Psychoanalysis: Self-Writings and Primordial Images in African Poetry

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Abstract

This paper attempt to investigate self-writings and primordial images in African poetic works. The human psyche is undoubtedly the storehouse of lots of repressed materials as Sigmund Freud rightly established in his study on psychoanalysis. These psychic contents or experiences trapped in the reservoir could be pleasant or traumatizing. However, through creative writings especially autobiographies some of these experiences are brought to conscious awareness of readers. In this study, therefore, the poetry of Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka will be critically examined to view how these early poetry giants portray their personal experiences through their artistic productions and the archetypal elements stored in them. The poems are carefully selected based on their relevance to the thematic discourse and analyzed qualitatively. They include Okara's "The Call of the River Nun", Okigbo's "Mother Idoto" and Soyinka's "Processions I-Hanging Day." The study adopted the psychoanalytic approach that focuses on the author's psyche and characters' motivations and thoughts which influence their actions as represented in the literary works. Attempt will also be made to review Carl Jung's concept of "subconscious" and "primordial images" in relation to the textual analysis. The study found that autobiographical works such as the poetry help to uncover the psychic contents, conflicts, nostalgic reflections and experiences of poets. Also, the narrative poems contain primordial images and posttraumatic disorders that will be beneficial to readers in socio-cultural settings.

Keywords: Psyche, poetry, primordial, autobiographies, unconscious

Introduction

Scholars have always seen the need to underpin their discourse with psychoanalytic theory for better understanding and interpretation. As a psychological approach, it is applicable

to various fields of study to investigate dysfunctional thoughts, unwanted behaviours and feelings among individuals in a particular society. Originally the aim of psychoanalysis is to effect a cure by uncovering unconscious conflicts during analysis by "helping the patient to deal with them rationally. This should release the patient from neurotic disorders and lead to a fundamental personality change" (Cave, 1999:32). Today, the theory is being applied to sociology, law, medicine, literature, and so on. The study of the human psyche has remained a focal point of discourse since Sigmund Freud introduced the practice of psychoanalysis in the nineteenth century. Jarra (2018:222) describes psychoanalysis as "a science that concerns itself with the interaction between the unconscious and conscious." In the opinion of Anugrah (2021:11), "psychoanalysis is a branch of science developed by Sigmund Freud and his followers as a study of human psychological functions and behaviours." The scholar asserts that "Freud's understanding of the mind is based on methods of interpretation, introspection, and clinical observation, and is focused on resolving subconscious conflicts, mental tensions, and other psychic disorders." Observation, interviews, experiments, case studies and so on are psychological methods of exploring the psyche of individuals in order to obtain relevant information.

On the significance of psychoanalytic approach to literary works, Rezaei and Seyyedrezaei (2013:1910) posit that "the theories and practice of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) provide the foundation for psychoanalytic criticism in literature. He lays the foundation for a model of how our minds operate. Hidden from the workings of the conscious mind, the unconscious, he believes, plays a large part in how we act, think, and feel" The scholar in his study divided the topographical structure of the mind into three layers: the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious mind. The Conscious refers to the layer of the psyche that deals with awareness of our actions, environment and behaviours. The preconscious is the part of the mind that enables us to recollect events or actions that happened a few moments again. The unconscious mind is the reservoir of repressed images, feelings and events that one experienced right from childhood till maturity. According to Tyson (2006:12), "the unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them." The experience of every individual from childhood goes straight into the unconscious mind even though the child is still tender. For instance, unpleasant memories of rape, ghastly accidents, robbery attacks, bullies, domestic violence with parents and even sexual acts, to mention a few, are all repressed into the unconscious layer of the human mind. However, these repressed experiences are activated whenever similar incidents occur or the victim has the impulse of reoccurrence around him or her. In affirming the foregoing, Tyson (2006:12) states that, "the unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the repression, the

expunging from the consciousness, of these unhappy psychological events." In the same vein, Kumari (2016:34) submits that; "The conscious part of the brain is like the tip of an iceberg which could be seen and a person is aware of his conscious minds such as feelings, emotions, dreams, fantasies, thoughts, and memories whereas the unconscious is hidden and unknown, a person is not aware of his personality in this part. Pre-conscious is not the present awareness but it is accessible." While expatiating the unconscious part of the Freudian topographical model, the scholar states that, "Unconscious is hidden for the benefit of an organism because it can trigger an anxiety attack and a person could not bear to look upon them such as memories and emotions related to trauma...we get the motivation from the unconscious part of the brain" (Kumari, 2016:35). This implies that the motivations writers required for creativity are repressed in the unconscious layer of the human mind. However, the need to subliminally utilize such latent contents and improve their psychological wellbeing informed their artistic writings.

In corroborating the foregoing, Nebolisa (2011:20) states that "Freud's most important contributions to the study of the psyche are the theory of repression." His research further reveals that "the unconscious mind is repository of the repressed desires, feelings, memories, wishes and instructed drives; many of which have to do with sexuality and violence." In advancing the submission of Nebolisa on the function of the unconscious mind, Bhuvaneswari (2017:49-50) notes that:

> the human beings either willingly or unwillingly repress some of their tendencies to pleasure, pain, repentance, gratification, etc. the state of repression, being between preconscious and unconscious state, functions like a storehouse, of all the unfulfilled desires or traumatic past events and experiences. The reflections of this storehouse have a powerful influence on all the human action.

Bhuvaneswari's view affirmed the earlier submission that every experience of individuals is repressed into the unconscious mind awaiting the triggers that would make the victims of such repressions response either positively or negatively depending on the psychic contents or repressed materials. The scholar through his research found that, "when the feelings of repression become excessive, they make the people sick. And sometimes the human beings try to transform the repressed desires and feelings into much purer or idealized form through the practices of religion, noble and heroic deeds, the habits of writing and doing some other selfless things, regrets and uncontrollable emotions" (Bhuvaneswari, 2017:50). The above findings imply subliminal coping strategy which

individuals may adopt in society, by diverting their psychic pains or emotional disturbances into something economically viable and socially acceptable. People should be able to employ this coping mechanism and other useful ones to prevent violence and emotional depression. In consonance with the above, Buss and Shackford (1997:607) posit that all human behaviour is a product of mechanisms internal to the person, in conjunction with inputs that trigger the activation of those mechanisms." Apart from Sigmund Freud who carried out research on psychoanalytic theory, Carl Gustav Jung also explored this theoretical approach but from different perspective. His findings contain the concepts of "primordial images", "archetypes" and introduced "subconscious" to replace Freudian "Unconscious" as the reservoir of repressed experiences, events and images.

Carl Jung's study will also enrich the current work though his concepts are also related to those of Sigmund Freud. According to Gijo and George (2021:55), Carl Gustav Jung's reearch reveals that "archetypes are the contents of the collective unconscious that can be found across cultures. Archetypes are symbols, characters and motifs that stir a primary feeling in the mind of humans everywhere." The scholar further states that archetypes;

> are the situations, subjects and images that are recurrent throughout the cultures. Archetypal situations including rivalry between brothers, the longing for a father figure, country bumpkin coming to the city for the first time, the tension between different generations. Archetypal subjects include birth, love, war, eagle, ox, serpent, dove (55).

Apart from the situations, subjects and images identified as archetypes in the study of Gijo and George, there are also archetypal characters, symbols, myths, rituals, and so on. The archetypal elements are found in literature and they cut across various cultures of the world. It is worthy of note that archetypes are also present in non-fiction writings such as biographies, autobiographies and memoirs which shall be examined in this study.

Writings and the Author's Psyche

Every writer produces his artistic works based on imagination, perceptions, feelings, or observations in his socio-cultural settings. Such creative works could be factual or fictional depending on the intention of the writers. It is therefore essential at this point to x-ray the subgenres of biography, autobiography and memoir in relation to the concept of self-writings which is a cardinal point of this study. Biographies refer to life histories of people written by those who have factual information about them. The narratives containing the characters, settings, events and ideas are regarded as true even though there may be some

distortions in the work. Autobiographies are also considered as true life experiences of the central characters carefully and artistically written by themselves. They are usually written in the first person narrative technique to show that the narrator and protagonist are actively involved in the experience being recounted.

In literature, autobiographies are often classified as non-fictional works because the events, characters, and subject matter all reflect life experiences of the writer while still alive. Although there might be some distorted facts in the narratives, the writers try as much as possible to present the information in realistic manner. This implies that the characters in the artistic works, the setting and events must reflect a reasonable degree of verisimilitude. Gorbert, Hansen and Wolf (2021:2) view that, "Autobiographical approaches to represent and narrate the self poetically are located at the very centre of lyrical expression: whether in love poems, religious poetry, historiographic or epic poems, to name but a few, the poet is often intertwined with the text in an approach to formulate selfhood." This implies that there are autobiographical works which cut across every genre of literature; prose narratives, plays and poetry. Although autobiographies are most common in prose works, there appear to be scanty of such artistic productions in the areas of drama and poetry. The third subgenre of nonfiction is the memoir which is the recollection of personal experience which is of great significance to the writer who actively participated in the events being narrated or observed conscientiously for future documentation. The writers of memoirs are therefore engaging in self-writing because they occupy the central stage of their creative works.

The study conducted by Shahwan (2017:2) revealed that "the literary text is the symptom of the author; the work of literature reveals unconscious desires and repressed wishes that can be found in many forms in a text, characters, symbols as well as offensive and defensive writings and can be even in the sort of conflict in the story and the choice of the subject matter." The scholar further states that;

> A literary text is a reflection of suppressed desire and wishes. Freud suggests three levels of consciousness- "unconscious", the part of the mind that we are not aware of and which may possess the suppressed wishes, desires and trauma or shock; the pre-conscious mind that reserves all the information that we are not aware of but that can be recalled; and, "conscious" which reveals the current state of awareness.

Apart from the genres of drama and prose fiction where the Freudian theoretical approach are applied, literary critics also employ Psychoanalytic theory to foreground their discourse during their poetry analysis. On the application of this theory to literary texts, Hamidreza (2012: 49) asserts that "the psychoanalytic literary critics often begin with a psychological theory, developed by a psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychoanalyst outside of the field of literature, of how and why the characters in a literary work behave as they do and the critics apply the theory as a criterion to elucidate, interpret, and evaluate a literary work." The scholar argues that;

> a literary work is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind or the characters of the text. As a result, the work of literature must then be dealt with as a dream; that is, the critic needs to apply psychoanalytic theories to the text to comprehend the hidden motivation, repressed desires, and wishes of either the author or the characters that the text presents (49).

The above submission reveals that the psyche of writers like other humans in society contain experiences, images or symbols that can be explored through their creative works. Although some of the experiences contained in their writings were imaginative, most of them were based on physical observations. In this paper, therefore, we shall examine the psychoanalytical discourse of self-writings and primordial images in the poetry of Nigerian writers. Apart from the foregoing, the study will focus on the following specific objectives: the interface between psychology and autobiography, the concept of primordial images and primordial elements in the selected poems.

The poems of Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka shall be analyzed using the Freudian theoretical approach. Christopher Okigbo was a contemporary of Chinua Achebe, J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka at the University College, Ibadan now the University of Ibadan. He was a great writer until his death during the Nigeria Civil War (1967-1970). He published three poetry collections include Heavensgate (1962), Limits (1964), Silences (1965) and Labyrinths, with Path of Thunder (1971). Wole Soyinka is among the early African writers whose artistic works spread across the three genres of literature. His popular poetry collections include *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967), *A Big Airplane Crashed into the Earth* (1969), A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972), *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1990), *Early Poems* (1997), *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* (2002).

In this paper, however, we shall focus on Gabriel Okara's "The Call of the River Nun", Christopher Okigbo's "Mother Idoto" and Wole Soyinka's "Processions I- Hanging Day" will be examined with a view to presenting primordial images contained in the selected Nigerian poems. Apart from the forgoing, it is worthy of note that the poetry of these writers are characterized with elements of African verbal and non-verbal folklores which are still been transferred to successive generations till date. In affirming the above view, Odey and Ogar (2021:157) states that the oral rendition "has remained a pivotal point where contemporary African writers source for traditional verbal resources to enhance their creativity. Apart from serving as a template for identification of "Africanness" in their creative works, it portends a great deal of inspiration for contemporary African writers.

Methodology

This study is library-based research with secondary materials gathered from the internet for literature review and also to buttress the views of the authors. Some poems published by early Nigerian writers are carefully selected based on their relevance to the thematic discourse and analyzed qualitatively. They include Gabriel Okara's "The Call of the River Nun", Christopher Okigbo's "Mother Idoto" and Wole Soyinka's "Processions I- Hanging Day"

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the psychoanalytic approach that focuses on the author's psyche and characters' motivations and thoughts which influence their actions as represented in the literary works. This theory is an offshoot of Psychology which was introduced by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist. Though this theoretical model suffered strong criticism from scholars initially, according to Bhuvaneswari (2017:49), "the techniques of psychoanalysis, which later influenced a large variety of disciplines. Psychoanalysis is primarily a clinical method for treating the diseases and disorders pertaining to psychopathology through the means of a dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst" (49). This theory is not only applied in the medical sciences, the study of literature also finds it beneficial. Njogu (2019:23) acknowledged (Davies: 1994:371) who notes that "Freudians have over the years subjected literature to psychoanalysis. By applying psychoanalysis to literary criticism it has been possible to interpret many aspects of modern culture that appear discordant and fragmented." According to Bhuvaneswari (2017:49):

> the human beings either willingly or unwillingly repress some of their tendencies to pleasure, pain, repentance, gratification, etc., The state of repression, being between preconscious and unconscious

> state, functions like a storehouse of all the unfulfilled desires or traumatic past events and experiences. The reflections of this storehouse have a powerful influence on all the human actions" (49).

Among the theories of Freudian psychoanalysis is the relationship between Neurosis and Creativity and according to Devardhi (2009:438), this "theory applies more to the author than the characters in the literary works. Freud believed that artists, poets, novelists, dramatists, etc., use their creativity as a sort of therapy. They release their neurotic tension through creative work. Such creative work provides us insights into the nature of reality and the people who exist in it."
The researcher maintains that:

> psychoanalyzing a literary text gives us a profound understanding of the 'unconscious' of the author which is supported by Freud's first theory "Primacy of the Unconscious." One or all of these five Freudian concepts can be deployed in the study of characters and their actions in a literary text, and at the same time provides us with a thorough understanding of the nature of man in general (438).

Interestingly, "the concepts of psychoanalysis can be used with reference to the narrative or poetic structure, thus offering us a method or theory of psychoanalytic literary criticism" (438). Carl Jung's study on psychoanalytic theory introduced the concept of "subconscious" and "primordial images" which shall form part of our poetry analysis. He describes primordial images as synonymous with archetypes, which are elements that reoccur in literature and cut across all cultures. Archetypal elements or primordial images are found in drama, novels and poetry especially those that are written to document and project the African custom and traditions.

Scholars have carried out studies in the area of Nigerian poetry, especially the early writers. However, no significant works have been done on Psychoanalysis, Autobiographies and primordial images in Nigerian poetry. For instance, the study by Odey and Ogar (2021:157) show that "Nigerian poetry is traceable to oral renditions in various Nigerian languages where poetry is part and parcel of the indigenous people's festivals, rites of passage, masquerade cultures, dance, funerals, speech patterns, folklores, rituals worship and so on". The researchers have also noted that, "One major impulse of pioneer poets was the desire to portray African life, values and customs in order to refute

centuries of vilification, denigration and misrepresentation by the Europeans. They strove to be assertive in fighting against the injustice of colonialism and liberation of the African intellectually and politically" (Odey and Ogar, 2021:157). The study of Nigerian poetry serves various purposes in socio-cultural settings because "through oral traditions, people are given information, ideas, opinions, feelings, and predictions are communicated. They are sources of inspirations for contemporary authors (Ogundokun, 2018:328).

African poets have always nostalgically reflect on their past experiences for documentation and evaluation. They have demonstrated through their writings that the human mind is actually the reservoir of repressed events, images and feelings and so they express these through the autobiographical form. In their narrative poetry, they capture what Carl Jung refers to as "primordial images" which is synonymous with archetype in literature. The poetry of Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka have been selected for analysis in this paper.

Self-Writings in Nigerian Poetry

The early Nigerian poets like their counterparts in other African societies used their works as instruments to redeem, preserve and project African culture and her identity to the outside world. Through poetry also, Nigerian nationalists including Dennis Osadebey, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macauley and so on, agitated for political independence which was gained in October 1, 1960. The second generation poets that include Gabriel Okara, John Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, and Christopher Okigbo focused on the subjects of culture, beliefs system, history, and anti-colonialism, to mention a few. Apart from writing about the Nigerian society, these poets imaginatively write about their personal experiences as a strategy to alleviate their psychological sufferings and also educate Nigerians about their rich cultural heritage. These self-writings distinctively contain primordial images which required scholarly attention in this study.

Gabriel Okara is among the early Nigerian poets whose artistic works are encapsulated by the oral traditions and cosmology of the Africans. His poetry collection titled, *The Fisherman's Invocation* was published in 1978. In his poem, "The Call of the River Nun", the poet demonstrated his creative and imaginative ingenuity by portraying vividly River Nun, a natural river that flows from a certain source to unknown destination and also compares this same river to his own life. He addresses the river, thus: I hear your call!/I hear it far away;/I hear it break the circle/of these crunching hills (Line 1-4). The poet nostalgically reflects on the river where he used to swims, describing its geographical location and the echoes produced by the waves as it come into contact with the hills. He

imaginatively expresses the nature of the river and its enchantment to him and other creatures. His words:

I want to view your face
again and feel your cold
embrace; or at your brim
to set myself and
inhale your breath; or
Like the trees, to watch
my mirrored self unfold
and span my days with
song from the lips of dawn.

The poet's repression of experiences both positive and negative into the memory starts from childhood till maturity. In the above lines, the expressions, "and span my days with/song from the lips of dawn" captures the childhood memories of the poet as he used to visit the river. He tries to evoke the days of innocence and though he has now experienced much in life. Through this creative work, critics and readers will be able to explore the psyche of the poet and interprets his present emotional feelings in relation to the subject matter. In responding to the role of the critics in this regards, Jegede (2003:7) notes that "the critic tries to use the work to uncover the psychology of its creator and from there, use any insight that is gained to shed fresh light on the work."

To Okara, the river offers him invitation whenever he hears the "lapping" of the water, and the beautiful reflection of the river, "silver-surfaced flow" together with the "river birds" activate latent contents or stimulate pleasant memories and alleviate psychic pains of the poet. He further recollects:

I hear your lapping call!
I hear it coming through;
invoking the ghost of a child
listening, where river birds hail
your silver-surfaced flow.

The call of the river symbolizes the archetype of inevitable death of the poet as he grows old. In some traditional societies, life is perceived as a voyage that must be completed when one gets to the shores. Everyone paddles a symbolic canoe and fate determines our direction and moment of our arrival. The poet states:

My river's calling too!
Its ceaseless flow impels
My found ring canoe down
Its inevitable course.
And each dying year
Brings near the sea-bird call,
The final call that
Stills the crested waves
And breaks in two the curtain
Of silence of my upturned canoe.

The poet through the above lines further reveals that as each year comes to an end, his departure time from this physical world draws closer. Every physical health problems and psychological challenges facing individuals in life terminate with the arrival of the canoe of death.

O incomprehensible God!
Shall my pilot be
My inborn stars to that
Final call to Thee
O my river's complex course?

In the poem, there are several primordial elements which include: river, death, canoe, stars, ghost, river birds, and so on. These are archetypal images that cut across every culture and the poet through this artistic work resolved to bring them to the fore for reader to appraise. They are both denotative and connotative in the poetic work. For instance, the "river" denotes the physical place where the poet used to visit and probably take his bath while it connotes the journey towards death which is inevitable. The river voyage requires a canoe which is another symbol of life that must berth someday.

In Christopher Okigbo's "The passage", the poet pleads earnestly to be reconnected to his cultural roots having disconnected himself several for years. He strays into the wilderness of western culture and religion until he realizes himself and humbly approaches Mother Idoto, the water goddess for forgiveness and reconciliation. Urama and Igwebuike (2018:128) note that "Okigbo presenting his search of his primordial self in his poems depicts that he is aware of his personal unconscious, which is a reflection of his personal experiences." The poem, "Mother Idoto" begins with the poets pleading for forgiveness:

BEFORE YOU, mother Idoto,
naked I stand;
before your watery presence,
a prodigal

The poet captures "*Mother Idoto*", a river goddess that he abandoned initially to embrace Western culture and Christianity but his appearance "*on barefoot*" depicts his absolute humility before the "*watery presence*", the new heaven of the water goddesss called Mother Idoto. The poet likens himself to "*a prodigal*" alluding to the Biblical story of the prodigal son as contained in the lines above. But he has demonstrated his humility and accepted the supremacy of the water goddess, thus:

leaning on an oilbean,
lost in your legend.
Under your power wait I
on barefoot,
watchman for the watchword
at *Heavensgate*;

In the above lines, the *"oilbean*" – a totem, legend or sacred place for the spirits of children where earthly mothers come to wait for their children. The poet is likened to kindred spirits of little children waiting for their mothers to accept them. *Oilbean* trees are archetypal images that are associated with village gods and goddesses. The poet seeks a reunion with "Mother Idoto" after abandoning her for Christian religion, hence; "out of the depths my cry:/give ear and hearken…"

DARK WATERS of the beginning.
RAYS, violet and short, piercing the gloom,
foreshadow the fire that is dreamed of.
Rainbow on far side, arched like boa bent to kill,
foreshadows the rain that is dreamed of.

The poet presents the image of "*DARK WATERS*" to make reference to Noah and the flood in the beginning as recorded in the Holy Bible. He captures the "*RAYS*" of light (violet and short) that pierce the darkness (gloom); depicts vision and prophecy of fire and destruction. Like the "*Rainbow*" that alludes to the time of Noah in the Old Testament. All these depict vision and prophecy of Noah's Ark, the flood and death. There is also the image of "*the orangery*" referring to an orange grove or orchard scene where the poet now imagines himself. The poet-persona states;

Me to the orangery
solitude invites,
a wagtail to tell
the tangled-wood-tale;
a sunbird, to mourn
a mother on a spray.

Apart from the "sunbird" and "young bird" that represent the poet, "*a wagtail*" also depicts the poet as a solitary bird. He has, "*tangled-wood-tale*" referring to a difficult tale to tell; the poet is lamenting his abandonment of his tradition, represented by "Mother Idoto." In the poem, "*Rain and sun in single combat"* depicts conflict between traditional and foreign cultures*:*

Rain and sun in single combat;
on one leg standing,
in silence at the passage,
the young bird at the passage.

The poet captures "*SILENCE FACES*", people who are calm and orderly, waiting to perform certain rituals at "*crossroads.*" In traditional settings, this is usually a scene of religious sacrifices where spirits of various kinds are expected to converge. This is presented in the lines:

SILENCE FACES at crossroads:
festivity in black…

Faces of black like long black
column of ants,

behind the bell tower,
into the hot garden
where all roads meet:
festivity in black…

In the poem is the character of "*Anna*" – this refers to the poet's late mother who according to Okigbo holds the knobs of the church door that depicts he "hinges" in the poem: "O Anna at the knobs of the panel oblong,/hear us at crossroads at the great hinges." Also thrown-up from the poet's psyche is "*the bell tower*" which is a Christian church bell used by the present generation. Africans hold meetings (festivity in black) either "behind the

bell tower" or "the hot garden/where all roads meet." The images that are evident in this poem attest to the fact that the poet is conversant with his custom and traditions, beliefs system, rituals and so on, even though he followed the Western religion earlier in his life. In corroborating the foregoing, Abram (1981:230) states that, "A literary work reflects personality characteristics, life experiences, and psychological dynamics of the author." In advancing his submission, the scholar affirms that "the writing of literary works is affected by the lives and experiences of their authors. This, however, is not to assume that all works are biographical; rather, all works are certainly influenced by the life experience of the writer" (231). Okigbo's poetry, thus reveals his personal journey for reconciliation, and acceptance into the watery heaven of Mother Idoto.

Okigbo further presents the "*cornfields*" that is associated with traditional rural landscape where the wind blows the crops. He compares the natural music of the "cornfields" to that of "the pipe organs" in the Christian church. Again, the poet tries to blend the two worlds in the poem (the traditional and the Christianity). The image of "*the wind players*" represents the producers of music (hymns) in the church. The lines read:

where the players of loft pipe organs
rehearse old lovely fragments, alone –

strains of pressed orange leaves on pages,
bleach of the light of years held in leather:
For we are listening in cornfields
among the windplayers,
listening to the wind leaning over
its loveliest fragment…

In corroborating the above poem Urama and Igwebuike (2018:127) acknowledged Dieke (2010) who notes that "in Labyrinths, Okigbo explores the subliminal interior of his being, searching for the eternal unconscious images with which to assuage his violently sundered feelings as he gropes his way through the darkened labyrinth of modern Nigeria caught in the suffocating cobweb of cultural dialectics." The archetypal elements in Okigbo's "Mother Idoto" are numerous and they include symbols, characters, themes, images, rituals, settings, myths, and so on.

Wole Soyinka's "Processions I" presents his personal prison experience during the Nigerian-Biafran War that spanned from 1967 to 1970. The poem presents primordial themes and images of death, ritual sacrifices, characters, and so on. The first stanza

captures the sadistic memories of prisoners being led to the gallows. Their journey begins from the "hollow earth" with the poet recounting their movement through their "echoes footsteps of the grave procession" while peeping through "sunspots" in the wall of the cell. This stanza reads:

> Hanging day. A hollow earth
> Echoes footsteps of the grave procession
> Walls in sunspots
> Lean to shadows of the shortening morn (Lines 1-4).

Soyinka also recorded the scene of the inmates offering prayers and probably rendering hymns or choruses at night before going to sleep. The poem reads: "Behold, an eyepath lushly blue./The wall of prayer has taken refuge/In a peace of blindness, closed/Its grey recessive steps. Fretful limbs." The detainees, though hopeless in their predicaments, express frightful looks which the poet describes as "conjure up a drawbridge." Due to the fear of unlawful arrest, detention and execution with trial, people never confront the dictatorial government but their anxieties are expressed through their eyes. This is captured in the poem, thus: "Withdraw, as all the living world/Belie their absence in a feel of eyes" (lines 13-14). Though the poet is imprisoned, he has spiritually migrated from the isolated confinement, prevented from the world outside, hence the image of the "shuttered windows" in the poem. His soul has wandered or transmigrated to the venue of the ritual rites of the hanging, of the five political detainees. This stanza reads: "Barred and secret in the empty home/Of shuttered windows. I know the heart/Has journeyed far from present." Apart from other genres of literature which could be used to convey thoughts, experience and feelings to reader, the poet goes poetical infusing primordial images into his personal observations and emotional feelings in the prison. His artistically imaginative writing, however, contains archetypal elements such as images, symbols, thematic discourse that will be of great interest to the reader. In the poem, for instance, the poet lamentably recollects the ritual of execution as follows;

> Tread. Drop. Dread Drop. Dead. (Line 18)
> What may I tell you? What reveal?
> I who before them peered unseen
> Who stood one-legged on the untrodden
> Verge –lest I should not return. (Lines 19-22)

Also recollected in the isolated confinement is the narrative of the five detainees who were gruesomely executed by hanging. It was a horrible experience that made the speaker feel

hopeless, anxious and downcast. In a poetic manner, Soyinka reveals his psychic and emotional pains while in incarceration. He visualized the murdered prisoners dangling and generating sounds even though they were dead.

> That I received them? That I
> Wheeled above and flew beneath them
> And brought them on their way
> And came to mine, even to the edge
> Of the unspeakable encirclement?
> What may I tell you of the five
> Bell-ringers on the ropes to chimes
> Of silence? (lines 23-30)

The poem is obviously a mental recording of confinement reminiscence. He poetically recounts the process of execution of the political detainees and condemns the draconian law of the country that promotes capital punishment without recourse to the dignity and cruel manner of its execution. The reads further, thus: "What tell you of rigours of the law?/From watchtowers on stunted walls,/Raised to stay a siege of darkness/What whisper to their football thunders/Vanishing to shrouds of sunlight?" There is injustice in the Nigerian society since the military juntas often crush every form of opposition, ordered indiscriminate arrest, detention and execution of prisoners. This is evident in the lines: "Let no man speak of justice, guilt./Far away, blood-stained in their/Tens of thousands, hands that damned/These wretches to the pit triumph/But here, alone the solitary deed" (Lines 36- 40). From the above, poet-persona captures the execution of prisoners beginning with their journey from the cell to their graves but the poet remains in his isolated confinement awaiting endlessly for the day designed fatefully for his own murder by hanging.

Some writings are motivated based on observations made by writers in their society. Writers may write about themselves and so their works reveal their personal challenges or experiences in life whether pleasant or otherwise. While some writings mirror the society of the authors, others reflect their own psychological problems in socio-cultural settings. In view of the above, Al-Dmour (2019:48) states that, "we can read literature by applying the methods of psychoanalysis both to literary characters and their authors. This could be treating the work like a dream and interpreting the content to uncover the hidden meaning, fulfilled through a close analysis of the language and symbolism." Soyinka's "Procession 1-Hanging Day" like the other poems examined earlier is a true reflection of his personal traumatic experience in isolated prison during the Nigerian Civil War. This affirms the fact that "the unconscious mind is the storehouse for hidden desires, emotions,

ambitions, and fears" (Bressler, 1999:90). The poet carefully and imaginatively observed the activities in the prison and artistically express them to alleviate his pent-up emotions and also to educate the public about the cruel and uncivilized manner of executing fellow citizens.

Conclusion

The study found that artistic works such as the poetry help to uncover the psychic contents, conflicts, nostalgic reflections and experiences of poets. Self-narrative poems or writings such as Okara's "The Call of the River Nun", Okigbo's "Mother Idoto" and Soyinka's "Procession 1- Hanging Day" all contain primordial images and posttraumatic experiences that require critical study. The findings have revealed that the unconscious mind which is the storehouse of repressions holds several mixed experiences that writers express through their artistic productions. Such writings are therefore channels of purging their psychic and emotional pains.

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