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#SÒRÒSÓKÈ RHYTHM: WHEN STREET POETRY BRAVES STORMY CITIES, SPEAKS TO POWER IN SEASON OF ANGST AND POLITICAL TURMOIL.

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Abstract

This work examines the creative impetus and social context of the #EndSARS-#Sorosoke art form in recent Nigerian literary experience that was birthed in the month of October 2020, as a novel offering to the literary catalogue of Nigeria's creative ferment. The poems in the collection serve as vivid witness to the period of the stormy saga of the #EndSARS protest movement, which climaxed the ennui of the Nigerian youths' bottled-up, prolonged frustration, disillusionment and angst. The outburst was to engulf the Nigerian state, provoked the bloody scene at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos, resulting in a devastating effects with indelible dent on the body politics of the nation. Although the foreboding situation was eventually brought under control after much ado by the fidgety, flabbergasted ruling federal government, yet, the spirit of that moment breaths in the rhythm of #Sorosoke poetry. To immortalize this historic moment, there was a rousing symphony of multi-tonal, multi-vocal poetic events that was incubated in the midst of this agonizing moment and the aftermath which added to mediate that tragic phase that in the process immortalize the heroism of the martyrs of that movement and also pass to posterity that historic epoch. In this work, the #EndSARS-derived 'sorosoke poetry' are examined critically and analyzed to highlight the tempo of actions and implications, convictions, resolves and statements that are embodied in the #Sorosoke art form that has created a new literary consciousness and fresh perspective in Nigerian literature.

Keywords: #EndSARS, #Sorosoke, Police brutality, James Yeku, Jumoke Verissimo.

Introduction:

James Yeku and Jumoke Verissimo's compilation of #Sorosoke poetry into an anthology, which came from the eruption of the #EndSARS protest movement organized by Nigerian youths. The entries were posted by contributors and collated by the editors, mostly from social media platforms and that has now become a book of poetry. The authors of the contributions are mainly from among the mobilizers, sympathizers, activist-participants and others who played roles during and in the aftermath of the October 2020 #EndSARS movement that brought many Nigerian cities to a standstill, created unprecedented anxiety and uncertainties with a repercussion that has continued to haunt Nigerian nationhood. Like the sudden outbreak of the October 2020 #EndSARS struggles, the entry of this poetic trope marks a novel event and significant milestone in Nigerian literature and especially in the annals of Nigerian poetic tradition. Obviously, the #Sorosoke subgenre has come to add significant impetus to the quest for an authentic definition of what constitutes the correct identity as 'Nigerian literature', even within the vast and variegated orbit of African literature at the continental level. As Onukaogu and Onyerionwu point out, such definite labels that would define the texture and flavor of 'Nigerian literature' in the 21st century would take into consideration certain indexes that emblematically hinges on the "sociohistorical, political and economic" aspect "… that is an appurtenance of the continental and global art" (14). The African historical experience remains the primary informant in the determination of the coloration of African poetic canon as a continental heritage, and, the poets are the active "midwives of the tradition", as James Tsaaior would aver. Tsaaior points out further that:

> An authentic African poetry is, essentially, that which draws its afflatus, sensibility and vision as well as themes, imagery, tropes and entire worldview from the quotidian realities and chequered experiences of Africa's historical continuum" (116).

This assertion is very apt and instructive especially when considering the critical/theoretical import of #Sorosoke as a fresh authentic entry into the tradition or canon of Nigerian literature. The emergent poetic form tends to fly on the wings of digitization with its 'newfangled' net-based paraphernalia. David Udoinwang and Ikpe Justice Akpan (2023) aptly aver that "Digitization incursions into social life and culture continue to evolve, flooding the world with e-tag paraphernalia and exerting unprecedented influence on cultural landscapes"; and this phenomenon it is that fired the massive mobilization of the younger, e-savvy generation of marginalized and angry Nigerians on the street during the extremely restive season the #EndSars protest in major capitals across the country.

Of course, the underlying template of African literature stems on the postcolonial history as depicted in the literary practices and hinges at the very motif of the 'subalterns' who are ever struggling to retrieve their posterity, humanity, common heritage and memory from the rubbles of distorted values that came with colonial imperialism and postmodernism as well as the multifaceted denigrating narratives of Difference, socially constructed inequality, economic disparity and fragmentations of the colonially or neo-colonially victimized societies. Indeed, as Affiah and Worugji aver, "maltreatment has informed the works writings and works of most post-colonial African writers" (40). In effect, Uwem Affiah, et al sum up that

"…postcolonialism is a constructive socio-political discourse that offers the subalterns an intellectual space to assert and re-establish their identity and otherness-otherness being a term located in the postcolonial concept of Difference" (15). The tension and baffling testimonies noticeable in the pages of #Sorosoke poetry metaphorizes the above-stated social realities.

Coming back home to the recent Nigerian socio-political and literary experience, such evaluation of the nature and forms of Nigerian poetry would also take into account the kinetic motion in the historical trajectory of postcolonial, postmodern Nigeria experience. A peep at the historical trajectory linking to the recent upheavals echoes J.P. Clarke-Bekederemo's poetic testament on the postcolonial/post-independence Nigerian reality in his collection: *State of the Union* (1985). In their critical response to Clarke-Bekederemo's poetic insight, David Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyeze aver thus:

> In the post independent [Nigerian] state, civil wars and the dark days of military interregnums followed in quick succession, pervading throughout the continent in ideological upheaval and seeming socio-political tinkering. The developmental process through this epoch has been noticeably marred by the phenomenon of negative ethnic consciousness, monster of corruption, neo-colonial dependency tendencies, leadership brigandage and wrangling of succession and violent power struggles (160).

It is critically pointing to note that the present unpleasant socio-political issues in Nigeria stem from the haunting debacles of the past continuum. The hashtag sign added to the ordinary expression, in postmodern socio-cultural and political experience adds to booster or garnish the linguistic unction of what '#Sorosoke' poetry means in its Nigerian street vernacular translation. In other words, the hashtag (#) added to 'EndSARS' as well as 'Sorosoke' is what gives the renditions in this anthology of poetry a revolutionary toga, a marching song or a tone as 'war cry' as it were. 'SARS' is the acronym of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad unit of the Nigeria Police which was created in the past to tackle the rising wave of violent robbery and armed criminal acts in Nigeria. Over the years, the unit has come to earn notoriety for its brutality, impunity, outlawry and inhumanity against the hapless citizenry, and the youths have often been their soft targets. In the midst of the prevalent socio-economic hardship in Nigeria, the youths have come to see SARS not necessarily as the arm of the Police that was supposed to fight crime, but as source of unnecessary violations of basic rights, deaths and pains to victims' families even while crime rate continues to swell.

The two re-conceptualized words '#EndSARS' as well as '#Sorosoke' are, against this backdrop, recognized in Nigerian street language or social media parlance as unification statement against a common enemy of the youths and the citizenry, to put an end to the atrocities of SARS. '#Sorosoke' in essence, is garbed with revolutionary idiom, statement of audacity and weapons of mobilization, so virulent and potent that they ignite the flurry and uproar that electrified the already fragile Nigerian cities when the long-cheated, energetic, yet unemployed young people in the country could no longer tolerate the burden of bad leadership and the frustrations of perennially botched dreams for a better nationhood. Their poetry was further ignited by the hopeless encounters of joblessness and poverty in the face

of opulence and wasteful lifestyles of the ruling elites. #Sorosoke which in Yoruba language goes for 'shout out', 'say it loud', 'make your voice to be heard', 'cry out' etc. added to echo the penetrating rhythm of the peaceful protest that unfortunately turned into that grave chapter in contemporary Nigeria socio-political experience, when the platoon of badly-oriented uniformed men opened fire pointblank and maimed, killed a great number of the protesting youths that fateful day. The peaceful, harmless songs at the mass gathering gave the youths that bonding sense of unity and oneness as they gathered at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos to protest bad and iniquitous system. In the 'new' social media-savvy society, the 'digital youths' found a platform to voice out the discrepancies, mobilize without any significant restrains, and indeed, empowered with the tool of poetry and other art forms with which to voice out, sensitize and energize their teeming numbers to call the ruling elites to accountability.

The angry youths who gathered in their thousands on that ill-fated day at the Lekki Toll Gate, whose voices reverberate through the lines in #Sorosoke poetry, bolstered their energy with admixture of re-mixed national anthem and solidarity songs; they engaged in different dramatis like dances, wisecracks, name-calling and rebuke of the brutal system that excludes the toiling and battered majority from benefiting the patrimony and the commonwealth. They pitched their actions and activities against police brutality and the corrupt system, and called for an end to evil system; but they were only armed with words that are magnified in the #Sorosoke poems. There was no physical confrontation or provocations before hell was let loose by the uniformed, AK47-weilding men on uniform who swooped on the mammoth crowd and began to unleash live bullets into their midst. The songs they rendered throughout the procession dwelled on the socio-political anomalies in the society as aptly captured in #Sorosoke anthem, in their wish to draw the attention of the government and political elites to the harsh realities of the moment. The Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos remained the signature canvass, the metaphor for a people's collective will and the commanding post; the signal station or situation room of the stormy activities of that turbelent season. The trigger-happy Nigerian soldiers who unleashed live-bullets on the teeming, yet unarmed protesters, left in the wake of the stampede gory bloody footage to the amazement of the flabbergasted nation and indeed, the global community.

The timing of the #EndSARS movement was another factor in the scenario of the procession that reverberates in the #Sorosoke poetry. It is recalled that the global community was either still struggling to come to terms with the devastations of the Covid-19 crisis and the distress that followed in the aftermath of that global lockdown. The situation of the pandemic and lockdown resulted in weakened economies, depressed social countenance and widespread apathy, especially against bad systems for mismanaged resources and added to stoke the flames of angst in many places and climes. While in other climes, researches were ongoing, aiming at cutting-edge technology for service provision and innovation towards alleviating human sufferings in the light of global lockdowns (Ikpe Akpan et al 2020), and in the attempt to stem the adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic. Palliative were changing hands in different measures to alleviate the pains of the global lockdown; but in Nigeria no significant measure were in place while the existing socio-economic infrastructures and social services remained a far cry in the face of the ravaging global crisis. Little efforts reluctantly put forward by the

government in Nigeria to rescue the vulnerable after much pressure and outcry by the obviously 'abandoned' citizenry, were cornered by the political and powerful elites through hoarding and underhand practices, while police continued to harass, maim and kill citizens unabated. Now the streets were already getting more and more fragile and vulnerable, and tensioned mounted, considering the long and aggravated misrule that the restive youths have had to grapple with. Udoinwang and Akpan rightly point at the socio-economic unease that blight postmodern African society and Nigeria in particular by stating the obvious: "Worsened by the existing phenomenon of socio-economic disparities in society, with the ever-widening gap between 'the haves and the have-nots', there arises a gnawing atmosphere of panic and fears for the present and succeeding generation…" (187). The atmosphere was now ripe for a revolutionary resistance by the underdogs and the vulnerable population grappling with hardship across the sprawling ghettos that dot Nigerian cities and streets.

In the face of all this, the toll gate shooting at the night of 20th October, 2020 ignited the flame and stirred the embers of an already fledgy nation and set it aflame. The poems in the #Soroske collection reflect the ambience of the moments that the #EndSARS movement signifies. The poems collected in this anthology serve as the intellectual resource that would sustain the spirit of the anti-imperialist movement against the greedy and corrupt political elite long after the street movement would have dissolved. At the moment, this trope of poetry has continued to spring up and evolve, and the thinking that #Sorosoke would remain the intellectual bulwark for the perpetuation of the #EndSARS anti-oppression consciousness in the annals of Nigerian literary arsenal. This reminds of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's assertion that: "The classes fighting against imperialism even in its neo-colonial stage and form, have to confront this threat with a higher and more creative culture of resolute struggle" (3). The #Sorosoke poetry would serve the purpose of preserving the sense of resistance and consciousness of resilience for posterity.

The protest experience was directed at the government in Nigeria. It signaled the resolve and determination to bring the leadership to accountability. It had become obvious that the youths were getting more and more impatient with the endemic misrule, poverty of vision among the ruling class, inefficiency and poor vision concerning the fate of the millions of unemployed youths and idle graduates who felt let down by unaccountable ruling elites. The songs rendered at the scenes of the procession became the strident call on the leadership to accountability and an end to police brutality. In effect, the repercussion of the brutal onslaught at the Lekki Toll Gate caused huge losses in terms of material infrastructure and human lives mostly among the youthful population, especially on the urban spaces across most parts of the nation. Hardly would one think that the situation would give such opportunity for the disillusioned, embittered and angry mammoths the enabling energy for creative activisms outside the streets. The Twitter, Facebook, photo reels, video calls, screen-based news releases, YouTube and every known e-media were exploited and purposefully utilized for the pursuit of the set goal of #EndSARS anti-police brutality protest across the Nigerian streets. The social media held the ace for synergy of resolves across the realm where young Nigerians gathered at virtual communities to set the agenda, the action plan and furnish actions, crying out for practical response and attention to their demands for meaningful change. The most intriguing part of the whole action was the birthing of a novel offering into Nigeria's literary ferment. It

amazes how the youths could make such an impromptu detour into song compositions, venting slogans, creatively elucidating abusive, esoteric inscriptions and biting invectives with artistic fervor that littered the social media spaces, all aimed at the stirring up the inchoate, corrupt, clueless leadership and powerful elites. The #Sorosoke #EndSARS poetry became the creative vault of the barbed arrow with which the largely endowed yet unemployed youths deployed to ventilate their frustration and despair against the long misruled nation.

The 20th poem in this anthology titled 'Postscript: #EndSARS', contributed by Niran Okewole could be taken as the pacesetter to the tone that runs through the vein of the entire anthology. The poem is suggestive of how herculean the task could be in any attempt to right the wrongs that have been long rooted in postcolonial Nigerian nationhood, and kind of beckons on the muse of revolution as the inspiring force the conundrum of systemic failure could be arrested. 'Postscript: #EndSARS' goes thus:

This is a trench chant for the other strong breed
The faceless throng who rolled a boulder uphill
With Sisyphus
Who gave up youth, blood and guts
Sometimes it is necessary to speak with stones,
To roar with tongues that won't readily
Marry slogans
That the fear of fear is stronger
Than the daily humiliation of stolen voices
Sometimes (Poem 20).

The turf and forcefulness of the #Sorosoke poetry and #EndSARS struggle is embodied in the hard sayings captured in the lines of the above rendition. It is suggestive here that the actions of the movement, just like the metaphor of its statement goes beyond the usual rhetoric or propaganda that political elites feed on, to serve their naïve promoters and supporters. The appeal of the #EndSARS project is therefore projected one way or the other in the poems in the collection just as it is hinted at in the one stated here above. It rings as a clarion call to an awakening unto a new dawn of revolutionary consciousness, self-liberation and national recovery.

The situation that forms the backdrop to the #Sorosoke subgenre erupted out of the dire and challenging socio-political condition of the Nigerian state in which successive regimes, military or civilian, had driven the nation into the doldrums of misrule, having failed to deliver on the mandate of good governance. The unprecedented revolutionary rupture of October 2020 in Nigeria points at the attempt by the oppressed to take their destiny in their own hands, born out of the conviction that the oppressor never ever willingly let go of their victims, except the victims do something extraordinary that would cause their chains of oppression to snap, even at a great price. The circumstantial entry of #Sorosoke poetry into Nigerian literary market simply reaffirms the long held notion that literary works are products of particular place and time, and that they do not emerge from a vacuum, but given

tone and energy by the social forces that characterize such society as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o would put it. Ayo Kehinde buttresses the point further by asserting that "The writer lives I a society and takes his ideas, characters and situations from that society. Besides, he imaginatively writes about the individuals who inhabit the society and about events which happen in that society" (3). Uwem Affiah echoes this when he stated that "social forces inescapably shape the work of literature". Indeed, to further buttress the linkage between the work of art and protest, Affiah states it aptly thus: "…nowhere in the world have forces of oppression been known to willingly set the oppressed free at any point in history" (284). At the same time, it is important to state here that protest is not new to literary thought, but this phenomenon becomes more applicable in the postcolonial literary experience where literary work remains almost synonymous with protest, either directly or inadvertently. As it is clearly suggestive of #Sorosoke poetry, John Stauffer puts it succinctly that "Protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society, but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society's ills" (xiii). The prevalence of harsh language, the atmosphere of angsts and despairing testaments, coupled with altercations of resistance, symbolisms of brutality and incidents of deaths bloodsheds, upheavals and tension that are palpable all through the poems, it becomes obvious the participatory roles and the state of mind of the contributors. The poems edited in the collection are contributed from different sheds of opinions of the obviously embittered youths filing their respective entry from across the nation. There is no doubt how embittered and disillusioned the contributors of these poems are, and how the poems catalogues the sentiments, emotions and mindset expressed of the youthful contributors.

The poems in their unique styles reflect the circumstances of the creative moments that have given birth to the very genre, and in diverse technics, voice of presentation and intensity expatiate the thematic preferences that reverberate the turmoil, angsts and bloodshed that characterized the streets in Nigerian cities during the #EndSARS imbroglio. Niyi Akingbe points out that "Protest literature does not necessarily utilize techniques which are radically different from those of other categories of literature. However, they often combine such techniques in such a way as to produce effects that are peculiar to the sub-category" (1). There is a prevalence of interrelated undertones of the altercations, bantering and quarrels, mind-sharing, acerbic remarks and rebukes against the oppressive ruling elites, expression of resilience, and sometimes trysts and expression of faith and resolve concerning the destiny of Nigerian nation, expression of amazement and despair that transpired during the protest marches in the streets as captured in the #Sorosoke collection. The concept of #Sorosoke - #EndSARS poetry cuts for itself a voice that directly speaks to power, the anger and hysteria arising from pictures of police brutality rent the ambience of the collection. This becomes the tool by which the mammoth of disheartened youths vent their bottled-up despair against a nation that continues to wobble directionless.

The Foot Soldiers and their War Songs against Power and Iniquities.

The 28th or second to the last poem: 'Looters on High' contributed to the anthology by Tayo Aluko, reels out like rolling gyre in a locomotive vehicle, and in effect, echoes rowdiness and uproar at the Lekki Toll Gate procession. This poem elicits the somber and empathetic atmosphere of the congregating street protesters when they milked out from across the cities

in thousands to put head together, planning their onslaught against the powerful and oppressive state hegemony. The poem can be considered as the take-off, 'oath-taking' stage, the brainstorming and meditation on the protest master plan, as they were singing, shouting out, sharpening their tongues for their war of words, as the scenarios give the essential picturesque of illumination on the landscape of that October, 2020 mass protest. The poem goes thus:

They sat on the tarmac
In their demand for
Change
Their voice rang out,
Chanting in unison
"The labor of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain"

Then the bullets flew,
The singing stopped and
Young hearts were stilled
In a repeat of heinous
crimes
From a century before
When the shooters were
White
And the spoils, the very
Soil
Into which fresh new
Blood now seeped… (Poem 28).

Towards the terminating lines, the persona's voice makes references to the historical backdrops to the current situation which is likened to 'new imperialism' that has reigned for long in Nigeria, but laying aside the despair of the moment, the persona encourages the youthful victims of neo-imperialist henchmen of power that they should not despair or relent in the struggle to liberate the nation or repossess their destinies so that the blood of those already felled by the bullets of dictatorial leadership may not be in vain.

The restive temperament is further reified in the 29th poem in the collection titles 'Arise, O Compatriots, Nigeria's Call Obey' contributed by Chinonyelum Anyichie, which further elucidates the situation that brought about that fateful night at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos. The aim and strategy employed by the persona in this song-poetry is achieved through descriptive skill, skillfully crafted diction and discernible allusions while exuding sense of patriotism, audacity and resilience. Through this sustained application of style, the scene of the events that transpired during those hours at the Lekki Toll Gate are reminisced, simulated and purposefully targeted towards drawing empathy and igniting feelings of doggedness and humanity that informed the protest action. In this poem, Nigeria's national anthem is deployed as motif and brought to scrutiny, deconstructed, and its originally intended themes

are made to pass through the crucible history. The poem is presented as a processional song in a tone of parody and the persona plays the role of a conductor, moderator or mediator who conducts the audience through the milestones of a nation that is persistently blighted with banal leadership. The poem rendered in as song replicates the paradoxes that characterize Nigerian nationhood, and in doing this, the rendition is regularly punctuated with echoes that reverberate the chaotic nature of contemporary Nigerian experience. The mammoth crowd of youths who are conducting peaceful procession, singing and drumming, dancing and shouting in protest at the Lekki Toll Gate meeting point are invoked into vivid picture by the persona. Of course, in reality the youths were not actually hidden on that fateful night of the soldiers' bullets. The global audience could see how that fateful moment was dramatized by the protesters, because many multinational broadcast stations beamed light on the scene as they were rendering Nigeria's national anthem together, holding hands in hands, raising Nigerian flag and chanting their slogans of #EndSARS as their vocal weapon. Suddenly the uniformed men swooped on the scene and unleashed bullets point-blank wounding, maiming and killing many of the protesters. The poem 'Arise, O Compatriots, Nigeria's Call Obey' contributed by Chinonyelum Anyichie depicts the scenario just described:

While we sang and held the flag, singing a song that never served us,
While we sat down, holding hands,
Brothers with one voice, brother with one fate,
Death came in torrents of hot steel.
One gasp here, another there
Will mine be the next?

While we begged and cried and begged for bread we baked,
They opened fire on us in the cover of the night;
Men green with envy at our guts;

Cowardly men, zombies without minds;
They opened fire on us,
For asking to have a seat at the table we built,
For having without training what they trained many years for-
Strength

"The labor of our heroes past shall never be in vain". (singing)
… (Poem 29).

It is a song poetry dedicated to that somber moment of Lekki Toll Gate massacre that occurred that night and immortalizes the compatriots that felled to the bullet that fateful night.

The statement by the editors of the collection, Yeku and Verissimo buttresses the significance of #Sorosoke poetry to the socio-political reality of contemporary Nigeria, that it goes beyond funs, fanfare or show of excitement of protesting youths, or as luxury of any sort, but functional as creative weapon for the ventilation of bottled-up desires, and for actualization of moral awakening of society, as well as being equally useful as strategy of social

sensitization, and wake-up call against the tyranny of power wielders. Thus the trope remains a veritable intellectual resource for engagement with powers and negotiation of nationhood. Never like this has poetry given voice to the younger generation for checkmating the inanities of the insensitive, greedy and corrupt ruling elites. The editors' statement on the blurb of the anthology affirms thus: "…Poetry is not a luxury. It is a tool that can respond to any form of inhumanity and social injustice". This is aptly stated and the assertion reverberates powerfully in the cadence of every line of the poems in the collection. The trope aligns with temperament of poetry of revolution elsewhere. Concerning French Revolution, Yasmine Getz states that "poetry during the Resistance… designates a specific period in which poets revisited by using their words to "Perpetuate" their country, to restore it in and through poetry" (3). This is applicable to the '#Sorosoke' poetry that came out of the '#EndSARS' protest movement in Nigeria in October 2020 and now has continued to blossom in Nigerian literary scene.

Back to the first poem in the volume: 'Nigeria Will Not End Me (Final words twitted by Okechukwu Obi-Enadhuze)', is a remix by the co-editor of the collection, Jumoke Verissimo, in which she reproduces the last words twitted by one of the slain victims of the tragic shootings at Lagos Lekki Toll Gate before the victim finally gave up the ghost from the injuries sustained during the shooting. Verissimo's epitaph is presented not just in memory of the fallen protester, but in memory of the many casualties who in one way or the other fell victim of the shootings: It goes thus:

> How could we not have known that our land drinks only young blood
> We ask for bread; it gives us stone; we ask to live, it takes our breath
> We stand up tall; it cuts our legs; we sit wearily; it shoots us down
> Don't we know it already, don't we? To age in this land, is to arrive in a grave?
> (Poem 1).

With the tone of a dirge the aura of the rendition evokes death, a mourning-house setting and echoes the plaintive lament of the dying victims, symbolizing the anguish of the hapless casualties on the throes of installment death. The poem also depicts the helplessness of the weak in a milieu where might seems to be right. The metaphor painted here, like in most other poems in the collection, symbolizes a society that is unsettled or agonizing. The poem reverberates the widespread angst and disillusionment, despair and hopelessness of the moment that has resulted in the present angst and turmoil. The diction in the composition and aura that pervades the rendition betray a failed state situation, imagined as a place where life is harsh and short; where dreams and aspirations of the younger generations are stifled while the old, corrupt and 'expired' elites hold the hapless majority to ransom. The poem exudes the sentiment and emotions that gingered the #EndSARS protest movement.

The sentiment in Yeku's rendition (Poem 7) echoes Verissimo's as analyzed above. Yeku's poem is titled 'A Tree that Falls'. It is a direct indictment of the powerful ruling elites, who care little or nothing about the underprivileged in society. An extract from Yeku's long rendition goes thus:

The Nigerian human, like a tree that falls
in an uninhabited forest, is never heard

Not by pot-bellied prepends whose noses
perceive only the smelly melodies of their own ramblings.

Not by monsters whose belch is a tirade
Hurling loud boastings after a conquest
of the communion table

Not by the gunshots of generals tongue-tied
by the horrors of conscience seared
by the ugliness of indifference … (Poem 7).

In the next poem by the same author, the tone of deviance and resilience gains prominence- a clear reflection of the raving momentum that characterized the streets where disillusioned young men and women have laid siege of during the #EndSARS street procession. The poem is titled 'Bubu' [this is taken to mean a coinage from boo-boo in light of the context of its deployment]. The title is taken from the common Nigerian street slang. The poem somewhat projects the angst of the protesting youths fuming in the streets in the moments of the #EndSARS procession. 'Bubu' is the common word now turned lingua franca of the street that signifies lies, falsehood, deceptiveness, etc. It is the personification of the falsehood-peddling rulers who keep talking big and loud at public places when they seek non-deserving credibility of members of the public, or promising good life at elections campaign periods but translate this into lies after they are sworn into the political offices. The poem goes thus:

The streets are heaving with anxieties,
as screens and smartphones pour tales of grief
into your chest: you wander what gestures
to end czars will unloose the tongue of Bubu

But alas, Bubu speaks, but of clouds without rain.
Dreaming hurricane as he gaslights a nation
without fuel, in a paradise drained of life and luster:
those who die are as the cattle of Daura , invisible. (Poem 8).

This tone here is a medley of elegy for the dead as well as a sharp-shooting at the wielders of crude force who serve as attack dogs for powerful rulers of state. Their given roles are targeted at the hapless youths who are only singing and dancing in peaceful procession. The play on the expression "end czars" in the fourth line of the first stanza in the extract above should be noted. The Nigerian political elites are projected as exploitative and they wield draconian tendencies like the ancient czars, and they play the "czars" and overlords to terrorize the 'subjects', preferring to be worshiped by those they were supposed to serve in trust. The songs reflected in the poems are the way of expressing disapproval for misrule and clueless leadership. The actions and reactions in the streets in the #EndSARS days are without doubt

predicated on the uncertainties and gloom that confront the youthful generation in An otherwise richly endowed nation that paradoxically seems to have lost sight of the direction where to lead the nation. The reference to Daura in the last line of the poem is equally a metaphorical allusion to the President of state who hails from Daura, the president of the Federal Republic who promised "change" and Eldorado at the time of electioneering campaign but has remained insensitive and incapacitated to work out solution to the prevalent hunger, poverty, insecurity, poor economic management and lamentations in the land since he ascended the presidency.

The 21st poem in the collection: 'Peace and Terror', contributed to the anthology by Damilola Oyeleke, further conjures the troubling imagery of the present moment and social angst captured in #Sorosoke poetry. The protest aesthetics in the genre is a creative innovation that has registered its advent into Nigeria's literary space. The poem, in a sense, narrates the terror that was used by the powerful but largely ill-trained, heartless military operatives to subvert peaceful and legitimate protest by the aggrieved Nigerian citizenry, mostly the youths, to press for socio-economic justice and accountable leadership in the nation. 'Pease and Terror' maps the moral cum psychological landscape that birthed the tragic drama of 2020. 'Peace and Terror' goes thus:

We took to the streets with nothing but our placards and our voices ringing loudly
Our leaders watched for days sickening at our naivety and waiting for our
tiredness
They failed to recognize they were the naïve ones
Thinking we still held the meekness they forced upon us and those before us
We came in hundreds, in different parts of the country, with different important
Roles
The world heard our chants for days,
Bore witness to our peace and unity
They fired shots, hired hoodlums, threw teargas and more
Hoping to incite violence and discredit our demands
Yet we returned, honoring the lives lost and swearing their justice
They might say they won
With blood on the streets
And building burning
They would think they won
…
We will not get tired of demanding for better
When we march again, you will hear our voices ring even louder
Even before then, you will watch us plan your exit (Poem 21).

There is no doubt that after the #EndSARS movement, the socio-political thermometer of Nigerian state would never remain the same again. The upheavals cross the nation and the global outrage that marked the experience shifted the paradigm for the negotiation of the terms of citizenship and accountability that, no doubt, may sometime in the future beckon

with a more, far-reaching consequences. Not only was there an unprecedented physical motions by the tensed-up, mass of unemployed and disillusioned youths who came together in a shared consciousness to confront the Nigerian state on the streets. The jittery response of the government to reform the SARS unit demonstrate the power of the youths protest. The social media space became the natural platform on which the populist stirrings could be driven, propagated, sensitized, mobilized and activated towards realizing the set goal.

It is instructive to note that not a single poem in the collection deviates from the revolutionary temperament and outright anger. The collection reels like a symphony of diverse progressions, and interconnected notation that dovetails into the thematic convergence of the entire rendition. Apart from those accommodated in the analysis so far, there are other bitingly acerbic entries that intensify the algorithm of #Sorosoke street poetry in this collection. Idowu Odeyemi's contribution: '& They Killed Poor Jimoh Isaiq' dwells on the pervasions and murderous spree of SARS unit of the Nigeria police, and echoes the characteristic rhythm of the anthology. The persona queries rhetorically thus:

For how long will these gruesome poli-trick-cians
Of our motherland continue to feed our bodies
Bullet for using the power in our voices?
… Poem 5).

This echoes Kola Tubosun's 'Blood-Spangled Banner' in poem number 6, in which the poet illuminates and meditates the numerous bloody scenes of police brutality that add up to paint the in bad light metaphorically captured as wallowing "in the Ezu River of bones and blood", where the bodies of its victims "sing with the reddened mud", and the streets echo get stained with the blood of youthful victims that daily fell from the bullet of merciless police. The tempo of the #EndSARS movement might have subsided, but its echoes reverberates unceasingly through the concaves of #Sorosoke poetry. The genre has indeed come to stay and will keep innovating as other editions have continued to flower in the internet, social platforms and in the bookshelves in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The analysis has so far engaged with the now trending genre of #Sorosoke poetry in Nigerian literary ferment, which had its stormy entry into the scene in the throes of the #EndSARS movement that epitomized in the Lekki Toll Gate mass killings in Lagos, Nigeria in October, 2022. The literary form has been found veritable, essentially for the reason that it would serve as reminder of that unprecedented chapter in the annals of Nigeria's political evolution, especially in terms of the critical impetus of the continued quest for accountable leadership in Nigeria. Indeed, the genre tacitly projects the potentialities of peoples' power and gives voice to the greater majority of the citizenry that had hitherto remained unheard. The statement metaphorized by the genre points out that no matter how strong, powerful or gripping the power hegemony holds the people to ransom, power in the final analysis, belongs to the people and a people can confront power, call power to accountability or change power peacefully or violently through any means imaginable; either through deviance, resilient actions or outright violent overthrow by the common people with mere singing, marching

processions and vocal confrontation wherever a people are determined to come together in one accord. The study has also demonstrated the veracity of poetry as intellectual resource for reinforcing populist discourse, re-creating posterity of a people and for serving as cross-generational pedagogy on the socio-political experience of nations.

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