

Evaluating Sylvanus Iniobong Udoidem’s Poem “Nigeria” in His *Philosopoetry* Using the Reader – Response Approach to Isolate, Demonstrate and Remedy the Intractable Question of Nigeria’s Socio-Political Woes

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Abstract

Sylvanus Iniobong Udoidem’s book, *PHILOSOPoetry*, provides in one of its poems an unrestricted source for the unbiased criticism and analysis of Nigeria’s socio-political woes and misgivings. The target poem would be “NIGERIA” which opens with the cynical statement that saw Nigeria as, “A mystery and an enigma.” The poem examines the numerous problems that give rise to the endurance level of Nigerians, the contradictions, the resentment and love of a country and what has gone wrong with patriotism in this country. This issues from Socrates contention that “an unexamined life is not worth living. We will feel the pulse of the Philosopoet, author of the book and distinguish the succinct expressions of extreme temperaments by the Philosopoet which were primarily directed at drawing support from the mass of the people and engender the needed change. We will try to isolate and discuss the myriads of these problems that has bedeviled this nation in our jinxed efforts to make progress on the political and economic front through valid suggestions. For emphasis, we will examine the Philosopoet’s outbursts in specific lines or stanzas of the poem and make comparisons with the work or with other relevant materials which will lend credence to our speculative acumen. We will conclude by closing in on these problems and from the poem raise options and considered views that could be invoked to help clear the mess that has become Nigeria if she is to reassert its place as the hope of Africa, of the world.

Keywords: Reader-response criticism, mystery, undaunted, petals of beauty, enigma, media blitz, great nation, destiny, woes

DOI [URL:https://doi.org/10.36758/jggsda/v6n6.2022/3](https://doi.org/10.36758/jggsda/v6n6.2022/3)

Introduction

The issues on our hands demand a rigorous and unbiased judgment, and thus we are looking for a step by step progression organized from the individual instances and events in the poem which suffice to have aggravated the political and socio-economic problems of Nigeria. We progress beyond this point to proposing viable solutions to these problems also relying on the same poem. The poem “NIGERIA” opens with a gloomy expression in this way, “Nigeria; A mystery or an enigma; Enigmatic or mysterious?” as a reader-response, we are touched by the incompatibility and incongruence of the authors feelings, personality, interest and prejudices as he feels for the nation of his birth, which cause him to lament how that the growth of the country had been truncated, hijacked and taken captive by callous captors who reside in our midst, and are the *raison d’etre* for the persistence of the national woes for which we have become impoverished and notorious. Our reader-response criticism of this poem will be winding, coarse and abrasive in line with the crescendo and climacteric rendition by the poet of the poem. Flowing with the Philosopoet’s words, we acknowledge as do reader-response inquiries that although the Philosopoet wrote this poem

almost a decade thence, its meaning, essence and viability could only have began for us today, today that we have opted to take cognizance of it and resolved to read it, do s criticism and amelioration of some ills of the society using it. It is obvious that in the eyes of a reader-response critic, a text exists and gets finished the day it is read by someone.

Reader Response Critic of Udoidem’s Poem, “Nigeria” To The Isolating, Demonstrating and Finding of a Nigeria that is an Enigma And a Mystery?

The Philosoepoet opens the poem “NIGERIA” with a rather highly critical and whimsical note by posing a hypothetically paradoxical question, one that exposes his disdain and displeasure with how the country has been run aground. He unmasks his loss of faith and shows that he is only holding on precariously while he makes strident moves to stop it from crashing down. The Philosoepoet looks eager to know from sources other than that known by him if he were wrong in his claim that Nigeria, the “great” country of his birth hasn’t tardily become both a mystery and an enigma. The use of the disjunctive word “or” here is meant to be understood contextually as a conjunctive in the sense in which it is used (Lycan 78, 147). It’s like running from the devil and facing the deep blue sea, each lunging to swallow you. The anxiety of the poet is that Nigeria had almost tripped over the cliff and to make matters worse, had become an enigmatic and mysterious entity that had gone past all known justifications. Invariably, by the setting and arrangement of the words used to elucidate this point in the 2nd and 3rd lines, “A mystery or an enigma; Enigmatic and mysterious” the poet’s repetition is not only for purposes of emphasis, but an expression of one strongly foreboding, in anticipation and awareness of the approach of certain danger. The Philosoepoet is reasonably afraid and his word are that of one agonizing for a one who is beloved and dear, a country that he loves and cherishes. These words openly express the poet’s inability to bear or stomach the fact that Nigeria has changed so much despite his wishing otherwise. It is more troubling that right before our eyes, the promised-land inherited at independence had gone past any reasonable explanation that might be handy in his kitty. The act of repeating that Nigeria is enigmatic and mysterious is an open solicitation for assistance from all and sundry like a drowning man, so that not only he, but all of us rally round him to hazard an understanding of the entity called “Nigeria.”

The answer is scarcely expected since the Philosoepoet remains preoccupied with more troubles trying to explain his country, Nigeria. The Philosoepoet thus takes solace in the past, recalls to memory the rare feats and strides which made Nigeria and Nigerians proud yesteryears. The records he possibly has do not indicate that “his” Nigeria would in any wise depreciate and fall from grace to grass in so short a time, and this realization increases his despair. This is a soft reminder that Harold Bloom once said, “Trying to write a poem takes a poet back to the origins of what a poem first was for him, and so takes the poet back beyond the pleasure principle to the decisive initial encounter and response that began him” (Harold Bloom 1975: 650). The Philosoepoet’s anxiety and trepidation sure arises from what began him, and this leads him to shop for valid and enduring answers to this grinding feeling of perturbation eating him on the inside. In the face of the first three lines of this poem, we observe the intense nature of his anguish, and it’s immediately obvious that no one dares wish away the poet’s verbal extrapolations without running into an irreconcilable contradiction. This is because the poet, steeped in philosophical handling of problems of life, was preoccupied with how he can best apply his intellect and wealth of knowledge to the problems of the Nigerian society. (Achebe1998: vii). The Philosoepoet possibly witnessed or came in soon after the inglorious exit of the colonial masters, so basking in the euphoria of what huge hopes lay ahead of the new and fragile nation, it was expected that good days lay ahead. This may also depend the unstated fact that he has seen better days. Unfortunately, it’s like a bad dream, because as conveyed

to the reader by his tone in this poem, Nigeria has simply missed the step in a long trail of intercalated steps, and pitifully comes hauled to the basement with such gusto and bounce like a mass of garbage.

In lines 4 – 6, the Philoso-poet continues his melancholic outbursts and observes disconcertingly as follows, “Nigeria; An enigma to the core; It bends but doesn’t break.” This heightens the fear index, and for the Poet, the threat index lurches on and on, to something between fever heat and combustion point. What if the entire country goes up in flames, he must be musing. He must have calculated that for solid fifty four (54) years from 1960 – 2014, Nigeria cared not to set sail to conquer the problems that threatened her unity, sovereignty and integrity. And then, the poet began to wonder, how come she was not swallowed by the myriads of crisis that have rocked her corporate existence? How was Nigeria able to bear these burdens, but the more this thought came up, the more it was difficult to understand his country. So, how did she survive? Then we are reminded of the words of Achebe 2012: 8, “Mother was neither talkative nor timid but seemed to exist on several plane – often quietly escaping into the inner casements of her mind, where she engaged in deep reflective thought.” Could this refer to Nigeria? But the Philoso-poet’s premonition did not see a Nigeria that merely escapes into deep reflective thoughts or meditation, for then things would have improved he is sure. The results would have been different. Rather, he feared that maybe Nigeria’s case could be one “in a sense, it was the very end of government itself, where government leaps beyond the precipice, dismisses itself and joins ranks with crime.” This conjured up graphic images of state sponsored terrorism and it gave him sleepless nights. The poet may be powerless all by himself to prevent his motherland – Nigeria – from consigning herself to the scrapheap of history, but the poet would never be tired of protesting. (Achebe 2012: 248, 249). The disturbing scenario in which Nigeria finds herself outrages the Philoso-poet so much that he doesn’t stop wondering why his prized bull, Nigeria has not broken to pieces under the overwhelming weight of the abundant evil that she has to contend with since independence. These very problems, he observes are at the very root of the country’s inability to realize any of the lofty ideals which were set before her at independence. So he spits out, “Nigeria; An enigma to the core” as the poet’s travails continue, like a woman in labour, borne out of her loving concern and devotion to the ideals of womanhood. The result of this probe indicates that Nigeria is not just restrained enigma, but a certified and confirmed maverick, “an enigma to the core; It bends and never breaks.” This later attribute confirms the poet’s uneasiness that Nigeria’s situation is one connected with habituation, long drawn acquaintance and familiarity. It befuddles and surprises the Philoso-poet that Nigeria, his loving motherland rather prefers hiding her identity and being overtly enigmatic. This throws up further images and constructs, of a country faced with a conundrum, and feels too bad for it that this very puzzle is what his country loves to fish in. the poet is at the cross roads. So he quickly thinks of what he will do since things are getting out of hands.

Then, the Philoso-poet thinks it over, how can he quickly help his country beat a retreat from that cluttering jungle and hodgepodge of chaos? He was well aware that if Nigeria has become “an enigma to the core”, the trumped up elasticity which arose from the nations rummaged adaptation to malevolence was wont to stragulate the salvation and redemption of the country from these forces of evil soon enough. It was not possible within this setting. As an inveterate enigma, Nigeria was better considered as a closed book. The Philoso-poet, caught gaping cannot help wondering why his treasured Nigeria would chose to be an enigma, but is even the more surprised that “It bends but doesn’t break.” If Nigeria has chosen to be a closed book, is it closed to everybody or to some people? So, can this same Nigeria ever be known and understood by some people? But who are those that can understand and what do they understand with Nigeria? In a complementary flow of thoughts, the Philoso-poet adds, “Nigeria; A mysterious country conceived by Flora; but delivered

by Lord Lugard.” This the poet says is responsible for the entire malady and anomaly called Nigeria. How can a woman conceive a man, allow the man to carry the baby for nine months and deliver the baby, so would that “child” would be a human person? This the Philosopoet brings to the fore because it serves to reflect a contused, aberrant and unnatural “birthing” process. This is entirely abominable when viewed in light of the calling of the poet, as a Roman Catholic Priest and Philosopher. The ordinary pattern that he is familiar with is that only a man would impregnate a woman, but quite oddly, the baby Nigeria was in this single instance conceived by a woman, Flora. How did the man, Lord Lugard, deliver the said baby and was that “baby” watery, liquid or simply fluid, bony or brainy? Or it was colourless, featureless and formless like amoeba. Was it a human person or a spirit? The contradictions coagulate, convulse and turn into an eddy, which is how one feels trying to understand an enigma like Nigeria. Maybe we were destined or is it designed to be colourless, featureless and formless.

The Philosopoet then like a spinning top, loses his centre of gravity, letting go of binding natural forces, he slipped and in moves that bespoke eddies and wild maelstroms saw nations, peoples, tribes and tongues, a multitude and of many nationalities, they differ, get spooled, then shoved. As it clears, the poet proceeds to enquire and he asks is, “Nigeria; A country of nations; And a nation of countries?” This raises the confusion the more, because it has been made clear that the mystery and enigmatic nature of Nigeria appears to be fine-tuned and accounts for why it has deteriorated beyond redemption. In what way did Lady Flora and Lord Lugard’s offspring – Nigeria deliver more babies that add to her brood of enigmas. This the poet tends to associate with the basis for the mysterious nature of what nations that Nigeria fathered and mothered. If Nigeria is a “country of nations,” then this will only find exit through mimicking the noxious effluvia called tribe and tribalism. In his exasperation, the Philosopoet reminisces how tribalism had been accepted as a friend, rejected as an enemy and smuggled through the back door as an accomplice. (Achebe 1998: 5). His revulsion in itself touches on the awkwardness of the nations within Nigeria, “a little sleep, a little slumber” (Proverbs 6:10 KJV) which has held back the olive branch. The nation refused to live and relive a rehearsal of the tunes that got forced out of our throats at independence that “Though tongues may differ; In brotherhood we stand.” It is this new found desideratum that has put our teeth on edge because everyone seems to be pulling at the common denominator, tribe – which fails to reply to the poet’s upbraiding inquiry, as “A country of nations; And a nation of countries.”

All eyes are on the status of the concocted arrangement of paralysis of the Nigerian geographical entity, which has remained at the doorstep of tribes and ethnicity. And again, on introspection, the poet is seen reminding us, why was it that this independence poem was equally conceived, scripted and composed and first sung by a woman and delivered by a man, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello to Nigerians at independence? What a coincidence? But this time around, the Philosopoet kept mute, as a holy servant of the most High God, he may at times choose to only say a little. (James 1:19 AMP). But this virtuous practice have been straddled when he proceeded to craft the poem, “Nigeria.” Its critic’s only limits is the horizon, so sees through the Philosopoet to call heaven down. Maybe, it’s associated with the critics calling who is expected to be doing what I am doing (Nbet 14) because for the reader-response critic, a work of literature only answers to its title when it is read by someone, and subjecting it to criticism by philosophy, a surplussage. Why was that anthem at independence suffused with so much tribal touchstones and notoriety? Was it because there was a marked error in its mode of being birthed, procreated? That is quite plausible. May be the lyrics in that anthem has been subtly responsible for orgies of bloodletting which has refused to be purged from this nation. Few years after the nation first sang that independence anthem, the Biafra – Nigeria war broke out and lasted for almost four years, leading to the death of millions. And since after that,

one tribe had been on the throat of another and so on ad infinitum till date, which dismisses the predication of our living in brotherhood that the inscription of though tribes and tongues differ was supposed to blot out.

Then the Philosoet proceeds to say that Nigeria is a “Nation of Countries.” This provokes the question, “Can two dominant wild cocks live in the same house, peacefully?” The British wrote the nomenclature of Nigeria in the name of three of the most populated ethnic groups, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbos. While these three appear to enjoy the deference accorded them by virtue of their sheer size, but the fact if the country belonged to the big three has been a source of constant debates. This was made obdurate when the national economic focus changed from agricultural and farm produce to crude oil as the major source of revenue. The powers that be then also abolished the original sharing formula and in its place acquired the oil in the oil rich Niger Delta because oil wealth was not found in the dominant tribes of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. This stanza of the poem “Nigeria” therefore is for us to recount the agitations of the people of the Niger Delta region for resource control (Mitee 42), since each tribe, or is it ethnic enclave in the entity called Nigeria is a “nation” or “country” depending on who and how it is looked at.

The position of the Philosoet is backed by It was a very good move when it is observed that “expert studies have shown that resources related conflicts increase in frequency and intensity with the rate of dependence on the resource” (Mitee 44). The sovereignty of the single entity is being incessantly trampled and compromised by the huge weight of the nation Nigeria, hence the poet called out that Nigeria is a country of nations and a nation of countries. The reminder that Nigeria is a country of nations and a nation of countries re-echoes the need to allow the natural resources to tip balance in favour of the oil rich Niger Delta because “every door that opens for the smooth ventilation of grievances . . . closes a window of excuse for self-help” (Mitee 55). It is only incumbent upon the Nigerian State and Government to ensure that the political, economic and judicial systems respond to the cries of the citizenry (Mitee 55). This the Philosoet made up for in his assertion under consideration, that Nigeria should understand the intricate position he is in, and always act like the father of many nations, of many countries.

In saying of Nigeria that Nigeria is a great nation, the poet did not mean what he was saying so this was immediately countered when he added a re-joinder, “Great Nation; Great People, media blitz.” This appellation sends the message that checks the earlier to the effect that Nigeria may not be great after. And this is why the poet lays all at the feet of media propaganda because Nigeria’s greatness and if her people are great were nothing but media assault on the mentality of the people. It is tantamount to mere gimmickry. This speaks to the fact that the mentality of Nigerians are been ambushed, assaulted and bombarded with volleys of spells and whammies, being conditioned so that we think and act in particular ways. The greatness of Nigeria ends on the pages of newspapers, in utterances in our television and radio stations. Nigeria is awfully overvalued and overrated each time its citizens are subjected to a barrage of wrong and suppressed information which are highly censored so that they only think along a desired line. If Nigeria and her people are great, what have we got to say about the recurrent cases of reckless, irresponsible behavior of corporate entities and the widespread instances of economic and political marginalization; or the pervasive regime of poverty, an increasing army of unemployed youths, a ready pool of recruitable youths for political thuggery” (Mitee 25). Where is justice?

The Philosoet’s ominous foreboding issues from the fact that the deep seated deception must be exposed, because from all fronts, that Nigeria is a great nation with great people is an illusion. All

the things that people perceive to be true about Nigeria is nothing but calculated attempts to assault the sensibilities of Nigerians, to create a self-delusive mentality. The fictional truth of this is what mischievously permitted in the mass media and that is why Nigeria is an enigma. The Philosopoet has successfully told us what the “epistemological truth” is indeed, that Nigerian greatness is laughable, farcical, paradoxical and rhetorical. This is why the Philosopoet invites us into his world, and bemoaning our faith and beckons strongly for a response. (Roger Scruton 102). It calls for emotional involvement of its readers, data sourcing and dispassionate understanding; especially, when it is thought in light of the fact that poems generally “exercise much stronger, deeper, and more universal effect than pictures and statutes do” (Soy Ribeiro 98).

What shows that Nigeria’s framed greatness has nothing to do with actuality corresponding events can be deduced from Achebe 1998: 10, who gave a succinct picture of this grand deception when he said:

Nigeria is not a great nation. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world, it is one of the most corrupt, insensitive places under the sun. It is one of the most expensive countries and one of those that give least value for money. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is one of the most unpleasant places on earth.

The above stands reinforced because presently, the much vaunted greatness of Nigeria keeps plummeting that since 2011, Nigeria was achieved rank number 14 on the Failed States Index after Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq (Achebe 2012: 250) and may hit number one by this rate. It is even terrible that by 2021, Nigeria was dislodged all countries to occupy the rank of No. 1 among the poorest and most indebted nations of the world. This calls for explanations what criteria qualifies a country to be called great? Whilst our leaders are boasting that Nigeria is a great nation, the very countries that are indeed great exhibit a very sobering and almost self-deprecatory attitude. This still finds expression in why Achebe said, “One of the commonest manifestations of underdevelopment is a tendency among the ruling elite to live in a world of make-believe and unrealistic expectations.” He continues to say “This is the cargo cult mentality that anthropologists sometimes speak about – a believe by backward people that someday without any exertion whatsoever on their part, a fairy ship will dock in their harbor laden with every goody they have always dreamed of.” This is even manifest in the motto of the country, “Unity and faith”, two entities that can readily be directed at undesirable ends and are amenable to manipulation by hypocrites and opportunists. We have been let to observe by ourselves that none of the criteria for a great nation is on display in Nigeria, hence that appellation is a huge joker, a bundle of self-delusion and a result of a well-orchestrated onslaught on the sensibilities of Nigerians and a huge lie.

The above falsehood is here supplanted by another paradoxical assertion, which in all respects is evidentially the truth. The Philosopoet says, “Nigeria, loved by leaders; But resented by citizens.” This stanza bears similarity with the seventh stanza which says, “Nigeria; The beloved city: with unruly leaders.” The poet here redirects his attention to the head problem of Nigeria’s political woes – leadership and followership, which are issues that touch on good governance, efficient and effective use of the natural resources in Nigeria, accountability of elected officials, openness and transparency in government business, institution and observance of the rule of law wherein everyone is equal before the law, and stability and predictability of government and governance. As one who had been on the scene for a long time, the Philosopoet used this piece to recall and rehearse the fall-outs from the political upheavals that has characterized the political arena since independence. From records, some of them included the 1966 coup, the killing of prominent Northern leaders, the civil

war, constant ethnic rivalry and inter-tribal wars, the electioneering crisis of 1962, 1964, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019, with accusations of electoral malpractices and rigging. There had been several cases of violation of human rights, ethnic and regional agitation for secession, assassination, kidnap and politically motivated killings of perceived opponents.

There has also been an astronomical rise in cult gangs and militias, terrorist organisations, proliferation of arms and ammunitions, communal upheavals and religious conflicts. These are all associated with the leadership problem in Nigeria. This provides the explanation why Nigeria is loved by its leaders which makes Nigeria a nation notoriously “with unruly leaders.” The leaders love the country because the crippled it politically, economically and socially; they are dishonest, greedy, corrupt and disrespect the rule of law; they have destroyed the structures that would have ensured that they are accountable, they lack ideology and wantonly embezzle and misappropriate the funds meant for the development of the country. This explains why the Philosopher sounded this loudly that, “Nigeria; Loved by Leaders; But resented by citizens.” The general apathy for the country by the mass of Nigerians is because Nigeria has failed to meet their expectations in every way imaginable. For the rulers and unruly leaders, Nigeria is like a girl without any sense of value and dignity, one who jumps into the hand of any man, one who hops into any available bed seeking fun. So like all loose men, such cheating sport is normally exciting to them, so they will definitely be pleased with the Nigeria that does not regulate or control their nefarious and offensive escapades, a stateless state. Achebe 1998: 26 saw this very clearly when he observed that “the real explosive potential of social injustice does not reside in the narrow jostling among the elite but the gargantuan disparity of privilege they have created between their tiny class and the vast multitude of ordinary Nigerians.”

The leaders are satisfied that although their number is tiny comparatively, but their tiny lot enjoys a long list of both legitimate and illegitimate privileges that sets them apart; while they continue to trample on people’s rights at will without being called to order, to vilify and disparage the opposition, they disobey court judgment orders and sack the court officials and judicial officers without remorse to create room for them to perfect their wicked schemes. These leaders have so much to make them love this country Nigeria. As long as employment opportunities are not created for the youths, these youths are handy and available as ready tools, serving as political thugs and hired assassins when elections come. The rulers delight in pushing the decaying remains of what is Nigeria down and down to the brink of putrefaction, instability, state sponsored violence and terrorism, and financial and social inequities (Achebe 2012: 250) in their show of love for the country. As long as the country stays that way, where these opportunistic leaders remain in charge and order the nation around the way they want, they will love it. These impoverished leaders are therefore happy that “the people have been dispossessed and subjugated by dictatorships for such a long time . . . the oppressive process also effectively strips away from the minds of the people the knowledge that they have rights.” (Achebe 2012: 246). The above mirrors the one side of the leadership coin, but on its reverse, it fully explains why the degenerate state called Nigeria is “resented by the people.”

The general masses are the electorates who are given a cup of salt by an uprising politician to be voted into power. After one year, despite the promises, the said leader moves into a cocoon, a world of his own, him and his family at least or and his group of friends, if he is very liberal. The people who are the electorates know the politician being voted in, but not long hence, the politician changes his phone number(s), changes his abode, moves from the village into the secluded area of the town where the security or his dog would ensure that no guests visits him in his country home. They see

him change his cars one after the other and change apartment. The masses suffer hunger, lack, deprivation and are to endure the cult of mediocrity and institutionalized robbery of the common people of Nigeria by their (s)elected leaders. (Achebe 1998: 27). The poor innocent Nigerians who qualify as the “citizens” cannot but resent the country that has allowed such a callous system to flourish unchecked, that has failed to uphold the main purpose of government – service, while they turn into the wretched of the earth, “drink bad water, suffer all kinds of preventable diseases, have no hospitals to attend and where they exist they cannot foot the bill and even when they send their children and wards to “public” schools, the illicit demand for “charges” or “levies”, they withdraw their children and wards. Their abode is under the flyovers, on the refuse heaps to scavenge for foods that were thrown away, some in advanced stage of putrefaction. The Philoso poet considered all these and surmised that Nigeria is “resented by its citizens.” This is very serious, one that would bring a reasonable government to its knees, but definitely not Nigeria.

In the eighth stanza of the poem, “NIGERIA”, the Philoso poet is seen to have moved from blowing the trumpet of thick melancholy and gradually turned over to excitement, accomplishment and optimism. The repetition of his description of Nigeria with the same attribute is not merely for emphasis, but to support a new direction and focus in his inquiry and speculation of Nigeria and her people. He is particular and therefore is set to reap from the referential use of his description to pick out a particular group of persons’ attribute so we can pick out whom he is referencing. (Lycan 23 – 24). We see the Philoso poet laying aside his presentiment against the other people whose stock in trade is to make a deceptive show of themselves as if they were great, which greatness remained on the pages of newspapers and in the mass media. But it’s still anaphoric, because now his statements referencing great Nigerians did not stand on its own, but was a follow-up to his earlier condemnation of the media blitz show of bravado, which led to nowhere at all (Lycan 27). To distinguish what he means and insist on the referential use of the word “great”, the Philoso poet here says, “Nigeria; Great Country; with Great People.” The poet is here acknowledging that although the greatness he alluded to earlier was fake and borne out of self-delusion, hence the resort to media colouration to make it appear likeable; so to now call attention to a person or thing, Nigeria and the people, he uses the adjectival referent “great” here to referentially draw attention to the Nigeria that is great, assured that the “great” in question have confirmations which endear him to proudly express them sake of how they are self-evident.

The Nigeria he now talks about, following after Aristotle, is a great nation, potentiality and in actuality. We see that the poet has turned his attention from the huge setbacks and failures that beclouded his sight and seeing Nigeria, and focuses on the huge prospects and viability that are intrinsic to the nation from independence. He has also turned his attention from the dismal failure in politics, misery in the hinterland, which makes her citizens detest and disdain her and from the lack of focus and direction which our leaders failed to chart for the fledgling state at independence. The Poet is here observed to be raking from the recesses of his soul, the Nigeria that has a sizeable number of a healthy workforce, persons who can drive any reform and industrial revolution to its successful conclusion, like China and India, instead of complaints and shortfalls. The poet now savours the undeniable fact that many other Nigerians, then, now and in the future have made their indelible marks on the sands of time in their various fields and disciplines. That passing a hasty verdict of being irredeemable failures, and that all operates under the aegis of a self-deluding greatness on all and sundry would commit the fallacy of hasty generalization, not fit for a Philosopher like him.

In this context, the poet seeks to separate the wheat from the chaff, hence the summersault and he proceeds to purr on the indices of the country's greatness. Working along the fringes of a reader-response critic, we have helped the poet identify the likes of Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Noble Prize in Literature, Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Aminu Kano, General Murtala Muhammed and General Tunde Idiagbon, who stand out as some of the less incorruptible Nigerians; Gani Fawehinmi, Femi Falana, Civil Liberties Organization, Tai Solarin and Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa, who lived and died as human rights campaigners of repute, giving and sacrificing all they have for the fight to restore sanity and the rule of law to a militarized, dictatorship military regimes. We also have the likes of General Zamani Lekwot (Zango-Kataf), Rev Father Kukah of the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto Diocese, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) who have consistently been on the frontlines campaigning and fighting the Hausa-Fulani Oligarchy that has held Nigerian politics captive since independence for respect of the rights of the minority ethnic tribes, of the Christians minorities in the North and for freedom of worship.

We will also not forget Jasper Adaka Boro, the first initiate of the Niger Delta Struggle, Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Ikemba of Nnewi and foremost leader of Biafra, who stood against the unrestrained murder and pogrom of all non-Hausa/Fulanis residing in the North of Nigeria between 1966 and 1970 in the pre-Biafra – Nigeria Civil War era. Not forgetting Ojukwu's newest replacement, Comrade Nnamdi Kanu, who is now in the Federal gulag for demanding that the Igbos be granted self-determination and rights to secession (independence). We also have astute labour leaders and especially, Pa Anthony Enahoro, forthright, unyielding and determined in his fight to improve the welfare of Nigeria and Nigerians workers. Comrade Adams Oshiomhole deserves a passing mention, but for the fact that he later betrayed the trust of Nigerian workers and Nigerians when he ascended the reins of power as Governor, and worse off as party Chairman. And we also have Professor Dora Akunyili, erstwhile Director General of National Foods, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Nigeria was made great by her giant strides and foray into drugs and food control.

The Poet, a highly enlightened and seasoned educator is conversant with the excellent feats that have been shown by Nigerians in the global world, be it in business, science and technology. Of note, one of our own, Philip Emeagwali blazes the trail as a mathematics and computer guru, who has made the world stand still with his many firsts in supercomputing. He holds the world record for the world's fastest computation of 3.1 billion calculations per minute; solving the largest partial differential equation with 8 million grid points; performing the largest weather forecasting equations with 128 million grid points; performed an unprecedented parallel computer speed up; and done counter-intuitive hypercube paradox and also the tessellated models for parallel computing and chirality, duality and helicity. (Eboh 2012: 48). His discoveries and success in mathematics and computing has put a big question mark, faulted and contradicted the Black Curve's position. In his response, Emeagwali has declared that "The scientific contributions of Africans will silence white supremacists and drive deep stakes into their argument" (Eboh 2012: 48).

In addition, despite the dismally poor rating of Nigerian politicians in international circles, the most humiliating being the non-contradicted reference by British Prime Minister Cameroon's of Nigerian politicians as being "fantastically corrupt", we have on record a good list of selfless and good leaders who performed well. This place may not allow us feature all of them but suffice it that some of those who did well include Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'adua, a President that openly admitted that his own election as a President was flawed. He remains one of the only Presidents who ensured that all

moneys appropriated in the budget but which were not spent by the 31st of December of that year were returned into the State's treasury. His primary focus was the welfare of all the people of Nigeria as provided for in the Constitution. He granted amnesty to the Niger Delta militants. Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'Adua was an epitome of modesty, honesty and integrity. With only him, Nigeria and its people would qualify as "Great Country; With Great Citizens."

The Philosoet's Nigeria would also gladly earn the anaphoric appellation, "Great Country; Great People" with the entrance of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as President. As a sitting president who had all the perquisites of power, yet out of patriotism and humility, he vowed that his re-election was not a do or die affair, that it was not worth the blood of any Nigerian. On this basis the President simply let go his mandate, even when it was evident that Professor Jega was working against his interest and that General Buhari does not possess the requisite qualifications that would have made him a contestant. He saw all, yet he was the first to congratulate General Buhari after the jinxed results was announced. Interestingly, while President Goodluck Jonathan held sway, the development of all of Nigeria was his topmost priority and this reflected in his appointments which he ensured had the flavour of "national character". President Goodluck Jonathan appointed Northerners, not just his cronies or blood relations, as we are now witnessing into key and sensitive positions such as that of making Professor Attahiru Jega the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). His home state, Bayelsa State had to wait on the present Government to reluctantly site a university in his place to have one. But sadly, it was later revealed that it was the same North that orchestrated his sack and that took advantage of his simplicity to wrest him out of power through a campaign of calumny. Chibok girls have not been released to this day and the school girl Leah is still being held hostage by Boko Haram, yet the present government is governing in peace. We are yet to be told in what way was President Goodluck Jonathan to be blamed?

I know and can perceive the mind of the poet working too fast, pointing at a handful of good Governors such as Dr. Donald Duke, Cross Rivers, and Peter Obi, Anambra who and Ambode, Lagos State who left good legacies in their states as dividends of democracy. We also know there a long list of good Local government Chairmen, Senators, House of Representatives and House of Assembly Members, but space has constrained us. These persons came to serve and like the late Aminu Kano, they knew what it was to serve and served. So the Philosoet rightly pictures a Nigeria that is great and whose citizens are also great and highly successful because these persons sat in positions of leadership.

The names listed above is not in any way exhaustive as the ivory towers spread across the length and breadth of Nigeria is a sure brewing spot for the ideas that drives every sector of a nation's life, economic, political, administrative, economic, social, religious and financial. Our tertiary institutions were set up, not to steal technology, but to mentor, developing and equipping creative and enlightened minds. Achebe 1998: 2 admits this when he said, "It is the duty of enlightened minds to lead the way in their discovery and to create an atmosphere conducive to their emergence (of change). If this effort is not made, good leaders, like good money will be driven out by bad." And they have continued to perform this onerous function creditably despite the odds against them, such as staggered and paucity of funds, a major cause of the many incessant strikes and industrial actions. The universities have continued to infuse the leadership with intellectual vigour and to eliminate what Achebe 1998: 13 terms the "tendency to pious materialistic wooliness and self centred pedestrianism." And these institutions are today populated with the best brains, show unflinching commitment to the use of human intelligence and labour to develop our own brand of

scientific and technological revolution. This is why poor funding of the Universities has to be confronted and eliminated at all cost.

These institutions have continued to guarantee a steady traffic of human intellectuals and academicians. They invariably hold the “magic” wand that could be flung in the face of our many failures to take us out of the woods, and not the occasional lifting of some university dons to serve limited tenures as Minister, Commissioners or advisers. The development should be handed over to them. The Philoso poet wonders why trillions of petro-dollars have entered our national treasury since oil became the source of revenue, recklessly thrown at us by providence and instead of our being launched into the forefront of development and industrial transformation, these funds were simply salted away and stolen by politicians without being utilized by these intellectual on how to prosecute our industrialization? Instead, these huge incomes were squandered, embezzled and stolen through excessive and very unreasonably high salaries for political appointees and their cronies, fixed for them by those in power, for importation of everything produced in Europe and America, including “importation of mud” and toothpicks (Achebe 1998: 51). Much also got wasted through highly escalated and fictitious salary payments for an incompetent and over-bloated civil service and through inflated and spooky contracts which were not executed. The intellectuals that populate our ivory towers are the real and true agents of change that could catapult this nation onto an industrial revolution if they are allowed and given the desired platform to perform. It is the way development and growth comes in other climes.

It is among the class of intellectuals and academicians that Udoidem, the Philoso poet gets classed. He knows like us, his importance and how he had influenced thousands that had sat under his aegis and tutelage. Accordingly, he would have committed a huge flaw if he hadn’t negated the greatness which manifests by media blitz great and nothing else. But, a high class thinker and philosopher of no mean repute, the poet knew what to do with the creative aspect and use of language, and that language had the limits of its mechanical explanation and usage (Chomsky 91). The Philoso poet succinctly calculated and rightly too that casting Nigerian greatness in stone is stanza seven would do no mean damage, and that the criticality of the meaning he had imputed to the language he thus chose to unleash. “Nigeria” would have remained buried in his chest if the Philoso poet had not bared his mind.

Not to forget the innumerable number of hundreds of thousands, and millions of others who are great in their various fields of endeavour, like Innoson, Dangote, save that the latter is not doing well stooping as a monopoly, having in his grip of common commodities so that we cast aspersions on him. There is Slok Engineering and the other unsung artisans and workmen at Lagos Onitsha, Kano, Port Harcourt (Ikokuwu) and Aba, whose tools taken further is enough for the smooth take-off of Nigeria’s industrial growth. They are unsung and would hardly be remembered or recognized till they die, they make our rickety cars come back to life. Thus we remember the unsung group of engineers and scientists that staged the silent revolution that sustained the Biafran Armed Forces and people during the Biafra – Nigerian civil war (Nzimiro 210 – 222). In Biafra a silent technological revolution, which but for bias and prejudice, was enough to provide the base for Nigeria technological and scientific revolution, Chinese modelling. The team consisted of scientists, engineers, technicians and technocrats who worked together on the Research and Production (PAP) Project and through it came out with spectacular scientific and technological innovations. It is remarkable that without any foreign assistance and with locally sourced materials, these scientists produced petroleum, salt, rockets (Ogbunigwe), ammunitions, food stuff and consumer goods, and which later was the basis for production of bricks, coal, refinery, garri, laboratory glassware and

plastic housing tents. In this wise, the poet is besieged with a crowd of which vindicate him that Nigeria and her citizens are great. If these innovations were translated and adopted, in the same way that the East Central State's Governor Ukpabi Asika adopted some of them when he was made Governor of the East Central State, then ultimately, by the time the Universities would have given them the touch of expertise and perfection, Nigeria's technological advancement would have long turned soared, with its head in the clouds, comparable to China and India.

The Philosoet was pervasive in his assertion that Nigeria is a great nation because of what pictures we have of her when seen through the prisms of her intimidating land mass. This is why no one prays for a breakup of the edifice. We can hear the poet in lines 25 - 27 declaring, "Nigeria, Its riches are many; Her woes are numerous." The first part of this stanza suffices for an explanation for why there was a partial recant or retraction of the absolute position earlier adopted that Nigeria is only great in terms of "media blitz." This has the function of enabling us to bring in Russellian argument that between lines 26 and 26, there exists an ellipsis (Russell in Lycan 21), which is why we are able to determine the presupposition in the mind of the author from what had been said previously. So then Nigeria is great in terms of how much foreign exchange that comes in through the sales of crude oil, the only source of Nigeria foreign exchange. Then, there are rich deposits of gold, petroleum gas, coal and superabundant supply of untapped human capital of over One Hundred and Eighty Million persons. This assures the poet's exclamation: "Nigeria; Great Country; With great citizens" and it holds true beyond the blitz of the media putsch and the trail self-delusion.

However, the sudden realisation doesn't answer to all the problems. This finds the Philosoet cursing that "Her woes are numerous." The moodiness of the Poet shown here indicates that he is unhappy that the riches of Nigeria continues to bring problems to the otherwise "Great Contry; With Great Citizens." The Philosoet's mind races to the prevalent problems of corruption, marginalization and oppression of the minorities who own the oil. He gets worried that how can the South-South Region, otherwise the Niger Delta own the oil, but oil wells in the area are allocated to persons from the North? Does this not violate the Kantian formulations of rights, freedom and equality? (Ogan & Nyeenenwa 2017: 16). Is this not a case of the gross infraction of the Kantian categorical imperative (Ogan and Nyeenenwa: 2017: 12) as it abandons the rights of the oil bearing communities at the foothold of race, sex, ethnicity, age, religion and geographical location.

The Philosoet also foresees the numerous woes that attend the riches of the nation as flowing from the fact that the Nigerian nation has continued to do nothing to address the lopsided nature of distributing the benefits from oil. This is what he knows has led to militancy and wanton destruction to oil installations and wells and accompanying devastation of the environment. This complacency of government, the poet observes allows the lunatic fringe to spread daily from the borderline to the whole, with fears it could engulf the entire polity. Put briefly, "if everyone breaks the law, when obedience was not optimific, the good done by separate acts of obedience might more than compensate for any public disorder which might result." (Ogan & Nyeenenwa: 2017: 49). The result would be widespread resistance to constituted authority and anarchy.

The Philosoet has also observed the environmental degradation and hazards to the environment from the oil prospecting and production. According to Nyeenenwa & Nnamdi 2019;

Unfortunately at all stages of oil petroleum business, beginning from the geophysical prospecting and seismic activities, oil platform sites, construction of access roads, drilling and production of oil,

right of ways for pipelines, refining and distribution of the refined products, all cause extensive damage and pollution to the environment.

Despite the grave impacts of oil prospecting by the International Oil Companies (IOCs), leading to air laden with particulates and the new entrant “black soot”, which put the lives of the people at serious risk, the IOCs have continued to insist that they don’t owe the oil bearing communities any obligation. (Nyeenenwa & Nnamdi 2019: 115). This is an unsurmountable problem, which causes the poet to exclaims, “its riches are many” or in other words, its riches are enough to solve all her problems, but the corollary, “Her woes are numerous” – is simply lamenting how unquantifiable and intercalated is the nature of problems associated with the oil, the source of the “riches.” The seriousness of the breach of the Kantian categorical imperative, Nyeenenwa & Nnamdi says is shown three ways, that is in the (a) “inability or refusal to operate these oil facilities for the good of the community”; by (b) “consequently refus(ing) to undertake purposive and significant contributions to the wellbeing of the growth and progress of their host communities” and (c) “the inclination of the IOCs to operate parallel compliance to the statutory provisions in their home states as different from and diverse from that undertaken in Nigeria’s Niger Delta oil producing areas.” (Nyeenenwa & Nnamdi 2019: 116, 117). This provides the fundamental configuration which holds the poet’s presentiment, as means to generate revenue to outsiders to the oil wealth safe that they sit atop the oil wealth politics. These are real occasions of oppressions and gross injustices to the owners of the oil wealth that Nigeria prides in in place, a dent on Nigeria’s greatness.

The poet’s cries that the oil is the bane of Nigeria’s woes exacerbates the issue of ownership of oil which the Nigerian government continues to politicize which is why he becomes hysterical. Like a white garment, the smallest stain could consign it to the scrap heap, so calling attention to the intractable problem that the “odious notion that oil is a God-given resources which ought to be shared among all, forgetful that . . . this mentality supports the ideology of domination and exploitation” should be discarded if we are to get to the root of the problem that leads to the nations “woes.” (Nyeenenwa & Elechi 2020: 101) will dent her greatness. It as a means of adroitly asking for remediation of the environmental degradation and of moderating the deleterious outfalls that attend oil operation and production in the oil-rich delta. We therefore observe that part of why the Poet proceeded to resolve that “Nigeria, Its riches are many; Her woes are numerous” was to directly link the first part of this stanza to the former antagonism to the greatness of Nigerians which was self-deluding to a later explanation on why there had to be a partial recant or retraction of the absolute and to hang it on Nigeria being great as per media blitz. This reechoes the onerous fact that the leaders and politicians in Nigeria from a particular section are fomenting trouble of which the national wealth was, and still stands at its centre.

The same understanding of line 26 and 27 of stanza 9 follows lines 29 and 30 of stanza 10. In saying that “Nigeria; The petals of Beauty; But dotted with dirt”, the poet seeks to obliterate the grand nature of whatever is by nature or design “beautiful” with the presence of dirt, which stain has become all too obvious. The sublime nature of the good and beautiful is quickly contemned, like filth, to be scorned and certainly moved into the inner chamber where it would no longer be an object of human fancy.

Attempting The Solution To The Intractable Question Of Nigeria's Socio-Political Woes By A Criticism Of Udoidem's Poem "Nigeria"

The poem, "Nigeria" affords good ground for an appraisal of the problems that lead up to Nigeria's socio-political woes. It provides for how to organize viable values and options that would lead to the orderly consummation of the problems. This shows off the Philoso-poet's maturity, experience and dexterity at putting philosophy to the answering and solving man's numerous ethical, social, epistemological and metaphysical problems. On his trail, we wish to adopt his style in adopting Philosophical inquiry and speculative review of the problems confronting the Nigerian society to answer them. Our leading to prescribing the remedy spreads across the entire poem. Take for example, in lines 14, 15, 17 and 18 of stanzas 5 and 6, the reader is beckoned to see Nigeria as a great nation, inhabited with great people, but even if it is shrouded in make-believe, merely a media blitz, but the remedy underlies our trying to knowing that wheat is to be sieved from the chaff. Why would Nigerians remain a notoriously self-deluding people, and chose to bombard themselves with a false image of themselves and feel comfortable? This has a link with the stanza before it where the note is about "A country of nations" being also "a nation of countries" which in actual fact should serve as a base for the progress of the country rather than as a case for its ruination. If the numerous tribes and national ethnic groups in the country can be united and the benefits exploited, Nigeria will become a beautiful array of unity in diversity, much like the multiple plumage of a song bird. The Philoso-poet's remedial action would here anchor and release healing effect of the multiplicity of nationalities and countries in Nigeria.

Next, we are faced with the 3rd line of the 6th stanza which states that "But resented by citizens." The reach of this line as regards providing the solution for a disgruntled citizenry would be to seek to reorder the national values and priorities and condemn the attitude of leaders that has created a schism between the rulers and the ruled. It seeks to encourage the people in authority to end corruption, enthrone the welfare of Nigerians as the top priority of the government and to actively guarantee the rights and privileges of the common masses, which would in turn gratify, delight and appease the people. This would engender clearing perceived animosity and anger in the people for what is expressed in the 2nd line of the 7th stanza, "The beloved City." As the beauty of nations, the poet skillfully calls attention to the colossal price of developing an entirely desert landscape into a beautiful city, one that fulfils the criteria for a new Federal Capital. It smacks of wastefulness and brings to memory how much of Nigeria's petrodollar that was been sunk into the city, while the Niger Delta sprawls in misery and neglect. The remedy would put these cost ahead, cautioning why anyone wouldn't think twice before casting a stone. This, we expect made the poet fly these high stakes so that once we can go past the vices, frailties and shortcomings, we would re-launch the beautiful capital of "Nigeria" and rid it of all stains and dirt and hope it swings like rustling leaves in a gentle breeze, sturdy as "The beauty of nations."

This would also work in tandem to ensure that the unruliness of its leaders would be adequately curbed or totally eliminated by the operation of curing the resentment of the generality of the masses to maladministration, deprivation and trampling under feet of their rights. This is the undertaking that would soothe the "woes" and rinse out the "dotted with dirt" that the greatness of Nigeria would be brought to the fore. Placating the people and instilling discipline would be made a national identity and by it, the patriotic zeal of those who now stand as role models would appraised and compensated. The virtue of greatness thus would become a rallying point for all engagement, assured that "Her riches are many", that it would spread around equitably, and led to promote and sustain it as "the petals of beauty." This is intertwined with the noble expectations of the Philoso-poet who

believes that at any stage of the progression or retrogression that change can be wrought which would work to the advantage of the country. Nzimiro 89, in agreement suggests that we should be more “prone to seek ways of preventing the reenactment of a political nexus that made internecine strife inevitable.” What was expected to be moderated or changed is the reversal of the way in which “the Nigerian class structure was very clearly demarcated by the way the ruling class behaved and manifested its wealth and affluence before the country’s wretched on the earth.” (Nzimiro 71). There is need to change the ethnic conflagration and to reintegrate all sections of the people in the country so that no ethnic group is marginalized by the other. These are things that can be easily changed, altered or corrected by the bourgeoisies and ruling class. It’s not time to pretend that nothing is wrong because everything is wrong with Nigeria, hence the only right thing to do is to know that this time around, the right thing is fixate upon “The symbol of hope.”

The whole essence of the poem, “Nigeria” we must acknowledge is that the poet intended to use it as a medium to send home his message of reassurance, hope and reawakening to the wretched of the earth. To instil confidence in the general mass of the people that the mistakes hitherto escalated to our faces can be remediated, that they require everyone to work towards resolving them either by acts of affirmation or avoidance. In the eleventh stanza of the poem, the poet speaks to the attractiveness of Abuja as Nigeria’s capital, requiring affirmative action, an acceptance that “Abuja” is the unifying force, that which will bind the different nations and countries in Nigeria. The poet anticipates that at the point in which Abuja, Nigeria’s swarming and sprawling capital acquires the toga of the “beauty of nations”, that by the logic of affirmation it would also gain notoriety as “The symbol of hope; For future Nigeria.” It is also through the act of affirmation that the Philosopoet looks to solving the political chaos and consequential woes, the unholy and enigmatic tendencies exhibited by Nigerians and the unruly attitude of her greedy and ethnic bigoted leadership afflicting the nation. It is, he believes that it is only within the same spirit of affirmative action that the poet seeks to instil hope for the citizens, build a future for Nigerians and reach up to stabilizing Nigeria to being “The hope of Africa; The hope of Africa.”

The poet also seeks to diversify the resource base of Nigeria since it’s now common knowledge that it is the petrodollars that have caused so much abuse, corruption, injustice, distrust and disunity. Oil wealth has led to underdevelopment and backwardness so here come a chance to propose alternatives. The poet says, “Nigeria; Green and white bear its destiny; Her hope is ever ending.” If we link the last sentence of the preceding stanza to the 2nd and 3rd lines of the 13th stanza, we appreciate what the Philosopoet is striving for the ideal. Green white green is the colour of the Nigerian flag which was raised at Nigeria’s independence by Great Britain. In this sentence, the poet tries to relate the import of nature, the nation’s wealth and its rich natural resources represented by the “green.” It must have crossed his mind here that he needs to recoil from petroleum, which had not been equitably managed and had caused more harm than good, so he should revert to agriculture, the vast arable fertile lands lying fallow and uncultivated being favorable assets that would support agriculture.

However, we also see the poet’s reference to green and white here as completely retrogressive and counterproductive. Almost all, or indeed all the artefacts Nigeria and Nigerians carried over from the post-independence era failed to deliver the goals for which they were assigned. This was largely due to the fact that our colonial masters sowed the seeds of divisions, ethnicity and conflict from the word go. The colonizers did “regard certain African language groups as superior or inferior to others depending on the similarity of their solid political organization to that of the colonizers.” (Nnoli 2). This perverted logic of theirs was what landed the leadership mantle on the Hausa-Fulani, Sir Alhaji

Tafawa Balewa and Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, and not either Nnamdi Azikiwe or Obafemi Awolowo who were preferable options for the highest office in the land at the time. The only criterion was that as at the time of their invasion, the Hausa/Fulani had a stronger political arrangement in place. We admit a radical turn in events and a total overhaul of what the poet recommends, however we hold certain reservations, like he also acknowledges when it has to do with a solution that seeks to re-open the old order or reinventing the present based on the old. The drawback draws the fact that there was no intellectual rigour and objectivity at the moment of formation of the country named, Nigeria; which is why Achebe 1998: 14, observes attuned us to a most “disorderly growth and mental deficiency”.

It is further observed that the Philosoet further recommended that the “white” in the national colours of green-white-green shall also serve as the foothold of the nation’s ascendancy to the future greatness in store for the country. But we are skeptical also to a large extent on this. How will the “white” sharing role with the green bear the destiny of the future Nigeria? And, how will this guarantee that this country if built on the “white” shall be one built on equity, truth, common good and justice? We seek guidance from Achebe 1998 as we see him fuming, “How valid is this notion of unity as an absolute good?” and “Faith in what?” In his scorn, he answers “Therefore virtues like unity and faith are not absolute but conditional on their satisfaction of other purposes.” In his conclusion, Achebe cautions that we should not harp our hopes and promise of change on either or both of the virtues of faith and unity without first satisfying ourselves that the end to which the said unity and/or faith is to be employed is impeachable. (Achebe 1998: 14, 15). This therefore leaves a large unfilled gulf in the proposal of the Philosoet. The unanswered query is, wont this perceived lapse rustle and even truncate the promise of “Her hope is ever unending”?

In stanzas 14 and 15, the poet says of Nigeria, “Nigeria; Beloved of all; For its air of freedom.” And goes on “Nigeria; Despite its woes, Citizens are undaunted.” The poet is fidgeting, employs puns as he reflects on the carefree attitude of the Nigerian government and its loosed systems. In NISER Monograph Series No. 17, 1999, Nyemutu Roberts detests the poor enforcement module in Nigeria, lamenting. “Nigeria had no choice than to kowtow to the will of Oil Trans-National Companies (TNCs)” (Roberts 25). This is because Nigeria is not just lawless, but where anyone does what pleases him. Roberts 38, continues, “Without democracy and equity in the political system, it was objectively difficult for the minority ethnic groups of the Niger delta to check the activities of the majority groups who benefit from the status quo.” This ethnic cleavage and clamour stood between justice and equity because, whenever a Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba or Igbo man ascended the seat of power, his/her tribesmen will gravitate towards him, cover and protect him from being accountable to the people, which means they were liberated to loot, steal and have disdain to the rule of law and trample of everyone without remorse. This is why the leaders are happy for the type of freedom in Nigeria.

The instances of the violation of the fundamental rights of Nigerians have become repetitive, comparatively higher or less, and also the disobedience to and flagrant disrespect to the orders of the court and direct antagonism to the rule of law. So it is euphemistic stating that the Nigeria is beloved for its air of freedom. This statement declares the direct opposite, safe that it is to be embraced, accommodated and realized within the scope of “Nigeria; The symbol of hope; For future Nigeria.” Ordinarily, asserting that Nigeria is beloved of all is an irony. It bespeaks ill of the exercise of the rights of Nigerians and we only ought to be hopeful that it will improve. Indeed how can the oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta agree with the poet on this except that it is taken to be paradoxical in the face of the fact that “the oil producing areas which see themselves losing non-

replaceable resources while replaceable and permanent resources of agriculture and industry are being developed elsewhere largely with oil revenue? It is a good proposal for the future good of Nigeria and the hope element will work towards its actualization, well and good. This is a laudable project and the poet wants all hands to be sunk into it” (Saro Wiwa iii).

The essence of this statement is again burst on us and punctured by the line 43 of the 15th stanza. The Philosopoeist despairingly stated that, “Nigeria; Despite its woes; Citizens undaunted.” This means that all is not well with the common man because his freedom, seen eulogized above, is arrested and in chains. In this penultimate stanza 15, the followership is depicted as a worthy example of Socrates, who though falsely accused of instigating the youths, but found no reason for escaping from justice, and abandoning a country that gave him all he had. But Rousseau would not take that especially, not in a situation where it is obvious that “the same laws cannot suit so many diverse provinces with different customs situated in the most various climates and incapable of enduring a uniform government.” (Rousseau 403). Nigerians have had to contend with the most inhumane conditions, from the politics, ethnicity and tribalism, leadership, deprivation, marginalization and oppression by the major tribes, and in particular, the Fulani hegemony that has held Nigeria in its vice grip since independence in 1960. Nigerians hope for a change, for a better Nigeria, for secession, for resource control, for a breakup of what is presently the flawed state of Nigeria along ethnic lines. Nigerians are bracing up for restructuring, self-determination, rebellion and militancy; hence they have not given up and wouldn’t give up. More so, the present “slave drivers”, the Hausa/Fulani leadership do not seem to be ready to restructure or let go of their grip on power, so the struggle will continue.

Yesterday, one of our own, Kenule Beeson Saro Wiwa was cut in his prime and not before he had warned, “I predict the denouement of the riddle of the Niger Delta will soon come. The agenda is being set at this trial. Whether the peaceful ways favoured by me and my colleagues prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signal it sends out to the waiting public.” (Ken Saro Wiwa 74). Before this the Ogoni Environmentalist and human rights activist had told the Tribunal trying him, “I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey, nor imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory.” This speaks volumes to the fact that Nigerians are resilient and enduring; suffering and smiling and hoping that all will be well someday.

Linked to the above, it also serves to explain why Kaduna Nzeogwu staged a coup in 1966, why General Murtala Muhammed seized power in 1975, why Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon toppled Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1980, why General Ibrahim Babangida unseated Generals Tunde Idiagbon and Muhammadu Buhari in a palace coup, and why General Sani Abacha removed Chief Ernest Shonekan as interim Head of State. The same doggedness as a hallmark and identity of Nigerians is here heralded and celebrated by the poet. At the base of this, we remind ourselves of Achebe 1998: 2 who had argued that Nigerians, especially, the elites and the enlightened have the bounden duty to lead the way towards the creation of an egalitarian society, so that “good leaders, like good money will (not) be driven out by bad.” Nigerians must arise to challenge the problem of national bad habits, or we ignore them at our perils. Nigerians are dogged and resilient because – “History which neither personal wealth nor power can pre-empt will pass terrible judgment on us, pronounce anathema on our names when we have accomplished our betrayal and passed on” (Achebe 1998:4) if we do nothing and merely allow the ills that have led to the woes now haunting us as a people to persist. This is what the poet had graphically and ironically outlined in this poem.

The search for order and justice requires brave leaders, resilient and purposive. As the adage goes, “winners don’t quit and quitters don’t win”, hence the struggle must go on until the victory is achieved, someday, one day.

The last stanza sanctions a regime of hope and continual trust by the people; but certainly it does not refer to a blind and directionless optimism and vacuous anticipation. This is why the poet inexplicably links the hope here with lines 45 and 46 of the 15th stanza which esteems and adulates the peoples’ spirited doggedness, persistence, adaptability and resilience. In saying that “Nigeria; The hope of Africa; The hope of the world”, the poet employs witticism, which conveys such pellucid irony and parody that it is obvious that, what the Philosoepoet infers is quite akin to hearing a Nigerian leader in General Olusegun Obasanjo telling the world in 1979 that “Nigeria will become one of the ten leading nations in the world by the end of the century” (Achebe 1998: 10). It was a posting into our ledger of a resounding note of self-delusion, and of livid proclamation that we are still living in a world of make-believe and unrealistic expectations, an extension of the impossibility of Nigeria, an enigma. This projection simply violates the natural principle of sowing and reaping and contained expressed as “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the sprit reap life everlasting.” (Galatians Chapter 6 : 7 & 8 – KJV). The Nigerian State having not prepared to play any such leading role in in international politics or in any other sphere of human undertaking, except sowing the seeds of corruption and maladministration cannot expect to reap apex leadership roles in the world politics at any time whatsoever. To be one of the ten leading countries of the world will be like reaping from where one did not sow. The same goes for saying that Nigeria would be the hope of Africa, and more than that, the “hope of the World.” This would simply be unachievable, unthinkable and out-rightly impossible because we don’t have anything that will cushion that to be realised.

Perfunctorily, we are wont to agree with the Philosoepoet that there exists some light at the end of the tunnel, though very dim. The undeniable fact is that Nigeria, like any other nation can rise to the challenges of nationhood and better her record because there exists numerous chances of improvement. In aligning with the Philosoepoet on the side of hope, we confront the need to target the immediate eradication of the pervasive corruption that have held this nation captive on all fronts since independence. This would tackle all cases of official misuse of public trust, funds and resources. We propose the enforcement of anti-corruption and institution of integrity systems that would be run by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), in collaboration with international anti-corruption agencies. Their inviolate mandate should to investigate all cases of corruption including any doubtful source of wealth acquisition, to fish out and prosecute the alleged culprits at all levels and apply appropriate sanctions. This will lay to rest all forms of greed, selfishness and insensitivity of the rulers, which will automatically target any ill-gotten wealth by unbiased anti-corruption bodies and agencies. When this happens, Nigeria would inch towards being the hope of Nigerians, then of Africa and of all the world.

On the heels of the above, the purport and aim of the poem “Nigeria” that Nigeria would or ought to be the hope of Nigerians which will be awash with continental and global stakes would be feasible when the ailing Nigerian constitution is amended and inputs accepted and included in it, especially, limitation of immunity clause when it has to do with anti-corruption allegations. In addition, major excisions of redundant sections would be done so that what results would practically reflect the ideals of a truly egalitarian nation, one that has the backing of an overwhelming majority of the nations and tribes in Nigerians. On a serious note, the idea of resource control, ownership and

allocation of natural resources which must include oil wealth, the type(s) of government, and whether it should or would be federalism, presidential, parliamentary, or a co-federation of all the ethnic groups, and which fosters equal representation by the over 250 ethnic groups would be expressly covered. It should also address itself to the agitations for self-determination and/or secession, which could be included in the new Constitution so that the fears of the minorities of marginalization, ethnic genocide and ethnic cleansing would be nipped in the bud since any nation that feels threatened would peacefully opt out. This will send a powerful signal to the world at large that the country is ready for a lasting change and to emerge as the hope of the people, and extrapolated to the hope of the world.

On the heels of the above, the international community look up to any Nigerian Government that seeks to lead the world to have resolved the environmental problems plaguing the Niger Delta area of the country. The problems of the Niger Delta region relate primarily to environmental degradation and despoliation resulting from oil prospecting and production. The Federal Government would have to look into this and ameliorate the problems of the polluted waters, land, sea and cause the companies in the area to show concern to the plight of the Niger delta area. It will be unacceptable, self-defeating and inequitable to opt to lead others in Africa and the world in the midst of “the serious damage to farmland, aquatic life and human life; and which on the long term are liable to cause large scale environmental degradation, environmental toxicoses and the disarticulation of the ecological balance and massive dislocation of the peasant economies are not concomitant too hard a pill for the Niger Delta communities to swallow” are rife (Nyeenenwa & Elechi 100). It is when this has been done, and a reordering of environmental priorities, smooth interface, collaboration and host communities’ inclusion by the IOCs that the nation can begin to have a face in world leadership affairs.

Additional efforts to move Nigeria into becoming the hope of Africa and the hope of the world, which we still consider a very tall order shall become feasible when Nigerian leadership has taken steps to make itself assuage Nigerians and instil trust and confidence in the people. We will need to drastically alter the type, quality and direction of our leadership since with the present crop of leadership of Nigeria, we cannot dare dream of being world powers. We need to cultivate and chose viable, visionary, objective, selfless and committed leaders, who have an overflowing honesty, integrity, focus and intellectual vigour (Achebe 1998: 13, 14). It is only such leadership that can guarantee solving the problem of poverty alleviation, since all past such programmes of the Nigerian government weren’t able to solve the problem of poverty. The powers that be only made poverty alleviation a mere name calling ceremony whose ideology reflected aiding government officials to siphon public funds to personal pockets.

Thus, we share the Philosopoet’s sentiment in how he envisages a Nigeria that will rise from its current position as the poorest country in the world to the 5th fastest growing economy in the world, with corresponding high GDP index to show that poverty has been reduced outrightly. The leadership to know that the poverty situation is compounded by the large scale inequity and wide margins that exist between the “haves” and the “have nots”, hence if this gap is not bridged, there is no way Nigeria can be the hope of Africa, much less of the World. The poet expects that specific poverty reduction programmes should be directed at reviewing and reallocating the oil blocks to now involve the localities, accommodating the interest of the oil bearing communities in the ownership and running of oil facilities and the remuneration of workers, especially, those in public service. Wealth re-distribution should be adopted as a means to even up and reduce the disparity

between the rich and poor in Nigeria so that in the comity of nations, Nigeria will hold its head high and lay unflinching claims to being the hope of the World, of Africa.

The Philosoepoet also took cognizance of how to tackle and arrest the incidences of long term ethnic conflicts and civil unrest since one whose house is on fire cannot take to chasing rats. Nigeria must first put its own house in order before it can look out to lead Africa, and lead the world. The aggravating circumstances would have to be identified and addressed by solving the intractable problems of bad leadership, poverty, easy access to justice and its affordability and quick dispensation of justice so that resort to self-help will turn unpopular. The government should also develop a listening ear to the grievances of the people and to keep faith to its agreement with labour and other groups, notwithstanding that the particular government that entered into the agreement had long lapsed. This is why it is particularly saddening that the Federal Government had allowed the problem of funding of the universities that it had with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to linger on for decades without end.

Finally, for Nigeria to become “The hope of Africa, The Hope of the World”, then it would have to resolve and nip the problem of ethnicity and tribalism, which Achebe 1988: 6 says, “Though alive and well, tribe had an embarrassing odour.” in the bud once and for all. This may not be as easy as it seems but concrete steps should be made to redirect the people’s attention from ethnicity and tribalism to other useful ways of unifying the differences in the same way that these politicians unite and work for their collective interest once in power. If an Igbo man and a Hausa/Fulani man in Senate cooperate to share money, doesn’t this not show that the problem of tribalism has always been blown beyond proportions by power hungry politicians? This will seek to address the prejudice put in place by the colonialists which made power customary to some and others perpetual strangers and put all the ethnic nationalities on an even playing field. This is what is needed to catapult Nigeria into being the hope of Nigerians, the hope of Africans and ultimately the hope of the world. This aside, the aspect of Nigeria being the hope of this triumvirate conglomeration would fly in the face of reason, only having live as an irony, a comical paradoxical impossibility.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the poem, “Nigeria” by Sylvanus Iniobom Udoiem, we have come to appreciate and cherish this work and value its richness. We do appreciate the Philosoepoet’s obsession to the ills bedeviling our beloved country, Nigeria. This accounts for why the Philosoepoet looked inscrutable, because this is the only state that the poet now, yet cannot understand anything about it, because it is enigmatic. The mysterious nature of the country, impaled the writer to see how mysterious Nigerian has become from what it was way back in 1960. He couldn’t bear turning his eyes away from “our collapsing public utilities, our inefficient and wasteful parastatals and state-owned companies . . . and the inevitable paralysis brought about by the cult of mediocrity which we espouse?” (Achebe 1998: 23, 24). He was espousing patriotism, love for his motherland. Love they say heals, so he was poised to heal Nigeria; but don’t healing itself also cause pains? If a Consultant Surgeon is set to treat a broken leg that makes one’s leg bend backwards, would he treat the leg perpetually keep away the pain? Would he vow that he will be solely committed to not inflicting any pain on the wounded? How would the fractured wound of the wounded be cleaned without some methylated spirit and iodine? Does these materials exacerbate or ameliorate the pain for the pained? Does this infer that the Philosoepoet’s demonstration of aversion to the way and manner the country was being run aground by mediocres unmake him from being patriotic? Does it make the poet in this case “one who cares deeply about the happiness and wellbeing of his country and its people?

So, how do we class the hordes of coupists, dictators, selfish, greedy politicians and usurpers in government, who run the government like personal estates? Were they and are they unpatriotic too? Is this what it means to say that “patriotism is an emotion of love directed by a critical intelligence”? (Achebe 1998: 17).

Then what of the avalanche of solutions and hidden remedies strewn in between mouthfuls of the Philosopher’s aversion to the contemporaneously evil perpetrated by a jinxed political system and an equally jinxed polity? Does this not invariably point us to the competing fact that even love itself does some kind of violence to the nature of a thing in the same way that hate and such other virtues do? So, please does love do its own violence in a constructive, healing and restorative capacity? Does this bespeak Nigeria’s love for its citizens, one that is designed to impair, subjugate, marginalize, oppress and plague its citizens in favour of some other tribes and person? This continues the distress and miff of the Philosopher because Nigerian’s enigmatism and mysteriousness has remained an enigma and perplexing. We may have tried but regrettably we can only be a far way off understanding and unraveling the mysterious nature, or the enigmatic overbloatedness of “Nigeria.”

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