Third-Generation Nigerian Poetry as Recreation of Nigeria's Social and Political Fabric

Solomon Awuzie

Edo State University, Nigeria

Introduction

Several academic works have erroneously argued that third-generation Nigerian poetry ended in 1999. The most reputable of these is Ode Ogede's *Nigeria's Third Generation Literature* (2023) that can be described as one of the finest contributions on third-generation Nigerian literature after Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton's article in the *English in Africa* Special Issue on third-generation Nigerian literature (2003) and Sule Egya's impressive article on third-generation Nigerian poetry titled "Historicity, Power, Dissidence: The Third generation Poets and Military Oppression in Nigeria" (2012). Ogede's book erroneously argued that third-generation Nigerian literature, which included poetry, emerged between the late 1980s and the early 1990s – signaling its end in 1999. Not only does Ogede get his dating wrong when he wrote "early 1990s," but also the book fails to consider the Nigerian poetry published between 2000 and the present as being part of third-generation Nigerian literature. This is happening despite the fact that some members of the same group of poets produced poetry published between 1988 and 1999, as well as between 2000 and the present. Sule Egya describes this group of poets as connected by birth, comradeship and circumstances and "most importantly by the personal" and collective will to protest against military despotism so as to pull it down in 1999 and to wield their poetry as a cultural tool to campaign against poor leadership in the Nigerian civilian administration. However, the present writer in his article titled "Mirroring the Society, Mirroring its Hospital: Hyginus Ekwuazi's Poetry and the Challenge of Nation Building" (2019) offered a different periodization as described above, dividing third-generation Nigerian poetry into two parts. The article fills a gap by discussing the kind of poetry that was produced during these times and how such a proliferation of poetic works impacted the said generations.

Many scholars of third-generation Nigerian poetry have attributed some reasons for this kind of proliferation. In his article titled, "Nomadic Pastoralism and Social Conflict in the Third Generation Nigerian poetry," Solomon Awuzie connects the proliferation of third-generation Nigerian poetry to the recent increase in the chaotic Nigerian socio-political landscape (58). Pius Adesanmi was also of the view that Nigeria has not been able to wriggle itself out of its chaotic socio-political experience

(27); hence the need for the poets to produce more poetry. Charles Nnolim, on the other hand, explains that third-generation Nigerian poetry reflects "a people adrift, hedonistic, cowed finally by the long incursion of the military in the body politic" (228). Nnolim further observes that third-generation Nigerian poetry lacked a "clear defined thematic focus" (228) and describes the society of the third generation as "a society adrift and a people lost in the imbecilities of futile optimism, hoping that materialism and the pursuit of dirty lucre will compensate for the loss of the nation's soul" (230). According to Puis Adesanmi, even though third-generation Nigerian poetry is the product of a chaotic and unsafe country, it has been able to introduce the "aesthetic of pain" into the Nigerian literary space: "With the Nigerian state making the country unsafe even for a generation as young as ours, we had no option but evolve what I will refer to as aesthetic of pain" (27). What Adesanmi meant is that third-generation Nigerian poetry is determined to be as acerbic as possible. It is a poetry that drives itself so hard as "to discover or create forms of expression that are strong enough to bear the burden of the felt pain, which had been produced by a sense of betrayal and anguish" (Abdul Raheem, 58). However, the aim of this article is to show that, unlike the argument in e.g. Ode Ogede's *Nigeria's Third Generation Literature*, third-generation Nigerian poetry can be argued to range from 1988 to the present.

The classification into two parts is reflected in several collections of poetry. The first part, which falls between 1988 and 1999 (Awuzie 82), chronicles the activities of the military dictatorship; it is a period in which military oppression is the "dominant condition of production" of the poetry. In this period, poetry played an important "role in the cultural struggle to challenge military despotism" (Egya, 425) and some of the poetry produced tools of cultural protest during this time which includes but is not limited to Ezenwa-Ohaeto's and Remi Raji's poetry. The second part, which ranges between 2000 and the present, it concerns itself with the activities of corrupt politicians and the deplorable state of the country. During this period, poetry played a role as a cultural tool to campaign against corrupt civilian leadership as well as the collapse of national values. Some of the poetry that has been wielded as a weapon of protest and vigorous campaign against faulty leadership and deplorable life conditions includes but is not limited to Barth Akpah's and Hyginus Ekwuazi's poetry. I aim to show why the themes treated both in the early and the later parts of third- generation Nigerian poetry are apt, different and important to that generation, and therefore to counter one of Nnolim's postulations. Another objective of this article is to show the conditions that have caused third-generation Nigerian poetry to endure beyond 1999.

Experience and Agency in Third-Generation Poetry

Nigerian poetry has always been used to engage issues of Nigerian national life. Poetry was first used to contest the European myth of African sub-humanity. Nigerian poetry has always been there in the country's national life to act as a reality check and to engage with the deplorable state of the country. Poetry was also the lone voice during times of military dictatorship, and the Nigerian Civil War. During the war, it was used as a medium to condemn the war as well as to show its futility. Third-generation poetry is an offshoot of this tradition of early poetry. Unlike Nigerian poetry that has come to stay as social commentary, third-generation Nigerian poetry has distinguished itself as protest poetry. In 1999, it was wielded as a weapon of cultural protest and campaign to pull down military despotism in Nigerian body politics and in 2020, it was deployed as a cultural tool at EndSAR protests to end the obnoxious activities of the Police Department named SARs. Poetry was also used in 2023 to condemn the activities of killers who took delight in the killing of southern farmers and it has succeeded in nipping these activities in the bud. Third-generation poetry has remained an instrument of check and the weapon wielded by Nigerian poets against the enemies of the state. It has continued to be used to bemoan corrupt military practices as well as the atrocities perpetrated by politicians in Nigeria. Between 1988 and 1999, the poetry was used to engage military despotism in Nigerian body politics and between 2000 and the present, the poetry has engaged with issues of insecurity and corruption in the civilian administration. Part of what has made it possible for third-generation poetry to achieve this feat is the poets' commitment to nation-building.

The model for third-generation Nigerian poetry is the poetry of the first-generation poets such as Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka. Unlike their early poetry that was accused of obscurantism by Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike in their book, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1983), the poetry they produced in the later part of their careers was accessible to Nigerian readers and appealed to Nigerian sensibilities (Awuzie, Models, 3). In his "Path of Thunder" poems, Okigbo started by showing that poetry is best used for nation-building or as social poetry. But the poetry that truly charted a poetic path for third-generation Nigerian poetry is the poetic manifestoes produced by the second generation of Nigerian writers led by Niyi Osundare, Kole Omotoso, and Femi Osofisan (see James Currey, 52). According to this group of writers, Chinua Achebe's and Okigbo's generation has been "too concerned with explaining Africa to Europeans," and their writings should be concerned with Africa's "contemporary social and political reality and must explain Africa to Africans" (Currey, 52). Despite being announced as such in the 1988 anthology titled *Voices from the Fringe: An ANA Anthology of New Nigerian Poets*, edited by Harry Garuba, the poetry is not just about Nigerian contemporary social and political realities but it has been able to explain Nigeria to Nigerians (Garuba, 62). This

coincidence led many Nigerian scholars to conceive of many second-generation Nigerian writers, such as Odia Ofeimun, Niyi Osundare, Kole Omotoso, Femi Osofisan, Catherine Achelonu, Ada Ugah, and Tanure Ojaide as writers of the third generation when in fact third-generation Nigerian poets should include such poets as Ezenwa-Oheato, Remi Raji, Isidore Diala, Okey Ndibe, Teju Cole, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Barth Akpah, just to mention a few.

Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton refer to these poets as third-generation poets "who had acquired a creative identity" that is different from that of the previous generations (7) in their radicalism and strong desire for a better Nigeria. Also writing about them, Sule Egya argues that these radical poets perceive one another as being "engaged, by birth, by circumstances, by comradeship, and most importantly by personal will in a cultural struggle in the sense prescribed by their precursors" (426). In their special issue of *Research in African Literature*, Adesanmi and Dunton describe the poetry produced by third-generation Nigerian poets as poetic texts "born into the scopic regime of the postcolonial and the postmodern" (Adensami and Dunton, xii). They also describe it as "an order of knowledge" that is used to question the Nigerian subjecthood and agency that are overdetermined by the politics of identity. Ode Ogede is of the view that reading the literature of the third generation would not only take one through the literary trajectory of innovative writing but also through many stories about a failed nation-state as well as the awful realities of its people (1). Third-generation Nigerian poetry is a postcolonial text that is needed in a multicultural and transnational frame like Nigeria "but in which the tropes of Otherness and subalternity are being remapped by questioning erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender, and their representative symbologies" (see Awuzie, 82). In order to show the characteristics of the kind of poetry produced by the two segments of the third generation the poetry produced between 1988 and 1999 is discussed in the next subsection while the poetry produced between 2000 and today is analyzed in the second subsection.

Nigerian Military Experience and the Early Third-Generation Poetry

The early segment of third-generation Nigerian poetry started with the publication of the ANA Anthology of poetry in 1988 titled *Voices from the Fringe: An ANA Anthology of New Nigerian Poets*, edited by the then ANA (Association of Nigerian Authors) president Harry Garuba. In the preface of the Anthology, Garuba argues that the literary Renaissance that was burgeoning at that time gave the impetus to the publication of the Anthology – eventually, it was the publication of *Voices from the Fringe* that ushered in the third generation. The Anthology featured the contributions of many writers of the time, some of them well-known second-generation Nigerian playwrights and poets such as Phanuel Egejuru, Tunde Fatunde, Sam Ukala and Dubem Okafor. The majority of

the other writers and poets whose works were featured in the Anthology was initially unknown young Nigerian writers and poets who later became the voice of third-generation Nigerian poetry. Most of the poems published in that Anthology were about military corruption, despotism, and brutality. Of course, this does not mean that poetry on Nigerian military experiences started with the Anthology in 1988. As a matter of fact, the military came into Nigerian mainstream politics in 1966 and it was first featured in Okigbo's "Path of Thunder" poems and, later, in second-generation Nigerian poetry.

In *Voices from the Fringe: An ANA Anthology of New Nigerian Poets,* there were an unprecedented number of voices, most of them known poets. Their number later became their strength. Some of these poets later came to be identified as Uche Umez, Teju Cole, Ike Aro, Remi Raji, Ezenwa-Oheato, Constance Ozurumba, Isidore Diala, Okey Ndibe, Musa Idris Okpanachi, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Barth Akpah, Romeo Oregon, Chiedu Ezeanah, Nze James Chinoyeremu, Obare Gomba and Ebereonwu, just to mention a few of them. Uche Umez later published an individual collection titled *Dark through the Delta* (2004) in which he engaged with the atrocities of the military across the Nigerian Delta. His poetry expresses worries about the leadership of the military in Nigeria and claims that such leadership has pulled a blanket of darkness over the country. Isidore Diala's *The Lure of Ash* (1997) shows that the country at that time was in turmoil as a result of the activities of the Nigerian military. This kind of poetry also reminds the reader of the Nigerian Civil War and how the military were used to cause mayhem in the Nigerian South East. The poetry is hopeful that one day the Nigerian people, represented in the poetry through the metaphor of the elephant, will trample on the military. The persona hopes that leadership will soon return to the people. Ebereonwu later published four personal collections of poetry before his life was tragically cut short in the night of 6 April 2007. Among his popular collections featured *Suddenly God was Naked* (1995), *Cobweb Seduction* (1997), and *The Insomniac Dragon* (2000).

With these three collections, Ebereonwu also decries military rule. In *Suddenly God was Naked*, the military is portrayed as the Nigerian messiah that suddenly went mad. The people thought the military was their long-awaited messiah, who would lead the country to its promised land, but they were wrong. The maddened military instead plunged the country into murky waters and, in their wake, killed some of the people whom they were supposed to protect. *Cobwed Seduction* warns about the highhandedness of the Nigerian military personnel. During that time, nobody dared talk to them for fear of being killed. The collection describes the military through the symbol of cobweb that holds its prey captive after the spider seduced it. The prey approaches the cobweb thinking it is a playground, not knowing that it is a trap of death. Likewise, *The Insomniac Dragon* addresses successive Nigerian military despots since the inception of military rule in Nigeria. Remi Raji also published an important collection of poetry during that time. *A Harvest of*

Laughters, which also addresses the Nigerian military problem, is a satirical collection of poetry. It lampoons some of the corrupt practices of the military and condemns them. The collection also condemns the unnecessary killings of the Nigerian civilian population in Udi and in Zakibiam. The collection also blamed the military for the killing of Gale Giwa, the investigative journalist and co-founder of Nigerian News Watch. Raji's poetry notes that all these killings were fueled by greed and envy – two of the vices that characterized the Nigerian military regime. As a case in point, Ezenwa-Oheato also wielded his poetry as a weapon to fight against military rule in Nigeria and, together with the other poems published between 1988 and 1999, it was used to pull down military dictatorship in Nigeria.

Ezenwa-Oheato was one of the finest poets of that generation. He was the poet of many collections of poetry, which include *Bullets for Buntings* (1989), *The Chants of a Minstrel* (2003), *If to say I be Soja* (1998), *The Voice of the Night Masquerade* (1996) and *Song of a Traveller* (1986). All these poetry collections were used to address the experiences of the Nigerian people in relation to military rulership. *If to say I be Soja* (1998) was a collection of poetry written in Pidgin English. The collection of poetry condemns the military dictatorship because of the human right abuses and incessant killings that characterized the regime. The reason why Pidgin English was used in the collection was to reach a wider audience. *Bullets for Buntings* is also a collection of poetry that is critical of the military in Nigeria. In one of the poems contained in the collection titled "In a War Mood" the persona laments the fact that the country was at war during that time and served as evidence of the fact that the military dictators were mindless. The persona says that military dictators have "a murky mind in a murky body" (11). In the collection, Ezenwa-Ohaeto explains that "bullet" is used as a metaphor for the military and of "not only a troubled land but also of a troubled psyche" ("On My Mind," 1). It is therefore thanks to these collections of poetry that the Nigerian military regime was pulled down in 1999 and the civilian administration was ushered in.

Nigerian Civil Rule and the Later Third-Generation Poetry

The Nigerian military has been pulled down in 1999 following the volume of poetry produced about them. The third-generation Nigerian poetry that began to resurface in the year 2000 became critical of the civilian administration as well. The poetry describes the new civilian president as a military man in a civilian cloak. Among the third-generation Nigerian poets who dominated the poetic scene at that time were: Remi Raji, Ebereonwu, Musa Idris Okpanachi, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Uche Umez, Barth Akpah, Romeo Oregon, Chiedu Ezeanah, Nze James Chinoyeremu, and Obare Gomba, just to mention a few. This later generation concerns itself with the activities of corrupt politicians. This was the time Raji published

his collection titled *Webs of Remembrance* (2000). The collection remembers the agonies of the Nigerian military experience and hopes for the better. Musa Idris Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* (2012) also played a role as a cultural tool to campaign against the civilian leadership as well as the collapse of national values. The poetry describes politicians as "eaters of the living." According to Uche Umez(urike), the collection condemns the civilian administration for its inability to save the lives of Nigerians: "Due to the commonness of death in the land, the poet bemoans the fact that the graveyards are full" (141). Nze James Chinoyeremu's *The Shattered Pot and Other Poems* and Obare Gomba's *The Ascent Stone* are wielded as vigorous campaign tools against corrupt leadership and deplorable life conditions. Hyginus Ekwuazi also laments the Nigerian people's ordeal in a plentiful country in *Dawn into Moon Light* (2008) and *The Monkey's Eye* (2009).

Barth Akpah's *Land of Tales* (2019) posits that Nigeria is a place where something dreadful always happens. In his poetry, Akpah decries the corruption in the Nigerian political landscape as well as the recurrent power cuts. The water supply system, the high cost of fuel, and the wide-spread inefficiency are disdainfully evoked as problems that need urgent attention. The persona also condemns the level of suffering in the country; leaders are even made to know that the people are aware of this and have accepted the reality of the state of their country. This is evident in the following lines:

> Our taps run dry with every finger at the water works pointing at the sky: the rains, they say, the rains have been torrential. (19)
> […] I watch them, the people of the city I watch them as they come and go, face (sic) on which any smile is as furtive as a guilty ghost fleeing cockcrow. (20)

In order to present this situation as an everyday affair, serious issues are represented with little or no seriousness. Hyginus Ekwuazi's *Love Apart* draws heavily from the reality of the country. For instance, politicians are depicted as always venturing into idiotic and senseless situations. This is expressed through the use of symbolic expressions such as selling one's basket of fish or selling a river just to buy a "magic livery." The government is portrayed as careless and nonchalant, and shamelessly extorting from the people, who are forced to pay their taxes yet are not allowed to enjoy the dividends. Almost all major roads are full of potholes and the people manage to ply the roads the way they can while they are aware that politicians fly in planes and helicopters. There is usually no electric power, yet electric bills come every month. The people are over-billed for using the erratic electric power and pipe-borne water. Even if they complain, no one will listen. This is also evident in the line where the government tells the people that their sweat "is too acidic/ for the soil" (23) only to collect the symbolic sweat and sell it back to them at exorbitant prices. In another line, the speaker stresses the careless attitude of the government towards the plight of the people thus: "because they

love us now/ they sell back our sweat to us /a drop for a pint of blood, a drop of our sweat for only a pint of our blood" (23). In these poems we are meant to know that the poet could only console himself and find happiness in personal memories.

In Hyginus Ekwuazi's *Dawn into Moon Light* (2008) the persona's grieving continues. The collection is an outburst of dread and lamentation over the state of the country. All that has been happening in the country from the poet persona's childhood to adulthood is relayed through the varied use of a lot of symbols such as "the moon," "memories," "Dawn" and "Night." For example, the persona intones that at "Dawn" the unpleasant experience of the day is recollected and at "night" and at "moonlight" the memories become feral. "Dawn" is presented as a time when the persona comes face to face with his experience while "moon" and "night" are times of recollection, times when "one is beside oneself in loneliness." This is captured in the first stanza of the poem, "They are all there at dawn," when the speaker notes that "They're all there at dawn: the taste, scent, sound, texture and sight of the day—they're all woven into the tapestry of the day which dawn spreads out before me" (13). This is also evident in the preface to the collection, where Ekwuazi explains: "All my memories are tied up with dawn; and with the moon. In effect, all of memory, to me, is nothing but a series of cross-fades from dawn into moonlight" (6). Hence, in most of the poems contained in the collection, the persona plays with the "dawn" and the "moon" symbols. In the collection, "memory" is also symbolically used. "Memory" becomes the platform from which the problems in the country are disclosed. At "night" and "moon" time, all memories are conjured up in bitterness.

In one of the poems of the collection titled "A scar is not a birthmark," the poet persona affirms that his country is his love and the cause of his terrible memories, as is is evident in the line: "I dedicated a birthmark to each state of the federation and with the moon and the stars and the wind as witnesses I vowed my love to you" (54). "Birthmarks" represent the states of the Federation of Nigeria: "I remember you spread eagle in the sands under that moonlight/ while I counted the birthmarks on your golden body/ On each count […] we arrived still at 36" (54); "the scar" represents the troubles which the speaker experienced since his country's independence. The persona tells us more about the scar in the following lines:

> You swore there were 12 scars – including the one
> That looked like a blackhead-turned-into-a-scar:
> One scar for each leader we've had in the country
> Since our sun set on the Union Jack- (55)

In *The Monkey's Eyes*, Ekwuazi focuses on the happenings in Nigerian hospitals. In the preface to the collection, Ekwuazi argues that the collection is about "a patient-persona who journeys through the hospital: through its rites and its rituals of healing; through the schedules and the

protocols of its bureaucracy: and through the stress and strain of its restrictions" (6). As the persona journeys through the wards of the hospital, the state of the country's hospitals is bemoaned. This lamentation is evidenced in the very first poem of the collection, "Why doesn't a death sentence deafen the ears?" Ekwuazi creates a picture of the hospital in Nigeria where the death of patients is hastened. The poem, which is the first in the collection, centers its message on the nonchalant indifference of Nigerian doctors to human life. This is captured in the poem, thus: "while he managed to remain untouched, totally/ untouched […] I was to him no more than a/ mathematical problem that he must couch in the language/ of a weather report" (14).

It is in the second poem, "My silent vow now a covenant prayer," that Ekwuazi gives us the impression that the Nigerian hospital environment is a place of death. This impression is first created through a rhetorical question that precedes the poem: "They who go through this gate – who go in to take a bed/ do they not approach this gate with dread in their heart?" He continues by recounting occurrences that should bring fear to anyone who goes in through the hospital gate. According to him, anyone going into most Nigerian hospitals for treatment should be aware "of a failed & ailing health-care delivery system," "of the spidery holes in the ceiling into which the hospital's supplies all disappear," "of medical personnel who siphon patients & resources to their own private businesses," "of outmoded, badly refurbished, totally unreliable life support & diagnostic equipment bought & installed at a higher cost than the modern and the new" (15). The repetition of the rhetorical question points towards the dread that imbues the entire collection.

The use of the word "covenant" in the title of the poem and in the last line of the poem implies that despite the fact that the hospital is a place of dread, the poet persona has no choice but to go into it for treatment. The poem stresses the fact that the act of going into the hospital for treatment itself is just to save the patients from the blames that might be heaped on them if anything happens to them after staying at home during one's illness. The hospital in the collection is a microcosm of Nigeria— a place where everything goes wrong and nobody cares.

Ekwuazi does not just report these situations through his poems; he supports the poems with live pictures and newspaper reports. The collection contains news pictures of the different parts of the hospital. For example, we are presented with a picture of the hospital ward where everyone wears "that self-pitying look … that the dream-is-o'er look" (21). He contemplates the situation in the picture further:

> have they come here to be healed or to die
> at the same place, each at his appointed hour -
> each with his own mind-set of healing fabricated
> from the intricate world of his own peculiar need? (21)

Later in the poem, there is a live picture of the hospital environment (83). The picture captures both the entrance to the hospital ward and the mortuary. While there are no vehicles at the entrance to the hospital ward, there are a lot of vehicles at the entrance to the mortuary. Below the picture, Ekwuazi writes: "the will to die/and the will to live -/ could there be any better way of strengthening the one/ and weakening the other than by locating the morgue/ in the daily view of the sick?" (83). We then see another picture where two giant billboards stand side by side by a road side. While the first giant billboards announce the death of a woman who died "after 80 years of neglect," the other is a billboard proclaiming a governor's "giant strides in the health sector." Under the picture, we find these lines:

> from where she stood, she could see, all too clearly,
> the giant chest-thumbing billboard that, like a cock
> falsely proclaiming a new day, proclaimed
> His Excellency's giant strides in the health sector
>
> a chest-thumbing, giant billboard
> that ought to have been planted at the gates of
> every cemetery, large and small, all over the country (96)

We also see a news picture captioned: "Court Hands On Hospital Missing Gen Set Case." Below the news picture, the poet persona writes: "the Chairman of the hospital's board gets up,/ dusts the seat of his pants,/ pockets the hospital's 1000KV power generator/ as his own share of the national cake/ and walks out through the wide open gates/ leaving the hospital in perennial load-shedding darkness" (113). These pictures and the newspaper reports are meant to bring the poetry closer to reality. It must be noted that the tradition of including pictures and newspaper reports in these collections of poetry is a very recent practice in Nigerian poetry; it gives credence to the ideas that are expressed in the collection. Using words, pictures and newspaper reports, the poet emphasizes the deteriorating condition of Nigerian hospitals.

In *The Monkey's Eye,* the same horrible situation that is decried in *Dawn into Moonlight* comes alive. In "No … not for me will any vulture wait" the poet persona also exposes the hospital as a place of death. In the poem, the persona posits that it is as if the interest of the hospital attendants is to constantly see people die. That is why a mortuary building is attached to the hospital's main block. The patient comes from home into the hospital hale and hearty but is taken home through the door of the mortuary dead. The poet persona recounts the incident that happened in the hospital thus: "Wilfred Wuyep: he had been discharged […] while waiting for the family car […] he slumped, right there, in the ward / And home for him, became the mortuary" (130). This accounts for the reason why there are a lot of beautiful cars in front of the mortuary while there are none in front of the hospital's main block. In the poem the speaker

howls: “those cars, waiting, patiently, like vultures, down there they’re in front of the mortuary” (81). To the persona, homecoming after sojourning into the Nigerian hospital is a miracle that needs to be celebrated. The need to celebrate upon returning from the hospital is fully expressed in the last poem of the collection, “I thought I was the sole witness to my homecoming!” Having survived the hospital, one needs to head for home “where all hearts/ beat in welcome” (132).

Conclusion

My analysis confirms that third-generation Nigerian poetry did not end in 1999;1999 only ended a military discourse in third-generation Nigerian poetic writing. The third-generation Nigerian poets constitute a postcolonial disposition deployed as a trope in the study of Nigerian poetry published between 1988 and the present. It also highlights the creative identities of a group of poets whose poetry was published between 1988 and the present. This group of poets are connected by birth, comradeship, circumstance and by the personal and collective will to protest against the military dictatorship, which helped in putting an end to military despotism in 1999, and in therefore pointing its finger at the corruption in the civilian administration since its inception in the year 2000. Since 2000, the poetry has been engaged in nation-building and has not stopped campaigning for responsible leadership and to seek a better Nigerian state.

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