

THE POET, THE PAST, THE PRESENT, THE FUTURE: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TWO SELECTED POEMS

Clement Chukwuka Idegwe, Kennedy Edegbe

Associates Professor, Department of Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State; Faculty of Arts, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Edo State,
NIGERIA.

clement.idegwe@unidel.edu.ng, kedegbe@biu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the inevitable relationship between the past, the present and the future. It goes on to investigate the inestimable values of the past in navigating the present, its relevance to the future, how literature lays bare the beauty of an ideal society, the New Nigeria, long expected and to realise it. It talks about the unrequited oil returns, the injustices being perpetrated by Nigerian leaders which creates restiveness as the highly neglected, fights to survive the torment and put an end to such deprivations. It also teaches how mothers should train their children, especially sons they see as heir apparent, living a compassionate life in order to have an ideal family. Employing sociological criticism, which explicitly explicates the relationship between literature and society, the paper analyses Sophia Obi's "Oloibiri" and J. P. Clark – Bekederomo's "When My Father Fell Ill, which beyond all reasonable doubts demonstrate that the past acquaints an individual, family, community, and nation of his records of existence where things went wrong and how to put them right. This article truly highlights from the sociological perspective that we are our undoing due to selfishness. It also finds out that the leadership of the country is faulty and needs to ensure equal distribution of the nations' Commonwealth. This is to avoid uprising while mothers must ensure proper upbringing of their children. This because those who are carrying out this unrequited love were once people children. And this act of deliberate denial of the beauty of our commonwealth could create a scene that will be better imagined than experience. However, the poet has emphatically stressed that whether they do or not, there are signs of eminent celebration, inevitable joyful uproar which comes with it, perhaps a revolution.

Keywords: Inevitable relationship, navigating the present, the past, the present and the future. The nations common wealth, injustice being perpetrated.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of thinkers do argue that the past is gone and should remain in the dust bins of history. Others who oscillates within the literary world and those of like minds do explicates the unquantifiable benefits of the knowledge of one's past. The sage, a like mind, postulates that people who are well inundated with how their parents lived, avoid the mistakes that hinder the fulfillments of destines.

K. E. Agovi (1990) cites Wole Soyinka as stating that "the real African consciousness establishes ... [that] the past exists now, this moment, it is co-existent in present awareness '(p 58). Kofi Anyidoho as cited by Idaevor Bello and Lillian Onyeiwu (2018) gives credence of the past in present existence and the future thus:

Our society will never know peace until we pay the full price for the children we have abandoned, until we learn to do the right thing by those others we hope to bring into our lives. And beyond the children,

our society also must learn to do right by the class of socially and economically disadvantaged people “produced” by our various failed development programme, and too often condemned to nightmarish existence in those sections of our urban centres systematically “overlooked” by our planners of urban growth. (P 255).

Anyidoho in very clear terms states the fate of children forced into the streets by the society. The consequences arising from the abandonment of these children are very devastating. They reside in utter squalor that which could be seen as Sodom and Gomorrah, a biblical allusion, a place utterly destroyed by God due to the sins of the inhabitants. Our interest in this extract lies in the lessons to be learnt from the past in order to ensure that we do not make such mistakes now and tomorrow.

Victor O. Ogbeide (2018) citing Kofi Anyidoho insightful deposition explicates the relevance of the past in order to successfully navigates the present and the future thus:

Beyond delight of tears, beyond the passionate intensity of countless orgasms, the future of our children, of our morality and the society awaits our constant vigilance and careful nurturing. No seed grows into harvest of joys without the planters’ diligent labour; as parents, as family, as community, we will forever stand condemned by the anguish in the eyes and the voices of our children forever guilty of the torturing of ... prospective souls into the clawing jaws of the street

(P 56)

The truth of the matter remains that children, parents, family and community or nation must understand that none will no peace until we are all ready to willingly pay the price for responsible children, responsible parenthood and responsible society. This accounts for Stephen R. Covey’s (2004) postulation that: “the power of choice means that we are not merely product of our past or of our genes. We are not a product of how other people treat us. they unquestionably influence, but they do not determine us” (42) Covey (2004) in an insightful attempt to help bring this discourse to a logical conclusion posits a question: “If we have given away our present to the past, do we (p 42). The answer is an unquestionable “No” Hence, a call for wisdom. According to Frances Hutcheson as cited by Covey 2004 states that “Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best and by the best means. (P 81). Hence the Sage’s argument those who have the knowledge of their dreams avoid the mistakes of the past. The thrust of our discourse.

The thrust of this article, therefore, is the inevitable relationship between the past, the present and the future. The inestimable values of the past in truly navigating the present and its unquantifiable relevance to the future.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on sociological theory as its analytical approach. This is a theory that explores the social context of a literary artists’ work and the readers role in shaping a literary text or literature.

Clement Chukwuka Idegwu (2021) citing Alierie Akporokah Harrison and Monday O. Akpoyisher posits that sociological criticism is “directed at an understanding or placing of literature in a larger context. Sociological criticism analysis how a society functions in literature and how literature works in a society” (p. 211).

Okpan Ochuko P and Isama Evelyn N. (2020) posit that Sociological criticism: “is a literary criticism which is directed at the understanding or placing of literature in a larger context. Sociological criticism analyzes how literature works in a society” (p. 37). They further added that “African literary artist do not just write for creativity, but to criticize and express their dissatisfaction over the ills in the society. They see it as their responsibility to educate the masses on how they are being oppressed and exploited by some ruthless individuals” (p. 38).

M. H. Abrams (2005) expounds that:

Sociological critics treat a work of literature as inescapably conditioned – in the choice and development of its subject matter, the way of thinking it incorporates its evaluation of the model of life it renders and even in its formal qualities – by the social, political and economic organization and forces of its age (298).

Ogaga, Okuyade (2010) cited by Clement Chukwuka Idegwu (2022) succinctly corroborates Abram thus: Literary production and criticism actually is an integral part of the process of state formation, for at least the heart of the polemics is the searching, for new political orders for a continent that is viewed by intellectual as desperately in need of social change” (p. 147). Ogaga further avers that “the writer articulates the ideas, words and images that relates to or under untreal power in order to construct a powerful literature alternatively” (p. 147).

Inuwa Mahmud 2020:30 gives credence to the above postulation on what sociological criticism is all about by stating that:

Literature it should be understood, plays a significant role any society. Overtimes, it has proved to be a formidable way through which writers make their voices heard and equally express their visions of what an ideal society should look like or be. Understandably, writers via any of its three genres decry and attack the ills of their society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature entails a critical evaluation of related materials aimed at postulations of literary critics and thinkers, about literary artists and the relevance of their past in creating the ideal in the present and ensuring the sustenance and improvement of such ideal state created from their past. This is due to the fact that, the literary artist have over the years demonstrated the inevitable relationship between an individual’s or group’s past, present and future.

In explicating the relevance of the past to the future, Felix Ayemere Airoboman (2018) cites George Ukagba thus: The enquiring mind seeks to know the where, why of the beginning and the end of things. The answers to these questions cannot be satisfactorily given without reference to the past (p. 63). The argument here is that there is need to make inquiry into someone’s life if one truly wants to be well inundated about the commencement of such a person’s journey or personality. The knowledge of such a personality’s past will provide the needed necessary information about the present situation of such an individual and a perfect prediction of such a persons’ future and steps to be taken if there are errors of the past that must be corrected. Ukagba as cited by Airoboman, continuing the argument about the

relevance of knowing the past in order to understand the present and articulate the future, further states that in modern time:

Many people ... tend to think in terms of the future alone. The past is nearly relegated to the background. The problem posed by the future cannot adequately be solved without reference to the past. This does not mean that the present will always be like the past. Rather it means that the present cannot be taken serious, nor the future without the help of the past experiences (p. 63).

In furtherance of our discourse of the inevitability of the past in our literary artists' creation of the present and the future ideal state, M. H. Matias (1995) *Universalism and the meaning of History*: gives an invaluable contribution of the creative artist to humanity thus: the creative act connects us with history, with what past generations had, created in science, philosophy, religion arts, technology, morality and practical life. These realms of fabric of civilization; they are not only the realms in which we think and act, they are also the impetus for new modes of creation" (p.110) Matias, further argues that by living these realms:

We partake of the meaning which our forefathers had created. We established in this way a link of continuity with them. We feel united with them, for, on the one hand, we enjoy what they created and on the other we continue and extend what they started. This is perhaps why respect for tradition is prevalent among all world civilizations. This tradition is to a good extent the basis of our cultural, and consequently individual, identities. But the survival and continuation of tradition provide the conditions for the survival and continuation of the individual, for what I am is continuous with a long standing tradition and what I shall achieve will become incorporated in the corpus of the work of others. This is why I can feel that what I struggled for and achieve will not be in vain. (p.110).

The argument above explicates that societal values and norms are acquired over time. This is made possible by the deliberate efforts of literary artists who daily inundate the citizenry of the life lived by our ancestors, the areas to be applauded and that which must be shunned in order for the ideal to be created and later improved upon for a better society. These invaluable values that are acquired through reading literary works helps in defining and redefining, imbuing relevance or values on the citizenry, helping them to realise their destinies, their possibilities and the joy of a fulfilled life.

Ailbeart Babukar, Absolon Bartolomeo; (2016) greatly amplifies our postulation of the relevance of the past, in the present and future life of the people which the literary artists succinctly make available to their readers in order to fulfill their destinies thus:

Literature allows people to have an insight into their past; an insight which is achieved through reading and exploring written and oral materials. By reading literary texts, people can have a further historic insight through which it can shape up their future development. In order to be more knowledgeable about the world, life, cultures and experiences, people need to read more literature. What would a good reader know and discovers, depends on the content of the materials read or presented as well as the socio-cultural and literary background of the reader. Through reading literature no matter what the nature, the reader communicates with his past and culture. Here, people should

understand by the word “communicate”, the ability of the readers or the listener to comprehend the literary works that are exposed to him and based on his self or culture in written words so as to improve the conditions of human beings and their societies (p.147).

In complementing the assertions above, on the relevance of the past to the present and the future, and the inevitable roles of literature in creating and sustaining an ideal society,

H. H. Okam (1991) postulates that:

Achebe’s *A man of the people* gives a view of politics in independent Nigeria and offers correctives to the unwholesome state of affairs through the use of modern satire whose critical shafts are directed equally at corrupt politicians of Chief Nangas’ stamp and the “Vast contemptible crowd”, the people, who unconsciously rationalize corruption in a patient expectation to benefit one day from corruption. Had the people found the coverage to condemn the kinds of chief Nanga. Achebe refers politics in independent Nigeria would have been more purposeful and to the benefit of all (which is corrective history) (p. 54).

Indeed, literature acquires illumination from hindsight and succinctly explains areas where people, history derailed; where necessary actions that would have improved the life of the people were deliberately neglected by those in power. It deliberately suggests what should have been done for the people’s life to be bettered. The realisation of an ideal society is possible if the people do not allow and sustain evil because they will benefit from it one day. Achebe’s *A man of the people* has given Nigerian an insight into bad governance and how to upturn it. The novel was published in 1966 If today, what is happening in Nigeria is worse than that which Achebe of blessed memory highlighted then it means the people celebrate corruption. Hence, the realisation of a purposeful Nigeria might be a mirage.

This paper, therefore, stresses the instructive value of one’s past which literature consciously ensures. Ajayi, Adeyinka Theresa and Buhari Lateef Oluwafemi (2014) affirm this unequivocally by citing Nwolise (2005) thus: “A society which neglects the instructive value of its past for its present and future, cannot be self confident and self reliant; and will lack internally generated dynamism and stability” (154). This is why, Nigeria ranks very, very high among countries whose leaders daily waste human and natural resources. It is indeed very unfortunate.

Roshni Duham (2015) in affirming the value of taking a critical view of ones’ past in order to avoid the errors of yesterday and have glorious future argues that the fact:

That literature is a reflection of society is a fact that has been widely acknowledged. Literature indeed reflects the society, its good values and its ills. In its corrective functions, literature mirrors the ills of the society with a view to making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also projects the virtues or good values in the society for people to emulate. Literature, as an imitation of human action, often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in a society (192).

Achebe (1965) in his essay *The Novelist as a Teacher*”, clearly explicates the literary artist’s role in the society thus: “... I would be quite satisfied if my novels especially the ones I set in the past did no more than teach my readers that their past ... on God’s behalf

delivered them (p. 7). Bernth Lindfors (1992) did buttress our claims of the relevance of the past in the fulfillment of individual's and nation's aspirations thus:

These depredations of the past are responsible for the chaos one sees in Africa at present and only by properly understanding that past and present will Africans collectively be able to tackle the problems of the future; how to get the victims back on its feet, how to raise the materially oppressed and down-trodden, how to heal the spiritually sick. Instead of merely cursing various symptoms of the colonial diseases, as he had done in his first three books, Armah now wants to work towards effecting a cure (268 – 269).

Our review of related literature indeed explains the inevitability of the knowledge of our past in our understanding the present, effecting the desired change, learning from our mistakes and being in charge of the future for the good of all. This indeed is awesome. An ideal that all should seek to attain, for wholeness comes from one is truly cured of one's disease.

Textual Analysis of Sophia Obi's Poems

Sophia Obi is a literary artist who is committed to the well-being of her people, the Niger Deltans. Her works are centered on how her people have been greatly impoverished in spite of their producing the oil that has become the mainstay of the nation's economy. She is from Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. She is a Poet, a Dramatist, and a Civil Servant. She has a Ph.D in Dramatic Theory and Criticism. *Tears in a Basket* is her first published work.

Sophia Obi in "Oloibiri" talks about the great injustice going on in Nigeria, how the people of Niger Delta have been unjustly treated. In a poem of twelve (12) irregular stanzas, the poet explicates how the Niger Deltans are denied the bliss of "oil returns". What an unjust society. The Poet states her cause thus:

At last I am free,
Free from bondage
Yet,
Desolate like a wealthy aged whore
Wrapped up in a gloomy attire,
I lay on the altar of a faded glory,
Oily tears rolling through my veins
To nourish households in the desert.

Along my coas,
The smoke and stench
Of my crude flow desecrates
My marine reserves

This is the coated freedom of torment

When anguish unfolds joy

I frown

Yes, I frown at the daily discovery

Of unrequited oil returns

The harvest belongs to the tyrant

And so I frown. (p. 13)

The poet in the first four stanzas lays bare the plight of the Niger Deltans, a people whose crude flow desecrates “their marine reserves” (p.13) and all that matter to them. It becomes annoying when one makes a daily discovery of unrequited oil returns. This means that the money realised from the exploration of the oil in the Niger Delta is used to develop the regions in the desert of the country when nothing is done to develop their geopolitical zones. Felix Ayemere Airoboman (2018) gives credence to the thrust of our argument that African literary artist ensures that the people are inundated with their past, their present and help to articulate their future. According to him:

Unless the contemporary African knows how, why, when and by whom they were dominated and colonized materially and culturally, and unless they know the aftermath consequences of these events, they cannot make a meaningful projection into the future in guarding against unforeseen ugly consequences (p.64).

The truth of the matter is that Obi, the poet whose poem is our concern in this section of our discourse deliberately tries to conscientise and sensitise her people about how much they have been exploited by the leadership of the entity call Nigeria. The poet moves further to state that this evil has been on for a long time thus:

I hear echo of years gone by

In my vicinity, there is the quake of discovery

A zebra a string of pipelines running

Through my belly,

Causing me to ache from relentless exploitation

Yet, brimful of unanswered complaints

I supply the wealth parameter

Of many a nation

Diminished by the effluence of my flow,

My generosity hangs me on the scale of extinction

And because my crude flows is poisonous to my children

Restive, they fight to survive the torment. (pp. 13 – 14).

The poet's choice of words is very remarkable. She talks about "quake of discovery" "echo of years gone", and "diminished by the effluence of my flow" (13). The poet in tune with the function of literature, ensures that the people of Niger Delta are inundated with their history in order to take their destiny in their hands. Martin E. P. Seligman¹, Peter Railton², Roy F. Baumeister³ and Chandra Sripada² (2013) aver to our argument that:

The past is not a force that drives them but a resource from which they selectively extract information about the prospects they face. These prospects can include not only possibility that have occurred before but also possibilities that have never occurred – and these new possibilities often play a decisive role in the selection of action (119).

Their postulation above is truly in tune with our disposition in this article that African literary artists navigate their past, extracting the desired information about their yesterdays, their past and the inevitable prospects before them. Having a perfect grasp of these; the possibilities that have occurred, whether well managed or not, and the possibilities before them, that which is their presents and future they will be well armed on how to play decisive roles in the selections of their actions in order to overcome detours and safely cross their red seas of life to their promised land.

This is what Obi has done in "Oloibiri" and other poems in her collection *Tears in a Basket*. The poetic persona in "Oloibiri" explicates how the Niger Delta has been made desolate like a wealthy aged whore, by the heartless leaders of Nigeria who heartlessly ensures that her endowments are daily used "to nourish households in desert" (p.13). This is done to spite her beauty and helplessness, "the smoke and stench of my crude desecrates, "My marine reserves" (p.13) she puts it, are testaments of how much Niger Deltans have been exploited. This makes the Niger Deltans to be coated with freedom of torment/when anguish enfolds joy. The narrative persona moves further to explain why the people are annoyed with the nation thus:

I frown
Yes, I frown at the daily, discovery
Of unrequited oil return
The harvest belongs to the tyrant
And so I frown.

The poetic persona's reasons are indisputable. Truly in a society where justice reigns, the harvest does not and should not belong to the tyrant no matter his might. The poet talks about "brimful of unanswered complaints" of supplying "the wealthy parameter of many nations" and all they have to show case to the world on a carnival of God's goodness are how much the tyrants unwanton exploitation have caused them "to ache from relentless exploitation", "Diminished by the effluence of my flow" My generosity hangs me on the scale of extinction" And because my crude flow is poisonous to my children" "Restive, they fight to survive the torment" (pp. 13 – 14).

A critical view of the above extract shows the poets' commitment. H. H. Okam (1991) expounds that "literature is at one and the same time History's major request to mankind and *the principal corrective of history*. This is because all literature begins as an experience and ends as a fiction. Accordingly without experience, or if you like without history, there would be no literature" (p. 53). Okam moves further to explicate that:

As events history moves in a straight line, and even those who by their actions are said to have changed the course of history only change the direction of the line; literature, on the other hand, gaining illumination from the hindsight presents not only an imaginative reconstruct of reality but also overtly or covertly offers correctives of history by suggesting what should have been. Thence on the one hand the didactic understanding of literature in general, ...” (54).

Okam’s view above truly shows that *Obi in Tears in a Basket*, her first collection of poems attempts to present or suggest correctives to the errors of the managers of Nigerian nation. She sincerely frowns at the unsavoury aspects of the Niger Deltans experience and calls for an end for such degree of wickedness by her country’s leaders. Peter Onwudinjo (1991) citing Conyer Reads avers that the literary artists are among those who “undertake to interpret the past for the present² (p. 63) Onwudinjo (1991) on a person note emphasised that “only the under, especially the poet, can recreate the fortunated landscape of a frustrated, disillusioned and despairing psyche”. (p.65)

Aderemi Bamikunle (1991) in furtherance of our discourse posits that literature arises “when writers, dissatisfied with present social realities, try to provide alternatives to them” (p.73). This is what *Obi*, the poet of one of our primary text, tries to do. In the last two stanzas of “*Oloibiri*”, she tries to talk about the celebration of joy. She foresees a new Niger Delta, a New Nigeria.

Yet, I quench the thirst
Of the desert dwellers
Far and wide, my flow invents
Elegant monuments of gigantic
To the untutored sight of my people.

Brigades and mansions grow out of dusty kinds
While my children wallow
In the crude mud peculiar to my swamp

O, I have lived a grey life of despair
Now with my fertility gone,
I carry a begging bowl
Unable to form a sovereign body to build
A monument to my forsaken glory

But I am awakened by the oily tears of the Ijaw Nation
And I hear the laughter
I hear the celebration,
The joyful uproar that comes
With controlling the blessings
Of my God-given inheritance (pp. 13 – 14)

The poet in these last stanzas expounds that the people will one day control their resources. In a stanza to the last, the poet presents a pathetic picture of how much the Niger Delta and Deltans have been wasted. The narrative persona talks about haven “lived a grey life of despair.” (p. 14). It shows how the people from birth to death are denied of the dividends of the exploration of oil, their natural endowments. Unfortunately, it has remained a vicious circle.

In the last stanza, the poetic persona talks about being “awakened by the oily tears of the Ijaw nation, their pains. The only good thing remains:

The joyful uproar that comes
With controlling the blessings
Of my God-given inheritance (p. 13)

There is hope that one day, the Niger Deltans will celebrate haven been able to form a sovereign body to build/A monument of “their forsaken glory”

Textual Analysis of Clark-Bekederemo’s Poem

In “When My Father Fell ill”, Clark – Bekederemo amplifies the relevance of the past in re-ordering the present, and ensuring that the ideal created due to the re-ordering, is highly sustained in the future which will greatly help in sustaining the development so realised or achieved. A father who does not assist others when they are in pains or difficulty becomes a testament for the re-education

One person’s pain is dead wood
To others, my mother used to
Remind my father of this saying
Well into their old age; for when
My father, who could not take
A sick wife, fell ill himself,
His wives felt it down to their children,
And the cry would go up to
His mother, miles away in
Another land, and rather like
Oream of the Ozidi
Saga, straight out she would fly
To the rescue of her one,
And only son from the hands’
Of evil ones, who from the day
The Almighty sent him to be
Heir to a great house, always
Wanted him dead. (p. 15).

A critical evaluation of the section of the poem above shows the short coming of a mother in the upbringing of her son. She never taught him the need for compassion, the need to bear one another's burden, the need to treat ones wife or wives for he had five, and children with utmost care and compassion. In the first four lines from the extract of the poem above, the narrative persona explains to the readers how his mother constantly reminded his father from when they got married "well into their old age;" of the need to love one another as oneself as the bible instructs and the need to complement one's spouse. Though the father was not taught by his mother, he too refused to learn from the school of life as he grew up. Justice Ndubuisi Otunne (2017) in "Are Writers Still "Righting?" citing Niyi Osundare 2007 avers that the writer "has a duty to relate not only how things are, but how they could be or should be. He must not only lead the people to the top of the mountain and point out the Promised Land; he must also show them how to get there" (p.112). He further quotes Ngugi Wa Thiong'o as affirming that the writer should not only explain the world; he should change it" (p.178). The writer does this by imaginatively recreating the past as it were with the intention of instructing the people of the need for a harmonious living, the need for compassion and integrity among others. This indeed accounts for the relevance of the past which is the thrust of this paper.

Mathew Arnold on his part "believes that art and morality are intertwined ... The writers thus has a moral responsibility and should use culture and criticism to enrich the spiritual life of his country" (29). It is a call to duty which everyone must subscribe to for the good of humanity. Hence, Clarke – Bekederemo employs his poem to educate and re-educate the people of the importance of living rightly. When the narrator's father became ill, haven failed to care for the wives who were more than five and children, in their moments of need, care less. The poet in his characteristic manner explains it thus:

My father who could not take
A sick wife, fell ill himself,
His wives felt it down to their children,
And the cry would go up to
His mother, miles away in
Another land, and rather like
Oream of the Ozidi
Saga, straight out she would fly
To the rescue of her one,
And only son from the hands
Of evil ones, who from the day,
The Almighty sent him to be
Heir to a great house, always
Wanted him dead (16).

Clark-Bekederemo, in his usual way, explicates how African literature evolved along historical lines. African writers poised for essential realism have contributed immensely to make them respond creatively. Indeed very creatively and convincingly to the changing patterns of family matter, socio-political and other spheres in Africa. Julia Udofia (2012) talks about African novelist, poets and playwrights writing to ensure that the ideal is done in

Africa. She posits that African Literary artist “arose from the African need to reflect the real African situation and rescue the African continent from acts that are capable of destroying the family unit”. (p.136), among others.

Udofia was quick to cite Ngugi to buttress her points thus:

History is very important in determining how we look at and how we evaluate the present. A distorted view of the people’s past can very easily distort our views and evaluations of the present potential and the future possibilities as a people ... Now I feel the Kenyan writers, intellectuals, historians, political scientists must be able to show us Kenya’s past which correctly evaluates Kenya’s people’s achievement (SIC) in the past in the present and at the same time, pointing out their creative potential in the future. (143).

Clark-Bekederemo in furtherance of his thematic construct, explicates why we should care for one another for there is always a moment in one’s life, especially as we age, when we will be at the mercy of others. The poet creatively states:

But there was once my father
Was ill, it remained so branded
In my brain, in this century
And millennium I can still
See the big strong man of the house,
Seated in his room steaming
In his sweat, his polo shirt,
Stuck to his skin, and every time
The fit of that fever took
Him by his feet,

The poet succinctly explains through recounting the past, the mistakes the narrative personal’s father made, the consequences and the lessons to be learnt by humanity. The choice of words are very instructive in themselves: “In my brain, in this century” as if it happened a few minutes ago. “I can still,” “See the big strong man”, an expression that demonstrates the father’s authoritativeness, his might. Readers could see the pains one suffers for doing evil. One could see that none showed him mercy because he was never compassionate to anyone.

The poet in the last part of the poem talks about death.

From eve where I sat, my head
Swollen with fear, which had
Everyone there, cold, the cement floor
Seemed to shake deep down under me

The poet explains the inevitable law of harvest. We all reap what we sow hence there is need for all to plant good seeds.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the relevance of the past in navigating the present and the future for the fulfillment of individual, family and national destinies, aims and aspirations for the good of our commonwealth. The paper lays bare the inevitability of seed time and harvest time in an attempt to explicate the need for Godliness, right living. It is indeed my humble submission that if the findings of this article are strictly adhered to, we will fully understand the need for us to be compassionate to one another for none is an island. This is indeed what the poet, the past, and the future actively entails.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Achebe, C. Novelist as a Teacher
- [2]. Agovi, K. E. (1990). *The African Writer and the Phenomenon of the Nation States in Africa*. UFAHAMU.
- [3]. Airoboman, F. A (2018). On the Philosophical Relevance of the Past and the Future Role of History. *LWATI. A Journal of Contemporary Research UAS* 5(3) 55-74.
- [4]. Ajayi, A. T. and Buhari, L. O. (2014). Methods of Conflicts Resolution in African Traditional Society. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal Ethiopia African Research Review*: 8 (2) Serial No. 33.
- [5]. Babukar, A. Bartolomeo, A. (2016). Literature Social Role and Artist accountability. *Global Journal of Arts and Social Science Education*.
- [6]. Babukar, A., and Bartolomeo, A. (2016). Literature Social Role and Artists' Accountability. *Global Journal of Arts and Social Science Education*.
- [7]. Bello, I and Onyeiwu, L. (2018). Broken Childhood and Counter – Vengeance in Amma Darko's Faceless. *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria (J.LSN)*.
- [8]. Covey, R. (2004). *The 8th Habit from Effectiveness to Greatness*. London: Simon & Schuster Ltd.
- [9]. Duham, R. (2015). *The Relationship between Literature and Society: Language in India*. www.languageindia.com.ISSN 190-2940 Vol.15.
- [10]. Idegwu C. C. (2021). Man and His Quest: A Study of Sam Ukala's Akpakaland and Break a Boil. *Journal of Languages and Literature (KJLL)* Vol. 2
- [11]. Idegwu C. C. (2022). The playwright and Conflict Resolution: A Critical Perspective on Ahmed Yerima's The Angel, *Clarep Journal of English and Literature (CJELL)* Vol. 4 /2022.
- [12]. Lindfors (1992). *Armah Histories ed. Derek Wright Critical Perspectives in Ayi Kwei Armah: The Continents Press* 1992.
- [13]. Mitias M. H. Universal (1995). and Meaning of History: Significance of the question of meaning,. *Dialogue and Universalism* 5.(1) 103 – 113.
- [14]. Mohamud, I (2021). The Novelist and the Kannywood Film Industry: Aliyu Kamal's Hausa Girl as the Focus. *Dutsin-Ma Journal of English and Literature (DUJELL)*
- [15]. Obi, S. (2005). *Tears in a Basket*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- [16]. Ogbeide V. O. (2018). of Traumatized Children and Bent Arrows in Darko's Faceless and Unique's Night Dancer. *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria (JLSN)*.

- [17]. Okam, H. H. (1991). *The Novelist as Historian: Yambo Omologuem's Le Devior de Violence Visited* ed. Chide Ikone, Emelia Oko, Peter Onwudinjo African Literature and African Historical Experience ed. Chidi Peter Onwudijo. Heinemann Educational Books Nigerian Plc.
- [18]. Okpan O.P. and Isama E. N. (2020). The African play as a societal mirror: A study of Frank Ogodo Obeche's Harvest of Corruption. *Humanities today* 4(11).
- [19]. Onwudinjo, P. (1991). *African Literature and African Historical Experiences* ed. Chidi Ikonne, Emelia Oko and Peter Onwudinjo. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigerian Plc.
- [20]. Seligman, M. E. P., Rauton, P, Banmeister, R. F. and Sripada, C (2013). Navigating into the Future or Driven by the past. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8 (2) 119 – 141. GPS Association of Psychological Science.
- [21]. Udofia, J, (2012). Social Realism in the African Novel: South African and East African Cases: LWATI; *A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 9 (3) 136-144. ISSN 1813 – 2227 UAS.