and ruthless he is. If Lejoka-Brown is taken as a symbolic representation of Nigerian leaders, one can then say that the playwright is criticizing Nigerian leader's use of brute force to achieve political ambitions especially the ex-military personnel who are occupying political positions in Nigeria. Lejoka-Brown's surprise and attack campaign strategy elicits the playwright's mockery. Although,

Lejoka vigorously explained to his party members the nature of his military strategy, he only succeeded in dramatizing his hollow mentality. He says:

> Gentlemen, our election campaign plan must follow a platform of military strategy known as surprise and attack…
> (Our Husband, p. 50)

From Lejoka's campaign plan, he exposes the fact that he is incredibly ridiculous. Rotimi portrays him as a man who fails to understand the difference between a politician and a soldier. And this is the problem of militarism in Nigerian politics. Most of these ex-soldiers in civilian politics still practice the hard-line military tactics on the people to the extent that the people could not distinguish the former military rule from the current democratic dispensation. Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic rule in Nigeria could not be differentiated from his military rule. The same brute, force and anarchy also prevailed. This is the symbolic representation in Lejoka-Brown.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discus the way in which Rotimi attacked militarism in Nigerian politics in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The role of the military in Nigeria has been more of the negative. As seen in the works under study in this unit, they come to correct but end up destroying what they ought to correct. A 'post-colonial' view of Nigerian history is an entirely ugly record because of the ugly military imposition of power. This study enables us to understand what a people have become in the process of a particular form of political and cultural contact. It tells of an important, even crucial, moment in a process of becoming a stable political nation. It acknowledges that colonialism was a fact of history that Nigerians can not dismiss urgently. The military created regimes of trauma. In such regimes, national identity is a mere fabrication, defined by passports and legal instruments merely, a form of identity. In such a situation, history is the account of the post-colonial encounter because there are no longer nations and peoples, and there is nothing to remember or recall. The military reminds us that the experience of colonialism dissolves all identities, erases nationalities, makes destiny irrelevant and even problematic. It is different from the condition created by national histories, even when that history is rife with exile and dispersal. That is why it helps to see that Anthills of the *Savannah is not about nation-building in the post-colonial era, but about*

the destiny of particular peoples, a destiny conceived as having a life and purpose of its own. The anthills of the savannah are eternal reminders of the many wild fires of every national history. Their only theme is renewal, a renewal that crashes at the point of hope. The coup predicted in Okigbo's Labyrinths forewarns the looming catastrophe associated with military politics which is out to bring respite to the people but ended up being more traumatic than the preceding corrupt government. Lejoka-Brown in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a typology of the military civilians permeating all evils in the name of democratic dividends.

5.0 SUMMARY

Nigerian literatures with militarism as theme are common in Nigeria because of the long history of military leadership in Nigeria. We see Sam, Chris and Ikem as the residues of western colonial might entrenching western values in various ways in Nigeria. Clearly, of course, both Chris and Ikem, two of the principal thinkers in the Anthills *of the Savannah, think they are intellectuals engaged in the building of a* new and just post-colonial, or more exactly, a post-independence, society. The final issue is not about the future of the state, but the future of the people. In Labyrinths, Okigbo expresses the fear that might result from militarism which eventually manifested in the Nigerian civil war. He warns that the progress of a people is determined upon the collective responsibility of the masses in achieving a common goal. The likes of Lejoka-Brown in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again must be flushed out if a true democratic dispensation is to be experienced in Nigeria. Nigerian writers have been in vanguard of expressing the fears associated wit militarism in Nigeria as revealed in these works and many more not mentioned here.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain why Nigerian writers use militarism as themes in their works.
2. What are the effects of military intervention in Anthills of the *Savannah?*
3. Discus how Okigbo expressed fears about militarism in *Labyrinths.*
4. Lejoka-Brown is a typology of Nigerian military leaders. Explain this as exemplified in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad *Again.*
5. Assess the influence of militarism in Nigeria as reflected in Nigerian literatures.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1987). Anthills of the Savannah. London: Heinemann.

Okigbo, Christopher (2008). Labyrinths & Path of Thunder. Lagos: Apex Books.

Rotimi, Ola (1981). Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 3 NIGERIAN HISTORY AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE 2: WAR

CONTENTS

4.0 Introduction
5.0 Objectives
6.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Civil War Novel: Isidore Okpewho's The Last *Duty*
3.3 Nigerian Civil War Poetry: J.P. Clark's "Casualties"
3.4 Nigerian Civil War Drama: Soyinka's Madmen and *Specialists*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine Nigerian literatures that treated the issue of wars. African countries have had history of wars. We have had Nigerian-Biafran War of 1968-1970. There are many war literatures in Nigeria about Nigerian-Biafran war. They include: Eddie Iroh's Forty *Eight Guns for the General and Toads of War, Ekwensi's Survive the Peace, Okpewho's The Last Duty, Achebe's Girls at War amongst other* numerous titles. We shall examine some novels, poetry and drama treating the theme of war in Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

understand that Nigerian war literature exists
appreciate Nigerian writers writing about wars
assess any Nigerian literature with war themes
recognize Nigerian literatures with war themes
identify Nigerian writers that write about wars.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

A war literature is a literature in which the primary action takes place in a field of armed combat, or in a domestic setting (or home front) where the characters are preoccupied with the preparations for, or recovery from, war. The war literature's main roots lie in the epic poetry of the classical and medieval periods, especially Homer's The Iliad, Virgil's *The Aeneid, the Old English saga Beowulf, and different versions of the* legends of King Arthur. All of these epics were concerned with preserving the history or mythology of conflicts between different societies, while providing an accessible narrative that could reinforce the collective memory of a people. Other important influences on the war literature include the tragedies of such dramatists as Euripides, Seneca the Younger, Christopher Marlowe, and Shakespeare. Shakespeare's *Henry V provided a model for how the history, tactics, and ethics of war* could be combined in an essentially fictional framework. Romances and satires in Early Modern Europe--Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene and Miguel de Cervantes's Don Quixote, to name two of many--also contained elements of military heroism and folly that influenced the later development of war literatures. In terms of imagery and symbolism, many modern war literatures (especially those espousing an anti-war viewpoint) take their cue from Dante's depiction of Hell in The *Inferno, John Milton's account of the war in Heaven in Paradise Lost,* and the Apocalypse as depicted in The Bible's Book of Revelations. All of these works feature realistic depictions of major battles, visceral scenes of wartime horrors and atrocities, and significant insights into the nature of heroism, cowardice, and morality in wartime.

Communal wars are common in Nigeria. Some of these wars are caused by tribal differences while others are caused by certain civil issues like the killing of an Umuofia woman in Achebe's Things Fall Apart and the war over land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi in Achebe's Arrow *of God. Communal wars are common in Africa. In Nigeria, the civil war* of 1968 to 1970 influenced many literary works. Apart from memoirs which gave accurate accounts of personal experiences during the war like Soyinka's The Man Died amongst other works, there are rich stocks of war literatures in Nigeria in all the genres. There are many war literatures in Nigeria written after the war even presently in 2007 when a young Nigeria, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, wrote Half of a Yellow *Sun, a story of the Nigerian-Biafran war almost 40 years after the war.* Judging by the steady stream of publications on the subject, they still seem to have much to say. For Eddie Iroh, "to stop writing about (the war) would be to stop writing about the history of this nation. You can never write enough about that tragic thing called war" (Feuser: 150).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the relevance of war themes in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Civil War in Nigerian Novel: Okpewho's The *Last Duty*

Isidore Okpewho's The Last Duty is a war novel that explores the psychological make up of characters in the war drama. In this novel, the Federal and the Secessionist armies are locked in a fierce battle. But the author plays down the drama of external violence and concentrates fully on its deeper human dimensions. We have committed characters giving account of their experiences and roles in the war. We have Chief Toje, a big chief who conspired to the arrest and detention of his greatest business rival Oshevire. He used the opportunity of Oshevire's arrest to attempt sexual exploitation of his wife, Aku. Aku is from the secessionist part of the country and feels unprotected in the course of the war. Chief Toje pretends offering her protection but with the intension of exploiting her. However, Toje's impotence could not allow him achieve his evil intention. His nephew, Odibo, the cripple often goes on errand for him to Aku's place. Aku, being sexually abused without actualizing it decides to allow Odibo calm her troubled sexual nerves. This single act makes Odibo realize that he is beyond destitution. He begins to challenge Chief Toje and this leads to the most heinous experiences of the war beyond the battlefront. Both men slaughtered each other. Aku is taken over by Major Ali for protection. Oghenovo, Aku's son and the only child narrator in the story is busy expecting the return of his father from prison. All he does is to fight against Onome or anyone who calls his father a thief. At the return of Oshevire after being proved innocent of the charges against him, he decided to do his last duty of restoring his image, home and conscience. This leads to another tragedy which marks the unending trauma of wars.

By adopting the "collective evidence" technical style of narration, we watch without any inhibition, the adventures, the feelings, the hopes, the fears, the emotional burden and the moral state of the characters in their process of formation. Each character's narrative portion and perspective is proportionate to his degree of involvement, and response to the conflicts. By presenting action from many points of view, the writer allows the reader to judge the entire situation himself. The dramatized or pictorial adopted allows Okpewho to give full and free verbal expression to his characters' emotions, even those that will normally be suppressed as a result of public consciousness.

Starting with Major Ali, both the narrative and the plot structures

expand gradually as if from an aperture into a wider channel until the

climax is reached when the three main characters lose their lives tragically over a woman. The themes also come tumbling in one by one, one linking the other until there is a complex network of themes: the disruption in communal life, the mischievous manipulation of military authorities for the settlement of private scores, the sexual oppression of a destitute and forlorn woman, the abuse of children and the handicapped, the heroic assertion of personal integrity in the face of daunting odds, moral chastity pulverized by destitution, domestic crises, psychological depression, sexual impotence, etc.

In the novel, we see each character contributing his quota to the main issue. The main issue is not the civil war demon that is currently devastating the land as this is only a catalyst for the internal psychological crises plaguing all the major characters. The war only reverberates at the background and remains peripheral to the main plot of the narrative. The writer's emphasis is on the series of individualized "civil" wars that each individual has to confront: the desperate tug-of-war between Chief Toje and his failing manhood, his death-knell struggle with his business rival, Oshevire, the fratricidal war between him and his servant over the beautiful wife of another citizen who has been jailed on trumped up charges, his pursuit of pre-war social and financial privileges, Oshevire's struggle against war time wickedness, Aku's moral battle with destitution and unlawful sexual urges, Major Ali's fight to maintain law and order, etc.

In the novel we see that there is much emphasis on honor, honesty, integrity and fellow feelings. The novel does not celebrate any heroic exploits in battle, but a heroic resolve to be just and compassionate under impossible circumstances. The series of micro "civil wars" are bitter, more destructive and more physically and spiritually agonizing than the real civil war. There is economy, not only of words and action, but also of details. The tragedy is worked out within the strategic temporal space of a border town. By selecting a small border town as setting, we are offered the sense of an enclosed arena, which allows no intrusion, or escape from this world of tragedy. Okpewho chooses appropriate characters to dramatize the tale, from the peasant to the noble, from the honorable to the villain. The nature of the human problem presented in the narrative is as complex, touching and realistic as the deft technical construction of the work. Okpewho displays an impressive understanding and insight into the deep world of his characters' inner lives. Okpewho explores this grave human situation with responsibility and sympathetic understanding. Each character makes his choice and bears the consequences of his decision. In Okpewho's artistic vision, choices stem from the characters' inner selves; thus he explores the characters' thoughts fully. He focuses his tragic vision on a closely-knit series of events and maintains this vision

through a supremely controlled authorial distance as well as a dramatized angle of observation. There is an effective combination of emotional detachment and an incisive display of sympathy and fellow feelings.

Okpewho has helped to make the war alive to us in a new and fresh way. He succeeds very well in deploying techniques to make the reader a collaborator with him and with the characters in creating a conception of the Civil War that leaps out of the text. The novel enlarges our sympathy and opens our eyes to areas of civil war experience we never really knew well. The novel explores the dark places of human nature, the ethical and moral values of both pre-war and during-the-war Nigerian society. One basic tendency in some of the best war novels is that many of the narrators see war in more personal than social terms. They seem to have concentrated on the fate of the innocent individuals who are trapped by a destructive machine whose magnitude they cannot even imagine and whose power they are helpless to oppose. Not even children are immune. The extent to which children are affected by war is driven home by the experience of the little Oghenovo in The Last Duty. War is an organism that consumes all who come in contact with it.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

From your reading of The last Duty, discuss the effect of war on individual psyche

3.3 Nigerian Civil War Poetry: J.P. Clark's "Casualties"

Clark is most remembered for his poetry, including: Poems (1961), a group of forty lyrics that treat heterogeneous themes; A Reed in the Tide (1965), occasional poems that focus on the Clark's indigenous African background and his travel experience in America and other places; *Casualties: Poems 1966-68 (1970), which illustrate the horrendous* events of the Nigeria-Biafra war; A Decade of Tongues (1981), a collection of seventy-four poems, all of which apart from "Epilogue to Casualties" (dedicated to Michael Echeruo) were previously published in earlier volumes; State of the Union (1981), which highlights his apprehension concerning the sociopolitical events in Nigeria as a developing nation; Mandela and Other Poems (1988), which deals with the perennial problem of aging and death.

Critics have noted three main stages in Clark's poetic career: the apprenticeship stage of trial and experimentation, exemplified by such juvenilia as "Darkness and Light" and "Iddo Bridge"; the imitative stage, in which he appropriates such Western poetic conventions as the couplet measure and the sonnet sequence, exemplified in such lyrics as "To a

Fallen Soldier" and "Of Faith"; and the individualized stage, in which he attains the maturity and originality of form of such poems as "Night Rain", "Out of the Tower", and "Song". Throughout his work, certain themes recur: Violence and protest, as in Casualties; Institutional corruption, as in State of the Union; The beauty of nature and the landscape, as in A Reed in the Tide; European colonialism as in, for example, "Ivbie" in the Poems collection; The inhumanity of the human race as in Mandela and Other Poems. Clark frequently dealt with these themes through a complex interweaving of indigenous African imagery and that of the Western literary tradition.

In the poem, 'Casualties', Clark makes a case for his people- the Ijaws, during the Nigeria-Biafra war. He recalls the scenes of the war, the effects of the war and the horrendous experiences that accompany the war. He tries to explain that though the Ijaws were not present at the scenes of war but that they suffered the same hardship. He actually explained thus:

The casualties are not only
Those who are dead
They are well out of it

The casualties are not only
Those that are wounded
They are well out of it

After explaining the various victims of the war: the dead, the wounded, the deprived and the hopeless, he further explained that the war affected those who may have been outside the war scenes:

The casualties are many
And good number well outside
The scenes of ravage and wreck

He further explained that the other victims are those who are suffering from what they never started, the wandering minstrels (the poets), and the people who could not quench the fire they started among others. He believes that war affects people beyond the scenes of war because its effects run against time, location and race. This poem resulted in one of the longest literary tussles that Nigeria has ever experienced. A young Nigerian writer by then, Odia Ofeimun reacted to J.P. Clark's poem 'Casualties'. He claimed that Clark's poem smacks of lies and poetic insincerity. In his controversial poetry collection, The Poet Lied, Odia called Clark a liar. He based his argument on the role of the Ijaws during the Nigerian-Biafran war. They were complacent and many of them like Clark left Lagos for their hometowns in Ijawland until the end of the

war. The logical question that arises out of Odia's poetry is: should a writer write what he experienced or should he lie about it. J.P. Clark never took the matter lightly. He took Odia Ofeimun to court claiming defamation of character and other legal rights. The case lasted for over ten years and was recently resolved as the judge told them to see literature as pure creativity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

In the controversy surrounding the poem 'Casualties', explain the need for experience in literary creativity.

3.4 Nigerian Civil War Drama: Soyinka's Madmen and *Specialists*

This play, written shortly after Soyinka was released from prison, reflects not only his personal mood at the time, but the horrors of the Nigerian civil war of 1966-1970. The ferocity of the fighting between Biafrans and other Nigerians was unprecedented in scale and intensity; and much of the nation was still in shock. Soyinka uses a variety of techniques borrowed from "absurdist" theater. These departures from realism are meant not to create a flight from reality, but to convey the terrors of reality in a more intense way than traditional realism could do.
The result is a sometimes obscure but intense and moving work of scathing satire and protest. The raised hut of Iya Agba and Iya Mate is the site of a sort of commentary on the action taking place below.

Mendicants, in this play, are beggars faking a variety of ailments to prey on the sympathies of the public. They function like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, commenting on the action. It is not always clear whether they are insane or simply expressing themselves satirically. "St. Vitus' Dance" is a traditional name for epilepsy. Traditionally it is believed that some people can curse others by looking at them with an "evil eye." The dehumanizing effects of the war are reflected in their gruesome gambling game. Ostriches were traditionally said to hide their heads in the sand. To "bite the dust" is an old expression for "to die." "As" is the mysterious deity of the new ferocious faith which has swept over the nation. This is why the beggars call themselves "Creatures of As."

Si Bero is a traditional herbal healer whose brother Dr. Bero is a modern-educated doctor who has become deeply involved with the terrorist regime ruling the country. "Rem Acu Tetigisti" is nonsense perpetrated by the new government cult and repeated here each time the beggars want to evoke the senseless violence of the government. "Casting pearls before swine" is an expression based on one of Jesus' parables (Matthew 7:6) which implies wasting something valuable on

people incapable of appreciating it. The beggars begin to mime the tortures carried out by the sadistic "specialist," Dr. Bero. They speculate about whether Bero will torture his own father, in the play referred to simply as "the old man."

Iya Mate compliments Si Bero as the sort of herbal woman who would not poison men, but discover she has inadvertently gathered a rare and deadly poison. The song they sing hints at the dangers they are experiencing. A boat full of oil would naturally avoid open flames. Why do you think Si Bero chooses Blindman as her assistant? It is a tradition to insult someone by insulting his mother. Si Bero has nothing particularly in mind by telling the Cripple that his mother is in a bad mood. The beggars' litany of medical treatments quickly deteriorates into gruesome violence: medicine has blended into torture in this play, reflected in the miming that follows. Persistently barking dogs were sometimes silenced by having their vocal chords cut. "The flaming sword" was wielded by an angel at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to bar the way back to Adam and Eve after they had been banished for their sin (Genesis 3:24). An advocate is a lawyer. How do we learn that the Blindman is also faking his handicap?

A holdall is a large suitcase. What do we learn about the relationship between Bero and the beggars? Note how the Blindman tries to soften Bero toward his sister. The beggars claim to have been discharged from the army, but Bero insists they are still under his orders. "Gaol" is the Nigerian/British spelling of "jail." Bero hints at unspeakable crimes for which the beggars were discharged. What does Bero mean by calling all his old patients corpses? What fluid is referring to when he brags of having wetted the earth with something more potent than palm wine? What is Si Bero's reaction to her brother? She believes that the herbal magic she was taught by the old women has preserved his life. "Big Braids" highest officers.

The windy old priest trusts Dr. Bero. What kind of a character is he? A miter is the hat worn by a bishop. He is the first to introduce the subject of cannibalism. Cannibalism is not part of normal modern Nigerian life, but there were instances of it during the civil war as people sought to terrify and insult their enemies in the fiercest way possible. What is Bero's reaction to the priest's statement that his father advocated legalizing cannibalism? In the following conversation with Si Bero the doctor explains the derivation of the divine name "As" from the traditional Christian blessing, "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, Amen." In its original Christian context, it was intended as a statement of firm faith in God's eternal goodness and justice, but in the new cult it has been emptied of theological content. The phrase has been reduced to its least significant word, and now alludes to a cursed cycle

of destruction from which there is no escape. What Dr. Bero is saying is that his father tricked him and others into eating human flesh hoping to shame them into realizing how savage they had become. Instead, it had the effect of liberating them from all moral inhibitions. What was his father's job in the war?

The Old Man is a fierce truth-teller. The beggars, who had pled insanity to escape punishment for their crimes, claim to have been driven mad by his truth-telling. What is the symbolism of the killing and eating of the flea? The cycle referred to suggests to Si Bero that the Old Man has been eaten by his son, and she is horrified. "Surgery" means "doctor's office."

In part two of the play, Aafaa's alphabetical sermon leads to the Blindman's assertion that the epileptic fits of worshippers bring not true freedom, but subjection to a vicious deity. "Circus turn" means "circus act." "Collaborate" is a much more loaded word than "assist," suggesting aiding in crimes. The Old Man has sat silent up to this point, seemingly in shock. The line "Arise, throw off thy crutches and follow me" is a combination of phrases from the Bible: Jesus saying to his would-be followers "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24) and Mark 2:9 where Jesus defends his right to heal a crippled man by stating "Who is my neighbor" is uttered in Luke 10:29 by a man responding to Jesus' teaching to love your neighbor as you love yourself. "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word," is the grateful speech of Simeon who has been preserved long enough to meet the infant Jesus, implying that he can now die content (Luke 2:29). Here it has more sinister implications. Soyinka was raised as a Christian and attended a missionary school as a boy, so he knows his Bible thoroughly.

"Chop" is slang for food. What is the nature of the relationship between Bero and his father? A stationer's is a stationery store. Why does Bero emphasize that the Old Man will get everything he needs? The Old Man revels in his feat of having tricked the leaders into practicing cannibalism. Why does he say he is still needed? A recidivist is one who commits again a crime that he has committed before. Why has Bero brought the Old Man here?

How does Aafaa say he was filled with the spirit that drove him mad? Note how the two old women present themselves as part of a spiritual reality far older and more powerful than that represented by Bero. The Latin quotation which the beggars mangle is "Dulcet et decorum est pro patria more": "Sweet and proper it is to die for one's country." Just as Biblical passages about love and healing have earlier been given a

sinister twist, so now references to patriotism and democracy are made to serve the goals of a degraded dictatorship. The song they sing is "When the Saints Go Marching In," yet another allusion to impending death. Clearly, the Old Man is doomed, but does not want to have died in vain.

Socrates was condemned to execution by drinking a potion made of hemlock berries. In the dialogue between Bero and the Old Man Bero is not so much talking of his father as of the resistance to the regime which his father represents. When he uses the word "you," he means "people like you." What does the new regime offer instead of freedom? The story is told that the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes went about in daylight carrying a lighted lantern. When asked why he did so, he said he was looking for an honest man. Note how the beggars run a variation on this story.

After Bero leaves the stage the beggars discuss the pageantry carried out by governments which conceal their crimes while gaining international acceptance through showy ceremonies. The mock ceremony culminating in cries of "We want Him" is probably meant to remind the audience of the mob's cry for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:6-15). Blindman's speech is a parody of an ignorant, bigoted European colonizer, pretending not to be interested in the mineral wealth of the colonized nations and maintaining the necessity of imperialism in the face of the winds of change. What sorts of negative stereotypes does he articulate about African cultures?

The speech culminates in a recitation of the formula of the new regime, implying that nothing has changed. The exploitation and oppression of colonialism has now become postcolonial exploitation and oppression. The Old Man's long speech dwells on this theme. A "cat-house" is a house of prostitution. A "poor box" is a box in a church where donations may be put to aid the poor. An heresiarch is a leading heretic, a disbeliever. The usual expression, "the ends justify the means" is often used to excuse crimes of oppression. If the purpose is worthy, then normally immoral means may be used to achieve it. Here the phrase is mocked by saying "the end shall justify the meanness." John 1:1 says "In the beginning was the Word" which is taken to be both Jesus and God. The new faith began not with God but with its priesthood. What does Aafaa mean by saying there is no division in this new religion? Monsieur l'homme sapiens is French for "Mr. Homo Sapiens."

The Old Man's last long speech is a brilliant series of puns in which he shows how debased the new faith is. Ham is forbidden to Muslims, as it is to Jews. An ashram is a Hindu place of spiritual retreat. A kibbutz is an Israeli commune. How many people are trying to kill each other at the end of this play? Who wins?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss how Soyinka revealed the possible causes of war in Madmen *and Specialists.*

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear that wars are not good experiences to humanity. It diminishes human integrity and arouses man's animalistic nature to the extent of destroying feelings and fancy. In The Last Duty, we see people fighting each other against the backdrop of immoralities. Many people are victims of the war because of fabricated facts. The civil war in Nigeria provided a lot of traumatic facts in the development of this novel. The poem 'Casualties' by J.P. Clark makes a case for those whom we thought may not be victims of the war. It exposes us to the horrendous effects of the war and the effects on the society. In Madmen and *Specialists Soyinka reenacts the possible reasons for war as war itself is* cause by madmen who never bothers about its after effects.

The three texts under study have given us different views and experiences of the Nigerian-Biafran war. War literatures are records of historical realities. It seems to be a new literary development. It is expected that these new literary development will force writers to become more experimental in motivating character, in fashioning new techniques in the fictional use of history to portray the evil effects of war on ordinary lives, and more war literatures will focus on the common soldier or civilian rather than the general on horseback.

5.0 SUMMARY

War has been an ever-recurring theme in human affairs all through the ages. Myths, legends, epics and other manifestations of oral and written literature bequeath to us traditional stories of war in ages past. Many of the world's notable philosophers, statesmen and writers have had one thing or the other to say about man and his numerous wars. A tragic conflict such as war must give rise to stories because it is an event that is capable of altering the human situation drastically and completely. War is one man-made tragedy, a primitive monster, very ubiquitous and invincible even to modern man and his superior intelligence. Rulers prosecute it while political philosophers rationalize it. Even the law under certain circumstances justifies it. War has been portrayed variously as a heroic and glorious adventure, as an evil that destroys and kills, and as bringing out the best and the worst in individuals and societies. It has been described as an inevitable manifestation of natural human, aggressive instincts.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the major concerns in most Nigerian war literatures.
2. Discuss the war horrendous effects of war in The Last Duty
3. What are the major causes of civil wars as revealed in Madmen *and Specialists?*
4. Using J. P. Clark's 'Casualties', explain the categories of war victims.
5. Appreciate the major themes resulting from wars as exemplified in the three texts under study in this unit.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Clark John Pepper (1970). Casualties: Poems 1966-1968. London: Longman.

Ofeimun, Odia (1981). The Poet Lied. London: Longman.

Okpewho, Isidore (1976). The Last Duty. London: Longman.

Feuser W. (1986). "Anomy and beyond: Nigeria's Civil War in Literature", Presence Africaine 137-138, 113-151.

Soyinka Wole (197). Madmen and Specialists. London: Methuen.

UNIT 4 NIGERIAN LITERATURES & ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1: LOCAL COLOUR

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 1: Transliteration in Okara's The Voice
3.3 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 2: Proverbs in Ohaeto's The Voice of the Night Masquerade
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the way in which the Nigerian writers have been applying the English language in order to accommodate the various linguistic tastes of Nigerians. Nigeria is a complex linguistic setting of over 500 languages. In each of these languages there are writers. English language becomes the main communication tool because of the need to allow the work reach wider audience within and outside the country. However, there have been attempts at indigenizing the English language used in Nigerian literature. One of these ways is the application of local colour tradition. By local colour, we mean the use of Nigerian expressions that capture Nigerian culture and environment although expressed in English language. They include transliteration of Nigerian language in English, the consistent use of proverbs and other forms of lores. We shall examine this using some Nigerian novels, poetry and drama in the exemplifications.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

appreciate the use of local colour in Nigerian literature
identify local colours in Nigerian literature
discuss proverbs as consistent local colour in Nigerian literature
see transliteration as a way of realizing local colour in Nigerian literature
accept local colours as a way of identifying Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In a situation where two or more languages and cultures are in contact, there is bound to be linguistic and cultural interference. This is the situation with Nigerian literature of English expression where important socio-cultural habits and traits are expressed in a foreign language. Many Nigerian writers have appropriated and reconstituted the English language in their text through some linguistic processes which include loan words, loan coinages, loan blends, pidginisation, code switching and the like. This is one way they strive to find a solution to the problem of bilingualism and biculturalism by relying heavily on the domestication of the imported tongue, which is English language. Many of these writers have deviated from the international literary norms {Linguistically}. They have not falsified the tradition they have transformed into the English Language. Rather they have been able to bridge the gap between the local colour variety and the appropriate English language diction suitable to the characters and themes they depict. The linguistic innovations in their works offer outlets for creativity in language and put a new life into the imported language. At this stage of globalization, Nigerian writers cannot afford to deny their works of wide readership; therefore they should consider the appropriation and reconstruction of English as a medium of Nigerian literature.

The place of English in the socio-political and economic activities of Nigeria has been widely discussed. Also, the status of the language as a dominant medium of African literature has been critically commented upon. African literary critics and writers have been arguing for and against the use of the imported language as the prevailing medium of African literature. As such, writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Akachi Ezeigbo among others try to Africanize the English language by adding local words of African origin. They use these local words firstly to express their meaning and for the reader to read and identify with them and secondly to create a unique language of its own, an African version of the English language. Using local words adds life and beauty to the otherwise dull English language and some things that are associated with Africa and the African culture which have no equivalent in English are easily introduced into the English language through their writings.

In a situation where two languages and two cultures are in contact, there will certainly be linguistic and cultural interferences. Such is the case of African literature of English expression where important cultural habits and geo-political phenomena are expressed. Since English is a “global

language", it has been modified and domesticated by writers across the globe. Even the new generation writers have also domesticated the English language in their literary texts. Literature depends primarily on language; it is language put in action, that is, language put into practice.
The African writer's effort in translating his or her multilingual or multicultural postcolonial experiences into literary work is always fraught with problems. Therefore he is often faced with the dilemma of negotiating between the English language in its ancestral place and the English language in the Diaspora.

This quandary has motivated some African writers to advocate a linguistic decolonization of African literature. For instance, Ngugi advocates the need to decolonize African cultures, including the return to writing in vernacular languages. He believes that Africans must use their languages and people as a strength with which they can leap into tomorrow. Osundare also reacts insistently against the continuity of writing African literature in foreign languages. Most Nigerian writers use local colour words because they believe that no foreign language can adequately express native experiences and problems and there are some words that cannot be easily translated in English, thus such words are transliterated into the English language in writing.

There are two major opposing camps that can be isolated in African writer's views on the desirability or otherwise of English as the literary language of the continent. The first camp advocates the abrogation of the use of the language as the prime medium of African literature; Ngugi and Osundare are key members of this exclusive class. On the other hand, the second group calls for the appropriation and reconstitution of English as a medium of African literature. With this, the group believes that the rigid hegemony of the language can be unmasked. This method is an attempt to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own. Consequently, the postcolonial African writer expresses his thoughts through an Africanized version of the almighty English language. According to Chinua Achebe, English is being made to "bear the burden" of the post colonial writer's experience (62). The African writers, for instance, always strive to free themselves from the standard rules of the imported language by using a unique form of the language whose standard version is being interrogated and subverted to be able to express their sense of otherness.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the need for the domestication of English language in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 1: Transliteration in Okara's The Voice

In Gabriel Okara's The Voice, there is a high experimentation with language. He tries to recapture Ijaw language in English. Gabriel Okara tries through experimentation to enrich foreign languages by injecting 'black blood' into their rusty joints. Gabriel Okara in an article reprinted from Dialogue, Paris in Transition magazine in September 1963:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African

> ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion that the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. . . . In order to capture the vivid images of African speech, I had to eschew the habit of expressing my thoughts first in English. It was difficult at first, but I had to learn. I had to study each Ijaw expression I used and to discover the probable situation in which it was used in order to bring out the nearest meaning in English. I found it a fascinating exercise.

Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed with using his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission? We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages?

Gabriel Okara, in The Voice, introduces Okolo, a man who dreams of a just and transparent society, is arrested and imprisoned for sharply lashing out at a corrupt regime, and is eventually delivered out of his dilemma by an old, illiterate woman in whose wisdom are personified the values and worth of society. The linguistic experimentation is unique. We see the attempts by Okara to realize his Ijaw tongue in English. We see a lot of linguistic aberrations in terms of semantic realizations. In English, the expressions do not carry much meaning and where there are meanings, they seem absurd, complex and distorted. The attempts at experimenting with language make the novel quite unreadable in terms of English usage. Even the Ijaw readers of the novel who are not familiar with English forms may find the text uninteresting.
For instance, the novel started thus: "Some of the town's men said that Okolo's eyes were not good and that his head was not correct." (1)
In an attempt at realizing the Ijaw language in the novel, we see such expressions as:

i. "he has no shadow…"
ii. "his inside is bad…"
iii. "his head is not correct…"
iv. "his eyes were not good…"

These expressions have been termed 'poetic', 'absurd', 'complex' and 'incomprehensible'. The fact remains that Okara tries to create a unique Nigerian novel by realizing his mother tongue using transliteration as linguistic process. The question of whether he achieved his aimed has been the concern of linguists and literary critics. The fact still remains that Okara has attempted a form for the realization of the Nigerian novel through the process of transliteration.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the effectiveness of transliteration in Okara's The Voice.

3.3 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 2: Proverbs in Ohaeto's The Voice of the Night Masquerade

Proverbs picture practically all the details of everyday life of ordinary people and they can refer to practically any situation. Occasionally, among many tribes in Nigeria like the Igbos, proverb is the major vehicle of expression in the art of conversation and is regarded very highly because it serves to arm, to inform, to educate, to instruct and very often to embellish speech. The use of proverb in some Nigerian poetry is very instrumental to the passing across of the message of the poet to the reader. In Achebe's words, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Things Fall Apart, 6). Proverbs have a wide range of subject matter and they are based on every aspect of societal life. It captures the African style of rhetoric; expresses the African affinity of their culture. In the words of Obiechina (1975):

> Proverbs are the kernels, which contain the wisdom of the traditional people. They are philosophical, moral expositions shrunk to a few words, and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to memory... These proverbs derive from a detailed observation of the behaviour of human beings, animals, plants and natural phenomena, from folklore, beliefs, attitudes, perception, emotions and the entire systems of thought.... (156)

In African literature, the literary and cultural significance of proverbs is the fact that they provide a rich source of imagery and succinct

expression on which more elaborate forms are drawn. In its simplest form, a proverb is a saying, which has some moral to teach. These morals could be explicit or implied. The language of a proverb is generally image filled, simple and interesting. Every language has its proverbs, often, the same proverbs occur among several different people. In some cases, similar proverbs come from the same source, but in other cases, they probably have no connection. In Africa, proverbs play prominent roles in communication. Values, beliefs and traditions of a people are often reflected in their proverbs, parables, and incantations, etc. Ezenwa Ohaeto exploited the rich Igbo proverbs in The Voice of the *Night Masquerade. It gives his work a local colour quality. He believes* that the language of proverbs is more than ordinary words. Some of these words refer to objects, which on their own are symbolic or represent something else. Ohaeto uses proverbs in his collection of poems to give force and dignity to his work.

Ohaeto's choice of proverbs in his collection of poems reflects the warning, moral as well as philosophical values in the Igbo societies. We could say that proverbs are used to intensify language in order to be effective. Language has been known to serve man's creativity. The Igbos are known to appreciate wisdom, knowledge and understanding in childhood use of proverbs. It is therefore not surprising to see Ohaeto employ extensive use of proverbs in his work. For example:

"What destroys the yams also destroys the cocoyams" (18). This proverb is Ohaeto's way of warning that whatever affects the head of a house also affects the entire house, and so, precautions should be taken when such cases of destruction arises.
Another is:

> "The bone dog could not eat the fowl wants to eat" {29}.
> Ohaeto uses proverbs in his poems as forces for teaching morals and as medium of warning.

His use of proverbs focuses on their positive cultural functions. One of the most significant applications of African orature in the poems is the use of proverbs. Ohaeto's competence in the use of proverbs reflects his possession of cultural wisdom and rhetorical skills.

Ohaeto's poetic vision in The Voice of the Night Masquerade is inspired by the indecency, disorderliness and untruthfulness in the society which are caused by the misdemeanor in the family, the deviance on the streets, the abnormalities in public affairs and the incongruities of socio-political activities. His vision is simply art for orderliness, justice and awareness. He takes sides out of his conviction of what is right. The

Voice of the Night Masquerade is a heroic celebration of nature-sun, water, wind, sea- and also a celebration of tradition- spirits and masquerades. It however goes beyond mere celebration of ecological changes to satirize man's indecency in the society, injustice in socio-political activities and man's excesses in the society, that is, harmful and thoughtless actions that are socially or morally unacceptable. The proverbs are functional:

> The creeper that tells
> An elephant halt immediately
> Must accompany the elephant
> {'A call at dusk' 15}

This warns better on the abnormalities of public affairs and the incongruities of socio-political activities. In explaining this proverb, we see the creeper and the elephant as a minor and a major respectively. Ohaeto's style of proverb use is expressed in a way that is clear and easily understood, vibrant, imaginative, intellectual and full of morals. It is of our time and the picture of our age. It carries the feelings and emotions of modern man. Its realities are present today and will perhaps colour tomorrow.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the poetic effects of proverb use in Ohaeto's The Voice of the *Night Masquerade?*

4.0 CONCLUSION

The question of domestication of English in African literature has been a major concern of African writers. Nigerian writers beginning from Amos Tutuola have been experimenting with the English language. Others follow. Even Chinua Achebe who claimed to write in Standard English has one time or another delved into local colour, transliteration and the application of local lores in his writing. This is evident with the use of proverbs, clichés, and oral forms of communication. In almost all his novels, he created a linguistic style which other African writers have towed. Gabriel Okara stands out. His language in The Voice was experimental. Ohaeto makes proverbs useful tools in his poetry.

5.0 SUMMARY

The question still remains: must we write in English qualify as African literature? The whole area of literature and audience, and hence of language as a determinant of both the national and class audience did not really figure: the debate has been more about the subject matter and

the racial origins and geographic habitation of the writer. English (like French and Portuguese) was assumed to be the natural language of literary and even political mediation between African people in the same nation and between Africa and other nations. In some instances these European languages were seen as having a capacity to unite African peoples against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographic state. Thus, the application of local colours whether through translation/transliteration or through the application of local lores has the singular tendency of making Nigerian (African) literature operate in unique style.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. What is transliteration? Explain its application in Okara's The *Voice.*
2. Nigerian writers have been attempting domesticating English. Discuss the forms of this domestication.
3. Assess the use of proverbs in Ohaeto's poetry.
4. The question of language in African literature has been in favour of English. Explain the advantage it English has over African languages.
5. The use of local colour makes Nigerian literature unique in style. Defend this statement.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1975). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in West *African Novel. London: Heinemann.*

Ohaeto, Ezenwa(2000). The Voice of the Night Masquerade. Ibadan: Kraft.

Okara, Gabriel (1964). The Voice. London: Heinemann.

UNIT 5 NIGERIAN LITERATURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2: PIDGIN/SPECIAL ENGLISH

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Novel
3.3 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Poetry
3.4 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Drama
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study another aspect of Nigerian literature which has to do with the use of pidgin or special English forms. In the process of domestication of English or in the process of creation of literatures that should serve the purpose of reaching the educated and the uneducated, some Nigerian writers have used Pidgin English or Special English forms in their literary works. Ken Saro Wiwa called the English language he used in his novel Sozaboy, 'Rotten English'. Some other writers, especially poets, have used Pidgin English completely in their works. We shall examine this special English forms as used in some Nigerian literatures.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students will be able to:

understand the use of Pidgin/Special English forms in Nigerian literature
appreciate the creativity in the usage
discuss the reasons for such usage in Nigerian literature
explain the need for such usage in Nigerian literature
see the usage as domestication of English in Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

It is a general belief by some Nigerian writers that Pidgin language provides an appropriate medium for the exploitation of oral traditions in literature, for it acts as a bridge between the orality of verbal communication and the formality of the written word. For instance, Nigerian Pidgin poetry is constructed as part of this utilization of oral resources, which has revitalized the literary scene and the poetic tradition. However, the development and utilization of Pidgin as a language medium in Nigerian poetry owes its manifestation to the reality of its profuse use along the coast and also in the hinterland, where the indigenous Nigerian languages predominate.

All the same, the origin of Nigerian Pidgin has been stated in a pioneering study as "essentially a product of the process of urbanization, while its origins lie historically in the early contacts between Africans and Europeans. The rapidly growing towns of Nigeria have increasingly become the melting pots of the many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria, and Pidgin seems to be today a very widely spoken lingua franca, many town and city dwellers being at least bilingual, in Pidgin and an indigenous language" (Mafeni, 98). Similarly, a later study which examines the origins of Nigerian Pidgin confirms that it "arose from the urgent communication needs of the contact between the visiting Europeans (in the end the English) and their multi-lingual Nigerian hosts. Stabilization of this contact led to the stabilization and expansion of Nigerian Pidgin (NP)" (Elugbe and Omamor, 21). These assertions emphasize the prevalent view discernible in the definition of Pidgin as a "communication system that develops among people who do not share a common language. In early stages of contact, such as the first encounters between British sailors and coastal West Africans or between American soldiers and the Vietnamese, a make-shift system emerges involving a few simple structures - mostly commands - and a limited number of words, drawn almost entirely from the language of the dominant group" (Todd, 3). Although the issues of domination and its appendage, exploitation, provided a political focus in the areas in which Pidgin was a medium of communication, the development of the language was affected by several other socio-cultural factors.

The most prominent socio-cultural factor was the fact that Pidgin was associated with a lower social status, which aided in the social stratification of the people who use it. This feeling of contempt was originally informed by a false sense of racial superiority, which has now been replaced by a misdirected sense of elitist superiority. Pidgin has made a noticeable linguistic advance in spite of the stigma that has often

been attached to its use, especially in elitist circles. Although some educationists and other literates still snobbishly and hypocritically condemn the use of Pidgin, claiming that it leads children to make a poor use of the 'Queen's English, ' it is true that among the people in the Anglophone region and for quite a sizeable number in the francophone zone, Pidgin is the main linguistic medium of communication. Nevertheless, the existence and development of Pidgin are the result of its own internal dynamics, and this internal dynamism of Nigerian Pidgin particularly has been aided in recent times by the production of works of literature in Pidgin and also by the arguments of critics who have found either merit in such works or possibilities in the language.

Some critics believe that Pidgin is a "practical, viable, flexible language distilled in the alembic of our native sensibility and human experience. This lusty language, which transcends our geographical and political boundaries grows daily before our eyes. It is our natural, unifying weapon against the divisive forces of English. It is believed that the adoption of Pidgin will automatically make the writer national by domesticating his outlook and sensibility and on adopting Pidgin and becoming a real nationalist the Nigerian writer can now speak with the knowledge of an insider (35), although Osofisan takes exception when he argues that "the use of Pidgin cannot automatically make any writer patriotic or progressive; that will depend finally on other factors, such as the consciousness and purpose of the particular artist" (Osofisan, 43). However, he agrees that Pidgin is a viable language and capable of sustaining works of literature.

It is clearly this capability of Pidgin to sustain works of literature - since it is a language that bridges orality, a language that absorbs several cultural elements as it communicates - which has made it yield creative possibilities for the Nigerian writers. However, a stress on Pidgin poetry in this study does not mean that it is only in poetry that the Pidgin language has been utilized. Although in the works of the popular Onitsha market literature there is no indication of a sustained use of Pidgin as a language of creative communication, Emmanuel Obiechina points out that "some authors make their illiterate or semi-literate characters speak in West African Pidgin English. Sometimes they take pains to explain such idiosyncratic usages in their prefaces" (Obiechina, 86). But the later works that emerged after the literary outburst of the Onitsha market literature indicated artistic dimensions to the use of Pidgin in Nigerian literature.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the importance of Pidgin English in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Novel

Nigerian novelists have been in the lead in terms of experimentation with English language in their works. There are handfuls of Nigerian novels written in either Pidgin English or special English form. In this sub unit, we will use two novels for the study. Interestingly, both of them are war novels written about two decades apart and by an old and a younger writer: Ken Saro Wiwa's Sozaboy (1985) and Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation (2005). The English language forms used in both novels seem alike except some syntactic and lexical differences. Ken Saro-Wiwa called the English use in Sozaboy, rotten. However, the English used in Beast of No Nation has no such tagging but we choose to tag it special English form because there are mixtures of Standard English and Pidgin English in the narration.

1. Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy (1985) [Rotten English]

The plot of Saro-Wiwa's civil war novel, Sozaboy (1984) revolves round the young hero whose real name is "Mene". In this novel, the emphasis is not on action, but on character. It is not the events, but the man that makes the events possible. Attracted by fine uniforms, glittering buttons, and the glamorized life of a soldier, Mene yields to his young wife's pressure to join in a war he knows nothing about. He becomes so confused that he ends up fighting unwittingly on both sides of the conflict without noticing any difference between the two. His metamorphosis from an apprentice-driver into a "sozaboy" (soldier-boy) marks a significant phase in the development of his character and life. He undergoes a physical, as well as a spiritual journey and plies the route from innocence to maturity. Because he is constantly on the road and because of his garrulous nature, he sees everything and tells us everything he knows about the two sides of the conflict. The journey motif is symbolically linked with the quest motif in the story. The quest motif manifests in various ways: the quest for manhood which is also linked with the quest to become a combatant soldier. His perception develops gradually, with each experience, each incident, each encounter, each trip, helping him to gain a clearer insight into the true nature of things. Along the line, he marries a young beautiful city-wise Lagos girl whose beauty, femininity, pragmatism and boldness intoxicate him. To earn and maintain her love, he enlists in the army to become a "sozaboy": "I will do anything so that this fine girl can be my wife and I can be sleeping with her on one bed every night," he says (37).

The corrupt recruitment officers into the army extract a large fee from him before enlisting him. As a new recruit, he is very proud of his uniform and his gun. His gun almost becomes an object of worship. He cuddles it, adores it just as he does his wife Agnes. But as he is unable to

raise up children by his wife because he has to dash off to war soon after marrying her, he is also not able to fire his gun because the rifle assigned to him is faulty. He does not quite succeed in realizing the three ambitions he sets his youthful heart and energy to accomplish. The war thwarts his plan to become the first licensed driver in his hometown, a task he has committed everything in life to accomplish. His honeymoon with his beautiful bride is also cut short by his enlistment in the army. His efforts, vision, passion and money are wasted as the war claims his wife and his mother- the two people that matter most to him in life. And having joined the army at a great cost, he is unable to experience the fulfillment of an accomplished soldier. He loses all that is dear to him in life in order for him to gain full awareness of himself, his environment, and life generally. Both as a civilian and as a soldier, Mene is not a violent person. He never even fires a shot throughout his stint in the army.

He keeps on asking why the war is being fought, but no one either within or outside the army is able to give him any answer. But at the end he learns when his romantic ideas collide with his painful experiences, that war and military life involve death, suffering and pain. Things, events, actions, people and the war must now be seen in their correct and realistic perspectives. It is bygone to those alluring “sweet dreams”. He sees the meaninglessness and the futility of war in one instant not as preached by pacifist or by a senior adult, but as it really is when all the officers and many of the company boys are butchered in the first air raid. Now every instinct in him tells him to desert. He runs through forests and creeks not minding “Whether tiger or snake or leopard or any dangerous animal is in the forest” (113).

Saro- Wiwa uses the new maturity and insight that Mene has just gained to undercut the glory of war by making him experience hardship, danger, disappointment and bereavement. He gains maturity from the ordeals and stresses he undergoes. With the benefit of experience he tries to redefine war, throwing into the ditch his earlier fanciful notions about warfare. War is a double-edged sword, capable of cutting this way and that way. The tragic death of his mother, wife and the destruction of his house in a bomb blast inflict a permanent injury on his psyche. He discovers that he has given too much of himself to the machinery of war. Mene would have loved to return to the protective arms of his mother and his wife and continue his life. But he realizes that the old life has passed away. The war has ended, but not until it swept away the nature and texture of the pre-war society. The search for his mother and his wife through all the refugee camps enables him to see at first hand the tragedy occasioned by a war in which he was an enthusiastic participant. He witnesses for himself the sufferings of the civilian population, the loss of life and property and the ruthless annihilation of many

communities. One very important theme of this novel is the experience of the common people who are caught up in the war. The war which had promised to build up Mene's personality ends up destroying his dream and hopes: "…war is useless …uniform and everything is just to cause confusion … (172). "War is a very bad and stupid game," he concludes (151). Saro-Wiwa has chosen this young hero to make his comments on the Nigerian Civil War and to offer a deep and direct insight into the fate of the common people who were caught in this tragic drama of destruction.

The young loquacious soldier is beyond embarrassment in his chosen idiolect as he strives to communicate in a language he has hardly mastered. But he gets by in a very funny and interesting way. He distorts, concocts, breaks, remolds and transfer words and phrases from British English to Pidgin idiolect without guilt and without sensitivity to the established grammar of the language. He is completely excited by the language he has fashioned to express himself in. There is no doubt that the novel embodies the profound essence of the Nigerian Civil War experience. The author concentrates on the downtrodden, the class of people on which the war and any war for that matter has its most devastating effects. The success of the novel rests on the innovative stylistic and narrative techniques the writer has chosen to objectify the experience he expounds in the text. The narrative captures the shock, confusion, and dehumanization that the war produces in the young, the helpless and defenseless population. The novel shows the personal and social consequences of war in a way that many other novels about war do not. The following extracts should guide our understanding of the language:

i. "And as I am marching with gun and singing, prouding, all the people will come and look at me. They will say how I am brave man. Very brave man. Then Agnes will like me. And Zaza cannot make yanga for me again ... And no woman whether Simple Defence or no Simple Defence cannot begin to give me order on the road ... And I will wear uniform!" (Sozaboy pp. 54)

ii. "Suppose as the soza captain come talk, enemy begin enter Iwoama? Then he will kill all of us plus myself. Then he will enter every place plus Dukana. Then they will carry away my mama plus Agnes and then begin to use Agnes." (Sozaboy pp. 87)

iii. "[he] will just get a license and [he] will find lorry to drive. Then [he] will get plenty money and my mama and Agnes and myself will be happy". [9]

Here, we notice the use of English in ways that do not define a given standard. The expressions above show pidgin, wrong usage and standard forms. In essence, the language is rotten

2. Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation (2005) [Special English]

Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation derives its title from a coinage made famous by Afrobeat King Fela Anikulapo-Kuti in his popular critical song of the same title. This debut novel about children in armed conflict has striking parallels with Fela's song for its social commentary and poignancy. The book is about the egregiousness of allowing the most valuable asset of our humanity –children- to be sucked into the horrors of war. It is about lost innocence and a children's story replete with horrors and realities of contemporary African politics and the destructive consequences of its unending civil strife.

Just as it began, Iweala's book ends with a whimper, "And I am saying to her, fine. I am all this thing. I am all this thing, but I am also having mother once, and she is loving me". What the end does not capture, is the torment and conflicting emotions embedded in this pint sized but powerful book. And neither does the end capture the blood-soaked reality of children caught in the vortex of armed conflict, of which cause they are none the wiser. This book is just as much about lost innocence as it is about failed societies and their decrepit values. Child soldiers, their hellish lives and the mayhem they cause on the African continent is no longer an aberration. Anyone lucky enough to have been shielded from this gory reality needs to pick up this book for some lessons learned- "All we are knowing is that before the war we are children and now we are not". Using with great dexterity a mix of refined Pidgin English, truncated syntax, and a flourish of nuanced and flowing style befitting of his Harvard pedigree, Iweala entraps the reader, as if one is entranced on a vivid life-sized play, which unfolds in a macabre fashion.

The slanted reportage form, coming as it were from an innocent but transformed child adds vigor and panache to the storytelling. This is clearly a script cleverly written from an insider's perspective or wealth of research, but it is invariably the handiness of Iweala's language that gives this debut work of fiction its powerful enchantment and unquestionable originality. Set in an unstated war ravaged country in West Africa (There are many from Sierra Leone to Liberia) the lead character, a teenage boy Agu (Nigerian?), is conscripted – indeed kidnapped- into the ranks of a guerrilla unit as the drums of war engulfed his homestead. Having lost his father to another set of brigands, and hunted incessantly by that reality, from which he had narrowly escaped, Agu elects to survive by the laws of the jungle and

the conventional wisdom of beat them or join them after the rest of his family had been evacuated by the UN. But his youth renders him inescapably susceptible to the machinations and dodgy, yet protective nature of his new commander. This was by itself a recipe for disaster. And so the mis-education of Agu and boys of his kind begins that soon enough, the victim become the oppressor as Agu rehashes the wickedness visited on his father by taking on the wicked ways of war and the seemingly normal tendency to commit remorseless atrocities, if that was indeed the only way to stay alive and survive the vicissitude of a war without norms.

Iweala has certainly drawn from the richness of the homeland of his ancestors in writing this book. Born well after the Biafran war, he must have tapped richly into the residual tales from his family about that gory civil war in which young lads were abducted from their defenseless parents and from refugee camps and deployed as spies (Boys Company) into enemy camps on reconnaissance missions. In reality, however, this work is a poignant reminder of the collective failure of societies to protect children from the scourge of war. It is also about the mindlessness of combatants to win every battle at all cost, even if it means the annihilation of pubescent broods, who in seeking out to kill, become themselves easy targets of friends and foes alike.

Beasts of No Nation is a tug of war, in which the combatants and not just the ganja weed-type militants exist in a restive environment and must contend with the drag between rationality and foolishness, reason against futility and abnormality against spirituality. How else does one contemplate and indeed explain, the transformation of an otherwise loving, bookish boy reared by a Christian mother into a zombie, capable of audacious mayhem and indiscriminate and unprovoked killings, safe for his being drugged or brainwashed. As Agu reveals, “But these things are before the war and I am only remembering them like dream”. The essence of abnormality also comes in different forms and modes to the extent that absurdity becomes real and palpable; “Everyone is looking like one kind of animal, no more human”. Inescapably in such an incoherent setting, it is little wonder that Agu metamorphosed into a killing machine clearly distanced from normality and divorced from reality as well as from his days of innocence. His past in its totality is fleeting; merely a cameo recall of the life he once knew – a fun-filled life of schoolyard friends, loving family, religious and church activities, and in sum, a life of unfettered adolescence. Characteristically cultist, Agu’s life follows a dependency spiral to nothingness, except for the braggadocio and gun-backed confidence. Meanwhile, for fear of ostracization and as much as from lack of a credible alternative, his everyday living becomes gang like, and one in which he must survive by his wits, by the trust and camaraderie of his fellow soldiers and the

deceptive altruism of his commander, while seemingly oblivious of his descent into the inhumane and bottomless abyss of war.

Beasts of No Nation may also be symmetric to indigenous rites of passage and coming of age. Bloodletting, but certainly not homicide or brutal murder has in the African context, been a way for a child to claim his manhood. Regrettably, some have stretched this notion to its breaking point as a way of proving that manhood is achieved when man can dominate his environ and those around him either legally or otherwise. Hence killing with impunity as rankling as it might be, has become a new niche that amplifies the cliché that all is fair in war and love. But the reality is that no one argues with a mad man with a loaded gun and there are plenty of guns in the wrong hands including children in many parts of Africa –guns that that sustain the profit lines of those who make and trade them.

Agu's escapism into the throes of war is not incidental nor a matter of rationalized choice. If there was truly a choice, it was not to suffer the fate of his father, who was shot in his presence. Being a boy soldier, however, offered Agu outlets and assurances of food, power, acceptance and perhaps, the guarantee of being alive another day. Soon enough, yielding to the fear of being taunted, he machetes a man to death nonplussed. Later on, he kills a woman and her daughter, as if butchering them were his final induction rite. Perhaps it was his provenance of being a damn good child soldier. Through it all, Agu's subdued value haunted him unceasingly. Add to this his personal trauma of being a toy boy to those who must satisfy their sexual proclivities and depravity at all cost. Through the seamless strands of roiling guns, blood, sex, hunger and mayhem, Iweala insinuates a twist of serendipity to an already twisted life, when Agu seeks elusive redemption from his very conflicted existence. But hope is furlong and out of reach.

If Agu had a choice it was to live or die. He opted for the former. And given such options, most grown men would probably capitulate and do the same. Unsurprisingly in the face of such an ironic choice Agu validates his role by asking, "What else can I be doing?" In a true show of survival instinct, he befriends Strika – his dumb, dingbat tormentor, who would not dare offer an answer to the question, "What is it like to be killing somebody?" The bestiality in this book is beyond redemption. Yet it does offer a modicum of redemption by delving into a heinously vexatious subject. What else, beyond mind-warping drugs, psychotic "gun juice' and blatant bestiality will make it impossible for a person, be it child or man to distinguish between his fellow human being and a goat. But like Agu confirms, "I am not knowing what is farmer and what is goat".

Beast of No Nation is a nerve-racking novel that raises more questions than it attempts to answer or shed light on. When Agu for the umpteenth time asks another contemptuous question, "How can I know what is happening to me?" it becomes stark to the reader that such questions are - their simplicity and rhetorical flourish notwithstanding - unrepentantly gut wrenching. Indeed, how can this be happening to Africa? The answer, like the old song says, is blowing in the wind. Consider the following extracts:

i. "And I am saying to her, fine. I am all this thing. I am all this thing, but I am also having mother once, and she is loving me"

ii. "But these things are before the war and I am only remembering them like dream".

iii. "Everyone is looking like one kind of animal, no more human"

iv. "What else can I be doing?" "What is it like to be killing somebody?"

v. "I am not knowing what is farmer and what is goat".

Like Sozaboy, there are marked pidgin and standard forms combined. The language here is used as characterization to capture the age, education and experience of the narrator

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate clearly the Rotten English in Sozaboy from the Special English in Beast of no Nation.

3.3 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Poetry

Historically, among the pioneer poets of West Africa there were writers who made use of Pidgin even as they created other poems in English. In his collection Africa Sings (1952) Dennis Osadebay, a pioneer poet, makes use of Pidgin in one poem entitled "Black Man Trouble." Here, he is much more adventurous than even many contemporary Nigerian poets, as he dramatizes the themes through the use of a character who is lamenting not only the injustice of his race but also his oppression as a colonial subject. This four-stanza poem commences with a general examination of the fate of the black man. The syntax of the Pidgin poem is not taxing, for Osadebay is clearly influenced by the ideas associated with the placement of words in English. However, the artistic element in the poem that is portrayed through the deliberate dissociation of the persona from the issue of the lament in the first stanza contributes to the

arousal of empathy in the reader. The poet indicates that the black person encounters enormous problems ("face big strife") in order to acquire even "some little food" for "him belly" (his stomach). Thus unconsciously the reader agrees with the poet in the subsequent stanzas that his "heart be clean, my word be true," but "why must my feet be in your chain?" and "you must chase me with your cane?" Even the issue of religion is utilized in this poem to demonstrate the unfair treatment of the black persona, who "no get gun," "no get bomb," and "no fit fight no more." The aspect of this hopeless situation which the poet most detests is the hypocritical use of the "cross" to "make me dumb," with the result that he is asked to close his eyes in prayer as the priest's "brudder thief my land away." The poet therefore laments the use of religion to camouflage materialistic aims. The emphatic note on which the poem ends reiterates the poet's thematic objective:

I no fit listen to more lies
I done see everything;
Dis tam I open wide my eyes
And see de tricks you bring;
You play me fair, I make you glad;
Play me selfish, I make you sad (17)

There is no doubt that this poem illustrates quite early the blend of serious issues and language experimentation which contradicts some of the recent prevalent views that Pidgin is suited for only comic situations. That erroneous impression must have developed through the popular use of Pidgin in Nigerian newspapers like Lagos Weekend and Lagos Life and on such television programs as "New Masquerade" and "Samanja." Osadebay's poem may appear humorous in some sections, but it captures with telling accuracy the problems of colonialism during that period of Nigerian history.

The achievement of that pioneer poet is extended in the early sixties by Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, whose poem "One Wife for One Man" was given in manuscript form to Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier and was subsequently published in the 1963 edition of Modern Poetry from *Africa. In this poem, Aig-Imoukhuede adopts a jocular tone to satirize* the religious injunction that polygamy is abnormal. The poet does not advocate polygamy, however, and in fact he presents several reasons for questioning the practice. The use of polygamy here as a theme serves the twin function of providing the poet with an issue that is not only traditional but also capable of forming a substantial subject for the interrogation of the cultural-conflict reality. The persona has been inundated by the injunction "One wife for one man" in the churches and law courts, with the result that he is almost deaf or, as he puts it, "my ear nearly cut." In the second stanza he argues that his ancestors "get him

wife borku [plenty]," although he agrees that "dat time done pass before white man come" (the time is past). After these seemingly trivial assertions, the persona proceeds to tabulate the reasons of infertility, excessive pride, the lack of home training or formal education, and the issue of producing male children to continue one's lineage as justification for not allowing "one wife for one man." The final stanza ends with the words:

> Suppose, self, say na so-so woman your wife dey born
> Suppose your wife sabe book, no'sabe make chop;
> Den, how you go tell man make 'e no' go out
> Sake of dis divorce? Bo, dis culture na waya O!
> Wen one wife be for one man" (Moore and Beier, 128-29).

This issue of language development through the absorption of elements from other languages is noticeable in the verse of Mamman Vatsa whose *Tori For Geti Bow Leg adds yet another dimension to Pidgin poetry,* since his work is the product of cultural experience from the northern region of Nigeria. In the forty-one poems of Vatsa's collection he explores diverse themes in such a way that he seems to have combined the attentive perception of social ethos with his own natural flair for light-heartedness. The first poem in this collection, "Our Country Law," sets the scene, as it illustrates the devious ways in which laws are fashioned to restrict womanhood. It must be stated that many of these Pidgin poets consider fundamental and worthy of castigation all issues related to the treatment of women in society. Vatsa's poem, for instance, charges that in most segments of society women are forbidden to smoke or to engage in polygamy. But the basic idea which he makes persuasive is that some of these laws are often circumvented, and he turns those instances of circumvention into metaphors in the poem.

Vatsa also criticizes prevalent attitudes that he deems detrimental to the development of society. In the poem "Woman, You Be Manure" (31) it is the punishing high rate of fertility without commensurate financial weight that merits his displeasure, while in "Wayo Man" (29) he castigates unreliability and dishonesty. As a Pidgin poet, Vatsa is certainly interested in the elimination of social vices and pretentious behaviour, like the other Pidgin poets considered here. In a poem entitled "Yanga" (which means "Useless Pride") he feels that many of those people who behave as if they possess physical power are often deluded and weak, like "chicken/im feda/wey wind/dey blow" (15). The admonition is made more forceful by the image of the chicken with its feathers flattened by the wind. It is in this use of apt imagery that Vatsa makes a striking mark as a Pidgin poet. In the poem "Apartai," which is informed by the obnoxious apartheid policy that existed for so long in

South Africa, he extends the issue to incorporate all forms of discrimination. For instance:

Bigi man latrine
wey smaller man no fit
use
dat na apartai."

Elsewhere we read:

Ten people
wey de rule
ten tousand people
bicos dem
get plenty moni
an' diffren-diffren colour
dat na apartai" (12)

Vatsa artistically elaborates upon the subject of discrimination in most human interactions in order to persuade the reader that even the trivial incidents one is likely to ignore are all appendages to the great discrimination that is transformed into the law of "apartheid." It is through this use of familiar symbols to treat social issues via new perspectives that Vatsa's poetry widens in scope. In his verse Vatsa the military man does not spare the deficiencies of the members of his profession, for the poems "Drink-Drink Soja-Soja" and "Ol' Soja Jolly Time" criticize the habit of soldiers who drink intoxicating wine excessively. At the same time he shows awareness for some of the unpleasant effects of the profession on low-ranking military personnel, for in the poem "Priva Soja Cry-Cry" he sympathizes with the ordinary soldier who bears the brunt of the labour in the barracks.

It is this awareness of social injustice which makes the poet argue in "Judgmenti Day" that, in the final analysis, each person, irrespective of his material possessions, is bound to pay for his unjust actions, since on the day of judgment "argument/no go de" (11). The stress on this "day of judgment" is clearly Vatsa' s way of drawing attention to the futile nature of such abnormal habits as the acquisition of expensive cars, as he shows in the poem "Obokun Odabo," where a "man no geti room/for sleep/e dey drive/Obokun" (39). In using the name "Obokun," said to be a Yoruba name for an expensive fish but also a term applied to Mercedes-Benz cars, the poet is satirizing an excessive acquisitive mentality, as he does again in the poem "Country Make Me Good." This poem admonishes covetousness, which makes "ya troat long," and at the same time asserts the values associated with farm work - an injunction

that is needed in a society which craves finished products without appreciating the labor associated with them.

It is certainly this issue of misplaced values that makes the poet criticize the fact that emotions often overcome the senses in human affairs, as in the title poem "Tori For Geti Bow Leg," in which a man confesses to his wife that if he had listened to his friend, she would not have been his wife. This confession leads to altercations, and Vatsa, in presenting this poem, is stressing the importance of applying a dose of wisdom to emotional issues. Thus, in his criticism he tackles all those characteristics that are foolish, like the modern woman in the poem "Modan Moda" who is unwilling to breastfeed her babies so that she can maintain erect breasts, the unpolished woman in the poem "Ye-Ye Woman" (32), the disrespectful woman in the poem "Gara-Gara" (48), and the women who gossip excessively in "Madam Tok- About" (54). Vatsa does not single out only women for censure, for he also criticizes men, as in the poem "Make-Make-Man," and especially when they engage in profitless activities in order to create false impressions. Such men are among the politicians he castigates in the poem "Promise Wey Boku" for not taking beneficial actions but instead only spouting frivolous speeches, with the result that, before the general public can benefit, "dem/Billi for Killam!" This ironic perception indicates that those who are expected to benefit from parliamentary bills put forward by politicians usually become victims of the ill- conceived ideas of those same politicians. It is clearly this perceptive power in Vatsa's poems that persuaded one critic to state that, as in "Tori For Geti Bow Leg," "Vatsa ever wrote genuinely popular poetry, poetry rooted in the accents, rhythms and feelings of common people, not versified banalities masquerading as simple, accessible 'popular' poetry" (Jeyifo, 291). In Vatsa's Pidgin poetry these feelings of common people range from the political to the social, from the personal to the public, from the mundane to the spiritual, from the psychological to the philosophical.

The pervasive nature of social criticism in Pidgin poetry reaches a high point in Ken Saro-Wiwa's "Dis Nigeria Sef." The tone of this poem emerges quite early, as the poet compares Nigeria to "water wey dey boil." The personification of Nigeria here is a means for examining the country's prevalent social ills, disorganized social services, and dilapidated infrastructures. One poetic device used by the poet is the creation of a dialogue involving the persona and Nigeria. The poet indicates that the country's soldiers, policemen, and nurses do not provide the necessary services associated with their professions, while the citizens lack originality in their religion, language, and acquisition of names. The exasperation of the persona, which emerges at intervals as the poem progresses, becomes part of the poet's technique in the addition of a folkloric dimension, as Nigeria is scolded: "Oh yes, you be

foolish yeye man/Look as you dey laugh as I dey talk/You tink say I dey joke?" (39). This abusive tone becomes clearer as a deliberate shock device when Saro-Wiwa adopts a different tone later in the poem: "But I beg you oh, Nigeria/No talk say I dey cuss you/True to God no be say, I no like you" (41). It is this patriotic love which the persona has for his country that is behind the poetic attitude, for the poet perceives the ostentatious nature of the people as responsible for the social anomalies despite the fact that the "rivers and de ocean/full of fish and oder good tings." The final segment of the poem extols the positive qualities of the country in terms of food, and Saro-Wiwa insists that some of the people

> na better man
> Dey work from morning till night
> weder soza nurse or police
> or farmer wey dey cut bush plant
> or trader wey dey sell petty petty for market
> or akowe wey dey siddon for him office" (44).

The perception of contraries in terms of the country's positive and negative characteristics takes the poem beyond the level of cataloguing impressions, for this poetic attitude is stressed in the last stanza as "dis I-love-no-love Nigeria" mannerism. This attitude also parallels that of the majority of the people, who are troubled by doubts of patriotism. Thus the poem is both a statement and an injunction, as Saro-Wiwa reflects the syntax and spelling of Pidgin words like soza (soldier), which is influenced by his mother tongue.

The collections of verse published by Mamman Vatsa and Aig-Imoukhuede in the eighties emphasized the progress which Pidgin poetry had made in two decades. But those collections were not the only works of Pidgin verse that the reading public encountered, for such well-known writers as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, and Tunde Fatunde and such lesser- known poets as Pita Okute, A. Ajakaiye, Ogunlowo, Erapi, Udenwa, Ojeifo, Bello, and Osita Ike published Pidgin poems in various anthologies. Both these well-known and lesser-known poets illustrate the basic orality manipulated through the choice and placement of Pidgin words. For instance, Ojaide, whose reputation has been established by the publication of several collections of verse in English - *Labyrinths of the Delta, The Endless Song, The Eagle's Vision, The Fate of Vultures, The Blood of Peace - includes one Pidgin poem in The Eagle's Vision.*

In this poem, entitled "I Be Somebody" (Ojaide, 69), he employs contrast as a rhetorical and artistic device as he manipulates the orality of the Pidgin language while choosing and placing his words in a manner to enhance the effect of his ideas. The persona in the poem is

proud of his abilities to "shine" shoes "like new one from supermarket" and "carry load for head from Lagos go Abuja." In addition, this persona is fertile, for his "children reach Nigerian Army" in their numbers. It is possible to argue that the fertility which this "poor man" asserts as a quality may not be positive considering his limited financial resources. However, what the poet is indicating ironically is that it is unjust and unwise to regard one's compatriots with contempt, especially when the persona is noble and selfless in helping "push your car from gutter for rain." Although the persona's reward is the splashing of "poto-poto" (watery mud) on his body, the poet still implies that his selfless services are essential.

Tunde Fatunde, has published three poems in Okike, The Anthill Annual, and Voices from the Fringe in which he exploits the resources of descriptive poetry. For example, in "Woman Dey Suffer," published in Okike, he describes the unpleasant aspects of the experience of women in society. He depicts the woman as receiving little pay despite her hard work at the office, having to return home in the evening to labor for her husband and children, and, in addition to all this responsibility, encountering several religious restrictions on her womanhood. The poet's basic contention is that:

"As we get beta woman
Na so we get Yeye Koni-Koni man
Yeye woman dey
Beta Man dey
If dis world good
Na man and woman
Make am good
If dis Obodo Nigeria bad
Na woman and man
Make am bad (98)

The poet is advocating equal treatment for all sexes, which is why his conclusion stresses social harmony.

In another poem, "Bad Belle Too Much," published in The Anthill *Annual, Fatunde again advocates amity and harmony in social* interactions. His concern is clearly to highlight the forms of injustice in the society, which is probably why he subjects his themes so seldom to complex philosophical ruminations. In addition, his poems are topical, as in the case of "Denis Obi Don Die," published in Voices from the *Fringe. The poem is based on a real-life incident in which Denis Obi, a* ten-year-old schoolboy, drowns while trying to catch fish in a small river near Sabongida-Ora in Bendel State. The poet attributes the boy's death to social injustice, which denies him parental guidance and financial protection - "Bekos in Papa and Mama/No fit pay im School

fees/Na only fifteen naira" (Garuba, 145) - and leads the headmaster to drive him away from school. All the same, it is still possible to read this poem as a metaphor in spite of its topicality, which to some extent militates against Fatunde's utilization of relevant poetic devices. His Pidgin poems are nevertheless faithful to the social and cultural tensions in contemporary Nigerian society.

Other poems in Voices from the Fringe present new thematic perspectives for both the creation and the appreciation of Pidgin poetry, as their variety of subjects touch on most aspects of modern reality. The poem "Common Wealth" by A. Ajakaiye takes up the concept of the Commonwealth of Nations, in which a "former colomaster" and several "former colo servants" are expected to assume a unitary view of reality. These Pidgin poets consider such deviant motives fundamental, and there is confirmation in Anthony Ogunlowo's "Dem Dey Kill Dem Sef" in which the poet condemns the violence of soldiers who periodically exterminate their comrades, especially "for dis time/when war no dey" (137). Complementary to this poem is Godwin Erapi's "Chopping Freedom", which demonstrates the dishonesty of one of those soldier-leaders who denies his people freedom of expression, freedom to live, and freedom to acquire education in spite of promises to the contrary. This issue of military politics is also prominent in Onuora Udenwa's "Who Send You," a poem in which he challenges the idea of "civilianized Soldiers".

In effect, the use of a persona whose ordinariness is obvious is, in most cases, not intended by the Pidgin poet to create the impression of naivete or simplemindedness. In the articulation of themes, the Pidgin poet, like other Nigerian poets who employ either English or one of the various Nigerian languages, makes use of the parabolic mode associated with the poetic persona in addition to the adoption of proverbial structures, metaphors, symbols, ironies, images, contrasts, refrain, rhythm, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. The language of the poem is mediated, but in this mediation there are varied levels of competence, which is really what determines the success of the works.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the effectiveness of Pidgin English in Nigerian Poetry.

3.4 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Drama

The question of language has continued to confront the Nigerian dramatist. Dapo Adelugba’s Three Dramatists in Search of a Language, therefore, would make a very interesting reading. From Ola Rotimi to Wale Ogunyemi and Tunde Fatunde among others, different

experiments on language have been carried out in their literary creativity. On a broad perspective, a few Nigerian playwrights write in their mother tongue. The reason for this is not far-fetched; the local audience for whom they write could be easily reached. Such writers do not bother much about a national or an international audience. Worthy of mention are certain Yoruba performing artists in the Western part of Nigeria like Afolabi Olabimtan, Kola Akinlade, Adekanmi Oyedele, Adebisi Aromolaran, Adeboye Babalola, Olu Owolabi and others. In the Northern and Eastern parts of the country and among the ethnic minorities, a few others exist but their creative outputs are known only to an audience of their immediate communities for whom they write.

In the South-Eastern part of the country, one of the emerging voices in indigenous playwriting is Sonny Sampson-Akpan. However, aware of the need for a national and, perhaps, an international audience, his plays like Mfon and Asabo Tale have been translated to English. A good others whose works meet international standards have had their works translated into English, the nation's lingua franca. Plays of Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola fall within this category.

However, for the Nigerian dramatist, writing in English, the question of language is a different ball-game. While Ola Rotimi has approached the matter entirely from an interpolation of cardinal indigenous Nigerian languages, sometimes representing the six geo-political zones of the country, and sometimes going further to capture the dialects of some unsung minorities in an ingeniously creative manner, Wale Ogunyemi has approached the matter in a purely transliterative manner deploying a medium which Dapo Adelugba has aptly described as "Yorubanglish" – a peculiar "Englishizing" of Yoruba expressions, words and parables. Tunde Fatunde, on his part, approaches the matter employing a special brand of Nigerian English known, simply, as "Pidgeon English" – a corrupt form of English notorious among the low-class of the society. These groups of people are in the majority, population-wise, and the medium is language-friendly to them. It should be noted that out of a population strength of over one hundred and twenty million in Nigeria, only about twenty per cent of this number is literate in the true sense of the word. While Tunde Fatunde's effort in plays like Oga na Tief Man and No Blood, No Sweat are commendable literary strides, the question of language continues to bog the minds of creative writers.

The adoption of "Pidgeon English" may not be the water-tight solution needed for the problem. This is because there are different varieties of "Pidgeon English". T he "Pidgeon English" that is spoken in Nigeria, varies among ethnic groups from the West, East, North and among the ethnic minorities like the Ijaw and the Ibibio of Niger-Delta. With a little effort, anyway, one could pick one or two meanings of the different

expressions here and there. Until the Nigerian Government shows more commitment to the advancement and promotion of education, this problem will continue to persist. Another problem with this medium is that since it is employed by academically-inclined people, it is removed from the targeted audience since plays that are written in this medium have never actually been known to have been performed in villages but in school theatre auditoria where the ready audience is already literate.

Adelugba has argued that 'the language barrier is more on the level of ideas than reality.' Elsewhere, in respect of the National Troupe, he says: 'Theatre language is not Yoruba, it is not Hausa, it is not Igbo. It is theatre and that is why the countries that have chosen the dance model have got round their problem. Once we choose the language of movement, sound, expression, then you get round the problem.' All this is true if the medium is not verbal. The moment one begins to deal with the cold texts that constitute a large part of the Nigerian theatre, the question of language becomes all too urgent.

Ogunba, almost 20 years ago, expressed the 'hope that as it (modern African drama) matures in years, it will become even more distinguished and finally achieving a form uniquely African... To do (this) however, the language question will have to be resolved in many parts of the continent.' He was aware then of the problem, underlined by the involvement of those who had chosen an idea which frustrates rather than facilitates communication. Etherton who usually takes the pain to examine every problem critically finally confesses that 'the language used in African drama is a problem for which there is no ready solution.' Yet Nigerian dramatists have made conscious efforts to relate their works to their perceived audiences. Clark, who had earlier written 'The Legacy of Caliban', believes the writer has to search within his culture. 'The task for an Ijaw', he remarks in 'Aspects of Nigerian Drama', a later essay, 'and I dare say, any Nigerian or African artist writing in a European language like English is one of finding the verbal equivalent for his characters created in their original context.' Rotimi has also stated his own approach to the issue thus: 'English, as you know, is the official medium of communication in Nigeria. Inevitably, I write for audiences who are knowledgeable in this language. However, in handling the English language in my plays, I strive to temper its phraseology to the ears of both the dominant semi-literate as well as the literate groups with ease in assimilation and clarity and identification.'

Any of the plays of Soyinka termed as 'difficult', shedding the language could have evolved from the imagination of a traditional artist. The use of traditional and accessible motifs like myth, ritual, dance and dirge situates them within a context to which Akinwumi Isola reaches in translating Death as Iku Olokun Esin which Ojewuyi directed in 1994.

But Soyinka claims he writes 'in the firm belief that there must be at least a hall full of people who are sort of on the same wave length as mine from every stratum of society and there must be at least a thousand people who are able to feel the same way as I do about something. So... I write in the absolute confidence that it must have an audience.' Osofisan, who arguably has written more popular plays than any other Nigerian literary dramatist, once translated Who's Afraid of Solarin into Yoruba as Yeepa! Solaarin Nbo, with the collaboration of Dotun Ogundeji, a teacher of Yoruba language. There is a coinage, 'Yorubanglish' by Adelugba. 'This is not just Yoruba or English or Yoruba mixed with English but the many-sided attempts to catch the flavour, tones, rhythms, emotional and intellectual content of Yoruba language and thought.' The question of English language as a possible medium for an authentic Nigerian literary drama, a drama which can reach vast audiences is now no longer a serious problem.' Plays have had very wide appeal in spite of the language. But there can be no question that a great number of the people that such plays intend to address have been excluded. Even at the very bare level where Mike now operates in the developmental theatre, vestiges of the language problem remain, and will remain for as long as English is used by only a few influential people in these parts. The origin of this problem, which constitutes for the contemporary theatre a crisis of relevance is, as hinted earlier on, to be found in the nature of education that the pioneers of the Nigerian theatre received.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Pidgin English is not the solution to proper theatre practice in Nigeria.

Assess this statement properly.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Some critics argue that Pidgin English is "used for humour as well as for character portrayal" and can also be "employed to explore deeper meanings, to explain the reasons behind a character's actions, and to project and foreground certain themes". There is no doubt that Pidgin has been deployed interestingly in the novels of Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Adaora Lily Ulasi and in the plays of Soyinka and Ola Rotimi. There are also other works that are written entirely or to a great extent in Pidgin, like Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy, Segun Oyekunle's *Kata-kata for Sufferhead, and Tunde Fatunde's No More Oil Boom, No Food No Country, Water No Get Enemy, Blood and Sweat, and Oga na Tief-Man. These works portray the varied dimensions in the use of* Pidgin to enhance modern Nigerian literature. However, it is in poetry that this language has been most effectively employed to create a bridge of orality, especially in the attempt to domesticate, develop, and exploit

its artistic resources, as we find in the works of Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, Mamman Vatsa, Ezenwa- Ohaeto, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tunde Fatunde, and Tanure Ojaide amongst others. There is no doubt that the thematic range and artistic qualities of the Pidgin literatures discussed in the foregoing portray both a development and successful experiments. The lyric quality of the poems and the use of irony, metaphor, and imagistic characterization combine to produce innovations which have helped blend the resources of Pidgin to the needs of serious poetry. The essence of these works makes it clear that the language is not an end in itself but a means to an end, thus confirming the view that language is used for the external manipulation of human thoughts [and] for man's understanding of the world in which he lives. The use of Pidgin by these poets is intended to make that manipulation and that understanding artistically better, for it portrays a medium quite close to African orality although the language has not been standardized.

5.0 SUMMARY

These Nigerian Pidgin/Special English writers have established a viable literary tradition, and in their achievement by bridging the gap between oral communication and the written medium. In addition, in their use of language they exploit its resources through the use of a folk poetics and a sensitive deployment of a range of rhetorical styles while synthesizing formal features of poetry and verbal resources to generate a new vigor in the Nigerian literary tradition. Although this study indicates that the strengths of the poets vary and that sometimes their creative works possess flaws, the conclusion is that Pidgin literature is part of the literary traditions that coalesce to make modern Nigerian literature worthy of critical attention.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain what is meant by domestication of English in Nigerian literature.
2. Discuss the importance of Pidgin in Nigerian poetry.
3. Assess the success of Pidgin English in Nigerian prose fiction.
4. Nigerian dramatists used various language forms in their art. How effective has been their experimentations?
5. Distinguish between Pidgin English and Special English as used in Nigerian literature.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Aig-Imoukhuede, Frank (1982). Pidgin Stew and Sufferhead. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann.

Elugbe, B. O., and A. P. Omamor (1991). Nigerian Pidgin: Background *and Prospects. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann.*

Garuba, Harry, ed. (1988). Voices from the Fringe: New Nigerian *Poetry. Lagos: Malthouse.*

Iweala, Uzodinma (2005). Beast of No Nation. London: John Murray Publishers.

Ohaeto, Ezenwa. "Bridges of Orality: Nigerian Pidgin Poetry". World *Literature Today, Vol. 69, 01-01-1995, pp 69(9).*

Osadebay, Dennis Chukude (1952). Africa Sings. Ilfracombe, E ng.: Arthur Stockwell.

.

Ken Saro-Wiwa (1985). Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English. Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers.

--- --- (1986). Poems in Time of War. Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers.

Vatsa, Mamman Jiya (1985). Tori for Geti Bow Leg and Other Pidgin *Poems. Lagos:Cross Continents.*

MODULE 4 OTHER ISSUES AND THE NEW WRITERS

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature
Unit 3 The New Nigeria Poets
Unit 4 The New Nigeria Novelists
Unit 5 The New Nigeria Playwrights

UNIT 1 GENDER ISSUES IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Feminist Novel: Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of *Motherhood*
3.3 The Feminist Poet: Catherine Acholonu's The Springs Last *Drop*
3.4 The Feminist Drama: Zulu Sofola's Wedlock of the Gods
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will discuss feminism and gender issues as treated in Nigerian literature. We shall examine select Nigerian literatures in order to understand how they treat gender issues. Nigerian women, who are also concerned about sexual politics, understand that a discussion of feminism must grapple with more than the issue of sex. So many issues are raised when the topic of gender is discussed in Nigerian literature. They include: the representation and mis-representation of women in literary texts; the education of women; the access of women to the economic means of survival; motherhood; women in the domestic sphere; women as part of their communities; women's role in politics and revolution; women and cultural practices; sexuality; and the direct treatment of women by men, and men by women. We shall use Buchi Emecheta's novel The Joys of Motherhood, Catherine Acholonu's poetry collection The Springs Last Drop and Zulu Sofola's play *Wedlock of the Gods in treating the gender issues in Nigerian literature.*

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the unit the students should be able to:

understand what gender issues are treated in Nigerian literature
appreciate Nigerian literature with gender themes
recognize gender themes in Nigerian literature
distinguish Nigerian literature with gender bias from others
discuss gender issues as presented in Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In gender studies in Africa, Nigerian women have been at the pivot. Flora Nwapa is one of the first writers to give the women voice in African literature. Her novels Efuru, Idu and One is Enough among others set out provocative gender issues in Africa. The role and history of feminist politics or activism on women's rights in Africa is a discourse which African women are studying and clarifying for themselves. The debate over feminist criticism and the development of an African feminist theory has been a concern to African gender scholars. As a Senegalese figure, Mariama Ba represents a kind of feminine Leopold Sedar Senghor. She shows that not only men are important in this world. She also shows that to succeed in this life, women should identify themselves and also trust in themselves to overcome the difficulties that compose life. In showing the importance of women, their role in bringing up families and keeping them together in time of calamity is clearly brought out in the novel.

Buchi Emecheta has a different view. She criticizes the society's belief that a woman is worth anything if she becomes a mother. Nnu Ego, as did other women in the Ibo society, bore many children in the hope that she would have someone to take care of her in her old age. Again, this was an Ibo custom. Some argue that it is not the responsibility of the children to support and care for Nnu Ego. They argue that Nnu Ego's children had the right to choose in what manner and to what extent they would do so, if at all. Others argue that there was never any real communication with regard to this expectation of Nnu Ego from her children, that this message was never expressed. Although that may have been the case, the understanding was implicit. It was a cultural understanding, a cultural expectation that, although not fully expressed, was always understood. It is a case of motherhood appreciation.

Catherine Acholonu's poetry examines women in cultural situations. In *The Spring's Last Drop, she examines the expectations of women in*

cultural things like ritual, rites of passage and cultural hegemony. She is the proponent of the feminist theory of motherism which she interpreted as the Afrocentric alternative to feminism. The theory discusses the place of African women in the feminist discourse and to correct some obvious lapses in womanism and feminism proper.

Zulu Sofola, one of the earliest female dramatists to have come out of Africa, has produced plays that give attention to the issues of female subjugation, culture clash and anarchy. Her plays have been recognized as trail blazers in the discourse on female subjugation and male dominance. She has often portrayed the need for harmony among the sexes in a community; the need for appreciating the place of the man and the role of the women and the need to discard those indices of anarchy that place women in bad positions in society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Examine the role of Nigerian female writers in the propagation of gender issues in Africa.

3.2 Gender Issues in The Joys of Motherhood

One of the many issues raised in Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of *Motherhood is the conflict Nnu Ego feels in embracing and accepting* new ideas when she moves away from her Ibo society to make a new life for herself in Lagos. Nnu Ego is caught between two cultures. While she sees that her old customs and beliefs are not conducive to a better life for her or her children, she is unable to come to terms with Lagos's different societal rules. It is shocking to her that money is now the status quo, not children. She finds it hard to believe that gender roles have been exchanged. Men now work as household servants for the "white man." Women are no longer having a large number of children. Nnu Ego finds it difficult to adjust to her new life. Her strong cultural beliefs are in direct conflict with her new life in Lagos. These cultural beliefs are the cause of her enslavement.

Nnu Ego's cultural background is one in which women are exploited to men's advantage. Womanhood is defined by the ability to bear children. The more male children a woman has, the higher her status. In this patriarchal society, a woman's duty is to bear male children for her husband to continue his lineage. A childless woman is considered a "half woman," a failed woman. The man, therefore, is of critical importance to the woman, for a woman cannot bring forth a child without a man. This way of thinking can be seen in Adankwko's advice to Nnu Ego: "Have you ever heard of a complete woman without a husband?" (Emecheta 158). A husband who can father male children is greatly admired.

In Nnu Ego's society, a daughter's value to her parents is only as high as the bride price she can fetch. The Ibos' way of thinking is that daughters are raised to glorify another man when her turn comes to produce male offspring. That is why daughters are not as highly regarded as sons are. In Nnu Ego's patriarchal society, women are viewed as tools of production. The younger the woman is, the better able she will be to reproduce. Women are valued in terms of their economic worth. In Nnu Ego's Ibo society, a woman is always owned by a male. First, she belongs to her father until she is of an age where she can be sold. Pre-arranged marriages are normal. How the daughter feels toward her husband is of little importance. After acquiring her, she is chattel and only valuable in terms of "producing" offspring, preferably males. She is his to command. Her duty is to obey him always.

All of these beliefs and customs are embedded in Nnu Ego's subconscious. Her new life in Lagos does not change that. She is not surprised, therefore, when Nnaife chides her for questioning him: "What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? " (Emecheta, 48)

The Joys of Motherhood is a mirror image of today's society in Africa and in many other parts of the world. It speaks of the struggles and conflicts of women and the gender roles imposed upon them. It further speaks of women's struggles to gain independence from their subservient roles as wives and to gain a voice of their own. Women in third world countries are still hesitant to speak out and make themselves heard for fear of being punished by their husbands and society in general. Their objections to being treated unfairly are seen as unimportant.

In Ibuza, wife beating was also common and, indeed, accepted. Since wives were property, husbands had the authority to do as they pleased. Wife beating elevated a husband's self-esteem and gave him a sense of control. In The Joys of Motherhood, Nnaife threatens to beat Nnu Ego when she presses him to find a job. He actually beats the pregnant Adaku when both she and Nnu Ego go on strike for more housekeeping money. Things have not changed very much for women in third world countries. They are still considered second class citizens. Although they work alongside the men in various fields, in addition to taking care of the household, their contributions are seen as insignificant. A woman is faceless. Her identity is forever linked with that of her husband's. They are as one.

Nnu Ego's conflict with her new life in Lagos first becomes evident when Adaku comes to live with them. Although in her Ibo society husbands have many wives who live together harmoniously, Nnu Ego

resents Adaku and does not like to share Nnaife with her. Nnu Ego is torn between her Ibo customs and the reality of her poverty filled life in Lagos. As she struggles to put food on the table for her children with the little money Nnaife earns, she comes to the conclusion that she is a prisoner because of her role as mother and senior wife. She reflects on the way her life would have been in Ibuza as a senior wife. She dreams of having the courage to abandon Nnaife and leave her children with him. As senior wife in Lagos, she has many responsibilities but none of the rewards that come with being a senior wife in Ibuza:

> On her way back to their room, it occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, and imprisoned in her role as the senior wife. She was not even expected to demand more money for her family; that was considered below the standard expected of a woman in her position. It was not fair, she felt, the way men cleverly used a woman's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her. (Emecheta 137)

When Nnu Ego first comes to Lagos, she is shocked to discover that Nnaife works as a domestic servant who washes "women's underwear." She questions his manhood and loses all respect for him. She would have preferred that he had a "real" man's job, like working on a farm. Her constant comparisons to Amatokwu must have been a source of pain and humiliation for Nnaife, who is content with the work that he does and does not understand Nnu Ego's exasperation and disbelief. Nnu Ego comes from a male dominated society where men and women each have their assigned roles.

Nnu Ego feels obligated to her family, her husband and her children. Everyone makes demands on her. Although she takes care of the household, the children and her husband in the traditional way, she also has to take charge of supporting her family when Nnaife is unable to do so. Although at times Nnu Ego expresses her anger and exasperation to Nnaife, her attitude changes when she realizes that because of him, she is a mother, she is a woman, therefore she is complete. To Nnu Ego, Nnaife proves his manhood by fathering many children. According to the Ibo ideology, Nnaife has made her a woman. That is why, although Nnu Ego loses respect for Nnaife when he doesn't find a job, she still clings to the Ibo custom of silence. "All the same, like a good woman, she must do what she was told, she must not question her husband in front of his friends" (Emecheta 114).

Nnu Ego's hesitancy in expressing her emotions and anger is common in many African societies even today. The woman's role is to obey her husband and accept any decisions he makes in silence. To express your

opinions could mean a night of abuse. Nnu Ego's conflict further comes into evidence when Adaku receives a visit from Igbonoba's wife. When she sees how elegantly dressed this woman is, she feels desperate and angry. Not at the visitor, but at herself. She has begun to realize that the high status she so desperately sought by having so many children is of little value in her new society in Lagos. Values have changed. Money is now the status symbol. Yet all because she was the mother of three sons, she was supposed to be happy in her poverty, in her nail-biting agony, in her churning stomach, in her rags, in her cramped room . . . Oh, it was a confusing world. (Emecheta 167) Nnu Ego is in a state of transition. She is slowly moving away from her Ibuza customs and beliefs but is still hesitant to fully embrace new ideas.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Nnu Ego is a mother who desired the joys of motherhood. Does this expectation reveal her gender roles?

3.3 The Feminist Poet: Catherine Acholonu's The Spring's *Last Drop*

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu's position as the first daughter of a chief is significant because she plays the role of helping to organize her father's household even though she is married. She claims in the poem "the message" to be the reincarnation of the spirit of her dead father. She is a chronicler of tradition, and in her poems she sets out to restore order through expert crafting of words, and in continuation of her father's mission, as a chief in her village. Since in Igbo culture, politics is not separated from religion, Acholonu finds her father's role as the leader of her community tied to his religious role, which tie has the potential to produce a richer and more balanced life for the individual and the people. She attempts to show the spiritual and traditional roots of her poetry as a testimony of her cultural roots and privileges of a poet in her community. Her social positioning and role in her father's house testifies to her Africana womanhood in seeking for a more egalitarian society where women participate in the political, cultural, and religious life of their community by right. Catherine Acholonu in The Spring's *Last Drop demonstrate in their poetry a consciousness of the spiritual as* a tool for creative empowerment, making spirituality both subject matter and source of diction so as to be relevant in their societies.

Acholonu belongs to the second generation of modern Nigerian poets, who are neither confronted with the task of fighting for independence as the pioneers poets were, nor experimenting with different poetic forms and individualistic romantic concerns as the first generation of modern Nigerian poets were. The vision of the poets in the second generation of

modern Nigerian poets is to give poetry back to the masses (i.e. to make poetry the voice of the masses) and to use their art to correct the evils and corruption that swept the nation after the Nigerian civil war (1967-70). The Nigerian civil war contributed to the erosion of traditional values, and marked the onset of armed robbery and other forms of violence, as common crimes. Acholonu attempts to use her art to reconnect the people to the traditional values they knew before. It is in her collection The Spring's Last Drop that she suggests that the solution to most societal problems lies in turning back to tradition, even to its mystic experience. Obi Maduakor in "Female Voices in Poetry: Catherine Acholonu and Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie as Poets" acknowledges Acholonu's commitment to traditional values and faith. Maduakor summarizes her themes and structure in the collection: "To a certain extent all her poems sum up to one supreme statement on the need to be rooted; to be anchored to tradition, to a faith or some kind of supernatural agency. The absence of anchorage she calls "Cultural loss," and the consequence of cultural loss is "Social death" (76). Even Acholonu's social criticism is guided by her commitment to traditional virtues; hence commenting on her role as a chronicler of the virtue of traditional life, Maduakor says "her poetry [. . .] has passion, for it flows from the heart and is conceived from within" (81). Her position in her family, training, and in the nation affirms her commitment to upholding spiritual, traditional, and Africana womanhood principles for liberation and restoration of the dignity of Black cultural values. Acholonu is rooted in both the tradition and spirituality of her community, and she find such rooting inspiring to her creativity and in articulating themes relevant to her experiences as a Black woman and to that of her people.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss Acholonu's perception of the role of women in culture and ritual in The Spring's Last Drop

3.4 The Feminist Drama: Zulu Sofola's Wedlock of the Gods

Zulu Sofola believes that Black women, in publicly reclaiming what has always belonged to them in terms of creative empowerment, present evidence that there exist relationships among creativity, religion, community, and gender. Even though there were existing forms of patriarchy, colonialism heightened male superiority and did not leave room for other forms of governance "while the African traditional system in concept and actualization [had] room for many or more". For instance, education that ought to empower Black women helps to divide them into socio-economic classes and makes it difficult for them to agree, organize, and believe to a woman that they can revoke any decision made by men that is contrary to women's interests. Sofola

laments the loss of traditional egalitarian values and writes about the difference between the educated Black woman who lives in delusions of grandeur and speaks in a demeaning manner about her illiterate, rural, 'traditional' counterpart. It never occurs to her that while she parrots the phrase, 'What a man can do, a woman can do better,' her illiterate counterpart asserts: 'What a woman can do, a man cannot do.' While she quotes the European saying, 'Behind every successful man is a woman,' her illiterate counterpart affirms: 'The strength of a man is in his woman,' or 'A soldier with a mother does not die in a war front.'

In Wedlock of the Gods a girl was bundled off to marriage because her parents needed money from her dowry to pay medical bills for her sick brother. She considers herself as been in bondage for three years the marriage lasted, then the husband dies. Rather than wait for three months as stipulated by custom or agree to the obnoxious custom of leviration, she becomes pregnant for her erstwhile lover. Custom is broken, the consequences are severe - the plot thickens as the tragedy unfolds. The dynamism that marked the pre-colonial African societies is not completely destroyed but it needs to be rebuilt. Cultural alienation has made familiar the once alien notion of the powerlessness of women; Black women seem therefore to be losing hold of their ability to organize and exert pressure on the patriarchal set-up in order to meet their needs. As well, instead of the society being run by decisions made by recognized socio-political groups and women's lines of authority, the instituted foreign male-centered system of governance completely eliminated women's leadership.

Zulu Sofola in her article "Feminism and African Womanhood" writes about the political powerlessness of women as a result of imperialism: "Chaos set in and women were dislodged and made irrelevant, a fact that is now full-blown in today's European / Arab systems of governance in contemporary Africa where our women have been rendered irrelevant, ineffective, and completely de-womanized" (59). The greatest problem of modern African woman is herself because she lacks knowledge about how to effectively combine existing traditional egalitarian values with her Western education so as to recover the collective memory of African womanhood and so refuse to be "de-womanized," being backed by both the physical and spiritual mandates replete in African cosmologies. According to Sofola there is always available a "particular traditional power-line" under which Black women can mobilize themselves to overcome obstacles against the full expression of their humanity (61). By going back to the culture, especially to their spiritual heritage, Black women may be able to recover their ability to negotiate for their rights in patriarchal societies.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss the violation of the marital rights of women in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods.*

4.0 CONCLUSION

Being a woman from Nigeria, Buchi Emecheta knows firsthand the unfairness of a patriarchal society and the conflicts it causes. Although she is reluctant to be called a feminist, Ms. Emecheta writes about the plight of African women and their struggle for freedom and equality. We can see that she does not think very highly of the patriarchal society from which she came. Through her writings, Ms Emecheta hopes to be able to empower women, especially women from third world countries, to educate themselves. Only through education can these women overcome the many obstacles in their paths. The Joys of Motherhood is about a woman from a third world country who, because of the patriarchal society which she lives in, cannot liberate herself from the chains of poverty. It is an honest look at women in the society of a colonized nation who, before, during and after colonization, do not quite fit in. They are still enslaved by men and their society.

Going back to African roots and origins, Black women writers and theorists demonstrate that there is no traditional politic of an irrevocable nature that enshrines discrimination against or limitation of Black women in the physical realm; then how much less could there be in the spiritual realm, which is genderless? This has been Catherine Acholonu's proposition. She believes that Black women's future in the African world has the potential for development and freedom despite the cultural ambiguities that on one hand uphold the importance of women in the society and on the other hand marginalize them. Nevertheless, there are loopholes in at least some African societies that provide the platform on which Black women can negotiate for their rights. Zulu Sofola provides a secure basis to argue that most traditional African societies in pre-colonial times were dynamic so that an average woman pragmatically manipulated her circumstances and potentials and achieved independence and visibility. The colonial intrusion that gave way to cultural alienation, capitalism, and class distinction compounded the problem of average modern Black women in their struggles to achieve the independence and visibility their foremothers had. This has been Sofola's proposition in her plays that the result of colonialism on Black women has been to reveal indigenous and foreign structures of male domination on the women.

5.0 SUMMARY

Buchi Emecheta is concerned with the domineering attitude of African men because of their cultural placement in society. She advocates for a reversal of the attitude. She also pleads in her works that the women deserve to earn the fruit of their labour; to be properly cared for and adored. However, Catherine is of the opinion that women ought to work out their respect. She believes that motherhood is a symbol of honour and must be revered. She also criticizes the subjugation of women when it comes to cultural issues like: birth, death and other rites of passage. She believes that women have the potential to perform what the men do especially where the mantle falls on them. Zulu Sofola decries the effect of colonialism in compounding the tighter gender disposition of African people. She sees western culture as a problem. She advocates a rethink at the way African women are seen as people with no spiritual, physical and emotional essence. Her plays go back to the primordial beginning examining what has been in comparison with what is. In their works, these women writers feature characters that see themselves in a male dominated culture and seek to redefine their future.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Discuss the various issues of gender that Nigerian female writers have been projecting in their works.
2. Catherine Acholonu believes that women can perform ritual and other spiritual essence. Explain how she revealed this The Spring's *Last Drop?*
3. Nnu Ego is mother who knows the worth of her husband and children. Explain how her roles helped her achieve motherhood.
4. The male characters in present in the works treated here are very queer. Does this reveal anything about Nigerian gender literature?
5. Appreciate Zulu Sofola's dimension of gender trend in Wedlock of *the Gods.*

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Acholonu, Catherine (1984). The Spring's Last Drop. Owerri: Afa Publications.

Emecheta, Buchi(1979). The Joys of Motherhood. London: Heinemann.

Otokunefor Henrietta & Nwodo Obiageli 1989). Nigerian Female *Writers. A Critical Perspective. Lagos: Malthouse Press.*

Sofola, Zulu (1976). Wedlock of the Gods. Ibadan: UPL.

UNIT 2 TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN NEW NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Magical Realism: Ben Okri's The Famished Road
3.3 Traditional Belief: Helen Oyeyemi's The Icarus Girl
3.4 Afrocentric Poetry: Chinweizu's Invocation and Admonition
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study the reflection of traditional beliefs in new Nigerian literature. Some new Nigerian writers draw heavily from the traditional beliefs of their people in the creation of their art. They believe that modernity has never spoilt the real traditional beliefs of the people even though some people have been trying to run from it. In trying to attack the incessant military coups and unstable governance in Nigeria, Okri decided to use the motif of the Abiku in Nigerian traditional belief to capture this reality. Oyeyemi in her novel reveals that many people die out of the ignorance of their culture. The culture of 'ere ibeji' in Yoruba traditional belief is exploited in the story. Chinweizu in his poetry reveals that only African beliefs and values are viable tools for a true African literature. He explores this in his poetry which he termed 'Afrocentric' poetry.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

- distinguish between new Nigerian literatures with traditional beliefs as motifs
- appreciate the use of traditional beliefs in new Nigeria literatures
- compare the treatment of African values in the new literatures with those of their predecessors
- answer questions regarding the relevance of traditional beliefs in new Nigerian literature
- accept traditional beliefs as viable themes in new Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The application of traditional beliefs in modern literature in Nigeria is a true reflection of the africanness in the literature. African literature started with African orature, African beliefs and African values. The part that literature plays as a unifying institution of art is paramount to our understanding of how a people can survive the present and win the future. This leads to a proper understanding of what a true African literature entails. Chinua Achebe was once probed on his thoughts on the African novel and the novelist. Rather impatiently, he responded that definitely the African novel had to be about Africa as a geographical expression and as a metaphysical landscape. He added that it should be about "a view of the world and all of the cosmos perceived from a particular position."

The term "African" appears to correspond to a geographical notion but we know that, in practical terms, it also takes in those areas of collective awareness that have been determined by ethnic, historical and sociological factors, all these factors, as they affect and express themselves in our literature, marking off for it a broad area of reference. Within this area of reference then, and related to certain aspects that are intrinsic to the literature, the problem of definition involves as well a consideration of aesthetic modes in their intimate correlation to the cultural and social structures which determine and define the expressive schemes of African peoples and societies. The essential elements of African literature which should include the obligation to represent the image of Africa, given that Africa is relatively still unknown, underestimated and despised in the world, should be an important criterion. Some African writers have respectively depicted Africa's past and traditions, for their contributions towards the better understanding of Africa.

Furthermore, for literature to reflect its society, it should be presented in the form that comes naturally to the people's appreciation of art. Moreover, in time to come, due to extreme pressures of life in modern cities, society will resort to less time-consuming ways of reading and communicating by finding new means, and new forms and then new definitions of changing practical consciousness. Thus, it is not surprising that Nigerian traditional beliefs are often reflected in the new Nigerian literature. This is because it helps in the proper communication of Nigerian values and aids in simplifying the message by using the people’s known beliefs.

Ben Okri has often exploited the power of the supernatural to give his novel a proper leaning towards the Nigerian cultural situation. This style

of writing often termed magical realism runs through his novels. A much younger writer, Helen Oyeyemi, 18 years at the completion of his debut novel, The Icarus Girl, exploited the Yoruba mythical belief on the 'bond' of twins which has been neglected in modern times due to deliberate attempts at avoiding those traditional values in modern literature. Oyeyemi, a diaspora writer, exploited this belief which made her novel draw much attention from critics and writers. Chinweizu, the modern Pan-Africanist, uses the traditional beliefs of his people in the creation of poetry of Afrocentric values. He believes that the utilization of African orature, African traditional beliefs and cultural values in African literature gives it a true African touch.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Critically assess the importance of traditional beliefs as motifs in new Nigerian literature.

3.2 Magical Realism: Ben Okri's The Famished Road

Ben Okri is a Nigerian poet and novelist. Okri has risen to an international acclaim, and he is often described as one of Africa's greatest writers. His best known work, The Famished Road, was awarded the 1991 Booker Prize. He has also been described as a magic realist, although he has shrugged off that tag. He writes about the mundane and the metaphysical, the individual and the collective, drawing the reader into a world with vivid descriptions.

The Famished Road is about an 'Abiku' child named Azaro. Shortly after birth, it became clear that Azaro was a spirit child. He had vivid dreams, which foretold the future and he could see spirits interacting with the living. The spirits called to him and caused him to leave his body for a time, which caused his parents to think he was dead. He woke up in his own coffin and his parents found they could not afford the spiritual ceremony to cut his obvious connection with the spirit world. Azaro grew and learned more about his "gift." He ran out of his compound (forcing his mother and father to follow) just before it went up in flames. Priestesses who saw his true power abducted him. Azaro made a narrow escape, only to end up in the house of a police officer whose dead son tried to communicate with him.

The Famished Road is the amazing story of the journey of a spirit child through the poverty and suffering of modern day Africa. In the pseudo-reality where the book is set, there is a spirit, as well as a physical world. A spirit child is one who only wants to be in the spirit world, so they kill themselves whenever they reincarnate in the physical world. The story is centred on Azaro, an abiku or spirit child. Spirit children are born into

the world of the living but some promise that as soon as they are born they will die and thus return to their friends in the land of spirits. Azaro makes such a promise but on being born he is stopped by the beautiful, suffering face of his mother and decides that he will try life. His spirit companions do not like this and haunt him to return to the land of the dead. This makes the childhood of Azaro both beautiful and harrowing.
In almost every scene of this novel the world familiar to us leaps and pours with the beauty of a spiritual presence. Spirits mingle with the living, in human or animal form, or in the form of lights and omens. Sometimes Azaro disappears altogether onto a spiritual level and a world that is both magnificent and terrifying runs by the reader.

Azaro is haunted by these spirits and some scenes can be quite distressing, even terrifying in places. The undead come as blind lecherous old men who want to use the eyes of children, beggars with misshapen limbs and horrific wounds, freaks and wild animals. Even the road of the title in this story is an entity with a stomach, a being who will destroy unwary travellers who do not leave proper sacrifices.

The novel is set in Nigeria and has a very African feel to it. We are always in the ghetto with Azaro's family, always just on the brink of starvation. Spirits, herbalists and witches and wizards all have their places in the communities, the people are riddled with superstition but in the context of this story every superstition is a real answer and cure. Each one works and we as readers see the spirits being affected by the superstitions of the living.

Azaro lives with both abuse and a prevailing love. One of the most intriguing characters of the book was Black Tyger, Azaro's father. A great boxer, Black Tyger is an abusive father and husband, the almost unbearable suffering of his life taken out on his wife and child. He is also a powerful and noble man crying to be heard. The boxing sequences of 'The Famished road' are among some of the most dramatic action scenes I've ever read, the opponents of Black T yger don't always come from the land of the living but from the land of fighting ghosts. The strength of the man and the power he draws from makes gripping reading. When he decides to become a politician we see he is noble in his thoughts, all he wants is to build schools for the beggars, the people laugh at him but I admired him.

Azaro's mother likewise suffers hopelessly, etching out a miserable living by labouring all day to sell goods. At times it gets too much for her and she takes it out on Azaro but the love she also feels for her child and husband is heart warming. At the lowest points of our characters lives we sometimes get a glimpse of love or happiness that seems like a diamond found in a pile of coal. The novel is throughout harrowing and

painful but the overall message is one of progress and hope.

Politics play a large part in the story as the party of the rich and the parties of the poor vie to get the people of the ghetto's votes. Progress is represented by the splendid, voluptuous character of Madame Koto. This kindly, overweight lady begins the story running a poor bar of palm wine and her famous peppercorn soup.
Without giving too much away she is the first to bring electricity to the ghetto and the first to own a car, both stupendous, magical artifacts to the eyes of the very poor. The richer she gets though the nastier she becomes. It is brilliantly done. You will feel suffering reading this novel, you will feel hunger and long with the characters to find even the smallest of successes. In return you will be rewarded with some of the most beautiful prose I've ever read, as one critic on the sleeve of the novel says: "Okri is incapable of writing a boring sentence."

Characters

1. Azaro is the story's narrator. He is an abiku, or a spirit child who has never lost ties with the spirit world. The story follows him as he tries to live his life, always aware of the spirits trying to bring him back.

2. Azaro's father is an idealistic labourer who wants the best for his family and the community. He suffers greatly for this, eventually becoming a boxer and later a politician. Azaro's father loves him deeply, but is often bitter at having an abiku and occasionally goes on angry violent tirades.

3. Azaro's mother works very hard selling anything she can get her hands on for the family. She cares for her family deeply and constantly gives up food and security for her family and their ideals. She is proud that Azaro is her son and goes to great lengths to protect him.

4. Madame Koto is proprietress of a local bar. She has a liking for Azaro, though at times is convinced he brings bad luck. She starts out as a well-meaning woman, trying to get along with everyone else. However, as the story progresses, she becomes richer, siding with the political party of the rich, and is often accused of witchcraft. She tries to help Azaro and his family on numerous occasions but seems to try to take Azaro's blood to remain youthful.

5. Jeremiah, the Photographer is a young artist who brings the village to the rest of the world and the rest of the world to the

village. He manages to get some of his photographs published, but practices his craft at great personal risk.

The story moves between Azaro's adventures in the real world with his struggling parents and dirty politics, and another peculiar world limited to Azaro's vision – Madame Koto's palm wine bar, the (famished) road and the forest – which are crowded with spirits, and supernatural elements. Often it is Azaro's visionary world that leads him through all the tribulations of the real world.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the application of magical realism in the satirical presentation of

politics in The Famished Road.

3.3 Traditional Belief: Helen Oyeyemi's The Icarus Girl

Helen Oyeyemi was born in Nigeria in 1984 and moved to London when she was four. The Icarus Girl was written while Oyeyemi was studying for her A-levels and she is also the author of two plays, *Juniper's Whitening and Victimese. The title 'Icarus' is taken from a* Greek mythology and it means 'protector'.

The Icarus Girl is a story of overwhelming, corrosive loneliness. Jessamy Harrison lives in London, the only child of a Yoruba mother and an English father. As the novel opens, this intellectually precocious, angry, solitary eight-year-old has shut herself into a cupboard because only in such confined spaces does she feel in control. Jess's alienation springs from everyday realities. She has been moved up a year in school because of her academic gifts. Her rages and screaming fits distance her further from her classmates. She is a stranger to her mother's family and language. On a deeper level, Jess is haunted by other identities which threaten to take over and destroy her own. The strongest of these takes the form of a little girl, Titiola, whom Jess encounters when she first visits Nigeria. Jess names the girl TillyTilly, and she appears to be the typical imaginary best friend of an isolated child. But TillyTilly is far more powerful than this. It emerges that Jess is not an only child, but a surviving twin. It also becomes clear that this novel is as much metaphysical as it is realistic.

The Icarus Girl takes its premise from the Yoruba belief that twins inhabit three separate worlds: the Bush, a 'wilderness for the mind' (page 298), the normal world and the spirit world. Oyeyemi has said that TillyTilly is from the Bush, 'a world that doesn't have the same structure as our world'. Through Jess's loss of her twin and her isolation at school, Oyeyemi explores themes of loneliness, alienation and the

difficulties — particularly for a young child — of being very obviously different. Jess's mixed race, her precocity and her tantrums set her apart from her schoolmates, marking her out and only serving to intensify the loneliness she already feels. Helen Oyeyemi has drawn on her own experience in exploring this emotional terrain. She describes herself as 'a real mess at school', isolated from her classmates and regarded as 'the weird girl'. At the age of fifteen she took an overdose and while recovering took refuge in reading: she still proclaims herself to be 'more of a reader than a writer'. That summer, another family visit to Nigeria set the seal on her recovery although she doesn't feel wholly Nigerian: 'I'm just British' she says.

Twins bring blessings in Yoruba culture, but may also bring misfortune. If one twin dies at birth, the surviving twin is thought to have lost half her soul. A sacred image of the dead twin, an ere ibeji, must be carved and then tended like a living child; in its turn the 'ere ibeji' protects the family. Otherwise, disaster follows in the form of sickness, death and barrenness. This fate overtakes Jessamy Harrison's family. Helen Oyeyemi describes Jess's psychic torment and near disintegration. Her father is sucked dry by depression, her teacher disappears on sick leave, and Jess's one good friend is almost killed during a sleepover from hell. Oyeyemi's writing is powerful if uneven. But at its best this is a chilling story about the anguish of separation from all that should be most familiar and dear. In the end, it is only in Nigeria, within the traditional family compound, that wounds can begin to heal.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

How realistic is the treatment of Yoruba belief about twins in The *Icarus Girl?*

3.4 Afrocentric Poetry: Chinweizu's Invocation and *Admonitions*

In Chinweizu's award-winning poetry collection Invocations and *Admonitions published 1986; his Africanist vision begins to loom large* in the poet's consciousness. Significantly, this volume is dedicated, to the memory of Cheikh Anta Diop, Egyptologist, scientist, historian great pioneer of Afrocentric history who reconnected the modern African consciousness to black Egypt. Invocations and Admonitions dwells on the community, the bard's own folks, and their mannerisms. Women, love and sex in 'Desire', 'That Lady', 'A Gift of Maidenhead' and 'Sex in Space' are treated with his usual masculinist rebuttal. 'Desire' for example maintains a subtle rhythm in the public jeer at womanhood. Other poems – 'The Penis of a God', 'Blest Freight for the Slaughter House', and 'Chant of Hired Planters' – recast the redundancy of the

ruling class and their exploitation of the underprivileged through all history. There is sympathy for the workers who actually 'clear the bush, plough the soil, harrow the ground' but are cheated in the harvest ('not for us the harvest time'). On the other hand, there is contempt for Capitalism and its lechery ('what do you expect...we who make sure the roads are built'). Chinweizu often adopts this stance of poet-reformer on a mission. He presumes to bulldoze his art with an acute sense of history ('Admonition to the Black World'), to flatten Imperialism's footholds (Islam, Christianity, Marxism, Capitalism) in our consciousness and, by these 'demolitions', retrieve from the distant past an 'icon' for the inspiration and pride of his generation. For this rare and courageous singer, putting on the garb of the griot in modern writing could be onerous, particularly when lamenting the fall of the heroes of our history ('Lament for a dauntless three') and attempting to capture a historical experience in an artistic memento that evokes the chequered Nigerian independence, its betrayal by a tribe of military interlopers and their civilian counterfeits incarnated even in millennial leaders.

Art is thus inscribed for posterity in the serial national conflicts which had come to signify, for recent Nigerian poetry, the point of departure from the aesthetics of the league of euro-modernists represented, in Chinweizu's argument, by the poetry of Okigbo, Soyinka, and Clark. Thus Invocations and Admonitions, distinguished by an Africanist alliance, adopts more complex techniques of expression in various traditional literary forms that had helped to enrich and distinguish the poetry of the new Nigerian writers from that of their older counterparts. This distinction lies in the realignment of heritage from a more credible interpretation and organisation of traditional repertoire. There is always the inevitable presence of a local audience achieved partly by the story-telling nature of the poems.

In Invocations the griot is more at home with his traditional repertoire: the prayer ('Invocations on a day of Exile'), the abuse: ('The Pagan's Reply'), work song: ('Chant of Hired Planters'), dirge song: ('Lament for a Dauntless Three'), and song of admonitions ('…To the Black World'). The prayer in 'Day of Exile' is remarkable in its adoption of òfò, to represent the Igbo poet-diviner. This totem of justice urges steadfastness on the holder through any human or divinely instigated adversity. The persona of this poem is therefore not unlike the exile of an unjust society 'where truth is cast out of the gates and falsehood sits majestic.' It draws from the traditional incantation as the supplicant calls upon his ancestors and gods: and you forest spirits/and you spirits of the rivers/and you my ancestors' (16). The journey motif parallels traditional rites of passage: 'I have travelled a road without rest/I am hungry for a patch of earth' and the rhetoricism is appropriately adapted to elicit the element of pathos: 'where can I settle my rump/and cool my blistered feet?'

though my path is hard
my chi is alert...
And what is that crouching in ambush...?
I say my chi will not permit it
move out of my path
my chi is alert (16)

Thus in this time-old precept of ritual self cleansing do we declare him/her clean and free from incrimination –an expression which is achieved by the accompanying device of rhetorical questions:

Did I get loose another man's tethered goat?
Did I lean unto my bed another man's unwilling daughter?
Did I loot the public granary and harm another man's
crop . . .? (17)

The truth of retributive justice reflects from traditional philosophy and, in Chinweizu's poetry, is deployed with extensive structural repetitions and parallelisms important in African communication art:

If prosperity should visit me
It shall find me at home
It shall not overwhelm me
It shall not drive laughter from my teeth
It shall not surround me with faces mad with envy
It shall not kill me before my time. (17)

In this lament, the subject-heroes take on mythic dimensions, quite disproportionate to actual historical positions. Now they are full of goodness, had elevated the material well-being of their people, helped the poor and made the peace. So their death is made to acquire a tragic outlook that should leave the bereaved utterly helpless as aptly projected in this rhetorical parallelism:

what voice shall comfort us…?
what arm shall strike for us ...?
what hand shall cleanse this rot ...? (11-13)

With the poet we can traverse further to reconstruct traditional funeral

occasions where, as assumed, the deceased is not really 'dead' until a 'thorough search' has been conducted around the familiar places the deceased usually stayed during his life time. When at last he is not found, he is then adjudged dead. 'Lament for a Dauntless Three' is informed by such funeral practices in Igboland. The three heroes are sought after in places associated with their physical and spiritual homelands.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the Afrocentric properties in Chinweizu's poetry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the works under study in this unit, the three Nigerian writers exploited Nigerian traditional beliefs in their writing. They believe that a true African literature must carry African themes, forms and beliefs. They are African writers writing about African cultural situations. They are African writers writing about Africa from the bias of African traditional beliefs. They are writing to contribute to reflect African culture in modern literature. Even though we observe the use of these traditional beliefs as motifs for discussing modern experiences, we notice a serious appeal in the usage. These writers wrote about Nigeria (Africa) as a part of their contribution to elevating and recalling traditional beliefs of the people. While Oyeyemi's story of twins is deeply rooted in Yoruba cultural belief, Okri's reflect a belief that runs through almost all the tribes in Nigeria. Every tribe in Nigeria has the belief in the emergence of a child who dies only to return with the purpose of tormenting their parents. Chinweizu exploited the traditional beliefs in gods, chi, nature and tradition. Even as modern African writers engage in anti-African moves in their bids at undermining African values, here are writers using the traditional beliefs of their people in creating functional literatures with modern relevance.

5.0 SUMMARY

These writers wrote about Nigerian traditional beliefs with much dexterity and vivacity. Their literatures truly reflect Africa. Helen Oyeyemi was born in Nigeria but relocated to UK at the age of four. Definitely at that age, she never knew anything about Africa her ancestral home. So, writing about a cultural issue like the Yoruba belief in the affinity of twins seems surprising. Definitely, she must have written her work based on what her parents told her. The character of Jess in the novel reveal a child alienated from her culture, a true picture of how Helen may have felt at younger age. The Icarus Girl reveals some misrepresentation of African cultural situation as a result of misinformation. Okri's Azaro is a reflection of traditional beliefs in modern times. The setting is modern. The issues are modern. But the culture is traditionally hinged on the destiny of a people as a result of powers unknown. Africans believe so much in the power of the supernatural. This is also reflected in Chinweizu's Afrocentric poetry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain some traditional beliefs reflected in Okri's The Famished *Road.*
2. Carefully examine the way Oyeyemi treated the Yoruba belief in 'ere ibeji' in her novel.
3. From your reading of these novels, do you think they reflected the real beliefs of their people?
4. Afrocentric literature is bent towards African belief system. How does Chinweizu reflect this in his poem?
5. Distinguish the various ways each of the writers treated here handled traditional beliefs in their works.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Chinweizu (1986). Invocation and Admonitions Lagos: Pero Press.

Chinweizu, Jemie, Madubuike (1980). Toward the Decolonization of *African Literature. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.*

Ben Okri (1991). The Famished Road. Ibadan: Spectrum.

Oyeyemi, Helen (2005). The Icarus Girl. London: Bloomsbury.

UNIT 3 THE NEW NIGERIA POETS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
  3.1 General Overview
  3.2 Poetry of Social Reform: Hyginus Ekwuazi's Love Apart
  3.3 Poetry of the City: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos
  3.4 Ritual Poetry: Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the works of select new poets in Nigeria. They classified as new poets because they fall under the third generation of writers to emerge from Nigeria. However, one of the select poets here, Hyginus Ekwuazi has been writing poetry for a long time alongside the second generation Nigerian poets like Osundare, Osofisan, Enekwe amongst others but his only collection of poetry Love Apart was just published in 2007 by Kraft Books, and hence he falls under the new generation poets in Nigeria. Other works to be used in illustrating this new poetry in Nigeria include: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos and Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the thematic focus of new Nigerian poetry

appreciate the works of new Nigerian poets
discuss the style and themes in new Nigerian poetry
distinguish the new Nigerian poets from the old Nigerian poets
see the new poets as versatile and broad in scope.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Writing poetry is a most personal enterprise and hence poets are prone to expressing certain peculiar opinions in defense their works, especially when faced with a criticism that challenges the value of such works. For

some Nigerian poets the problem is less of talent than of their indolence and reluctance in undergoing the laborious process of developing their craft. Many critics believe that the third generation writers are hasty. They accuse them of being too anxious to get published. They ask: how many of the poets of this generation are ready to undergo pain-staking craftsmanship? Every true poet who desires greatness must as of necessity be determined upon a life of poetry - he must be ready to work hard at his art, suffer for it, bleed for it, he must make himself amenable to constructive criticisms and most of all he must be his own bitterest critic.

The question remains: what will the future poets find in the best poets of this generation to admire and emulate? The poetry of every generation the world over has always had some distinctive features that distinguish it from the one of the preceding generation. Are there some distinguishing features peculiar to the poetry of this generation of Nigerian writers? Some critics have also observed that in spite of the increasing chunks of poetry that are being churned out everyday, Nigerian poets are yet to evolve a style that would distinguish them from their predecessors and that there are hardly new trends in the poetry being currently written. They want to imitate the trends of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide. Almost every poet still wants to write in the oral, lyrical fashion of Osundare and Ojaide. There is nothing wrong in being influenced by the great masters of the art of a preceding generation, as Wole Soyinka asserts in his preface to Poems of Black *Africa:*

> There is a distinct quality in all great poets that does exercise a ghostly influence in other writers, but this need not to be cause for self - flagellation. The resulting works is judged by its capacity to move ahead or sideways by the thoroughness of ingestion within a new organic mould, by the original strength of the new entity(2)

The renown that the Niyi Osundare generation presently enjoys is a result of its resolve to 'move ahead' from the conservative poetic trends of the poets of Soyinka's generation and evolve its own unique poetry in a new 'organic mould'. The present generation of Nigerian poets has tried to do likewise.

As exceptional as the poetry of Osundare generation is, it still does have some gross weaknesses. It is unfortunate that the poets of the present generation have continued to imitate such styles. Its best poets though very brilliant still have their bilabials lost in the gutturals of the masters, to put it in stricter words, their voices can at best be categorized as self - displaying babels that are yet to evolve into one organic, unmistakable

voice that would denominate their generation and distinguish it from the preceding generation. Our poetry should reflect that vastness and endlessness.

We have had poets addressing the so called socio - political ills since the country's independence, yet nothing has changed. There is no way politics can be completely expunged from our poetry, but if we must write about politics let us be more subtle and creative about it. Every student of literature knows that the development of poetry, nay literature, has always followed and maintained fidelity to one unchanging tradition - the tradition of action and reaction, of counter reactions and returns. Thus we have romanticism as a reaction against neo-classicism, modernism as a reaction against Victorianism, etc., and poetry is much the better or it. Why then has the present generation of Nigerian poets created for itself dark stagnant waters in which it has continued to wallow in the oral traditions of the second generation of Nigerian poets? Why should our contemporary poets continue to write in the aesthetics in whose evolution they had no hand and in which their predecessors have continued to record unsurpassable achievements?

Literary history is a self-pruning process - it prunes poetry to the study of few poets of each generation and it may be that these poets generally regarded as the best of this generation will be studied, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Akeem Lasisi, Ogaga Ifowodo, Uche Uduka, Ebereonwu, Obi Nwakama, Remi Raji, Promise Okekwe, Austyn Njoku and others. But this is only a tentative judgment. However ecstatically we praise these poets, the final verdict belongs to the future generation of poets, who will find in some of these poets something to admire and emulate. Every poet worth his salt knows that his poetry will be richer if he submits himself to vast extensive readings; if he makes himself receptive to all poetic trends all over the world, while maintaining a consciousness of his base; if he loosens up his current stilted poetic lines and finally if he embraces all subjects as material for poetry. It is, however, gratifying to note that propitious signs about the development of new Nigerian poetry are already emerging from certain poets. In the freshness of imagery, in the musicality of lines, in the inventiveness of imagination and language these new poets are certainly some of the poets that shall define the aesthetics by which their generation of poets will be enjoyed and remembered by subsequent generations of poets.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Critically discuss the various criticisms against the new Nigerian poetry.

3.2 Poetry of Passion: Hyginus Ekwuazi's Love Apart (2007)

Hyginus Ekwuazi is a director at the Nigerian Film Institute in Jos. He was a Senior lecturer at the department of Dramatic Arts, University of Ibadan. He has been a well known researcher in the field of dramatic arts, films studies, Nigerian home videos and creative arts generally. He has been writing poetry for the past two decades. His earlier poems were ranked alongside the second generation Nigerian poets like Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Okinba Launko (Femi Osofisan) amongst others. However, his only collection of poetry Love Apart was published in 2007. This collection won two awards: ANA NDDC Prize and Gabriel Okara Prize for literature. The judges commended the poetic novelty in the collection.

In this collection, Hyginus uses a poet persona who passes through series of love experiences to explore issues of human relationship, politics, culture, and the essence of societal growth. Love Apart is a poetic journey that grows from innocence to experience where apart from love other aspects of human passionate realities are treated with in-depth poetic essence. According to Ekwuazi in his preface to Love *Apart:*

> All I've been leading to is simply this: there are here, like Okigbo would say, the errors of the rendering. I daresay, the amount of such errors here could 9should?) be overwhelming. Of course, I'm only too well aware that no amount of polishing/rewriting can completely or, even, substantially, remove them. (6-7)

The poems trace the effects of separation, the obvious effects of living apart after a long time of togetherness. We see the effect of power as one of the obvious causes of separation. We see greed, anarchy and other forms of subjugation which are parts of the errors of the rendering. He sees silence as poetry. Silence is golden when applied with caution and reasoning. In the poem "Those men that prance and dance around you", he attacks those leaders, politicians, military men and other people who have been killing the joy of the helpless populace who dance to the various tones of anarchy permeating the entire system:

the one who would share and share alike the ancient

throne of his fathers for half your bed…

the one whose carrot stick is a mansion and a million in any currency not the dollar or the euro the oil sleek politician false as only a Nigerian butchers scale can be…

Love Apart takes careful incursion into the effects of betrayal, lust, denial and rejection. It uses personal relationship as yardstick for measuring communal belief and the need for love which should form the basis for harmony in the society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the effectiveness of the theme of love in appraising governance in Love Apart.

3.3 Poetry of the City: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos (2008)

Austyn Njoku has been in Nigeria's literary sphere for more than two decades. He was a crew staff of the defunct Nigeria Airways, a job which sharpened his interest in literature. Haven travelled to over 20 countries, his contact with people of many races in comparison with his Nigerian life helped so much in making his poetry a unique voice. He writes poetry with individualistic touch. So far, he has written three collections of poetry I've Been a Crew (1998), Scents of Dawn (2002) and Night in Lagos (2008).

Lagos is beyond a mere city. It is a phenomenon: the good, the bad and the ugly. Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos (2008) takes a poetic incursion into the various aspects of Lagos: the sociological, the psychological, the physical and the spiritual. It treats each aspect with much dexterity. In his preface to Night in Lagos, Olu Obafemi says: "Talking about commitment and passion, the two most notorious passport of any Nigerian poet, I dare say in our obsolescent Nigerian society today, Austyn Njoku robs soul and body with his contemporary third generation Nigerian writers" Talking about Lagos, the subject of the collection, Obafemi adds: "Osofisan has warned us, in a recent Ibadan Lecture Series, to expect more of literature of anguish, disillusion, delectable sensuality in, hopefully arty forms from Lagos, a new centre of creativity haven seized the baton from Ibadan"(v).

In the beginning of Nigerian written literature, Cyprian Ekwensi began with People of the City, a novel which examines the social life of Victorian Lagos. It juxtaposes the new urban passion with the rural beginning of the people. The sad news is that the city, though with every thing good, lacks the unity, love and the expected passion for brotherhood. The city in Nigerian literature since then has been a symbol of everything odd. Night in Lagos takes a deeper look at these odds of the city using the same Lagos as focus. Most of the poems revolve around the poet's experiences in the city of Lagos where there are marked differences in class and topography. Some questions that come to mind are: why did the poet choose the title Night in Lagos?

What does night portend for Lagosians? Does Lagos night define uniqueness that the daytime never carries?

In one of the poems entitled "Lagos", he pictures the ugly scenes of dirt, hate, destruction and the labyrinthine: "The sinks solemnly sigh/ At the sight of drab dishes/Swelling their brooding bowels" (2). This verse becomes more realistic with the next poem "Flood Lagos" which tries to question the population explosion in the city. Lagos population, to the poet, "Leaves a mystery yet unraveled" (3). Lagos is one of the most populated cities in the world but the infrastructural development is not as fast as the population increases by the minute. Even in the elite part of Lagos, the Island, the commercialization of the city centre which results in high traffic bothers the poet in the poem "Lagos Island". The poem "Oshodi Oke", pictures the inhuman part of Lagosians. Oshodi bus stop has been described as the busiest bus stop in the world with human traffic of over one million people on a daily basis. In this poem, the poet recalls how a dying man was left unattended to in the bus stop because "They all filed past him/ Like black busy ants/ In a long black procession" (7). Every body is busy in Lagos fighting for greener pastures even at the detriment of love, compassion and charity. It is in the title poem "Night in Lagos" that the poet revealed the horrors of Lagos:

> Whispering in the shadows
> Smooching shuffling of flesh
> Moaning in the corners of Allen
> Grabbing stabbing in Mushin
> And slashing off a head or
> Simply plucking some eyes-
> Sleeping with serpents in Oshodi
> While private parts fly into thin air!

These are just rhythms of night in Lagos (51)

Each of the poems in this collection examines the state of Lagos in various dimensions as the poet ruminates in awe at every aspect of the city's odds. One is left at the end of the reading with much taught at the height of human carnage, environmental odds, political insincerity, underdevelopment and even spiritual wickedness. Olu Obafemi, in his affirmation of Lagos as a good subject matter in Nigerian literature adds thus:

> In Lagos…in the mixture of rancid stench in deodorant fragrance; the ghetto and the super-maul(sic); abjection and opulence; lavish love and searing hate; pain and joy; prey and predation we see the new centre of creative burst

> of the emerging generation that will lead the light of Nigerian literature by young men and women (iv)

All these and more are captured in Night in Lagos in subtle poetic monologue with racy comprehensible images and message.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the sullen images of Lagos as reflected in Night in Lagos.

3.4 Ritual Poetry: Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje (2001)

Ritual poetry is a type of oral poetry. It is that poetry expressed through the spoken medium. It is much realized when performed. Ritual poetry is a special kind of poetry that originated from the Ijala tradition. Ritual, according to Emeaba (1987) is, "A drama dealing specifically with religious beliefs in godly scenarios. The dramatic personae of most ritual dramas are made to represent gods, deities or spirits. Masks and masquerades are used to represent dead ancestors. The drama relies very much on excessive action and mime with little dialogue." (176) Ritual poetry is, therefore, a type of poetry (with dramatic and/or rhetoric properties) usually performed as a tribute to the dead or a fallen hero. *Iremoje is a tribute to the late Ken Saro Wiwa and other fallen heroes in* Nigeria. More so, Ritual poetry is an art of 'Ijala' tradition, which is a type of Yoruba traditional poetry. 'Ijala' according to Emeaba (1987) is "a poetic composition of lengths varying from between ten and hundreds of lines presented and conforming to specific rules of theme, meter and languages. Ijalas are connected with the legendary traditions of a people especially the Yoruba and accounts for the heroic exploits of Ogun and it is usually performed during annual festivals" (90). According to Akeem Lasisi in his 'Preface to Iremoje' (2000):

> The Yoruba tradition is a functional art and it is largely event based. "Iremoje", is a strictly specialized form, a valedictory ritual poetry, in honour of dead hunters. Other sub-genus such as Ekun Iyawo, Ijala e.t.c. are identified with ceremonies such as marriages and naming ceremonies. (1)

The Yoruba believe that hunters are great chanters with Ijala being their art-in-trade. But, when one of their ilk passes away, they celebrate his exit with a night of 'Iremoje performance' that invokes his great exploits especially during hunting expeditions; how he gunned down the wildest of hyenas and how he wrestled a buffalo to a standstill. (All these are just indications of what makes him great). More importantly though, is the form which symbolizes "a necessary rite of separation,

the one that serves the lord that binds the deceased and the world and enrolls him into the league of his ancestors, who are believed to be carrying on their hunting business in their new sphere of existence." (Akeem Lasisi, Preface 1). The context and structure of *Iremoje are 'heavier' than other forms because of its ritual property. It is* experimentation in the direction of old venerable tradition. The performance aims at serving the dual purpose of giving Ken Saro Wiwa- the indefatigable environmentalist, dogged human rights activist and accomplished author, who was murderously hanged on November 10, 1995, an immortal remembrance and to entertain using African orature. Iremoje is a service of poetry and also the renewal of a dying orature in modern literature.

In Iremoje, Akeem Lasisi makes use of anaphora scheme either through question asking or illustration of a point. This can be illustrated in the following extract:

Ask them:

Ask the snail
What it did that ruined its voice;
Ask the toad
What it did that cut its tail;
Ask the tortoise
What it did that spoilt its skin;
Ask the vulture
What it did that fallowed its head;
Ask them;
Ask the widowed wife of the hilterite weevil
Who trampled on the intricate traffic of nature's web? (36)

The repetition of these initial lines gives the poem a songlike quality, as if it is a chorus. It also shows his emotional state. More like rhetorical questions, each of the imperatives creates images of reality and builds up feelings and thoughtfulness. The regular application of the words 'ask' and 'what' brings in a high level rhetoric inquiries whereby the human mind is constantly pushed towards deeper state of thoughtfulness. There is high invocative essence in the application. Anaphora is also a means of regulating the musicality of the poems. The imperative lexical choices build in tension and increase the tempo of the renditions. The fictionality of the reality paves way for truth and practicality. Akeem Lasisi uses some words to express his mind or inner thought. This occurs, not in clear language, but in various local dialects. Thus, the messages of such likes are still not elusive for they could still be understood in the context of application. Such words can be seen as illustrated in the poem below:

The elephant will yet weigh more than a healthy deer
Kulu kulu kulu. (46)

This onomatopoeic choice 'kulu kulu kulu' mimics the heaviness of an elephants exploits. It captures and/or shows how the word formulated illustrates the leaping of the verses. It reveals revered personality and suggests a heavy picture or outburst of reality. The onomatopoeic contour in the choice above shows the overwhelming truth of the war against environmental degradation and the odds of bad politics!

The sparrow wonders kwaai! kwaai!
Why the ferocious cruelty of the hunter's gun. (33)

This epitomizes the sounds of anger and pains of the suffering populace.

There is the image of a sparrow croaking with anger at the cruelty of the hunters. The choice of this onomatopoeic lexis shows the place of sounds at capturing reality and at the same time revealing situations. We see 'the sparrows', (innocent common man), being hunted and killed mercilessly by the blood thirsty hunters with their guns (the military men in power). The sound 'kwaai' mimics the word 'cry' and captures the sorrowful experiences of the people.

My poetry is oruku tindi-tindi
My poetry is oruku tindi-tindi (45)

Akeem Lasisi blends the local dialects and sounds freely to the extent that the non-Yoruba consumers of this art are forced into it in manner that does not make room for absolute complexities. The choice of this lexical choice of sounds, oruku tindi-tindi, suggests that the entire verse is filled or pregnant with ideas untold. It may also suggest the mysteries of poetry as the little song that reveals the reality of things or the unknown states of man. It also shows that poetry is shrouded in hidden truths, which must be told.

In Iremoje, there are serious attempts at blending African orature with modern poetry. Each blending carries with it a special effect in whole ritual recourse. Each poetic application aims at achieving certain effects which are realizable. They are significant as they embody the ideas of struggle and anarchy as reflected in the life of the hero, Ken Saro Wiwa.
The use of local dialects like Ogoni and Yoruba languages adds more oral reality to the verses. As an oral discourse, Iremoje is has the effect of realizing the truth of the message with less doubt and this is one way that modern African poets have evolved in domesticating their arts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the various oral properties in Lasisi's Iremoje.

4.0 CONCLUSION

There have been these calls for caution to the younger poets in Nigeria. Many critics believe that they are too hasty to publish. In essence, there are over 10,000 poetry collections published within the last two decades in Nigeria especially by the young writers. There are marked prolific outpourings especially in the genre of poetry. Many of these poets write with reasons: to belong to the edified group of writers, to express themselves poetically no matter the weakness in their craft, to get published and be called authors (as most of these works are self published). Many of these writers complained that established publishing outfits reject their manuscripts because they were not known authors like Soyinka, Achebe, Clark, Okara or Osofisan. Prof. Femi Osofisan decided to experiment with a pen name in order to find out whether established publishing outfits would be able to find any substance in his poetry. Fortunately his collection was found publishable and since then he had published several works under the pen name 'Okinba Launko'.

However, these writers: Njoku, Lasisi and Ekwuazi are significant in their arts. Their poetry projects thematic vivacity, stylistic newness and painstaking poetic balance. Each of the poems in the collections treated here reveals a measure commitment to art and humanity. Njoku ponders on the odds of modern Lagos and uses the setting as a micro dissection of the general odds in Nigeria and Africa in general. Lasisi takes a careful incursion into the Yoruba ritual art, using it as a viable too for the revelation of the draconic governance in Africa while Ekwuazi takes a dive into the emotional and psychological make up of the vast populace of the downtrodden in the Nigerian society. At least, within this sea of insignificant poetry, there are still some good ones to consume.

5.0 SUMMARY

The collections of poems treated in this unit are some of the significant poetry of this generation. It is not that there are no other better poets with good poetic skills but the choice here is based on style, theme and time. It is not surprising that all the poets treated here are males. This is because there are fewer female poets in Nigeria today and interestingly they far outweigh the female poets of the other generations. We have such strong female poets as Promise Okekwe, Molara Wood, Unomah Azuah and Angela Nwosu amongst others. They have good poetic skills

but most of them are based in Europe and America. However, the male poets far outweigh the female but there seem to be many female novelists and they are than the female poets. The poets treated here are chosen because of the content of their massage and their craft. They rank among the best poets in Nigeria today and they constitute a framework for discussing the poetic craft of the generation of Nigerian poets today.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Discuss the various critical attacks on modern Nigerian poetry.
2. Explain the major thematic thrust in Njoku's Night in Lagos.
3. Assess the function of Ijala ritual in Lasisi's Iremoje.
4. Ekwuazi's Love Apart is a poetic dissection of Nigeria's trauma. How true is this perception?
5. Distinguish the thematic concern of modern Nigerian poets from their predecessors.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ekwuazi, Hyginus (2007). Love Apart. Ibadan: Kraft.

Emeaba, Onuma Emeaba (1987). A Dictionary of Literature. Aba: Inteks Press.

Lasisi, Akeem (2001). Iremoje (Ritual Poetry for Ken Saro-Wiwa). Ikeja: Hybun.

Njoku, Austyn (2008). Night in Lagos. Lagos: Jemie Books.

UNIT 4 THE NEW NIGERIA NOVELISTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Political Satire: Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus
3.3 Socio-Political Factor: Helon Habila Waiting for an Angel
3.4 Niger-Delta Situation: Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall study the prose fiction of select new Nigerian writers. These writers write about the events that chronicle the experiences of the new Nigerian situation: politics, society, culture, religion etc. Interestingly, most of them are females. These new Nigerian novelists produce artistic works that show that Nigeria has her own history, culture, and civilization. They see their works as a service to their societies. They reveal that Nigerian society had its own contradictions and spiritual crises. Their fictional approach sharply contrasts to the early writers, such as Ekwensi, Achebe, Soyinka, and others, whose artistic works idealize Nigeria. They examine the social situations from the standpoint of class conflict. They use the English language to suit their purposes in fiction writing. We shall select a few of these writers in order to study their message about the new Nigerian situation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

appreciate the new novelists in Nigeria
assess the message in the works of these new writers
contrast their novels with the early writers in terms of themes
discover the newness in their approach to novel writing
identify their contributions to the vast African Prose fiction.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

These new writers of novel in Nigeria reveal in their works the traumas of the present age: starvation, torture, oil spillage, environmental pollution, AIDS, murder, cultural odds, religious and political problems. Their tales/images reveal instances of pain and deprivation. Their novels enter the heart by sneak attack. The questions that often trail the minds of their readers are: Why are we so depressed? Is there no joy in our existence? How is it that our best and brightest are not mindful of the end of the machete that hurts our motherland? Regardless, these writers have every reason to be worried about the situation in Nigeria (Africa). The question becomes: What are they doing about it? Many of these writers spend a lot of time painting gory pictures of Nigeria's (Africa's) sorry state. These writers focus on the Nigeria's (continent's) corrupt leaders, warlords, "tribal" conflicts, child laborers, child traffickers and women disfigured by abuse and genital mutilation amongst other issues.

They write to critique and correct the horrible images of Nigeria (Africa) as one giant beggar-continent that will someday be erased when the intellectuals and writers like these millennium writers direct their rage inwards. They believe the African writers and intellectuals can stop feeding the West stories of irredeemable despair that turn Africa into a caricature continent. They believe there is hope, because there is a return to the oral tradition of storytelling by our ancestors and they call this change.

These new writers write for a precocious generation that went through books with the same intensity with which they surf the pages of the Internet. The pressures on these writers of fiction are enormous. Their voices never stopped singing, they delivered story after story, so painstakingly about the odds of the age. As you read their novels, you feel the passion and the love for the word, pulsating through every word; there is a near obsession for perfection that borders on a disability. These new writers focus on the true condition of the country without reducing the land and her people to ridicule.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

These new novelists are engrossed with revealing the totality of Nigeria's ugly state. Discuss this proposition

3.2 Political Satire: Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus

Kambili, the protagonist in Purple Hibiscus, uses the draconic ruling pattern of her father, Chief Eugene Achike, to reveal the problems in the entire Nigerian society. The unnecessary religious conflicts that make Kambili's father to hate Papa Nnukwu; her grand father shows the high-handedness of some African people who use religion as a means of creating discord in their families. Uncle Eugene allows religion to becloud his sense of fellowship with his culture and society. His children must comply with the tenets of Catholicism. It becomes surprising that a man like Chief Eugene Achike who fights for the political freedom of his people through his journalistic ventures could apply what he attacks in his home. He engages in children and wife battery but criticizes those who batter the society. It looks like denying a phenomenon and embracing it at the same time. A paradox! He celebrates the relief that comes from coups believing that a new government means freedom in sight. He expects freedom but blocks it from his vicinity.

> Kambili sees the contrast between her father and the military government when she critically asserts, "of course, Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt…, what we needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy. Renewed Democracy. It sounded important, the way he said it…" (25).

This whole dream sounded as if Kambili is expecting a 'renewed approach' to the family affairs first before hoping for a renewed governance in the country. Adichie explains that the issue of governance in Africa would change when the individuals begin to examine within themselves the correct approaches to life that would enhance the development of good governance.

Kambili and Jaja never experienced 'real' love in their home at Enugu. It was Aunty Ifeoma's home that provided the needed environment for them to experience love. Jaja falls in love with flowers and other chores. He expresses himself to his cousins. He visits scenes and places and exchanges gifts and experiences. He sees the love of a 'heathen' grandfather who tells them moral folk tales and the love of a reverend father who provides the needed atmosphere for peace and joy. Kambili sees the love of a sister who teaches her to cook meals, care for others and accommodate people around her. She 'falls in love' with Father Amadi. Father Amadi sees in Kambili the character of a heroine who talks less but acts more in her mind, "she does not waste her energy in picking never-ending arguments. But there is a lot going on in her mind, I can tell." (173).

Amaka is also a strong voice. She seems to be one of the strongest female voices in our contemporary fiction. Amaka refuses to take an English name for her confirmation because she sees no need for such 'colonial' necessity. She was never forced to accept this 'necessity'. Not even from Father Amadi whose closeness to the family ought to have given the necessary touch for Amaka to choose an English name:

> "I told you I am not taking an English name, father," she said
> "And have I asked you why?"
> "Why do I have to?"
> "Because it is the way it's done. Let's forget if it's right or wrong for now," father Amadi said, and I noticed the shadows under his eyes.
> "When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn't we moving ahead?" (271-272)

Amaka represents the new hope for the coming generation of African women. Amaka seems to be the most vocal of these characters: young, resilient, outspoken and unbending in the things that touch her African pride. Kambili describes her thus: "She walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Aunty Ifeoma did" (78). She is a rare breed of the new generation of youths. She is creative, accommodating, honest, outspoken and a dogged fighter. Even when Amaka left the country with her mother, she never stops her protests against those things she finds unpalatable in the Nigerian society. Kambili tells us that:

> Amaka used to write to the office of the head of state, even the Nigerian Ambassador in America, to complain about the poor state of Nigeria's justice system. She said nobody acknowledged the letters but still it was important to her that she do something. (300)

Adichie takes a historical stance in the exposition of the travails of military oddities in the novel. Ade Coker fights the military regime through the Standard newspaper. Uncle Eugene sees the fight as his needed role in the correction of military anarchy. Aunty Ifeoma flees the country to the United States in search of peace and academic freedom. Brain drain increases daily. Later, Ade Coker is murdered. Nwankiti Ogechi (a typology for Ken Saro Wiwa) is murdered:

Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And

> then they poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his

bones, to kill him even when he was already dead. (200-201)

After this killing, commonwealth countries suspended Nigeria and imposed sanctions. The Big Oga later dies "atop a prostitute, foaming at the mouth and jerking-…" (297). The Big Oga, invariably General Sani Abacha, is revealed as the ending point of Nigeria's military rule. His death and the death of Uncle Eugene bring in a new hope, a dawn, to the polity. Jaja's acceptance of the crime of murdering his father, even though his mother had claimed responsibility, shows the yearning of the family to get freedom from the brutal and strict father, just like the needed respite the Nigerian nation experienced with the exit of the dictator, General Sani Abacha. The symbol of the purple hibiscus bringing a new hope in their home is seen in Kambili's new vision of tomorrow: "I reach out and place my arm around mama's shoulder and she leans towards me and smiles...The new rains will come soon (307).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Purple Hibiscus is the picture of Nigeria at the zenith of anarchy. Explain how Adichie achieved this.

3.3 Helon Habila's Waiting for an Angel

Nigeria in the 1990s, the setting for this novel, was a police state of such sadistic violence, with human rights abuses so staggering, that the country was expelled from the Commonwealth of Nations, and virtually every other country had sanctions against it. As the author says in the 'Afterword' to this stunning novel, "There was nothing to believe in: the only mission the military rulers had was systematically to loot the national treasury; their only morality was a vicious survivalist agenda in which any hint of disloyalty was ruthlessly crushed." Every hint of dissent and every suspicion of democratic thinking by many of the country's most gifted writers and thinkers were wiped out by the military government of Sani Abacha.

Focusing primarily on Lomba, a journalist and frustrated novelist, who, in the opening chapter is a starving political prisoner in a Lagos jail, author Helon Habila jumps back and forth in time, introducing us in succeeding chapters to the lives of ordinary citizens of Lagos, men and women, including Lomba himself, living on Poverty Street, trying to maintain some semblance of hope in an increasingly hopeless world. Lomba, jailed for two years without a trial as the novel opens, has gone beyond anger, which he describes as "the baffled prisoner's attempt to re-crystallize his slowly dissolving self," and entered "a state of tranquil acceptance" of his fate. When the jailer finds the poems and journal

entries he has written and hidden, he persuades Lomba to write some love poems for the better-educated woman he is courting. A brief ray of hope flickers when the woman recognizes Lomba's cryptic messages and comes to the prison to meet him.

The novel then flashes back to the years before Lomba's arrest, and as various episodes unfold, the author shows us the effects of this dictatorial government on the ordinary people who populate the country. Though life is difficult and opportunities almost non-existent, the young people still have hopes and dreams. When Lomba and a friend have their fortunes told by a poet, one of the young men asks to know the day of his death, which he hopes will be "spectacular and momentous," a day he is assured he will know when the time comes—and does. A second friend, whose parents have been killed in a car crash, is so grief-stricken that he makes an intemperate and idealistic speech, then is arrested, severely beaten, and driven insane. With no chance of getting his own novel published, Lomba himself takes a job writing for the Dial, for which he occasionally reports on political demonstrations, one of them a demonstration in which people peacefully protest the neglect of their neighborhood. "We are dying from lack of hope," his friend Joshua says at the demonstration. The unarmed protesters are suddenly attacked by fifty armed riot police, tear gas is exploded, protesters are severely beaten, and running women and children are killed by cars speeding on the adjacent highway.

Because the author presents these episodes in random order, depicting the families, everyday life, and hopes and dreams of the participants, the reader easily imagines what life must have been like during this time and can envision what his/her own life might have been under the same circumstances. But Habila adds further reality to his depictions of life in Nigeria under Sani Abacha by including some well-known historical events and their effects on Lomba and the fictional characters: the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa, the killing of Dele Giwa, the editor of Newswatch magazine, by a letter bomb, and the shooting of the wife of Abiola, the opponent of Abacha who was jailed simply for challenging him.

In one of the most telling episodes in the novel, Lomba goes to a party and meets the writers and poets of Lagos. A man introduces himself to him, saying, "Hi, I am Helon Habila." Suddenly, the reader realizes how much of this novel may be autobiographical, a factor which makes the drama of the story even more intense. We know from the author's biography that he once held the same job as Lomba and that he is now living in London. What we do not know is how many of the other realistically presented events may also be true. The reader may wonder how he knows so much about life under sadistic jailers in the prisons of Lagos, though no one will doubt the accuracy of his descriptions.

Because the chronological ending--Lomba's imprisonment--appears as the first chapter, the reader experiences a sense of déjà vu throughout the reading of the novel, as the action backtracks, forcing the reader to experience the events which led up to the opening chapter and to wonder if anything could have prevented Lomba's eventual imprisonment. Habila makes us think, ponder the fragility of democratic institutions which we take for granted, and explore how the slow erosion of rights can lead to the rise of dictators who seize absolute power to continue their rule. Though the drama and violence are presented with almost journalistic clarity, the novel's emotion is engendered by our identification with the characters and our ability to understand that these are people not much different from ourselves, people who through no fault of their own have become victims of circumstance and the power of a military controlled by one man.

Habila's novel is a powerful defense of the freedom of the press and a celebration of the lives of those courageous writers who have refused to be silenced, even when faced with death. As he says, "Every oppressor knows that wherever one word is joined to another word to form a sentence, there'll be revolt. That is our work, the media: to refuse to be silenced, to encourage legitimate criticism wherever we find it." This moving study of idealistic young people refusing to give up, even when faced with threats to their very lives, is an unforgettable story of the human spirit waiting for an angel--and sometimes meeting the Angel of Death.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the themes of political odds and military dictatorship in Waiting *for an Angel.*

3.4 Niger Delta Situation: Kaine Agary Yellow Yellow

Kaine Agary claimed that he was inspired by Saro-Wiwa's book entitled *A Month and a Day in writing the novel. Yellow-Yellow was the first* novel of Kaine Agary, who grew up in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The honour was to reflect the relevance of the book on how literatures have been used to illuminate the Niger Delta question. Kaine was in the United States of America for a while before relocating to Lagos. Yellow-*Yellow was all about a young biracial girl, Zilayefa, who was born of a* Nigerian mother and a Greek sailor, who left her rustic existence and the protective grip of her mother in the village in search of a better life in the city of Port Harcourt.

With a recommendation from her pastor, Zilayefa, the main character in the book, took in and was cared for by an elderly biracial woman, Sisi,

and her friend, Lolo. She was thrust into the bustling city of Port Harcourt, unprepared for the pitfalls awaiting a young girl so unsure of herself and also in desperate need of direction. She was confronted by prejudices against her racial identity. Zilayefa joined the fast Port Harcourt life, coloured by the presence of expatriates in the oil sector and declining societal values during a military regime.

She struggled with accepting the void left by not knowing her father and tried to fill that void with the attention of an older lover. Through her budding sexuality experiences, Zilayefa grew to a higher level of knowledge and understanding. Yellow-Yellow portrayed life and culture in the Niger Delta through the eyes of Zilayefa when she struggled with development of her identity. It revealed a portrait of beauty and social destruction of the Nigerian Niger Delta, giving a picture and a human face to the hardships of the people.

At the early chapters of the book, the author reflected the menace of oil spillage on hectares of farmland that was supposed to be cultivated for food production. The villagers constituted a pressure group to fight against oppression especially from the foreigners, who were operators of the oil companies that laid their oil pipes in the village. They reported the case to the village head for immediate rescue. Some were crying, others were agitating for compensation. The crude oil, as reported by the author, spread out and covered more land and drowned small animals in its path. The air was polluted with bad smell from crude oil and decaying animals. Men and women were covered knee-deep in the crude oil.

The oil company rejected the accusation, declaring a suspect sabotage of the youth in the village. They insisted on not paying any compensation for all the destruction the burst pipes had caused. Many people lost their main source of sustenance to the spillage including the author's mother. Women rowed their canoes farther away to find land for farming. Every year, it was hard to catch fish. It was contrary to the early days of the author's mother when every husband was expected to give his new wife a dugout canoe he had carved out and crafted himself. The wife would use the canoe to fish, earn a living and help to feed the family. The big boys carved out decorative paddles that carried the legends of the Ijaws in every curve.

Sisi, who took care of Zilayefa, stopped schooling at primary six level. She was exposed to all influences that converged on Port Harcourt before Nigeria's Independence from the British. She used the exposure to get contracts for construction and food supply in government hospitals. She was good with creative ideas for projects she was selling to the procurement officers of the establishment. She was involved in

the supply of toilet papers and leasing of pick-up trucks. She was the only woman who got contracts from oil companies. At the concluding chapters of the book, the author reviewed how young girls, who wanted to escape poverty, were looking up to white men to rescue them. Girls were trooping into hotel lobbies at Warri and Bonny, looking for how to attach themselves with the white men. There were people on contract, linking up good looking young girls with prospective white men. On one of such night cruises, Zilayefa met Sergio, his former jilted lover whom she thought was one of those hanging out for young girls.

There have been different reactions over the quality of artworks compiled in Yellow-Yellow by its author, which made it to gain such befitting recognition at a first trial. Yellow-Yellow takes us on an amazing journey through the Delta region of Nigeria: our guide is a young woman trying to find herself seeking her fortune in a big city, a city hungry to swallow her soul and spit out her jaded hollow shell. It is a truly authentic narrative of a region, the burden of its incredible wealth and a young woman's determination to carry it. This literary gem is a must read.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

The Niger-Delta region in Nigeria is a focus of attention because of environmental degradation. How successful is Agary's treatment of the issue in Yellow Yellow?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The new Nigerian novel is based on contemporary human experiences in order to remain relevant. One fundamental character of the contemporary Nigerian novel is that it provides a specific manner of narration which identifies and assumes human names in such a way that suggests that they are to be regarded as individuals in the contemporary society. The new Nigerian novel becomes an exploration of the personality as it is defined in the interpretation of its past and present self-awareness. The mark of true realism therefore, is the depiction of an age as individuals' experience and the bourgeois exploration of the individual's experience reaches its highest form when this individual is not a fragmentary experience but the quintessential representation of a particular historical and social experience. The political life of a nation and its social-national dilemma is thus depicted through an individual experience, the individual himself being shaped by the socio-economic circumstances in which he finds himself. These writers reveal social cohesion or social consciousness. They reveal new interests and experiences in their crafts of fiction. Their novels are constantly interrupted in the effort to maintain and expand contemporary artistic

activities and institutions in the face of their country's problems and a general sapping of energy and initiative.

5.0 SUMMARY

The new Nigerian fiction writers are producing artistic works that show that Nigeria (Africa) had its own history, culture, and civilization. These writers apply pathos and emotive power of their works to instigate the oppressors in their societies and to initiate a political and economic reorganization of their society in the interest of the oppressed. However, some critics maintain that the intentions (of the pathos and bitterness of these novels) are to whip the emotions of the people into revolutionary action. The artistic forms reflect the ideological content, for these writers use satire and ridicule as corrective narrative techniques to enlighten their society morally. The despair that pervades these works, which portray the oppressed as trapped and helpless, arises in the writers' political misunderstanding. These new Nigerian fiction writers have no choice but to join in the people's struggle for survival. In that situation, they will have to confront the ruling elites whose services are not beneficial to all. These writers apply the real language of struggle in the actions and speeches of their people, learn from their great optimism and faith in the capacity of human beings to remake their world and renew themselves.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. The new novelists reveal every ugly thing that hinders Nigeria's development. Explain how they achieve this.
2. Purple Hibiscus touches on the odds of militarism in Nigeria. Discus the thematic concerns in the novel.
3. Discus the blend of politics and social trauma in Habila's *Waiting for an Angel.*
4. There are vast social and environmental traumas in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Carefully discus how Agary revealed this in Yellow Yellow.
5. Compare and contrast the thematic thrust of the new fiction writers with their predecessors.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Adichie, Chimamanda (2005). Purple Hibiscus. Lagos: Farafina.

Agary, Kaine (2005). Yellow Yellow Lagos: Infomedia.

Habila, Helon (2005). Waiting for an Angel. London: Faber & Faber.

UNIT 5 THE NEW NIGERIAN PLAYWRIGHTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Political Drama: Niyi Osundare's The State Visit
3.3 Historical Drama: Ahmed Yerima's The Trial of Oba *Ovonramwen*
3.4 A New Theory: Sam Ukala's Folkist Dramatic Theory
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study some new plays that reflect different forms from what has been in the years before. The theatrical practices of Soyinka and Clark among others in the first generation dramatists in Nigeria reflect the basic imitative patterns of Europe and America. Their plays juxtaposed the African thoughts in Europeans style of art. However, the new playwrights have often evolved something different from their predecessors. They exploit African beliefs, environment, art, and life in the creation new forms of theatre. For instance, Ahmed Yerima, has written plays utilizing the Nigerian historical and mythical experiences covering almost all the ethnic divides. Sam Ukala propounded the theory of Folkist theatre. It is a theatrical form of drama using the folktale tradition as yardstick. Their plays reflect new forms of theatricality.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the new forms of theater in Nigeria
appreciate the new forms in terms of their relevance
distinguish the old forms of drama from the new forms
discuss the new theatrical forms and their contributions to Nigerian literature
accept that the new playwrights have unique ways of expressing their arts .

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In Nigeria, theatre is a reflection of life. Right from the pre-colonial, pre-literate days, it has been in existence and it is reflected in the people's festivals, rituals, mythology and other forms of social engagements. The typical African is bound to frown on theatre as entertainment because, to him, it transcends that. It is a medium through which he reaches out to, or better still, courts the supernatural world and certain enigmatic developments or phenomena of life in order to transcend them. However, the African man's contact with the colonial world has eroded some of the importance attached to certain African values. Exposure to education and other seemly more refined religious practices has diminished, significantly, the importance that was once attached to certain beliefs and notions. Today, the story has changed. Nigerian playwrights in the years before and immediately after independence wrote to correct certain misconceptions about her people. Others wrote to magnify and eulogize those aspects of the Nigerian culture that promote good will and social harmony.

Wole Soyinka, no doubt, is a master of his art. He has commanded attention, both at home and abroad. His literary activities cut across the diverse genres of literary writing. When, in 1986, he won the laureate, not too many people were taken unawares. Since Soyinka, however, a good number of literary activities both in writing and performance have taken place in the Nigerian society – major playwrights and theatre practitioners whose work cannot just be wished away, have emerged. Foremost among the emergent playwrights is Fémi Òsófisan, who has been widely acclaimed as the next literary giant that the Nigerian literary society is producing after Soyinka. Other pronounced and highly acclaimed dramatists and theatre arts practitioners who are coeval with Femi Osofisan include Ola Rotimi, Bode Sowande, Zulu Sofola, Tunde Fatunde, Wale Ogunyemi, Olu Obafemi, Bode Osanyin, Ben Tomoloju, Sam Ukala, Tess Onwueme and a host of others. These are all theatre arts dramatists and practitioners who have caused ripples in recent Nigerian theatre history. Not any one of the aforementioned has less than a dozen published plays – and they are still writing and publishing.

Femi Osofisan is famed for plays like Morountodun, No More the *Wasted Breed, Midnight Hotel, Aringindin and the Night Watchmen, Midnight Blackout, Once Upon 4 Robbers, Who's Afraid of Solarin?, Another Raft and a host of others. In his repertory are about fifty* published plays. He continues to write and publish. He is, perhaps, the most performed playwright in Nigeria today. A folklorist dramatist, Femi Osofisan approaches the diverse problems that confront man in his

society, in parables and song. His language is easy to comprehend and his style amenable to different tastes and experiments. The fluidity of his style of writing makes virtually all of his works the choice of theatre houses both within and outside the academia.

Ola Rotimi is reputed for his lingual experimentations, profoundly conscious of the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society, Rotimi a kind of theatre that would meet the yearnings of all major ethnic groupings in the Nigerian society. In plays like Hopes of the Living *Dead and If… A Tragedy of the Ruled, this becomes immediately* obvious. Hitherto, influences on Rotimi at the early stage of his literary writings are traceable to the Classical and the absurdist traditions. One is, therefore, not surprised that his earlier plays like The Gods are not to *Blame and Holding Talks follow these great theatre traditions. Perhaps* aware that these traditions did not meet the social and political immediacy which his art was later to command, he turned a little bit to the left in his later plays. His Man Talk, Woman Talk and Tororo are more of social commentaries on the Nigerian situation while his comedy, Our Husband has gone Mad Again is more of a political satire – a grotesque revelation of happenings within the continent's political landscape even years after political independence had been achieved.

Zulu Sofola is an indisputable neo-Classical writer. Most of her plays are modeled along the Classical concept of tragedy. She adopts this approach in plays like Wedlock of the gods and King Emene among others, to reprimand man for his hubris. Man, she contends, will always be brought back to where he truly belongs as long as pride remains in him. However, Sofola's later plays like The Sweet Trap and Song of a *Maiden are a radical departure from the tradition which she has always* adored. Respectively, the two plays deal with the woman question and where she truly belongs in the society in a radically different manner. One would have expected Zulu Sofola, a frontline woman leader, activist and female writer, to use her plays to propagate the ideals of womanhood and then scream equality or women liberation from the roof-tops the way some contemporary feminist writers and performing artists are wont to do, but no; this is not to be with a Sofola. She insists that though women should possess certain rights in the society, feminism, as presently advocated and propagated, which places the woman at par with her male folk would, definitely, not make for a good social equilibrium. A woman should aspire to any height in the society in her numerous endeavours and she is free to possess limitless ambitions but this should not make her blind to the realities of her existence; she should assist her husband to build a better society, not dictate to him. She can pursue her ambitions and yet maintain her position at home as the officer in-charge of domestic affairs. The man is expected to support his wife and encourage her of her dreams, not lord

things over her. This is the panacea for the present turbulence in contemporary society. Instead of feminism, as is currently being trumpeted, therefore, womanism should be advocated. Feminism is antithetical to the spirit of the African woman.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Carefully discuss the background to Nigerian theatre practice that led to the present new forms.

3.2 Political Drama: Niyi Osundare's The State Visit

Niyi Osundare is better known as a poet. He is one of the finest poets from Nigeria for the past two decades. The State Visit is his first play. It is a Stage Drama published by Kraft Books in 2002 but first performed by The Creativity Workshop at the Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan in 1997. The genre chosen for expression by the writer is a sartorial comedy. The play is a satirical attack on the political odds in Nigeria. Many Nigerian playwrights consider it a point of social responsibility to discuss the issue of the excesses of the military leaders and Osundare is no exception. Wole Soyinka's King Baabu, Wole Oguntokun's Who's Afraid of Wole Soyinka? and Deji Toye's Botching *of a Brute are some examples of plays attacking the excesses of the* military in Nigeria.

The location is the fictional Yanke, which appears to be a thin veil for Nigeria itself and the antagonists are the ruler of the country simply known as "Head" and his entire cabinet of ministers. The Head and his ministers prepare for a state visit by a ruler of a neighbouring country, Wilama, hence the title of the drama, a visitor known by many names including the "Son of the Leopard, Descendant of the Towering Giraffe, Offshoot of a warrior family…" among many others.

The cabinet of Yanke, an obsequious crew that follows its leader, the Hyena of Yanke to the point of absurdity in his various schemes are given curious characters by the playwright bordering on the farcical. The Minister in charge of Public Morality is female but spends time engaging in touching and being touched in sensitive areas of her body by the Minister of Agriculture, all these taking place during cabinet meetings. It appears the Minister of Agriculture whose ministry is deprived of money designed to keep the masses from starvation is a form of the former Roman Emperor Nero who fiddled as Rome burnt. This minister has no problem with the impending starvation but finds the threat of hunger to the people amusing. The Minister simply known as "Agric" says: "What future are you talking about?" The future is not the problem now. When it comes, it will take care of itself. Let us eat

and be merry today. Why should we bother about tomorrow? You can only grab what you see."

The Minister of External Affairs is lent more intelligence than the entirety of the cabinet combined, indicating to the reader that sometimes, the dictator-rulers of Africa often add members of the intelligentsia and academia to their ranks, people who should know better but instead become willing aides in the continuous pillaging of the African continent.

The voice of conscience in the cabinet of Yanke's government is the Minister of finance who makes his opposition known to his fellow cabinet members and the Head of Yanke. He then walks out on the cabinet and is replaced by a more unscrupulous and opportunistic Finance minister. It is unlikely that in reality, any finance minister could state his opposition plainly to a ruler like the Head. Opposition is not accepted lightly by people of this ilk, is regarded as a personal affront and extreme and final steps are taken against those regarded as disloyal. Sanni Abacha of Nigeria (who appears to be the Head) and Idi Amin Dada of Uganda are examples of the reactions of maniacs in power.

There is an official journalist for the Head and his ministers and the extremes gone to, so as to be perfect in the pictures taken are absurd, ridiculing the entire cabinet. It appears that the main pattern of satirizing the excesses of African and particularly Nigerian leaders is farce. The journalist represents those that fiercely opposed the Head but who were bought over by subtle threats and the largesse given by the government to those it tries to silence. The question to be asked here is, "Does everyone have a prize?"

Even today, in modern day Nigeria, it is obvious that parallels may be drawn between the cabinet of Yanke, deaf to the entreaties and sufferings of its people and the ruling government in Modern day Nigeria peppered with members of the ruling political parties. The discontented people of Yanke are represented by a selection of beggars, students, workers and a discontented painter who refuses to use his skills for preparing for the visit of the neighbouring ruler. The beggars tell their own stories of how they have been betrayed by the state, left to fend for themselves in extreme deprivation. It is obvious that Yanke is a failed state, lacking all forms of welfare for its people and the similarity to the Nigerian situation is extremely disturbing to this reader.

One of the beggars becomes an alms-receiver as a result of an accident with a piano he was helping to unload. The Piano itself, an instrument of cultural enlightenment meant for his master's daughter, falls on him as he helps with the unloading, and causes him the use of his limbs. The

master, representing the upper class does not see to his welfare and subsequently he becomes a beggar. The symbolism of the piano as an instrument of subjection and repression is a striking one. The painter (or creative person) who refuses to work for the Lion of Yanke fearlessly calls the entire cabinet derogatory names to their faces. He refers to them as tyrants and vampires but the Head chooses to remain obtuse, not understanding what is being said. When the cabinet finally realizes the "artistic" insults of the painter, the ensuing rage costs the painter his life.

The State Visit does not take place; at least in the play as the people violently resist the excesses of the Lion of Yanke. The Narrator is left to finish the story in the end, saying that "Yanke will never be the same again" and indeed the songs of opposition are heard continuing despite the deaths of several citizens at the hands of the law enforcement agents of Yanke. The Narrator who set us on the path to an understanding of the play ends the performance and it appears as if the future of Yanke is in the hands of the people and whether they will choose to react or be silent. One wonders if this is a call to revolution by the playwright. For those who might think all revolutions are calls to anarchy, we must remember that we have seen the success of a rose revolution where no shots were fired but where the people took back the reins of government from undeserving leaders.

The writer seems to be comfortable with a didactic approach, one where lessons are taught and learned and indeed the entire play through its Narrator, plot, twists and the development of its characters teaches moral development all the way. The helplessness and frustration of the citizens in the country today are well thought out and a way out is revealed by the playwright. The people must speak up and reclaim what is theirs or die in the throes of tyranny.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Carefully assess Osundare's exposition of military dictatorship in The *State Visit.*

3.3 Historical Drama: Yerima's The Trial of Oba *Ovonramwen (1997)*

The Trials by Ahmed Yerima is another historical version of the great punitive invasion of Benin and The Trial of the Chiefs who killed White men in the Phillips party. Unlike the two plays above, this play starts with Ovonramwen tell-ing his own story with a melancholic anger: Here I am seated in my glory… how can I discredit myself when the truth is that the story will never be written well if I don't tell you myself… the white men. He desired my Empire and envied my position and wanted

my throne… (19) The overzealousness of the Acting Consul-General Phillips is the next dramatic action and this dialogue of his below expresses the desire of the British Empire:

There you are. The great Benin Empire, I need you… you

> extend to Otun in the north, Asaba in the east, and Lagos in the west. The British Empire must have you in order to have the whole Niger area under its grasp. And it must be now… (21)

Phillips' action negates the advice given to him by District Commissioner Bur-rows, who says that the intelligence report from Eyebokan (one of their moles in Oba's palace) did not recommend them to enter Benin at that time, especially when the Oba and his people were celebrating one of their sacred festivals. How-ever, Phillips insists on entering Benin because of his own inordinate ambition, "I must take Benin for the glory of the British Empire and mine." In an overlapping order the following scenario makes

The Trials a captivating play: Ologbosere, Ovonramwen's father-in law, builds his loyalty on the Oba, the oracle of Uhe's warning and the inevitability of the destruction of Benin city, Obaseki and Omatshola also report to the Oba the situation at Warri with Ovonramwen expressing his suspicion and doubt of the integrity of Obaseki about state affairs, Eyebokan delivers Phillips' message of his intended visit as regards the Trade Treaty, the chiefs of Benin discuss the issue of the uninvited visitors and the need for them not to visit Benin, Uzazakpo recounts his dream to Ovonramwen and how the colour of the white-man frightens him. T he dramatic conflict of the play becomes visible when Ovonramwen demands the white men and Ologbosere says that, "Dead, we killed the white men". Obiro, the Court Seer, informs Ovonramwen that he cannot do anything to avert the impending disaster, Ovonramwen also warns Iyase to be a good umpire for he hears through Obiro that: "… My son Aiguobasimwin in a wrestling contest with an older wrestler, the price was my crown" (56). Obaseki's supposed classical betrayal of the Benin people becomes exposed through his discussion with Carter in the play after the fall of Benin:

Obaseki: Not enough

> Carter: What do you need then?
> Obaseki: Some authority. I need something new. Some powers so that he can believe me. The Oba must know that when I am talking to him it is with power…
> Carter: I see your point. Then you must go as a representative of Her Majesty's government.
> Obaseki: Yes. Very good

As the most senior Bini man with British Empire here in Bini Country. (60) Consul-General Moor is the judge and the prosecutor in the Trial Scene with Obaseki supporting every move of the British Officers in the trial. Ovonramwen makes obeisance to the British Monarch without his crown, which he gives to Chief Obaseki in trust. Idiaghe dies in the play for telling lies against the Oba and Chief Obaiuwana commits suicide after he is arrested during the trial. Moor finally delivers his judgment:

> Yes. Let it be entered that… the Oba did not order the massacre. Let Ologbosheri, Obaradesagbon, Uso, Obakhavbaye and Ugiade guilty and hereby sentences them to death. (77)

Ovonramwen is dethroned and banished to Calabar and he ends the play that he starts by accepting the fate that befalls him:… Take me whiteman. Take me…For the love of Bini, Take me…To the royal valley…Where the gods await their sacrifice. (79)

The theme of this play includes; overweening ambition, conspiracy, deceit, disloyalty, disobedience, partiality and fate. The text explicitly create practical impressions about the story of Oba Ovonramwen; the political scenario that leads to the massacre of the Phillips Party, the great invasion, the celebration of the Igue festival, the warning of the oracle of Uhe, the intrigue and deceit that follow the coronation of Ovonramwen, Ologbosere's unflinching patriotism and loyalty to the Benin Kingdom and their Oba, Phillips' overzealousness, the big trial and the revenge tragedy that follows it and the subsequent banishment and dethronement of Ovonramwen to Calabar. Throughout the play, Ovonramwen is presented as a strong defender of tradition who also understands the scheming of the British Monarch to gain control over his kingdom as other stronger Empires and Kingdoms have fallen honourably to the British Government. With caution, however, he strongly warns his people to protect the white men against any form of intimidation or attack: The ceremony must wait… I shall see them… you follow Eyebokan to the camp of the white men. See their leader called Phillips. Tell him that I shall receive him. Eyebokan, how many white men are in the party? (The Trials… 37) Ovonramwen's diplomatic overtures are at variance with the overzealousness of the white men who think that Benin must fall if the entire Niger-Delta area must be under their firm control.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Comment on the historical accuracy in the play The Trials of Oba *Ovonramwen.*

3.4 A New Theory: Sam Ukala's Folkist Dramatic Theory

Sam Ukala is well known literary scholar, theater arts practitioner and dramatic theorist. He has written several known plays where his theory of folkism is put to practice. Some of his popular plays include The *Slave Wife, Akpakaland, The Log in your Eyes, The placenta of Death* etc. Ukala's thought provoking essay, "Oral Literature, Development and National Integration" is a confirmation of his firm standing that the developmental potentials of our oral traditional literature have not been fully and properly explored and exploited by contemporary Nigeria. It is, therefore, a seeming extension of the argument of the earlier considered "Literature and Governance" and a further authentication of Ukala's strong belief that a recourse to the oral traditions is one effective panacea to Nigeria's multi-varied problems as a nation. A curious statement made by Ukala in the two essays reviewed so far is that an enduring ideological standpoint should be relevant to a vast array of issues within and outside a discipline, and, even more importantly, should proffer solutions to humanity's many problems. These essays are, by and large, a certification of the fact that a subscription to the folk resonates in most of Ukala's writings, as stated earlier in this paper.

Ukala holds that the oral traditional art forms should be desperately deployed to put aright everything written literature which its imperialist backgrounds and negative aftermaths have destroyed in Africa. The above opinion is founded on Ukala's conviction, that "Western literature was the tool by which the African mind was shackled by the colonialists." With the example of Ika folktales, Kwagh-hir stories, the masquerade performances of the Efik, the Kwa, the Ibibio, the Egugu of Illah, the Ikaki masquerade of the Kalabari and the oral poetry of various traditional societies of Africa, Ukala is able to prove that oral literature could provide the escape route for Nigeria from its many socio-political and economic woes.

In this essay too, he reminds us that this formula has worked for both the French and the Russians. In the final analysis, he recommends: "Nigerian government should take a cue from France and Russia and champion the renaissance of Nigerian oral literature and, thereafter, encourage Nigerian writers to reinvent modern Nigerian literature with a view to making it perform among its audience the same roles performed by oral literature among the rural populace. The governments, through their ministries of Arts, Culture and Tourism, must tackle the great task..."

Unarguably, Sam Ukala's most remarkable and enduring contribution to literary/dramatic scholarship in Nigeria (Africa) is his theoretical postulation of "folkism" which according to him is, "the tendency to

base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk… and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale." This theoretical framework, which has been given flesh in some of his plays, most notably, the hugely popular Akpakaland, has negotiated a high rating for Ukala among African scholars of the theatre, as he joins the exclusive league of literary theorists who have demonstrated enormous commitment to the job of carving a new authentic aesthetic identity for African literature.

Thus, Ukala must have satisfied a major craving of African literature, especially as most articulately outlined by the redoubtable critic of African literature, Professor Charles E. Nnolim: … the task facing all of us in the 80's (is) to build up carefully and painstakingly a poetics, a theory of African literature. We need a scholar or a group of scholars with the synthesizing mind of an Aristotle to build for us a poetics of African literature whose uniqueness is no longer a matter for debate, whose vital juices are fed with uniquely African orature.

Thus, Ukala's success with the seminal essay "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle For Nigerian Dramaturgy" in the context of African literature tallies with the accomplishments of fellow dramatic theorists, Wole Soyinka (Myth, Literature and the African World), Biodun Jeyifo (The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama), poetry critic, Sunday Anozie, (Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric), occidentalist Chinweizu, Ihechukwu Madubuike and Onwuchekwa Jemie (Toward the Decolonization of African Literature) and prose critic Ernest Emenyonu (The Rise of the Igbo Novel).

From all indications, Ukala intends the theory of Folkism to fill a vital lacuna in African drama- that that has to do with making African drama more audience-friendly and, consequently, more effective in helping to combat Nigeria's socio-economic and political problems. Folkism appears inspired by what Ukala has identified as fundamental lapses in the dramaturgy of Nigeria's most prominent playwrights- Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and J.P. Clark. He charges Soyinka and Clark with dabbling in unnecessary esoterism and abstraction, and Osofisan with a misdirected manipulation of myth, especially, the Moremi in *Morountodun.*

Against the backdrop of what Ukala perceives as dramatic miscalculations, he recommends the concept of "folkism", an aesthetic direction which seeks to impress the cruciality of the resources of the traditional African folktale on African drama. He says: "Apart from the Africa folktale's capacity for clear communication and its popularity among the folk, there are other reasons why it should provide a matrix

for folkism. The folktale and the literary play are narratives, ultimately realized in performance."

Both are largely secular- unlike most African ritual and festival performances- and also temporal, mimetic, interpretative, and synthetic. Perhaps, to validate Ukala's concern for the folk in African theatre, one has to mention that certain other scholars of the African theatre share in the sensibility of operating a literary drama institution that carries the entirety of the people along.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Folkism is a blend of folktale in dramaturgy. Discuss the folktale narrator as a one man theatre

4.0 CONCLUSION

The new playwrights write and perform committed arts. They write and act for correction. They reveal the image and function of the writer as griot and raconteur, the sole characteristics of which they are practitioners. Indeed many of the dramatists of the 'new generation' tell Africa's story in costume, sound, mime and movement in a manner whose physical representation forcibly engages the consciousness. There is a radical, even revolutionary project, a robust belief that the theatre is not just a house of speeches and props, but also a battleground for contending images and ideas. Wole Soyinka remains an enormous and highly seminal influence. But for the generation after him he has been both a venerable model and fertile point of departure. Thus, he is many ways the relationship of the 'new' generation to Soyinka's dramaturgy has been somewhat problematic. The plays treated here under the new generation playwrights represent the thematic and the stylistic forms of this age. Osundare takes a punch at the odds of politics, militarism and parochialism which are the major thematic concern of the playwrights of this time. Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen represents the vast historical plays which the playwrights have been enacting. However, there are no dramatist theorist within the new generation range except Sam Ukala and a few others. They are more concerned with acting than with theorizing. Thus, Sam Ukala's 'Folkist theory' is a welcome contribution to this new playwrights' artistic development.

5.0 SUMMARY

In the 'new generation' drama, history re-connects with mythology and a reinterpretation of both yields a reality which provides a handle on the present and the future. This is evident in the plays under study here. In *The State Visit, we Osundare's reenactment of history in a fiction form.*

We see the playwright's attempt at using history in the presenting of Nigeria's past and future impediments. Yerima's The Trials of *Oba Ovonramwen is a continuation of anti-colonial attacks on* the after effects of colonialism in Africa. Using the conquest of Benin kingdom, he makes a case for carefulness in the way and manner; Africans assume and adopt those things that impinge on the development of Africa. Ukala's theory of folkism is like an oasis in this dry theoryless generation. Ukala's theory has influenced several plays the way Soyinka influenced his contemporaries.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the major thrusts of the new playwrights in Nigeria.
2. Discuss the presentation of dictatorship in Osundare's The *State Visit.*
3. Assess Yerima's The Trials as anti-colonial play in the new spirit.
4. Theories guide creativity. Trace the influence of Ukala's 'Folkist' theory in the plays of the new playwrights.
5. Using any other play of your choice, discuss the use of new forms in the new plays from Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Osundare, Niyi (2001). The State Visit. Ibadan: Kraft.

Ukala, Sam. "Oral Literature, Development and National Integration".

--- --- ---. "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy".

Yerima, Ahmed (1997). The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen. Ibadan: Longman.

ENG 114 **COURSE GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION TO NIGERIAN LITERATURE II

Course Developer/Writer Mr. Anthony C. Oha
Department of Arts
English Unit
Benson Idahosa University
Benin City

Course Editor Prof. M.E.M. Kolawole (Sabbatical)
National Open University of Nigeria

Programme Leader Dr. Christine Ofulue
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator Mrs. Onyeka Iwuchukwu
National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2009

ISBN: 978-058-259-2

All Rights Reserved

Printed by:

CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction…….…. 1
Course Aims…….… 1
Course Objectives…….… 1
Working through the Course…… 2
Course Materials……... 2
Study Units…… 2
Textbooks and References ……. 3
Assignment File …….. 3
Tutor-Marked Assignment…….……..… 3
Final Examination and Grading…… 3
Course Marking Scheme…… …….. 4
Presentation Schedule……..…… 4
Course Overview ……..... 4
How to Get the Most from this Course……. 5
Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials…….. 7
Summary…….…… 7

Introduction

Welcome to ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature II

ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature II is a 3 credit one semester undergraduate course. It comprises 25 study units subdivided into 5 modules. The materials have been developed with Nigerian context in view. This course guide gives you an overview of the course.
It also provides you with information on the organization and requirements of the course.

Course Aims

a) To expose students to the concept of Nigerian Literature in English
b) To make the students understand the genres of Nigerian Literature
c) To give students insight into the structure of Nigerian Literature
d) To improve students' knowledge of Nigerian literature
e) To acquaint students with the thematic thrusts of Nigerian Literature

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims above, we have some overall objectives. Each unit also has objectives. These will guide you in your study. They are usually stated at the beginning of each unit and when you are through with studying the units go back and read the objectives. This would help you assimilate the task you have set out to achieve. On completion of the course, you should be able to:

a) Trace the history of Nigerian written literature in English

b) Understand the rise of Nigerian written Literature
c) Discuss the major themes in Nigerian Literature in English
d) Recognize the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian Literature
e) Realize the reasons for the emergence of neo-colonial Nigerian literatures
f) Explain the major thematic thrusts of the new Nigerian writers
g) Appreciate the form of Nigerian literature in English

Working through this Course

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a notebook, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

1. Course guide
2. Study units
3. Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit
4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are 20 study units in this course as follows:

Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Transition from Orature
Unit 2 Market Literatures
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature
Unit 4 Literary Journals
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama

Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry
Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre

Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English

Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature

Unit 3 The New Nigerian Poets
Unit 4 The New Nigerian Novelists
Unit 5 The New Nigerian Playwrights

Textbooks and References

Certain books are recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading

Assignment File

An assignment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignment file itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

You will need to submit a specified number of the Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best four (that is, the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total work. Assignment questions for the unit in this course are counted in the Assignment File. When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with the TMA (tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination of ENG 114 will be of three hours' duration. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will also find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments (Best three Assignments out of Four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%s
Total	100%

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date for completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activities	Assessment (End of Unit)
Course Guide			
	Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature		
1	Transition from Orature	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Market Literatures	Week 1	Assignment 2
3	Nationalist literature	Week 2	Assignment 3
4	Literary Journals	Week 2	Assignment 4
5	Performance/Theatre to Drama	Week 3	Assignment 5
	Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature		
1	Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature	Week 3	Assignment 1
2	Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria	Week 4	Assignment 2
3	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry	Week 4	Assignment 3
4	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Prose	Week 5	Assignment 4
5	Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Drama/Theatre	Week 5	Assignment 5
	Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature		
1	Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism	Week 7	Assignment 2

3	Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War	Week 8	Assignment 3
4	Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour	Week 9	Assignment 4
5	Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English	Week 10	Assignment 5
	Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers		
1	Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature Week 11 Assignment 1		
2	Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	The New Nigeria Novelists Week 13 Assignment 3		
4	The New Nigeria Poets	Week 14	Assignment 4
5	The New Nigeria Playwrights Week 15 Assignment 5		
Revision		1 Week	
Examination		1 Week	
Total		**17 Weeks**	

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from your course guides. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it. Follow the following advice carefully:

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.

2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course Overview for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.

4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit.

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.

6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

7. Review the objectives for each unit to inform that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.

10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

11. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and retuned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned

readings,

You have difficulty with the self-tests exercises,

You have a question or problem with assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to- face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

This course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. ENG 114: Introduction to Nigerian Literature 2 introduces you to the major genres of Nigerian literature and the socio-political conditions that have influenced their development. Attention is drawn to the changes in scope and pre-occupation of the Nigerian artists over the years.

MAIN **COURSE**

Course Code ENG 114

Course Title

Introduction to Nigerian Literature II

Course Developer/Writer Mr. Anthony C. Oha
Department of Arts
English Unit
Benson Idahosa University
Benin City

Course Editor
Prof. M.E.M. Kolawole (Sabbatical)
National Open University of Nigeria

Programme Leader Dr. Christine Ofulue
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator Mrs. Onyeka Iwuchukwu
National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2009

ISBN: 978-058-259-2

All Rights Reserved

Printed by:

Module 1 The Rise of Written Nigerian Literature ……..… 1

Unit 1 Transition from Orature …….…… 1
Unit 2 Market Literatures …… 7
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature…….. 18
Unit 4 Journal Literatures ……. 26
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama ……... 35

Module 2 Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature …… 45

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature ……. 45
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria ……. 52
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry … …… ……. 61
Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose ……. 69
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre ……. 77

Module 3 Major Trends and Types of Nigerian Literature … 85

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society …… 85
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism 98
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War ……110
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1:
Local Colour ……122
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2:
Pidgin/Special English …….…130

Module 4 Other Issues and the New Writers ……152

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature …….....152
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature……....162
Unit 3 The New Nigeria Poets ……... 173
Unit 4 The New Nigeria Novelists ……..... 184
Unit 5 The New Nigeria Playwrights ……..... 194

MODULE 1 THE RISE OF WRITTEN NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Transition from Orature
Unit 2 Market Literatures
Unit 3 Nationalist Literature
Unit 4 Journal Literatures
Unit 5 Performance/Theatre to Drama

UNIT 1 THE BEGINNING OF WRITTEN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Orature in Nigerian Literature
3.3 Orature in and as Early Nigerian Literature
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will study the beginning of written literature in Nigeria. This unit links us with Introduction to Nigerian Literature 1, where we examined all aspects of orality that culminated in the rise of written literature in Nigeria. In the course preceding this we studied the types and the various influences that led to the emergence of Nigerian literature. Nigerian oral tradition carries the Nigerian storytelling tradition with it. It embodies the beliefs and general attitudes to life. They transmit and store the values of their experiences by telling the tales to the younger generations as guide. In this unit, we will look at the beginning of written Nigerian literature in all genres as influenced by the preceding oral traditions. Forms like the folktales, fables, proverbs, clichés and idioms in order to establish the true development of Nigerian literature after the emergence of writing through colonial education.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

recognize orature as part of Nigerian literature
establish a link between the orature and written Nigerian literature
accept that oral narratives are in the written Nigerian literature
explain that early Nigerian literature owe a lot to oral narratives.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In the colonial period, some Nigerians exposed to English language began to write literatures in English. Nigerian writers in this period wrote both in Western language (notably English) and in traditional Nigerian languages. One interesting thing about these early works is the absorption of the oral arts in them. D.O. Fagunwa pioneered the Yoruba language novel. In 1938, Fagunwa wrote his Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo *Irunmale, the first novel written in the Yoruba language and one of the* first to be written in any African language; Wole Soyinka translated the book into English in 1968 as The Forest of A Thousand Demons. Fagunwa's later works include Igbo Olodumare (The Forest of God, 1949), Ireke Onibudo (1949), Irinkerindo ninu Igbo Elegbeje (Expedition to the Mount of Thought, 1954), and Adiitu Olodumare (1961). Again, Fagunwa's novels draw heavily on folktale traditions and idioms, including many supernatural elements. His heroes are usually Yoruba hunters, who interact with kings, sages, and even gods in their quests. Thematically, his novels also explore the divide between the Christian beliefs of Nigeria's colonizers and the country's traditional religions. Fagunwa remains the most widely-read Yorùbá-language author, and a major influence on such contemporary writers as Amos Tutuola. Amos Tutuola's The Palm wine Drinkard was also written based on the style of African Orature. In Igbo area, Pita Nwana wrote *Omenuko which is regarded as the first Igbo epic. The same occurred in* the Hausa literature especially the works of Samanja Mazan Fama, and Karo-da-Goma. In all these early written literatures in Nigerian languages, we see the re-enactment of the oral narrative power of Nigerian. We see the mystical and the mundane intermingling in many ways. We see the supernatural forces determining the fate of humans, humans marrying strange beings and other mythical realities. Nigerian Orature is richly drawn from the people's way of living and belief system which form the basis for the moral undertone of oral tales which are evident in the early written literatures. Western education enabled the African people the opportunity to put down their oral narratives into written words.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain how orature metamorphosed into literature in early Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Orature in Nigerian Literature

Nigerian oral literature, like other forms of popular culture, is not merely a form of entertainment but a medium for commenting on contemporary social and political events. It can also be a significant agent of change capable of storing the people's historical experiences. This is how myths and legends emerged. Myths are stories of origin or creation. They are stories about the beginning of a people, a race or a community. Many communities attribute their greatness to their beginning. Legends are records of a community's heroes. They are stories about those who founded a community and how brave they were. Ruth Finnegan (1980) expresses that myths and legend capture the most valued history of a people by tracing how they began and how their beginning affected their situation. It also traces the beginning of traditions, cultural rites, worship and the discovery of food, craft, and other lore. We also have different forms of myths and legends recounted in most African novels set in the rural backgrounds. Myths and legends are fictional but have traces of reality as each of them has a physical referent in the real world. This referent guides the members of the community in certain observances. Myths and legends help to store or preserve a people's cultural beliefs about nature and their natural habitats. This is one of the sources of truly African novels as one of the earliest novels to have come out of Africa called The Palmwine Drinkard by Amos Tutuola which is truly an embodiment of African orature in the written form. Myths have often occurred in African novels such as the origin of Ulu in Arrow of God, the exploits of the great Umuofia men in Things Fall Apart, the story of Osu Caste in No Longer at Ease etc. It seemed impossible for the early Nigerian writers to extricate themselves from the clutches of Orature.

Folktales are animal stories. They are stories about select animals personified to carry certain human attributes in order to play out a needed role for moral lessons. In folktales, there are heroes and villains. The heroes are human or animals that play the major roles. A common type of Nigerian folktale is also called the "trickster" story, where a small animal uses its wits to survive encounters with larger creatures. Some animal tricksters include Ijàpá or Mbe, a tortoise in Yoruba or Igbo folklore of Nigeria. One interesting thing about the folktale is the manipulation of animals as humans playing out their political, sociological and cultural roles in a fictional community. We have seen the folktale forms occurring in African novels. In folktales the essence of poetic justice is expressed and this is a recurring feature in some African novels. D.O. Fagunwa's My Life in a Forest of a Thousand

Demons is purely a written folktale, similar to the form in Amos Tutuola's The Palmwine Drinkard. The form of the folktale has a great influence on the present form of the Nigerian novels. The folktale form is arranged in a manner that there is a beginning in a distant land with different wrongs being committed by a given animal at the end of which poetic justice occurs. This thematic form is often the structure of most African novels. The effects of oral narratives on the written literatures in Africa are mostly structural and thematic.

There seems to be the impossibility of discussing the African story without a link at the traditional values. These values are stored in the various tales: myths, legend, oral narratives of different sorts, songs and acts. The early African writers attempt in various ways to blend these oral values in the written contexts. It seemed to work. This is because it helps in marking out a true African literary tradition where the written absorbs the unwritten values in the quest for making literatures the totality of the people's rites of passage.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

How does the folktale tradition influence the writing of African novels?

3.3 Orature in/as Early Nigerian Literature

Orature occurs in various ways in early Nigerian literatures. Unlike the western literature, African literature contains the oral heritage of the African people. In Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, we have various oral heritage of the Igbos in the novel. There is the form of drama which manifested in the form of wrestling and the Egwugwu Masquerade group. We also see the belief in the existence of changelings as revealed in Ezinma's search for her iyiuwa. There are sessions where folktales are narrated and various songs are rendered according to the required circumstance. These are oral narratives manifesting in the written literature. The same occurred in other novels especially in novels set in rural background in Africa. In Achebe's Arrow of God, we see the tradition of religious worship, how gods are created and how poetic justice prevails in a community. Elechi Amadi's The Concubine presents a typical eastern Nigerian village with all their arts: stories, songs and dances. There is the typical exposition of the traditional belief regarding the intermingling of humans and the supernatural forces.

Considering the root of the Nigerian writers first as Nigerians brought up in the Nigerian society and secondly as the fortunate recipients of western education, they can not avoid expressing their art forms in their new found form of expressing art. The resultant effect is that they represent the Nigerian personality and culture. Some of them who could

write in their native languages using English alphabetic forms attempted original works in their first languages as can be seen in Fagunwa and Nwana. Although, English served as the only language that could make their message reach wider audience, the writers try as much as possible to incorporate the oral literary forms in their works. It is not surprising though that the early literatures in Nigeria are mostly works generated from the oral tradition of the people. We see this strongly in the works of Fagunwa, Tutuola, Amadi, Achebe and Soyinka, among others.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how oral traditions manifested in and as early Nigerian literature

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear that Nigeria has a rich oral tradition. Besides, there are patterned literary forms akin to the western types in Africa. The difference is that African literature then was oral. Western education marked the rise of African literature. There was a smooth transition from orature to literature. Africans did not hear of literature for the first time from the Europeans. The three genres of literature also manifests in African orature in various forms. The epic and legends of Africa have often occurred in the written literature. The other forms like songs, masquerades, rituals, incantations, folktale narration, the application of proverbs and anecdotes amongst other African oral heritage have become a regular form in African novels. All these reflect the influence of the oral tradition in the Nigerian literature. In the beginning, after the encounter with western education, the early Nigerian writers began with the writing of orature as literature. The works of Fagunwa, Tutuola, and Achebe among others reveal a leaning towards the oral art as an expression of a true Nigerian literature. The application of these forms has been tagged 'local colour tradition' by critics of Nigerian literature. They are local colour because they capture the original oral art in its entirety in the written form. We notice today that Nigerian literature is identified mainly by the oral forms and inherent lore. There are elements of orature in most genres of Nigerian literature and the Nigerian literature embodies all the genres as the storyteller uses every means to reach out to his immediate audience.

5.0 SUMMARY

Orature is African heritage in storytelling, songs and masquerades. It is the most significant ways of transmitting cultural values and belief systems of the people. Orature like literature has several genres. These genres manifest in various forms. African writers imbibe the oral tradition in the writing of literature. Early novels began as a revisit of the African tradition. This is evident in the works of the early Nigerian writers like Fagunwa, Tutuola, Achebe and Amadi among others. They reflect the African oral tradition in their works. It is thoroughly evident that Nigerian literature began from the oral literary tradition of the Africans. We have the application Nigerian myths and legends, folktale forms, fable forms, proverbs, idioms, dance, songs, incantations and masquerade forms in African novels. This is because a writer is a product of his environment and reflects that in his works. Western education only prepared the African writer for the task of transmitting his cultural values to a wider audience beyond his immediate environment. Quite often, not surprising though, the Nigerian literature still reflects the Nigerian orature in various forms to reflect a true Nigerian literature.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1) Explain the various effects of orature in Nigerian literature.
2) How does Nigerian orature manifest in Nigerian literature?
3) Explain why orature has been termed ‘local colour tradition’.
4) Must Nigerian literature be written in Nigerian languages?
5) Discuss the link between orature and literature in Nigerian.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Finnegan, Ruth (1980). Oral Literature in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in the *West AfricanNovel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

Taiwo, Oladele (1976). Culture and the Nigerian Novel. London: Macmillan.

UNIT 2 MARKET LITERATURES

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
  3.1 General Overview
  3.2 Market Literature
  3.3 Onitsha Market Literature
  3.4 Kano Market Literature
  3.5 Transition from Pamphlets into Full Literatures
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine critically the way the early educated Nigerians were able to write creatively. Most of them had no university education and it is only those who had the opportunity of attending the then University College Ibadan that really turned their creative sketches into full blown literatures. At that time, pamphlets of all types in all literary genres flourished and were sold to interested members of the public for entertainment. The first set of Nigerians that came in contact with European education was excited about the discovery and attempted several experiments through writing. These group of Nigerians were actually not well educated as most of them had little education, especially the type that allows them write and work as civil servants. They had middle level of education equivalent to the present secondary education. We will study the historical development of pamphlets and how they contributed immensely to the development of Nigerian literature. Most of the writers were civil servants and traders. They were concerned with expressing themselves in pamphlets as means to counselling, guiding or entertaining the people. However, some intellectuals like Cyprian Ekwensi among others started writing through pamphlets. The pamphlets were not really published but were printed without ISBN numbers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand pamphlets as one of the beginnings of Nigerian literature
trace the beginning of pamphlets to western education
appreciate pamphlets as motivation for full literature
see market literature as the end product of pamphleteering
explain how pamphlets transited into Nigerian literature
recognize Onitsha Market Literature & Kano Market Literatures as the most popular in early Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

A pamphlet is an unbound booklet (that is, without a hard cover or binding). It may consist of a single sheet of paper that is printed on both sides and folded in half, in thirds, or in fourths (called a leaflet), or it may consist of a few pages that are folded in half and stapled at the crease to make a simple book. In order to count as a pamphlet, UNESCO requires a publication (other than a periodical) to have 'at least 5 but not more than 48 pages exclusive of the cover pages'; a longer item is a book. Pamphlets can contain anything from information on kitchen appliances to medical information and religious treatises. Pamphlets are very important in marketing as they are cheap to produce and can be distributed easily to customers. Pamphlets have also long been an important tool of political protest and political campaigning for similar reasons. The storage of individual pamphlets requires special consideration because they can be easily crushed or torn when shelved alongside hardcover books. For this reason, they should either be kept in file folders in a file cabinet, or kept in boxes that have approximately the dimensions of a hardcover book and placed vertically on a shelf. The word pamphlet means a small work issued without covers. Pamphlet coined from ‘Pamphilus’ was derived from Greek, meaning "loved by all". It has the modern connotation of a tract concerning a contemporary issue. By the end of the seventeenth century the most effective means of persuasion and communication in the world was the pamphlet, which created influential moral and political communities of readers, and thus formed a ‘public sphere’ of popular, political opinion. In Africa, pamphlets were used for political campaigns and as guides. In Nigeria, the use of pamphlets was popularized through the consistent use of it by market traders. The most popular are the Onitsha and Kano Market Literature which flourished so much before the emergence of regular literatures. They were pamphlets dealing with various issues: some literary, some political, some religious and some pedagogical. Some of

them are used as satiric attack on the frailties of man in his society. It is interesting to note however, that People of the City regarded as the first African novel per se published in 1945 was written by one of the Onitsha Market pamphleteers called Cyprian Ekwensi.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain thoroughly the major difference between a pamphlet and a book.

3.2 Market Literature

A market literature is a consistent form of writing popularized by traders in a given market place or by people living and working in a given commercial centre. Market literatures are printed as pamphlets. They have no standard form or guiding rules covering the subject matters. Most of the subject matters go from moral to amoral, from sacred to profane, from political to apolitical and from pedagogical to generalities.
They are usually written with less commercial intention. The authors have the joy of being read by others and being classified among the circle of writers. The pages are usually very few and written in very simple and transliterated English forms. The language of market literatures is usually entertaining and the lexical selection is usually unconnected but creates fun in the reading. Market literatures are regarded as popular literatures. The Kano Market writers wrote mainly in Hausa with just a handful in English. The critical question has been: was the popular pamphleteering in Nigeria a success or a failure? The obvious answer is that it was a big success. There are several factors which contributed to the success of these market literatures. In 1946, the colonial government of Nigeria sold their used printing presses and shortly after, the local market places were flooded with romantic novelettes and chapbooks. Many traders in Onitsha bought these discarded machines. Cheap production costs also made it possible for large print runs to be produced. There is the fact that the authors had declared that their main concern was not to make money from their writing but that also meant that the publishers had a free hand to fix cheap prices for the pamphlets.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate between a market literature and a real literature

3.3 Onitsha Market Literature

Onitsha Market Literature is a term used to designate the popular pamphlets that were sold at the large market in Onitsha, Nigeria, in the middle decades of the 20th century. Written by and intended for the "common" or "uneducated" people, this literature covered a range of genres including fiction, current events, plays, social advice and language study. Starting in the 1960s, European and American scholars began to take an interest in this form of popular literature, especially insofar as it reflected African social conditions. It is not known whether any individual or group of people ever came together, sat down, planned and worked out the details of what they wanted to do in advance before they started publishing and selling pamphlets in the Onitsha market literature series to the public. However, what is known is that, according to Emmanuel Obiechina, the first pamphlets in the series were published in 1947. It could be said that the first publications in the Onitsha market literature were written by Cyprian Ekwensi, who later became a famous Nigerian novelist. The titles of the pamphlets written by Ekwensi were "When love whispers" and a collection of Igbo folktales called "Ikolo the wrestler and other Igbo tales". All these were published in 1947. Another factor which spurred people on to writing the chapbooks was the end of the Second World War. The Nigerian soldiers, who fought in India and the Far East, came back with copies of Indian and Victorian drugstore pulp magazines which served as models for the pamphlet literature.

It has been said above that a good number of young people with the minimum educational qualification of standard six found their ways to Onitsha either to trade or to work as apprentices in various trades and professions. It was this group of new literates, school leavers, school teachers, low-level clerks, artisans, provincial correspondents of daily newspapers who now devoted their time to writing the Onitsha market pamphlets. Most of the authors of the Onitsha chapbooks were amateurs rather than professionals. Another group of people who wrote the Onitsha market pamphlets were local printing press owners, booksellers, journalists, railway men, traders, and farmers. Some of the pamphlets were written by grammar school boys who wrote under pseudo names so that their school authorities would not identify and then punish them.
Most of the pamphlet authors maintained that financial gain was not their reason for writing the pamphlets. The authors already had full-time employment from which they earned their living and they merely took up writing as part-time and for the joy of it. Consequently, even if they earned little money from their writing, that was regarded as a supplementary family income. A good number of the authors wrote a preface to the finished work in which they gave biographical details of their lives. Usually such a preface gave the details as to how and why the authors came to be personally involved in pamphlet writing.

The strategic position of the city of Onitsha on the eastern bank of the River Niger also contributed to the success of the market literature. Onitsha is easily accessible from all parts of Nigeria and people come from all parts of the Federation and also from other countries in West Africa either to buy or sell their commodities at Onitsha. The pamphlets were sold in various bookshops in Onitsha as well as in the open markets. Roadside hawkers as well as peripatetic booksellers helped to sell thousands of copies of the pamphlets. Travellers passing through Onitsha boasted of buying copies of the cheap chapbooks to show to their relatives and friends at home. Onitsha town has a large home-based market and many educational institutions. There are thousands of traders in the Onitsha market and also thousands of grammar school boys and girls in Onitsha who bought copies of the pamphlets.

The publication and distribution of the pamphlets coincided with the period when many people were becoming educated in Eastern Nigeria. Even the Onitsha traders who were not educated decided to go to the night schools to learn how to read and write. By so doing, they were able to read the stories by themselves. Some illiterate traders who bought the pamphlets but decided not to go to the night schools, availed themselves of the services of the Onitsha public scribes. These were educated people who had it as their full-time job to read or write letters as well as read stories from books to illiterates and charge them for the service.

There were still other factors which helped the success of the market literature. By the time the first set of pamphlets was published in 1947, public libraries did not exist in Eastern Nigeria. The market booksellers concentrated their efforts in selling prescribed school textbooks and not popular fiction and general trade books. The people had nowhere to go when they wanted to read some light materials. This meant that for many years, Nigerians were suffering from book hunger. Consequently, when the Onitsha market pamphlets were issued, the people were happy and the cheapness of the retail price enabled them to buy the copies in large numbers. As already stated, the 5-year period, 1958 to 1962 may be described as the heyday of the Onitsha market literature pamphlets. During that period, one could easily go to a bookshop and select up to 200 titles. The popularity of the chapbooks quickly spread from Onitsha to Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Port Harcourt, Calabar and other cities and towns in Eastern Nigeria. From the East, it spread to the West, Northern Nigeria and to Lagos, to Cameroons, Ghana and other countries in West Africa. As Onitsha could no longer cope with the popular demand, the printing and production were now contracted to companies based in Aba, Port Harcourt, Yaba in Lagos, Enugu and Owerri. The average Onitsha market pamphlet sold 3000-4000 copies per title. There were two titles which sold over 30,000 copies each.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Trace the historical development of Onitsha Market Literature and the factors responsible for its growth.

3.4 Kano Market Literature

Due to historical peculiarities, the Hausa-Fulani comprising all the tribes that speak Hausa language as a first or second language, were less enthusiastic in the pursuit of western Education right from the colonial periods up to the present time. Consequently, several methods that can appeal to their understanding and comprehension were devised to enlighten them on government policies and programs. This gave rise to a medium of mass communication like Town Criers and Drama Series which became very popular as a result of its acceptability among the generality of the people. In that golden period, monetary consideration was never a factor in gauging the success or otherwise of the actors/actress, it was more or less voluntary. The main objectives were simply to enlighten the public, with strict adherence to the rules and regulations which guard against anything that will torch our sensibilities. This ensured the protection of our cultural norms and values jealously over the years. The thespians were just happy and contented to partake in a venture that will lead to the general understanding of government aims and objectives on several issues.

The many prominent personalities that took part in the drama series of this early phase include the following: Kassimu Yero, Kar-Kuzu, Late Alhaji Buguzun, Dan Hajiya, Dan-Magori, Hajiya Tambaya, Me Ayah, Late Mallam Mamman, Golobo, Samanja Mazan Fama, Late Karo-da-Goma, Barmo and several others too numerous to mention. They used their God given talent effectively in mass mobilization and enlightenment and for that, we are very grateful indeed. What is now known as Kannywood, evolved partly out of the booming Kano Market Literature (KML), which made some of the writers instantly famous. The success recorded, made some exuberant youth to begin the conversion of the content of their 'soyayya' books into films. Subsequently, what started as a small private affair suddenly metamorphosed into a full-blown money spinning venture and the rest is now history.

With the government's inability to cater for its citizens' needs, coupled with the opulent life style of these writers, in addition to endemic poverty; film making readily become a veritable source of employment and instant fame and wealth. This induced mass exodus of all characters from every part of the North and even neighboring countries to Kano, to

the ready embrace of the stakeholders in the industry. Many boys and girls in their teens therefore migrated to Kano, leading to the resurgence of divorce cases in many parts of the north.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What are the major thrusts of Kano Market Literature?

3.5 Transition from Pamphlets into Full Literatures

The first book in the Onitsha market literature series was published in 1947. This was quickly followed by other titles some of which were so slim that they numbered less than 20 pages each. In a relatively short time, these chapbooks and novelettes became popular in Eastern Nigeria especially among secondary school boys and girls and among thousands of traders in Onitsha market. From the Eastern Region the popularity spread to the Cameroon, Ghana and other West African countries. The 5-year period, 1958 to 1962 may be described as the heyday when the total number of books published each year was near the 50 titles mark. The language used in the books was suitable for most of the people in the society because not many of them were educated to primary and secondary school levels. By the time the Biafran war ended in January 1970, the publication and selling of the Onitsha market pamphlets and chapbooks was dying a natural death.

The same period in history also marked the transition from writing novelettes with semi-literate population in mind to writing serious trade-books, both fiction and non-fiction, for highly educated people. By general trade books we mean those books written for the general public, mainly the adult population, and published by a commercial publisher. Such books are written for the non-specialist reading public, such as biography, novels, literature, belles letters, etc. Incidentally, these are the kind of books which people usually buy for their intrinsic merits, and they read them for their own sake.

Despite the popularity which the Onitsha market literature enjoyed for nearly a generation, by the year 1975, that literary phenomenon had ceased to exist. To many people, especially those who enjoyed comfortable living as a result of this special book trade, the demise came rather too quickly and too unexpectedly. Why was this the case? One obvious answer is that the Biafran war of July 1967 to January 1970 had abruptly halted the progress of the pamphlet business. At the end of the war, when people came back to Onitsha, what they saw was a city which had been systematically destroyed. It was like a ghost town. There was little or nothing left for them to use in starting a new life. This state of affairs led to frustration, hopelessness and despair. People even turned

round and started blaming their fellow Onitsha inhabitants for being the cause of their woes. The spirit of comradeship, for which the inhabitants of Onitsha were known, had gone. People did not trust one another any more. Rather they started being cagey and secretive. The informality and the openness of life in the Onitsha market had gone. People were no longer prepared to tell their fellow traders the truth.

However, there were people who loved the Onitsha market literature so much that they were determined to reactivate their business. Before long, they discovered that they were facing many odds. Their printing presses and other production equipment had either been stolen or destroyed beyond repair. Buying new machines would obviously cost them more money. Moreover, the resumption of the production of new pamphlets was capital-intensive. The cover price for each new title produced would be increased considerably. Some of the well-known pamphlet authors had disappeared from Onitsha, and some even lost their lives. Obiechina stated clearly that one of the famous pamphlet authors, Chike Okonyia, the author of Tragic, Niger Tales was killed during the war.

The whole fabric of society and the special characteristics which distinguished Onitsha from other cities in Igboland had gone. Thousands of people decided to leave Onitsha for good and set up new lines of business in other cities like Enugu, Aba and Port Harcourt. Before the war, some traders were prepared to buy every new pamphlet title published. After the war, the same traders decided not to purchase the publications any more, partly because they had no money, and partly because the new retail prices were too high for them. Few years after the war, even those who thrived on the pamphleteering business had no alternative than to give up the trade. Consequently, it can be said that by the year 1975, the Onitsha market literature had ceased to exist. The people of Eastern Nigeria had to look elsewhere for their reading materials. The disappearance of this literary genre was a loss not only to the Igbos and to Eastern Nigerians but also to the whole of Nigeria and to some West Africans. The Biafran war had changed the philosophy of life of the Igbo people of Nigeria.

Between 1950 and 1970, a period of 20 years, some classic novels written by Nigerian authors were published. The same period coincided with the time when the Onitsha market literature was in vogue from 1947 to 1975. Some of these novels were The Palm-Wine Drinkard by Amos Tutuola (1952); People of the City, by Cyprian Ekwensi (1954); *Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe (1958), and One Man One Wife* by Timothy Aluko (1959). These represent what Oyekan Owomoyela called the First Wave Writers of West Africa. Their works also represent a transitional period from the novelettes and chapbooks of the Onitsha

market literature, to serious fiction written by intellectual authors. One Nigerian novelist who may be said to have spearheaded the transition was C.O.D. Ekwensi. He wrote for the Onitsha market literature as well as serious novels for the more sophisticated readers. As Obiechina has rightly observed, both the pamphlet writers and the intellectual West African writers used their writing as media to provide insights into the contemporary West African life. The pamphlet writers concerned themselves with surface appearances, while the intellectual writers tried to dig deep into underlying causes and explanations.

We have already seen how serious fiction was being published almost side by side with the pamphlets of the Onitsha market literature. Those novels were written by first wave intellectual writers from Nigeria. During the Second wave, we had Wole Soyinka's novel The *Interpreters (1965) and Gabriel Okara's novel, The Voice (1964). It was* during the Second Wave that Chinua Achebe published his two next novels – No Longer at Ease (1960) and Man of the People, (1966). Elechi Amadi's novel, The Concubine, was published in 1966. Achebe's *A Man of the People dealt with corruption, and ended with violence and* a coup. It was during this Second Wave that some of the novels of the pioneer Igbo women writers were published. The first was Efuru, by Flora Nwapa (1966), and Idu (1969). The other female novelist, Buchi Emecheta, published her autobiographical novels, In the Ditch (1972) and Second Class Citizen, (1974).

The writers of the Third Wave were young people writing for an African audience and not for the Euro-Americans as was the case with the first Wave authors. These new Third Wave authors sought not only to entertain like the Onitsha chapbooks, but also to edify and instruct, as well as to forge a common cause with ordinary people. Some of the novels of the Third Wave are One is Enough, by Flora Nwapa (1981); Kalu Okpi's The Smugglers (1978), Zaynab Alkali's The Stillborn (1986) and Abubakar Gimba's Trail of Sacrifice (1989).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Explain thoroughly the factors that led to the demise of pamphleteering

4.0 CONCLUSION

No doubt, pamphleteering constitutes a very important aspect of the development of the African novel. From the above excursions into the development of pamphleteering and the emergence of market literatures, Onitsha and Kano, it is clear that they represent one of the first attempts at writing and publishing what is real literature. This development process is not an African thing. Early literature writers in Europe and America started through pamphleteering. American literature began as pamphlets which still represent an important aspect of their literary heritage. The works of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson were mainly in pamphlets and they are one of the most revered documents in American literature today. However, the pamphlets of Africa unlike the revolutionary aspects of Europe and America constitute attempts by the half literate Africans at expressing them in the printed words. It represents a beginning that actually saw literature beyond the ordinariness of the spoken words. It elevated the orality of literature to the status of the printed matter. It brings African novels to the realm of the printed words.

5.0 SUMMARY

Pamphleteering developed to market literature in Nigeria. This is because most of the pamphlets were written by traders and people living in the two most commercial areas in Nigeria: Onitsha and Kano. They are middle educated members of the society that for fun and belongingness to the circle of writers. The quantity of works produced is enormous and represent many aspects of man's developmental needs from the physical to the spiritual. The quality reveals beginners with no clear-cut genres, themes and functionality. The works reveal the budding desire of young half educated Africans who wrote to bring African orality into the print. The market literatures marked a real phase in the development of printing in Africa. Thus, pamphlets led directly to the real publishing of African novels and other genres.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. What factors led to the emergence of pamphleteering in Africa?
2. Differentiate critically the thematic differences between Onitsha and Kano Market Literatures
3. Explain the basic contribution of pamphlets to the development of the African novel.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Furniss, George (1996). Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1971). Literature for the Masses: An Analytical *Study of Popular Pamphleteering in Nigeria. Enugu, Nigeria:* Nwankwo-Ifejika Publishers.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in the *West African Novel. London: Cambridge University Press.*

UNIT 3 NIGERIAN NATIONALIST LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nationalism and Early Nigerian Literature
3.3 Literatures of Identity and Personality
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine the beginning of written literatures from the contributions of Nigerian nationalists. Many African nationalists, that is, those who fought for the independence of their countries were mostly educated Africans who were trained abroad as there were no universities in Africa to produce graduates then. They used everything at their disposal in the fight. They used propaganda, journalism, literature etc. They used literature mainly to sensitize the Africans about their personality and the destruction of inferiority complex. They contributed in the development of African literature. Many of these African writers present the African society, culture and personality in such manners that reveal the totality of African values. The issues of equality, cultural values and social mores are presented in manners that show the placement of attitudes and societal requirements for greatness. The values of leadership are also examined using the African leadership parameters as yardsticks. In Nigeria, most of the nationalists used literature as tools for their nationalistic messages.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand that Nigerian literature was a tool of nationalism

explain the need for nationalist literature
relate the Nationalist literature to Nigeria's struggle for independence
see Nationalist literatures as part of early Nigerian literature
distinguish nationalist literature from negritude literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Early Nigerian poetry in English was an anti colonial, mobilisational poetry. It was one of the weapons used by nationalists to fight the British colonial administration in Nigeria and sensitized the people to the injustices of colonialism. This anti colonial poetry movement was West Africa wide. R. E. E. Armattoe, Michael Dei-Anang and Benibengor Blay, all of Ghana; Crispin George of Sierra Leone; and, Roland Tombekai of Liberia, are the prominent names. In Nigeria, the important names are Dennis Osadebay and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Literary arts were part of the colonial educational structure which had as its basic end, the incorporation of Africans into the orbit of Western Civilization. In the European Colonization of Africa, commerce, Christianity and civilization were a three – legged relay in which Christianity was always either first or second baton (after commerce). Both combined to produce colonialism and the sum total of all three was the imposition of Western civilization on Africa. Of all the contacts with the Europeans, the most decisive of them all is the evolution of the modern Nigerian state as a colonized entity in the late 19th century. Although Africans had been writing in Portuguese as early as 1850 and a few volumes of African writing in English and French had been published, an explosion of African writing in European languages occurred in the mid-twentieth century.

In the 1930s, black intellectuals from French colonies living in Paris initiated a literary movement called Negritude. Negritude emerged out of “a sudden grasp of racial identity and of cultural values and an awareness of the wide discrepancies” (Gerard 39) which existed between the promise of the French system of assimilation and the reality. The movement's founders looked to Africa to rediscover and rehabilitate the African values that had been erased by French cultural superiority. Negritude writers wrote poetry in French in which they presented African traditions and cultures as antithetical, but equal, to European culture. Out of this philosophical/literary movement came the creation of Presence Africaine by Alioune Diop in 1947. The journal, according to its founder, was an endeavour "to help define African originality and to hasten its introduction into the modern world" (Owomoyela 39). Other Negritude authors include Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire, and Leon Damas.

In the mid-60s, Nigeria replaced French West Africa as the largest producer and consumer of African literature, and literary production in English surpassed that in French. Many Nigerian nationalists, like Dr.

Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Denis Osadebey and Chief Enahoro among others were products of Western Education and they recognized the power of literature in the achievement of their goal for Nigeria's independence. They constituted the nationalist writers. Their literary motive was akin to that of negritude. They emphasized African culture, personality and value system. They believe that giving attention to everything Africa is one of the basic tools of their agitation. Large numbers of talented writers in Francophone Africa came to occupy important political and diplomatic posts and gave up creative writing.

The vastness in size and population of Nigeria gave it an advantage over smaller countries. In the 1950s, a large readership made up of clerks and small traders and a steadily increasing number of high schools students developed in Nigeria, and this readership enabled the emergence of market literatures. Even Ibadan University College, founded in 1948, produced some of the writers that came to the forefront in the 60s. The encounter with Europe through trade relationships, missionary activities, and colonialism propelled the wave of literacy in Nigeria. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, literary activity in the British colonies was conducted almost entirely in vernacular languages. Missionaries found it more useful to translate the Bible into local languages than to teach English to large number of Africans. This resulted in the production of hymns, morality tales, and other literatures in African languages concerned with propagating Christian values and morals. All these helped in the propagation of nationalism which culminated in the independence of the country.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the importance of Nigerian literature in Nigerian nationalism

3.2 Nationalism and Early Nigerian Literature

Nigerian literature of the early 50s and 60s were more of journalistic and nationalistic. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was a journalist and a nationalist. He, like his peers, wrote poetry and other forms of literature to express his Africanness as a way of killing the inferiority complex always expressed by the Africans. Most of these nationalists suffered much racism in their studies abroad. It was these racial experiences that sparked off their agitation for independence. However, their creative works were not allowed in the curriculum of schools. The same western education curriculum prevailed in the British colonies. The curriculum of western education was largely made up of European texts and authors. Admittedly, at the inception of tertiary education in Nigeria in the 1950s, authors of African origin had not written many texts. But neither literature written in the indigenous African languages, nor the traditional

artistic practices were considered of significance enough to merit attention in scholarly investigation of literary experience, presumed when convenient, to be universal. Thus, until the postcolonial agitation for artistic and cultural decolonization impacted on the academia, African literature was like an inconceivable possibility or at best, a shocking novelty. Given the above, it is not surprising that the curriculum of literary studies in Nigeria as it obtained in many parts of colonized Africa was fashioned in the image of metropolitan derivation. Primary texts and authors studied, the critical and theoretical approaches adopted in textual interrogations were largely Euro-American. Where the continent features as subject, it is done with a view to underscore its significance as we see in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Shakespeare's Othello and Tempest, Sir H. Rider Haggard's King *Solomon's Mine, etc. No indigenous poet had presumably emerged to* rival Thomas Wyatt, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Alexander Pope, William Blake, and T.S. Eliot among others.

The indigenous imagination was seen as incapable of producing such epical compositions with the rhetorical grandeur exhibited in Beowulf by the Anglo-Saxons or works of arresting suspense and didacticism as exemplified in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales. In terms of drama, African ritual performances and festivals, myths, legends and other narratives of the people wherein lie the seedbeds of African drama earned no place in the curriculum fashioned in the main and ab initio from the metropolitan centres. Thus, the historical trajectory of literature in Nigeria shows that it was part of the embracing marginalization of the colonies.

By the 1960s, there was a gradual legitimation of African oral literature as a worthy subject of literary inquiry. Thus, traditional rituals, festivals and indigenous poetic chants became worthy subjects for learning. Nationalism had the conscious drive to put Nigerians on the self appraisal of their personality and culture. These works, mainly poetry, are written in simplified syntax with the aim of communicating ideas. The poems read as discourse projecting the need for understanding and appreciating the black race.

By its very nature, this poetry had a public tone. It was confrontational and defamatory, and was meant to be hurled at the white opponent as a counter to his negative assumptions about African culture. It was also a highly affirmative poetry, often taking Africa as a monolithic entity and singing her praise to the high heavens. This posture must have been justifiable at the time, given the sustained denigration of Africa by whites who were either ignorant of the real situation in Africa or were simply malicious.

Dennis Osadebay was the leading Nigerian poet of the mobilization era. In 1952, he published a book of poems entitled Africa Sings which, in many ways, is typical of the mobilisational mode. In the poem "Who Buys My Thoughts", for example, the emphasis is on the throbbing soul of Africa, an Africa that is still hungry, naked and sick, but whose youth are already awake, restless and questioning and who by this very fact are going to make significant achievements in the future. But Osadebay was also a poet with an ambivalent disposition towards the West; for, while he may condemn the West for some of the cruder features of colonialism, he nevertheless sang the white man's praise unabashedly for what he called the benefits of western civilization, namely schools, hospitals and the like.

Perhaps the poem that is most typical of him is "Young Africa's Plea" in which he seeks a synthesis of black and white values especially in the following lines:

Let me play with the Whiteman's ways
Let me work with the Blackman's brains
Let my affairs themselves sort out
Then in sweet rebirth
I'll rise a better man
Not ashamed to face the world.

This consciousness of Africanness elevates the thought-system of the Africans and creates a superior sense of their existence among mankind. Nationalism was seen as a way of asserting their integrity and modified to carry the tones of Anglo Nigerian experiences.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Many Nigerian nationalists believe that our literature should dominate our education. Explain why it should be so.

3.3 Literatures of Identity and Personality

The 50s in Nigeria were also the time when the ferment for freedom was at its highest. India was independent, so it was only a matter of time for West Africa to be free. The Second World War was fought for freedom as they told Africans. They were asked to collect palm kernels for the war effort. They were told that each one would put a nail on Hitler's coffin. Nigerians returning home from the war asked, 'where's the freedom we were told about?' So the two issues were together: the political ferment and the revolution in the classroom. The Nigerian elites were angered to see that they were deceived into fighting a war they never knew how it began. They never knew Hitler and were amazed that

a man they never knew and who never offended them turned out to be their enemy. The enlightenment from those ex-servicemen, who actually fought in the battle front with the whites, discovered that they were stronger than their white counterparts at the warfront. The myth about white superiority began to wane in their mind. They began to teach Nigerians at home on their return from the war that the colonial masters were not superior to them. This resulted in the publication of pamphlets and papers on the need for African independence. In Nigeria, many of these ex-servicemen who later joined the Nigerian armed forces began to spread information on the possibility of self governance in the country.

For the elites, the educated Nigerians at the forefront of the battle for self governance, the need to implant the consciousness about the superiority of he black person over the whites began as a necessary independence slogan. They wrote poems, short stories and historical account of their encounters with the whites. They painted gory pictures of racism and instilled in the educated few, the need for their self aggrandizement in the face of all odds. Unfortunately, most of these nationalist works were never in complete books as most of them were products of the immediate necessity or the situation that that gave rise to them. They were usually published in newspapers like The West African *Pilot which had the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the editor at the time* Nigeria's agitation for independence was at its peak.

In most of these literary works, the nationalists emphasized national unity, identification with the struggle for independence, the elevation of the African personality and the destruction of inferiority complex.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the factors that led to the realization of African identity and personality during the struggles for independence

4.0 CONCLUSION

Nationalism paved the way for the appreciation of African oral arts. Apart from the significant interests shown in indigenous oral literary and artistic traditions, by independence, the nation had produced writers who were significant in many ways. The literary field witnessed expansion in the list of works written by educated Nigerians, whose sources of artistic influence were not only the classical European literature to which they were exposed in the course of their education, but also their indigenous oral and performance resources in Nigerian culture. These were writers whose mastery of poetic, theatrical and narrative skills were acclaimed beyond the shores of Nigeria. These writers include Gabriel Okara

whose collection, The Fisherman's Invocation, was and is still regarded as the trailblazer in true poetic expression in Africa. Okara uses indigenous materials in capturing his ideals while painting the metaphors of truth using his environment as proper poetic tool in his craft. His novel, The Voice, an experimental work written with the transliteration of Ijaw language into English makes a case for the appreciation of the linguistic beauty in African languages. The Voice, apart from its linguistic properties carried more message of nationalism as it examines Nigeria beyond Independence. Independence is a goal but he believes that the success of independence rests with the individuals who must work with clear conscience in order to pilot Nigeria towards worthy ends.

5.0 SUMMARY

The little literary products of the nationalists paved way for the arrival of serious literatures attacking the excesses of colonialism and neocolonial mentalities in Nigeria. The arrival of Chinua Achebe's novels (Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, No Longer at Ease and A Man *of the People) strengthens the nationalistic themes in Nigerian* literatures. Achebe's novels cleared certain complexities about the African continent and personality. His first novel Things Fall Apart was a reaction to the distorted pictures of Africa by the Europeans. More so, Wole Soyinka's plays (A Dance of the Forests, The Strong Breed, The *Lion and The Jewel, Kongi's Harvest and The Road) use the theatre as* another avenue for the same nationalistic ventures; even J. P. Clark in his Ozidi, Song of A Goat, The Raft, among other plays elevated the African personality and redirected the Nigerians adrift. On the feminine angle, Nigerian women contributed to the nationalistic consciousness. Writers like Flora Nwapa, Mabel Segun and Zulu Sofola towed the lines of the men in the same nationalistic concern. They rested their art on the need to embrace openness in the society by avoiding sexual segregation. Though many people saw their works as European ideals but others believe that African culture like every other is dynamic and must follow change. Their works fuse elements of the indigenous and Western literary traditions. Although, many of the works of the early nationalists like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dennis Osadebey among others were not really published as books because they appeared as pamphlets and in newspaper; but some of them have been collected recently in anthologies such as West African Verse edited by Donatus Nwoga who categorized their works under pioneer poetry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. Discuss the importance of literature in Nigeria's struggle for independence
2. Nigeria's nationalists were products of western education. How did that aid them in writing literature?
3. What are the major thrusts of nationalist literatures in Nigeria?
4. Relate the concern of Negritude literature with those of Nationalist literature in Nigeria
5. Explain the major factors that led to the emergence of nationalist literatures in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Gerard, Albert (1990). Contexts of African Literature. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi.
.

Harrow, Kenneth (1994). Thresholds of Change in African Literature: *The Emergence of a Tradition. Portsmouth and London:* Heinemann and James Curry.

Owomoyela, Oyekan (1979). African Literatures: An Introduction. Waltham, Mass, African Studies Association.

Nwoga, Donatus (1980). (ed.) West African Verse. London: Longman.

Senanu, K. & Vincent T. (1977). A Selection of African Verse. London: Longman.

UNIT 4 LITERARY JOURNALS IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Horn/The Black Orpheus
3.3 The Mbari Club
3.4 Okike and Other Journals
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the emergence of journal literatures in Nigerian premier universities which helped in grooming Nigerian writers. The University of Ibadan, which was the university college affiliated to the University of London, produced the majority of Nigerian writers because of the literary consciousness in the university that resulted from the existence of literary journals on the campus. These journals, which were products of the Nigerian students, started with the advice of the European teachers in the university. The journals were edited by the Nigerian students themselves. We will study the origin of these journals, the effects of the journal in the training of Nigerian writers and the effects in the development of Nigerian literature in all ramifications.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the meaning of journal literatures
assess the importance of journal literatures in the development of Nigerian literature
discuss journal literatures as Nigerian literatures
see the emergence of great Nigerian writers through journal literatures
distinguish journal literatures from other forms of literary expressions.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In search of a new policy on higher education, the Colonial Office set up the Elliot and Asquith Commissions which recommended the creation of a university college at Ibadan. According to Adewoye (1973), the founding of the college in 1948 "represented the fulfillment of many years of aspiration by Nigerians for the establishment, locally of an institution of higher education." The British, however, entrenched their cultural hegemony in the new college by specifying that it should have British universities as its model in order to maintain a high academic standard. The college was affiliated with the University of London in what was termed a "special relationship." This, in practice, forced the University College to adopt the curricula of the said university until 1962 when it became autonomous and came to be known as the University of Ibadan. The residential nature of the college made it possible for it to create intellectual elite in Nigeria. The college was the first institution of higher learning to bring such a large group of talented young men and women from various parts of the country together. Takena Tamuno wrote that the plan to make the college residential was fully thought-out.

The Asquith Commission favoured the principle of residential universities for a number of reasons: the unsuitability of off-campus accommodation and the necessity to supervise the health of students closely; the widely different backgrounds of the undergraduates and the need to promote unity; the opportunity offered for broadening their outlook through extra curricula activities. The social climate within the university easily created avenues for interaction and mutual edification among the students. This was evident in the growth of campus publications including The Bug, Beacon, The Eagle, The Sword, The *Weekly, The University Herald, The Criterion, and The University Voice* which served as the official organ of the students' union. In the sphere of extra-curricula activities, the Arts Theatre was a major catalyst and it enjoyed the patronage of the small university community. Geoffrey Axworthy of the English department, who was responsible for creating the Drama Unit in the department, also directed plays at the theatre. The experiences of the students in their new environment and the prospects of university education engendered in them an awareness of their status as privileged members of the society with unlimited opportunities in the emergent nation. They were not only fascinated by, but also celebrated their encounter with, the prevailing intellectual attitudes in Europe. Some of the students saw the university campus as a world on its own. Most of the activities that enlivened campus life at Ibadan in those early years originated from students in the humanities.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the factors in the university which led to the establishment of campus journals.

3.2 The Horn/ Black Orpheus

A major development in campus journal was the establishment of The *Horn, a poetry magazine in the Department of English in 1957. Martin* Banham, a young lecturer in the department who was also a fresh graduate of Leeds, suggested the creation of the magazine to John Pepper Clark, then an honours student in the department, who later started and first edited The Horn. Banham's proposal was borne out of a desire to experiment with what was obtained at Leeds University, where *Poetry and Audience, a student-run magazine with the same orientation,* was stimulating poetic creation. Interestingly, the official involvement of the English department in this development was minimal because the idea was novel in the university.

W.H. Stevenson, who was part of the department, explained that The *Horn started when John Pepper Clark gathered a committee of three* including Higo Aigboje and John Ekwere and so in January 1957 the first issue of The Horn appeared. There were no funds available for such a venture. Martin Banham himself provided enough cash to start it; the English Department provided paper also the printing equipment. But funds had to be raised, and so The Horn was sold at two-pence a copy (raised after the third issue to three pence, a price maintained until the end). It could not afford to appear in any but the most modest from which was probably just as well if it were to remain a genuine student magazine. The pioneering role of The Horn is often acknowledged but within the few years in which it appeared was due largely to the effort of individuals who were interested in giving impetus to the literary renaissance that it initiated.

After Clark's editorship, it became a rule that only third-year students would edit it. But this never worked. Between January 1957 when its first issue was published and 1964 when it last appeared, The Horn only had five editors: J.P. Clark (1957-58), Abiola Irele (1958-60), Dapo Adelugba (1960-62), Omolara Ogundipe (1962-63) and Onyema Iheme (1963-64). Despite its short lifespan, The Horn gave exposure to many student-poets and served as a forum for discussing issues related to Nigerian writing. Even though copies of the journal are no longer easily accessible, some poems published in its first three years have been collected in Nigerian Student Verse, an anthology edited by Martin Banham. Curiously enough, Clark objected to being represented in the anthology on the grounds that he was not writing "student verse". The

few contributions of Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo were also not included in the anthology. They had both left Ibadan and had contributed from Leeds University and Fiditi College respectively. Of the thirteen student-poets: Mac Akpoyoware, Minji Karibo, Pius Oleghe, G.A. Adeyemo, Gordon Umukoro, Yetunde Esan, U. I. Ukwu, R. Opara, Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, B. Akobo, A. Higo, J.D. Ekwere and Abiola Irele, whose works constitute the twenty-seven poems that form Martin Banham's anthology, only Frank Aig-Imoukhuede has since published a personal collection - Pidgin Stew and Other Poems (1982).

If The Horn mainly served the Ibadan student community, Black *Orpheus, another journal started at Ibadan in September 1957, was more* ambitious. It was committed to promoting cultural activity in the entire black world. It was also a brainchild of expatriates - Ulli Beier, a German attached to the extra-mural department of the University, and Janheinz Jahn, his compatriot, who did not reside in Nigeria but showed much interest in black arts and culture. The special interest of the founders of Black Orpheus in poetry is reflected in its name and the journal made a stronger impact in the society than The Horn not only because it had a broader vision and wider circulation but because it also enjoyed the financial support of the Paris-based Congress for Cultural Freedom and the government of the old Western Region.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What are the major reasons for the establishment of The Horn magazine and what is its focus in literature?

3.3 The Mbari Club

The cultural currents stirred by the intellectual elites at Ibadan came to a climax in 1960 with the formation of the Mbari Writers' & Artists' *Club, an organization that soon charted a direction for African arts and* letters. The Mbari complemented the role of the Black Orpheus in the sense that some of those who formed its nucleus were associated with the journal. The cosmopolitan character of the first Mbari Club is illustrated by some of its founders. These included: Chinua Achebe (Igbo); Frances Ademola, (Ghanaian); Mabel Aig-Imoukhuede (now Segun), (Bini); Ulli Beier, (German-born British citizen); John Pepper Clark, (Ijaw); Mercer Cook, (African-American); the late Chief D.O. Fagunwa, (well-known Yoruba writer); Begun Hendricks, (South African Indian); Vincent Kofi, (Ghanaian); Christopher Okigbo (Igbo); Ezekiel Mphahlele (South African); Demas Nwoko (Igbo) and Wole Soyinka (Yoruba).

The Igbo name Mbari, suggested by Chinua Achebe, has its roots in the Igbo religion where it refers to a house built for, and dedicated to, Ala, *the earth goddess. It denoted any act of creation in which the light of the* gods is reflected in the work of man. The name perhaps bestowed an African essence of the creative enterprise inaugurated at the Mbari centre which was located at the heart of Ibadan. Naturally, the activities of the group led to the formation of similar clubs at Oshogbo and Enugu. Besides the creative ambience it provided for writers, the Mbari centre was also used for art exhibitions, dramatic performances and the training of promising writers. The club became a major cultural institution, strong enough to take over the publication of Black Orpheus in partnership with Longman in 1962. Mbari's success may be seen in the light of its popularization of African writers and their works. Because the club ran a small press, it performed on a large scale what the journal could attempt or only do on a small scale.

The Mbari, for instance, published the first volumes of a number of African poets. Among these were Clark's Poems (1962), and Okigbo's *Heavensgate (1962) and Limits (1964). The club promoted the emergent* art of these writers through its encouraging exposure of their works. It is important to note that the writers and artists in the Mbari were not all based in Ibadan. Okigbo, one of the frequent contributors, for example, was teaching at Fiditi College -about twenty miles away from Ibadan. Early Ibadan poetry is conceived here as the totality of the output of the poets, ranging from their juvenilia in student publications in the fifties, to their poems written just before the civil war, when with the maturation of some poetic voices and the assistance of the Mbari, individual collections had begun to appear. Works published during the period may be seen as unified by certain tendencies, such works being a product of the shared experiences of the writers. At the same time, the works of Achebe, Clark, Soyinka and Okigbo represent both in quantity and enduring merit, the best produced at that period. There is a need to examine the manner in which the syllabus of the English department at Ibadan in its early days in particular influenced the creative expression of her products who, understandably, constitute the majority of our writers even in this contemporary dispensation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Critically assess the role of the Mbari Club in the promotion literature and arts in Nigeria

3.4 Okike and Other Journals

With the establishment of Nigeria's first indigenous university at Nsukka, some of the scholars from Ibadan trooped en mass to the new university. Most of them decided to create a university of excellence by improving on the standard set up at Ibadan as a college of the University of London. University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960, some years after the graduation of the excellent literary scholars like Achebe, Soyinka, Clark, Segun and Okigbo among others. The Department of English at Nsukka under the headship of Chinua Achebe began the publication of Okike which he called "a journal of new writing". He was the Founding Editor for several years before leaving Nsukka. Okike was created to cover issues beyond literary works. It covered such areas as creative works, meta-criticism of literature, language and other issues relevant to literary discourse. The other universities which fall into the first generation universities include the University of Ife, Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Lagos also has established literary journals in their departments of English.

Okike became a mouthpiece for several literary scholars within and outside Nigeria. Some prominent African scholars like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Taban Lo Liyong, Dennis Brutus among many others contributed to this journal. Many prominent scholars and writers in Nigeria began their literary productions from being published in Okike. The journal created the opportunity for literary expressions in many forms. Unlike the Ibadan journals which concentrated mainly on poetry and prose, Okike gave voice to dramatists because Achebe encouraged the inclusion of plays in the journal. Many known literary critics in Nigeria like Obi Wali, Abiola Irele, and Biodun Jeyifo among others expressed some of their critical discourse in Okike. The journal served in various forms to promote literary discourse and later became a reference point in world literature. Okike experienced an interregnum when Achebe left Nsukka. Okike is now being edited by Prof. Ossie Enekwe. It was and still is a respected journal in the field of literature today.

With the multiplication of universities in Nigeria came the multiplicity of literary journals like Kiabara, Kakaki, Gong, Tablet, etc. Most of these universities in Maiduguri, Kano, Port Harcourt, Benin, Calabar etc. started various literary journals in the departments of English and Drama which aided in the development of literary consciousness in Nigeria and Africa at large. However, with time, these journals metamorphosed into pure academic journals with the sole aim of publishing critical works instead of literary works. Although, the students' associations in most departments of English in Nigeria still float literary journals edited by students under the tutelage of a lecturer

in the department. These journals now serve the function which The *Horn and The Beacon in Ibadan served. Some students' clubs like 'The* Literary Club', 'Creative Writers' Club' and 'The Creative Discourse Club' among others serve like the then Mbari Club but the issue of inactive sensibility and consciousness have drained the keenness expected in creativity among literary students today. Yet, many young writers emerged from there.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss in details what distinguished Okike from the other literary journals in Nigeria

4.0 CONCLUSION

Early Nigerian writers like Achebe, Clark, Soyinka and Okigbo, for instance, manifested peculiar traits which were best understood in relation to the preference and growth of each of them. Early Clark was representative of the poetry of his era in the sense that some of the best and the worst tendencies in early Ibadan poetry were present in his poems collected in Poems. He appeared to have been incapable of refining borrowed methods. His best poems, "Ibadan," "Night Rain" and perhaps "Abiku", were therefore those not stained by technical appropriations from his imitation of the style of Hopkins, Yeats and Eliot. Clark's early poems were generally marked by a nostalgic strain which betrayed his alienation from his people and their culture. If his poem "Ivbie" then made a case for his violated people, "Agbor Dancer" projected his own quest for reunion with the same people and their heritage. Thus, the unnamed dancer merely provided him an occasion for personal reflection. He compensated for his technical dependence by frequently adopting a familiar locale as the setting for his poems.

Clark wrote that their training affected both their understanding and practice of poetic craft in an essay entitled "Another Kind of Poetry" (1966). Apart from the fact that the Ibadan poetry of this period is largely derivative, the medium employed by the poets, especially Okigbo and Soyinka, evinces what, for want of a better label, one may call 'arrogant complexity'. Intended complex effects best confirms the elitist orientation of their art. It is safe to assume that their audience was, in the main, the few university-trained art enthusiasts at Ibadan at that moment who were already furnished with the skill and learning needed to penetrate their work. Okigbo had been termed obscure. He had said that his poetry was not for non-poets. Soyinka's poetry, like Okigbo's, ranks among the most complex literatures in Africa. Chinua Achebe's novel fashioned in line with the style of the British novel reads quite

simple because his prose was not poetic; the British writers he read wrote in simplified prose to convey their message.

5.0 SUMMARY

Martin Banham explains in his "introduction" to Nigerian Student *Verse, that the influence of European literature on Nigerian literature* was unwholesome for the growth of Nigerian literature. He explains, "Some of the verse presented here shows only too clearly how deep is the influence of the alien verse of English romanticism upon aspiring Nigerian writers. The more Nigerians can be encouraged to write as Nigerians, about Nigerian themes, for Nigerian audiences, the better for the development of a healthy literature in Nigeria." Chinweizu and his colleagues clarified this observation in Towards the Decolonization of *African Literature. They highlighted the "failure of craft" in the works* of the Ibadan poets, tracing the problem to what they saw as "a divorce from African oral and poetic traditions". But the truth is that this imitative tendency was a betrayal of the deeper anguish of Nigerian writers at that historical moment. The writers, part of emergent elite incapable of authentic self-expression, were caught in a crisis of identity. It was almost inevitable that they would borrow idioms rooted in European literary traditions to convey African experiences. Wole Soyinka has drawn attention to the fact that a purist outlook on the African imagination was unrealistic. He maintained that it was impossible to kill impulses generated by the contact of Africa with the non-African world, as "individual writers," in reality, "make their creative emergence from the true and not the wistful untainted backcloth" ("From a common backcloth..." 1963).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Discuss the foundation of journal literature in the University College Ibadan
2. What are the major thrusts of The Horn and The Black Orpheus journals?
3. Assess the influence The Mbari Club in the development of Nigerian literature
4. There were marked relationship in the style and language of the Nigerian and British writers as discovered in Nigerian Student *Verse. What led to this unfortunate identity?*
5. Distinguish the literature of the early Ibadan writers with that of the contemporary Nigerian writers
6. Differentiate between Okike and the other literary journals in Nigeria

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Aig-Imoukhuede, Frank (1961). Pidgin Stew and Suffer Head. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Aig-Imoukhuede, Mabel. On being a West African Writer. Ibadan 12 June (1961): 11-12.

Banham, Martin (1961). Nigerian Student Verse. Ibadan: U.P.

Chinweizu, Jemie, O. & Madubuike I. (1980). Toward the *Decolonization of African Literature Vol. 1. Enugu: Fourth* Dimension.

Lindfords, Berth (1979). Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literatures. London: Heinemann.

Soyinka, Wole (1967). "From a Common Backcloth: A Reassessment of the African Literary Image." The American Scholar 32, 3. 387-396.

Stevenson, W. H. (1976). "The Horn: What it was and what it did." In *CriticalPerspectives on Nigerian Literatures. Berth Lindfords* (ed.) London: Heinemann. 209-233.

Tamuno, Tekena (1973). The Formative Years in the University of *Ibadan: 1948-73: A History of the First Twenty-Five Years.* Ibadan: UP,

--- --- ---. "Mbari -The Missing Link". Phylon XXVI, 3 (Fall): 247-254.

UNIT 5 PIONEER DRAMA/THEATRE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Performance Drama/Theatre
3.3 Dramatic Arts
3.4 Drama and culture
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine the emergence of Nigerian theatre/drama. Africa is a rich theatrical environment. All aspects of the people's culture: birth, death, ritual and all rites of passage have theatrical basis. The history of theatre in Nigeria traces back to then hey days before the advent of colonialism. The traditional artist is a complete theatre in practice. In orature, the folktale narrator is regarded as a complete one man theatre. We will study the development of the theatre and the literary drama in Nigeria. We will also take an incursion into the various factors that led the development of the genre in Nigeria over the years.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

trace the origin Nigerian theatre and literary drama
discuss the emergence and role of mobile theatres in Nigeria
relate the thematic focus of the early theatre practitioners with the present
see the early Nigeria theatre as a product of necessity
assess the thematic concern of the early and current dramatists in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

It is difficult to imagine any respectable assessment of contemporary Nigerian art, drama in particular (being more indigenous than other art forms, like the novel) without a consideration of its fountain, and in particular those images, tropes and usages which continue to run through every stage and subsequent development of the drama - from the traditional and trado-modern theatre through the literary theatre (especially drama of English expression), to the Community theatre, the Cinema and its now ubiquitous successor, the 'Home' Video Film, sometimes contentiously referred to as "Nollywood." It is these archetypal tropes deriving from traditional modes of theatrical expression that also continue to provide the mark of authenticity in contemporary Nigerian drama. This authenticity includes but also transcends the question of language or verbal deployment, to encompass the gamut of theatricality. What we find in contemporary Nigerian drama is a continual projection of the past into the future at every level of theatrical expression.

The emergence of drama in Nigeria through the agency of the numinous is well established. Anthropomorphic representatives of ancestral spirits – egungun in Yoruba, egwugwu in Igbo, masquerade in English – emerge during funeral rites or other rituals around which festivals and myths have been constructed in the indigenous communities. Theatre emerged from the imitation of the egungun display and the appropriation of the ritual motifs for popular cultural ends. Total theatre in the Nigerian contexts is defined in terms of the relative degree of approximation of these motifs of the egungun festival - mask, dance, drumming and singing, drama, audience participation. In contemporary Nigerian theatre output from stage and literary theatre to video film we find a continued quest to represent the cultural nuances of traditional Nigeria in the drama.

A parallel development from about the middle eighties was the rise of English theatre professionalism which had begun to take the theatre of English expression out of the University. Before then, theatre outside the university and school system had been the main preserve of the indigenous language theatre, with the major Nigerian example being the Yoruba Travelling Theatre. By the early 80s some teachers and students of theatre had begun to seek outlet outside the walls of the university. Notable examples were John Pepper Clark who set up his PEC Repertory theatre in Lagos in 1982 and Bode Sowande who retired from the University of Ibadan at a fairly early age to concentrate on his Odu Themes Meridian Productions. The heydays of the rise of

professionalism of drama of English expression in Nigerian were in the mid-eighties.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lagos, a theatre tradition developed featuring well-known English and European musicals, concerts and operas. The actors, concert groups and clientele of the foreign tradition were the new, Westernized elite. The artists featured included Handel and Mozart. Similar concert groups were set up in lbadan and Abeokuta. Soon, there was a clamour for works based on indigenous Nigerian subject matter, and one D. O. Oyedele is said to have written a play entitled 'King Elejigbo' (1904) in response to the call. The play cannot now be traced, but there are references to it in the Lagos theatre reviews of the period. This theatre tradition did not last beyond the first decade of the twentieth century. Politics was already in the air in Lagos and in other parts of Nigeria, and many of the leading spirits behind the Lagos Theatre Movement, like Herbert Macaulay, soon found politics more attractive than the theatre. For about forty years after the play 'King Elejigbo', there was no notable development, in the Nigerian Theatre until Hubert Ogunde came to the scene in 1944.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the transition from the traditional theatre to the elite theatre in Nigeria

3.2 Performance Drama/Theatre

There was a gradual development of the performance drama or theatre in Nigeria. Alarinjo, the traditional Yoruba theatre so well espoused by Adedeji (“Alarinjo”) is direct ancestor of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre which flourished from the late forties well into the late eighties before its practitioners and their descendants dispersed into television, film and video productions. At its zenith, the Yoruba travelling theatre assemblage had some two hundred different theatre groups criss-crossing the length and breath of the country Nigeria. The major personages of the Yoruba travelling theatre in its formative years were the acknowledged “father of Nigerian theatre”, Hubert Ogunde, and his contemporaries Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola. They constituted the ‘trinity’ of the indigenous mask idiom in the Nigerian theatre, the defining mark of their vocation being the representation of an irreducible Africanness in language and histrionics. Performances were always preceded by the ‘opening glee’ which comprised traditional drumming, dancing and invocation of the metaphysical realm and pertinent deities. Duro Ladipo’s forte was the ritualised stage in which Yoruba deities such as Sango, Oya and Moremi thundered back to life and electrified stages across the globe. Ladipo was singularly

responsible, with the collaboration of transnational culture worker Uli Beier, for bringing the myths of Sango and some other Yoruba deities to the international stage. The theatres of the trio were mutually reinforcing

Hubert Ogunde, who wrote both in English and in Yoruba, more than any one else, created the awareness of the modern theatre tradition in Nigeria. His was an operatic travelling theatre, and he took his plays to various parts of the country, and also to other West African countries, particularly Ghana and Sierra Leone, for about forty years. Ogunde's plays have religious, social and political themes and titles such as *Garden of Eden, Nebuchandnezar's Feign, Herbert Macaulay, Journey to Heaven, Tiger's Empire, Strike and Hunger and Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba rethink). Occasionally, he came into confrontation with the political authorities and had his plays banned. Hubert Ogunde was professionally remarkable in another sense.

Early in his theatre career, he confronted the problem of the frequent resignation and departure of his actresses, especially as soon as they got married and their husbands objected to their wives continuing as actresses because of the stigma attached. Ogunde then solved this problem in a practical way by marrying virtually all his actresses. This stabilized his performing company such that he often had too many actresses and sometimes made some of the women to perform male roles. Ogunde was the first professional theatre man in Nigeria who lived entirely by the art and, indeed, for it.

Ogunde had many followers and imitators, and there is now a flourishing art of the popular theatre. Biodun Jeyifo (1984) listed over a hundred such theatres in Yoruba land alone. They are popular with the masses because they use the local language, and their operatic mode (a balance of speech and music) endears them to the people. Indeed, the ordinary Nigerian is hardly aware of any other modern theatre form.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically assess Hubert Ogunde as “father of Nigerian theatre”

3.3 The Literary Drama

Apart from the popular travelling theatre of Ogunde and his followers, there is also literary drama, largely university-based and elitists. One of the first practitioners of this mode was James Ene Henshaw. He wrote several plays including This is Our Chance, Children of the Goddess, *Medicine for Love, and Dinner for Promotion. These plays are* commentaries on social and political life in Nigeria in the years just before and after independence. They treat issues of culture contact and

conflict, of the problems of building a coherent nation out of diverse ethnic groups, and of morality in social dealings. The plays were popular in schools and other literate circles in the 1960s and early 1970s, and were the first diet of many budding Nigerian playwrights.

By far, the dominant personality in Nigerian literary drama has been the Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, who has been in active theatre, both inside and outside Nigeria, since the late 1950s. He produced and published many plays. Early in his artistic career, he established the Orisun Theatre Company and the 1960 Masks from which literally flowed a stream of truly remarkable plays. He has a background which includes the University of Leeds and the Royal Court Theatre in London, university jobs in Lagos, lbadan and lfe and reasonably well-equipped theatres in lbadan and lfe. Thus, Soyinka was well prepared for an outstanding career as a playwright and theatre-practitioner.

Soyinka has tended to write two types of plays; first, the relatively easily comprehensible play in which he is dealing with a single issue or a limited number of issues in plain language; and second, the more ambitious, full-length play in which he is dealing with a wide array of issues in complex language, often loaded with abstruse imagery and symbolism, and for which he has acquired the reputation of being a difficult writer. The easier plays include The Lion and the Jewel, The *Jero Plays, Kongi's Harvest and A Play of Giants, while the more* abstruse ones include The Road, The Strong Breed, Madmen and *Specialists and Death and the King's Horseman. In content also,* Soyinka has tended to write two types of plays, viz; the political play and the social/metaphysical play. In the political plays, Soyinka exposes the bizarre, insensitive and bestial nature of governance in contemporary Africa. In the social/metaphysical plays, he explores, often in a satirical vein, issues like prejudices, religious hypocrisy, and futurology, or he probes the nature of sacrifices, conflict, the transition from life to death, and the inscrutable supernatural forces which control the universe.

John Pepper Clark is another important playwright. He has published seven plays, namely, Songs of a Goat, The Masquerade, The Raft, Ozidi, *The Boat, The Return Home, Full Circle and The Wives' Revolt. The* first four belong to the 1960s, and the last four to the 1980s. As in his poetry, Clark's setting is the ljaw Delta environment and his universe is one of storm and tide, of sandbars, boat capsizes and drowning, and the human tragedy enacted therein. The plays, with the exception of Ozidi which is Shakespearean in style, have Greek models and seem organized into two sets of trilogies.

Ola Rotimi, who started his writing career in 1966, has been a well-

rounded theatre man and a first rate play director. He has published

about six plays, namely, The Gods Are not to Blame, Kurunmi, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, Our Husband has Gone Again, If…Tragedy of the Ruled, and Holding Talks. Rotimi's major pre-occupation in his plays* is with history conceived as tragedy either in metaphoric or in plain expository terms. The Gods are not to Blame , for example, is a Nigerian adaptation of the 'Oedipus theme' in which Rotimi uses the metaphor of communal dispute, self-love and ethnic pride to symbolize the problems that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. Thus, it is not the gods who are to blame for Nigeria's national tragedy, but the people themselves who led their nation to disaster through their incautious actions and aggressive self-interest. In Kurunmi and Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi, the message is even less ambiguous: it is the case of a people* who plunge themselves into tragedy either because of the excesses of their leader or the limited vision of the people themselves.

There are several other playwrights in Nigeria who belong to this liberal-conservative ethos, notably Wale Ogunyemi and two women playwrights, Zulu Sofola and Tess Onwueme. Ogunyemi's landscape is similar to that of Ola Rotimi. His ljaiye War, for example, is earlier and uses basically the same material as Rotimi draws on for his Kurunmi. Ogunyemi has published many other plays, including Eshu Elegbara, and Obaluaye.

Zulu Sofola, the first Nigerian woman playwright, has been writing plays for over twenty years. Her titles include Wedlock of the Gods (1972), King Emene (1974) and The Disturbed Peace of Christmas. Her forte is tragedy put in domestic or two ritual setting with human error, insensitivity or crime as the tragic flaw. In Wedlock of the Gods, her first play, a girl was bundled off to marriage because her parents needed money from her dowry to pay medical bills for her sick brother. She considers herself as being in bondage for three years the marriage lasted, and then the husband dies. Rather than wait for three months as stipulated by custom or agree to the obnoxious custom of leviration, she becomes pregnant for her former lover. Custom is broken, the consequences are severe - the plot thickens as the tragedy unfolds.

By contrast, Tess Onwueme started writing in the early 1980s. Her plays include A Hen Too Soon (1983), The Broken Calabash (1984), The *Desert Encroaches (1985), The Reign of Wazobia (1988) and Legacies* (1989). Unlike Sofola, her vision is not predominantly about the past; rather she moves across temporal and cultural frontiers with relative ease.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Critically assess the thematic focus of most Nigerian playwrights.

3.4 The Emergent New Playwrights

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, a group of young people started expressing unease about the prevailing liberal-conservative ethos in the Nigerian theatre. They were mostly former disciples or admirers of Soyinka, but who were no longer fully satisfied with his vision of society. While still paying respect to his great artistic skill, they suggested that he was not giving the adequate leadership in his plays about what the people ought to do to alleviate their social and political problems. With varying degrees of sophistication, they expressed their desire to see the theatre in the vanguard of the search for solutions to society's problems and as a propaganda machine designed to achieve this purpose. Some of the prominent names in this socialist alternative are Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Tunde Fatunde, Olu Obafemi, Sam Ukala and Kole Omotoso.

Osofisan has published more than eleven plays, the most important of which are The Chattering and the Song (1977), Who is Afraid of *Solarin? (1978), Once Upon Four Robbers (1980) and Morountodun* (1982). Bode Sowande's plays include The Night Before, Farewell to *Babylon and A Sanctus for Women (1979). Fatunde has No More Oil Boom (1985), Blood and Sweat (1985), No Food, No Country, (1985)* and Oga Na Tief Man (1986). Obafemi's publications include three short plays: Night of the Mystical Beast (1986), The New Dawn (1986), and *Suicide Syndrome (1988). Omotoso wrote the play The Curse (1976).*

All these plays in various ways protect the socialist vision of the Nigerian society. At its most competent, for example in Osofisan's plays, the vision is realized through carefully woven plots mediated by limit-credible characters and situations. Some of the playwrights, however, give the impression that their works have been hurriedly put together to catch the moment. Such plays are little more than topical social and political tracts with only a thin veneer of fiction.

This succeeding generations of dramatists of English, for which Femi Osofisan and Bode Sowande remain frontline representatives were not as tired of the gods as they had proclaimed, even if they do seem occasionally wary of their ‘inviolability’. Also literary in orientation, their work is however marked by ideological departures, and a toning down of sacred idioms of the numinous in favour of a more secular verbal engagement. The gods continue to appear in the plays of Osofisan, allegedly only as ‘metaphor’ rather than in their full mystical significance as potent, real or functional personages of the metaphysical world. The distinction between the deployment of the numinous as myth or as metaphor had been subject of scholarly exchange. What is crucial to the current engagement however is the continued appropriation of

tropes of the traditional theatre for contemporary dramaturgy in their works.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Most Nigerian playwrights acknowledge Soyinka's influence. Explain why some dramatists towed a new direction

4.0 CONCLUSION

Apart from the traditional folktale narrator and Yoruba Travelling theatre groups at the early state of theatre, theatre in Nigeria was largely university-based and elitist even though the question of authentic representation of indigenous theatre aesthetics was more prominent. The drama of frontline playwrights like Soyinka, John Bekederemo-Clark and Sofola acquitted themselves well in their deep-structure representation of the Nigerian worldview and aesthetics. Soyinka proved also to be consistently master translator of the indigenous ritual stage, with metaphysical confrontation deployed as metaphor for the understanding of life's critical moments in his major works from Dance *of the Forest (1960) to Death and the King's Horseman (1975). His* plays are drawn into the arc of post-coloniality not on account of being post-independence per se but also because of the debates and issues they deliberate set up in opposition to colonial experience and European postulation of epistemological and cultural superiority. Confrontation is usually achieved at two structural levels of drama and dialogue, first by pitching the Yoruba metaphysical world-view in direct confrontation with western/colonial epistemic or ontological systems, and second through telling, reality invoking dialogue.

The late matriarch of the literary stage of English expression in Nigeria, Zulu Sofola, herself a theorist of the African stage, explores the realm of the tragic and ritual as representational idiom in both her Wedlock of the *Gods and King Emene (The tragedy of a Rebellion). She is also known* for her gender-centred plays. In her work, tragic conflict consists on the one hand in a confrontation with temporal and super-temporal powers beyond one's full understanding and grasp, and on the other hand in her immersion in her dual Igbo (Isele Ukwu) and Yoruba traditional heritage.

The other playwrights and theatre practitioners have been in the vanguard of addressing socio-political issues in Nigeria through the theatre. They have been realizing the odds of the Nigerian state in various forms on stage. Unlike, the histrionic concerns of Hubert Ogunde's art, the later dramatists aim more on the correction of political odds, social vices and culture destruction.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Nigerian state has been affecting the Nigerian theatre and drama. What was more difficult to survive was the grip of the Nigerian political economy and its aftermath, which has proved an even greater test for the resilience of the tenets of traditional drama aesthetics. The downturn in the Nigerian economy from about the early eighties had a direct impact on the literary theatre as on various other intellectual sectors. The departments of English and theatre in Nigeria, which had been the nursery of the important dramas, began to suffer severe brain drain and creativity fatigue. Promising playwrights had their attention divided by the sheer need to survive economically and began to turn their creativity into other, occasionally and not so noble, spheres. The commitment of students who were the mainstay of the literary theatre productions (as cast and crew members and as consumers) could no longer be guaranteed. Many outstanding students could not secure graduate assistantship in university departments where they could have honed their talents. The relative economic security and political stability that produced the great literary works of the first and second generation playwrights had suddenly vanished. Related to this was the problem of dictatorship, the clamp-down on the Nigerian intelligentsia from where came the most vociferous opposition to untoward government policies left the university in droves for either the private sector or the intellectual pastures in Europe, America and even some more favourable climes in Africa such as South Africa where the radical dramatist Kola Omotoso, and more recently the poet and literary critic Harry Garuba reside. Even Soyinka left Nigeria at the height of the draconian experiences. Theatre/dramatic literature in Nigeria is long history of upheavals.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. Trace the emergence of Nigerian theatre from the time of orature
2. Discuss the role of Yoruba Travelling Theatre in the development of Nigerian Theatre.
3. Carefully assess the influence of Wole Soyinka in Nigerian Theatre practice.
4. What factors led to the emergence of anti-Soyinka playwrights?
5. Highlight the major thematic focus of Nigerian theatre artists/dramatists since the late 80s.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Adedeji, Joel (1978). "Alarinjo: Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre," *Theatre in Africa. Ed. Oyin Ogunba & Abiola Irele. Ibadan:* Ibadan UP, 27 – 51.

Adelugba, Dapo (1978). Wale Ogunyemi, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi: "Three Dramatists in Search of a Language". Theatre in Africa. Ed. Oyin Ogunba & Abiola Irele. Ibadan: Ibadan UP, 201 – 220.

Clark, John Pepper (1985). "Aspects of Nigerian Drama" in Drama and *Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book. (Ed.) Yemi* Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.

Jeyifo, Biodun (1984). "The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria". in Dramaand Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source *Book. (Ed.) Yemi Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.*

Osofisan, Femi (1982). "Ritual and the Revolutionary Ethos: The Humanistic Dilemma" in Nigerian Theatre." Okike 22 (1982): 72 – 81.

Soyinka, Wole (1982). "Theatre in African Traditional Cultures: Survival Patterns." Art, Dialogue and Outrage. 190 – 203.

MODULE 2 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Anti-Colonialism and Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Types of Anti-Colonial Literature in Nigeria
Unit 3 Anti-Colonial Literature 1: Poetry
Unit 4 Anti-Colonial Literature 2: Prose
Unit 5 Anti-Colonial Literature 3: Drama/Theatre

UNIT 1 ANTI-COLONIALISM AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Basis of Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature
3.3 The Influence of Anti-Colonial Nigerian Literature
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the effect of colonialism in the development of Nigerian literature. All Nigerian writers are products of western education. It is this western education that armed Nigerian writers with the linguistic tool to write literature in English. Colonialism has positive and negative effects. However, most Nigerian writers attack the negative effects of colonialism. There is the general belief that Africa's woes result from colonial experiences and that the present African leaders are practicing the colonial method of administration. We will study how the Nigerian poets, novelists and dramatists presented colonialism, attacked colonialism and/or praised colonialism

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

understand colonialism as theme in Nigerian literature
appreciate the theme of colonialism in Nigerian literature
identify the Nigerian literature treating colonial themes
distinguish between anti-colonial and pro-colonial Nigerian Literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Colonialism according to the Advanced Learners Dictionary is an act of settling in a country or territory by migrants from another country, controlled by it (Hornby, 2000:p.196). Colonial rulers were agents in the promotion of Commerce and Christianity. The purposes of colonialism included economic exploitation of the colony's natural resources in any possible way. In colonial Nigeria, British rule dominated the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and imposed socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures. According to Irvin Markovitz, "colonialism was only one expression of an ever more encompassing capitalism" (1977:p.58). Colonialism was often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. The ideas were propagated through schools and mission houses. British colonial rule in Nigeria was described by Frederick Lugard as 'indirect rule' in which the natives acted in the name of the Governor- General who approved actions of all native officers (Lugard, 1970, p.268). Indirect rule was also described by Temple (1968) as a system of administration which allows European influence to bear on the native indirectly as though he was ruled by their chiefs (30).

European attempt to propagate and integrate their ideas created two enclaves of domination and submission. This perhaps was not deliberate as the dynamics of domination paved way to doldrums. The distance from colonialism to civilization became infinite bringing along with it new patterns and ways of living including corruption, and sometimes near anarchy following the dismantling of the indigenous fabrics of societies. Indigenous administrative machineries were tampered with like all other facets of organic structures. Replacements were neither new nor old as the pot-pouri released the good, the bad and the ugly sides of two cultures. It was in the light of this that warrant chiefs were appointed by British officials on the basis of "make me believe that you can do the job". On the other hand the peoples' rulers were moved to pave way for individuals who gained by the European presence. According to Afigbo (1974, even when the British administration sought to undo the harm believed to have been done to the indigenous society in the era of the warrant chiefs the effort was a failure (11). British rule was corrupt and as such pragmatic. What was pragmatic to the Europeans was seen as an act of corruption by the natives. As a result, age sets, a form of pre-colonial organization was replaced by native executives many of which positions did not have any historical antecedents in the culture of the people.

British colonial rule led to significant changes in Nigerian societies. With colonial rule, initiation into the fullness of a tribe and manhood which was important for good conduct became irrelevant in the burgeoning urban centers of Lagos, Calabar, Lokoja and Benin to mention just a few places. Rites or knowledge of passage from one generation to another was abandoned. Urban people became individuals, with overt ideas that were uncanny to collective efforts or communalism. At the same time the competitive urban environment of the colonial period threw up new challenges where only the fittest survives. Old and traditional rules lost significance. Traditional refuge gave way to individualism. There was apathy. The drift was significant. There is delusion. By 1960, it became normal to find men and women that would otherwise have been protectors of the young, old and members of their societies engaging in various acts inimical to real growth. Communal roles became antiquated as moral consciousness gave way to personal needs. British colonial rule changed old ways. Violence and corruption were enthroned.

The Nigerian writers have been writing to address these issues in various forms. It becomes a commitment and a protest. It becomes a way of redirecting the Nigerian people towards reflecting on the beauty of original Africa before its corruption by the imperialists. These anti-colonial works have been addressing various salient issues that have formed the bane of Nigeria's underdevelopment since the evacuation of the imperialists.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the major characteristics of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.2 The Basis of Anti-Colonial Literature

The Nigerian writers tell stories to entertain and educate the people in a way they understand. Nigerian literature shows how economic, political, religious and social situations relate to pre-colonial Africa, colonialism, neo-colonial independence, and indigenous situations. Thus, the themes dealt with by Nigerian writers include art, religion, urban-life, tradition and culture, ironies of life, and pre-colonial, colonial, and neo-colonial realities. Just as the common storyteller of old, the contemporary Nigerian writer aims at helping his/her society to change while retaining the best features of authentic Nigerian cultures.

The bases of anti-colonial writings from Nigeria can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is to correct the ill-pictures of Africa in those literatures written by those Europeans who claimed to have written African literatures even when they were never African. The fact is that

some literary writers who wrote about Africa during the colonial era were not Africans. For instance, Joyce Cary wrote Mister Johnson, a story about eastern Nigeria. It was this novel which prompted the writing of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. According to Achebe, *Mister Johnson contained distorted pictures of the Nigerian society* which he tried to correct in his novel, Things Fall Apart. More so, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is also a 'racist' story about Africa and the African People. The ugly picture about Africans painted by the western writers, made the early African writers struggle to face the theme of identity and the personality of the African people. To classify Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad as African writers and to call their fictions African fictions becomes a major problem in the polemics of definition of African fiction. Fiction is an imaginative recreation of real life experiences. This means that the subject matters in every fiction must reflect the experiences of the society from which it emanated. One very important fact here, being that every fictional work must show realism not mere fabrication of unrealities purposely designed to distort the history of a people. Chinua Achebe made a proposition that fictional works about Africa written by non Africans tend to rewrite the history and culture of African people in very bad manner and intentions.

The second reason is the need to expose the ugly mode of governance of the imperialists and the effect on the Nigerian people. Early historians gave distorted history of Africa. They saw Africa as a continent of barbarians and animal-like humans with four legs without any form of culture or religion and this historical distortion has often influenced the western judgment of Africa and Africans. So, the imperialists treated their subjects like animals. The used them as beasts of burden, as slaves, as servants, as second-class humans, as idiots and as cultureless humans. Hence, we do not expect a better literature from non-Africans about Africa since they already have a distorted history about Africa. The anti-colonial Nigerian literatures are assertive about the African personality, the Nigerian identity and universal appeal of the Nigerian psyche.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

With adequate examples, explain the major thematic concern of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.3 Nigerian Literary Form as Anti-colonial

Chinua Achebe explained in his collection of essay Morning Yet on *Creation Day that African things are not accepted in the writing* literatures. He said that he was scolded by his teacher for writing a poem about Harmattan, instead of summer, winter or fall. In unit 1 of this course, it was clearly stated that, Nigerian literature owes much to the

Nigerian oral tradition. On the sub-unit on the influence of journal literature, we read how the editor of Nigerian Student Verse decried the imitation of western writers by the Nigerian students who contributed in the anthology. He called it an unfortunate development which impairs the positive development of a true Nigerian literature. We see the effect of this negative influence in the works of Okigbo, Soyinka, and some other writers.

Later, however, there is a hinge on traditional oral values of Africans in the later works of these writers. Soyinka turns to the myth of Ogun in his works. He romances freely with the African values and in some cases we see him infusing western values in his African milieu. Many other writers like Okigbo draws his metaphors from his town Ojoto in Anambra State of Nigeria while J.P. Clark writes freely about the Ijaw region of Nigeria, romancing with the sea and marine metaphors. This shift is deliberate because it marks the renaissance of Nigerian literature where Nigerian cultural values and Nigerian milieu are good subject matters for literature.

In their seminal critical volume Towards the Decolonization of African *Literature Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike outline three major* tendencies discernible in African poetry in English one of which is the Euro-modernist tendency to 'ape' the practices of 20th century European modernist poetry. They repeatedly name Soyinka's, Clark's, and the early Okigbo's poetry as notorious examples. They believe that the trio never believed in their Africanness hence their leaning towards the style and mode of western literature. They believed that using western literary style, conceit or mode of literature does not improve the existence of a true Nigerian literature.

In contemporary Nigerian literature, there are deliberate attempts to use the Nigerian historical experiences in expressing the literary ideals. This leaning towards everything African in recent literatures from Nigeria marks a deliberate shift away from the western literary pattern thus undermining the use of English to achieve wider readership.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Clearly state the effect of Nigerian cultural milieu in Nigerian literature.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Anti-colonial literature in Nigeria is a protest type of literature revealing the odds of colonialism and the effect of neocolonialism in the country. This theme has been more prevalent since the publication of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart. The Nigerian writers treating this theme have often*

contested all the experiences of Nigerians: economic, socio-cultural, psychological and the political dimensions of colonialism. When Chinua Achebe explains in his essay "The Novelist as a Teacher" that Africans did not hear of culture first from the Europeans, he meant that Africans were really treated as uncultured beings. This makes anti-colonial Nigerian works of literature strive to correct these misconceptions about the African personality and milieu. The question of audience comes in here. Many critics have wondered whom anti-colonial Nigerian literatures are meant for. Is it meant for the Nigerian people who are worried about the experiences of the past or is it meant for the Europeans who should understand that the experiences of Africans (Nigerians) had during the colonial days were not according to Achebe (1975), "one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them". The fact remains that anti-colonial Nigerian writings are meant to teach the Nigerian or European readers about the ugly sides and the effects of imperialism.

5.0 SUMMARY

Anti-colonial themes are common in Nigerian literatures because the experiences are still relevant and the relics of colonialism are around us. More so, the prevalent neo-colonial attitudes of Nigerian political rulers points to a reminder in the experiences of the ugly past. Nigerian writers act as "sensitive needles" in reminding the people and the politicians on the need to shun everything that will take the country back to those experiences of colonial trauma. It is true that the present form of written literature in Nigeria is an offshoot of Western literary style infused in the western education pattern in Nigeria but is it possible to have Nigerian literature in a pure Nigerian form that is without any hinge on the western form of writing? This may seem impossible since the literature writers in Nigeria make use of western style in their craft. However, Nigerian literature, in its basic form, is oral. So, written literature echoes western values but the infusion of the oral artistic forms in Nigerian literature has helped in the indigenization of Nigerian literature in form and style.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the main ideal in anti-colonial Nigerian literature
2. Discus the anti-colonial themes in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall *Apart*
3. How does Nigerian literary style contribute in anti-colonialism?
4. What factors have been responsible for the continued production of anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria?
5. Assess the importance of ant-colonial literature in Nigeria

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1982). Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1982). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Aiyejina, Funso (1985). 'Recent Nigerian Poetry in English: An Alternative Tradition,' The Guardian. Lagos.

Chinweizu, Jemie, Madubuike (1980). Toward the Decolonization of *African Literature. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.*

UNIT 2 TYPES OF ANTI-COLONIAL LITERATURE IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Type 1: Anti-Colonialism on Society
3.3 Type 2: Anti-Colonialism on Culture
3.4 Type 3: Anti-Colonialism on Politics
3.3 Type 4: Anti-Colonialism on Form
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will be looking at the different types of anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria. By types, we mean what they focus on in the treatment of the theme of colonialism. Some anti-colonial Nigerian literatures focus on the effects of colonialism on the Nigerian society, some on the effects of colonialism on Nigerian culture, some on its effect on the political development of the country while some focus on the change in literary form: structure, language and theme, as a way of driving home the points about avoiding colonial mentalities in Nigerian creative writing spheres. We will study various anti-colonial Nigerian literatures as possible explanation of these types of anti-colonial works in all literary genres.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students will be able to:

understand the various types of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

appreciate the themes in anti-colonial Nigerian literature
discuss the various types of anti-colonial literature in Nigeria
distinguish the types of anti-colonial Nigerian literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Anti-colonial literature in Nigeria is a vast phenomenon. However, that magnitude is perhaps the least of the difficulties facing the critic in attempting to give a fair view of this ever-growing phenomenon. A more formidable problem arises from the fact that Nigerian writers are writing two different kinds of literature. The first is the social-realistic literary convention that has been familiar to readers and still exists. The second is the kind in which a new language prevails; this is relatively unfamiliar to many – perhaps even most – readers. This is premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between Nigerian literature and its historical context(s). The multiple paths that are followed include a thorough examination of the ideologies and context(s) within which the work was produced, the consideration of the expression of life of disenchantment and pain in the literature. All lead to the unmasking of Nigerian literature as a socially symbolic act, that is, a reflection of the problems of the writer's immediate society, in particular, and the African continent in general.

Many Nigerian writers have been termed anti-colonial because of the manner in which the colonial experiences are attacked. It also exposes the traumatic effects of colonial power on Nigeria's development. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and a host of other writers from Nigeria have often been described as anti-colonial writers because they have often chronicled the experiences of Nigerians during the colonial days. They write to draw sympathies from the people, especially the non-African consumers of Nigerian literature and to direct Nigerians properly in avoiding the repetition of such experience. One characteristic feature of anti-colonial Nigerian literature is the detailed exposition of the negative experiences of Nigerians during the colonial period and avoiding any positive impact they may made on the African continent. These writers prefer painting gory pictures of slavery, imposition of taxes and levies, the destruction of African culture and the abuse of their fundamental human rights. Anti-colonial themes occur consistently as protest literatures against the excesses of colonialism.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the major characteristics of anti-colonial Nigerian literature

3.2 Type 1: Anti-Colonialism on Society

Many anti-colonial literatures in Nigeria focused on the effects of colonialism on the social lives of Nigerians. Nigerian society before

imperialism is ordered within a cohered society. The rural set up is made up of people with communal laws and ethics. Justice was fearlessly dispensed and leadership is left in the hands of monarchs and most of them through the process of primogeniture that is by inheritance. The northern Nigeria, through the effects of Islam, established a standard form society enmeshed in the rubrics of Sharia laws and living. The monarchs occupied religious and political positions. The southern axis has divided societies. The Yoruba in the south, like the Hausa in the north, also maintained a society with standard laws, mythical practices and political stability. Except the eastern Igbo, which had no established kingship, the role of the select members of the community in the administration of social justice, parliamentary roles and religious affinity is quite commendable. This was the society met by the imperials. For the Hausa north and Yoruba south, the singleton of their monarchy made it easy for the imperials to impose and administer their colonial agenda. The Igbo south was not easily ruled by the imperialists. There was no single political leadership to hinge on. This issue is recalled in Achebe's Arrow of God, where the colonial administrator, Captain Winterbottom, tried forcing Ezeulu, the priest of Ulu into performing the role of a Warrant Chief. This was rejected by Ezeulu and was subsequently imprisoned by Winterbottom. The entire society is destabilized with famine and religious riots.

With the increasing effect of colonialism, urbanism became a focus. The Colonial masters were busy developing a new type of settlement for themselves and the educated Africans. T he rural setting became undeveloped because attention is paid to the city. The city embodies everything ugly: armed robbery, stealing, prostitution, suicide, manslaughter and other negative vices which the rural areas are not always known for. Withthe arrival of electricity and other communication gadgets, the city became a haven for the educated and the foreigners. Cyprian Ekwensi P eople of the City published in 1954 was the first book by a Nigerian writer to garner international attention. Ekwensi tries to examine the urban society in Nigeria during the colonial days in comparison with the rural setting which still has elements of true Nigerian society since at least there are still some aspects of the society under the control of the people with their laws and ethics still being observed. This novel was the first novel, telling the true Nigerian story beyond the earlier mythical and legendary stories of Fagunwa and Tutuola.

In People of the City, Ekwensi examined the life of the urban dwellers and the effects of colonialism on the Africans. One fascinating thing about these urban novels is that they try to juxtapose the rural setting with the urban setting in order to assess the rural and the urban lives as it affects the Africans. His most successful novel was Jagua Nana (1961)

which was about a Pidgin-speaking Nigerian woman who leaves her husband to work as a prostitute in a city and falls in love with a teacher.
He also wrote a sequel to this, Jagua Nana's Daughter. Most of these urban novels especially Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Jagua Nana's *Daughter explored deeply the negative imports of urbanization on* Nigerian society

Chinweizu's Energy Crisis (1978) is a collection of poems which introduced the stirring of cultural and artistic sensitivity in an artiste whose roots were beset with problematic responses toward a hollow but endemic frippery of twentieth century western modernism in Nigeria. It left the artiste with the choice of either furthering the prevalent vision of self promotion or joining the bards of ancestral days in elucidating a community aesthetic. One can see this tenuous struggle in Energy Crisis which seemed torn between the poet's obsession with self and for his people – his folks – with all their mannerisms and idiosyncrasies as reflected in their social conditions and responses to society. Those poems had come to reflect an artistic awareness and adaptation of his African– contrasted with a powerful but close-minded Western– world to his choice responses to social experience. It saw the articulation of vision which initially had started jaggedly as of a raconteur, who eager of merit, initially betrays a floundering that nevertheless recedes with one bold proclamation after another.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss any Nigerian literature text that attacks the effect of colonialism

on Nigerian society.

3.3 Type 2: Anti-Colonialism on Religion/Culture

The traditional African religion is embedded in African culture, so both are intertwined. In their practices, missionaries regarded indigenous names, religion, arts and music as signs of paganism that must be wiped out. Through their teachings and practices, they won converts who formed the nucleus of early Christianity in most urban areas. Even when they preached a gospel of equality in all men they were the new elites within the new society. They trained teachers, catechists, clerks and many that were in the literary professions. With some impact this gesture could not completely change the peoples' perception that authority came from the white man and not from his God. Consequently, imitation of the white man's ways penetrated into the fabrics of the society. In other words, through missionary influences many people began to accept what normally would have appeared bewildering and unacceptable to them. For instance the indigenous setting would never

have allowed the sale of land which was held in trust by the elders for the dead, the living and the yet unborn.

The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) among other missionaries established several stations where the intensities of Christian religion were being administered to the people. One can not also underestimate the role of the converts in the spread of western influences. Singing songs like "Onward Christian Soldiers marching on to war", they led converts to destroy shrines and all images which they considered were idolatrous. In the same vein indigenous relics and totems were destroyed as a sign of the outward appearances of conversion. We see this also in Achebe's Arrow of God where Oduche, Ezeulu's son, tries to imprison the sacred python of *Idemili as a sign of his new Christian faith. This single act brought lot* reactions from the people against their chief priest who should have protected their culture. Even in Achebe's No Longer at Ease, we see how Obi Okonkwo went against his culture by marrying an Osu. His behaviour is a consequence of his Christian background and his western education.

Conversion into Christianity was marked by baptism. In the process of baptism indigenous names that had meaning in the indigenous setting were discarded for Christian or Biblical names like Paul, James, Peter or Andrew. As the people embraced Christianity and early churches began to get fuller, the people ensured that loyalty to customs and beliefs changed. In spite of the efforts of missionaries, Christianity did not suit the every day life of the people and as such frustration gave vent to mischief. The destruction of indigenous ways of life led to an attitudinal somersault that paved way for corruption and delusion.

Christopher Okigbo's poem 'Fragments out of the Deluge' in Labyrinths laments the European imperialist exploitation of the human and material resources of Africa and the colonial conquest. The colonization of the continent is imaged as a deluge that erodes the very foundation of African societies, for the 'gods lie in state', abandoned and unsung (p. 34). The poet represents the possessors of power who rape Africa and violate her gods and goddesses as predatory eagles in whose talons young birds wobble and utter the cry of death. The use of animal images to express the poet's vision of Social Darwinism signifies that Western civilization or industrial capitalism is cannibalistic and its purveyors are savages. The attainment of Independence by African countries does not change their dependency status. The suffering of the people continues unabated. The dream of Independence fades; another 'big white elephant...'(p.26) appears to continue the mayhem.

James Ene Henshaw wrote several plays including This is Our Chance, *Children of the Goddess, Medicine for Love, and Dinner for Promotion.* These plays are commentaries on social and political life in Nigeria in the years just before and after independence. They treat issues of culture contact and conflict, of the problems of building a coherent nation out of diverse ethnic groups, and of morality in social dealings. The most important of all is that these plays never relented in pointing directly towards the imperialist's direction for whatever has been the basis of all these traumas in culture clash.

The issue of the effects of colonialism on African culture has been of concern to most anti-colonial Nigerian writers. Many people still believe that African culture is dying because of the various ways by which the imperialists imposed certain rules that almost destroyed Nigerian cultural heritage. Chinua Achebe in his artistic creed emphasized that the wrong presentation of African culture in European literatures was responsible for his venturing into creative writing in order to give the correct picture of things.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Using any Nigerian literary drama, discuss the attack on the colonial effect on Nigerian culture and religion

3.4 Type 3: Anti-Colonialism on Politics

Most Nigerian literatures seem to be an attack on the ruling class who are direct descendants of the imperialists. Since independence the question of leadership has been a very sensitive issue in Nigeria. The Nigerian writers have been commenting on the bad administration of the country. In 1966, Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People, was described as a prophetic novel because it predicted the first ever military coup in Nigeria. It was glaring as at that time that the civilian government in Nigeria was very corrupt and that military intervention was the only option.

Nigerian literature manifests the struggles of a people whose country is undergoing the painful process of transformation from colonial through neo-colonial to wholly self-determining nation. After a bloody fratricidal war (1967-70), immediately followed by an ill-managed oil boom that, in turn, created social and political dislocations that the nation has yet to overcome, it was inevitable that Nigeria's artists would fulfill the pre-colonial definition of the artist as "town crier," to borrow that fine expression from the late poet Christopher Okigbo. They have made Nigerian literature, in its many forms, a social act against the wantonness of the new society.

The tradition of protest poetry in Nigeria began with Okigbo's "Path of Thunder," which marked the first significant step by any Nigerian literary poet to transcend the usual "quarrel with the self" of poetry and the bemoaning, in personal terms, of the griefs and failures of the commonwealth. This poem was a forewarning of the cataclysm that was to envelop Nigeria in the mid-1960s, culminating in the civil war that tragically claimed the life of Okigbo himself. In this poem, Okigbo aims at a direct attack on the imperialists with their imperial political system being practiced by Africans and which has been the bane of wars and unrest in Africa.

In many literary dramas and the theatre, there are anti-colonial themes meant to guide Nigerians and to expose the ugly effects of colonialism on Nigeria's political structure. For instance, in Ola Rotimi's *Ovoranmen Nogbaisi, the British conquest of Benin Kingdom which led* to the ostracizing of Oba Ovoranmen Nogbaisi is re-enacted. The play attacked the imposition of strange laws on the society and the attempts at destroying the primogeniture patterns of Benin monarchy. This also reflects the British attempts at imposing their kind of politics on the Nigerian nation, the major problem which has even led to wars.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Assess the vast anti-colonial political themes in Nigerian literature

4.0 CONCLUSION

Many critics of Nigerian literature consider anti-colonial themes as the most prevalent and consistent in most literatures written within the post-independence era. These writers emphasize that the problem with the country began with British imperialism: new laws, new politics, new people, new education, new religion and new modes of thought. The old values have been thrown out while the alien values are being inculcated on a people who do not even understand why they must tow the line. Nigeria is a country with multifaceted people and culture. This complex nature of the country was not even considered by the imperialists in their attempts at exploiting Africa. This is a major problem. Nigerian writers have been recording history through literatures. They have recorded the past and the immediate traumas of the Nigerian people as a result of colonial experiences. Some critics of Nigerian literature believe that English Language is an imperial language representing colonialism in all its facets. They advocated that Nigerian writers should use their native languages in writing literatures. It looked as if there was no compromise in this direction because the Nigerian or Africa stories must be read beyond Africa; after all, the true picture of things must read by the world that Nigeria's history was an ugly paradigm of imperialist's ideals.

5.0 SUMMARY

Nigerian literature has a tradition of protestation. The literatures written before colonialism harmers on the essence of cultural cohesion but the ones written during and after colonialism are with the undertone of disillusionment. Nigeria as a country never existed before colonialism but the British partitioning of Africa created the country with less consideration on the complex linguistic and cultural make up of the people. It has been cries if woes. With the recent discovery of oil in large quantities, imperialism continues, this time being administered from Scotland Yard and the White House. The Nigerian writers have seen the need for cohesion in the country. They write literatures with a common voice to correct the ills and to fight a common enemy. So, we have many literatures in Nigeria with anti-colonial themes: on the Nigerian society, Nigerian politics, Nigerian religion and Nigeria culture.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain the major concern of anti-colonial literatures
2. Discuss any Nigerian literature attacking colonialism
3. Using any Nigerian literature of your choice, assess the imposition of British culture on Nigerians
4. Distinguish the anti-colonial themes in Chinua Achebe's Things *Fall Apart from that of Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman*
5. From what perspectives do the Nigerian writers attack Christianity as a tool of imperial evil?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1958). Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1972). No Longer at Ease. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1966).A Man of the People London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1963). Arrow of God. London: Heinemann.

Ekwensi, Cyprian (1954). People of the City. London: Heinemann.

_____. (1972). Jagua Nana. London: Heinemann.

Markovitz, L. I. (1977). Power and Class in Africa: An Introduction to *Change & Conflict in African Politics. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:* Prentice-Hall Inc.

Soyinka, Wole (1985. Death and the King's Horseman. London: OUP.

Temple, C.L. (1968). Native Races and their Rulers. London: Frank Cass.

UNIT 3 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN POETRY

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Poetry of Okara and Clark
3.3 The Poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will concentrate on the study of anti-colonial poetry. When we talk about anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria, we are referring to a vast collection of poetry dealing with anti-colonial themes in Nigeria. Anti-colonial themes occupy many streams of Nigerian poetry from the pioneer poets through to the journal poetry of the Ibadan school, the Mbari club and the other poetry groups within the colonial and the post-colonial times. Nigerian poetry is a complex phenomenon that began with the imitation of the western models down to the recapturing of the rich Nigerian orature in the poetic process. We will study the poetry of two Nigerian poets who have commented bitterly about the odds and effects of colonialism on Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

appreciate anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
understand the major thrusts of anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
assess the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian poetry
discuss the factors that led to anti-colonial poetry in Nigeria
comment on the effect of the theme of anti-colonialism in the development of Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Colonialism did more than corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of the Africans (Nigerians), it filled him/her with abnormal complexes which de-Africanized and alienated him/her from the needs of his/her environment. Colonial education thus dispossessed and put out the control of the Nigerian intellectual, the necessary forces for directing the life and development of his/her society. The European exploiters, oppressors and grabbers use Christianity as a tool to explain the manifest contradictions portrayed in African literature because of the working out of broader historical forces. The relationship between culture and colonialism, explores the relationship between culture and social class. Nigerian literature is understood by putting into its proper historical perspective the crisis of identity and its implications portrayed artistically by them. Culture as the result of economic and political activities as they appear on the ideological and idealist levels is perceived by Nigerian writers. Culture has its basis in a society's level of productive forces and in the character of the dominant mode of production. Culture may be dynamic, but only in the sense of being a continuing record of a society's achievements and an important element in sustaining resistance to foreign domination.

Colonialism, however, denied Nigeria the right to cultural development and self expression and set up a state of siege that it justified with theories about cultural assimilation. Liberation struggle rejects cultural domination by the foreign power by denying the culture of the oppressor. Thus, the tie between a people's identity and the reproduction and maintenance of the social system of a specific set of institutions affects both culture and the people's intimate sense of selfhood. Colonialism by denying to the dominated people their own historical process, necessarily denies their cultural process.

The 1950s was the decade of hope during which most African countries gained independence as anti-imperialist movements triumphed. Nigerian writers born in this decade had an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, yet hopeful mood, which explains the assertive and optimistic nature of the writing of the period. Colonialism had tried to justify its oppression and exploitation by resorting to claims of racial superiority. The new Nigerian writer countered such claims by producing artistic works that showed that Nigeria had its own history, culture, and civilization that were equal if not superior to that of the imperialists. The writers saw their societies, according to Achebe (1975) “put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement imposed on them by colonialism"

The age of independence also witnessed the emergence of social classes and class contradictions- a development that disappointed and shocked many Nigerian writers, who created artistic works expressing disillusionment with postcolonial Nigerian society. At this time, writers therefore saw their role as that of transforming society (and its leaders) by means of moral enlightenment. The works of this period thus subscribed to a liberal humanist ideology that pleaded with the oppressed. The writers of this period intended the pathos and emotive power of their works to instigate the oppressors to initiate a political and economic reorganization of society in the interest of the oppressed. The despair that pervades these anti-colonial works, which portray the oppressed as trapped and helpless, arises in the writers' perception of the gloomy years ahead after the effects of colonialism.

Nigerian poets were among the most vocal in Africa; attacking all the odds of colonialism. The nationalist poets began the trend in Nigeria which poets like Okara, Okigbo, Clark and Soyinka among others continued in their attempts presenting the odds of the past and need for a newer perception and development of the country.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Comment on the effects of colonialism on the sensibilities of Nigerian elite and/or Nigerian writers.

3.2 The Poetry of Okara and Clark

Gabriel Okara and John Pepper Clark are amongst the earliest anti-colonial poets from Nigeria. With them, Nigerian poetry in English has matured and taken a big leap forward. Gabriel Okara is a very unique writer. He has obviously brought himself up most creditably and his works show a close awareness of English Romantic and nature poetry as well as some modernist traits. An important theme in Okara's poetry is culture contact/culture conflict. It is expressed metaphorically in "The Snows Flakes" in the imagery of "uprooters" whose spades are dented in the process of trying to uproot traditional African culture. In "Piano and Drums", the poet expresses his perplexity and confusion at being caught between conflicting Western and traditional African cultures. And in "The Fisherman's Invocation", the argument is whether the Back (traditional African culture) should be taken along with the Front (the imported Western ways) to form the Child-Front, which is the new projection for our contemporary situation. Thus, although Okara expresses ideas and sentiments which are similar to those of the mobilisational poets, he does so in a totally different manner, cultivating a private tone and using fresh imagery of water, fishes, birds, uprooters and diggers, piano and drums instead of the clichés of his predecessors.

His kind of anti-colonial poetry is mixed in a manner that questions the suitability of western culture in Nigerian terrain. He celebrates Nigerian landscapes: rivers, mountains and forest. His poetry protests imperialists' odds while painting beautiful scenes in his country and at the same time satirizing the ugly trends of colonialism.

John Pepper dark's poetic landscape is similar to that of Gabriel Okara. Both of them are ljaw and they use coastal and riverine imagery copiously in their poetry. Clark has published three volumes of poetry, namely, Poems (1962), A Reed in the Tide (1965), and Casualties (1970). One of Clark's achievements as a poet is that he directs our attention to the details of the physical environment, and his poetry has a ring of authenticity. Early poems like "Night Rain", "Streamside Exchange" and "The Year's First Rain" provide ample illustration of this point. He is, in this respect, a great scenic poet and his poems "lbadan", "Agbor Dancer" and "lbadan Dawn" provide further proof of his descriptive power. There is also evidence of great sensuality and compassion in his poetry. In the poem "Olokun", there is a play on the senses, especially the sense of feeling and touching, aroused by the seductive mask of Olokun, the goddess of the sea. And in "Abiku" based on the spirit-child who undergoes a perennial cycle of births and deaths, the poet's posture is one of compassionate appeal to the child to break the vicious cycle. By celebrating African landscapes, by romancing with Nigerian cities and dancers, by appreciating Nigerian culture and religion he totally abhorred imperialism and emphasizes the belief that Nigerian cultural space is better than any one being imposed on the people through colonial might. His poems are usually symbolic as each of his poems transcends beyond the immediate semantic realizations.

Clark is also a poet of warfare and its dire consequences on the society. The poems in the volume entitled Casualties were inspired by the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. In them, Clark writes of particular events during the war, of friends lost in the war, of remote and immediate causes of the war, of trickery and broken promises, and of the moral and ethnical collapse of the citizenry who are the real casualties of the war. In this collection also, he emphasized the ugly hands of the imperialists in the inferno. He believes that the war a mastermind of the western powers.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the identical anti-colonial themes in Okara and Clark's poetry

3.3 The Poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka

Christopher Okigbo (1932-67) wrote five sequences of poems entitled "Heavensgate", "Limits", "Silences", "Distances" and "Path of Thunder", respectively. They were published at different times between 1962 and 1968 and were later put together in one volume under the title *Labyrinths in 1971. Okigbo has the reputation of being the most* technically accomplished, the most tuneful, and the post eclectic and allusive of Nigerian poets. In the first four of the sequences, Okigbo is the poet of private sensibilities, par excellence, with a persona who has been a prodigal seeking re-entry, being initiated and then taking part fully in the ceremony of cultural and spiritual rejuvenation. Each sequence is a variation on that same theme. In "Path of Thunder", on the other hand, the poet drops his private tone and goes public. He is a town-crier with a message of great importance for the survival of his community. The message is about imminent war and the great destruction that will come in its wake. All of this is worked out in appropriate imagery so that the dancer is referred to variously as thunder, iron-dream, and a 'nebula immense and immeasurable'; the country as the elephant; the combat machines as iron-birds; and the catastrophe itself as the elephant being struck by thunder (i.e. lightning) and falling. Poetry is conceived by Okigbo as ritual, or, as a sacred duty that demands total commitment. It speaks a cultic language that can be understood only by the initiate. This conception of poetry partly accounts for the arcane nature of his poetry.

Even the poetry of life is comprehended by only a tiny percentage of humanity! The poems themselves are conceived as sacrificial offerings to the poet's goddess or Muse in more or less the same manner that man is presented in Christianity as a living sacrifice to God. Okigbo disclosed that the 'new laid egg' and the 'white hen at midterm' in 'Lustra' were actually new poems that he had just written in his official capacity as the priest of Idoto. He is truly a visionary poet: a poet-prophet. Enhancing the ritual character of his poetry is the use of repetition and variation. One recurrent image or personage takes on diverse identities. 'Mother Idoto', for example, appears variously as a 'water-maid', as a 'white goddess', as a 'lioness', and as a 'white queen'.

The critical reception of Okigbo's poetry has been paradoxical: a mixture of condemnation and praise. The technical strategies that are most celebrated in the poetry, for example, the sacrifice of limpidity of meaning and style in an attempt to perfect form and achieve a rare lyricism, are ironically the most vilified. However recondite the poetry may appear to detractors, it is not bereft of human interest or meaning. 'Lament of the Drums', a song of exile, depicts the parlous state into which Nigeria has fallen. It thematizes the rape of democratic values by

the military and their opportunistic civilian collaborators, the perversion of justice, the underdevelopment of the country through the wanton waste of her human and material resources, and the overall degeneration of the land. The neo-colonial African politician- civilian or military- continues with the structures of exploitation and privilege erected by the white conquerors in the colonial period.

Wole Soyinka's poetry is characterized by two related phenomena. First, early in his career, Soyinka adopted Ogun, the Yoruba god of metallurgy (iron), as his personal muse and the inspiration for his poetry. The presence of the god has given focus and coherence to a great deal of his poetry. Second, since Ogun is himself a heroic being, Soyinka has found himself writing, inter alia, epic poetry in celebration of his god, unlike most of his contemporaries. Soyinka's poetry is, thus, broadly of two kinds, namely, poems of various life experiences and Ogunnian poems. The poems of the first category include “Telephone Conversation”, (an early light hearted response to racial discrimination), some of the poems in Idanre and Other Poems (1967), and most of the ones in A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972), (his prison notes when he was detained during the Nigerian Civil War). The poems are a good index to Soyinka's humanity. They are about births and deaths (the most important being his "Abiku" poem) in which he dwells on the inscrutable nature of the spirit of death, about strange coincidences as in "A First Death Day", when a child dies exactly on her first birthday anniversary, about grey seasons as metaphors for rust, ripeness and decay, and about lone figures and the messianic plight of some of them. Many of the poems in A Shuttle in the Crypt are even more private in tone because of their genesis. They are the meditations of a man in confinement whose active mind wandered far and wide, about people in similar plight in history, about nature, and about the fragility and transience of life.

The Ogunnian poems include poems about death on the road and about the massacre in northern Nigerian in 1966. They also include the epic poems “Idanre” and “Ogun Abibiman” (1977). All these poems are celebrations in a contemporary context: of the mysteries of Ogun, the god of contraries, who is both destructive and creative and, therefore, whose unlimited resources can be used for good or for ill. The road and massacre poems showed Ogun in his most negative aspects that is, metaphors for man or man's weapons of destruction eating up fellow men.

They are Soyinka's way of commenting on the senseless slaughter and wastage of human life in moments of carelessness, hatred and ethnic intoxication. In “Idanre” and “Ogun Abibiman”, however, Soyinka goes beyond the merely negative features of Ogun. In the former, he seeks a

new order that will further split the Ogun godhead and release the creative flint that will be used perpetually for man's benefit. In the latter, he enlists the co-operation of Ogun to commit his unlimited resources to the liberation struggle in South Africa. By celebrating and imbibing the Ogun myth in his works, he directly rejects the western god and their values.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

There are marked cultural/religious themes in the poetry of Okigbo and Soyinka. Discuss this consistent trend

4.0 CONCLUSION

Nigerian poetry, from the onset, has been in the vanguard of protesting against colonial odds in Africa. Even beyond colonialism, they have not failed pointing out those residues of colonialism which have impinged on the proper development of their societies. One way forward is for them to betray the colonial mission in Africa by speaking with the voice of a prodigal rejecting all the odds of imperialism. That is, colonial subservience to the bourgeoisie of Nigeria and the exploitation of the people leads to a psychic split. However, there is a gradual and consequent disappearance of this type of poetry which resulted from the individualistic nature of poetry, the declining attractiveness of anti-colonial themes and the increased emphasis upon the pursuit of sectional interests. In the light of this, there developed the formation of organic intellectuals and writers who are in touch with the masses as opposed to the traditional intellectuals of the ruling class who write from sequestration.

5.0 SUMMARY

The study of Nigerian literature has witnessed tremendous growth since its inception. Literature was a vital component of scholarship in colonial education. However, the point needs to be made that when it started, literary arts was part of the colonial educational structure which had as its basic end, the incorporation of Africans into the orbit of Western Civilization. Both combined to produce colonialism and the sum total of all three was the imposition of Western civilization on Africa. Nonetheless, the increasing call for the de-westernization of African literature expressed has been of a major concern to African writers. Apart from the significant interest shown in indigenous oral literary and artistic traditions, by independence, Nigeria had produced writers who have had the genuine interest of abhorring all the bad sides of colonialism. This theme witnessed expansion in the list of works written by educated Nigerians, whose sources of artistic influence were not only

the classical European literature to which they were exposed in the course of their education, but also their indigenous oral and performance resources. These were writers whose mastery of poetic, theatrical and narrative skills were acclaimed beyond the shores of Nigeria. They include Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo, J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka among others. Their works fuse elements of the indigenous and Western literary traditions. They were able to pin-point the ugly sides of colonialism, the effects of colonialism and the need to help Africa (Nigeria) build a viable society where natural African (Nigerian) laws and ways of life prevail. The poetry has the undertone of protest but with a focus on the avoidance of neo-colonial experiences.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the effects of colonial education on Nigerian writers
2. Gabriel Okara's poetry is a comment on the confused Nigerians who are hesitant about which culture to follow. Discuss this theme in his poetry
3. J.P. Clark uses his locale as avenue for commenting on anti-colonial issues. Explain this aspect of his poetry
4. Perceiving the later effects of colonialism in Nigeria, Christopher Okigbo predicted the later story of Nigeria. Comment on Okigbo as poetic prophet
5. By embracing the Ogun myth, Soyinka outrightly discarded the European gods. Discuss the anti-colonial religious themes in Soyinka's poetry.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1973). "The Novelist as Teacher" in African Writers *on African Writing. (ed) Killian, G. D. London: Heinemann.*

Fraser, Robert (1986). West African Poetry: A Critical History. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Lindfors, Bernth (1979). "Early Writings of Wole Soyinka". In Critical *Perspectives on Nigerian Literatures. Ibadan, London:* Heinemann Educational Books. 165-190.

Obuke, Okpure (1978). "The Poetry of Wole Soyinka, and J.P. Clark: A Comparative Analysis". World Literature Today 52, 2 (Spring) 216-223.

UNIT 4 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN NOVEL

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Achebe's Arrow of God
3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Iyayi's Violence
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine anti-colonialism as themes in Nigerian Novels. Most works of Nigerian literature in all genres have the thematic perspective of revealing mostly, the negative import of colonialism. Most elite Nigerians have come to realize that colonialism affected almost every aspect of Nigerian culture and sociology. There are reasons to believe that the educated Nigerians who embraced European values and attitudes have started retracting their colonial mentality and thereby exposing the evils associated with colonialism. Nigerian writers have been at the fore-front of this retraction. They have often exposed the evils of colonialism and have strongly proved that the anomalies in Nigerian politics stems from European indoctrinations. They have often attacked the Nigerian politicians, leaders, intellectuals and other people who practice European ideals against their rich Nigerian values. We shall use Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God and Festus Iyayi's Violence in treating this theme.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

understand the reasons for anti-colonial themes in Nigerian novels

appreciate Nigerian novels with anti-colonial themes
discuss anti-colonial subject matters in Nigerian novels
realize that Nigerian literature is often a reaction to historical experiences
assess the basic historical reasons for anti-colonial novels.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Nigerian novelists have been at the forefront of satirizing and criticizing colonialism in all facets. Even though Nigerian novels today treat vast themes, one still senses the underlying sarcasm that everything bad that happens to Africa (Nigeria) has an imperialist link. Chinua Achebe set the pace in these anti-colonial sarcasms but other Nigerian writers have shown disgusts in several ways against colonialism. These themes have been treated in several ways. However, the magnitude is perhaps the least of the difficulties facing the critic in attempting to give a fair view of this troubling theme. A more formidable problem arises from the fact that Nigerian writers are writing two different kinds of anti-colonial fictions. The first is the social-realistic narrative convention that has been familiar to readers and still exists because it attacks the known colonial problems. While the second is the socialist realistic category in which a new language prevails which attacks colonialism by attacking the institutions that emanated from it. Both are prevalent in contemporary Nigerian novels. This is premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between Nigerian literature and its historical context(s). The multiple paths that are followed include a thorough examination of the ideologies and context(s) within which the society is built, the consideration of the expression of life of disenchantment and pain in the polity. All lead to the unmasking of the novel as a socially symbolic act, that is, a reflection of the problems of the author's immediate society, in particular, and the Nigerian society in general.

Many Nigerian novelists have been termed anti-colonial because of the manner in which the colonial experiences are attacked in their works. It also exposes the traumatic effects of colonial power on Africa's development. Chinua Achebe and Festus Iyayi have often been described as anti-colonial writers because they have often chronicled the experiences of Nigerians during and after the colonial days. They write to draw sympathy and direct Nigerian properly in avoiding the repetition of colonial experiences or practicing colonial ideologies in their new or nascent polity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

It is the duty of the writer to direct his society properly. Explain how anti-colonial Nigerian novels try to achieve this.

3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Arrow of God

Arrow of God centres on Ezeulu, the Chief priest Ulu, the god that protects the whole villages of Umuaro. Ezeulu has been very careful in the management of the affairs of the village since his position as the Chief Priest bestowed on him powers akin to that of a political head in village. Ulu the god is seen as the great protector of the village, revered and feared, so its priest is respected beyond the usual spiritual control to a political height. He determines the day for the new yam feast as he meticulously eats each of the select 12 yams at the appearance of every new moon. The eating of the last yam predetermines the date for the new feast.

Umuaro village is in peace until the arrival of the colonial masters into the hinterlands of Nigeria. Ezeulu saw the whites as people with high wisdom. He sees their religion as something powerful. He decides secretly to send his son Oduche to the church in order to acquire their power. He was challenged by his arch-rival, Nwaka, of Umunneora village. Nwaka, the Chief Priest of Idemili, senses that Ezeulu's decision might affect the efficacy of Ulu. He openly challenges Ezeulu on the matter. The rivalry becomes severe when Oduche imprisoned a python in a box. He was attempting to kill the highly revered snake which is the symbol of worship of Idemili. More so, Ezeulu's insistence that the land, which was in dispute between Umuaro and Okperi, belonged to Okperi sparked more trouble for him. Although this sincerity on the land issue drew him closer to the colonial administration in charge of the area, Captain Winterbottom, little did he know that it would cause much harm to the village of Umuaro. Captain Winterbottom had no option but to appoint him a Warrant Chief because of his sincerity and integrity. He refused the offer and was held in Winterbottom's custody for three months within which period he could not eat three sacred yams. He expected that his people would come and rescue him from the Whiteman's grip but they never budged. He was really provoked and vowed to make life miserable for them. He was expected to eat the three sacred yams he missed as a result of his arrest but he refused insisting that he would begin his count from the day he was released. Ezeulu's stubbornness led to famine and starvation in Umuaro Village because he refused to name the day for the new yam festival. In all the confusion, he lost his most beloved son, Obika and even went mad in the process. The confused villagers had no option but to go to the Christian god for solace and protection.

The novel is anti-colonial because it exposed the inconsiderate attitude of the colonialists who believe that the Africans have no mind of their own. Imagine the detention of Ezeulu for refusing to accept an appointment from Winterbottom. He was treated with disrespect and unnecessarily detained which led to the famine in the land. Laws are

imposed on the Africans as if they have no human rights. More so, the use of arms in settling local conflicts was intimidating. Africans were meant to believe that they were inferior to the whites.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Ezeulu and Captain Winterbottom represent two different cultures. Explain Achebe presented them with regards to their sense of politics and religion.

3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Festus Iyayi's Violence

Festus Iyayi has been interested in exposing the after-effect of colonialism on the social and economic well being of Nigerians. Socialist realism as exemplified in Violence questions an existing social order and articulates a revolutionary option. Capitalism is an economic system in which the factors of production are concentrated in a few hands resulting in the alienation of property from the direct producers - the workers. Capitalism was the imperialist's tool of discord in Nigeria.
The means of production thus shifted, become the property of the capitalist - the movers of the bourgeois society. The direct result of this is apparently a dichotomy between two classes - the labourer (the worker) who receives his means of subsistence in exchange for his labour-power, and the capitalist who receives the worker's labour and appropriates all the proceeds arising from it. The worker only receives an insignificant portion of the proceeds only for survival. Social crisis is therefore bound to arise as a reaction by the exploited workers who are in the majority.

The worker in the capitalist society is an exploited and alienated worker.
He is without capital or investment or ground rent and lives entirely on his labour. He is used "just like a horse needs only receive so as enables him work" He is not considered for leisure as a human being and rather than fulfill himself in the work, he does deny himself. He does not develop freely a physical and mental energy but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. While at work, the worker feels homeless because the work is not his own. Since he works for someone else, he does not belong to himself but to another person. These conditions are the consequent creation of the capitalist society as portrayed by Iyayi's *Violence.*

In the story, Idemudia struggles with unemployment and poverty in a social background of class intolerance. The masses are depicted in a dilapidated tent in a shanty slum. Idemudia unfortunately ends his secondary education in class four when his father could no longer pay his school fees. He is alternatively thrown into the labour market

unprepared. He fails to secure employment after many years. Marries and has a son, he sends the child to the village. He is forced to hang around Iyaro for hire as a common labourer - a life of agony of having to feed a loyal and determined wife who grows increasingly bitter because of their condition. Iyayi portrays Idemudia's dilemma as not only arising from his poor education, but also lacking an opportunity to improve himself through his labour. In the Nigerian capitalism, even the educated are unsafe from exploitation. The bourgeois take advantage of Idemudia's unskilled labour to exploit him, so that though he works hard, he is underpaid and his condition suffers consistent degeneration. Idemudia, his wife and his three friends, (Osaro, Omoifo and Patrick) represent the Nigerian worker. Their social dilemma and deprivation are the subjects of Iyayi's criticism in Violence.

This explains his argument that capitalist ideals, a result of colonial enculturation, alienates and dehumanizes the Nigerian worker. An indebted Idemudia and his wife cannot pay their debts yet the man works hard but is paid so little – a paltry sum of N5 at the end of the month. Iyayi postulates that there is too much injustice in the system. The Nigerian employer who Queen Obofun represents is constructed as a slave driver who is insensitive to the basic needs of workers. She is ever ready to extort and exploit especially those who lack the guts to say No! And Iyayi calls this violence.

> When a man is denied opportunity, of being educated, of getting a job, of feeding himself and his family properly, of getting medical attention cheaply, quickly and promptly, the act of violence is committed against him (193)

An overt contrast to this condition is the world of the opulent depicted by Obofun and his wife, Queen, whose ill-gotten affluence places them on the apex of the society. The Obofuns whose wealth is accumulated through fraud in collusion with the government live in sheer luxury, own a fleet of cars, and own a chain of hotels. While Idemudia is so poor that he cannot even replace an old broom in his room, the wealthy Queen (his employer) throws away left-over food in her refuse bins. The employment of labourers in her construction company is to save her low-cost housing contract which the government had threatened to terminate for her delay in executing the project. At the work-site, work condition is extremely unbearable. The workers are slave-driven, sacked at will, intimidated and denied the opportunity to negotiate for a higher wage. This condition eventually forced Idemudia and his co-workers to embark on an industrial action. And Iyayi argues that physical violence is a moral option against psychological violence.

Class dichotomy in a capitalist society generates class discrimination and breeds hostility. In Violence, class intolerance affects even the running of the hospital. Idemudia's illness and subsequent admission to the hospital reveals class consciousness in the administration of the hospital. Idemudia can only go a lower Ogbe hospital where the general wards are so congested that patients are paired up in beds irrespective of the nature of their diseases. Unlucky patients are forced to sleep on the bare floor along the corridor in front of the wards. "Senior service" wards are for the rich and in most cases the executive wards are virtually empty, because the rich who seldom fall sick have the best hospital facilities reserved for them while the poor who are prone to frequent ailments have no hospitals. Iyayi portrays this situation as injustice against workers. Idemudia and Osaro sell their blood to a man in a Mercedes Benz car, showing that capitalism saps the last drop of blood of the common man and rapes his manhood.

In the mock-drama embedded within the plot of the novel, also titled "Violence", the Defence Counsel puts the whole society on trial and postulates that the society lacks moral qualification to punish crimes. Iyayi through the Defence counsel argues that every form of sabotage, crime or prostitution in the society is a direct consequence of lack of opportunity propagated by irresponsible government as well as intolerant class stratification. The lack of privilege and opportunity to the worker is a greater violence than whatever reaction the aggrieved worker might project. Here again Iyayi insists that it is the social institution that makes the man and determines his level of morality. In fact, through the Defence Counsel, Iyayi calls to question the moral eligibility of judges; because individuals are no more responsible for their actions than the society conditions them. Iyayi insists that it is the poverty of Idemudia's family, the lack of food and the lack of money to pay Idemudia's hospital bill that drive Adisa to adultery. Adisa must convince herself that her poverty justifies her offering her body as a way of solving her material problem. Festus Iyayi sees the Nigerian capitalist society as committing various forms of violence against the masses. To him capitalism is violence, and violence should be answered with violence. He advocates for a mass revolt which hopefully would usher in a new socio-economic order that is basically Nigerian. Thus, he wishes that the true African ideals of justice, fair play and compassion should be practiced against the hard imperialist capitalism that extorts and exploits innocent Nigerians.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how Iyayi attacked colonialism in contemporary Nigerian state.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the two novels under study that Festus Iyayi and Chinua Achebe have revealed to a large extent, the negative influences of colonialism on the Nigerian society. They have explained how Nigerians were made slaves in their own country and how customs and traditions were manipulated to suit the interest of the colonial master and the new bourgeoisie and elite class. African people were given the orientation that they were inferior to the whites. They were told that African religion was fetish while the European religion was the only key to meeting God Almighty. They were taught that African culture and systems of government were impracticable and should be discarded. All these issues and more were attacked in the two novels under study and these are anti-colonial elements.

5.0 SUMMARY

Anti-colonial novels are reactions by Nigerian novelists to the challenges of colonialism. Chinua Achebe stated in his authorial creed that he "would be quite satisfied if his novels especially the ones he set in the past could do no more than teach his readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery by which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them". He explained that Africans did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans. His novel Things Fall Apart was a direct reaction to Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson which was a novel filled with ugly pictures about Africa and the African people. Chinua Achebe, Festus Iyayi and most Nigerian writers have been writing anti-colonial novels as a reaction the ugly presentation of Africa (Nigeria) by European writers. Most Africa's problems emanate from colonial times and there are evidences of European manipulation of African governments in order to have positive gains while imposing negative vices like war and injustice on the people.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain the attack on Christian religion as presented in Arrow of *God*
2. Defend the statement by Achebe that Africans did not hear of culture first from the Europeans
3. If anti-colonial novels attack colonialism, what do they teach Africans?
4. Is it possible for a novel to be anti-colonial without discussing colonialism?
5. Discuss capitalism in Iyayi's Violence as anti-colonial issue.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1968). Arrow of God. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, Chinua (1975). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Iyayi, Festus (1989. Violence. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 5 ANTI-COLONIAL NIGERIAN DRAMA

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi*
3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Femi Osofisan's Midnight Hotel
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the thematic treatment of anti-colonial themes in Nigerian dramatic literature and theatre. In Nigeria, many writers major in almost all the genres hence the sameness themes in all their works. Wole Soyinka is known more as a dramatist/theater practitioner but he is also a very popular poet and novelist. He is at present the only writer in Nigeria with the longest series of memoirs. Chinua Achebe is best known as a novelist but he also writes good poetry. His collection of poetry, Beware Soul Brother, won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize when it came out. John Pepper Clark is known better as a poet but he is also a well respected playwright whose works have been given world acclaim. In all these writers, we see the consistency in the manner with which they treat their themes while the anti-colonial themes are mostly prevalent. We shall use the works of two Nigerian playwrights: Ola Rotimi and Femi Osofisan, to study the anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

- realize that anti-colonial themes run all genres of Nigerian literature
- appreciate the use of anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama/theatre
- understand the dramatic techniques used in projecting anti-colonial themes
- see the Nigeria playwrights as writers preach for change in society
- discuss anti-colonial themes in Nigerian drama/theatre.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In Nigeria, drama/theatre is a reflection of life. Right from the pre-colonial, pre-literate days, it has been in existence and it is reflected in the people's festivals, rituals, mythology and other forms of social engagements. It is a medium through which he reaches out to, or better still, courts the supernatural world and certain enigmatic developments or phenomena of life in order to transcend them. However, the African man's contact with the colonial world has eroded some of the importance attached to certain African values. Exposure to education and other seemly more refined religious practices has diminished, significantly, the importance that was once attached to certain beliefs and notions. Today, the story has changed. Nigerian playwrights in the years before and immediately after independence wrote to correct certain misconceptions about her people. Others wrote to magnify and eulogize those aspects of the Nigerian culture that promote good will and social harmony. So much has been said about the origins and development of dramatic and theatrical activities in the Nigerian society that dwelling on it here would amount to a mere rehash of ideas of some sort.

Ogunbiyi edited a book entitled Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A *Critical Source Book (1981) which turned out to be a compendium of* essays on dramatic and theatrical activities in certain festivals and rituals among certain Nigerian ethnic sub-sets, Ogunbiyi had argued that it is rather a misnomer or better still, a falsity to refer to "Nigerian drama and theatre" since the theatrical vaunting of the country rests on dramatic and theatrical activities in the many ethnic groupings that constitute the Nigerian nation. The book was also written to correct certain notions about earlier Eurocentric theatre critics, especially in the West, who had written "books" on "Nigerian and African theatre and drama" practices, based on knowledge that were grossly inadequate, thwarted and lacking in hindsight.

Three years earlier, precisely in 1978, two foremost Nigerian theatre and drama critics, Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele, had made a similar and remarkable attempt in their brilliantly edited book, Theatre in Africa. Since then, a good number of books have been written and essays have either been published as articles in books and other learned journals, or as project dissertations and theses locked up in many institutions of higher learning across the Nigerian nation. One of such remarkable essays is Dapo Adelugba's "The Development of Drama and Theatre in Nigeria". His disputation was that Nigeria's development in drama and theatre has taken many forms. Dramatic and theatrical activities in Nigeria is, indeed, very robust, vibrant and dynamic. Dapo Adelugba's translation of Bakary Traore's thesis, titled "The Black African Theatre and Its Social Functions" is a worthy testimony to this. Other

noteworthy testimonies include Biodun Jeyifo's The Yoruba Popular *Travelling Theatre of Nigeria, Onuora Ossie Enekwe's Igbo Masks: The Oneness of Ritual and Theatre, Ebun Clark's Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre and a host of others. All these are academic* endeavours towards explicating the trend of dramatic and theatrical activities in the Nigerian society.

In the same vein, books have been written on "the masters of contemporary Nigerian dramas" and on their art. It is, however, a sad commentary on the Nigerian literati that efforts of our literary critics have been directional, focusing on the old generation of writers like the Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, and the world acclaimed novelist, Chinua Achebe, even long after the former had won the laureate and the later has been over-exposed internationally. Not even their contemporaries like the chemist novelist, Cyprian Ekwensi and the domestic dramatist, James Ene Henshaw, to mention a few, have enjoyed half the kind of attention which they have commanded. The argument may be that there is always something new to talk about in their work. However, there has been the consistent attack by the dramatists and theatre practitioners on the bad effects of colonialism on Nigeria. Even the neo-colonial attacks have been hinged on the negative effects of colonialism on Nigeria.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Nigerian drama/theatre has consistently attacked imperialism at various stages of development. Discuss this trend.

3.2 Anti-Colonial Themes in Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi*

Ovonramwen Nogbaisi by Ola Rotimi begins with Oba Ovonramwen's tasks of controlling a growing rebellion within his kingdom. There is a confrontation between him and some of his rebellious chiefs and, most importantly, the British and French Governments who were searching for economic domination of many parts of Africa and the rest of the world too. This historical play is divided into three Acts, with a prologue at the beginning and an Epilogue at the end. Act One establishes Ovonramwen's revenge and judgment on his two chiefs (Obaruduagbon and Esasoyen) that both of them must die for killing Uwangue Egiebo, Ovonramwen's Chief Adviser, as a result of the political fall-out for the political soul of the Benin Kingdom. This action is followed by the visit of Itsekiri Traders who come to beg Ovonramwen for shortchanging the Benin people. Uzazakpo (the aged court jester) also admonishes the King to beware of people, especially his Chiefs, and to also seek the loyalty of Ologbosere against the growing hypocrisy of his Chiefs. Ifa priest also warns Ovonramwen to be careful: "Oba Alaiyeluwa, Ifa has

sent me to deliver the word – Caution. I have delivered the word. Caution. My lord… Oni of Ife sends you greetings." (16)

This warning is overtaken by the visit of two white men; Hulton and Gallwey who bring a Trade Treaty document to the King to sign and which the king refuses to sign. Hulton is surprised. This Act ends with Ovonramwen instructing Ologbosere, his third-in-command, to lead the Benin army to Agbor to teach the people there some lessons because "the people of Agbor, of late have been getting too hot for our peace".

Act II starts with a dramatic celebration of one of the Benin's traditional festivals, the Ague (igue) festival, and the unceremonious invasion of the Benin Kingdom by white men under the control of Acting Consul-General Phillips. Okavbiogbe, the Chief Policeman of the Benin Empire, warns the white men of the danger inherent in seeing the Oba during the Ague festival and his encounter with Phillips sets the conflict of this play. Phillips goes on to state the intention of the British Monarch: "what then are we in Africa for? What object brings us here? Commerce, gentlemen! Commerce brought us to Africa; commerce determines our actions in Africa!" (32).

Obaseki and Oshodin (Benin chiefs) meet Acting Resident Roupell in Act III of the play and they promise to locate Ovonramwen and give him up. The King, however, gives himself up and Roupell demands that he surrender to the British Authority and after serious persuasion from his Chiefs, Ovonramwen removes the crown on his head and surrenders to the British Monarch; an act which Roupell confidently and heroically celebrates: "From this day, this land of Benin belongs to her Royal Majesty Queen Victoria!" (54)

The chiefs are tried and seven of them are to die for killing seven white men. Obayuwana (a Benin Chief), however, refuses to be shot, instead he heroically stabs himself and Ovonramwen leaves for Obaseki's house to re-strategize for the continuation of the war against the white imperialists. Ovonramwen hides and sleeps in the bush with Uzazakpo, the Court Jester who makes things easy for him on their way to Okemue to meet Ologbosere and before they could reach Okemue, Roupell and his soldiers apprehend Ovonramwen and he paradoxically rejoices with the white men on their success in capturing Benin: "Not much. Tell Queen Victoria that at last the big pot of corn has been toppled; now mother hen and her children may rejoice!" (78)

This play is totally anti-colonial. It reveals the destruction of one of the strongest monarchs in Nigeria. It reveals the imperialists invasion of Africa using commerce and Christianity as yardsticks. It reveals the downturn in the history of Nigeria as the political, cultural and religious

aspects of the people are infected with colonial intrusions that destroyed the system.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the Various anti-colonial dramatic elements in Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi.*

3.3 Anti-Colonial Themes in Femi Osofisan's Midnight Hotel

Osofisan is a playwright critical of a Plethora of social vices in contemporary Nigeria. Midnight Hotel is a work of satire which concerns corruption and decadent political culture. It questions the credibility of Nigerian law makers and touches on political intolerance and religious charlatans in the society. The prevailing immorality, hypocrisy and flirtatious tendencies of highly placed persons are aspects of the national psyche which he subjects to criticism. All these mannerisms and characteristics are offshoots of colonial education and exposure. Nigerian culture was a morally based one before colonialism.

Femi Osofisan is of the view that nepotism, corruption and favoritism have gone deep into the Nigerian political system as a result of the imitation and adaptation of the imperialists system of politics and justice. The point of corruption is driven home when Awero, the only female Member of Parliament decides to take Pastor Suuru to a hotel so that she could "sample" him before he is given a contract since, according to her; male MPS do this to the opposite sex. But when Suuru does not compromise with her she says: "For Christ's sake, what's wrong with you? I'm telling you its regular practice in parliament. All the male MPS are doing it even to their own nieces and cousins: every one in our contracts and award committee is taking some member of the opposite sex somewhere or the other before jobs are given out. They call it "sampling" the goods…" (Midnight Hotel, 13) In response to Suuru's question Awero says, "Why not? Once you cooperate and I sample… once you stop making a fool of yourself: and not only Abuja the new capital, I assure you. Depending on you, your company can bag ten, fifteen contracts in a week: our committee has far ranging powers over contracts from Aladja to Ajaokuta, to Warri to Apapa you name It" (Midnight Hotel, 19). The picture painted reveals that our leaders are politically myopic, ideologically visionless and morally bankrupt. For Osofisan, Nigerian leaders subordinate the common man's welfare to their selfish, avaricious and hedonistic tendencies. And all these are reflective of the imperialists' capitalists tendencies.

Apart from his attack on the political system and its operators, Osofisan also criticizes political intolerance and victimization of political opponents. Political opponents in Nigeria are perceived as enemies. The government in power victimizes members of the opposition and denies

their communities basic amenities. Victimization in Nigeria is forcefully demonstrated in Midnight Hotel when the headmaster (Alatise) who also lost the governorship election also lost his school to the winning party. This led to Alatise's impoverishment and his subsequent search for refuge with his daughter in Lagos, listen to Alatise as he narrates his ugly experience to Awero: "You know, since the new government came in, it's been hell for me. They took over my school, my land and here I am, jobless, homeless, and hungry." (Midnight Hotel, 34) Femi Osofisan criticizes and condemns this "winner take all" syndrome, in Nigeria's political system which negates the democratic principle. For him, winners should be magnanimous in victory, while losers should accept defeat and work in partnership with the winner in order to ensure a harmonious co-existence in the society. Osofisan's search light in the play is also directed at prostitution, another social malady. Immorality and sexual perversion is another subject of attack because of its effect on our national psyche. Although he is quite critical of prostitution among the women in the society, Osofisan attributes the persistence of prostitution to people's avarice and desire to get money at all cost. The playwright was unrelenting in his attack on religious leaders' whom he regards as charlatans and hypocrites.

In Midnight Hotel, Osofisan takes a swipe at these religious leader's clandestine activities, their moral filth, and their deceitful pronouncements which run counter to their divine calling. The character that embodies this negative aspect of the men of God is Pastor Suuru who shamelessly allows himself to be "sampled" in a hotel by Awero. Suuru is also a liar having falsely claimed to have been robbed by armed robbers. Osofisan therefore criticizes religious leaders for their failings and castigates them for misleading their followers. Commercialization of chieftaincy titles in communities did not escape Osofisan's criticism and derision. In traditional Nigerian societies, chieftaincy titles were conferred on people of proven integrity. It was not for sale as is the case nowadays. Presently, fraudsters and the so-called philanthropists who have money and the wherewithal to "buy" the title are respected. This has resulted in the bastardization and commercialization of traditional institutions in Nigeria. This situation is driven home as Osofisan 'tells' how one Jumoh is made an Asiwaju of Ifeko for his humanitarian services. Jumoh sells his belongings to earn that chieftaincy title. What a shame.

Every aspect of Nigerian politics, social malaise, religious bigotry, corruption and all aspects of cultural degradation are all a result of the colonial education, colonial influence and the imitation of the imperialist's ideals. This work is a satire on the imitation of European values against Nigerian moral culture.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the various behaviours of Nigerians in Midnight Hotel that are offshoots of colonial influence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

On the whole, Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Osofisan's Midnight *Hotel are dramatic works which explored situations and incidents that* reveal Nigeria at the grip of colonial mentality. The playwrights in one form or another ridicule Nigeria's politics culture, religious leaders, their leadership styles, and other social vices. Ola Rotimi's play is a historical jab at the imperialists imposition of alien cultures in Nigeria. It attacks the destruction of culture and monarchs. Osofisan's play laughs at and also makes us laugh at the society's failings as a result of neo-colonial assumptions and aspirations. By examining the Nigerian history and attacking Nigerian society, Rotimi and Osofisan are using their artistic creation to bring about social change, a reconstruction of values and the need to go back to Nigerian roots in all ramifications. Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Osofisan's Midnight Hotel share a lot of* things in common in terms of the way they explored the Nigerian society vis-à-vis the influence and effects of colonialism.

5.0 SUMMARY

There is also a great element of verisimilitude in the two plays as far as the themes of anti-colonialism are concerned. In Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, we see a culture collapsing because of British invasion. The people's culture becomes a bet for the imperialists whose intention was to use commerce and religion as tools for destroying Nigeria. In Midnight *Hotel, Suuru is a Christian, a cheat and a destroyer of cultural values.* The political leaders are corrupt. The religious leaders are corrupt. The anti-colonial elements are glaring as each play takes both historical and sociological jab at the influences colonialism have on the entire well-being of Nigeria as a nation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the major thematic pre-occupation of Nigerian playwrights.
2. Discuss the anti-colonial themes in Rotimi's Ovonramwen *Nogbaisi.*
3. Assess the effects of colonialism in modern Nigeria as revealed in Osofisan's Midnight Hotel.
4. Identify the key issues that Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi tries to reveal about colonialism and Benin History.
5. It is believed that colonial education is the bane of colonial mentality in Nigeria. How true is this in Osofisan's Midnight *Hotel.*

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

'Biodun Jeyifo (1984). "The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre of Nigeria", in Nigeria Magazine, Lagos .

Ebun Clark (1979).Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre. London: Oxford Univ. Press.

Ossie Onuora Enekwe (1987). "Igbo Masks: The Oneness of Ritual and Theatre", in Nigeria Magazine, Lagos.

Osofisan, Femi (1985). 'Midnight Hotel', in Morountodum and Other *Plays. Ibadan: Longmans.*

Rotimi, Ola (1981). Ovonramwen Nogbaisi. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.

Yemi Ogunbiyi (1981). Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical *Source Book. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.*

MODULE 3 MAJOR TRENDS AND TYPES OF NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Unit 1 Nigerian Literatures and Nigerian Society
Unit 2 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 1: Militarism
Unit 3 Nigerian History and Nigerian Literature 2: War
Unit 4 Nigerian Literature and English Language 1: Local Colour
Unit 5 Nigerian Literature and English Language 2: Pidgin/Special English

UNIT 1 NIGERIAN LITERATURES AND NIGERIAN SOCIETY

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Religion as Social Reality: Elechi Amadi's The Concubine
3.3 Social Issues in Nigerian Poetry: Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures*
3.4 Nigerian Drama and Social Realities: Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall examine the concept of social reality in Nigerian literatures. Social realities include those prevalent behavioral and social factors that reveal to a large extent the social make-up of the Nigerian people. One of these strong social realities is religion. Religion is a key factor in the definition of Africa's social development. Other social realities include politics, rites of passage like birth, death, marriage, community relations and cohesion. Most Nigerian literatures focus on these issues and more in order to expose certain facts about Nigeria to her social structure and existence. We shall use Elechi Amadi's The *Concubine (Novel), Tanure Ojaide's The Fate of Vultures (Poetry) and* Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again (Drama) in treating the social realities in Nigerian literatures.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

recognize Nigerian literatures treating social realities as themes
identify political realities in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again
appreciate traditional religion as social reality in The Concubine
discus politics, religion and marriage as social realities in Ojaide's poetry
assess social mores as essential realities in Nigerian literatures.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Religion and politics are two social factors that affect the social structure of any society. They are both linked and are tied to the proper management of the spiritual and spiritual well-being of individuals in a community. Religion is the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life. In the beginning of history, it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected and which in the course of further evolution underwent the most manifold and varied personification among the various peoples. At a still further stage of evolution, all natural and social attributes of the numerous gods are transferred to one Almighty God, who is but a reflection of the abstract man. Within a purely African philosophical context man is a political animal embellished in religious thought system. If we assume that the religion of any population have become co-coordinated to individuals and the various levels of grouping that include them as a result of a process of selection or politics based on perceived relevance to particular goals at particular levels of structural reference, we can expect to find meaning in the existence of the people as some implication of relevance in the particular social context where it has become fixed. So politics and religion are interlinked in the development of every nation and African states are part of these developmental frameworks that shape the social realities of the people and development.

Most Nigerian literatures have elements of religion and politics in them. The reasons are not far-fetched. African states before the advent of colonialism had strong religious and political structures that were strong and made the inversion of colonialism difficult at the early stage. There was resistance because there was a structure on ground. Africans have strong religious and political structures that worked for the people. Chinua Achebe tried to a very large extent to reveal these structures in *Things Fall Apart as a reaction to the insinuations by the Europeans that* Africans did not have culture, religion or political structure before

colonialism. And in his subsequent novels, he gradually exposed how colonialism destroyed these structures in Africa. We shall use Elechi Amadi's The Concubine, a novel set in pre-colonial times, to examine the true structure of religion in Nigeria before colonialism while we use Tanure Ojaide's The Fate of Vultures (Poetry) and Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again in examining the political structure of* Nigeria after colonialism. Thus, a comparative presentation of Nigerian religion before colonialism and Nigerian politics after colonialism would be thoroughly exemplified for proper understanding of Nigeria's historical experiences and the writers' burden of transmitting these social values for her posterity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discus religion and politics as basic social realities in Nigerian's development as applied in Nigerian literature

3.2 Religion as Social Reality: Elechi Amadi's The *Concubine*

Elechi Amadi is a Nigerian educator, novelist and dramatist, writing in English. Amadi has interpreted in such novels as The Concubine (1966), *The Great Ponds (1969), and The Slave (1978) the life and values of the* traditional village society. His stories often deal with people who try to change their course of life but fail in it. Amadi's early novels, like Chinua Achebe's, are set in his traditional African world, but they deal with timeless societies which are not poisoned by the effects of colonialism, rationalism, or modern change. Amadi's first novel, The *Concubine, was published in 1966, six years after Nigerian* independence.

The story was set in the area near Port Harcourt. It starts out as a depiction of village life, its conflicts, ancient customs, and gods, but then it proceeds into mythological level. Ihuoma is the most desirable woman in Omigwe village and the tragic heroine, whose well-fed look does a great credit to her husband. He dies, but she has won the heart of the hunter Ekwueme. They deny their love so that Ekwueme can marry another woman, to whom he has been betrothed since birth. At the end Amadi reveals that Ihuoma is actually the wife of the Sea-King, the ruling spirit of the sea, but she had assumed the human form.

The first half of the book pays particular attention to the religious institutions of Omokachi village and demonstrates by aid of apposite narrative incidents the central place these institutions occupy in the daily life of the Omokachi villagers. The opening action focuses on the fight between Emenike and Madume over a piece of land. This conflict sets

the realistic tone, and maintains it over the new elements that result from and amplify the dispute. Having defined a realistic frame of reference at the social level, Amadi then injects the religious element into it:

> Madume was relieved when he heard that Emenike was back home. It was true he was in very bad shape himself, but the possibility of killing a man filled him with fear. The cost of the rites of purification was prohibitive and even after that he would still be a branded man (3)

Here is revealed in a nutshell the religious basis of Omokachi's social organization: it is not the possibility of a court trial that fills Madume with fear but the looming threat of divine chastisement. A man who kills his kinsman has wronged the gods primarily and must seek absolution in purification sacrifices commensurate with his crime.

Emenike's illness after the fight with Madume provides the occasion for ritual intervention, in the course of which the religious fabric is given sharper scrutiny and exposition. Anyika, the central religious personage comes into view, and so too do the attributes of his office: "Anyika the medicine man was sent for… to the villagers he was just a medicine man and a mediator between them and the spirit world" (5–6). This presentation is then substantiated by the practical exercise of his office, in which he is seen pouring libation and hanging amulets on doors to keep away evil spirits. The exposition is progressive and judicious. The reader is being introduced to the main corners of the stage, and concurrently to the principal actors. Anyika's libation shows man, the gods and the ancestors communing in a spirit of sacred and secular harmony. The gods are not far; they are near. Invisible physically, they fill man and object with their spiritual presence, and partake of human action in ways that are essentially concrete. Amadioha is king of the skies; Ojukwu is the fair, and the other gods have dominion over the Night, the Earth, and the Rivers, elements through which man comes into permanent experience of the divine presence and influence.

The ritual act performed by Anyika is part of a complex structure of religious observation defined by rules and ordinances. When Ihuoma proposes a sacrifice to Amadioha on her sick husband's behalf, the god's priest Nwokekoro answers: "My daughter, that will be on Eke, the usual day for sacrifices" (9). Details of this kind demonstrate a religious order with a solid internal logic and organization. The priests too are men chosen for their integrity:

> The next caller was Nwokekoro, the priest of Amadioha the god of thunder and of the skies. He was a short fat man, old but well preserved and had an easy-going

> disposition. He never seemed to be bothered about anything. He had no wife and no compound of his own. His small house was in his junior brother's compound. He was getting too old for active farming, so his yams were few and he owned very little property. He was friendly with everyone and was highly respected. His office as high priest of the most powerful god lent him great dignity (8)

The gods are brought down from their remove and presented at work among the villagers. Mini Wekwu, for instance, curbs evil both within and between the adjoining villages, thereby promoting good neighbourliness. The gods of Omokachi are deployed in a hierarchic order that points ultimately to the superstructure of Omokachi's religious belief, culminating as it does in Chineke, "the creator of spirits and men" (59).

The review of the village pantheon ends with Amadioha, Omokachi's principal deity, first among "God's associates" (The Concubine, 75). Ruler over the skies and purveyor of rain and sunshine, Amadioha is the most feared and the most venerated of all the gods, a deity whose name no man can invoke when guilty. He holds his worshippers in chaste fear through which they acknowledge the god's supreme authority and their own inferior humanity. But the villagers' relationship with Amadioha, as indeed with all the other deities of the local pantheon, is one of concrete communion. Worship at his shrine therefore takes on the nature of a close personal dialogue between god and man, through which complaints are resolved, wishes met, and during which the god reveals himself to men so that they can better testify to his existence:

> After the main rites Nwokekoro built a fire from a glowing orepe brand which one old man had brought along. The cocks were killed according to ancient rites and boiled with the yams. Before any part of the meal was touched, the priest cut off one wing of the chicken and threw it casually to the right side of the temple. The old men were evidently used to this and did not watch his movement… in a matter of seconds a huge grey serpent crawled out from behind the shrine and began to swallow its share of the feast. It showed no fear and the old men bowed their heads in reverence. The god having been fed, the men fell on the remains of the feast (17–18)

This worship scene closes the first half of the novel's action, but no mention has as yet been made of the sea-king, the principal actor in the collective drama of the village. The reader has been made familiar with the sea-king's other divine peers, their powers, and method of

retribution: perjury exposes its perpetrator to Amadioha's thunderbolt; anti-social behaviour to Ojukwu's smallpox; and witchcraft to extermination by Mini Wekwu.

This religious activity comes against the background of Emenike's illness, and more especially against that of his marriage with Ihuoma. Emenike dies unexpectedly shortly hereafter, and veers the dialectical significance of structuring unto its main course. A solid religious foundation has already been laid, so that when the sea-king finally appears, he is accepted for the same reasons that the other deities were accepted; that is to say as a living force within the specific socio-religious context of Omokachi.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Assess the implication of religion in determining marriage, conflict and death as applied in Amadi's The Concubine

3.3 Social Issues in Nigerian Poetry: Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures*

Of the new generation of African poets and their poetry, there are only a few that one would read and return to. Nigeria's Tanure Ojaide belongs to those few. What makes Ojaide's poetry appealing is not only its technical qualities but its cultural integrity. Ojaide is not the type of poet one remembers only by one good work; he is prolific, and his writings are consistently rich and deeply rooted in the Delta region of Nigeria. He has published more than five books of poetry, including Children of *Iroko and Other Poems, Labyrinths of the Delta, The Eagle's Vision, The Endless Song, and The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems. If there is* a persistent and unifying theme in most of his works, it is a single-minded detestation of tyrants combined with an obsessive commitment to social justice. His poems resemble what Soyinka, citing the poet Ted Jones, calls "shot-gun" poems - they are meant to be detonated immediately on the complacent bottoms of enemies. "Shot-gun" poems are aimed at a target - in Ojaide's case "Africa's or Nigeria's malevolent dictators" - and they have a reason. This consuming theme of rebellion against tyranny and injustice, recurrent in much of his poetry, he has made inimitably his own. In The fate of vultures, where we get images stacked with insular density, representing the poet's powerful plea for accountability for public money from politicians who have gone hopelessly out of control, indeed beyond ministration:

O Aridon, bring back my wealth
From rogue-vaults;
.....

blaze an ash-trail to the hands
that buried mountains in their bowels,
lifted crates of cash into their closets.
(The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems 11)

He equates the corrupt, self-gratifying breed of Nigerian politicians with "vultures," a biological symbol that is both ominous and sinister. But it is a contextually relevant symbol, implying both the disappearance of "life" and the appearance of political "carcass." In a sense, the withering away of classical public service, where the pursuit of the public good is perceived not only as individually wise but selfishly remunerative, has given birth to the stench of that sinister force - private greed. Ojaide is ready to call a "spade a spade," or more aptly, "a vulture a vulture," for he sees little virtue in obfuscating the ignoble scavenger-role of politicians in Nigeria's contemporary body-politic. For when those charged with duties for guarding public patrimony abrogate their responsibilities, then society is forced to take notice. In the above poem, Ojaide demonstrates, like Camus, that good poetic artistry must be inserted in the dramas of history, not as mere picture-postcard documentation but as a mirror of those corrigible frailties of the human condition in the hope of alerting the "movers and shakers" of the Nigerian polity to do something about it.

In Ojaide's works, political concerns abound, but they are handled with the reasoned devotion and care of a seasoned craftsman. The poet obviously demonstrates that he cannot afford the luxury of "art for art's sake," or pretty musings created to serve the genteel lifestyles of a moribund African parasitic class. He uses politics to invigorate his art but is careful not to let his artistry suffer from political bad breath. Ojaide is as much suspicious of politicians in those elevated seats of power as he is of people who feast on resources they did not work for.
He believes that "freedom" for Africans carries with it a price which implies hard work, discipline, and commitment to moving society towards desirable social goals. So he sings:

You can tell
when one believes freedom is a windfall
and fans himself with flamboyance.
The chief and his council, a flock of flukes
gambolling in the veins of fortune.
Range chickens, they consume and scatter.... (Vultures 11)

Empty flamboyance, to him, is a sign of lack of sincerity to self and to others. When powerful politicians steal public funds and waste, they violate the public's sacred trust. So, as poet, he is ready to skillfully use

poetic license to satirize the corruption under Nigerian presidents like Shehu Shagari. In a clever play of poetic pun, he contrasts ordinary Nigerians' deprivation of essential things like food - "garri" - and the billions of nairas which went into the building of Abuja with all the attendant corruption in the allocation of contracts. As he puts it:

Shamgari, Shankari, shun garri

staple of the people
and toast champagne;
Alexius, architect of wind-razed mansions,
a mountain of capital
Abuja has had its dreams!
(Vultures 11-12)

Why is it that former head of state Shagari and his cohorts shunned the basic needs of Nigerians - Ojaide's "garri" (such as access to decent food, clean water, shelter, etc.) and wasted the country's oil money on lavish imports (of champagne, Mercedes Benzes, etc.) and on grand, unproductive public schemes nationwide (which Soyinka has humorously ridiculed as "Quadruple A": Ajaokuta steel mill, Abuja, Aluminium, and the Army)

The poet, being an honest skeptic, thinks that political and economic grandstanding has been pursued, in many cases, at the expense of the basic development of Nigerians. The pun with words such as "mountain of capital" - Abuja as a monumental "capital city" being by a mountain and a place where monumental public money was spent shows the poet's shrewd ability to convey multiple meanings through the ambiguity of images. "Alexius" refers perhaps to Alex Ekwueme, then Vice President, who, as an architect, was one of the major contractors who built Abuja.

But what is Abuja really? Could it be the "elephant dreams" of a nation with excess petro-dollars (or petro-nairas) gone sour? Or could it be a centrist concession - a megalopolis designed to assuage the bitter memories of a much villified (but perhaps redeeming) civil war? Abuja is perhaps both - an elusive quest for the "true African soul" of Nigeria. We should concede that Nigeria is a domain of contrasts: black Africa's giant tormented by unresolved puzzles. Large and wealth- endowed, it has a dynamic and resourceful population. However, it suffers from some of the worst symptoms of the "big country syndrome." National cohesion is at best aspirational, and the country strives continuously to transcend the self-limiting, feet-shooting defeatism of ethnicity. An ethos of "cheat or risk being out-cheated" has crystallized since independence, which has made public trust and public good words only in the lexicon of idealists. Lagos - that quintessential mirror of what is

wrong with Nigeria - i.e., squalor and individual disparities in wealth and social status, ethnic disharmony disguised into religious and sectarian tensions, degenerate opportunism reinforced by a self- seeking social ethics, and a rowdy but humorous and open attitude to self-criticism - all these made it necessary, if nothing else, for Nigeria to opt for fresh lease on progressive nationhood. A new capital perhaps serves as a first step. Surely, Abuja - despite all the waste which went into her construction - could serve that real need for unity of a potentially great nation.

In Ojaide's poems, "Where everybody is king," we are confronted with a theme which has larger significance for contemporary Africa. The setting of the poem is Agbarha, and the poet employs the lyrical qualities of traditional Urhobo poetry (the ethnic group from which he hails) to shed light on some self-defeating attitudes characteristic of some contemporary Africans:

Come to Agbarha
where everybody is king
and nobody bows to the other.
Who cares to acknowledge age, since
power doesn't come from wisdom?
And who brags about youth
when there's no concession to vitality?
You just carry your head high.
And do you ask why
where nobody accepts insults
doesn't grow beyond its petty walls? (Vultures 58)

The humor of the poem is in its sarcasm. The Urhobo town of "Agbarha" could be any place in Africa - it is a symbolic place of "larger Africa" written small. The poet, in some sense, laments contemporary African attitudes which show no respect for traditional African authorities and institutions. Foolish pride becomes very self-destructive if it does not make concession to the wisdom of elderly experience and the vitality of youth. The poet is even more pointed in his public indictment of the indolence of some of his people when he states:

When you come to Agbarha
mind you, the town of only kings,
there are no blacksmiths, no hunters;
you will not find anybody
doing menial jobs that will
soil the great name of a king - nobody
ever climbs the oil-palm
nor taps the rubber tree.
Everybody is as bloated

as a wind-filled bag. (Vultures 58)

In short, foolish pride - Ojaide's "wind-filled bag" - is no substitute for humility to one's manual trade and hard work. This could, of course, be said for many places in Africa where the culture of consumption has outstripped that of production, resulting in a grave economic and social crisis in the continent. Ojaide sees that some parts of contemporary Africa are "basket cases" precisely because the pre-colonial attitudes of hard work, fending for oneself, and engaging in food production and artisan activities have increasingly been unfortunately displaced by a dangerous craving for consumerism and flamboyance. The role of the state and some external "do-gooders" have not, many times, helped either, by their adverse policies and actions, which have served to tax heavily rural producers to appease politically more vocal urban consumers.

The imagery, the terseness of the message, the humor - all point to Ojaide's view that even dignity has to be earned. What the above poems demonstrate, as indeed most of Ojaide's poetry, is that his artistry is largely informed by a deep and unabashed interest in the events and direction of his society. In this sense, the poet is not ashamed to evoke images from within his own local universe. Corrupt politicians and their religious co-conspirators take carnivorous traits - "hyenas" or "vultures" - or the poet retrieves murderous tyrants such as "Ogiso" from his Urhobo past and transposes their roles to fit modern tyrants. All these are the socio-political realities in Nigeria (Africa)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Comment on the political realities of Nigerian society as portrayed in Ojaide's poetry.

3.4 Nigerian Drama and Social Realities: Ola Rotimi's Our *Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a satire, because Rotimi, critical of the ills in the Nigerian society, is out to condemn them through the vehicle of laughter and mockery. It is a comic or mild satire because the events characterized the actions of some of the characters in the play which make us laugh. Individuals, institutions and the society as a whole are ridiculed. However, the major object or subject of attack and derision in the play is Lejoka-Brown (the hero). In making fun of his hero, Rotimi is indirectly mocking the Nigerian society as a whole. The playwright lampoons his hero's idea about politics.

In the discussion between Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo, the former has

this to say why he takes to politics: "Are you there…? Politics is the thing, no in Nigeria mate, you want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop life? No, no… you want to chop a big slice of the national cake? Na politics" (Our Husband, 4). Lejoka-Brown's motive in joining politics is not dictated by his sense of patriotism and service but he sees politics as a means to an end. He is certainly myopic, ideologically barren and too ridiculous to be a leader of the nation. In exposing Lejoka-Brown's motive, Rotimi is subtly indicting the decadent Nigerian political activists. By making jest of Lejoka-Brown, Rotimi is indirectly attacking our greedy, selfish and pleasure seeking leaders in Nigerian society. Hear Lejoka-Brown: "It is a war, politics is war. Ooo I am not taking no chance this time I took things slow and easy and what happened? I lost a bye election to a small crab". (Our Husband, p. 7)Certainly, Lejoka-Brown's statement evokes laughter in us. Yet, it goes to show how crude and ruthless he is. If Lejoka-Brown is taken as a symbolic representation of Nigerian leaders, one can then say that the playwright is criticizing Nigerian leader's use of brute force to achieve political ambitions. Lejoka-Brown's surprise and attack campaign strategy elicits the playwright's mockery. Although, Lejoka vigorously explained to his party members the nature of his military strategy, he only succeeded in dramatizing his hollow mentality. He says: "Gentlemen, our election campaign plan must follow a platform of military strategy known as surprise and attack…" (Our Husband, p. 50) From Lejoka's campaign plan, he exposes the fact that he is incredibly ridiculous. Rotimi portrays him as a man who fails to understand the difference between a politician and a soldier.

Polygamy – a system of marriage in Nigeria did not escape Rotimi's ridicule. The playwright dramatizes the incessant quarrels and arguments between Sikira and her co-wife Liza, live a dog and cat's life, constantly fighting one another. Sikira and Liza's relationship is that of fear and mutual suspicion. Sikira fears that Liza might overshadow her. Secondly, Sikira thinks that Liza being more educated than herself would make the latter more domineering and overbearing than herself. In order to forestall such a situation, Sikira picks quarrel with Liza at the least provocation. Lejoka-Brown's household is in reality a fictional representation of what actually happens in most polygamous families. In directing his satire at such a home, Rotimi is indirectly cautioning prospective polygamists of the consequences of such a marriage.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Elechi Amadi's The Concubine presents pure Nigerian religious realities before colonial times. We see a society that is enmeshed in religious beliefs about everything around them. Everything within the Nigerian society has religious attachment which determines the way the people

react to their environment and to their social cohesion. Nigerian religious rites of passage are a social factor that brings the people together in all their beliefs and practices. This novel exemplifies this social reality. Tanure Ojaide's collection of poetry, The Fate of *Vultures, examines the state of governance in Nigeria as it affects the* Nigeria society. This collection demonstrates the back and forth of Nigeria's history, and locates the solution to the imperatives within the Nigerian society. Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again takes a critical look at the Nigerian family and the distancing effects of politics, the issues of polygamy, the deceits of the political class and the social trauma of political make believe. In these works, we see the social factors that have been the bane and stronghold of the people's social being.

5.0 SUMMARY

The three works studied here in the three genres reveal various aspects of Nigerian social milieu. We see religion, politics, and marriage, among other issues as social realities in Nigerian society. All aspects of traditional religious beliefs are revealed in The Concubine by Elechi Amadi. We see a people with defined religious beliefs in God, gods and other elemental forces. There are patterned modes of worship. There are natural phenomena which have meaning in the religious lives of the people. In Tanure Ojaide's collection of poetry, The Fate of Vultures, and Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again we see pictures of the inevitable traumas of the people where politics and other decadences try to outsmart the people's social standing. Here, the social realities are rehashed as the people's ways of lives are exposed. These works have shown to a large extent, how the Nigerian writers have recorded the social realities of the Nigerian people from different dimensions.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. What are the basic reasons for reflecting social realities in Nigerian literature?
2. Explain religion as a social force in Amadi's The Concubine.
3. Appreciate Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again as revealing political/marital realities in Nigeria.
4. Assess the treatment of social realities in Tanure Ojaide's The *Fate of Vultures.*
5. Discuss the effectiveness of Nigerian writers in reflecting the Nigerian society in their works.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Amadi, Elechi (1966). The Concubine. London: Heinemann.

Ojaide, Tanure (1990). The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems. Lagos: Malthouse.

Rotimi, Ola (1982). Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 2 NIGERIAN HISTORY AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE 1: MILITARISM

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Militarism in Nigerian Novel: Achebe's Anthills of the *Savannah*
3.3 Militarism as theme in Okigbo's Labyrinth
3.4 Militarism as theme in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone *Mad Again*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will examine the theme of military and other political issues in Nigerian literature. Military politics is one of the unfortunate offshoots of colonialism in Africa and consequently a recurrent theme in the African novel. In African culture, there are people traditionally trained to fight wars in case of external aggression. These trained men are often seen in the time of need. They obey those occupying political or tradition executive powers that they vowed to protect. They do not imagine themselves occupying the political positions as heads of government or heads of their communities. However, when the colonial powers came into being in Africa, they trained Africans in the art of their kind of wars. They exposed Africans to wars by recruiting them into fighting the first and the second world wars. These African military men encountered European soldiers in battle field. They learnt new logistics of military intelligence. We shall study the treatment of these themes in Nigerian literature using some Nigerian literary works s yardsticks.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

understand military and political themes in Nigerian literature
assess the use of military and political themes in Nigerian literature
appreciate the use of militarism as theme in Nigerian literature
discuss the use of militarism as theme in Nigerian literature

identify Nigerian literatures with military politics as subject matter.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The military rulers who tasted power never wanted to relinquish power. For instance, since Nigeria's independence 48 years ago, the military have served the political arena for over 30 years. The military rulers held on to power with endless promises of democracy. Many Nigerian writers who wrote about militarism have presented them as being corrupt more than the people they are supposed to correct. Most of them developed into dictators like Muamar Ghadaffi of Libya and the late Sani Abacha of Nigeria. Many African countries are still under the grip of militarism because it is either their leaders are military rulers or ex-military. One still sees the same military politics even as the people are hopeful of a democratic government in place.

Many Africans believe that military politics was a reaction to the corrupt practices of the political class. For instance, Chinua Achebe's A Man of *the People was described as a prophetic work because it was launched* almost at the brink of the first military coup de tat in Nigeria. Chinua Achebe believed then that the corruption going among the First Republic politicians in Nigeria might trigger off a possible coup as a corrective measure. However, this dream of correction turned into pure anarchy as the military leaders projected their militarism as tactics in governance. These military rulers siphon the people's economic base and save huge sums of money in foreign accounts. They turn the country's treasury into their personal accounts. The situation seems very pathetic.

The theory of military intervention in politics in Africa and other third world countries is a catalytic post-colonial discourse. In Nigeria, the inability of the political elite to give the young nation the needed creative force to move forward and the employment of political institutions to serve the whims and boisterous accumulative urge of sectional leaders created the chasm that heralded the first military coup in 1966. Thus, in the wake of the first coup d'état and counter-coups in Nigeria (nay Africa), the men in uniform had at various times, unimaginatively harped on the same tune as the motivation for their over-throw of legitimate governments, that is, 'the love for country'. Unfortunately, the soldiers have never achieved the litany of objectives that brought them to power. Some of the social decadence that they sought to eliminate includes corruption and outright embezzlement, the quest for genuine federalism, the promise of more inclusive

arrangement, political stability, reduction of poverty level, safety and security of life, and better health facility.

The military by nature rules by command and obedience; thus no room for opposition that would have guaranteed checks and balances of any sort, and the gulf they tried to fill, by and large, encouraged unrestricted access to the national resources which they expended so unsparingly, irresponsibly and inefficiently. Thus, the mottled gangsters' circuit show became a centrifugal force which drew the whole military institution from its lofty ideals of professionalism, national security and loyalty; and the military's longing for stable polity became a chimera in an induced culture of violence which became a nucleus of incoherence with the embezzlement of public funds heightened only by degree as the Nigerian military produced a nest of millionaire and multi-millionaire generals. Thus this economic war of looting waged on Nigeria plundered its resources while the impoverished citizens live in squalor and abject poverty and the purportedly 'redemptive missions' led to 'ruinous mission' as the military grew into a mildew and ominous albatross on the political terrain, emphasizing only its oppressive endowments; the archetypal characterization and role possessed at the early morning of colonial irruption on the continent

Some theorists and politicians have however carved a specious argument and an Alice-in- Wonderland theory of a northern oligarchy of the Hausa/Fulani, whose nomenclature changes according to the fancy and degree of mystifications and political bruise sustained by lachrymal scholars and political victims. Thus the Kaduna mafia is thought to be the manipulating force behind military rule in Nigeria in a votary of castigated hegemonic philosophy of the caste, Maitama Sule Dan Masani Kano, which nearly lent credence to this myth when he freely uncovered a clandestine enterprise in one of his numerous interviews, stating that: a directive was issued to all the ministers in Sardauna's cabinet, that each time any of them, was on tour they were to ensure that they visit schools and recruited people into the military. The occasion and motivation for this surreptitious gang up, was the bestial treatment meted to political elite in Iraq at the dawn of the country's first coup.

Maitama Sule's confessions, like the legendary confessions of a prodigal acolyte before mother "Idoto" in Okigbo's poem, a necessary ritual for his baptism into statesmanship seems so wild, narrow and arrogant, seeing the ruinous consequence of the perverse vision on Nigerian political and economic epistemological space: one discovers an oppositional algebraic sum that only points at the "narrowness of vision" of some self-seeking and self-opinionated bunch of ethnic chauvinists who laundered themselves to power through their surrogates and thus violently and relentlessly maintained a vertical network of personal and

patron-client relations. Thus the military's troublous (mis)adventure in politics drew Nigeria to the fringes with the dubious regimes of Babangida and Abacha (1985-1998) as the worst period of crisis and military dictatorship in the entire post-independence period and as the time tickled away, the juntas and the whole military institution drifted and lost their sense of direction. And second, the greed of the military dragged the nation by degrees, slowly but surely away from the project of nationhood, and thus by the end of almost forty years of military rule, Nigeria was far more fragmented than it was in January 1966, when they first seized power.

Thus, the pains and frustration of military rule equally foregrounded the realities of some post-colonial literary texts in (African) Nigeria, whose grains include anguish, privation, fatalism and cynicism. Who is the Writer? A writer may be protean in nature, depending on the perception and context of his/her conception or cognition. Within general academic province, she/he is an intellectual in a field of knowledge. But significantly, she/he is a member of the society. More specifically, however, the writer in this context as a member of society and like any member of society partakes of the observable experience(s) of the society. In the universe of this discourse, the writer, unlike other members, is conceived as one who portrays and examines these experiences in: a specialized creative manner and with the sole aim of sourcing for relevant materials from the pool of experiences. The selected materials (experiences) he/she interprets, recreates imaginatively, and reflects or refracts, depending on his/her level of consciousness and degree of commitment. The writer is therefore a true artist, always wanting to create works answering the most urgent questions engaging the contemporary mind. One significant feature of the writer in this context is not only his cognition of life but also an aesthetic interpretation and artistic revelation of cultural environment to yield the link between art and life that queries the mode or medium of transmission.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the role of the Nigerian writer in the correction of militarism in Nigeria?

3.2 Militarism as Theme in Achebe's Anthills of the *Savannah*

The novel starts out by describing a Cabinet meeting. After the session is closed it turns out that outside the palace there is a crowd of people from the province of Abazon who try to get to meet the President. The people are dissatisfied because, as it later turns out, Sam has caused

them to suffer by shutting down water-holes in the province, which are dry as a result of the drought. He refuses to meet the delegation. After this event, Ikem goes to meet the delegation. It turns out that he is in a way one of them, born and raised in Abazon, and has come to be greatly respected by the Abazonians as the famous editor of the National Gazette. When he leaves the Abazonian delegation that day, he is stopped by the traffic police because of some misdemeanour. It is later revealed that he was followed by State Research Council agents who needed proof that Ikem had actually visited the delegation in order to be able to accuse him of treason for siding with the rebellious Abazonians. Some time after this, Ikem is fired from the National Gazette by orders from the President, who thinks Ikem's writing in the Gazette is too critical of his "administration". The President actually wants Chris to do the firing, but he refuses. After being sacked, Ikem makes a radical speech at the University of Bassa (the capital of Kangan). The speech is purposefully misquoted in the Gazette the next day, giving the impression that Ikem wants the President dead. He's charged of treason and conspiracy, soldiers come to pick him up from his home and shoot him dead, claiming it was an accident.

After this episode, Chris feels he can no longer work under President Sam as Commissioner for Information. He is afraid he is going to wind up like Ikem, and goes into hiding. A while later, he too is charged with treason and becomes a fugitive for real. After a couple of weeks hiding, he decides to travel away from the capital to the province of Abazon. When he reaches the province, it turns out that there has been some kind of a coup d'état and the President has fled the country. Upon hearing this he joins a celebration on the street and meets a drunken policeman. By accident, the man shoots him dead.

In Anthills of the Savannah, Chinua Achebe writes about the problems facing newly independent African states. The prevailing theme and the most visible one of these problems is the corrupt, dictatorial rule set up in Kangan (Nigeria) and most of the other "new" African states that let down the dreams and hopes that were associated with independence. Although the rulers were no longer European, and although they were a lot closer to the people than their European predecessors, they fairly soon distanced themselves from the people. The first instance of this alienation in the novel is the way Sam deals with the problem of the Abazonian delegation. Instead of going out to meet them by himself, he assigns someone else to do it. The fact that he's built himself a luxurious lakeside mansion is another representation of this. There is also the theme of oppressive dictatorial rule. The way Sam deals with Ikem is reminiscent of traditional totalitarian states, especially the Latin American juntas. This is also the case with freedom of speech in Kangan. The paper, apparently the only one in the country, is censored

and orders regarding its contents often seem to come straight from the President.

Another theme of the book is described in Ikem's peculiar dilemma. Despite his position as editor of the Gazette, he wants to appear like just another Kangan worker. Therefore he doesn't ride a company car to work, but drives by himself in an old beat-up car. The dilemma is pointed out to him by a taxi driver: by driving himself, he is taking away a job opportunity from some poor Kangan chauffeur. The larger problem here is the position of the black, African elite in the new African countries, where the elite has traditionally been of European origin. There was no elite class in the pre-colonial period in Africa. The novel also deals with the theme of being a been-to, an African who has come back to his country after a longer stay in the West. The main characters are all been-tos and this is reflected in the ways in which they try to position themselves in relation to the "common" Kangans. An example of this is how Chris relates to Emmanuel, a university student leader; and Braimoh, a cab driver.

There is a direct reference to the West in the scene in which Beatrice goes to a party that Sam has organized to impress an American journalist. The journalist wraps the President and the whole Cabinet around her finger, lecturing them about how Kangan should take care of its foreign affairs and debt. She represents the attitudes of the West to the African countries in general and their unequal standing in world politics. According to Walter Rodney the colonial machinery created a military elite that later became military dictators in the post-independence era. A good example is Sam, the military despot in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Critically explain how Sam, the military president, exhibited dictatorial

governance in Kangan

3.3 Militarism as Theme in Okigbo's Labyrinths

In 'Lament of the Drums', one of the segments in Okigbo's Labyrinths, a song of exile, depicts the parlous state into which Nigeria has fallen. It thematizes the rape of democratic values by the military and their opportunistic civilian collaborators, the perversion of justice, the underdevelopment of the country through the wanton waste of her human and material resources, and the overall degeneration of the land. The elegy ends with:

The wailing is for the Great River:

Her pot-bellied watchers
Despoil her... (p.50)

The river, of course, is the Niger from which the country derives its name. The ellipsis indicates that the destruction of the land shall be a continuous process. As aptly predicted by the poet, the Nigerian Armed Forces that are supposed to protect the land lay siege to it, fall upon its fat like robbers, and strip the people of their laughter. Okigbo brings back the image of the predatory eagles in 'Elegy for Alto' to express the idea of a second conquest, but this time around the usurpation comes from within:

THE EAGLES have come again,
The eagles rain down on us -
POLITICIANS are back in giant hidden steps of
howitzers, of detonators, (p. 71).

The neo-colonial African politician - civilian or military - continues with the structures of exploitation and privilege erected by the white conquerors in the colonial period. Although Okigbo hailed and praised the architects of the first military putsch in Nigeria, the Majors' coup-of January 15, 1966, he recognized the danger in the Armed Forces perceiving themselves as politicians and warned the self-acclaimed saviours against the temptation to loot the nation's treasury and thereby commit the mistakes of civilian politicians. He intones:

Alas! the elephant has fallen -
Hurrah for thunder -
But already the hunters are talking about pumpkins:
If they share the meat let them remember thunder.
The eye that looks down will surely see the nose;
The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose.
Today - for tomorrow, today becomes yesterday:
How many million promises can ever fill a basket... (p.67)

It is fruitless counting the number of military coups - botched or successful - that have been reported in Nigeria. The same facile explanation of saving the people from themselves and from evils of maladministration and economic mismanagement and returning the country onto the path of true democracy is proffered by the coup plotters. It is sad to note that the promise has so far remained unfulfilled. The intervention of the military in the politics of the nation is a total disaster. The most urgent task that confronts the Nigerian people is how to deliver their country from the death-clutch of its greedy Armed Forces. The joy that attends the poet's homecoming, like the ephemeral euphoria at Independence, is deceptive and ironic. Correctly

apprehended, it is the joy of freedom from being. The poet's homecoming is celebrated in terms that suggest the Worship of Death:

> Death herself,
> the chief celebrant,
> in a cloud of incense,
> paring her finger nails...
> At her feet rolled their heads like cut fruits;
> She bathed her knees in the blood of attendants;
> her smock in entrails of ministrants... (p.55)

The images remind us of the pogrom in which thousands of Igbo people lost their lives in the Northern part of the country and the waste of lives during the Civil War. Nigeria is portrayed as mother-earth that consumes her own children but, unlike earth-mother, the country continually fails to profit from the promise of procreation and regeneration and, therefore, remains a waste land. The picture of a hecatomb and horror is relatively the same for most post-Independence states of Africa. Carnage, a regular feature in modern African history, continues to rage in Algeria, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia. The continent bleeds and bleeds again from self-inflicted wounds, as if to prove the veracity of Yambo Ouologuem's thesis that she is bound to violence. Her poetry is an unbroken paean to Moloch. The poet's homecoming reminds us of Thomas Carlyle's Worship of Sorrow. The current political debacle in Nigeria is a re-enactment in its horrendous detail of the tragic events that led the country to the path of war in the late sixties. The detention of M. K. O. Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the June 12 1993 presidential election, is analogous to the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo on treasonable felony charges. 'Both parts of Silences', Okigbo wrote in the ‘Introduction to Labyrinths’, 'were inspired by the events of the day. ‘Lament of the Silent Sister’, by the Western Nigeria Crisis of 1962, and the death of Patrice Lumumba; ‘Lament of the Drums’ by the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo, and the tragic death of his eldest son.' (p. xii)

It is not an exaggeration to assert that Nigeria's season of anomy started barely two years after her attainment of political Independence. Despite the long period of doom, there is still not even a shadow in the horizon of the possibility of relief for the suffering of the people. The flowers of the nation, the minorities, and the multitudes of pariahs - all aliens in their own land, like 'the drums' (the ancestors) - 'sense/ With dog-nose a Babylonian capture' (p.46) and shriek in the agony of despair as they lament daily their predicament and watch their supposed protectors usurp their being, make a mockery of their sacrifice, and stifle their seeds to death. They either embrace revolutionary violence, as Okigbo did, or continue to moan in despair, or go into exile. It is thus clear that

the-dream of freedom is still a tantalizing mirage as Nigeria persists in treading the path of thunder.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain how Okigbo captures militarism in his Labyrinths

3.4 Militarism as Theme in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone

Mad Again

Again in Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, we see attack on the ex-military personnel in Nigeria attempting to go into civilian politics with the same military mentality. The drama is a satire, critical of the ills in the Nigerian society. The major object or subject of attack and derision in the play is Lejoka-Brown. He was ex-military personnel, a veteran who believes so much in his military intelligence in outsmarting everybody. Rotimi makes fun of Lejoka-Brown because of military madness. The playwright outrightly lampoons his hero's idea about politics with military intelligence. In the discussion between Lejoka-Brown and Okonkwo, the former has this to say why he takes to politics:

> "Are you there…? Politics is the thing, no in Nigeria mate, you want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop life? No, no… you want to chop a big slice of the national cake? Na politics" (Our Husband, p. 4)

Lejoka-Brown's motive in joining politics is not dictated by his sense of patriotism and service but he sees politics as a means to an end. He is certainly myopic, ideologically barren and too ridiculous to be a leader of the nation. In exposing Lejoka-Brown's motive, Rotimi is subtly indicting the decadent Nigerian political activists. By making jest of Lejoka-Brown, Rotimi is indirectly attacking the greedy, selfish and pleasure seeking leaders in Nigerian society. Hear Lejoka-Brown:

> It is a war, politics is war. Ooo I am not taking
> no chance this time I took things slow and easy
> and what happened? I lost a bye election to a small crab.
> (Our Husband, p. 7)

Certainly, Lejoka-Brown's statement evokes laughter in us. Yet, it goes to show how crude and ruthless he is. If Lejoka-Brown is taken as a symbolic representation of Nigerian leaders, one can then say that the playwright is criticizing Nigerian leader's use of brute force to achieve political ambitions especially the ex-military personnel who are occupying political positions in Nigeria. Lejoka-Brown's surprise and attack campaign strategy elicits the playwright's mockery. Although,

Lejoka vigorously explained to his party members the nature of his military strategy, he only succeeded in dramatizing his hollow mentality. He says:

> Gentlemen, our election campaign plan must follow a platform of military strategy known as surprise and attack…
> (Our Husband, p. 50)

From Lejoka's campaign plan, he exposes the fact that he is incredibly ridiculous. Rotimi portrays him as a man who fails to understand the difference between a politician and a soldier. And this is the problem of militarism in Nigerian politics. Most of these ex-soldiers in civilian politics still practice the hard-line military tactics on the people to the extent that the people could not distinguish the former military rule from the current democratic dispensation. Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic rule in Nigeria could not be differentiated from his military rule. The same brute, force and anarchy also prevailed. This is the symbolic representation in Lejoka-Brown.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discus the way in which Rotimi attacked militarism in Nigerian politics in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The role of the military in Nigeria has been more of the negative. As seen in the works under study in this unit, they come to correct but end up destroying what they ought to correct. A 'post-colonial' view of Nigerian history is an entirely ugly record because of the ugly military imposition of power. This study enables us to understand what a people have become in the process of a particular form of political and cultural contact. It tells of an important, even crucial, moment in a process of becoming a stable political nation. It acknowledges that colonialism was a fact of history that Nigerians can not dismiss urgently. The military created regimes of trauma. In such regimes, national identity is a mere fabrication, defined by passports and legal instruments merely, a form of identity. In such a situation, history is the account of the post-colonial encounter because there are no longer nations and peoples, and there is nothing to remember or recall. The military reminds us that the experience of colonialism dissolves all identities, erases nationalities, makes destiny irrelevant and even problematic. It is different from the condition created by national histories, even when that history is rife with exile and dispersal. That is why it helps to see that Anthills of the *Savannah is not about nation-building in the post-colonial era, but about*

the destiny of particular peoples, a destiny conceived as having a life and purpose of its own. The anthills of the savannah are eternal reminders of the many wild fires of every national history. Their only theme is renewal, a renewal that crashes at the point of hope. The coup predicted in Okigbo's Labyrinths forewarns the looming catastrophe associated with military politics which is out to bring respite to the people but ended up being more traumatic than the preceding corrupt government. Lejoka-Brown in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a typology of the military civilians permeating all evils in the name of democratic dividends.

5.0 SUMMARY

Nigerian literatures with militarism as theme are common in Nigeria because of the long history of military leadership in Nigeria. We see Sam, Chris and Ikem as the residues of western colonial might entrenching western values in various ways in Nigeria. Clearly, of course, both Chris and Ikem, two of the principal thinkers in the Anthills *of the Savannah, think they are intellectuals engaged in the building of a* new and just post-colonial, or more exactly, a post-independence, society. The final issue is not about the future of the state, but the future of the people. In Labyrinths, Okigbo expresses the fear that might result from militarism which eventually manifested in the Nigerian civil war. He warns that the progress of a people is determined upon the collective responsibility of the masses in achieving a common goal. The likes of Lejoka-Brown in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again must be flushed out if a true democratic dispensation is to be experienced in Nigeria. Nigerian writers have been in vanguard of expressing the fears associated wit militarism in Nigeria as revealed in these works and many more not mentioned here.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain why Nigerian writers use militarism as themes in their works.
2. What are the effects of military intervention in Anthills of the *Savannah?*
3. Discus how Okigbo expressed fears about militarism in *Labyrinths.*
4. Lejoka-Brown is a typology of Nigerian military leaders. Explain this as exemplified in Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad *Again.*
5. Assess the influence of militarism in Nigeria as reflected in Nigerian literatures.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1987). Anthills of the Savannah. London: Heinemann.

Okigbo, Christopher (2008). Labyrinths & Path of Thunder. Lagos: Apex Books.

Rotimi, Ola (1981). Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again. Ibadan: Longman.

UNIT 3 NIGERIAN HISTORY AND NIGERIAN LITERATURE 2: WAR

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Civil War Novel: Isidore Okpewho's The Last *Duty*
3.3 Nigerian Civil War Poetry: J.P. Clark's "Casualties"
3.4 Nigerian Civil War Drama: Soyinka's Madmen and *Specialists*
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall examine Nigerian literatures that treated the issue of wars. African countries have had history of wars. We have had Nigerian-Biafran War of 1968-1970. There are many war literatures in Nigeria about Nigerian-Biafran war. They include: Eddie Iroh's Forty *Eight Guns for the General and Toads of War, Ekwensi's Survive the Peace, Okpewho's The Last Duty, Achebe's Girls at War amongst other* numerous titles. We shall examine some novels, poetry and drama treating the theme of war in Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

understand that Nigerian war literature exists
appreciate Nigerian writers writing about wars
assess any Nigerian literature with war themes
recognize Nigerian literatures with war themes
identify Nigerian writers that write about wars.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

A war literature is a literature in which the primary action takes place in a field of armed combat, or in a domestic setting (or home front) where the characters are preoccupied with the preparations for, or recovery from, war. The war literature's main roots lie in the epic poetry of the classical and medieval periods, especially Homer's The Iliad, Virgil's *The Aeneid, the Old English saga Beowulf, and different versions of the* legends of King Arthur. All of these epics were concerned with preserving the history or mythology of conflicts between different societies, while providing an accessible narrative that could reinforce the collective memory of a people. Other important influences on the war literature include the tragedies of such dramatists as Euripides, Seneca the Younger, Christopher Marlowe, and Shakespeare. Shakespeare's *Henry V provided a model for how the history, tactics, and ethics of war* could be combined in an essentially fictional framework. Romances and satires in Early Modern Europe--Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene and Miguel de Cervantes's Don Quixote, to name two of many--also contained elements of military heroism and folly that influenced the later development of war literatures. In terms of imagery and symbolism, many modern war literatures (especially those espousing an anti-war viewpoint) take their cue from Dante's depiction of Hell in The *Inferno, John Milton's account of the war in Heaven in Paradise Lost,* and the Apocalypse as depicted in The Bible's Book of Revelations. All of these works feature realistic depictions of major battles, visceral scenes of wartime horrors and atrocities, and significant insights into the nature of heroism, cowardice, and morality in wartime.

Communal wars are common in Nigeria. Some of these wars are caused by tribal differences while others are caused by certain civil issues like the killing of an Umuofia woman in Achebe's Things Fall Apart and the war over land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi in Achebe's Arrow *of God. Communal wars are common in Africa. In Nigeria, the civil war* of 1968 to 1970 influenced many literary works. Apart from memoirs which gave accurate accounts of personal experiences during the war like Soyinka's The Man Died amongst other works, there are rich stocks of war literatures in Nigeria in all the genres. There are many war literatures in Nigeria written after the war even presently in 2007 when a young Nigeria, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, wrote Half of a Yellow *Sun, a story of the Nigerian-Biafran war almost 40 years after the war.* Judging by the steady stream of publications on the subject, they still seem to have much to say. For Eddie Iroh, "to stop writing about (the war) would be to stop writing about the history of this nation. You can never write enough about that tragic thing called war" (Feuser: 150).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the relevance of war themes in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Civil War in Nigerian Novel: Okpewho's The *Last Duty*

Isidore Okpewho's The Last Duty is a war novel that explores the psychological make up of characters in the war drama. In this novel, the Federal and the Secessionist armies are locked in a fierce battle. But the author plays down the drama of external violence and concentrates fully on its deeper human dimensions. We have committed characters giving account of their experiences and roles in the war. We have Chief Toje, a big chief who conspired to the arrest and detention of his greatest business rival Oshevire. He used the opportunity of Oshevire's arrest to attempt sexual exploitation of his wife, Aku. Aku is from the secessionist part of the country and feels unprotected in the course of the war. Chief Toje pretends offering her protection but with the intension of exploiting her. However, Toje's impotence could not allow him achieve his evil intention. His nephew, Odibo, the cripple often goes on errand for him to Aku's place. Aku, being sexually abused without actualizing it decides to allow Odibo calm her troubled sexual nerves. This single act makes Odibo realize that he is beyond destitution. He begins to challenge Chief Toje and this leads to the most heinous experiences of the war beyond the battlefront. Both men slaughtered each other. Aku is taken over by Major Ali for protection. Oghenovo, Aku's son and the only child narrator in the story is busy expecting the return of his father from prison. All he does is to fight against Onome or anyone who calls his father a thief. At the return of Oshevire after being proved innocent of the charges against him, he decided to do his last duty of restoring his image, home and conscience. This leads to another tragedy which marks the unending trauma of wars.

By adopting the "collective evidence" technical style of narration, we watch without any inhibition, the adventures, the feelings, the hopes, the fears, the emotional burden and the moral state of the characters in their process of formation. Each character's narrative portion and perspective is proportionate to his degree of involvement, and response to the conflicts. By presenting action from many points of view, the writer allows the reader to judge the entire situation himself. The dramatized or pictorial adopted allows Okpewho to give full and free verbal expression to his characters' emotions, even those that will normally be suppressed as a result of public consciousness.

Starting with Major Ali, both the narrative and the plot structures

expand gradually as if from an aperture into a wider channel until the

climax is reached when the three main characters lose their lives tragically over a woman. The themes also come tumbling in one by one, one linking the other until there is a complex network of themes: the disruption in communal life, the mischievous manipulation of military authorities for the settlement of private scores, the sexual oppression of a destitute and forlorn woman, the abuse of children and the handicapped, the heroic assertion of personal integrity in the face of daunting odds, moral chastity pulverized by destitution, domestic crises, psychological depression, sexual impotence, etc.

In the novel, we see each character contributing his quota to the main issue. The main issue is not the civil war demon that is currently devastating the land as this is only a catalyst for the internal psychological crises plaguing all the major characters. The war only reverberates at the background and remains peripheral to the main plot of the narrative. The writer's emphasis is on the series of individualized "civil" wars that each individual has to confront: the desperate tug-of-war between Chief Toje and his failing manhood, his death-knell struggle with his business rival, Oshevire, the fratricidal war between him and his servant over the beautiful wife of another citizen who has been jailed on trumped up charges, his pursuit of pre-war social and financial privileges, Oshevire's struggle against war time wickedness, Aku's moral battle with destitution and unlawful sexual urges, Major Ali's fight to maintain law and order, etc.

In the novel we see that there is much emphasis on honor, honesty, integrity and fellow feelings. The novel does not celebrate any heroic exploits in battle, but a heroic resolve to be just and compassionate under impossible circumstances. The series of micro "civil wars" are bitter, more destructive and more physically and spiritually agonizing than the real civil war. There is economy, not only of words and action, but also of details. The tragedy is worked out within the strategic temporal space of a border town. By selecting a small border town as setting, we are offered the sense of an enclosed arena, which allows no intrusion, or escape from this world of tragedy. Okpewho chooses appropriate characters to dramatize the tale, from the peasant to the noble, from the honorable to the villain. The nature of the human problem presented in the narrative is as complex, touching and realistic as the deft technical construction of the work. Okpewho displays an impressive understanding and insight into the deep world of his characters' inner lives. Okpewho explores this grave human situation with responsibility and sympathetic understanding. Each character makes his choice and bears the consequences of his decision. In Okpewho's artistic vision, choices stem from the characters' inner selves; thus he explores the characters' thoughts fully. He focuses his tragic vision on a closely-knit series of events and maintains this vision

through a supremely controlled authorial distance as well as a dramatized angle of observation. There is an effective combination of emotional detachment and an incisive display of sympathy and fellow feelings.

Okpewho has helped to make the war alive to us in a new and fresh way. He succeeds very well in deploying techniques to make the reader a collaborator with him and with the characters in creating a conception of the Civil War that leaps out of the text. The novel enlarges our sympathy and opens our eyes to areas of civil war experience we never really knew well. The novel explores the dark places of human nature, the ethical and moral values of both pre-war and during-the-war Nigerian society. One basic tendency in some of the best war novels is that many of the narrators see war in more personal than social terms. They seem to have concentrated on the fate of the innocent individuals who are trapped by a destructive machine whose magnitude they cannot even imagine and whose power they are helpless to oppose. Not even children are immune. The extent to which children are affected by war is driven home by the experience of the little Oghenovo in The Last Duty. War is an organism that consumes all who come in contact with it.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

From your reading of The last Duty, discuss the effect of war on individual psyche

3.3 Nigerian Civil War Poetry: J.P. Clark's "Casualties"

Clark is most remembered for his poetry, including: Poems (1961), a group of forty lyrics that treat heterogeneous themes; A Reed in the Tide (1965), occasional poems that focus on the Clark's indigenous African background and his travel experience in America and other places; *Casualties: Poems 1966-68 (1970), which illustrate the horrendous* events of the Nigeria-Biafra war; A Decade of Tongues (1981), a collection of seventy-four poems, all of which apart from "Epilogue to Casualties" (dedicated to Michael Echeruo) were previously published in earlier volumes; State of the Union (1981), which highlights his apprehension concerning the sociopolitical events in Nigeria as a developing nation; Mandela and Other Poems (1988), which deals with the perennial problem of aging and death.

Critics have noted three main stages in Clark's poetic career: the apprenticeship stage of trial and experimentation, exemplified by such juvenilia as "Darkness and Light" and "Iddo Bridge"; the imitative stage, in which he appropriates such Western poetic conventions as the couplet measure and the sonnet sequence, exemplified in such lyrics as "To a

Fallen Soldier" and "Of Faith"; and the individualized stage, in which he attains the maturity and originality of form of such poems as "Night Rain", "Out of the Tower", and "Song". Throughout his work, certain themes recur: Violence and protest, as in Casualties; Institutional corruption, as in State of the Union; The beauty of nature and the landscape, as in A Reed in the Tide; European colonialism as in, for example, "Ivbie" in the Poems collection; The inhumanity of the human race as in Mandela and Other Poems. Clark frequently dealt with these themes through a complex interweaving of indigenous African imagery and that of the Western literary tradition.

In the poem, 'Casualties', Clark makes a case for his people- the Ijaws, during the Nigeria-Biafra war. He recalls the scenes of the war, the effects of the war and the horrendous experiences that accompany the war. He tries to explain that though the Ijaws were not present at the scenes of war but that they suffered the same hardship. He actually explained thus:

The casualties are not only
Those who are dead
They are well out of it

The casualties are not only
Those that are wounded
They are well out of it

After explaining the various victims of the war: the dead, the wounded, the deprived and the hopeless, he further explained that the war affected those who may have been outside the war scenes:

The casualties are many
And good number well outside
The scenes of ravage and wreck

He further explained that the other victims are those who are suffering from what they never started, the wandering minstrels (the poets), and the people who could not quench the fire they started among others. He believes that war affects people beyond the scenes of war because its effects run against time, location and race. This poem resulted in one of the longest literary tussles that Nigeria has ever experienced. A young Nigerian writer by then, Odia Ofeimun reacted to J.P. Clark's poem 'Casualties'. He claimed that Clark's poem smacks of lies and poetic insincerity. In his controversial poetry collection, The Poet Lied, Odia called Clark a liar. He based his argument on the role of the Ijaws during the Nigerian-Biafran war. They were complacent and many of them like Clark left Lagos for their hometowns in Ijawland until the end of the

war. The logical question that arises out of Odia's poetry is: should a writer write what he experienced or should he lie about it. J.P. Clark never took the matter lightly. He took Odia Ofeimun to court claiming defamation of character and other legal rights. The case lasted for over ten years and was recently resolved as the judge told them to see literature as pure creativity.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

In the controversy surrounding the poem 'Casualties', explain the need for experience in literary creativity.

3.4 Nigerian Civil War Drama: Soyinka's Madmen and *Specialists*

This play, written shortly after Soyinka was released from prison, reflects not only his personal mood at the time, but the horrors of the Nigerian civil war of 1966-1970. The ferocity of the fighting between Biafrans and other Nigerians was unprecedented in scale and intensity; and much of the nation was still in shock. Soyinka uses a variety of techniques borrowed from "absurdist" theater. These departures from realism are meant not to create a flight from reality, but to convey the terrors of reality in a more intense way than traditional realism could do.
The result is a sometimes obscure but intense and moving work of scathing satire and protest. The raised hut of Iya Agba and Iya Mate is the site of a sort of commentary on the action taking place below.

Mendicants, in this play, are beggars faking a variety of ailments to prey on the sympathies of the public. They function like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, commenting on the action. It is not always clear whether they are insane or simply expressing themselves satirically. "St. Vitus' Dance" is a traditional name for epilepsy. Traditionally it is believed that some people can curse others by looking at them with an "evil eye." The dehumanizing effects of the war are reflected in their gruesome gambling game. Ostriches were traditionally said to hide their heads in the sand. To "bite the dust" is an old expression for "to die." "As" is the mysterious deity of the new ferocious faith which has swept over the nation. This is why the beggars call themselves "Creatures of As."

Si Bero is a traditional herbal healer whose brother Dr. Bero is a modern-educated doctor who has become deeply involved with the terrorist regime ruling the country. "Rem Acu Tetigisti" is nonsense perpetrated by the new government cult and repeated here each time the beggars want to evoke the senseless violence of the government. "Casting pearls before swine" is an expression based on one of Jesus' parables (Matthew 7:6) which implies wasting something valuable on

people incapable of appreciating it. The beggars begin to mime the tortures carried out by the sadistic "specialist," Dr. Bero. They speculate about whether Bero will torture his own father, in the play referred to simply as "the old man."

Iya Mate compliments Si Bero as the sort of herbal woman who would not poison men, but discover she has inadvertently gathered a rare and deadly poison. The song they sing hints at the dangers they are experiencing. A boat full of oil would naturally avoid open flames. Why do you think Si Bero chooses Blindman as her assistant? It is a tradition to insult someone by insulting his mother. Si Bero has nothing particularly in mind by telling the Cripple that his mother is in a bad mood. The beggars' litany of medical treatments quickly deteriorates into gruesome violence: medicine has blended into torture in this play, reflected in the miming that follows. Persistently barking dogs were sometimes silenced by having their vocal chords cut. "The flaming sword" was wielded by an angel at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to bar the way back to Adam and Eve after they had been banished for their sin (Genesis 3:24). An advocate is a lawyer. How do we learn that the Blindman is also faking his handicap?

A holdall is a large suitcase. What do we learn about the relationship between Bero and the beggars? Note how the Blindman tries to soften Bero toward his sister. The beggars claim to have been discharged from the army, but Bero insists they are still under his orders. "Gaol" is the Nigerian/British spelling of "jail." Bero hints at unspeakable crimes for which the beggars were discharged. What does Bero mean by calling all his old patients corpses? What fluid is referring to when he brags of having wetted the earth with something more potent than palm wine? What is Si Bero's reaction to her brother? She believes that the herbal magic she was taught by the old women has preserved his life. "Big Braids" highest officers.

The windy old priest trusts Dr. Bero. What kind of a character is he? A miter is the hat worn by a bishop. He is the first to introduce the subject of cannibalism. Cannibalism is not part of normal modern Nigerian life, but there were instances of it during the civil war as people sought to terrify and insult their enemies in the fiercest way possible. What is Bero's reaction to the priest's statement that his father advocated legalizing cannibalism? In the following conversation with Si Bero the doctor explains the derivation of the divine name "As" from the traditional Christian blessing, "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, Amen." In its original Christian context, it was intended as a statement of firm faith in God's eternal goodness and justice, but in the new cult it has been emptied of theological content. The phrase has been reduced to its least significant word, and now alludes to a cursed cycle

of destruction from which there is no escape. What Dr. Bero is saying is that his father tricked him and others into eating human flesh hoping to shame them into realizing how savage they had become. Instead, it had the effect of liberating them from all moral inhibitions. What was his father's job in the war?

The Old Man is a fierce truth-teller. The beggars, who had pled insanity to escape punishment for their crimes, claim to have been driven mad by his truth-telling. What is the symbolism of the killing and eating of the flea? The cycle referred to suggests to Si Bero that the Old Man has been eaten by his son, and she is horrified. "Surgery" means "doctor's office."

In part two of the play, Aafaa's alphabetical sermon leads to the Blindman's assertion that the epileptic fits of worshippers bring not true freedom, but subjection to a vicious deity. "Circus turn" means "circus act." "Collaborate" is a much more loaded word than "assist," suggesting aiding in crimes. The Old Man has sat silent up to this point, seemingly in shock. The line "Arise, throw off thy crutches and follow me" is a combination of phrases from the Bible: Jesus saying to his would-be followers "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24) and Mark 2:9 where Jesus defends his right to heal a crippled man by stating "Who is my neighbor" is uttered in Luke 10:29 by a man responding to Jesus' teaching to love your neighbor as you love yourself. "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word," is the grateful speech of Simeon who has been preserved long enough to meet the infant Jesus, implying that he can now die content (Luke 2:29). Here it has more sinister implications. Soyinka was raised as a Christian and attended a missionary school as a boy, so he knows his Bible thoroughly.

"Chop" is slang for food. What is the nature of the relationship between Bero and his father? A stationer's is a stationery store. Why does Bero emphasize that the Old Man will get everything he needs? The Old Man revels in his feat of having tricked the leaders into practicing cannibalism. Why does he say he is still needed? A recidivist is one who commits again a crime that he has committed before. Why has Bero brought the Old Man here?

How does Aafaa say he was filled with the spirit that drove him mad? Note how the two old women present themselves as part of a spiritual reality far older and more powerful than that represented by Bero. The Latin quotation which the beggars mangle is "Dulcet et decorum est pro patria more": "Sweet and proper it is to die for one's country." Just as Biblical passages about love and healing have earlier been given a

sinister twist, so now references to patriotism and democracy are made to serve the goals of a degraded dictatorship. The song they sing is "When the Saints Go Marching In," yet another allusion to impending death. Clearly, the Old Man is doomed, but does not want to have died in vain.

Socrates was condemned to execution by drinking a potion made of hemlock berries. In the dialogue between Bero and the Old Man Bero is not so much talking of his father as of the resistance to the regime which his father represents. When he uses the word "you," he means "people like you." What does the new regime offer instead of freedom? The story is told that the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes went about in daylight carrying a lighted lantern. When asked why he did so, he said he was looking for an honest man. Note how the beggars run a variation on this story.

After Bero leaves the stage the beggars discuss the pageantry carried out by governments which conceal their crimes while gaining international acceptance through showy ceremonies. The mock ceremony culminating in cries of "We want Him" is probably meant to remind the audience of the mob's cry for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:6-15). Blindman's speech is a parody of an ignorant, bigoted European colonizer, pretending not to be interested in the mineral wealth of the colonized nations and maintaining the necessity of imperialism in the face of the winds of change. What sorts of negative stereotypes does he articulate about African cultures?

The speech culminates in a recitation of the formula of the new regime, implying that nothing has changed. The exploitation and oppression of colonialism has now become postcolonial exploitation and oppression. The Old Man's long speech dwells on this theme. A "cat-house" is a house of prostitution. A "poor box" is a box in a church where donations may be put to aid the poor. An heresiarch is a leading heretic, a disbeliever. The usual expression, "the ends justify the means" is often used to excuse crimes of oppression. If the purpose is worthy, then normally immoral means may be used to achieve it. Here the phrase is mocked by saying "the end shall justify the meanness." John 1:1 says "In the beginning was the Word" which is taken to be both Jesus and God. The new faith began not with God but with its priesthood. What does Aafaa mean by saying there is no division in this new religion? Monsieur l'homme sapiens is French for "Mr. Homo Sapiens."

The Old Man's last long speech is a brilliant series of puns in which he shows how debased the new faith is. Ham is forbidden to Muslims, as it is to Jews. An ashram is a Hindu place of spiritual retreat. A kibbutz is an Israeli commune. How many people are trying to kill each other at the end of this play? Who wins?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss how Soyinka revealed the possible causes of war in Madmen *and Specialists.*

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear that wars are not good experiences to humanity. It diminishes human integrity and arouses man's animalistic nature to the extent of destroying feelings and fancy. In The Last Duty, we see people fighting each other against the backdrop of immoralities. Many people are victims of the war because of fabricated facts. The civil war in Nigeria provided a lot of traumatic facts in the development of this novel. The poem 'Casualties' by J.P. Clark makes a case for those whom we thought may not be victims of the war. It exposes us to the horrendous effects of the war and the effects on the society. In Madmen and *Specialists Soyinka reenacts the possible reasons for war as war itself is* cause by madmen who never bothers about its after effects.

The three texts under study have given us different views and experiences of the Nigerian-Biafran war. War literatures are records of historical realities. It seems to be a new literary development. It is expected that these new literary development will force writers to become more experimental in motivating character, in fashioning new techniques in the fictional use of history to portray the evil effects of war on ordinary lives, and more war literatures will focus on the common soldier or civilian rather than the general on horseback.

5.0 SUMMARY

War has been an ever-recurring theme in human affairs all through the ages. Myths, legends, epics and other manifestations of oral and written literature bequeath to us traditional stories of war in ages past. Many of the world's notable philosophers, statesmen and writers have had one thing or the other to say about man and his numerous wars. A tragic conflict such as war must give rise to stories because it is an event that is capable of altering the human situation drastically and completely. War is one man-made tragedy, a primitive monster, very ubiquitous and invincible even to modern man and his superior intelligence. Rulers prosecute it while political philosophers rationalize it. Even the law under certain circumstances justifies it. War has been portrayed variously as a heroic and glorious adventure, as an evil that destroys and kills, and as bringing out the best and the worst in individuals and societies. It has been described as an inevitable manifestation of natural human, aggressive instincts.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the major concerns in most Nigerian war literatures.
2. Discuss the war horrendous effects of war in The Last Duty
3. What are the major causes of civil wars as revealed in Madmen *and Specialists?*
4. Using J. P. Clark's 'Casualties', explain the categories of war victims.
5. Appreciate the major themes resulting from wars as exemplified in the three texts under study in this unit.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Clark John Pepper (1970). Casualties: Poems 1966-1968. London: Longman.

Ofeimun, Odia (1981). The Poet Lied. London: Longman.

Okpewho, Isidore (1976). The Last Duty. London: Longman.

Feuser W. (1986). "Anomy and beyond: Nigeria's Civil War in Literature", Presence Africaine 137-138, 113-151.

Soyinka Wole (197). Madmen and Specialists. London: Methuen.

UNIT 4 NIGERIAN LITERATURES & ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1: LOCAL COLOUR

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 1: Transliteration in Okara's The Voice
3.3 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 2: Proverbs in Ohaeto's The Voice of the Night Masquerade
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the way in which the Nigerian writers have been applying the English language in order to accommodate the various linguistic tastes of Nigerians. Nigeria is a complex linguistic setting of over 500 languages. In each of these languages there are writers. English language becomes the main communication tool because of the need to allow the work reach wider audience within and outside the country. However, there have been attempts at indigenizing the English language used in Nigerian literature. One of these ways is the application of local colour tradition. By local colour, we mean the use of Nigerian expressions that capture Nigerian culture and environment although expressed in English language. They include transliteration of Nigerian language in English, the consistent use of proverbs and other forms of lores. We shall examine this using some Nigerian novels, poetry and drama in the exemplifications.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

appreciate the use of local colour in Nigerian literature
identify local colours in Nigerian literature
discuss proverbs as consistent local colour in Nigerian literature
see transliteration as a way of realizing local colour in Nigerian literature
accept local colours as a way of identifying Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In a situation where two or more languages and cultures are in contact, there is bound to be linguistic and cultural interference. This is the situation with Nigerian literature of English expression where important socio-cultural habits and traits are expressed in a foreign language. Many Nigerian writers have appropriated and reconstituted the English language in their text through some linguistic processes which include loan words, loan coinages, loan blends, pidginisation, code switching and the like. This is one way they strive to find a solution to the problem of bilingualism and biculturalism by relying heavily on the domestication of the imported tongue, which is English language. Many of these writers have deviated from the international literary norms {Linguistically}. They have not falsified the tradition they have transformed into the English Language. Rather they have been able to bridge the gap between the local colour variety and the appropriate English language diction suitable to the characters and themes they depict. The linguistic innovations in their works offer outlets for creativity in language and put a new life into the imported language. At this stage of globalization, Nigerian writers cannot afford to deny their works of wide readership; therefore they should consider the appropriation and reconstruction of English as a medium of Nigerian literature.

The place of English in the socio-political and economic activities of Nigeria has been widely discussed. Also, the status of the language as a dominant medium of African literature has been critically commented upon. African literary critics and writers have been arguing for and against the use of the imported language as the prevailing medium of African literature. As such, writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Akachi Ezeigbo among others try to Africanize the English language by adding local words of African origin. They use these local words firstly to express their meaning and for the reader to read and identify with them and secondly to create a unique language of its own, an African version of the English language. Using local words adds life and beauty to the otherwise dull English language and some things that are associated with Africa and the African culture which have no equivalent in English are easily introduced into the English language through their writings.

In a situation where two languages and two cultures are in contact, there will certainly be linguistic and cultural interferences. Such is the case of African literature of English expression where important cultural habits and geo-political phenomena are expressed. Since English is a “global

language", it has been modified and domesticated by writers across the globe. Even the new generation writers have also domesticated the English language in their literary texts. Literature depends primarily on language; it is language put in action, that is, language put into practice.
The African writer's effort in translating his or her multilingual or multicultural postcolonial experiences into literary work is always fraught with problems. Therefore he is often faced with the dilemma of negotiating between the English language in its ancestral place and the English language in the Diaspora.

This quandary has motivated some African writers to advocate a linguistic decolonization of African literature. For instance, Ngugi advocates the need to decolonize African cultures, including the return to writing in vernacular languages. He believes that Africans must use their languages and people as a strength with which they can leap into tomorrow. Osundare also reacts insistently against the continuity of writing African literature in foreign languages. Most Nigerian writers use local colour words because they believe that no foreign language can adequately express native experiences and problems and there are some words that cannot be easily translated in English, thus such words are transliterated into the English language in writing.

There are two major opposing camps that can be isolated in African writer's views on the desirability or otherwise of English as the literary language of the continent. The first camp advocates the abrogation of the use of the language as the prime medium of African literature; Ngugi and Osundare are key members of this exclusive class. On the other hand, the second group calls for the appropriation and reconstitution of English as a medium of African literature. With this, the group believes that the rigid hegemony of the language can be unmasked. This method is an attempt to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own. Consequently, the postcolonial African writer expresses his thoughts through an Africanized version of the almighty English language. According to Chinua Achebe, English is being made to "bear the burden" of the post colonial writer's experience (62). The African writers, for instance, always strive to free themselves from the standard rules of the imported language by using a unique form of the language whose standard version is being interrogated and subverted to be able to express their sense of otherness.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the need for the domestication of English language in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 1: Transliteration in Okara's The Voice

In Gabriel Okara's The Voice, there is a high experimentation with language. He tries to recapture Ijaw language in English. Gabriel Okara tries through experimentation to enrich foreign languages by injecting 'black blood' into their rusty joints. Gabriel Okara in an article reprinted from Dialogue, Paris in Transition magazine in September 1963:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African

> ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion that the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. . . . In order to capture the vivid images of African speech, I had to eschew the habit of expressing my thoughts first in English. It was difficult at first, but I had to learn. I had to study each Ijaw expression I used and to discover the probable situation in which it was used in order to bring out the nearest meaning in English. I found it a fascinating exercise.

Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed with using his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission? We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages?

Gabriel Okara, in The Voice, introduces Okolo, a man who dreams of a just and transparent society, is arrested and imprisoned for sharply lashing out at a corrupt regime, and is eventually delivered out of his dilemma by an old, illiterate woman in whose wisdom are personified the values and worth of society. The linguistic experimentation is unique. We see the attempts by Okara to realize his Ijaw tongue in English. We see a lot of linguistic aberrations in terms of semantic realizations. In English, the expressions do not carry much meaning and where there are meanings, they seem absurd, complex and distorted. The attempts at experimenting with language make the novel quite unreadable in terms of English usage. Even the Ijaw readers of the novel who are not familiar with English forms may find the text uninteresting.
For instance, the novel started thus: "Some of the town's men said that Okolo's eyes were not good and that his head was not correct." (1)
In an attempt at realizing the Ijaw language in the novel, we see such expressions as:

i. "he has no shadow…"
ii. "his inside is bad…"
iii. "his head is not correct…"
iv. "his eyes were not good…"

These expressions have been termed 'poetic', 'absurd', 'complex' and 'incomprehensible'. The fact remains that Okara tries to create a unique Nigerian novel by realizing his mother tongue using transliteration as linguistic process. The question of whether he achieved his aimed has been the concern of linguists and literary critics. The fact still remains that Okara has attempted a form for the realization of the Nigerian novel through the process of transliteration.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the effectiveness of transliteration in Okara's The Voice.

3.3 Nigerian Literature and Local Colour 2: Proverbs in Ohaeto's The Voice of the Night Masquerade

Proverbs picture practically all the details of everyday life of ordinary people and they can refer to practically any situation. Occasionally, among many tribes in Nigeria like the Igbos, proverb is the major vehicle of expression in the art of conversation and is regarded very highly because it serves to arm, to inform, to educate, to instruct and very often to embellish speech. The use of proverb in some Nigerian poetry is very instrumental to the passing across of the message of the poet to the reader. In Achebe's words, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Things Fall Apart, 6). Proverbs have a wide range of subject matter and they are based on every aspect of societal life. It captures the African style of rhetoric; expresses the African affinity of their culture. In the words of Obiechina (1975):

> Proverbs are the kernels, which contain the wisdom of the traditional people. They are philosophical, moral expositions shrunk to a few words, and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to memory... These proverbs derive from a detailed observation of the behaviour of human beings, animals, plants and natural phenomena, from folklore, beliefs, attitudes, perception, emotions and the entire systems of thought.... (156)

In African literature, the literary and cultural significance of proverbs is the fact that they provide a rich source of imagery and succinct

expression on which more elaborate forms are drawn. In its simplest form, a proverb is a saying, which has some moral to teach. These morals could be explicit or implied. The language of a proverb is generally image filled, simple and interesting. Every language has its proverbs, often, the same proverbs occur among several different people. In some cases, similar proverbs come from the same source, but in other cases, they probably have no connection. In Africa, proverbs play prominent roles in communication. Values, beliefs and traditions of a people are often reflected in their proverbs, parables, and incantations, etc. Ezenwa Ohaeto exploited the rich Igbo proverbs in The Voice of the *Night Masquerade. It gives his work a local colour quality. He believes* that the language of proverbs is more than ordinary words. Some of these words refer to objects, which on their own are symbolic or represent something else. Ohaeto uses proverbs in his collection of poems to give force and dignity to his work.

Ohaeto's choice of proverbs in his collection of poems reflects the warning, moral as well as philosophical values in the Igbo societies. We could say that proverbs are used to intensify language in order to be effective. Language has been known to serve man's creativity. The Igbos are known to appreciate wisdom, knowledge and understanding in childhood use of proverbs. It is therefore not surprising to see Ohaeto employ extensive use of proverbs in his work. For example:

"What destroys the yams also destroys the cocoyams" (18). This proverb is Ohaeto's way of warning that whatever affects the head of a house also affects the entire house, and so, precautions should be taken when such cases of destruction arises.
Another is:

> "The bone dog could not eat the fowl wants to eat" {29}.
> Ohaeto uses proverbs in his poems as forces for teaching morals and as medium of warning.

His use of proverbs focuses on their positive cultural functions. One of the most significant applications of African orature in the poems is the use of proverbs. Ohaeto's competence in the use of proverbs reflects his possession of cultural wisdom and rhetorical skills.

Ohaeto's poetic vision in The Voice of the Night Masquerade is inspired by the indecency, disorderliness and untruthfulness in the society which are caused by the misdemeanor in the family, the deviance on the streets, the abnormalities in public affairs and the incongruities of socio-political activities. His vision is simply art for orderliness, justice and awareness. He takes sides out of his conviction of what is right. The

Voice of the Night Masquerade is a heroic celebration of nature-sun, water, wind, sea- and also a celebration of tradition- spirits and masquerades. It however goes beyond mere celebration of ecological changes to satirize man's indecency in the society, injustice in socio-political activities and man's excesses in the society, that is, harmful and thoughtless actions that are socially or morally unacceptable. The proverbs are functional:

> The creeper that tells
> An elephant halt immediately
> Must accompany the elephant
> {'A call at dusk' 15}

This warns better on the abnormalities of public affairs and the incongruities of socio-political activities. In explaining this proverb, we see the creeper and the elephant as a minor and a major respectively. Ohaeto's style of proverb use is expressed in a way that is clear and easily understood, vibrant, imaginative, intellectual and full of morals. It is of our time and the picture of our age. It carries the feelings and emotions of modern man. Its realities are present today and will perhaps colour tomorrow.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the poetic effects of proverb use in Ohaeto's The Voice of the *Night Masquerade?*

4.0 CONCLUSION

The question of domestication of English in African literature has been a major concern of African writers. Nigerian writers beginning from Amos Tutuola have been experimenting with the English language. Others follow. Even Chinua Achebe who claimed to write in Standard English has one time or another delved into local colour, transliteration and the application of local lores in his writing. This is evident with the use of proverbs, clichés, and oral forms of communication. In almost all his novels, he created a linguistic style which other African writers have towed. Gabriel Okara stands out. His language in The Voice was experimental. Ohaeto makes proverbs useful tools in his poetry.

5.0 SUMMARY

The question still remains: must we write in English qualify as African literature? The whole area of literature and audience, and hence of language as a determinant of both the national and class audience did not really figure: the debate has been more about the subject matter and

the racial origins and geographic habitation of the writer. English (like French and Portuguese) was assumed to be the natural language of literary and even political mediation between African people in the same nation and between Africa and other nations. In some instances these European languages were seen as having a capacity to unite African peoples against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographic state. Thus, the application of local colours whether through translation/transliteration or through the application of local lores has the singular tendency of making Nigerian (African) literature operate in unique style.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. What is transliteration? Explain its application in Okara's The *Voice.*
2. Nigerian writers have been attempting domesticating English. Discuss the forms of this domestication.
3. Assess the use of proverbs in Ohaeto's poetry.
4. The question of language in African literature has been in favour of English. Explain the advantage it English has over African languages.
5. The use of local colour makes Nigerian literature unique in style. Defend this statement.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Achebe, Chinua (1975). Morning yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann.

Obiechina, Emmanuel (1975). Culture, Tradition and Society in West *African Novel. London: Heinemann.*

Ohaeto, Ezenwa(2000). The Voice of the Night Masquerade. Ibadan: Kraft.

Okara, Gabriel (1964). The Voice. London: Heinemann.

UNIT 5 NIGERIAN LITERATURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2: PIDGIN/SPECIAL ENGLISH

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Novel
3.3 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Poetry
3.4 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Drama
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study another aspect of Nigerian literature which has to do with the use of pidgin or special English forms. In the process of domestication of English or in the process of creation of literatures that should serve the purpose of reaching the educated and the uneducated, some Nigerian writers have used Pidgin English or Special English forms in their literary works. Ken Saro Wiwa called the English language he used in his novel Sozaboy, 'Rotten English'. Some other writers, especially poets, have used Pidgin English completely in their works. We shall examine this special English forms as used in some Nigerian literatures.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students will be able to:

understand the use of Pidgin/Special English forms in Nigerian literature
appreciate the creativity in the usage
discuss the reasons for such usage in Nigerian literature
explain the need for such usage in Nigerian literature
see the usage as domestication of English in Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

It is a general belief by some Nigerian writers that Pidgin language provides an appropriate medium for the exploitation of oral traditions in literature, for it acts as a bridge between the orality of verbal communication and the formality of the written word. For instance, Nigerian Pidgin poetry is constructed as part of this utilization of oral resources, which has revitalized the literary scene and the poetic tradition. However, the development and utilization of Pidgin as a language medium in Nigerian poetry owes its manifestation to the reality of its profuse use along the coast and also in the hinterland, where the indigenous Nigerian languages predominate.

All the same, the origin of Nigerian Pidgin has been stated in a pioneering study as "essentially a product of the process of urbanization, while its origins lie historically in the early contacts between Africans and Europeans. The rapidly growing towns of Nigeria have increasingly become the melting pots of the many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria, and Pidgin seems to be today a very widely spoken lingua franca, many town and city dwellers being at least bilingual, in Pidgin and an indigenous language" (Mafeni, 98). Similarly, a later study which examines the origins of Nigerian Pidgin confirms that it "arose from the urgent communication needs of the contact between the visiting Europeans (in the end the English) and their multi-lingual Nigerian hosts. Stabilization of this contact led to the stabilization and expansion of Nigerian Pidgin (NP)" (Elugbe and Omamor, 21). These assertions emphasize the prevalent view discernible in the definition of Pidgin as a "communication system that develops among people who do not share a common language. In early stages of contact, such as the first encounters between British sailors and coastal West Africans or between American soldiers and the Vietnamese, a make-shift system emerges involving a few simple structures - mostly commands - and a limited number of words, drawn almost entirely from the language of the dominant group" (Todd, 3). Although the issues of domination and its appendage, exploitation, provided a political focus in the areas in which Pidgin was a medium of communication, the development of the language was affected by several other socio-cultural factors.

The most prominent socio-cultural factor was the fact that Pidgin was associated with a lower social status, which aided in the social stratification of the people who use it. This feeling of contempt was originally informed by a false sense of racial superiority, which has now been replaced by a misdirected sense of elitist superiority. Pidgin has made a noticeable linguistic advance in spite of the stigma that has often

been attached to its use, especially in elitist circles. Although some educationists and other literates still snobbishly and hypocritically condemn the use of Pidgin, claiming that it leads children to make a poor use of the 'Queen's English, ' it is true that among the people in the Anglophone region and for quite a sizeable number in the francophone zone, Pidgin is the main linguistic medium of communication. Nevertheless, the existence and development of Pidgin are the result of its own internal dynamics, and this internal dynamism of Nigerian Pidgin particularly has been aided in recent times by the production of works of literature in Pidgin and also by the arguments of critics who have found either merit in such works or possibilities in the language.

Some critics believe that Pidgin is a "practical, viable, flexible language distilled in the alembic of our native sensibility and human experience. This lusty language, which transcends our geographical and political boundaries grows daily before our eyes. It is our natural, unifying weapon against the divisive forces of English. It is believed that the adoption of Pidgin will automatically make the writer national by domesticating his outlook and sensibility and on adopting Pidgin and becoming a real nationalist the Nigerian writer can now speak with the knowledge of an insider (35), although Osofisan takes exception when he argues that "the use of Pidgin cannot automatically make any writer patriotic or progressive; that will depend finally on other factors, such as the consciousness and purpose of the particular artist" (Osofisan, 43). However, he agrees that Pidgin is a viable language and capable of sustaining works of literature.

It is clearly this capability of Pidgin to sustain works of literature - since it is a language that bridges orality, a language that absorbs several cultural elements as it communicates - which has made it yield creative possibilities for the Nigerian writers. However, a stress on Pidgin poetry in this study does not mean that it is only in poetry that the Pidgin language has been utilized. Although in the works of the popular Onitsha market literature there is no indication of a sustained use of Pidgin as a language of creative communication, Emmanuel Obiechina points out that "some authors make their illiterate or semi-literate characters speak in West African Pidgin English. Sometimes they take pains to explain such idiosyncratic usages in their prefaces" (Obiechina, 86). But the later works that emerged after the literary outburst of the Onitsha market literature indicated artistic dimensions to the use of Pidgin in Nigerian literature.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the importance of Pidgin English in Nigerian literature.

3.2 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Novel

Nigerian novelists have been in the lead in terms of experimentation with English language in their works. There are handfuls of Nigerian novels written in either Pidgin English or special English form. In this sub unit, we will use two novels for the study. Interestingly, both of them are war novels written about two decades apart and by an old and a younger writer: Ken Saro Wiwa's Sozaboy (1985) and Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation (2005). The English language forms used in both novels seem alike except some syntactic and lexical differences. Ken Saro-Wiwa called the English use in Sozaboy, rotten. However, the English used in Beast of No Nation has no such tagging but we choose to tag it special English form because there are mixtures of Standard English and Pidgin English in the narration.

1. Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy (1985) [Rotten English]

The plot of Saro-Wiwa's civil war novel, Sozaboy (1984) revolves round the young hero whose real name is "Mene". In this novel, the emphasis is not on action, but on character. It is not the events, but the man that makes the events possible. Attracted by fine uniforms, glittering buttons, and the glamorized life of a soldier, Mene yields to his young wife's pressure to join in a war he knows nothing about. He becomes so confused that he ends up fighting unwittingly on both sides of the conflict without noticing any difference between the two. His metamorphosis from an apprentice-driver into a "sozaboy" (soldier-boy) marks a significant phase in the development of his character and life. He undergoes a physical, as well as a spiritual journey and plies the route from innocence to maturity. Because he is constantly on the road and because of his garrulous nature, he sees everything and tells us everything he knows about the two sides of the conflict. The journey motif is symbolically linked with the quest motif in the story. The quest motif manifests in various ways: the quest for manhood which is also linked with the quest to become a combatant soldier. His perception develops gradually, with each experience, each incident, each encounter, each trip, helping him to gain a clearer insight into the true nature of things. Along the line, he marries a young beautiful city-wise Lagos girl whose beauty, femininity, pragmatism and boldness intoxicate him. To earn and maintain her love, he enlists in the army to become a "sozaboy": "I will do anything so that this fine girl can be my wife and I can be sleeping with her on one bed every night," he says (37).

The corrupt recruitment officers into the army extract a large fee from him before enlisting him. As a new recruit, he is very proud of his uniform and his gun. His gun almost becomes an object of worship. He cuddles it, adores it just as he does his wife Agnes. But as he is unable to

raise up children by his wife because he has to dash off to war soon after marrying her, he is also not able to fire his gun because the rifle assigned to him is faulty. He does not quite succeed in realizing the three ambitions he sets his youthful heart and energy to accomplish. The war thwarts his plan to become the first licensed driver in his hometown, a task he has committed everything in life to accomplish. His honeymoon with his beautiful bride is also cut short by his enlistment in the army. His efforts, vision, passion and money are wasted as the war claims his wife and his mother- the two people that matter most to him in life. And having joined the army at a great cost, he is unable to experience the fulfillment of an accomplished soldier. He loses all that is dear to him in life in order for him to gain full awareness of himself, his environment, and life generally. Both as a civilian and as a soldier, Mene is not a violent person. He never even fires a shot throughout his stint in the army.

He keeps on asking why the war is being fought, but no one either within or outside the army is able to give him any answer. But at the end he learns when his romantic ideas collide with his painful experiences, that war and military life involve death, suffering and pain. Things, events, actions, people and the war must now be seen in their correct and realistic perspectives. It is bygone to those alluring “sweet dreams”. He sees the meaninglessness and the futility of war in one instant not as preached by pacifist or by a senior adult, but as it really is when all the officers and many of the company boys are butchered in the first air raid. Now every instinct in him tells him to desert. He runs through forests and creeks not minding “Whether tiger or snake or leopard or any dangerous animal is in the forest” (113).

Saro- Wiwa uses the new maturity and insight that Mene has just gained to undercut the glory of war by making him experience hardship, danger, disappointment and bereavement. He gains maturity from the ordeals and stresses he undergoes. With the benefit of experience he tries to redefine war, throwing into the ditch his earlier fanciful notions about warfare. War is a double-edged sword, capable of cutting this way and that way. The tragic death of his mother, wife and the destruction of his house in a bomb blast inflict a permanent injury on his psyche. He discovers that he has given too much of himself to the machinery of war. Mene would have loved to return to the protective arms of his mother and his wife and continue his life. But he realizes that the old life has passed away. The war has ended, but not until it swept away the nature and texture of the pre-war society. The search for his mother and his wife through all the refugee camps enables him to see at first hand the tragedy occasioned by a war in which he was an enthusiastic participant. He witnesses for himself the sufferings of the civilian population, the loss of life and property and the ruthless annihilation of many

communities. One very important theme of this novel is the experience of the common people who are caught up in the war. The war which had promised to build up Mene's personality ends up destroying his dream and hopes: "…war is useless …uniform and everything is just to cause confusion … (172). "War is a very bad and stupid game," he concludes (151). Saro-Wiwa has chosen this young hero to make his comments on the Nigerian Civil War and to offer a deep and direct insight into the fate of the common people who were caught in this tragic drama of destruction.

The young loquacious soldier is beyond embarrassment in his chosen idiolect as he strives to communicate in a language he has hardly mastered. But he gets by in a very funny and interesting way. He distorts, concocts, breaks, remolds and transfer words and phrases from British English to Pidgin idiolect without guilt and without sensitivity to the established grammar of the language. He is completely excited by the language he has fashioned to express himself in. There is no doubt that the novel embodies the profound essence of the Nigerian Civil War experience. The author concentrates on the downtrodden, the class of people on which the war and any war for that matter has its most devastating effects. The success of the novel rests on the innovative stylistic and narrative techniques the writer has chosen to objectify the experience he expounds in the text. The narrative captures the shock, confusion, and dehumanization that the war produces in the young, the helpless and defenseless population. The novel shows the personal and social consequences of war in a way that many other novels about war do not. The following extracts should guide our understanding of the language:

i. "And as I am marching with gun and singing, prouding, all the people will come and look at me. They will say how I am brave man. Very brave man. Then Agnes will like me. And Zaza cannot make yanga for me again ... And no woman whether Simple Defence or no Simple Defence cannot begin to give me order on the road ... And I will wear uniform!" (Sozaboy pp. 54)

ii. "Suppose as the soza captain come talk, enemy begin enter Iwoama? Then he will kill all of us plus myself. Then he will enter every place plus Dukana. Then they will carry away my mama plus Agnes and then begin to use Agnes." (Sozaboy pp. 87)

iii. "[he] will just get a license and [he] will find lorry to drive. Then [he] will get plenty money and my mama and Agnes and myself will be happy". [9]

Here, we notice the use of English in ways that do not define a given standard. The expressions above show pidgin, wrong usage and standard forms. In essence, the language is rotten

2. Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation (2005) [Special English]

Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation derives its title from a coinage made famous by Afrobeat King Fela Anikulapo-Kuti in his popular critical song of the same title. This debut novel about children in armed conflict has striking parallels with Fela's song for its social commentary and poignancy. The book is about the egregiousness of allowing the most valuable asset of our humanity –children- to be sucked into the horrors of war. It is about lost innocence and a children's story replete with horrors and realities of contemporary African politics and the destructive consequences of its unending civil strife.

Just as it began, Iweala's book ends with a whimper, "And I am saying to her, fine. I am all this thing. I am all this thing, but I am also having mother once, and she is loving me". What the end does not capture, is the torment and conflicting emotions embedded in this pint sized but powerful book. And neither does the end capture the blood-soaked reality of children caught in the vortex of armed conflict, of which cause they are none the wiser. This book is just as much about lost innocence as it is about failed societies and their decrepit values. Child soldiers, their hellish lives and the mayhem they cause on the African continent is no longer an aberration. Anyone lucky enough to have been shielded from this gory reality needs to pick up this book for some lessons learned- "All we are knowing is that before the war we are children and now we are not". Using with great dexterity a mix of refined Pidgin English, truncated syntax, and a flourish of nuanced and flowing style befitting of his Harvard pedigree, Iweala entraps the reader, as if one is entranced on a vivid life-sized play, which unfolds in a macabre fashion.

The slanted reportage form, coming as it were from an innocent but transformed child adds vigor and panache to the storytelling. This is clearly a script cleverly written from an insider's perspective or wealth of research, but it is invariably the handiness of Iweala's language that gives this debut work of fiction its powerful enchantment and unquestionable originality. Set in an unstated war ravaged country in West Africa (There are many from Sierra Leone to Liberia) the lead character, a teenage boy Agu (Nigerian?), is conscripted – indeed kidnapped- into the ranks of a guerrilla unit as the drums of war engulfed his homestead. Having lost his father to another set of brigands, and hunted incessantly by that reality, from which he had narrowly escaped, Agu elects to survive by the laws of the jungle and

the conventional wisdom of beat them or join them after the rest of his family had been evacuated by the UN. But his youth renders him inescapably susceptible to the machinations and dodgy, yet protective nature of his new commander. This was by itself a recipe for disaster. And so the mis-education of Agu and boys of his kind begins that soon enough, the victim become the oppressor as Agu rehashes the wickedness visited on his father by taking on the wicked ways of war and the seemingly normal tendency to commit remorseless atrocities, if that was indeed the only way to stay alive and survive the vicissitude of a war without norms.

Iweala has certainly drawn from the richness of the homeland of his ancestors in writing this book. Born well after the Biafran war, he must have tapped richly into the residual tales from his family about that gory civil war in which young lads were abducted from their defenseless parents and from refugee camps and deployed as spies (Boys Company) into enemy camps on reconnaissance missions. In reality, however, this work is a poignant reminder of the collective failure of societies to protect children from the scourge of war. It is also about the mindlessness of combatants to win every battle at all cost, even if it means the annihilation of pubescent broods, who in seeking out to kill, become themselves easy targets of friends and foes alike.

Beasts of No Nation is a tug of war, in which the combatants and not just the ganja weed-type militants exist in a restive environment and must contend with the drag between rationality and foolishness, reason against futility and abnormality against spirituality. How else does one contemplate and indeed explain, the transformation of an otherwise loving, bookish boy reared by a Christian mother into a zombie, capable of audacious mayhem and indiscriminate and unprovoked killings, safe for his being drugged or brainwashed. As Agu reveals, “But these things are before the war and I am only remembering them like dream”. The essence of abnormality also comes in different forms and modes to the extent that absurdity becomes real and palpable; “Everyone is looking like one kind of animal, no more human”. Inescapably in such an incoherent setting, it is little wonder that Agu metamorphosed into a killing machine clearly distanced from normality and divorced from reality as well as from his days of innocence. His past in its totality is fleeting; merely a cameo recall of the life he once knew – a fun-filled life of schoolyard friends, loving family, religious and church activities, and in sum, a life of unfettered adolescence. Characteristically cultist, Agu’s life follows a dependency spiral to nothingness, except for the braggadocio and gun-backed confidence. Meanwhile, for fear of ostracization and as much as from lack of a credible alternative, his everyday living becomes gang like, and one in which he must survive by his wits, by the trust and camaraderie of his fellow soldiers and the

deceptive altruism of his commander, while seemingly oblivious of his descent into the inhumane and bottomless abyss of war.

Beasts of No Nation may also be symmetric to indigenous rites of passage and coming of age. Bloodletting, but certainly not homicide or brutal murder has in the African context, been a way for a child to claim his manhood. Regrettably, some have stretched this notion to its breaking point as a way of proving that manhood is achieved when man can dominate his environ and those around him either legally or otherwise. Hence killing with impunity as rankling as it might be, has become a new niche that amplifies the cliché that all is fair in war and love. But the reality is that no one argues with a mad man with a loaded gun and there are plenty of guns in the wrong hands including children in many parts of Africa –guns that that sustain the profit lines of those who make and trade them.

Agu's escapism into the throes of war is not incidental nor a matter of rationalized choice. If there was truly a choice, it was not to suffer the fate of his father, who was shot in his presence. Being a boy soldier, however, offered Agu outlets and assurances of food, power, acceptance and perhaps, the guarantee of being alive another day. Soon enough, yielding to the fear of being taunted, he machetes a man to death nonplussed. Later on, he kills a woman and her daughter, as if butchering them were his final induction rite. Perhaps it was his provenance of being a damn good child soldier. Through it all, Agu's subdued value haunted him unceasingly. Add to this his personal trauma of being a toy boy to those who must satisfy their sexual proclivities and depravity at all cost. Through the seamless strands of roiling guns, blood, sex, hunger and mayhem, Iweala insinuates a twist of serendipity to an already twisted life, when Agu seeks elusive redemption from his very conflicted existence. But hope is furlong and out of reach.

If Agu had a choice it was to live or die. He opted for the former. And given such options, most grown men would probably capitulate and do the same. Unsurprisingly in the face of such an ironic choice Agu validates his role by asking, "What else can I be doing?" In a true show of survival instinct, he befriends Strika – his dumb, dingbat tormentor, who would not dare offer an answer to the question, "What is it like to be killing somebody?" The bestiality in this book is beyond redemption. Yet it does offer a modicum of redemption by delving into a heinously vexatious subject. What else, beyond mind-warping drugs, psychotic "gun juice' and blatant bestiality will make it impossible for a person, be it child or man to distinguish between his fellow human being and a goat. But like Agu confirms, "I am not knowing what is farmer and what is goat".

Beast of No Nation is a nerve-racking novel that raises more questions than it attempts to answer or shed light on. When Agu for the umpteenth time asks another contemptuous question, "How can I know what is happening to me?" it becomes stark to the reader that such questions are - their simplicity and rhetorical flourish notwithstanding - unrepentantly gut wrenching. Indeed, how can this be happening to Africa? The answer, like the old song says, is blowing in the wind. Consider the following extracts:

i. "And I am saying to her, fine. I am all this thing. I am all this thing, but I am also having mother once, and she is loving me"

ii. "But these things are before the war and I am only remembering them like dream".

iii. "Everyone is looking like one kind of animal, no more human"

iv. "What else can I be doing?" "What is it like to be killing somebody?"

v. "I am not knowing what is farmer and what is goat".

Like Sozaboy, there are marked pidgin and standard forms combined. The language here is used as characterization to capture the age, education and experience of the narrator

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate clearly the Rotten English in Sozaboy from the Special English in Beast of no Nation.

3.3 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Poetry

Historically, among the pioneer poets of West Africa there were writers who made use of Pidgin even as they created other poems in English. In his collection Africa Sings (1952) Dennis Osadebay, a pioneer poet, makes use of Pidgin in one poem entitled "Black Man Trouble." Here, he is much more adventurous than even many contemporary Nigerian poets, as he dramatizes the themes through the use of a character who is lamenting not only the injustice of his race but also his oppression as a colonial subject. This four-stanza poem commences with a general examination of the fate of the black man. The syntax of the Pidgin poem is not taxing, for Osadebay is clearly influenced by the ideas associated with the placement of words in English. However, the artistic element in the poem that is portrayed through the deliberate dissociation of the persona from the issue of the lament in the first stanza contributes to the

arousal of empathy in the reader. The poet indicates that the black person encounters enormous problems ("face big strife") in order to acquire even "some little food" for "him belly" (his stomach). Thus unconsciously the reader agrees with the poet in the subsequent stanzas that his "heart be clean, my word be true," but "why must my feet be in your chain?" and "you must chase me with your cane?" Even the issue of religion is utilized in this poem to demonstrate the unfair treatment of the black persona, who "no get gun," "no get bomb," and "no fit fight no more." The aspect of this hopeless situation which the poet most detests is the hypocritical use of the "cross" to "make me dumb," with the result that he is asked to close his eyes in prayer as the priest's "brudder thief my land away." The poet therefore laments the use of religion to camouflage materialistic aims. The emphatic note on which the poem ends reiterates the poet's thematic objective:

I no fit listen to more lies
I done see everything;
Dis tam I open wide my eyes
And see de tricks you bring;
You play me fair, I make you glad;
Play me selfish, I make you sad (17)

There is no doubt that this poem illustrates quite early the blend of serious issues and language experimentation which contradicts some of the recent prevalent views that Pidgin is suited for only comic situations. That erroneous impression must have developed through the popular use of Pidgin in Nigerian newspapers like Lagos Weekend and Lagos Life and on such television programs as "New Masquerade" and "Samanja." Osadebay's poem may appear humorous in some sections, but it captures with telling accuracy the problems of colonialism during that period of Nigerian history.

The achievement of that pioneer poet is extended in the early sixties by Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, whose poem "One Wife for One Man" was given in manuscript form to Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier and was subsequently published in the 1963 edition of Modern Poetry from *Africa. In this poem, Aig-Imoukhuede adopts a jocular tone to satirize* the religious injunction that polygamy is abnormal. The poet does not advocate polygamy, however, and in fact he presents several reasons for questioning the practice. The use of polygamy here as a theme serves the twin function of providing the poet with an issue that is not only traditional but also capable of forming a substantial subject for the interrogation of the cultural-conflict reality. The persona has been inundated by the injunction "One wife for one man" in the churches and law courts, with the result that he is almost deaf or, as he puts it, "my ear nearly cut." In the second stanza he argues that his ancestors "get him

wife borku [plenty]," although he agrees that "dat time done pass before white man come" (the time is past). After these seemingly trivial assertions, the persona proceeds to tabulate the reasons of infertility, excessive pride, the lack of home training or formal education, and the issue of producing male children to continue one's lineage as justification for not allowing "one wife for one man." The final stanza ends with the words:

> Suppose, self, say na so-so woman your wife dey born
> Suppose your wife sabe book, no'sabe make chop;
> Den, how you go tell man make 'e no' go out
> Sake of dis divorce? Bo, dis culture na waya O!
> Wen one wife be for one man" (Moore and Beier, 128-29).

This issue of language development through the absorption of elements from other languages is noticeable in the verse of Mamman Vatsa whose *Tori For Geti Bow Leg adds yet another dimension to Pidgin poetry,* since his work is the product of cultural experience from the northern region of Nigeria. In the forty-one poems of Vatsa's collection he explores diverse themes in such a way that he seems to have combined the attentive perception of social ethos with his own natural flair for light-heartedness. The first poem in this collection, "Our Country Law," sets the scene, as it illustrates the devious ways in which laws are fashioned to restrict womanhood. It must be stated that many of these Pidgin poets consider fundamental and worthy of castigation all issues related to the treatment of women in society. Vatsa's poem, for instance, charges that in most segments of society women are forbidden to smoke or to engage in polygamy. But the basic idea which he makes persuasive is that some of these laws are often circumvented, and he turns those instances of circumvention into metaphors in the poem.

Vatsa also criticizes prevalent attitudes that he deems detrimental to the development of society. In the poem "Woman, You Be Manure" (31) it is the punishing high rate of fertility without commensurate financial weight that merits his displeasure, while in "Wayo Man" (29) he castigates unreliability and dishonesty. As a Pidgin poet, Vatsa is certainly interested in the elimination of social vices and pretentious behaviour, like the other Pidgin poets considered here. In a poem entitled "Yanga" (which means "Useless Pride") he feels that many of those people who behave as if they possess physical power are often deluded and weak, like "chicken/im feda/wey wind/dey blow" (15). The admonition is made more forceful by the image of the chicken with its feathers flattened by the wind. It is in this use of apt imagery that Vatsa makes a striking mark as a Pidgin poet. In the poem "Apartai," which is informed by the obnoxious apartheid policy that existed for so long in

South Africa, he extends the issue to incorporate all forms of discrimination. For instance:

Bigi man latrine
wey smaller man no fit
use
dat na apartai."

Elsewhere we read:

Ten people
wey de rule
ten tousand people
bicos dem
get plenty moni
an' diffren-diffren colour
dat na apartai" (12)

Vatsa artistically elaborates upon the subject of discrimination in most human interactions in order to persuade the reader that even the trivial incidents one is likely to ignore are all appendages to the great discrimination that is transformed into the law of "apartheid." It is through this use of familiar symbols to treat social issues via new perspectives that Vatsa's poetry widens in scope. In his verse Vatsa the military man does not spare the deficiencies of the members of his profession, for the poems "Drink-Drink Soja-Soja" and "Ol' Soja Jolly Time" criticize the habit of soldiers who drink intoxicating wine excessively. At the same time he shows awareness for some of the unpleasant effects of the profession on low-ranking military personnel, for in the poem "Priva Soja Cry-Cry" he sympathizes with the ordinary soldier who bears the brunt of the labour in the barracks.

It is this awareness of social injustice which makes the poet argue in "Judgmenti Day" that, in the final analysis, each person, irrespective of his material possessions, is bound to pay for his unjust actions, since on the day of judgment "argument/no go de" (11). The stress on this "day of judgment" is clearly Vatsa' s way of drawing attention to the futile nature of such abnormal habits as the acquisition of expensive cars, as he shows in the poem "Obokun Odabo," where a "man no geti room/for sleep/e dey drive/Obokun" (39). In using the name "Obokun," said to be a Yoruba name for an expensive fish but also a term applied to Mercedes-Benz cars, the poet is satirizing an excessive acquisitive mentality, as he does again in the poem "Country Make Me Good." This poem admonishes covetousness, which makes "ya troat long," and at the same time asserts the values associated with farm work - an injunction

that is needed in a society which craves finished products without appreciating the labor associated with them.

It is certainly this issue of misplaced values that makes the poet criticize the fact that emotions often overcome the senses in human affairs, as in the title poem "Tori For Geti Bow Leg," in which a man confesses to his wife that if he had listened to his friend, she would not have been his wife. This confession leads to altercations, and Vatsa, in presenting this poem, is stressing the importance of applying a dose of wisdom to emotional issues. Thus, in his criticism he tackles all those characteristics that are foolish, like the modern woman in the poem "Modan Moda" who is unwilling to breastfeed her babies so that she can maintain erect breasts, the unpolished woman in the poem "Ye-Ye Woman" (32), the disrespectful woman in the poem "Gara-Gara" (48), and the women who gossip excessively in "Madam Tok- About" (54). Vatsa does not single out only women for censure, for he also criticizes men, as in the poem "Make-Make-Man," and especially when they engage in profitless activities in order to create false impressions. Such men are among the politicians he castigates in the poem "Promise Wey Boku" for not taking beneficial actions but instead only spouting frivolous speeches, with the result that, before the general public can benefit, "dem/Billi for Killam!" This ironic perception indicates that those who are expected to benefit from parliamentary bills put forward by politicians usually become victims of the ill- conceived ideas of those same politicians. It is clearly this perceptive power in Vatsa's poems that persuaded one critic to state that, as in "Tori For Geti Bow Leg," "Vatsa ever wrote genuinely popular poetry, poetry rooted in the accents, rhythms and feelings of common people, not versified banalities masquerading as simple, accessible 'popular' poetry" (Jeyifo, 291). In Vatsa's Pidgin poetry these feelings of common people range from the political to the social, from the personal to the public, from the mundane to the spiritual, from the psychological to the philosophical.

The pervasive nature of social criticism in Pidgin poetry reaches a high point in Ken Saro-Wiwa's "Dis Nigeria Sef." The tone of this poem emerges quite early, as the poet compares Nigeria to "water wey dey boil." The personification of Nigeria here is a means for examining the country's prevalent social ills, disorganized social services, and dilapidated infrastructures. One poetic device used by the poet is the creation of a dialogue involving the persona and Nigeria. The poet indicates that the country's soldiers, policemen, and nurses do not provide the necessary services associated with their professions, while the citizens lack originality in their religion, language, and acquisition of names. The exasperation of the persona, which emerges at intervals as the poem progresses, becomes part of the poet's technique in the addition of a folkloric dimension, as Nigeria is scolded: "Oh yes, you be

foolish yeye man/Look as you dey laugh as I dey talk/You tink say I dey joke?" (39). This abusive tone becomes clearer as a deliberate shock device when Saro-Wiwa adopts a different tone later in the poem: "But I beg you oh, Nigeria/No talk say I dey cuss you/True to God no be say, I no like you" (41). It is this patriotic love which the persona has for his country that is behind the poetic attitude, for the poet perceives the ostentatious nature of the people as responsible for the social anomalies despite the fact that the "rivers and de ocean/full of fish and oder good tings." The final segment of the poem extols the positive qualities of the country in terms of food, and Saro-Wiwa insists that some of the people

> na better man
> Dey work from morning till night
> weder soza nurse or police
> or farmer wey dey cut bush plant
> or trader wey dey sell petty petty for market
> or akowe wey dey siddon for him office" (44).

The perception of contraries in terms of the country's positive and negative characteristics takes the poem beyond the level of cataloguing impressions, for this poetic attitude is stressed in the last stanza as "dis I-love-no-love Nigeria" mannerism. This attitude also parallels that of the majority of the people, who are troubled by doubts of patriotism. Thus the poem is both a statement and an injunction, as Saro-Wiwa reflects the syntax and spelling of Pidgin words like soza (soldier), which is influenced by his mother tongue.

The collections of verse published by Mamman Vatsa and Aig-Imoukhuede in the eighties emphasized the progress which Pidgin poetry had made in two decades. But those collections were not the only works of Pidgin verse that the reading public encountered, for such well-known writers as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, and Tunde Fatunde and such lesser- known poets as Pita Okute, A. Ajakaiye, Ogunlowo, Erapi, Udenwa, Ojeifo, Bello, and Osita Ike published Pidgin poems in various anthologies. Both these well-known and lesser-known poets illustrate the basic orality manipulated through the choice and placement of Pidgin words. For instance, Ojaide, whose reputation has been established by the publication of several collections of verse in English - *Labyrinths of the Delta, The Endless Song, The Eagle's Vision, The Fate of Vultures, The Blood of Peace - includes one Pidgin poem in The Eagle's Vision.*

In this poem, entitled "I Be Somebody" (Ojaide, 69), he employs contrast as a rhetorical and artistic device as he manipulates the orality of the Pidgin language while choosing and placing his words in a manner to enhance the effect of his ideas. The persona in the poem is

proud of his abilities to "shine" shoes "like new one from supermarket" and "carry load for head from Lagos go Abuja." In addition, this persona is fertile, for his "children reach Nigerian Army" in their numbers. It is possible to argue that the fertility which this "poor man" asserts as a quality may not be positive considering his limited financial resources. However, what the poet is indicating ironically is that it is unjust and unwise to regard one's compatriots with contempt, especially when the persona is noble and selfless in helping "push your car from gutter for rain." Although the persona's reward is the splashing of "poto-poto" (watery mud) on his body, the poet still implies that his selfless services are essential.

Tunde Fatunde, has published three poems in Okike, The Anthill Annual, and Voices from the Fringe in which he exploits the resources of descriptive poetry. For example, in "Woman Dey Suffer," published in Okike, he describes the unpleasant aspects of the experience of women in society. He depicts the woman as receiving little pay despite her hard work at the office, having to return home in the evening to labor for her husband and children, and, in addition to all this responsibility, encountering several religious restrictions on her womanhood. The poet's basic contention is that:

"As we get beta woman
Na so we get Yeye Koni-Koni man
Yeye woman dey
Beta Man dey
If dis world good
Na man and woman
Make am good
If dis Obodo Nigeria bad
Na woman and man
Make am bad (98)

The poet is advocating equal treatment for all sexes, which is why his conclusion stresses social harmony.

In another poem, "Bad Belle Too Much," published in The Anthill *Annual, Fatunde again advocates amity and harmony in social* interactions. His concern is clearly to highlight the forms of injustice in the society, which is probably why he subjects his themes so seldom to complex philosophical ruminations. In addition, his poems are topical, as in the case of "Denis Obi Don Die," published in Voices from the *Fringe. The poem is based on a real-life incident in which Denis Obi, a* ten-year-old schoolboy, drowns while trying to catch fish in a small river near Sabongida-Ora in Bendel State. The poet attributes the boy's death to social injustice, which denies him parental guidance and financial protection - "Bekos in Papa and Mama/No fit pay im School

fees/Na only fifteen naira" (Garuba, 145) - and leads the headmaster to drive him away from school. All the same, it is still possible to read this poem as a metaphor in spite of its topicality, which to some extent militates against Fatunde's utilization of relevant poetic devices. His Pidgin poems are nevertheless faithful to the social and cultural tensions in contemporary Nigerian society.

Other poems in Voices from the Fringe present new thematic perspectives for both the creation and the appreciation of Pidgin poetry, as their variety of subjects touch on most aspects of modern reality. The poem "Common Wealth" by A. Ajakaiye takes up the concept of the Commonwealth of Nations, in which a "former colomaster" and several "former colo servants" are expected to assume a unitary view of reality. These Pidgin poets consider such deviant motives fundamental, and there is confirmation in Anthony Ogunlowo's "Dem Dey Kill Dem Sef" in which the poet condemns the violence of soldiers who periodically exterminate their comrades, especially "for dis time/when war no dey" (137). Complementary to this poem is Godwin Erapi's "Chopping Freedom", which demonstrates the dishonesty of one of those soldier-leaders who denies his people freedom of expression, freedom to live, and freedom to acquire education in spite of promises to the contrary. This issue of military politics is also prominent in Onuora Udenwa's "Who Send You," a poem in which he challenges the idea of "civilianized Soldiers".

In effect, the use of a persona whose ordinariness is obvious is, in most cases, not intended by the Pidgin poet to create the impression of naivete or simplemindedness. In the articulation of themes, the Pidgin poet, like other Nigerian poets who employ either English or one of the various Nigerian languages, makes use of the parabolic mode associated with the poetic persona in addition to the adoption of proverbial structures, metaphors, symbols, ironies, images, contrasts, refrain, rhythm, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. The language of the poem is mediated, but in this mediation there are varied levels of competence, which is really what determines the success of the works.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the effectiveness of Pidgin English in Nigerian Poetry.

3.4 Pidgin/Special English in Nigerian Drama

The question of language has continued to confront the Nigerian dramatist. Dapo Adelugba’s Three Dramatists in Search of a Language, therefore, would make a very interesting reading. From Ola Rotimi to Wale Ogunyemi and Tunde Fatunde among others, different

experiments on language have been carried out in their literary creativity. On a broad perspective, a few Nigerian playwrights write in their mother tongue. The reason for this is not far-fetched; the local audience for whom they write could be easily reached. Such writers do not bother much about a national or an international audience. Worthy of mention are certain Yoruba performing artists in the Western part of Nigeria like Afolabi Olabimtan, Kola Akinlade, Adekanmi Oyedele, Adebisi Aromolaran, Adeboye Babalola, Olu Owolabi and others. In the Northern and Eastern parts of the country and among the ethnic minorities, a few others exist but their creative outputs are known only to an audience of their immediate communities for whom they write.

In the South-Eastern part of the country, one of the emerging voices in indigenous playwriting is Sonny Sampson-Akpan. However, aware of the need for a national and, perhaps, an international audience, his plays like Mfon and Asabo Tale have been translated to English. A good others whose works meet international standards have had their works translated into English, the nation's lingua franca. Plays of Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola fall within this category.

However, for the Nigerian dramatist, writing in English, the question of language is a different ball-game. While Ola Rotimi has approached the matter entirely from an interpolation of cardinal indigenous Nigerian languages, sometimes representing the six geo-political zones of the country, and sometimes going further to capture the dialects of some unsung minorities in an ingeniously creative manner, Wale Ogunyemi has approached the matter in a purely transliterative manner deploying a medium which Dapo Adelugba has aptly described as "Yorubanglish" – a peculiar "Englishizing" of Yoruba expressions, words and parables. Tunde Fatunde, on his part, approaches the matter employing a special brand of Nigerian English known, simply, as "Pidgeon English" – a corrupt form of English notorious among the low-class of the society. These groups of people are in the majority, population-wise, and the medium is language-friendly to them. It should be noted that out of a population strength of over one hundred and twenty million in Nigeria, only about twenty per cent of this number is literate in the true sense of the word. While Tunde Fatunde's effort in plays like Oga na Tief Man and No Blood, No Sweat are commendable literary strides, the question of language continues to bog the minds of creative writers.

The adoption of "Pidgeon English" may not be the water-tight solution needed for the problem. This is because there are different varieties of "Pidgeon English". T he "Pidgeon English" that is spoken in Nigeria, varies among ethnic groups from the West, East, North and among the ethnic minorities like the Ijaw and the Ibibio of Niger-Delta. With a little effort, anyway, one could pick one or two meanings of the different

expressions here and there. Until the Nigerian Government shows more commitment to the advancement and promotion of education, this problem will continue to persist. Another problem with this medium is that since it is employed by academically-inclined people, it is removed from the targeted audience since plays that are written in this medium have never actually been known to have been performed in villages but in school theatre auditoria where the ready audience is already literate.

Adelugba has argued that 'the language barrier is more on the level of ideas than reality.' Elsewhere, in respect of the National Troupe, he says: 'Theatre language is not Yoruba, it is not Hausa, it is not Igbo. It is theatre and that is why the countries that have chosen the dance model have got round their problem. Once we choose the language of movement, sound, expression, then you get round the problem.' All this is true if the medium is not verbal. The moment one begins to deal with the cold texts that constitute a large part of the Nigerian theatre, the question of language becomes all too urgent.

Ogunba, almost 20 years ago, expressed the 'hope that as it (modern African drama) matures in years, it will become even more distinguished and finally achieving a form uniquely African... To do (this) however, the language question will have to be resolved in many parts of the continent.' He was aware then of the problem, underlined by the involvement of those who had chosen an idea which frustrates rather than facilitates communication. Etherton who usually takes the pain to examine every problem critically finally confesses that 'the language used in African drama is a problem for which there is no ready solution.' Yet Nigerian dramatists have made conscious efforts to relate their works to their perceived audiences. Clark, who had earlier written 'The Legacy of Caliban', believes the writer has to search within his culture. 'The task for an Ijaw', he remarks in 'Aspects of Nigerian Drama', a later essay, 'and I dare say, any Nigerian or African artist writing in a European language like English is one of finding the verbal equivalent for his characters created in their original context.' Rotimi has also stated his own approach to the issue thus: 'English, as you know, is the official medium of communication in Nigeria. Inevitably, I write for audiences who are knowledgeable in this language. However, in handling the English language in my plays, I strive to temper its phraseology to the ears of both the dominant semi-literate as well as the literate groups with ease in assimilation and clarity and identification.'

Any of the plays of Soyinka termed as 'difficult', shedding the language could have evolved from the imagination of a traditional artist. The use of traditional and accessible motifs like myth, ritual, dance and dirge situates them within a context to which Akinwumi Isola reaches in translating Death as Iku Olokun Esin which Ojewuyi directed in 1994.

But Soyinka claims he writes 'in the firm belief that there must be at least a hall full of people who are sort of on the same wave length as mine from every stratum of society and there must be at least a thousand people who are able to feel the same way as I do about something. So... I write in the absolute confidence that it must have an audience.' Osofisan, who arguably has written more popular plays than any other Nigerian literary dramatist, once translated Who's Afraid of Solarin into Yoruba as Yeepa! Solaarin Nbo, with the collaboration of Dotun Ogundeji, a teacher of Yoruba language. There is a coinage, 'Yorubanglish' by Adelugba. 'This is not just Yoruba or English or Yoruba mixed with English but the many-sided attempts to catch the flavour, tones, rhythms, emotional and intellectual content of Yoruba language and thought.' The question of English language as a possible medium for an authentic Nigerian literary drama, a drama which can reach vast audiences is now no longer a serious problem.' Plays have had very wide appeal in spite of the language. But there can be no question that a great number of the people that such plays intend to address have been excluded. Even at the very bare level where Mike now operates in the developmental theatre, vestiges of the language problem remain, and will remain for as long as English is used by only a few influential people in these parts. The origin of this problem, which constitutes for the contemporary theatre a crisis of relevance is, as hinted earlier on, to be found in the nature of education that the pioneers of the Nigerian theatre received.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Pidgin English is not the solution to proper theatre practice in Nigeria.

Assess this statement properly.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Some critics argue that Pidgin English is "used for humour as well as for character portrayal" and can also be "employed to explore deeper meanings, to explain the reasons behind a character's actions, and to project and foreground certain themes". There is no doubt that Pidgin has been deployed interestingly in the novels of Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Adaora Lily Ulasi and in the plays of Soyinka and Ola Rotimi. There are also other works that are written entirely or to a great extent in Pidgin, like Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy, Segun Oyekunle's *Kata-kata for Sufferhead, and Tunde Fatunde's No More Oil Boom, No Food No Country, Water No Get Enemy, Blood and Sweat, and Oga na Tief-Man. These works portray the varied dimensions in the use of* Pidgin to enhance modern Nigerian literature. However, it is in poetry that this language has been most effectively employed to create a bridge of orality, especially in the attempt to domesticate, develop, and exploit

its artistic resources, as we find in the works of Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, Mamman Vatsa, Ezenwa- Ohaeto, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tunde Fatunde, and Tanure Ojaide amongst others. There is no doubt that the thematic range and artistic qualities of the Pidgin literatures discussed in the foregoing portray both a development and successful experiments. The lyric quality of the poems and the use of irony, metaphor, and imagistic characterization combine to produce innovations which have helped blend the resources of Pidgin to the needs of serious poetry. The essence of these works makes it clear that the language is not an end in itself but a means to an end, thus confirming the view that language is used for the external manipulation of human thoughts [and] for man's understanding of the world in which he lives. The use of Pidgin by these poets is intended to make that manipulation and that understanding artistically better, for it portrays a medium quite close to African orality although the language has not been standardized.

5.0 SUMMARY

These Nigerian Pidgin/Special English writers have established a viable literary tradition, and in their achievement by bridging the gap between oral communication and the written medium. In addition, in their use of language they exploit its resources through the use of a folk poetics and a sensitive deployment of a range of rhetorical styles while synthesizing formal features of poetry and verbal resources to generate a new vigor in the Nigerian literary tradition. Although this study indicates that the strengths of the poets vary and that sometimes their creative works possess flaws, the conclusion is that Pidgin literature is part of the literary traditions that coalesce to make modern Nigerian literature worthy of critical attention.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain what is meant by domestication of English in Nigerian literature.
2. Discuss the importance of Pidgin in Nigerian poetry.
3. Assess the success of Pidgin English in Nigerian prose fiction.
4. Nigerian dramatists used various language forms in their art. How effective has been their experimentations?
5. Distinguish between Pidgin English and Special English as used in Nigerian literature.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Aig-Imoukhuede, Frank (1982). Pidgin Stew and Sufferhead. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann.

Elugbe, B. O., and A. P. Omamor (1991). Nigerian Pidgin: Background *and Prospects. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann.*

Garuba, Harry, ed. (1988). Voices from the Fringe: New Nigerian *Poetry. Lagos: Malthouse.*

Iweala, Uzodinma (2005). Beast of No Nation. London: John Murray Publishers.

Ohaeto, Ezenwa. "Bridges of Orality: Nigerian Pidgin Poetry". World *Literature Today, Vol. 69, 01-01-1995, pp 69(9).*

Osadebay, Dennis Chukude (1952). Africa Sings. Ilfracombe, E ng.: Arthur Stockwell.

.

Ken Saro-Wiwa (1985). Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English. Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers.

--- --- (1986). Poems in Time of War. Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers.

Vatsa, Mamman Jiya (1985). Tori for Geti Bow Leg and Other Pidgin *Poems. Lagos:Cross Continents.*

MODULE 4 OTHER ISSUES AND THE NEW WRITERS

Unit 1 Gender Issues in Nigerian Literature
Unit 2 Traditional Beliefs in New Nigerian Literature
Unit 3 The New Nigeria Poets
Unit 4 The New Nigeria Novelists
Unit 5 The New Nigeria Playwrights

UNIT 1 GENDER ISSUES IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 The Feminist Novel: Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of *Motherhood*
3.3 The Feminist Poet: Catherine Acholonu's The Springs Last *Drop*
3.4 The Feminist Drama: Zulu Sofola's Wedlock of the Gods
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will discuss feminism and gender issues as treated in Nigerian literature. We shall examine select Nigerian literatures in order to understand how they treat gender issues. Nigerian women, who are also concerned about sexual politics, understand that a discussion of feminism must grapple with more than the issue of sex. So many issues are raised when the topic of gender is discussed in Nigerian literature. They include: the representation and mis-representation of women in literary texts; the education of women; the access of women to the economic means of survival; motherhood; women in the domestic sphere; women as part of their communities; women's role in politics and revolution; women and cultural practices; sexuality; and the direct treatment of women by men, and men by women. We shall use Buchi Emecheta's novel The Joys of Motherhood, Catherine Acholonu's poetry collection The Springs Last Drop and Zulu Sofola's play *Wedlock of the Gods in treating the gender issues in Nigerian literature.*

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the unit the students should be able to:

understand what gender issues are treated in Nigerian literature
appreciate Nigerian literature with gender themes
recognize gender themes in Nigerian literature
distinguish Nigerian literature with gender bias from others
discuss gender issues as presented in Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In gender studies in Africa, Nigerian women have been at the pivot. Flora Nwapa is one of the first writers to give the women voice in African literature. Her novels Efuru, Idu and One is Enough among others set out provocative gender issues in Africa. The role and history of feminist politics or activism on women's rights in Africa is a discourse which African women are studying and clarifying for themselves. The debate over feminist criticism and the development of an African feminist theory has been a concern to African gender scholars. As a Senegalese figure, Mariama Ba represents a kind of feminine Leopold Sedar Senghor. She shows that not only men are important in this world. She also shows that to succeed in this life, women should identify themselves and also trust in themselves to overcome the difficulties that compose life. In showing the importance of women, their role in bringing up families and keeping them together in time of calamity is clearly brought out in the novel.

Buchi Emecheta has a different view. She criticizes the society's belief that a woman is worth anything if she becomes a mother. Nnu Ego, as did other women in the Ibo society, bore many children in the hope that she would have someone to take care of her in her old age. Again, this was an Ibo custom. Some argue that it is not the responsibility of the children to support and care for Nnu Ego. They argue that Nnu Ego's children had the right to choose in what manner and to what extent they would do so, if at all. Others argue that there was never any real communication with regard to this expectation of Nnu Ego from her children, that this message was never expressed. Although that may have been the case, the understanding was implicit. It was a cultural understanding, a cultural expectation that, although not fully expressed, was always understood. It is a case of motherhood appreciation.

Catherine Acholonu's poetry examines women in cultural situations. In *The Spring's Last Drop, she examines the expectations of women in*

cultural things like ritual, rites of passage and cultural hegemony. She is the proponent of the feminist theory of motherism which she interpreted as the Afrocentric alternative to feminism. The theory discusses the place of African women in the feminist discourse and to correct some obvious lapses in womanism and feminism proper.

Zulu Sofola, one of the earliest female dramatists to have come out of Africa, has produced plays that give attention to the issues of female subjugation, culture clash and anarchy. Her plays have been recognized as trail blazers in the discourse on female subjugation and male dominance. She has often portrayed the need for harmony among the sexes in a community; the need for appreciating the place of the man and the role of the women and the need to discard those indices of anarchy that place women in bad positions in society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Examine the role of Nigerian female writers in the propagation of gender issues in Africa.

3.2 Gender Issues in The Joys of Motherhood

One of the many issues raised in Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of *Motherhood is the conflict Nnu Ego feels in embracing and accepting* new ideas when she moves away from her Ibo society to make a new life for herself in Lagos. Nnu Ego is caught between two cultures. While she sees that her old customs and beliefs are not conducive to a better life for her or her children, she is unable to come to terms with Lagos's different societal rules. It is shocking to her that money is now the status quo, not children. She finds it hard to believe that gender roles have been exchanged. Men now work as household servants for the "white man." Women are no longer having a large number of children. Nnu Ego finds it difficult to adjust to her new life. Her strong cultural beliefs are in direct conflict with her new life in Lagos. These cultural beliefs are the cause of her enslavement.

Nnu Ego's cultural background is one in which women are exploited to men's advantage. Womanhood is defined by the ability to bear children. The more male children a woman has, the higher her status. In this patriarchal society, a woman's duty is to bear male children for her husband to continue his lineage. A childless woman is considered a "half woman," a failed woman. The man, therefore, is of critical importance to the woman, for a woman cannot bring forth a child without a man. This way of thinking can be seen in Adankwko's advice to Nnu Ego: "Have you ever heard of a complete woman without a husband?" (Emecheta 158). A husband who can father male children is greatly admired.

In Nnu Ego's society, a daughter's value to her parents is only as high as the bride price she can fetch. The Ibos' way of thinking is that daughters are raised to glorify another man when her turn comes to produce male offspring. That is why daughters are not as highly regarded as sons are. In Nnu Ego's patriarchal society, women are viewed as tools of production. The younger the woman is, the better able she will be to reproduce. Women are valued in terms of their economic worth. In Nnu Ego's Ibo society, a woman is always owned by a male. First, she belongs to her father until she is of an age where she can be sold. Pre-arranged marriages are normal. How the daughter feels toward her husband is of little importance. After acquiring her, she is chattel and only valuable in terms of "producing" offspring, preferably males. She is his to command. Her duty is to obey him always.

All of these beliefs and customs are embedded in Nnu Ego's subconscious. Her new life in Lagos does not change that. She is not surprised, therefore, when Nnaife chides her for questioning him: "What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? " (Emecheta, 48)

The Joys of Motherhood is a mirror image of today's society in Africa and in many other parts of the world. It speaks of the struggles and conflicts of women and the gender roles imposed upon them. It further speaks of women's struggles to gain independence from their subservient roles as wives and to gain a voice of their own. Women in third world countries are still hesitant to speak out and make themselves heard for fear of being punished by their husbands and society in general. Their objections to being treated unfairly are seen as unimportant.

In Ibuza, wife beating was also common and, indeed, accepted. Since wives were property, husbands had the authority to do as they pleased. Wife beating elevated a husband's self-esteem and gave him a sense of control. In The Joys of Motherhood, Nnaife threatens to beat Nnu Ego when she presses him to find a job. He actually beats the pregnant Adaku when both she and Nnu Ego go on strike for more housekeeping money. Things have not changed very much for women in third world countries. They are still considered second class citizens. Although they work alongside the men in various fields, in addition to taking care of the household, their contributions are seen as insignificant. A woman is faceless. Her identity is forever linked with that of her husband's. They are as one.

Nnu Ego's conflict with her new life in Lagos first becomes evident when Adaku comes to live with them. Although in her Ibo society husbands have many wives who live together harmoniously, Nnu Ego

resents Adaku and does not like to share Nnaife with her. Nnu Ego is torn between her Ibo customs and the reality of her poverty filled life in Lagos. As she struggles to put food on the table for her children with the little money Nnaife earns, she comes to the conclusion that she is a prisoner because of her role as mother and senior wife. She reflects on the way her life would have been in Ibuza as a senior wife. She dreams of having the courage to abandon Nnaife and leave her children with him. As senior wife in Lagos, she has many responsibilities but none of the rewards that come with being a senior wife in Ibuza:

> On her way back to their room, it occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, and imprisoned in her role as the senior wife. She was not even expected to demand more money for her family; that was considered below the standard expected of a woman in her position. It was not fair, she felt, the way men cleverly used a woman's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her. (Emecheta 137)

When Nnu Ego first comes to Lagos, she is shocked to discover that Nnaife works as a domestic servant who washes "women's underwear." She questions his manhood and loses all respect for him. She would have preferred that he had a "real" man's job, like working on a farm. Her constant comparisons to Amatokwu must have been a source of pain and humiliation for Nnaife, who is content with the work that he does and does not understand Nnu Ego's exasperation and disbelief. Nnu Ego comes from a male dominated society where men and women each have their assigned roles.

Nnu Ego feels obligated to her family, her husband and her children. Everyone makes demands on her. Although she takes care of the household, the children and her husband in the traditional way, she also has to take charge of supporting her family when Nnaife is unable to do so. Although at times Nnu Ego expresses her anger and exasperation to Nnaife, her attitude changes when she realizes that because of him, she is a mother, she is a woman, therefore she is complete. To Nnu Ego, Nnaife proves his manhood by fathering many children. According to the Ibo ideology, Nnaife has made her a woman. That is why, although Nnu Ego loses respect for Nnaife when he doesn't find a job, she still clings to the Ibo custom of silence. "All the same, like a good woman, she must do what she was told, she must not question her husband in front of his friends" (Emecheta 114).

Nnu Ego's hesitancy in expressing her emotions and anger is common in many African societies even today. The woman's role is to obey her husband and accept any decisions he makes in silence. To express your

opinions could mean a night of abuse. Nnu Ego's conflict further comes into evidence when Adaku receives a visit from Igbonoba's wife. When she sees how elegantly dressed this woman is, she feels desperate and angry. Not at the visitor, but at herself. She has begun to realize that the high status she so desperately sought by having so many children is of little value in her new society in Lagos. Values have changed. Money is now the status symbol. Yet all because she was the mother of three sons, she was supposed to be happy in her poverty, in her nail-biting agony, in her churning stomach, in her rags, in her cramped room . . . Oh, it was a confusing world. (Emecheta 167) Nnu Ego is in a state of transition. She is slowly moving away from her Ibuza customs and beliefs but is still hesitant to fully embrace new ideas.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Nnu Ego is a mother who desired the joys of motherhood. Does this expectation reveal her gender roles?

3.3 The Feminist Poet: Catherine Acholonu's The Spring's *Last Drop*

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu's position as the first daughter of a chief is significant because she plays the role of helping to organize her father's household even though she is married. She claims in the poem "the message" to be the reincarnation of the spirit of her dead father. She is a chronicler of tradition, and in her poems she sets out to restore order through expert crafting of words, and in continuation of her father's mission, as a chief in her village. Since in Igbo culture, politics is not separated from religion, Acholonu finds her father's role as the leader of her community tied to his religious role, which tie has the potential to produce a richer and more balanced life for the individual and the people. She attempts to show the spiritual and traditional roots of her poetry as a testimony of her cultural roots and privileges of a poet in her community. Her social positioning and role in her father's house testifies to her Africana womanhood in seeking for a more egalitarian society where women participate in the political, cultural, and religious life of their community by right. Catherine Acholonu in The Spring's *Last Drop demonstrate in their poetry a consciousness of the spiritual as* a tool for creative empowerment, making spirituality both subject matter and source of diction so as to be relevant in their societies.

Acholonu belongs to the second generation of modern Nigerian poets, who are neither confronted with the task of fighting for independence as the pioneers poets were, nor experimenting with different poetic forms and individualistic romantic concerns as the first generation of modern Nigerian poets were. The vision of the poets in the second generation of

modern Nigerian poets is to give poetry back to the masses (i.e. to make poetry the voice of the masses) and to use their art to correct the evils and corruption that swept the nation after the Nigerian civil war (1967-70). The Nigerian civil war contributed to the erosion of traditional values, and marked the onset of armed robbery and other forms of violence, as common crimes. Acholonu attempts to use her art to reconnect the people to the traditional values they knew before. It is in her collection The Spring's Last Drop that she suggests that the solution to most societal problems lies in turning back to tradition, even to its mystic experience. Obi Maduakor in "Female Voices in Poetry: Catherine Acholonu and Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie as Poets" acknowledges Acholonu's commitment to traditional values and faith. Maduakor summarizes her themes and structure in the collection: "To a certain extent all her poems sum up to one supreme statement on the need to be rooted; to be anchored to tradition, to a faith or some kind of supernatural agency. The absence of anchorage she calls "Cultural loss," and the consequence of cultural loss is "Social death" (76). Even Acholonu's social criticism is guided by her commitment to traditional virtues; hence commenting on her role as a chronicler of the virtue of traditional life, Maduakor says "her poetry [. . .] has passion, for it flows from the heart and is conceived from within" (81). Her position in her family, training, and in the nation affirms her commitment to upholding spiritual, traditional, and Africana womanhood principles for liberation and restoration of the dignity of Black cultural values. Acholonu is rooted in both the tradition and spirituality of her community, and she find such rooting inspiring to her creativity and in articulating themes relevant to her experiences as a Black woman and to that of her people.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss Acholonu's perception of the role of women in culture and ritual in The Spring's Last Drop

3.4 The Feminist Drama: Zulu Sofola's Wedlock of the Gods

Zulu Sofola believes that Black women, in publicly reclaiming what has always belonged to them in terms of creative empowerment, present evidence that there exist relationships among creativity, religion, community, and gender. Even though there were existing forms of patriarchy, colonialism heightened male superiority and did not leave room for other forms of governance "while the African traditional system in concept and actualization [had] room for many or more". For instance, education that ought to empower Black women helps to divide them into socio-economic classes and makes it difficult for them to agree, organize, and believe to a woman that they can revoke any decision made by men that is contrary to women's interests. Sofola

laments the loss of traditional egalitarian values and writes about the difference between the educated Black woman who lives in delusions of grandeur and speaks in a demeaning manner about her illiterate, rural, 'traditional' counterpart. It never occurs to her that while she parrots the phrase, 'What a man can do, a woman can do better,' her illiterate counterpart asserts: 'What a woman can do, a man cannot do.' While she quotes the European saying, 'Behind every successful man is a woman,' her illiterate counterpart affirms: 'The strength of a man is in his woman,' or 'A soldier with a mother does not die in a war front.'

In Wedlock of the Gods a girl was bundled off to marriage because her parents needed money from her dowry to pay medical bills for her sick brother. She considers herself as been in bondage for three years the marriage lasted, then the husband dies. Rather than wait for three months as stipulated by custom or agree to the obnoxious custom of leviration, she becomes pregnant for her erstwhile lover. Custom is broken, the consequences are severe - the plot thickens as the tragedy unfolds. The dynamism that marked the pre-colonial African societies is not completely destroyed but it needs to be rebuilt. Cultural alienation has made familiar the once alien notion of the powerlessness of women; Black women seem therefore to be losing hold of their ability to organize and exert pressure on the patriarchal set-up in order to meet their needs. As well, instead of the society being run by decisions made by recognized socio-political groups and women's lines of authority, the instituted foreign male-centered system of governance completely eliminated women's leadership.

Zulu Sofola in her article "Feminism and African Womanhood" writes about the political powerlessness of women as a result of imperialism: "Chaos set in and women were dislodged and made irrelevant, a fact that is now full-blown in today's European / Arab systems of governance in contemporary Africa where our women have been rendered irrelevant, ineffective, and completely de-womanized" (59). The greatest problem of modern African woman is herself because she lacks knowledge about how to effectively combine existing traditional egalitarian values with her Western education so as to recover the collective memory of African womanhood and so refuse to be "de-womanized," being backed by both the physical and spiritual mandates replete in African cosmologies. According to Sofola there is always available a "particular traditional power-line" under which Black women can mobilize themselves to overcome obstacles against the full expression of their humanity (61). By going back to the culture, especially to their spiritual heritage, Black women may be able to recover their ability to negotiate for their rights in patriarchal societies.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Discuss the violation of the marital rights of women in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods.*

4.0 CONCLUSION

Being a woman from Nigeria, Buchi Emecheta knows firsthand the unfairness of a patriarchal society and the conflicts it causes. Although she is reluctant to be called a feminist, Ms. Emecheta writes about the plight of African women and their struggle for freedom and equality. We can see that she does not think very highly of the patriarchal society from which she came. Through her writings, Ms Emecheta hopes to be able to empower women, especially women from third world countries, to educate themselves. Only through education can these women overcome the many obstacles in their paths. The Joys of Motherhood is about a woman from a third world country who, because of the patriarchal society which she lives in, cannot liberate herself from the chains of poverty. It is an honest look at women in the society of a colonized nation who, before, during and after colonization, do not quite fit in. They are still enslaved by men and their society.

Going back to African roots and origins, Black women writers and theorists demonstrate that there is no traditional politic of an irrevocable nature that enshrines discrimination against or limitation of Black women in the physical realm; then how much less could there be in the spiritual realm, which is genderless? This has been Catherine Acholonu's proposition. She believes that Black women's future in the African world has the potential for development and freedom despite the cultural ambiguities that on one hand uphold the importance of women in the society and on the other hand marginalize them. Nevertheless, there are loopholes in at least some African societies that provide the platform on which Black women can negotiate for their rights. Zulu Sofola provides a secure basis to argue that most traditional African societies in pre-colonial times were dynamic so that an average woman pragmatically manipulated her circumstances and potentials and achieved independence and visibility. The colonial intrusion that gave way to cultural alienation, capitalism, and class distinction compounded the problem of average modern Black women in their struggles to achieve the independence and visibility their foremothers had. This has been Sofola's proposition in her plays that the result of colonialism on Black women has been to reveal indigenous and foreign structures of male domination on the women.

5.0 SUMMARY

Buchi Emecheta is concerned with the domineering attitude of African men because of their cultural placement in society. She advocates for a reversal of the attitude. She also pleads in her works that the women deserve to earn the fruit of their labour; to be properly cared for and adored. However, Catherine is of the opinion that women ought to work out their respect. She believes that motherhood is a symbol of honour and must be revered. She also criticizes the subjugation of women when it comes to cultural issues like: birth, death and other rites of passage. She believes that women have the potential to perform what the men do especially where the mantle falls on them. Zulu Sofola decries the effect of colonialism in compounding the tighter gender disposition of African people. She sees western culture as a problem. She advocates a rethink at the way African women are seen as people with no spiritual, physical and emotional essence. Her plays go back to the primordial beginning examining what has been in comparison with what is. In their works, these women writers feature characters that see themselves in a male dominated culture and seek to redefine their future.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Discuss the various issues of gender that Nigerian female writers have been projecting in their works.
2. Catherine Acholonu believes that women can perform ritual and other spiritual essence. Explain how she revealed this The Spring's *Last Drop?*
3. Nnu Ego is mother who knows the worth of her husband and children. Explain how her roles helped her achieve motherhood.
4. The male characters in present in the works treated here are very queer. Does this reveal anything about Nigerian gender literature?
5. Appreciate Zulu Sofola's dimension of gender trend in Wedlock of *the Gods.*

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Acholonu, Catherine (1984). The Spring's Last Drop. Owerri: Afa Publications.

Emecheta, Buchi(1979). The Joys of Motherhood. London: Heinemann.

Otokunefor Henrietta & Nwodo Obiageli 1989). Nigerian Female *Writers. A Critical Perspective. Lagos: Malthouse Press.*

Sofola, Zulu (1976). Wedlock of the Gods. Ibadan: UPL.

UNIT 2 TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN NEW NIGERIAN LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Magical Realism: Ben Okri's The Famished Road
3.3 Traditional Belief: Helen Oyeyemi's The Icarus Girl
3.4 Afrocentric Poetry: Chinweizu's Invocation and Admonition
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall study the reflection of traditional beliefs in new Nigerian literature. Some new Nigerian writers draw heavily from the traditional beliefs of their people in the creation of their art. They believe that modernity has never spoilt the real traditional beliefs of the people even though some people have been trying to run from it. In trying to attack the incessant military coups and unstable governance in Nigeria, Okri decided to use the motif of the Abiku in Nigerian traditional belief to capture this reality. Oyeyemi in her novel reveals that many people die out of the ignorance of their culture. The culture of 'ere ibeji' in Yoruba traditional belief is exploited in the story. Chinweizu in his poetry reveals that only African beliefs and values are viable tools for a true African literature. He explores this in his poetry which he termed 'Afrocentric' poetry.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

- distinguish between new Nigerian literatures with traditional beliefs as motifs
- appreciate the use of traditional beliefs in new Nigeria literatures
- compare the treatment of African values in the new literatures with those of their predecessors
- answer questions regarding the relevance of traditional beliefs in new Nigerian literature
- accept traditional beliefs as viable themes in new Nigerian literature.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

The application of traditional beliefs in modern literature in Nigeria is a true reflection of the africanness in the literature. African literature started with African orature, African beliefs and African values. The part that literature plays as a unifying institution of art is paramount to our understanding of how a people can survive the present and win the future. This leads to a proper understanding of what a true African literature entails. Chinua Achebe was once probed on his thoughts on the African novel and the novelist. Rather impatiently, he responded that definitely the African novel had to be about Africa as a geographical expression and as a metaphysical landscape. He added that it should be about "a view of the world and all of the cosmos perceived from a particular position."

The term "African" appears to correspond to a geographical notion but we know that, in practical terms, it also takes in those areas of collective awareness that have been determined by ethnic, historical and sociological factors, all these factors, as they affect and express themselves in our literature, marking off for it a broad area of reference. Within this area of reference then, and related to certain aspects that are intrinsic to the literature, the problem of definition involves as well a consideration of aesthetic modes in their intimate correlation to the cultural and social structures which determine and define the expressive schemes of African peoples and societies. The essential elements of African literature which should include the obligation to represent the image of Africa, given that Africa is relatively still unknown, underestimated and despised in the world, should be an important criterion. Some African writers have respectively depicted Africa's past and traditions, for their contributions towards the better understanding of Africa.

Furthermore, for literature to reflect its society, it should be presented in the form that comes naturally to the people's appreciation of art. Moreover, in time to come, due to extreme pressures of life in modern cities, society will resort to less time-consuming ways of reading and communicating by finding new means, and new forms and then new definitions of changing practical consciousness. Thus, it is not surprising that Nigerian traditional beliefs are often reflected in the new Nigerian literature. This is because it helps in the proper communication of Nigerian values and aids in simplifying the message by using the people’s known beliefs.

Ben Okri has often exploited the power of the supernatural to give his novel a proper leaning towards the Nigerian cultural situation. This style

of writing often termed magical realism runs through his novels. A much younger writer, Helen Oyeyemi, 18 years at the completion of his debut novel, The Icarus Girl, exploited the Yoruba mythical belief on the 'bond' of twins which has been neglected in modern times due to deliberate attempts at avoiding those traditional values in modern literature. Oyeyemi, a diaspora writer, exploited this belief which made her novel draw much attention from critics and writers. Chinweizu, the modern Pan-Africanist, uses the traditional beliefs of his people in the creation of poetry of Afrocentric values. He believes that the utilization of African orature, African traditional beliefs and cultural values in African literature gives it a true African touch.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Critically assess the importance of traditional beliefs as motifs in new Nigerian literature.

3.2 Magical Realism: Ben Okri's The Famished Road

Ben Okri is a Nigerian poet and novelist. Okri has risen to an international acclaim, and he is often described as one of Africa's greatest writers. His best known work, The Famished Road, was awarded the 1991 Booker Prize. He has also been described as a magic realist, although he has shrugged off that tag. He writes about the mundane and the metaphysical, the individual and the collective, drawing the reader into a world with vivid descriptions.

The Famished Road is about an 'Abiku' child named Azaro. Shortly after birth, it became clear that Azaro was a spirit child. He had vivid dreams, which foretold the future and he could see spirits interacting with the living. The spirits called to him and caused him to leave his body for a time, which caused his parents to think he was dead. He woke up in his own coffin and his parents found they could not afford the spiritual ceremony to cut his obvious connection with the spirit world. Azaro grew and learned more about his "gift." He ran out of his compound (forcing his mother and father to follow) just before it went up in flames. Priestesses who saw his true power abducted him. Azaro made a narrow escape, only to end up in the house of a police officer whose dead son tried to communicate with him.

The Famished Road is the amazing story of the journey of a spirit child through the poverty and suffering of modern day Africa. In the pseudo-reality where the book is set, there is a spirit, as well as a physical world. A spirit child is one who only wants to be in the spirit world, so they kill themselves whenever they reincarnate in the physical world. The story is centred on Azaro, an abiku or spirit child. Spirit children are born into

the world of the living but some promise that as soon as they are born they will die and thus return to their friends in the land of spirits. Azaro makes such a promise but on being born he is stopped by the beautiful, suffering face of his mother and decides that he will try life. His spirit companions do not like this and haunt him to return to the land of the dead. This makes the childhood of Azaro both beautiful and harrowing.
In almost every scene of this novel the world familiar to us leaps and pours with the beauty of a spiritual presence. Spirits mingle with the living, in human or animal form, or in the form of lights and omens. Sometimes Azaro disappears altogether onto a spiritual level and a world that is both magnificent and terrifying runs by the reader.

Azaro is haunted by these spirits and some scenes can be quite distressing, even terrifying in places. The undead come as blind lecherous old men who want to use the eyes of children, beggars with misshapen limbs and horrific wounds, freaks and wild animals. Even the road of the title in this story is an entity with a stomach, a being who will destroy unwary travellers who do not leave proper sacrifices.

The novel is set in Nigeria and has a very African feel to it. We are always in the ghetto with Azaro's family, always just on the brink of starvation. Spirits, herbalists and witches and wizards all have their places in the communities, the people are riddled with superstition but in the context of this story every superstition is a real answer and cure. Each one works and we as readers see the spirits being affected by the superstitions of the living.

Azaro lives with both abuse and a prevailing love. One of the most intriguing characters of the book was Black Tyger, Azaro's father. A great boxer, Black Tyger is an abusive father and husband, the almost unbearable suffering of his life taken out on his wife and child. He is also a powerful and noble man crying to be heard. The boxing sequences of 'The Famished road' are among some of the most dramatic action scenes I've ever read, the opponents of Black T yger don't always come from the land of the living but from the land of fighting ghosts. The strength of the man and the power he draws from makes gripping reading. When he decides to become a politician we see he is noble in his thoughts, all he wants is to build schools for the beggars, the people laugh at him but I admired him.

Azaro's mother likewise suffers hopelessly, etching out a miserable living by labouring all day to sell goods. At times it gets too much for her and she takes it out on Azaro but the love she also feels for her child and husband is heart warming. At the lowest points of our characters lives we sometimes get a glimpse of love or happiness that seems like a diamond found in a pile of coal. The novel is throughout harrowing and

painful but the overall message is one of progress and hope.

Politics play a large part in the story as the party of the rich and the parties of the poor vie to get the people of the ghetto's votes. Progress is represented by the splendid, voluptuous character of Madame Koto. This kindly, overweight lady begins the story running a poor bar of palm wine and her famous peppercorn soup.
Without giving too much away she is the first to bring electricity to the ghetto and the first to own a car, both stupendous, magical artifacts to the eyes of the very poor. The richer she gets though the nastier she becomes. It is brilliantly done. You will feel suffering reading this novel, you will feel hunger and long with the characters to find even the smallest of successes. In return you will be rewarded with some of the most beautiful prose I've ever read, as one critic on the sleeve of the novel says: "Okri is incapable of writing a boring sentence."

Characters

1. Azaro is the story's narrator. He is an abiku, or a spirit child who has never lost ties with the spirit world. The story follows him as he tries to live his life, always aware of the spirits trying to bring him back.

2. Azaro's father is an idealistic labourer who wants the best for his family and the community. He suffers greatly for this, eventually becoming a boxer and later a politician. Azaro's father loves him deeply, but is often bitter at having an abiku and occasionally goes on angry violent tirades.

3. Azaro's mother works very hard selling anything she can get her hands on for the family. She cares for her family deeply and constantly gives up food and security for her family and their ideals. She is proud that Azaro is her son and goes to great lengths to protect him.

4. Madame Koto is proprietress of a local bar. She has a liking for Azaro, though at times is convinced he brings bad luck. She starts out as a well-meaning woman, trying to get along with everyone else. However, as the story progresses, she becomes richer, siding with the political party of the rich, and is often accused of witchcraft. She tries to help Azaro and his family on numerous occasions but seems to try to take Azaro's blood to remain youthful.

5. Jeremiah, the Photographer is a young artist who brings the village to the rest of the world and the rest of the world to the

village. He manages to get some of his photographs published, but practices his craft at great personal risk.

The story moves between Azaro's adventures in the real world with his struggling parents and dirty politics, and another peculiar world limited to Azaro's vision – Madame Koto's palm wine bar, the (famished) road and the forest – which are crowded with spirits, and supernatural elements. Often it is Azaro's visionary world that leads him through all the tribulations of the real world.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the application of magical realism in the satirical presentation of

politics in The Famished Road.

3.3 Traditional Belief: Helen Oyeyemi's The Icarus Girl

Helen Oyeyemi was born in Nigeria in 1984 and moved to London when she was four. The Icarus Girl was written while Oyeyemi was studying for her A-levels and she is also the author of two plays, *Juniper's Whitening and Victimese. The title 'Icarus' is taken from a* Greek mythology and it means 'protector'.

The Icarus Girl is a story of overwhelming, corrosive loneliness. Jessamy Harrison lives in London, the only child of a Yoruba mother and an English father. As the novel opens, this intellectually precocious, angry, solitary eight-year-old has shut herself into a cupboard because only in such confined spaces does she feel in control. Jess's alienation springs from everyday realities. She has been moved up a year in school because of her academic gifts. Her rages and screaming fits distance her further from her classmates. She is a stranger to her mother's family and language. On a deeper level, Jess is haunted by other identities which threaten to take over and destroy her own. The strongest of these takes the form of a little girl, Titiola, whom Jess encounters when she first visits Nigeria. Jess names the girl TillyTilly, and she appears to be the typical imaginary best friend of an isolated child. But TillyTilly is far more powerful than this. It emerges that Jess is not an only child, but a surviving twin. It also becomes clear that this novel is as much metaphysical as it is realistic.

The Icarus Girl takes its premise from the Yoruba belief that twins inhabit three separate worlds: the Bush, a 'wilderness for the mind' (page 298), the normal world and the spirit world. Oyeyemi has said that TillyTilly is from the Bush, 'a world that doesn't have the same structure as our world'. Through Jess's loss of her twin and her isolation at school, Oyeyemi explores themes of loneliness, alienation and the

difficulties — particularly for a young child — of being very obviously different. Jess's mixed race, her precocity and her tantrums set her apart from her schoolmates, marking her out and only serving to intensify the loneliness she already feels. Helen Oyeyemi has drawn on her own experience in exploring this emotional terrain. She describes herself as 'a real mess at school', isolated from her classmates and regarded as 'the weird girl'. At the age of fifteen she took an overdose and while recovering took refuge in reading: she still proclaims herself to be 'more of a reader than a writer'. That summer, another family visit to Nigeria set the seal on her recovery although she doesn't feel wholly Nigerian: 'I'm just British' she says.

Twins bring blessings in Yoruba culture, but may also bring misfortune. If one twin dies at birth, the surviving twin is thought to have lost half her soul. A sacred image of the dead twin, an ere ibeji, must be carved and then tended like a living child; in its turn the 'ere ibeji' protects the family. Otherwise, disaster follows in the form of sickness, death and barrenness. This fate overtakes Jessamy Harrison's family. Helen Oyeyemi describes Jess's psychic torment and near disintegration. Her father is sucked dry by depression, her teacher disappears on sick leave, and Jess's one good friend is almost killed during a sleepover from hell. Oyeyemi's writing is powerful if uneven. But at its best this is a chilling story about the anguish of separation from all that should be most familiar and dear. In the end, it is only in Nigeria, within the traditional family compound, that wounds can begin to heal.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

How realistic is the treatment of Yoruba belief about twins in The *Icarus Girl?*

3.4 Afrocentric Poetry: Chinweizu's Invocation and *Admonitions*

In Chinweizu's award-winning poetry collection Invocations and *Admonitions published 1986; his Africanist vision begins to loom large* in the poet's consciousness. Significantly, this volume is dedicated, to the memory of Cheikh Anta Diop, Egyptologist, scientist, historian great pioneer of Afrocentric history who reconnected the modern African consciousness to black Egypt. Invocations and Admonitions dwells on the community, the bard's own folks, and their mannerisms. Women, love and sex in 'Desire', 'That Lady', 'A Gift of Maidenhead' and 'Sex in Space' are treated with his usual masculinist rebuttal. 'Desire' for example maintains a subtle rhythm in the public jeer at womanhood. Other poems – 'The Penis of a God', 'Blest Freight for the Slaughter House', and 'Chant of Hired Planters' – recast the redundancy of the

ruling class and their exploitation of the underprivileged through all history. There is sympathy for the workers who actually 'clear the bush, plough the soil, harrow the ground' but are cheated in the harvest ('not for us the harvest time'). On the other hand, there is contempt for Capitalism and its lechery ('what do you expect...we who make sure the roads are built'). Chinweizu often adopts this stance of poet-reformer on a mission. He presumes to bulldoze his art with an acute sense of history ('Admonition to the Black World'), to flatten Imperialism's footholds (Islam, Christianity, Marxism, Capitalism) in our consciousness and, by these 'demolitions', retrieve from the distant past an 'icon' for the inspiration and pride of his generation. For this rare and courageous singer, putting on the garb of the griot in modern writing could be onerous, particularly when lamenting the fall of the heroes of our history ('Lament for a dauntless three') and attempting to capture a historical experience in an artistic memento that evokes the chequered Nigerian independence, its betrayal by a tribe of military interlopers and their civilian counterfeits incarnated even in millennial leaders.

Art is thus inscribed for posterity in the serial national conflicts which had come to signify, for recent Nigerian poetry, the point of departure from the aesthetics of the league of euro-modernists represented, in Chinweizu's argument, by the poetry of Okigbo, Soyinka, and Clark. Thus Invocations and Admonitions, distinguished by an Africanist alliance, adopts more complex techniques of expression in various traditional literary forms that had helped to enrich and distinguish the poetry of the new Nigerian writers from that of their older counterparts. This distinction lies in the realignment of heritage from a more credible interpretation and organisation of traditional repertoire. There is always the inevitable presence of a local audience achieved partly by the story-telling nature of the poems.

In Invocations the griot is more at home with his traditional repertoire: the prayer ('Invocations on a day of Exile'), the abuse: ('The Pagan's Reply'), work song: ('Chant of Hired Planters'), dirge song: ('Lament for a Dauntless Three'), and song of admonitions ('…To the Black World'). The prayer in 'Day of Exile' is remarkable in its adoption of òfò, to represent the Igbo poet-diviner. This totem of justice urges steadfastness on the holder through any human or divinely instigated adversity. The persona of this poem is therefore not unlike the exile of an unjust society 'where truth is cast out of the gates and falsehood sits majestic.' It draws from the traditional incantation as the supplicant calls upon his ancestors and gods: and you forest spirits/and you spirits of the rivers/and you my ancestors' (16). The journey motif parallels traditional rites of passage: 'I have travelled a road without rest/I am hungry for a patch of earth' and the rhetoricism is appropriately adapted to elicit the element of pathos: 'where can I settle my rump/and cool my blistered feet?'

though my path is hard
my chi is alert...
And what is that crouching in ambush...?
I say my chi will not permit it
move out of my path
my chi is alert (16)

Thus in this time-old precept of ritual self cleansing do we declare him/her clean and free from incrimination –an expression which is achieved by the accompanying device of rhetorical questions:

Did I get loose another man's tethered goat?
Did I lean unto my bed another man's unwilling daughter?
Did I loot the public granary and harm another man's
crop . . .? (17)

The truth of retributive justice reflects from traditional philosophy and, in Chinweizu's poetry, is deployed with extensive structural repetitions and parallelisms important in African communication art:

If prosperity should visit me
It shall find me at home
It shall not overwhelm me
It shall not drive laughter from my teeth
It shall not surround me with faces mad with envy
It shall not kill me before my time. (17)

In this lament, the subject-heroes take on mythic dimensions, quite disproportionate to actual historical positions. Now they are full of goodness, had elevated the material well-being of their people, helped the poor and made the peace. So their death is made to acquire a tragic outlook that should leave the bereaved utterly helpless as aptly projected in this rhetorical parallelism:

what voice shall comfort us…?
what arm shall strike for us ...?
what hand shall cleanse this rot ...? (11-13)

With the poet we can traverse further to reconstruct traditional funeral

occasions where, as assumed, the deceased is not really 'dead' until a 'thorough search' has been conducted around the familiar places the deceased usually stayed during his life time. When at last he is not found, he is then adjudged dead. 'Lament for a Dauntless Three' is informed by such funeral practices in Igboland. The three heroes are sought after in places associated with their physical and spiritual homelands.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the Afrocentric properties in Chinweizu's poetry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the works under study in this unit, the three Nigerian writers exploited Nigerian traditional beliefs in their writing. They believe that a true African literature must carry African themes, forms and beliefs. They are African writers writing about African cultural situations. They are African writers writing about Africa from the bias of African traditional beliefs. They are writing to contribute to reflect African culture in modern literature. Even though we observe the use of these traditional beliefs as motifs for discussing modern experiences, we notice a serious appeal in the usage. These writers wrote about Nigeria (Africa) as a part of their contribution to elevating and recalling traditional beliefs of the people. While Oyeyemi's story of twins is deeply rooted in Yoruba cultural belief, Okri's reflect a belief that runs through almost all the tribes in Nigeria. Every tribe in Nigeria has the belief in the emergence of a child who dies only to return with the purpose of tormenting their parents. Chinweizu exploited the traditional beliefs in gods, chi, nature and tradition. Even as modern African writers engage in anti-African moves in their bids at undermining African values, here are writers using the traditional beliefs of their people in creating functional literatures with modern relevance.

5.0 SUMMARY

These writers wrote about Nigerian traditional beliefs with much dexterity and vivacity. Their literatures truly reflect Africa. Helen Oyeyemi was born in Nigeria but relocated to UK at the age of four. Definitely at that age, she never knew anything about Africa her ancestral home. So, writing about a cultural issue like the Yoruba belief in the affinity of twins seems surprising. Definitely, she must have written her work based on what her parents told her. The character of Jess in the novel reveal a child alienated from her culture, a true picture of how Helen may have felt at younger age. The Icarus Girl reveals some misrepresentation of African cultural situation as a result of misinformation. Okri's Azaro is a reflection of traditional beliefs in modern times. The setting is modern. The issues are modern. But the culture is traditionally hinged on the destiny of a people as a result of powers unknown. Africans believe so much in the power of the supernatural. This is also reflected in Chinweizu's Afrocentric poetry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions carefully:

1. Explain some traditional beliefs reflected in Okri's The Famished *Road.*
2. Carefully examine the way Oyeyemi treated the Yoruba belief in 'ere ibeji' in her novel.
3. From your reading of these novels, do you think they reflected the real beliefs of their people?
4. Afrocentric literature is bent towards African belief system. How does Chinweizu reflect this in his poem?
5. Distinguish the various ways each of the writers treated here handled traditional beliefs in their works.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Chinweizu (1986). Invocation and Admonitions Lagos: Pero Press.

Chinweizu, Jemie, Madubuike (1980). Toward the Decolonization of *African Literature. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.*

Ben Okri (1991). The Famished Road. Ibadan: Spectrum.

Oyeyemi, Helen (2005). The Icarus Girl. London: Bloomsbury.

UNIT 3 THE NEW NIGERIA POETS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
  3.1 General Overview
  3.2 Poetry of Social Reform: Hyginus Ekwuazi's Love Apart
  3.3 Poetry of the City: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos
  3.4 Ritual Poetry: Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the works of select new poets in Nigeria. They classified as new poets because they fall under the third generation of writers to emerge from Nigeria. However, one of the select poets here, Hyginus Ekwuazi has been writing poetry for a long time alongside the second generation Nigerian poets like Osundare, Osofisan, Enekwe amongst others but his only collection of poetry Love Apart was just published in 2007 by Kraft Books, and hence he falls under the new generation poets in Nigeria. Other works to be used in illustrating this new poetry in Nigeria include: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos and Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the thematic focus of new Nigerian poetry

appreciate the works of new Nigerian poets
discuss the style and themes in new Nigerian poetry
distinguish the new Nigerian poets from the old Nigerian poets
see the new poets as versatile and broad in scope.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Writing poetry is a most personal enterprise and hence poets are prone to expressing certain peculiar opinions in defense their works, especially when faced with a criticism that challenges the value of such works. For

some Nigerian poets the problem is less of talent than of their indolence and reluctance in undergoing the laborious process of developing their craft. Many critics believe that the third generation writers are hasty. They accuse them of being too anxious to get published. They ask: how many of the poets of this generation are ready to undergo pain-staking craftsmanship? Every true poet who desires greatness must as of necessity be determined upon a life of poetry - he must be ready to work hard at his art, suffer for it, bleed for it, he must make himself amenable to constructive criticisms and most of all he must be his own bitterest critic.

The question remains: what will the future poets find in the best poets of this generation to admire and emulate? The poetry of every generation the world over has always had some distinctive features that distinguish it from the one of the preceding generation. Are there some distinguishing features peculiar to the poetry of this generation of Nigerian writers? Some critics have also observed that in spite of the increasing chunks of poetry that are being churned out everyday, Nigerian poets are yet to evolve a style that would distinguish them from their predecessors and that there are hardly new trends in the poetry being currently written. They want to imitate the trends of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide. Almost every poet still wants to write in the oral, lyrical fashion of Osundare and Ojaide. There is nothing wrong in being influenced by the great masters of the art of a preceding generation, as Wole Soyinka asserts in his preface to Poems of Black *Africa:*

> There is a distinct quality in all great poets that does exercise a ghostly influence in other writers, but this need not to be cause for self - flagellation. The resulting works is judged by its capacity to move ahead or sideways by the thoroughness of ingestion within a new organic mould, by the original strength of the new entity(2)

The renown that the Niyi Osundare generation presently enjoys is a result of its resolve to 'move ahead' from the conservative poetic trends of the poets of Soyinka's generation and evolve its own unique poetry in a new 'organic mould'. The present generation of Nigerian poets has tried to do likewise.

As exceptional as the poetry of Osundare generation is, it still does have some gross weaknesses. It is unfortunate that the poets of the present generation have continued to imitate such styles. Its best poets though very brilliant still have their bilabials lost in the gutturals of the masters, to put it in stricter words, their voices can at best be categorized as self - displaying babels that are yet to evolve into one organic, unmistakable

voice that would denominate their generation and distinguish it from the preceding generation. Our poetry should reflect that vastness and endlessness.

We have had poets addressing the so called socio - political ills since the country's independence, yet nothing has changed. There is no way politics can be completely expunged from our poetry, but if we must write about politics let us be more subtle and creative about it. Every student of literature knows that the development of poetry, nay literature, has always followed and maintained fidelity to one unchanging tradition - the tradition of action and reaction, of counter reactions and returns. Thus we have romanticism as a reaction against neo-classicism, modernism as a reaction against Victorianism, etc., and poetry is much the better or it. Why then has the present generation of Nigerian poets created for itself dark stagnant waters in which it has continued to wallow in the oral traditions of the second generation of Nigerian poets? Why should our contemporary poets continue to write in the aesthetics in whose evolution they had no hand and in which their predecessors have continued to record unsurpassable achievements?

Literary history is a self-pruning process - it prunes poetry to the study of few poets of each generation and it may be that these poets generally regarded as the best of this generation will be studied, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Akeem Lasisi, Ogaga Ifowodo, Uche Uduka, Ebereonwu, Obi Nwakama, Remi Raji, Promise Okekwe, Austyn Njoku and others. But this is only a tentative judgment. However ecstatically we praise these poets, the final verdict belongs to the future generation of poets, who will find in some of these poets something to admire and emulate. Every poet worth his salt knows that his poetry will be richer if he submits himself to vast extensive readings; if he makes himself receptive to all poetic trends all over the world, while maintaining a consciousness of his base; if he loosens up his current stilted poetic lines and finally if he embraces all subjects as material for poetry. It is, however, gratifying to note that propitious signs about the development of new Nigerian poetry are already emerging from certain poets. In the freshness of imagery, in the musicality of lines, in the inventiveness of imagination and language these new poets are certainly some of the poets that shall define the aesthetics by which their generation of poets will be enjoyed and remembered by subsequent generations of poets.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Critically discuss the various criticisms against the new Nigerian poetry.

3.2 Poetry of Passion: Hyginus Ekwuazi's Love Apart (2007)

Hyginus Ekwuazi is a director at the Nigerian Film Institute in Jos. He was a Senior lecturer at the department of Dramatic Arts, University of Ibadan. He has been a well known researcher in the field of dramatic arts, films studies, Nigerian home videos and creative arts generally. He has been writing poetry for the past two decades. His earlier poems were ranked alongside the second generation Nigerian poets like Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Okinba Launko (Femi Osofisan) amongst others. However, his only collection of poetry Love Apart was published in 2007. This collection won two awards: ANA NDDC Prize and Gabriel Okara Prize for literature. The judges commended the poetic novelty in the collection.

In this collection, Hyginus uses a poet persona who passes through series of love experiences to explore issues of human relationship, politics, culture, and the essence of societal growth. Love Apart is a poetic journey that grows from innocence to experience where apart from love other aspects of human passionate realities are treated with in-depth poetic essence. According to Ekwuazi in his preface to Love *Apart:*

> All I've been leading to is simply this: there are here, like Okigbo would say, the errors of the rendering. I daresay, the amount of such errors here could 9should?) be overwhelming. Of course, I'm only too well aware that no amount of polishing/rewriting can completely or, even, substantially, remove them. (6-7)

The poems trace the effects of separation, the obvious effects of living apart after a long time of togetherness. We see the effect of power as one of the obvious causes of separation. We see greed, anarchy and other forms of subjugation which are parts of the errors of the rendering. He sees silence as poetry. Silence is golden when applied with caution and reasoning. In the poem "Those men that prance and dance around you", he attacks those leaders, politicians, military men and other people who have been killing the joy of the helpless populace who dance to the various tones of anarchy permeating the entire system:

the one who would share and share alike the ancient

throne of his fathers for half your bed…

the one whose carrot stick is a mansion and a million in any currency not the dollar or the euro the oil sleek politician false as only a Nigerian butchers scale can be…

Love Apart takes careful incursion into the effects of betrayal, lust, denial and rejection. It uses personal relationship as yardstick for measuring communal belief and the need for love which should form the basis for harmony in the society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain the effectiveness of the theme of love in appraising governance in Love Apart.

3.3 Poetry of the City: Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos (2008)

Austyn Njoku has been in Nigeria's literary sphere for more than two decades. He was a crew staff of the defunct Nigeria Airways, a job which sharpened his interest in literature. Haven travelled to over 20 countries, his contact with people of many races in comparison with his Nigerian life helped so much in making his poetry a unique voice. He writes poetry with individualistic touch. So far, he has written three collections of poetry I've Been a Crew (1998), Scents of Dawn (2002) and Night in Lagos (2008).

Lagos is beyond a mere city. It is a phenomenon: the good, the bad and the ugly. Austyn Njoku's Night in Lagos (2008) takes a poetic incursion into the various aspects of Lagos: the sociological, the psychological, the physical and the spiritual. It treats each aspect with much dexterity. In his preface to Night in Lagos, Olu Obafemi says: "Talking about commitment and passion, the two most notorious passport of any Nigerian poet, I dare say in our obsolescent Nigerian society today, Austyn Njoku robs soul and body with his contemporary third generation Nigerian writers" Talking about Lagos, the subject of the collection, Obafemi adds: "Osofisan has warned us, in a recent Ibadan Lecture Series, to expect more of literature of anguish, disillusion, delectable sensuality in, hopefully arty forms from Lagos, a new centre of creativity haven seized the baton from Ibadan"(v).

In the beginning of Nigerian written literature, Cyprian Ekwensi began with People of the City, a novel which examines the social life of Victorian Lagos. It juxtaposes the new urban passion with the rural beginning of the people. The sad news is that the city, though with every thing good, lacks the unity, love and the expected passion for brotherhood. The city in Nigerian literature since then has been a symbol of everything odd. Night in Lagos takes a deeper look at these odds of the city using the same Lagos as focus. Most of the poems revolve around the poet's experiences in the city of Lagos where there are marked differences in class and topography. Some questions that come to mind are: why did the poet choose the title Night in Lagos?

What does night portend for Lagosians? Does Lagos night define uniqueness that the daytime never carries?

In one of the poems entitled "Lagos", he pictures the ugly scenes of dirt, hate, destruction and the labyrinthine: "The sinks solemnly sigh/ At the sight of drab dishes/Swelling their brooding bowels" (2). This verse becomes more realistic with the next poem "Flood Lagos" which tries to question the population explosion in the city. Lagos population, to the poet, "Leaves a mystery yet unraveled" (3). Lagos is one of the most populated cities in the world but the infrastructural development is not as fast as the population increases by the minute. Even in the elite part of Lagos, the Island, the commercialization of the city centre which results in high traffic bothers the poet in the poem "Lagos Island". The poem "Oshodi Oke", pictures the inhuman part of Lagosians. Oshodi bus stop has been described as the busiest bus stop in the world with human traffic of over one million people on a daily basis. In this poem, the poet recalls how a dying man was left unattended to in the bus stop because "They all filed past him/ Like black busy ants/ In a long black procession" (7). Every body is busy in Lagos fighting for greener pastures even at the detriment of love, compassion and charity. It is in the title poem "Night in Lagos" that the poet revealed the horrors of Lagos:

> Whispering in the shadows
> Smooching shuffling of flesh
> Moaning in the corners of Allen
> Grabbing stabbing in Mushin
> And slashing off a head or
> Simply plucking some eyes-
> Sleeping with serpents in Oshodi
> While private parts fly into thin air!

These are just rhythms of night in Lagos (51)

Each of the poems in this collection examines the state of Lagos in various dimensions as the poet ruminates in awe at every aspect of the city's odds. One is left at the end of the reading with much taught at the height of human carnage, environmental odds, political insincerity, underdevelopment and even spiritual wickedness. Olu Obafemi, in his affirmation of Lagos as a good subject matter in Nigerian literature adds thus:

> In Lagos…in the mixture of rancid stench in deodorant fragrance; the ghetto and the super-maul(sic); abjection and opulence; lavish love and searing hate; pain and joy; prey and predation we see the new centre of creative burst

> of the emerging generation that will lead the light of Nigerian literature by young men and women (iv)

All these and more are captured in Night in Lagos in subtle poetic monologue with racy comprehensible images and message.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the sullen images of Lagos as reflected in Night in Lagos.

3.4 Ritual Poetry: Akeem Lasisi's Iremoje (2001)

Ritual poetry is a type of oral poetry. It is that poetry expressed through the spoken medium. It is much realized when performed. Ritual poetry is a special kind of poetry that originated from the Ijala tradition. Ritual, according to Emeaba (1987) is, "A drama dealing specifically with religious beliefs in godly scenarios. The dramatic personae of most ritual dramas are made to represent gods, deities or spirits. Masks and masquerades are used to represent dead ancestors. The drama relies very much on excessive action and mime with little dialogue." (176) Ritual poetry is, therefore, a type of poetry (with dramatic and/or rhetoric properties) usually performed as a tribute to the dead or a fallen hero. *Iremoje is a tribute to the late Ken Saro Wiwa and other fallen heroes in* Nigeria. More so, Ritual poetry is an art of 'Ijala' tradition, which is a type of Yoruba traditional poetry. 'Ijala' according to Emeaba (1987) is "a poetic composition of lengths varying from between ten and hundreds of lines presented and conforming to specific rules of theme, meter and languages. Ijalas are connected with the legendary traditions of a people especially the Yoruba and accounts for the heroic exploits of Ogun and it is usually performed during annual festivals" (90). According to Akeem Lasisi in his 'Preface to Iremoje' (2000):

> The Yoruba tradition is a functional art and it is largely event based. "Iremoje", is a strictly specialized form, a valedictory ritual poetry, in honour of dead hunters. Other sub-genus such as Ekun Iyawo, Ijala e.t.c. are identified with ceremonies such as marriages and naming ceremonies. (1)

The Yoruba believe that hunters are great chanters with Ijala being their art-in-trade. But, when one of their ilk passes away, they celebrate his exit with a night of 'Iremoje performance' that invokes his great exploits especially during hunting expeditions; how he gunned down the wildest of hyenas and how he wrestled a buffalo to a standstill. (All these are just indications of what makes him great). More importantly though, is the form which symbolizes "a necessary rite of separation,

the one that serves the lord that binds the deceased and the world and enrolls him into the league of his ancestors, who are believed to be carrying on their hunting business in their new sphere of existence." (Akeem Lasisi, Preface 1). The context and structure of *Iremoje are 'heavier' than other forms because of its ritual property. It is* experimentation in the direction of old venerable tradition. The performance aims at serving the dual purpose of giving Ken Saro Wiwa- the indefatigable environmentalist, dogged human rights activist and accomplished author, who was murderously hanged on November 10, 1995, an immortal remembrance and to entertain using African orature. Iremoje is a service of poetry and also the renewal of a dying orature in modern literature.

In Iremoje, Akeem Lasisi makes use of anaphora scheme either through question asking or illustration of a point. This can be illustrated in the following extract:

Ask them:

Ask the snail
What it did that ruined its voice;
Ask the toad
What it did that cut its tail;
Ask the tortoise
What it did that spoilt its skin;
Ask the vulture
What it did that fallowed its head;
Ask them;
Ask the widowed wife of the hilterite weevil
Who trampled on the intricate traffic of nature's web? (36)

The repetition of these initial lines gives the poem a songlike quality, as if it is a chorus. It also shows his emotional state. More like rhetorical questions, each of the imperatives creates images of reality and builds up feelings and thoughtfulness. The regular application of the words 'ask' and 'what' brings in a high level rhetoric inquiries whereby the human mind is constantly pushed towards deeper state of thoughtfulness. There is high invocative essence in the application. Anaphora is also a means of regulating the musicality of the poems. The imperative lexical choices build in tension and increase the tempo of the renditions. The fictionality of the reality paves way for truth and practicality. Akeem Lasisi uses some words to express his mind or inner thought. This occurs, not in clear language, but in various local dialects. Thus, the messages of such likes are still not elusive for they could still be understood in the context of application. Such words can be seen as illustrated in the poem below:

The elephant will yet weigh more than a healthy deer
Kulu kulu kulu. (46)

This onomatopoeic choice 'kulu kulu kulu' mimics the heaviness of an elephants exploits. It captures and/or shows how the word formulated illustrates the leaping of the verses. It reveals revered personality and suggests a heavy picture or outburst of reality. The onomatopoeic contour in the choice above shows the overwhelming truth of the war against environmental degradation and the odds of bad politics!

The sparrow wonders kwaai! kwaai!
Why the ferocious cruelty of the hunter's gun. (33)

This epitomizes the sounds of anger and pains of the suffering populace.

There is the image of a sparrow croaking with anger at the cruelty of the hunters. The choice of this onomatopoeic lexis shows the place of sounds at capturing reality and at the same time revealing situations. We see 'the sparrows', (innocent common man), being hunted and killed mercilessly by the blood thirsty hunters with their guns (the military men in power). The sound 'kwaai' mimics the word 'cry' and captures the sorrowful experiences of the people.

My poetry is oruku tindi-tindi
My poetry is oruku tindi-tindi (45)

Akeem Lasisi blends the local dialects and sounds freely to the extent that the non-Yoruba consumers of this art are forced into it in manner that does not make room for absolute complexities. The choice of this lexical choice of sounds, oruku tindi-tindi, suggests that the entire verse is filled or pregnant with ideas untold. It may also suggest the mysteries of poetry as the little song that reveals the reality of things or the unknown states of man. It also shows that poetry is shrouded in hidden truths, which must be told.

In Iremoje, there are serious attempts at blending African orature with modern poetry. Each blending carries with it a special effect in whole ritual recourse. Each poetic application aims at achieving certain effects which are realizable. They are significant as they embody the ideas of struggle and anarchy as reflected in the life of the hero, Ken Saro Wiwa.
The use of local dialects like Ogoni and Yoruba languages adds more oral reality to the verses. As an oral discourse, Iremoje is has the effect of realizing the truth of the message with less doubt and this is one way that modern African poets have evolved in domesticating their arts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the various oral properties in Lasisi's Iremoje.

4.0 CONCLUSION

There have been these calls for caution to the younger poets in Nigeria. Many critics believe that they are too hasty to publish. In essence, there are over 10,000 poetry collections published within the last two decades in Nigeria especially by the young writers. There are marked prolific outpourings especially in the genre of poetry. Many of these poets write with reasons: to belong to the edified group of writers, to express themselves poetically no matter the weakness in their craft, to get published and be called authors (as most of these works are self published). Many of these writers complained that established publishing outfits reject their manuscripts because they were not known authors like Soyinka, Achebe, Clark, Okara or Osofisan. Prof. Femi Osofisan decided to experiment with a pen name in order to find out whether established publishing outfits would be able to find any substance in his poetry. Fortunately his collection was found publishable and since then he had published several works under the pen name 'Okinba Launko'.

However, these writers: Njoku, Lasisi and Ekwuazi are significant in their arts. Their poetry projects thematic vivacity, stylistic newness and painstaking poetic balance. Each of the poems in the collections treated here reveals a measure commitment to art and humanity. Njoku ponders on the odds of modern Lagos and uses the setting as a micro dissection of the general odds in Nigeria and Africa in general. Lasisi takes a careful incursion into the Yoruba ritual art, using it as a viable too for the revelation of the draconic governance in Africa while Ekwuazi takes a dive into the emotional and psychological make up of the vast populace of the downtrodden in the Nigerian society. At least, within this sea of insignificant poetry, there are still some good ones to consume.

5.0 SUMMARY

The collections of poems treated in this unit are some of the significant poetry of this generation. It is not that there are no other better poets with good poetic skills but the choice here is based on style, theme and time. It is not surprising that all the poets treated here are males. This is because there are fewer female poets in Nigeria today and interestingly they far outweigh the female poets of the other generations. We have such strong female poets as Promise Okekwe, Molara Wood, Unomah Azuah and Angela Nwosu amongst others. They have good poetic skills

but most of them are based in Europe and America. However, the male poets far outweigh the female but there seem to be many female novelists and they are than the female poets. The poets treated here are chosen because of the content of their massage and their craft. They rank among the best poets in Nigeria today and they constitute a framework for discussing the poetic craft of the generation of Nigerian poets today.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Discuss the various critical attacks on modern Nigerian poetry.
2. Explain the major thematic thrust in Njoku's Night in Lagos.
3. Assess the function of Ijala ritual in Lasisi's Iremoje.
4. Ekwuazi's Love Apart is a poetic dissection of Nigeria's trauma. How true is this perception?
5. Distinguish the thematic concern of modern Nigerian poets from their predecessors.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ekwuazi, Hyginus (2007). Love Apart. Ibadan: Kraft.

Emeaba, Onuma Emeaba (1987). A Dictionary of Literature. Aba: Inteks Press.

Lasisi, Akeem (2001). Iremoje (Ritual Poetry for Ken Saro-Wiwa). Ikeja: Hybun.

Njoku, Austyn (2008). Night in Lagos. Lagos: Jemie Books.

UNIT 4 THE NEW NIGERIA NOVELISTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Political Satire: Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus
3.3 Socio-Political Factor: Helon Habila Waiting for an Angel
3.4 Niger-Delta Situation: Kaine Agary's Yellow Yellow
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall study the prose fiction of select new Nigerian writers. These writers write about the events that chronicle the experiences of the new Nigerian situation: politics, society, culture, religion etc. Interestingly, most of them are females. These new Nigerian novelists produce artistic works that show that Nigeria has her own history, culture, and civilization. They see their works as a service to their societies. They reveal that Nigerian society had its own contradictions and spiritual crises. Their fictional approach sharply contrasts to the early writers, such as Ekwensi, Achebe, Soyinka, and others, whose artistic works idealize Nigeria. They examine the social situations from the standpoint of class conflict. They use the English language to suit their purposes in fiction writing. We shall select a few of these writers in order to study their message about the new Nigerian situation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit the students should be able to:

appreciate the new novelists in Nigeria
assess the message in the works of these new writers
contrast their novels with the early writers in terms of themes
discover the newness in their approach to novel writing
identify their contributions to the vast African Prose fiction.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

These new writers of novel in Nigeria reveal in their works the traumas of the present age: starvation, torture, oil spillage, environmental pollution, AIDS, murder, cultural odds, religious and political problems. Their tales/images reveal instances of pain and deprivation. Their novels enter the heart by sneak attack. The questions that often trail the minds of their readers are: Why are we so depressed? Is there no joy in our existence? How is it that our best and brightest are not mindful of the end of the machete that hurts our motherland? Regardless, these writers have every reason to be worried about the situation in Nigeria (Africa). The question becomes: What are they doing about it? Many of these writers spend a lot of time painting gory pictures of Nigeria's (Africa's) sorry state. These writers focus on the Nigeria's (continent's) corrupt leaders, warlords, "tribal" conflicts, child laborers, child traffickers and women disfigured by abuse and genital mutilation amongst other issues.

They write to critique and correct the horrible images of Nigeria (Africa) as one giant beggar-continent that will someday be erased when the intellectuals and writers like these millennium writers direct their rage inwards. They believe the African writers and intellectuals can stop feeding the West stories of irredeemable despair that turn Africa into a caricature continent. They believe there is hope, because there is a return to the oral tradition of storytelling by our ancestors and they call this change.

These new writers write for a precocious generation that went through books with the same intensity with which they surf the pages of the Internet. The pressures on these writers of fiction are enormous. Their voices never stopped singing, they delivered story after story, so painstakingly about the odds of the age. As you read their novels, you feel the passion and the love for the word, pulsating through every word; there is a near obsession for perfection that borders on a disability. These new writers focus on the true condition of the country without reducing the land and her people to ridicule.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

These new novelists are engrossed with revealing the totality of Nigeria's ugly state. Discuss this proposition

3.2 Political Satire: Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus

Kambili, the protagonist in Purple Hibiscus, uses the draconic ruling pattern of her father, Chief Eugene Achike, to reveal the problems in the entire Nigerian society. The unnecessary religious conflicts that make Kambili's father to hate Papa Nnukwu; her grand father shows the high-handedness of some African people who use religion as a means of creating discord in their families. Uncle Eugene allows religion to becloud his sense of fellowship with his culture and society. His children must comply with the tenets of Catholicism. It becomes surprising that a man like Chief Eugene Achike who fights for the political freedom of his people through his journalistic ventures could apply what he attacks in his home. He engages in children and wife battery but criticizes those who batter the society. It looks like denying a phenomenon and embracing it at the same time. A paradox! He celebrates the relief that comes from coups believing that a new government means freedom in sight. He expects freedom but blocks it from his vicinity.

> Kambili sees the contrast between her father and the military government when she critically asserts, "of course, Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt…, what we needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy. Renewed Democracy. It sounded important, the way he said it…" (25).

This whole dream sounded as if Kambili is expecting a 'renewed approach' to the family affairs first before hoping for a renewed governance in the country. Adichie explains that the issue of governance in Africa would change when the individuals begin to examine within themselves the correct approaches to life that would enhance the development of good governance.

Kambili and Jaja never experienced 'real' love in their home at Enugu. It was Aunty Ifeoma's home that provided the needed environment for them to experience love. Jaja falls in love with flowers and other chores. He expresses himself to his cousins. He visits scenes and places and exchanges gifts and experiences. He sees the love of a 'heathen' grandfather who tells them moral folk tales and the love of a reverend father who provides the needed atmosphere for peace and joy. Kambili sees the love of a sister who teaches her to cook meals, care for others and accommodate people around her. She 'falls in love' with Father Amadi. Father Amadi sees in Kambili the character of a heroine who talks less but acts more in her mind, "she does not waste her energy in picking never-ending arguments. But there is a lot going on in her mind, I can tell." (173).

Amaka is also a strong voice. She seems to be one of the strongest female voices in our contemporary fiction. Amaka refuses to take an English name for her confirmation because she sees no need for such 'colonial' necessity. She was never forced to accept this 'necessity'. Not even from Father Amadi whose closeness to the family ought to have given the necessary touch for Amaka to choose an English name:

> "I told you I am not taking an English name, father," she said
> "And have I asked you why?"
> "Why do I have to?"
> "Because it is the way it's done. Let's forget if it's right or wrong for now," father Amadi said, and I noticed the shadows under his eyes.
> "When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn't we moving ahead?" (271-272)

Amaka represents the new hope for the coming generation of African women. Amaka seems to be the most vocal of these characters: young, resilient, outspoken and unbending in the things that touch her African pride. Kambili describes her thus: "She walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Aunty Ifeoma did" (78). She is a rare breed of the new generation of youths. She is creative, accommodating, honest, outspoken and a dogged fighter. Even when Amaka left the country with her mother, she never stops her protests against those things she finds unpalatable in the Nigerian society. Kambili tells us that:

> Amaka used to write to the office of the head of state, even the Nigerian Ambassador in America, to complain about the poor state of Nigeria's justice system. She said nobody acknowledged the letters but still it was important to her that she do something. (300)

Adichie takes a historical stance in the exposition of the travails of military oddities in the novel. Ade Coker fights the military regime through the Standard newspaper. Uncle Eugene sees the fight as his needed role in the correction of military anarchy. Aunty Ifeoma flees the country to the United States in search of peace and academic freedom. Brain drain increases daily. Later, Ade Coker is murdered. Nwankiti Ogechi (a typology for Ken Saro Wiwa) is murdered:

Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And

> then they poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his

bones, to kill him even when he was already dead. (200-201)

After this killing, commonwealth countries suspended Nigeria and imposed sanctions. The Big Oga later dies "atop a prostitute, foaming at the mouth and jerking-…" (297). The Big Oga, invariably General Sani Abacha, is revealed as the ending point of Nigeria's military rule. His death and the death of Uncle Eugene bring in a new hope, a dawn, to the polity. Jaja's acceptance of the crime of murdering his father, even though his mother had claimed responsibility, shows the yearning of the family to get freedom from the brutal and strict father, just like the needed respite the Nigerian nation experienced with the exit of the dictator, General Sani Abacha. The symbol of the purple hibiscus bringing a new hope in their home is seen in Kambili's new vision of tomorrow: "I reach out and place my arm around mama's shoulder and she leans towards me and smiles...The new rains will come soon (307).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Purple Hibiscus is the picture of Nigeria at the zenith of anarchy. Explain how Adichie achieved this.

3.3 Helon Habila's Waiting for an Angel

Nigeria in the 1990s, the setting for this novel, was a police state of such sadistic violence, with human rights abuses so staggering, that the country was expelled from the Commonwealth of Nations, and virtually every other country had sanctions against it. As the author says in the 'Afterword' to this stunning novel, "There was nothing to believe in: the only mission the military rulers had was systematically to loot the national treasury; their only morality was a vicious survivalist agenda in which any hint of disloyalty was ruthlessly crushed." Every hint of dissent and every suspicion of democratic thinking by many of the country's most gifted writers and thinkers were wiped out by the military government of Sani Abacha.

Focusing primarily on Lomba, a journalist and frustrated novelist, who, in the opening chapter is a starving political prisoner in a Lagos jail, author Helon Habila jumps back and forth in time, introducing us in succeeding chapters to the lives of ordinary citizens of Lagos, men and women, including Lomba himself, living on Poverty Street, trying to maintain some semblance of hope in an increasingly hopeless world. Lomba, jailed for two years without a trial as the novel opens, has gone beyond anger, which he describes as "the baffled prisoner's attempt to re-crystallize his slowly dissolving self," and entered "a state of tranquil acceptance" of his fate. When the jailer finds the poems and journal

entries he has written and hidden, he persuades Lomba to write some love poems for the better-educated woman he is courting. A brief ray of hope flickers when the woman recognizes Lomba's cryptic messages and comes to the prison to meet him.

The novel then flashes back to the years before Lomba's arrest, and as various episodes unfold, the author shows us the effects of this dictatorial government on the ordinary people who populate the country. Though life is difficult and opportunities almost non-existent, the young people still have hopes and dreams. When Lomba and a friend have their fortunes told by a poet, one of the young men asks to know the day of his death, which he hopes will be "spectacular and momentous," a day he is assured he will know when the time comes—and does. A second friend, whose parents have been killed in a car crash, is so grief-stricken that he makes an intemperate and idealistic speech, then is arrested, severely beaten, and driven insane. With no chance of getting his own novel published, Lomba himself takes a job writing for the Dial, for which he occasionally reports on political demonstrations, one of them a demonstration in which people peacefully protest the neglect of their neighborhood. "We are dying from lack of hope," his friend Joshua says at the demonstration. The unarmed protesters are suddenly attacked by fifty armed riot police, tear gas is exploded, protesters are severely beaten, and running women and children are killed by cars speeding on the adjacent highway.

Because the author presents these episodes in random order, depicting the families, everyday life, and hopes and dreams of the participants, the reader easily imagines what life must have been like during this time and can envision what his/her own life might have been under the same circumstances. But Habila adds further reality to his depictions of life in Nigeria under Sani Abacha by including some well-known historical events and their effects on Lomba and the fictional characters: the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa, the killing of Dele Giwa, the editor of Newswatch magazine, by a letter bomb, and the shooting of the wife of Abiola, the opponent of Abacha who was jailed simply for challenging him.

In one of the most telling episodes in the novel, Lomba goes to a party and meets the writers and poets of Lagos. A man introduces himself to him, saying, "Hi, I am Helon Habila." Suddenly, the reader realizes how much of this novel may be autobiographical, a factor which makes the drama of the story even more intense. We know from the author's biography that he once held the same job as Lomba and that he is now living in London. What we do not know is how many of the other realistically presented events may also be true. The reader may wonder how he knows so much about life under sadistic jailers in the prisons of Lagos, though no one will doubt the accuracy of his descriptions.

Because the chronological ending--Lomba's imprisonment--appears as the first chapter, the reader experiences a sense of déjà vu throughout the reading of the novel, as the action backtracks, forcing the reader to experience the events which led up to the opening chapter and to wonder if anything could have prevented Lomba's eventual imprisonment. Habila makes us think, ponder the fragility of democratic institutions which we take for granted, and explore how the slow erosion of rights can lead to the rise of dictators who seize absolute power to continue their rule. Though the drama and violence are presented with almost journalistic clarity, the novel's emotion is engendered by our identification with the characters and our ability to understand that these are people not much different from ourselves, people who through no fault of their own have become victims of circumstance and the power of a military controlled by one man.

Habila's novel is a powerful defense of the freedom of the press and a celebration of the lives of those courageous writers who have refused to be silenced, even when faced with death. As he says, "Every oppressor knows that wherever one word is joined to another word to form a sentence, there'll be revolt. That is our work, the media: to refuse to be silenced, to encourage legitimate criticism wherever we find it." This moving study of idealistic young people refusing to give up, even when faced with threats to their very lives, is an unforgettable story of the human spirit waiting for an angel--and sometimes meeting the Angel of Death.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the themes of political odds and military dictatorship in Waiting *for an Angel.*

3.4 Niger Delta Situation: Kaine Agary Yellow Yellow

Kaine Agary claimed that he was inspired by Saro-Wiwa's book entitled *A Month and a Day in writing the novel. Yellow-Yellow was the first* novel of Kaine Agary, who grew up in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The honour was to reflect the relevance of the book on how literatures have been used to illuminate the Niger Delta question. Kaine was in the United States of America for a while before relocating to Lagos. Yellow-*Yellow was all about a young biracial girl, Zilayefa, who was born of a* Nigerian mother and a Greek sailor, who left her rustic existence and the protective grip of her mother in the village in search of a better life in the city of Port Harcourt.

With a recommendation from her pastor, Zilayefa, the main character in the book, took in and was cared for by an elderly biracial woman, Sisi,

and her friend, Lolo. She was thrust into the bustling city of Port Harcourt, unprepared for the pitfalls awaiting a young girl so unsure of herself and also in desperate need of direction. She was confronted by prejudices against her racial identity. Zilayefa joined the fast Port Harcourt life, coloured by the presence of expatriates in the oil sector and declining societal values during a military regime.

She struggled with accepting the void left by not knowing her father and tried to fill that void with the attention of an older lover. Through her budding sexuality experiences, Zilayefa grew to a higher level of knowledge and understanding. Yellow-Yellow portrayed life and culture in the Niger Delta through the eyes of Zilayefa when she struggled with development of her identity. It revealed a portrait of beauty and social destruction of the Nigerian Niger Delta, giving a picture and a human face to the hardships of the people.

At the early chapters of the book, the author reflected the menace of oil spillage on hectares of farmland that was supposed to be cultivated for food production. The villagers constituted a pressure group to fight against oppression especially from the foreigners, who were operators of the oil companies that laid their oil pipes in the village. They reported the case to the village head for immediate rescue. Some were crying, others were agitating for compensation. The crude oil, as reported by the author, spread out and covered more land and drowned small animals in its path. The air was polluted with bad smell from crude oil and decaying animals. Men and women were covered knee-deep in the crude oil.

The oil company rejected the accusation, declaring a suspect sabotage of the youth in the village. They insisted on not paying any compensation for all the destruction the burst pipes had caused. Many people lost their main source of sustenance to the spillage including the author's mother. Women rowed their canoes farther away to find land for farming. Every year, it was hard to catch fish. It was contrary to the early days of the author's mother when every husband was expected to give his new wife a dugout canoe he had carved out and crafted himself. The wife would use the canoe to fish, earn a living and help to feed the family. The big boys carved out decorative paddles that carried the legends of the Ijaws in every curve.

Sisi, who took care of Zilayefa, stopped schooling at primary six level. She was exposed to all influences that converged on Port Harcourt before Nigeria's Independence from the British. She used the exposure to get contracts for construction and food supply in government hospitals. She was good with creative ideas for projects she was selling to the procurement officers of the establishment. She was involved in

the supply of toilet papers and leasing of pick-up trucks. She was the only woman who got contracts from oil companies. At the concluding chapters of the book, the author reviewed how young girls, who wanted to escape poverty, were looking up to white men to rescue them. Girls were trooping into hotel lobbies at Warri and Bonny, looking for how to attach themselves with the white men. There were people on contract, linking up good looking young girls with prospective white men. On one of such night cruises, Zilayefa met Sergio, his former jilted lover whom she thought was one of those hanging out for young girls.

There have been different reactions over the quality of artworks compiled in Yellow-Yellow by its author, which made it to gain such befitting recognition at a first trial. Yellow-Yellow takes us on an amazing journey through the Delta region of Nigeria: our guide is a young woman trying to find herself seeking her fortune in a big city, a city hungry to swallow her soul and spit out her jaded hollow shell. It is a truly authentic narrative of a region, the burden of its incredible wealth and a young woman's determination to carry it. This literary gem is a must read.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

The Niger-Delta region in Nigeria is a focus of attention because of environmental degradation. How successful is Agary's treatment of the issue in Yellow Yellow?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The new Nigerian novel is based on contemporary human experiences in order to remain relevant. One fundamental character of the contemporary Nigerian novel is that it provides a specific manner of narration which identifies and assumes human names in such a way that suggests that they are to be regarded as individuals in the contemporary society. The new Nigerian novel becomes an exploration of the personality as it is defined in the interpretation of its past and present self-awareness. The mark of true realism therefore, is the depiction of an age as individuals' experience and the bourgeois exploration of the individual's experience reaches its highest form when this individual is not a fragmentary experience but the quintessential representation of a particular historical and social experience. The political life of a nation and its social-national dilemma is thus depicted through an individual experience, the individual himself being shaped by the socio-economic circumstances in which he finds himself. These writers reveal social cohesion or social consciousness. They reveal new interests and experiences in their crafts of fiction. Their novels are constantly interrupted in the effort to maintain and expand contemporary artistic

activities and institutions in the face of their country's problems and a general sapping of energy and initiative.

5.0 SUMMARY

The new Nigerian fiction writers are producing artistic works that show that Nigeria (Africa) had its own history, culture, and civilization. These writers apply pathos and emotive power of their works to instigate the oppressors in their societies and to initiate a political and economic reorganization of their society in the interest of the oppressed. However, some critics maintain that the intentions (of the pathos and bitterness of these novels) are to whip the emotions of the people into revolutionary action. The artistic forms reflect the ideological content, for these writers use satire and ridicule as corrective narrative techniques to enlighten their society morally. The despair that pervades these works, which portray the oppressed as trapped and helpless, arises in the writers' political misunderstanding. These new Nigerian fiction writers have no choice but to join in the people's struggle for survival. In that situation, they will have to confront the ruling elites whose services are not beneficial to all. These writers apply the real language of struggle in the actions and speeches of their people, learn from their great optimism and faith in the capacity of human beings to remake their world and renew themselves.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions:

1. The new novelists reveal every ugly thing that hinders Nigeria's development. Explain how they achieve this.
2. Purple Hibiscus touches on the odds of militarism in Nigeria. Discus the thematic concerns in the novel.
3. Discus the blend of politics and social trauma in Habila's *Waiting for an Angel.*
4. There are vast social and environmental traumas in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Carefully discus how Agary revealed this in Yellow Yellow.
5. Compare and contrast the thematic thrust of the new fiction writers with their predecessors.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Adichie, Chimamanda (2005). Purple Hibiscus. Lagos: Farafina.

Agary, Kaine (2005). Yellow Yellow Lagos: Infomedia.

Habila, Helon (2005). Waiting for an Angel. London: Faber & Faber.

UNIT 5 THE NEW NIGERIAN PLAYWRIGHTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
3.1 General Overview
3.2 Political Drama: Niyi Osundare's The State Visit
3.3 Historical Drama: Ahmed Yerima's The Trial of Oba *Ovonramwen*
3.4 A New Theory: Sam Ukala's Folkist Dramatic Theory
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study some new plays that reflect different forms from what has been in the years before. The theatrical practices of Soyinka and Clark among others in the first generation dramatists in Nigeria reflect the basic imitative patterns of Europe and America. Their plays juxtaposed the African thoughts in Europeans style of art. However, the new playwrights have often evolved something different from their predecessors. They exploit African beliefs, environment, art, and life in the creation new forms of theatre. For instance, Ahmed Yerima, has written plays utilizing the Nigerian historical and mythical experiences covering almost all the ethnic divides. Sam Ukala propounded the theory of Folkist theatre. It is a theatrical form of drama using the folktale tradition as yardstick. Their plays reflect new forms of theatricality.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, the students will be able to:

understand the new forms of theater in Nigeria
appreciate the new forms in terms of their relevance
distinguish the old forms of drama from the new forms
discuss the new theatrical forms and their contributions to Nigerian literature
accept that the new playwrights have unique ways of expressing their arts .

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

In Nigeria, theatre is a reflection of life. Right from the pre-colonial, pre-literate days, it has been in existence and it is reflected in the people's festivals, rituals, mythology and other forms of social engagements. The typical African is bound to frown on theatre as entertainment because, to him, it transcends that. It is a medium through which he reaches out to, or better still, courts the supernatural world and certain enigmatic developments or phenomena of life in order to transcend them. However, the African man's contact with the colonial world has eroded some of the importance attached to certain African values. Exposure to education and other seemly more refined religious practices has diminished, significantly, the importance that was once attached to certain beliefs and notions. Today, the story has changed. Nigerian playwrights in the years before and immediately after independence wrote to correct certain misconceptions about her people. Others wrote to magnify and eulogize those aspects of the Nigerian culture that promote good will and social harmony.

Wole Soyinka, no doubt, is a master of his art. He has commanded attention, both at home and abroad. His literary activities cut across the diverse genres of literary writing. When, in 1986, he won the laureate, not too many people were taken unawares. Since Soyinka, however, a good number of literary activities both in writing and performance have taken place in the Nigerian society – major playwrights and theatre practitioners whose work cannot just be wished away, have emerged. Foremost among the emergent playwrights is Fémi Òsófisan, who has been widely acclaimed as the next literary giant that the Nigerian literary society is producing after Soyinka. Other pronounced and highly acclaimed dramatists and theatre arts practitioners who are coeval with Femi Osofisan include Ola Rotimi, Bode Sowande, Zulu Sofola, Tunde Fatunde, Wale Ogunyemi, Olu Obafemi, Bode Osanyin, Ben Tomoloju, Sam Ukala, Tess Onwueme and a host of others. These are all theatre arts dramatists and practitioners who have caused ripples in recent Nigerian theatre history. Not any one of the aforementioned has less than a dozen published plays – and they are still writing and publishing.

Femi Osofisan is famed for plays like Morountodun, No More the *Wasted Breed, Midnight Hotel, Aringindin and the Night Watchmen, Midnight Blackout, Once Upon 4 Robbers, Who's Afraid of Solarin?, Another Raft and a host of others. In his repertory are about fifty* published plays. He continues to write and publish. He is, perhaps, the most performed playwright in Nigeria today. A folklorist dramatist, Femi Osofisan approaches the diverse problems that confront man in his

society, in parables and song. His language is easy to comprehend and his style amenable to different tastes and experiments. The fluidity of his style of writing makes virtually all of his works the choice of theatre houses both within and outside the academia.

Ola Rotimi is reputed for his lingual experimentations, profoundly conscious of the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society, Rotimi a kind of theatre that would meet the yearnings of all major ethnic groupings in the Nigerian society. In plays like Hopes of the Living *Dead and If… A Tragedy of the Ruled, this becomes immediately* obvious. Hitherto, influences on Rotimi at the early stage of his literary writings are traceable to the Classical and the absurdist traditions. One is, therefore, not surprised that his earlier plays like The Gods are not to *Blame and Holding Talks follow these great theatre traditions. Perhaps* aware that these traditions did not meet the social and political immediacy which his art was later to command, he turned a little bit to the left in his later plays. His Man Talk, Woman Talk and Tororo are more of social commentaries on the Nigerian situation while his comedy, Our Husband has gone Mad Again is more of a political satire – a grotesque revelation of happenings within the continent's political landscape even years after political independence had been achieved.

Zulu Sofola is an indisputable neo-Classical writer. Most of her plays are modeled along the Classical concept of tragedy. She adopts this approach in plays like Wedlock of the gods and King Emene among others, to reprimand man for his hubris. Man, she contends, will always be brought back to where he truly belongs as long as pride remains in him. However, Sofola's later plays like The Sweet Trap and Song of a *Maiden are a radical departure from the tradition which she has always* adored. Respectively, the two plays deal with the woman question and where she truly belongs in the society in a radically different manner. One would have expected Zulu Sofola, a frontline woman leader, activist and female writer, to use her plays to propagate the ideals of womanhood and then scream equality or women liberation from the roof-tops the way some contemporary feminist writers and performing artists are wont to do, but no; this is not to be with a Sofola. She insists that though women should possess certain rights in the society, feminism, as presently advocated and propagated, which places the woman at par with her male folk would, definitely, not make for a good social equilibrium. A woman should aspire to any height in the society in her numerous endeavours and she is free to possess limitless ambitions but this should not make her blind to the realities of her existence; she should assist her husband to build a better society, not dictate to him. She can pursue her ambitions and yet maintain her position at home as the officer in-charge of domestic affairs. The man is expected to support his wife and encourage her of her dreams, not lord

things over her. This is the panacea for the present turbulence in contemporary society. Instead of feminism, as is currently being trumpeted, therefore, womanism should be advocated. Feminism is antithetical to the spirit of the African woman.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Carefully discuss the background to Nigerian theatre practice that led to the present new forms.

3.2 Political Drama: Niyi Osundare's The State Visit

Niyi Osundare is better known as a poet. He is one of the finest poets from Nigeria for the past two decades. The State Visit is his first play. It is a Stage Drama published by Kraft Books in 2002 but first performed by The Creativity Workshop at the Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan in 1997. The genre chosen for expression by the writer is a sartorial comedy. The play is a satirical attack on the political odds in Nigeria. Many Nigerian playwrights consider it a point of social responsibility to discuss the issue of the excesses of the military leaders and Osundare is no exception. Wole Soyinka's King Baabu, Wole Oguntokun's Who's Afraid of Wole Soyinka? and Deji Toye's Botching *of a Brute are some examples of plays attacking the excesses of the* military in Nigeria.

The location is the fictional Yanke, which appears to be a thin veil for Nigeria itself and the antagonists are the ruler of the country simply known as "Head" and his entire cabinet of ministers. The Head and his ministers prepare for a state visit by a ruler of a neighbouring country, Wilama, hence the title of the drama, a visitor known by many names including the "Son of the Leopard, Descendant of the Towering Giraffe, Offshoot of a warrior family…" among many others.

The cabinet of Yanke, an obsequious crew that follows its leader, the Hyena of Yanke to the point of absurdity in his various schemes are given curious characters by the playwright bordering on the farcical. The Minister in charge of Public Morality is female but spends time engaging in touching and being touched in sensitive areas of her body by the Minister of Agriculture, all these taking place during cabinet meetings. It appears the Minister of Agriculture whose ministry is deprived of money designed to keep the masses from starvation is a form of the former Roman Emperor Nero who fiddled as Rome burnt. This minister has no problem with the impending starvation but finds the threat of hunger to the people amusing. The Minister simply known as "Agric" says: "What future are you talking about?" The future is not the problem now. When it comes, it will take care of itself. Let us eat

and be merry today. Why should we bother about tomorrow? You can only grab what you see."

The Minister of External Affairs is lent more intelligence than the entirety of the cabinet combined, indicating to the reader that sometimes, the dictator-rulers of Africa often add members of the intelligentsia and academia to their ranks, people who should know better but instead become willing aides in the continuous pillaging of the African continent.

The voice of conscience in the cabinet of Yanke's government is the Minister of finance who makes his opposition known to his fellow cabinet members and the Head of Yanke. He then walks out on the cabinet and is replaced by a more unscrupulous and opportunistic Finance minister. It is unlikely that in reality, any finance minister could state his opposition plainly to a ruler like the Head. Opposition is not accepted lightly by people of this ilk, is regarded as a personal affront and extreme and final steps are taken against those regarded as disloyal. Sanni Abacha of Nigeria (who appears to be the Head) and Idi Amin Dada of Uganda are examples of the reactions of maniacs in power.

There is an official journalist for the Head and his ministers and the extremes gone to, so as to be perfect in the pictures taken are absurd, ridiculing the entire cabinet. It appears that the main pattern of satirizing the excesses of African and particularly Nigerian leaders is farce. The journalist represents those that fiercely opposed the Head but who were bought over by subtle threats and the largesse given by the government to those it tries to silence. The question to be asked here is, "Does everyone have a prize?"

Even today, in modern day Nigeria, it is obvious that parallels may be drawn between the cabinet of Yanke, deaf to the entreaties and sufferings of its people and the ruling government in Modern day Nigeria peppered with members of the ruling political parties. The discontented people of Yanke are represented by a selection of beggars, students, workers and a discontented painter who refuses to use his skills for preparing for the visit of the neighbouring ruler. The beggars tell their own stories of how they have been betrayed by the state, left to fend for themselves in extreme deprivation. It is obvious that Yanke is a failed state, lacking all forms of welfare for its people and the similarity to the Nigerian situation is extremely disturbing to this reader.

One of the beggars becomes an alms-receiver as a result of an accident with a piano he was helping to unload. The Piano itself, an instrument of cultural enlightenment meant for his master's daughter, falls on him as he helps with the unloading, and causes him the use of his limbs. The

master, representing the upper class does not see to his welfare and subsequently he becomes a beggar. The symbolism of the piano as an instrument of subjection and repression is a striking one. The painter (or creative person) who refuses to work for the Lion of Yanke fearlessly calls the entire cabinet derogatory names to their faces. He refers to them as tyrants and vampires but the Head chooses to remain obtuse, not understanding what is being said. When the cabinet finally realizes the "artistic" insults of the painter, the ensuing rage costs the painter his life.

The State Visit does not take place; at least in the play as the people violently resist the excesses of the Lion of Yanke. The Narrator is left to finish the story in the end, saying that "Yanke will never be the same again" and indeed the songs of opposition are heard continuing despite the deaths of several citizens at the hands of the law enforcement agents of Yanke. The Narrator who set us on the path to an understanding of the play ends the performance and it appears as if the future of Yanke is in the hands of the people and whether they will choose to react or be silent. One wonders if this is a call to revolution by the playwright. For those who might think all revolutions are calls to anarchy, we must remember that we have seen the success of a rose revolution where no shots were fired but where the people took back the reins of government from undeserving leaders.

The writer seems to be comfortable with a didactic approach, one where lessons are taught and learned and indeed the entire play through its Narrator, plot, twists and the development of its characters teaches moral development all the way. The helplessness and frustration of the citizens in the country today are well thought out and a way out is revealed by the playwright. The people must speak up and reclaim what is theirs or die in the throes of tyranny.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Carefully assess Osundare's exposition of military dictatorship in The *State Visit.*

3.3 Historical Drama: Yerima's The Trial of Oba *Ovonramwen (1997)*

The Trials by Ahmed Yerima is another historical version of the great punitive invasion of Benin and The Trial of the Chiefs who killed White men in the Phillips party. Unlike the two plays above, this play starts with Ovonramwen tell-ing his own story with a melancholic anger: Here I am seated in my glory… how can I discredit myself when the truth is that the story will never be written well if I don't tell you myself… the white men. He desired my Empire and envied my position and wanted

my throne… (19) The overzealousness of the Acting Consul-General Phillips is the next dramatic action and this dialogue of his below expresses the desire of the British Empire:

There you are. The great Benin Empire, I need you… you

> extend to Otun in the north, Asaba in the east, and Lagos in the west. The British Empire must have you in order to have the whole Niger area under its grasp. And it must be now… (21)

Phillips' action negates the advice given to him by District Commissioner Bur-rows, who says that the intelligence report from Eyebokan (one of their moles in Oba's palace) did not recommend them to enter Benin at that time, especially when the Oba and his people were celebrating one of their sacred festivals. How-ever, Phillips insists on entering Benin because of his own inordinate ambition, "I must take Benin for the glory of the British Empire and mine." In an overlapping order the following scenario makes

The Trials a captivating play: Ologbosere, Ovonramwen's father-in law, builds his loyalty on the Oba, the oracle of Uhe's warning and the inevitability of the destruction of Benin city, Obaseki and Omatshola also report to the Oba the situation at Warri with Ovonramwen expressing his suspicion and doubt of the integrity of Obaseki about state affairs, Eyebokan delivers Phillips' message of his intended visit as regards the Trade Treaty, the chiefs of Benin discuss the issue of the uninvited visitors and the need for them not to visit Benin, Uzazakpo recounts his dream to Ovonramwen and how the colour of the white-man frightens him. T he dramatic conflict of the play becomes visible when Ovonramwen demands the white men and Ologbosere says that, "Dead, we killed the white men". Obiro, the Court Seer, informs Ovonramwen that he cannot do anything to avert the impending disaster, Ovonramwen also warns Iyase to be a good umpire for he hears through Obiro that: "… My son Aiguobasimwin in a wrestling contest with an older wrestler, the price was my crown" (56). Obaseki's supposed classical betrayal of the Benin people becomes exposed through his discussion with Carter in the play after the fall of Benin:

Obaseki: Not enough

> Carter: What do you need then?
> Obaseki: Some authority. I need something new. Some powers so that he can believe me. The Oba must know that when I am talking to him it is with power…
> Carter: I see your point. Then you must go as a representative of Her Majesty's government.
> Obaseki: Yes. Very good

As the most senior Bini man with British Empire here in Bini Country. (60) Consul-General Moor is the judge and the prosecutor in the Trial Scene with Obaseki supporting every move of the British Officers in the trial. Ovonramwen makes obeisance to the British Monarch without his crown, which he gives to Chief Obaseki in trust. Idiaghe dies in the play for telling lies against the Oba and Chief Obaiuwana commits suicide after he is arrested during the trial. Moor finally delivers his judgment:

> Yes. Let it be entered that… the Oba did not order the massacre. Let Ologbosheri, Obaradesagbon, Uso, Obakhavbaye and Ugiade guilty and hereby sentences them to death. (77)

Ovonramwen is dethroned and banished to Calabar and he ends the play that he starts by accepting the fate that befalls him:… Take me whiteman. Take me…For the love of Bini, Take me…To the royal valley…Where the gods await their sacrifice. (79)

The theme of this play includes; overweening ambition, conspiracy, deceit, disloyalty, disobedience, partiality and fate. The text explicitly create practical impressions about the story of Oba Ovonramwen; the political scenario that leads to the massacre of the Phillips Party, the great invasion, the celebration of the Igue festival, the warning of the oracle of Uhe, the intrigue and deceit that follow the coronation of Ovonramwen, Ologbosere's unflinching patriotism and loyalty to the Benin Kingdom and their Oba, Phillips' overzealousness, the big trial and the revenge tragedy that follows it and the subsequent banishment and dethronement of Ovonramwen to Calabar. Throughout the play, Ovonramwen is presented as a strong defender of tradition who also understands the scheming of the British Monarch to gain control over his kingdom as other stronger Empires and Kingdoms have fallen honourably to the British Government. With caution, however, he strongly warns his people to protect the white men against any form of intimidation or attack: The ceremony must wait… I shall see them… you follow Eyebokan to the camp of the white men. See their leader called Phillips. Tell him that I shall receive him. Eyebokan, how many white men are in the party? (The Trials… 37) Ovonramwen's diplomatic overtures are at variance with the overzealousness of the white men who think that Benin must fall if the entire Niger-Delta area must be under their firm control.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Comment on the historical accuracy in the play The Trials of Oba *Ovonramwen.*

3.4 A New Theory: Sam Ukala's Folkist Dramatic Theory

Sam Ukala is well known literary scholar, theater arts practitioner and dramatic theorist. He has written several known plays where his theory of folkism is put to practice. Some of his popular plays include The *Slave Wife, Akpakaland, The Log in your Eyes, The placenta of Death* etc. Ukala's thought provoking essay, "Oral Literature, Development and National Integration" is a confirmation of his firm standing that the developmental potentials of our oral traditional literature have not been fully and properly explored and exploited by contemporary Nigeria. It is, therefore, a seeming extension of the argument of the earlier considered "Literature and Governance" and a further authentication of Ukala's strong belief that a recourse to the oral traditions is one effective panacea to Nigeria's multi-varied problems as a nation. A curious statement made by Ukala in the two essays reviewed so far is that an enduring ideological standpoint should be relevant to a vast array of issues within and outside a discipline, and, even more importantly, should proffer solutions to humanity's many problems. These essays are, by and large, a certification of the fact that a subscription to the folk resonates in most of Ukala's writings, as stated earlier in this paper.

Ukala holds that the oral traditional art forms should be desperately deployed to put aright everything written literature which its imperialist backgrounds and negative aftermaths have destroyed in Africa. The above opinion is founded on Ukala's conviction, that "Western literature was the tool by which the African mind was shackled by the colonialists." With the example of Ika folktales, Kwagh-hir stories, the masquerade performances of the Efik, the Kwa, the Ibibio, the Egugu of Illah, the Ikaki masquerade of the Kalabari and the oral poetry of various traditional societies of Africa, Ukala is able to prove that oral literature could provide the escape route for Nigeria from its many socio-political and economic woes.

In this essay too, he reminds us that this formula has worked for both the French and the Russians. In the final analysis, he recommends: "Nigerian government should take a cue from France and Russia and champion the renaissance of Nigerian oral literature and, thereafter, encourage Nigerian writers to reinvent modern Nigerian literature with a view to making it perform among its audience the same roles performed by oral literature among the rural populace. The governments, through their ministries of Arts, Culture and Tourism, must tackle the great task..."

Unarguably, Sam Ukala's most remarkable and enduring contribution to literary/dramatic scholarship in Nigeria (Africa) is his theoretical postulation of "folkism" which according to him is, "the tendency to

base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk… and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale." This theoretical framework, which has been given flesh in some of his plays, most notably, the hugely popular Akpakaland, has negotiated a high rating for Ukala among African scholars of the theatre, as he joins the exclusive league of literary theorists who have demonstrated enormous commitment to the job of carving a new authentic aesthetic identity for African literature.

Thus, Ukala must have satisfied a major craving of African literature, especially as most articulately outlined by the redoubtable critic of African literature, Professor Charles E. Nnolim: … the task facing all of us in the 80's (is) to build up carefully and painstakingly a poetics, a theory of African literature. We need a scholar or a group of scholars with the synthesizing mind of an Aristotle to build for us a poetics of African literature whose uniqueness is no longer a matter for debate, whose vital juices are fed with uniquely African orature.

Thus, Ukala's success with the seminal essay "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle For Nigerian Dramaturgy" in the context of African literature tallies with the accomplishments of fellow dramatic theorists, Wole Soyinka (Myth, Literature and the African World), Biodun Jeyifo (The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama), poetry critic, Sunday Anozie, (Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric), occidentalist Chinweizu, Ihechukwu Madubuike and Onwuchekwa Jemie (Toward the Decolonization of African Literature) and prose critic Ernest Emenyonu (The Rise of the Igbo Novel).

From all indications, Ukala intends the theory of Folkism to fill a vital lacuna in African drama- that that has to do with making African drama more audience-friendly and, consequently, more effective in helping to combat Nigeria's socio-economic and political problems. Folkism appears inspired by what Ukala has identified as fundamental lapses in the dramaturgy of Nigeria's most prominent playwrights- Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and J.P. Clark. He charges Soyinka and Clark with dabbling in unnecessary esoterism and abstraction, and Osofisan with a misdirected manipulation of myth, especially, the Moremi in *Morountodun.*

Against the backdrop of what Ukala perceives as dramatic miscalculations, he recommends the concept of "folkism", an aesthetic direction which seeks to impress the cruciality of the resources of the traditional African folktale on African drama. He says: "Apart from the Africa folktale's capacity for clear communication and its popularity among the folk, there are other reasons why it should provide a matrix

for folkism. The folktale and the literary play are narratives, ultimately realized in performance."

Both are largely secular- unlike most African ritual and festival performances- and also temporal, mimetic, interpretative, and synthetic. Perhaps, to validate Ukala's concern for the folk in African theatre, one has to mention that certain other scholars of the African theatre share in the sensibility of operating a literary drama institution that carries the entirety of the people along.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Folkism is a blend of folktale in dramaturgy. Discuss the folktale narrator as a one man theatre

4.0 CONCLUSION

The new playwrights write and perform committed arts. They write and act for correction. They reveal the image and function of the writer as griot and raconteur, the sole characteristics of which they are practitioners. Indeed many of the dramatists of the 'new generation' tell Africa's story in costume, sound, mime and movement in a manner whose physical representation forcibly engages the consciousness. There is a radical, even revolutionary project, a robust belief that the theatre is not just a house of speeches and props, but also a battleground for contending images and ideas. Wole Soyinka remains an enormous and highly seminal influence. But for the generation after him he has been both a venerable model and fertile point of departure. Thus, he is many ways the relationship of the 'new' generation to Soyinka's dramaturgy has been somewhat problematic. The plays treated here under the new generation playwrights represent the thematic and the stylistic forms of this age. Osundare takes a punch at the odds of politics, militarism and parochialism which are the major thematic concern of the playwrights of this time. Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen represents the vast historical plays which the playwrights have been enacting. However, there are no dramatist theorist within the new generation range except Sam Ukala and a few others. They are more concerned with acting than with theorizing. Thus, Sam Ukala's 'Folkist theory' is a welcome contribution to this new playwrights' artistic development.

5.0 SUMMARY

In the 'new generation' drama, history re-connects with mythology and a reinterpretation of both yields a reality which provides a handle on the present and the future. This is evident in the plays under study here. In *The State Visit, we Osundare's reenactment of history in a fiction form.*

We see the playwright's attempt at using history in the presenting of Nigeria's past and future impediments. Yerima's The Trials of Oba *Ovonramwen is a continuation of anti-colonial attacks on the after* effects of colonialism in Africa. Using the conquest of Benin kingdom, he makes a case for carefulness in the way and manner; Africans assume and adopt those things that impinge on the development of Africa. Ukala's theory of folkism is like an oasis in this dry theoryless generation. Ukala's theory has influenced several plays the way Soyinka influenced his contemporaries.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

1. Explain the major thrusts of the new playwrights in Nigeria.
2. Discuss the presentation of dictatorship in Osundare's The State *Visit.*
3. Assess Yerima's The Trials as anti-colonial play in the new spirit.
4. Theories guide creativity. Trace the influence of Ukala's 'Folkist' theory in the plays of the new playwrights.
5. Using any other play of your choice, discuss the use of new forms in the new plays from Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Osundare, Niyi (2001). The State Visit. Ibadan: Kraft.

Ukala, Sam. "Oral Literature, Development and National Integration".

--- --- ---. "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy".

Yerima, Ahmed (1997). The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen. Ibadan: Longman.