

MIRRORING THE SOCIETY, MIRRORING ITS HOSPITALS: HYGINUS EKWUAZI'S POETRY AND THE CHALLENGE OF NATION-BUILDING

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Abstract

Anglophone African poetry has become a significant medium through which African society from the year 2000 to date is mirrored. The younger Anglophone African poets, widely referred to as the poets of the third-generation, have always used their poetry as means to respond to both historical and current socio-political circumstances that tend to distinguish Africa from the rest of the world. Their poetry now constitutes counter-hegemonic discourse against bad leadership in Africa and against corrupt African social and medical institutions. Using Hyginus Ekwuazi's *The Monkey's Eyes* as a representative poetry of the younger Anglophone African poets, emphasis is made on how the poet depicts the African society and its hospitals. The paper analyzes the collection as a sequel to all other collections of poetry produced by the younger poets at this period. It reveals the condition in which the poetry is produced and how it has responded to the decay in African society and its hospitals. The paper points out that though the older generation of the Anglophone African poets responded to similar socio-political situation, the younger generation of the Anglophone African poets has become the prominent voice in this period and that their poetry provides a clear picture of what is happening in Africa within this time space. Being a new set of voices on the terrain of the Anglophone African poetry, a study of this poetry opens up a new platform upon which this so-called "aesthetic of rage" is appreciated.

Keywords: society, Anglophone Africa, poetry, third-generation, hospital, nation-building

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The poetry of the younger generation of the Anglophone African poets, now referred to as the poets of the third generation, has become a medium through which the contemporary socio-political and economic situation of the African society is mirrored. As part of contemporary postcolonial African intellectual disposition, the Anglophone African poetry of the third generation has always been seen as part of the counter-hegemonic force that pulled down the military despotism in Africa. This connection between the poetry and the resistance against the oppressive military regimes in Africa has dominated present third generational discourses. Of particular importance is contemporary Nigerian scholarship where the poetry is defined as the poetry of military resistance. For instance, in his article entitled “Bayonet and the carnage of tongues: the contemporary Nigerian poetry speaking truth to power”, Diala (2017) describes the poetry as an “appropriately characterized” poetry of “counter- hegemonic” against military regimes in Nigeria (p.1). Oyeniyi Okunoye (2011, p. 83) has also been noted to argue that the poetry is part of a well-articulated intellectual engagement against the oppressive military regimes which lasted for four decades in Nigeria, and by extension Africa. Egya (2012) maintains in the article “Historicity, power, dissidence: the third-generation poetry and military oppression in Nigeria” that “military oppression represented the dominant condition of production for the poetry” (p. 425).

However, despite the important role this poetry undertook during the military era by becoming a very important voice through which the despotic military regimes were resisted, since year 2000 to date the poetry has been used to engage corrupt political leadership and the worsening socio-political situation of the African societies. The poetry now seems to be the lone voice seeking the redemption of the contemporary society and the condition for the production of cultural and political correction. The poets of the period whose poetry dominate contemporary intellectual space are all Anglophone African poets of the third generation who started writing from the year 2000 or whose poetry became recognized from the year 2000 to date (see Charles Nnolim, 2009, p. 228). Our concern in this paper therefore is to establish this new poetic voice as a continuum of the popular condition of production which the Anglophone African poetry of the third generation is associated with. The paper seeks to reveal this poetic production as a new trajectory in the condition of production of the Anglophone African poetry of the third generation using Hyginus Ekwuazi’s *The Monkey’s Eyes* as a point of reference. Like all other poetry produced before the time, the poetry is part of the coherent, sustained and

well-articulated intellectual and cultural activities to put the society back on the track of sanity. Since most scholarships on the poetry of the third generation are limited to discourses on Nigerian poetic tradition, this paper is therefore an avenue to remap the poetry as the totality of African poetic engagement during this period.

In order to properly position the poetry as part of the postcolonial intellectual paradigm, this paper has been divided into four subsections. While the first subsection introduces the poet as an important member of the society who is also responsible to the society, the second subsection discusses the intellectual background of the poetry. In the third subsection the poetry of Hyginus Ekwuazi, a leading poet of the period, is analysed as a poetry representing this postcolonial tradition. The fourth subsection is the conclusion. In it inference is drawn from the discourse as contained in the entire paper.

The Poet and his Responsibility to his Society

The poetry represents the poet of this time as a very important member of the African society who cannot detach himself from the contemporary situation of his society. Hence, he reflects that society in whatever he writes. It has also portrayed him as “an organ developed by the society to respond to its need for meaning” (Andre Brink cited in Diala, 2017, p.3). In most cases one sees some connections between the content of the poetry and the views circulating in the society as it concerns Africa’s need to outgrow its present socio-political challenges. It is for this reason the poetry is described, to use the words of Nurrudin Farah, as the voice of “everybody”:

[A poet] however, is in a sense everybody; he is a woman, he is a man: he is as many other selves as those whose shadows reflect his ghostly images; he is as many other selves as the ones whose tongues he employs to articulate his thoughts; he is as many other selves as there are minds and hearts he dwells in. He is the raped continent; he is the maltreated worker; he is the struggle itself- or at least its spokesperson (1983, p. 3).

While representing the poet as “everybody’s spokesperson”, the poetry is a charge to the poet of the time to function as the voice of the society. Andre Brink describes the general poetic responsibility in the context of providing the society with that needed meaning which is capable of causing “healing”. To be able to fulfil this function, the poetry of the Anglophone African poet of the third generation requires the poet to perform his duty properly, in that, unless his functions are properly performed, he would have nothing to offer the society. But if he does his duty properly and if “his

diagnosis is heeded”, then “healing” will be possible for the society (see Andre Brink, 1983, p. 235). What this then entails is that the poetry, to also use the words of Per Wästberg, is “part of the nation-building effort” (p. 20). Through it the poet teaches and has a very direct influence which can make the poet suffer for what he teaches. In the bid to fulfil its function of teaching, the poetry, like all other generational poetry, documents “a time of transition” and reflects “what is still in the memory of the living” (Wästberg, 1986, p. 17).

In order to perform this function, the poetry of the Anglophone African poets of the third generation has made its subject matter dominantly the social and political condition of the African continent from the year 2000 to date. The poetry mirrors the corruption in the society and its adverse effect on African hospitals. The poetry performs its duty to the society by representing the poets as Africa’s contemporary bard and oracle in whose hands the salvation of the society lies and in whose voice is the urge to address the challenges confronting contemporary African society from the year 2000 to date. Through this poetry the challenges of the contemporary African society and its hospitals can be seen more clearly and exactly than other organs of the society. The poetry represents a visionary, a warning voice and a builder of the future of the African society and its hospitals. Of matter of emphasis, all generations of African poetry have produced poetry that is akin to this poetry as it concerns its usefulness to the society. In a conference in Hasselby, Wole Soyinka also made a submission that further depicts the usefulness of African poetry to the society. In the conference Soyinka maintained that African poetry must not just be contented with “chronicling the customs of the society” but should be used, as he also puts it in the preface to his play *Opera Wonyosi* (1981), to “expose, reflect, indeed magnify the decadent, rotten underbelly of a society that has lost its directions, jettisoned all sense of values and it is careering down a precipice as fast as the latest artificial boom can take it” (p. x). In the case of the Anglophone African poetry of the third generation, it is only in doing this that, in the words of F. Chung and E Ngara, “our consciousness and our perception” (p. 12) of the African society and its hospitals can be shaped and sharpened.

The Third Generation and the Issues of Its Conception

In his introductory article entitled “The writer in modern Africa”, delivered in Stockholm at the Second African Writers Conference in 1986, Wästberg argued that the

younger generation of the African poets has grown up and concern themselves with what happens in Africa after post-independence Africa: "Their point of reference is now Africa, not Europe. They know they have to chart the future without much outside help. They are not obsessed by colonialism, rather by corruption, greed, inefficiency and elitism" (p. 19). He posits further that they try not "only to protect their freedom of action but seek a way of acting". They "take the side of the powerless". They "write of victims of the arbitrariness of others" and "sing no songs in praise of the victor" (Wästberg, 1986, 19). In his essay entitled "The Role of the African Writer in National Liberation and Social Reconstruction", Emmanuel Ngara also maintains that one of the functions of this poetry "is to awaken the oppressed, to make the citizens of Africa aware of the new reality so as to challenge that reality and fight for a more humane society" (p. 131). F. Chung and E. Ngara also posit that the basic functioning of African poetry is "to render social justice to people that have been silent so that they should not have lived in vain" (p.25). It is therefore to bring these functions to their fulfilment that the term "generation" is first employed upon the terrain of the postcolonial African literature.

This is to say that the use of the term "generation" to contemplate the temporal positioning of writers in time is not new in the postcolonial African literary discourse. Its use as a marker of positioning writers in time started as an attempt by a group of writers to introduce their literature to the transnational African literary community. This group of writers led by Niyi Osundare, Kole Omotoso, and Femi Osofisan (see James Currey, 2008, p. 52) were the first to put it to use by describing Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo's generation as the first generation writers and by accusing them of being too "concerned with explaining Africa to Europeans" (p. 52). They also described themselves as the second generation writers and posited that their writing will concern Africa's "contemporary social and political reality and must explain Africa to Africans" (p. 52).

The third generation is a continuum in this tradition of usage to properly position the writers of the time in the postcolonial African literary space. The generation is "widely believed to have been announced by and in the 1988 anthology, *Voice from the Fringe: An ANA Anthology of New Nigerian Poets*, edited by Harry Garuba" (Egya, 2012, p. 426). Adesanmi and Dunton note that this generation embodies the poetry "produced by emergent writers who had acquired a creative identity markedly different from that of the second generation writers" (2005, p. 7). As part of the

assertions that announced the generation, in his introduction to the anthology, which happened to be the first of the several anthologies published by the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), the editor Harry Garuba notes that “there is a significant literary renaissance taking place all over the country, especially in the genre of poetry” (p. xv). In the introductory essay contained in the special issue of *English in Africa* in May 2005 devoted to the generation and edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, it is observed that, as at that time, “little or no scholarship [has been done] on the rapidly expanding body of work” (2005, p. 7) produced in the generation. With the issue, the editors “signal the entry of the new writing into the arena of African critical discourse” (2005, p. 8). They argue further that the issue is “a timely legitimization of our initial efforts to bring scholarship to bear on this significant body of writing and a recognition of the fact that more scholars have now turned their attention to this significant corpus of new writing” (2005, p. 8). In another special issue of *Research in African Literature* edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, it is declared that the writing of the generation “does exhibit distinctive features, in terms of scope of characterization, thematic and formal characteristic” (2008, p. ix). Brenda Cooper also posits that the writing of the generation is distinct and unique. It is a demonstration of a generation that has properly positioned itself for the challenges of the time. Adesanmi and Dunton also refer to the writing as:

texts born into the scopic regime of the postcolonial and the postmodern, an order of knowledge in which questions of subject hood and agency are not only massively over determined by the politics of identity in a multicultural and transnational frame 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. (2005, p. 15)

Unlike the previous generations, the third generation which period spans between 1988 and the present (Remi Raji, 2005, p. 22) can be classified into two parts. The first is the early part of the generation, the very one which was announced with the publication of the *Voice from the Fringe* and concerns military dictatorship and their activities. This part of the generation is between 1988 and 1999 which represents a period of military despotism in Africa. Chronicling the activities of this part of the generation, Adepitan (2006) observes that:

The 1980s and 1990s heralded the arrival of a new breed of African writers who in ordinary circumstances would be described as constituting a new generation. But they came labouring under too many anxieties. The political landscape was becoming more and more desperate; before they learned to write many were co-opted into the vanguard of literature as an instrument of protest and that was all they wrote. (2006, p. 25)

The second is the latter part of the generation which focuses on the activities of corrupt politicians and the state of the African continent. As an important part of the third generation African Literature, it was announced by and in the 2004 Association of Nigerian Authors conference captioned "ANA-Imo National Conference". In his keynote address, during the conference, Charles Nnolim described this second part of the generation as the counter-hegemonic force of the third generation African literature which is expected to take the affairs of African literature in the continent to the next level. He goes further to affirm that this part falls between the year 2000 and the present (see Charles Nnolim, 2009, p. 228). While commenting on this period of the generation, Niyi Osundare describes the generation as the "poets' generation." This description stems from the generation's tendency to produce more poets than any other generation in Africa and their temperament which "ranges from anger through desperation to despondency" and "his identification of the demon that hounds them" (cited in Diala, 2017, p.11). Osundare also addresses the poets of this time as the "midnight children". He said the generation is made up of poets "who have spent the first three decades of their lives confronting the nightmare that the country" as well as the entire African continent has become (Osundare cited in Adagboyin, p.20). However, as this younger generation of poets began to publish, many of their poetry express the feeling of "a sense of renewed energy and commitment and of identifying within themselves a collective identity that set them apart from older writers" (Hewett, 2005, p.74). Affirming the commitment of the poets of this period to the functions which they set for themselves for the betterment of their society, Hewett observes thus:

Many of them have also chronicled the growing intellectual community that encouraged many writers to continue to write even when things were at their worst: ANA monthly readings, gatherings at literary salons, publication in ANA anthologies and literary journals, and appearances in the pages of the Post Express Literary Supplement and the Vanguard, which provided much-needed forums for literary debate and discussion. (p.74)

To emphasize the significance of this latter generation of the Anglophone African poetry of the third generation, Hewett has further noted that “the emerging account of this generation is one of triumph over adversity.” It represents “a story of courageous individuals refusing to be silenced. [...] It is a remarkable story, one that is still being written by critics and writers themselves” (p.74).

Among the leading poets of this time whose poetry is a very important example of the literary production in the period is Hyginus Ekwuazi. Having won the ANA National Literary Awards with his various collections at different times, Ekwuazi can be said to be one of the representative poets of Nigeria of the third generation in particular and Africa of the third generation in general of the year 2000 to date. His poetry depicts the situation of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general at the centre of his poetic motif. Ekwuazi’s poetry mirrors the African experience and reveals the continent in chaos. Ekwuazi’s collections include *Love Apart*, *Dawn in to Moonlight*, *The Monkey’s Eyes*, and *That Other Country*. This paper is particularly focused on Ekwuazi’s third collection, *The Monkey’s Eyes*, since, unlike the other three, the collection mirrors the condition of Nigerian as well as most African hospitals.

African Society and its Hospital: Hyginus Ekwuazi’s *The Monkey’s Eyes*

The hospital in Nigeria as well as in Africa has been represented in the latter part of the Anglophone African literature of the third generation as an institution that is currently facing challenges. In Bakari Ojo Rasaki’s *Once Upon a Tower* African hospital is portrayed in the drama genre as being dominated by graduate doctors who do not know their left from their rights because the society celebrates what Nnolim calls “fake graduates” (Nnolim cited in Solomon Awuzie, 2017, p. 3). This situation is reiterated in another leading prose work in the period, Camillus Ukah’s *When the Wind Blows*. In this prose work we are presented with another “fake graduate” in Medical Laboratory Science. Adaku, a “fake” Laboratory Scientist, “who graduated a dangerous fake” (Awuzie, 2017, p. 7), by bribing her way through the university, later got a job in the hospital where she was expected to sample blood. The first person whose blood she sampled died after taking in the blood as a result her incompetency. It is this same situation that is revisited in the poetry genre in Ekwuazi’s *The Monkey’s Eyes*. Its

inclusion in the poetry genre has heightened the tension previously generated in the Anglophone African literature of the third generation.

Like most African literary titles that are taken from proverbs and poems, the title of the collection, *The Monkey's Eyes*, is coined from the popular Nigerian proverb: "Anyone who really wants to know how gravely sick monkey's relation was, should see the red eyes monkey acquired from blowing the sick room fire" (*The Monkey's Eyes*, 2009, p.11). The connection between the title of the poetry and the proverb from where it is coined emphasizes how gravely sick the African society is and its hospitals have recently become. It also represents the significance of the poetry as a very important platform through which the society of the period vis-à-vis its hospitals are mirrored for corrective purposes. For this purpose the poetry takes on all aspects of the hospital in its contemplation. This is further stressed in the preface to the collection, where it is noted 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" (p.6). As the persona journeys through the wards of the hospital, the state of African society as well as its hospitals are mirrored and also bemoaned.

The revelation in the collection starts with the first poem of the collection, "Why doesn't a death sentence deafen the ears?" In the poem, a picture of the African hospital as a place of death is painted. This is as a result of the nonchalance with which the African doctors discharge their job in the hospital. The doctor in the African hospital treats human life like a mere commodity, hence he tries as much as possible not to leave any memories. He tries as much as possible not to leave any trace of his patient's death or pain in the hospital. Any trace of pain or death in the hospital that is "sooner left" is quickly completely wiped out "like footsteps/ on shifting sands" (p. 13). In the hospital, the doctor displays his uncertainty about most of the ailment his patient brings before him yet he shifts "the gear of his uncertainty/ as he [moves] further into that region of impassivity/ where doctors spend their work hours" (p. 14). And then, from that "alienating distance", the doctor would speak. The doctor's voice when he speaks portrays his uncertainty and carelessness towards the patient persona's illness. His voice according to the patient persona shows "no stress, no colour" and "each syllable" that proceeds out of it wears "the cloak of the one preceding it", each usually lifeless, as

though there is “a machine / somewhere inside him churning it out” (p. 14). While he manages “to remain untouched, totally / untouched” the patient is to him “no more than a / mathematical problem that he must couch in the language / of a weather report” (p. 14). The consequence of this is that being in attendance in an African hospital causes fear. The kind of fear that comes is “like a deluge” (p. 14).

In the second poem of the collection entitled “My silent vow now a covenant prayer,” the patient persona contemplates whether those approaching the hospital do not do so with fear in their hearts. He asks a rhetorical question that has an overriding significance in the entire collection: “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 recounts the condition of the hospital that is capable of instilling fear in anybody. The first is the “failed & ailing health-care delivery system”. The second is “the spidery holes in the ceiling into which the hospital’s supplies all disappear”. The third is the “medical personnel who siphon patients & resources to their own private businesses”. The fourth is the “outmoded, badly refurbished, totally unreliable life support & diagnostic equipment bought & installed at a higher cost than the modern and the new” (p.15). He asks another perturbing rhetorical question: “they who go through this gate – who go in to take a bed ...” does the hospital gate “not say to them”: Abandon hope, all who enter! – here, you’ll die more than a little everyday / every day, you’ll slide more than a little / beyond cure / beyond care” (p.15).

In another poem, entitled “One fine tomorrow, I’ll arise and take up my bed”, the patient persona compares illness to criminality and the hospital ward to “the cell for the most hardened cases” (p. 18). This comparison stems from the patient persona’s perception and depiction of the condition of the hospital as “the region of the damned” (p. 18). The condition in which the patient persona finds himself in the hospital is horrible. He describes it as a “depressing,” “forlorn” and “abandoned” condition. This is evident in the look of everyone in the hospital ward. Everyone is described in the hospital as wearing that “self-pitying look ... that the dream-is-o’er look” (p. 17). There is also “no getting away from the smell and the sight/ and the sound of decaying humanity in a decaying hospital” (p. 17). The smell in the hospital is that of a deep rottenness that no incense and no antiseptic / can hide” (p. 17). The poem contains lots of rhetorical questions that all reveal the dread that have taken the significant part of

the patient persona's stay in the hospital. Yet with the use of the word "covenant", in "My silent vow now a covenant prayer," it is implied the patient persona attends the hospital because he has no choice and has no other place to go for treatment. He stresses the act of going into the hospital for treatment as just to fulfil all righteousness. The hospital is also revealed as a microcosm of Nigeria and the entire African continent— a place where everything goes wrong and nobody cares. In "How do I colour-code for hope?" the patient persona is expected to always use the "laboured corridors and staircases" because "the lifts are dead and not a thing [...] / seems to have been planned for efficiency and ease" (p. 26). The lab tests take the patient "up and down and round and round the hospital" (p. 26). The persona stresses that he now knows what an African hospital really is:

- the hospital is
 where the heaviest traffic is in hope & despair
- the hospital is
 there where illnesses of every make are put on the
 shelf ...& if you were asked to choose you'd be only
 too happy to choose the one you brought along ... (p.26)

In "Can't you suffer them, my visitors, to come unto me", he also notes that to "be on a hospital bed" in Africa "is to shout loud and clear": "Here's a life that's about to reach its ashes!" (p. 59). Being in hospital bed in Africa is also compared to wearing "a neon light that screams to any passer-by": "Life is full of misery, / life is full of loneliness / life is full of suffering-/ but can't it ... this miserable, / lonely, suffering life ... can't / it go on ... can't it go on just a / little longer?" (p. 59). The hospital bed is described as "an uncharted border bound on all sides by fear and loneliness" and also "bound on all sides by pain and worry" (p. 59). In "By their footsteps and their bedside manners ..." the persona reveals that the doctors carry the aura of pain about. He perceives it whenever the doctor turns up at his bedside. At first he thought it was guilt but later realized it was pain: "that kind of pain that scorns company / that kind of pain that sours every dish & / that kind of pain that builds sandbags in the eye-/ that rarest kind of pain that hysterically insists / that tomorrow's pain will be even worse" (p. 63).

The patient persona also attributes the "undefined odour" in the hospital to the "big dumpsite" usually and "quietly growing right / within the premises" (p. 26). This is part of the reason the "hospital bed spawns dreams" (p. 34). In "blank spaces in family

portraits” the patient persona notes that each time his “head touches the pillow a million / dreams jostle to glue” his eyelids together (p. 34). Hence in “When shared loss becomes a knot that binds” he describes the dream and the past that it recasts as “another country” – “a country into/ which this illness has given [him] a multiple entry visa” (p. 40). In “These varied chords of goodwill” the goodwill custom made card brought to the patient persona while he is in his sick bed, “sags with tips on how to survive hospitalization” in Africa (p. 55):

- ‘Distrust all nurses, big & small, especially when they come bearing medication: they’re paid to take care of only the sick: they have to keep you sick ...if they must remain in business!’
- ‘Don’t be fooled: the doctor doesn’t know all; let him know you know he doesn’t.’
- ‘If they say any food is good for you, avoid it ... that way they can’t poison you; remember, that you’re paranoid doesn’t mean you don’t have enemies’
- ‘Demand an increase in the alcoholic content of all your medication; if they refuse, explore other avenues of getting alcohol’
- ‘Worry about everything: how the country is going to the dogs, the falling standards of education, global warming & financial melt-down ... worry all you can for hypertension is the surest sign that you’re alive & kicking ...’ (pp. 55-56)

In “No... not for me will any vulture wait” the patient persona reveals that the hospital is designed to constantly see people die. This is part of the reason the mortuary building is attached to the hospital ward. Patients come in alive through the hospital ward but are taken home through the door of the mortuary dead. The patient 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” (p.130). The collection further stresses that that is the reason there are lots of beautiful cars in front of the mortuary while there are none in front of the hospital ward. The collection does not just reveal these situations through the words contained in the lines; it supports the content with live pictures and newspaper reports. On page eighty three (p. 83) there is a live picture of the hospital environ. 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 lots of

vehicles at the entrance to the mortuary. Below the picture, it is written: “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?” (p. 83) On page ninety six (p. 96), we see another picture where two giant billboards stand side by side at a road side. While the first giant billboard announces 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, it is also written thus:

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 ... (p. 96)

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 of these kinds in collections of poems is a very new practice in African poetry writing, yet it gives credence to the ideas that are expressed in the collection. With words, pictures and newspaper reports, the poetry emphasizes the deteriorating condition of the African hospitals.

Conclusion

As part of the poetry produced by one of the leading poets of the Anglophone African poets of third generation, Ekwuazi’s *The Monkey’s Eyes* is poised to be one of the leading voices of the poetry of the generation to stand up to the challenge that is bedevilling the African hospital. There is this anonymous popular assertion that “a healthy society should have a healthy hospital.” The poetry of the Anglophone African poets over the years has represented the African society as an unhealthy one: Niyi Osundare, one of the leading Anglophone African poets, has been quoted to have maintained that “ours is not a human society.” This is to say that a human society that is not qualified to be addressed as human is not healthy. With a similar disposition, the Anglophone African poets of the latter part of the third generation embodied in Ekwuazi and his collection, *The Monkey’s Eyes*, has revealed that even an unhealthy society deserves a healthy hospital. When an unhealthy society parades an unhealthy hospital,

its citizenry are left with virtually no hope. The poetry of the Anglophone African poets of the third generation finds the African society in this situation hence their poetry becomes a counter hegemonic discourse to positively reposition the society and its hospital. To do this, it has taken the challenge to mirror the society and its hospital for the purpose of reprove and correction and to condemn the decay that is gradually spreading and now engulfing most African hospitals. One of its guiding principles is to bring to the people's realization that a society whose hospital celebrates death cannot make any headway.

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