

RETHINKING HUMANITY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IN OGOCHUKWU PROMISE'S COLLECTION OF POEMS, *WILD LETTERS*

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Abstract: The Twentieth-first Century, in perpetual change, is an appraisal for scholars, creative writers and intellectuals to question the future of humans as social beings. Ogochukwu in her collections of poems, *Wild Letters*, empowers both her persona and the addressee to question their place and responsibility in this everchanging world. This work aims to show Ogochukwu as a philosopher. Differently put, the objective is to discuss the extent to which the poems identify her a poetess of new world order. To achieve this aim, Psychological Reader Response theory by Holland serves as theoretical framework for my analyses. As results, it has been discovered that all humans are responsible, to some extent, for the economic and socio-political violences in our societies nowadays. Equally important, the study reveals that, for effective and durable social development and peace, human society should revise their hypocritical understanding of human responsibility.

Keywords: Humanity, Nature, Responsibility, Love, and Redefinition.

REPENSER L'HUMANITE ET LA RESPONSABILITE HUMAINE DANS LE RECUEIL DE POEMES *WILD LETTERS* DE OGOCHUKWU PROMISE

Résumé : Le vingt et unième siècle en perpétuelle transformation est une période de prise de conscience des savants, écrivains, et intellectuels sur l'avenir des humains entant qu'êtres sociaux. Ogochukwu dans son recueil de poèmes, « *Wild Letters*, » commissionne son personnage et le lecteur à s'interroger sur leurs places et leurs rôles dans ce monde en constant changement. Ce travail vise à montrer Ogochukwu comme un philosophe. En d'autres mots, l'objectif consiste à voir à quel point les poèmes identifient l'auteur comme une poétesse d'un nouvel ordre mondial. La théorie de la réception et de la lecture notamment sa branche dénommée "Psychological Reader Response Theory" développée par Holland sert de cadre théorique. Ce travail a découvert, entre autres, que tous les humains sont responsables de l'instabilité socio-politique et économique dans les sociétés. Pour une paix et un développement social durables et effectifs, la société humaine doit revoir la compréhension hypocrite de la responsabilité humaine.

Mots-clés : Humanité, nature, responsabilité, amour, et redéfinition.

Introduction

The critical awareness of scholars, writers and intellectuals is to question the future of humans as social beings having the three dimensions -body, soul and spirit – that animals are not gifted with in this twentieth-first century in perpetual change. This rapid change of the world both positive and negative is perceptible in every aspect of human life. Science and technology are the wings that impart this change which affects both non-human beings

and human beings. Common people either undergo or enjoy these transformations without much attention and awareness toward their criticising or questioning. Ogochukwu in her collections of poems, *Wild Letters*, empowers both her persona and the addressee to evaluate human responsibility in this everchanging world. As a result, one may wonder: why should she question the existing prevailing order of the world? What does she have anew to offer? This work aims to show Ogochukwu as a philosopher. In other words, this article discusses the extent to which the poems identify the author as a poetess of new world order. That is, how the persona endeavours to redefine human's responsibility as a getaway and antidote for human suffering and socio-political violence and malaise, because "it is when people start to talk like this that they are beginning to think philosophically. In this case they are embarking on what is known as political philosophy (Magee, 2001: 6)". To refer to Ogochukwu in this collection as philosopher is to reveal the fact that her verses are "an essentially unitary line of development" (1965: 71) in Hursel's terms when discussing "various philosophies since the Renaissance". To achieve this objective, Reader Response Literary Criticism serves as theoretical framework for my analyses. Tyson (2006: 172) in his book, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, distinguishes five headings in this theory: transactional reader-response theory, affective stylistics, subjective reader-response theory, Psychological Reader-response theory, and social reader-response theory. As a common point to them, they all agree that "a written text is not an object, despite its physical existence, but an event that occurs within the reader, whose response is of primary importance in creating the text." However, Psychological Reader Response Theory" by Holland fits well to help achieve my objective. Tyson while explaining this branch of the theory, observes

Holland believes that we react to literary texts with the same psychological responses we bring to events in our daily lives. The situations that cause my defenses to emerge in my interpersonal life will cause my defenses to emerge when I read. To use a simple example, if I am quick to dislike new acquaintances who remind me of my alcoholic father, then I probably will be quick to dislike any fictional character who reminds me of him (2006: 180).

The reader's impression on the text is then conditional upon what happens in his or her psychology or inner mind: be it fear, joy, sorrow, anxiety, frustration, etc. which may or may not find fulfilment in the text. Aesthetically, Ogochukwu's verses work, on the one hand, on the addressee's psychology in a fantastic way to lure him into her philosophical world, and on the other hand, revive in him sentiments and resentments dormant in him. The persona constantly courts the reader to abhor the poetess's degrading image of the real world in favour of her would-be world devoid of calamities as resulting from the persona's experiences. As the reader voyages with the persona throughout the whole collection, the call for new humanity becomes so tangible that it dissipates every resistance and reluctance on the part of the reader. The reader's psychology finds agreement in the poetess's poetic world. The poetess's ideological enterprise has shaped the whole collection in Heywood's terms.

In the first place, a poem is thing, a pattern of marks in the space of the page. It is made up of letters, and words, and sentences arranged in lines, and lines in stanzas. The whole makes a distinct shape, either regular or irregular, within the white emptiness of the paper. In Nortje's *Words* and Choonara's *Response* we are aware of this concrete shape

which acts out the message of the poem in a more vivid and immediate way even than the sentence says it (1983, p. ii).

This quotation highlights the fact that what a poem does to the reader is also consequential to its form or shape on the page, for the shape and the poet's message are blended for ideological purpose. In other words, the paratextual elements in the collection are clues towards the poem's assessment. Habib while talking about the influence poetry has on its readers observes that "Plato was acutely aware of the disturbing power of poetry to affect people at the level of their passions and morality.... He saw poetry as appealing to our lower natures, disposing us toward irrational behavior, and distracting us from the rational pursuit of truth." (2005: 708). The power of the diction in the poems over the reader results from the structure of the whole anthology into seven parts named after the seven days of the week, bearing titles as "Monday -Sage and Seed, take these offerings", "Tuesday - come, let us redefine humanity", "Wednesday – And bask in a culture of sharing - joy of communal living", "Thursday -That life's perplexities may counterbalance as Aristocrats give care", "Friday – To love in resolute toleration as the soil soaks it all up", "Saturday – Thistles, Moth orchids at the departure lounge! Still flowers bloom" and Sunday - If Life is not a gift, what then is?". The poetess's endeavour to redefine humanity and her constant call for some values as human offering and gift to the humanity becomes her leitmotiv let alone her philosophical stance as the reader's "identity theme" in Holland's terms.

Holland calls the pattern of our psychological conflicts and coping strategies our *identity theme*. He believes that in our daily lives we project that identity theme onto every situation we encounter and thus perceive the world through the lens of our psychological experience. Analogously, when we read literature, we project our identity theme, or variations of it, onto the text. That is, in various ways we unconsciously recreate in the text the world that exists in our own mind. Our interpretations, then, are products of the fears, defenses, needs, and desires we project onto the text (Tyson, 2006: 183).

Holland's point in this quotation is of crucial importance to reveal the reader's non-neutrality in meaning making of literary texts. The lexis and praxis of literary texts have no real meaning beyond readers' experiences and psychological frame. There is a complicity between the literary creation and its readers toward meaning gearing as Habib observes it about the scholars of Reader Response Theory: "there are elements of a reader-response outlook in the theoretical writings of Virginia Woolf, Louise Rosenblatt, and Wayne Booth. All of these figures recognized that the author of a literary text uses certain strategies to produce given effects in their readers or to guide their responses" (2005: 709). My arguments in this work are organised into two sections whereby the first one, humanity in degradation process and human hypocrisy and selfishness, highlights the poetess's awful image of the world and the second one, toward redefining humanity and human life, stresses her call for new humanity grounded on new values systems.

1. Humanity in Degradation Process: Human Hypocrisy and Selfishness

The ecosystem is unique and common to all living and non-living beings whose tranquillity, peace and lifespan require awareness and responsibility from every constituent element. Humanity, an entity of the ecosystem is hierarchically structured for harmony and peace purpose. This structural organisation implies levels of responsibility and

accountability. As results, parental responsibility is lower than the children's and the political leaders' responsibility is as well higher than the population's in terms of accountability. In this vein, the prevalence of harmony and peace becomes a matter of proportional responsibility at different levels whereby failure gives way to all sort of harmful things the world witnesses nowadays. Ogochukwu, in her collection of poems, *Wild Letters*¹, endeavours to awaken and revive the conscience of the readers on the hypocritical and selfish ways people carry out their responsibilities. She does this through questioning and wonderment in Magee's terms when he elaborates on the role of philosophers: "philosophers question the fundamental principles underlying all knowledge and existence (2001: 1). In her verses, the reader, through challenging and accusatory image and tone, is invited questioningly to acknowledge the poetess's blame on the addressee because,

a "text" involves a psychological process in which author and reader interact through a physical text. One cannot read a text except by the processes by which we perceive texts (and they are driven by our sense of the text's relation to our feelings and values, including our ideas of how one ought to read a text (Holland, 1990: 55-56).

The poetess's blame moves from parental or individual to collective spheres. When an individual is irresponsible this will sooner or later affect the whole humanity. In the poem "The Handwriting", the speaker after accepting the importance and usefulness of children, reproaches parents for their irresponsibility and carelessness in childbearing: "A rounded belly need not be looked upon as sin/ Least of all the unbearable body within it/ Which may arrive as often as it is summoned/ A tingling responsiveness on the inside of the thighs/ Leaving a loud poetry of knock-on-effects (WL: 48)". The speaker concludes his tirade in a nervous tone toward both parents - the man and the woman - who abandon their children in the streets carelessly. It is at this level that the reader is not and should be not "devoid of all aesthetic sensibility (Husserl, 2005: 13-14)" so as to perceive and respond to the gaps the text offers.

We lean over, cursing not the senseless groin and red lips of joy
But with lax scatterbrained savagery of the tongue
Hurring the seed to the slaughter slab -shamelessly
Only to sprawl on the floor of our being, chewing bones (WL:48).

The "senseless groin and the red lips of joy" is both the man and woman who enjoy their sexual affairs but are irresponsible for the fruit of their intercourse because they carry out hypocritically their marital responsibility: they enjoy sexual pleasure but are not ready to make sure the world is not negatively affected by the results of their joy and pleasure. Many are such people who jeopardise the common humanity to us all. The poetess's anger is against the whole humanity, through her use of the personal pronoun "we" as the speaker's voice, who curses, insults, imprisons, hangs, beats, and criticises these children instead of 'the senseless groin', the parents who hurry their children "to the slaughter slab shamelessly". The verses at this level stresses Heidegger's view according to which "art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical" (1975: 78). These children do not just end up on streets to become dangers for the society, for some of them try hard but in vain to make both ends meet. The poetess while

¹ Ogochukwu Promise, *Wild Letters*, Oracle Books LTD: Lagos, Nigeria, 2013. This book is referred to in this work as WL, with page numbers added.

blaming these children's genitors, holds as well the society accomplice as it aggravates the situation through inactions, carelessness and wrong attitudes towards these street children.

I ask you to take another look
 At the sunken cheeks of the street child
 Meandering between moving automobiles
 Hawking peanuts, wiping your windshield with
 Clean urine from the canal
 As your wailing siren chases him to the gutter
 His face, buried in the pollution of your powerful machine
 Which –he longed to touch, (WL: 67)

The reproach of Ogochukwu to the society in these verses is the bad, indifferent and harsh attitudes of the owners of automobiles, cars, lorries, motos and buses, toward the street children who try their best to sell things and to do petit jobs at traffic lights intercessions in towns. Since “art then is the becoming and happening of truth” (Heidegger, 1975: 71), the diction of the poetess is of interest as the image of how these events happen in real life at roundabouts and traffic lights is brought back accusatively into the reader's psychology and conscience. The children's “meandering, hawking and wiping” while cars and lorries move unnoticeably risking their lives, bring tears and regrets to the reader as the diction counterbalances with the car owners' wailing siren chasing them to the gutter as they bury in the pollution of the automobiles. At the collective level, the poetess, in her poem, “Seat of Power” reveals the fundamental reason of people's hypocrisy vis-à-vis their responsibility. The speaker in a sort of collective acceptance of the chaos in which the world is, points at human gluttony in power system. The poem begins with the poetess's ironical definition of power as a matter of “influence, affluence, a startling change of air” whereby:

We let it all disappear into mouth,
 That small opening in a body so huge!
 Lengthening throat. Appetite so voracious
 Swallowing steadily, swelling in every direction
 Till so grotesque and unmindful of the errors in our glut
 We put the nation in harm's way
 The reek of our chunky ills, unbecoming. Vulgar (WL:45).

The poetess's irony is revealed in the metonymic and euphemistic image of human mouth, “that small opening in a body so huge” but which constitutes the danger for the whole world. The euphemism “small opening” is to mock at what it does in human life: “swallowing steadily, swelling in every direction till so grotesque and unmindful of the error in our glut”. The mouth is just a small hole but it leads the whole ‘huge body’ to be “unmindful of the errors in our glut”. Because of this carelessness and selfish responsibility, “we put the nation in harm's way” whereby lives are destroyed. Promise's diction confirms Fish's belief that “it is impossible even to think of a sentence independently of its context” (1980: 311): the poems' meaning runs through the verses and the whole poem. The context here is largely the reader's and partially the one of the poems. The poetess's use of the personal pronoun “we” strengthens her irony to lessen the accusation toward the political leaders even though she does not exclude anybody. Aesthetically, the poem is balanced in the speaker's use of “but”

to structurally show the cause-effect relationship in the poem. The impact of human's glut as the above stanza unveils it, leads some other people to be nepotist while the true qualified and competent people are neglected unmindfully.

So you've found good hands, huh!
Your school leaving daughter, your adviser
Her granny, in the Senate
Your son, your aid, your in-law, head of protocol
Your townsmen, occupying every position
Little wonder your Ministry's backslide movement
I see you remedied the situation
With six mansions in England
Installing your bootlickers as caretakers (WL: 54)

The speaker is morose in this stanza because of the selfishness of the political leaders who mismanage the nation's wealth. The image the poetess makes of the situation is so alarming as she hints at the impunity that reigns as these people are on power carrying out hypocritically their political responsibility. Fuchs, Breyer & al editors of *Karl Jaspers' Philosophy and Psychopathology* observe that "the awareness that something is wrong or simply not as it should be disturbs the person, although he or she may not be able to say what is actually going on" (2014: 152). Their observation is real and true as one considers African population who finally resigns after many years of illusion in such a situation in the above quotation. In front of this nepotism whereby the leader's daughter is his adviser in the senate, his son is his protocol aid, and his townsmen occupy every high position, the majority of people suffers while just few relatives and friends enjoy their lives. As a result, the poem 'Anarchy' has become the voice of these voiceless people who finally indulge in violence as the unique left opportunity to get rid of such leaders because "the material productive forces of society" (Marx, 1976: 3) have understood the thieving and hypocritical attitudes of their leaders. In a discursive technique, the speaker and the addressee reveal, on the one hand, the grassroots of how leaders manage the country and, on the other hand, predict the future of the world if due attention is not paid to these poor and oppressed people of different nations. Today, there is no country that does not experience the violence the poetess is addressing in her poems as resulting from arrogant, selfish and hypocritical use of political power. When "we, the Bakassi Boys serve with heart and might/ we have agreed to work hard and eat well/ but there are some who insist the food we all cook/ belong to them alone, they man the kitchen 2-4-7" (WL: 55), then peace and harmony will be hard to reign. In this metonymy where the kitchen stands for the nation, the food is therefore the nation's wealth and treasure that profit only the leaders who become the prey of the oppressed people: "we watch out for them with our glistening knives/ like ghouls they prowled our nights till aground, / our vigilante forced them, breaking ten skulls for a wounded finger/ the crushing sound of their thieving hearts/ like pop music under our boots/we shall not relent till the society is rid of them all" (WL: 55). The bloody mood of the poem and its warlike image are frightful as the poor decide to rid the society of such leaders by violence. As "the text is examined closely, often line by line or even word by word, in order to understand how (stylistics) it affects (affective) the reader in the process of reading" (Fish, 1980: 45), there are fear and worry that overcome the reader and remind him of the awaiting insecurity of the world. The warning of Ogochukwu in these verses is to raise awareness on the issue and how

political power should be handled for the better of the whole society. By giving the floor to the poor and the oppressed to voice their sorrows and the reasons of their violent actions, the poetess, far from justifying their deeds, is ringing the house bell of these leaders to reconsider how they carry their responsibility. The poem on the whole awakens the reader's "defenses" as Holland stipulates it as an effect of the text on the psychology of the reader. For years people are hypocritically responsible: that is their power and position serve only and first their own interests. In another poem 'Boko Haram: Rocky Argument', the reader discovers to his surprise that this group of people as well justify vehemently their bloody actions. The portrayal of their actions is painted reproachfully as follows:

You who take pleasure in the cries of innocent children
 As your invidious bombs blast their brown skin, chopping them into pieces
 Suya meat, grilled in your frenzied fire,
 Blinding smoke –your thick night recreation
 You who in cold blood rip apart pregnant women and their unborn babies
 Monsters from the thickest wilderness
 Everyone's nightmare!
 You lay siege for your country men and cut them down before sunrise
 You set ablaze places of worship, brandishing your butcher's knives
 Like rabid dog, you lap up the blood of men
 What do we know of you who know no book? (WL: 59)

Despite the fact that they "know no book" as the speaker concludes his accusation, they have drawn the attention of the whole world on themselves through violence as a way to force the leaders to listen to them. In Nigeria for instance, it is known that "the Boko Haram conflict has triggered an acute humanitarian and forced displacement crisis, with devastating social and economic impacts on the population, further deepening underdevelopment and regional inequalities" (Bertoni, 2018: 5). As the poem's atmosphere shows the atrocity of these people by referring to them as "monster from the thickest wilderness" who take pleasure in people's cries, blood, suffering and death, the reader is somehow projected into a jungle with carnivores. The feverish feeling of the reader when this portion is read questions Holland's notion of "identity theme" which is the reader's "psychological conflicts and coping strategies" (1980: 120). However, when the poetess gives the floor to these people as the question is put to them "what do we know of you who know no book?", they surprise the reader when the stanza begins with: "I shall tell you then, ignorant scholar" (WL: 59). By referring to the speaker as "ignorant scholar", the addressee reveals the world's neglect and carelessness of their situation. As a result, he believes he is right and is ready to do more until his situation is understood and reconsidered by the leaders who "have taken everything from us and kept us down/ all that oil syphoned foreign banks/ all that cheating and cunning learnt from books/ all the cake shared among rogues/ whom we the almajaris –go beg from –/ are those not what ought to belong to us all? (WL: 59-60). At this level, Eagleton's conclusion that "understanding is radically historical: it is always caught up with the concrete situation I am in, and that I am trying to surpass" (2003: 55) gives credence to these people's reactions because they are the streets boys whom nobody considers and pays attention to when they were still good normal children who can be saved. But through the collective inconsideration on the one hand and the politicians' on the other hand they take up arms to voice their suffering. At this level, the poetess wants all of us to plead guilty before these people. How could we imagine that our neglect and refusal to help

and pay attention to these poor street children would hatch these kinds of people some years later? The situation that leads to such depiction of the poetess is largely the selfish and hypocritical managing of political power and responsibilities on the one hand, but on the other hand, the collective indifference and neglect are also implied. However, since the “immediate goal of interpretation, like the immediate psychological goal of our daily lives, is to fulfil our psychological needs and desires” (Tyson, 2006: 183) the reader worries about the future of the humanity with such people and prepares him to welcome the poetess’s new world order as her philosophical call to the humanity. When people use and carry out their responsibility only for their own interests such outcomes are unavoidable. To corroborate his reasons, the addressee shouts rhetorically at the speaker:

How much longer do we remain deprived, dehumanized, silenced!
Ever bearing begging bowls in which privileged thieves
Drop a coin and derisive laughter. For centuries they’ve kept us so
.....
Does it hurt you that we woke from our slumber
That we are armed –matching every delivery
With Lucifer’s insurrection in resounding aplomb?
For we are bombs seeking explosion
We crush still all that stand in our way (WL: 60-61).

The above quotation highlights the collective responsibility of the society which breeds injustice and inequality as far as collective resources are concerned in different nations all over the world. In this collective responsibility, politicians are the first and most powerful instrument to revisit their understanding and approach to social stability. Bleich’s “symbolization: our perception and identification of our reading experience create a conceptual, or symbolic, world in our mind as we read” (1975, 68) is effective as the addressee threatens and defines their objective in these terms: “we crush still all that stand in our way”; and this symbolization leads to our “resymbolization [which] occurs when our experience of the text produces in us a desire for explanation” (Bleich, 1975: 68) which is the enterprise and duty of scholarly researchers to raise people’s awareness. In some remote past, it was rare let alone absent to experience this kind of violence as it is today in nearly every country. Nowadays, it has become the model for different oppressed and deprived people to take up arms to claim their rights because negotiations have been so far manipulated and biased to lure them by postponing real problems. It is very dangerous for the world to present negative models for people because they serve as precedent in any attempt to solve problems. But instead of finding real solutions to the issue, every country develops strategies and instruments of oppressions to impose a deadly silence on such people who end up revigorated and uncontrollable in their counteractions. Ogochukwu, in these verses shows what is awaiting the world in a near future despite the sophisticated weapons and others deterrent means to guaranty collective peace and harmony. At this level, Rosenblatt’s “determinate meaning [which] refers to what might be called the facts of the text, certain events in the plot or physical descriptions clearly provided by the words on the page [and her] indeterminate meaning, or indeterminacy, [which] refers to “gaps” in the text” (1978: 16) come to one point: there is danger ahead the world which needs a redefinition or a new order. By showing case this catastrophic image of the world in degradation, the poetess, as a philosopher, does not want the reader to despair but to think

of survival possibilities for the world. The next subtitle discusses Ogochukwu's suggestion to save the world from these violences and atrocities.

2. Toward Redefining Humanity: The Essence of Human Life

Despite the awful, regretful and degrading image of human society as it is really known and highlighted in the poems, Ogochukwu believes there is still a way out for the world to be a better living place for all without exception. This is even her poetic ideology in this collection of our study. As the reader opens up the book, he discovers amazingly and this invitation:

Sage and seed, take these offerings
Come, let us redefine humanity!
And bask in a culture of sharing –joy of communal living.
That life's perplexities may counterbalance as aristocrats give care
To love in resolute toleration as the soil soaks it all up –
If life is not a gift, what then is? (WL: 15)

This quote is the first poem standing as the prologue to whole collection and it hints at the poetess's ideological vision in this clear statement: "come, let us redefine humanity! / and bask in a culture of sharing –joy of communal living". These two verses become the leitmotiv that traverses the whole collection. This leitmotiv is carried out by the diction "redefine". And as Senanu highlights it:

What has happened in our approach to the poem is that we have discovered that a single word, both in its literal and symbolic meaning is the main structural device that the poet uses to impose a unified and coherent meaning on his thoughts. An appreciation of what happens in a poem can come as we try to discover both the strategies and the devices of organization in each poem (1999: 17).

The poetess holds onto this call to invite the reader to join her by all means in this redefinition project after the display of the sorrowful images that many of her poems reveal of the actual world. This call is what makes the poetess a philosopher as she is showing new ways for the humanity in trouble and chaos. Her poems contain ingredients for her new world order. The persona stresses this as he claims to be the "seeker of silence and unknown" (WL:20). A philosopher is not an illusionist but a reasonable and thoughtful person who, having analysed the society and discovered its flaws and dangers, rings another bell for the inhabitants. Ogochukwu, throughout the collection, takes the society responsible for what befalls it because there is no doubt that "the moral dignity of human beings, the ability of people and nations to live in harmony, as well as our capacity to know ourselves and the world – were plunged into a mode of moral, spiritual, and intellectual crisis" (Habib, 2005: 558). Her invitation to the redefinition of the humanity which needs reparation and healing that will counterbalance 'life's perplexities' is sponsored by some values the poems embody. This redefinition as the poem underlines it, involves "love in resolute toleration" because life whether individual or collective is a gift that nobody should destroy in any case. Two important ingredients are put forward by the poetess in her alternative for the new humanity: "love and toleration" as they help "bask in a culture of sharing –joy of communal living" and "rekindle smouldering embers of failing friendships and cold handshakes/ in emotive

embrace, our laughter swilling" (WL:19). For this alternative to work, the speaker does not just naively and rhetorically lecture the addressee, but rather he posits the basics:

I empty my pride and greed at your feet, O humanity!

 Black, yellow, white, brown, gray. Red blood in green veins of gods
 I decant my fears of tomorrows as I did those of yesterday
 Unclothed, I prostrate before the seemliness of your being
 Accept, Oh people, this total self-giving: soul, skin, sweetness
 Let life, its spirit and essence embrace your grandeur
 Made manifest in the care of man, earth and means

 Indeed greatness is born of giving that knows no other way to exist. (WL:20).

So many are the troubles the humanity has been witnessing due to human pride and greed as it is shown in the first part of this article. The persona's exigence is to make sure humanity is rid of these human vices which are common to "black, yellow, white, brown, gray" because "private troubles" become very soon "public issue" (Wright, 1971: 14.). As the persona continues his apologia, he hints at human nature - fear - that fragilizes peace and harmony in human society by predisposing individual's reactions as Schutz rightly points out that: "the many interrelated systems of hopes and fears, of wants and satisfactions, of chances and risks which incite man with the natural attitude to attempts the master of the world, to overcome obstacles, to draft projects, and to realize them" (1945: 550). And as a philosopher, the poetess always takes herself as an example or practitioner of the proposed value for her would-be humanity. In the above verse, "I decant my fears of tomorrows as I did those of yesterday", the reader discovers not just a speaker but a doer and practitioner showing the way to the reader. Humanity must be devoid of fear either of the past, the present or the future that poisons suspiciously human relationships. Basing on Iser's "aesthetic" pole which refers to "the realization accomplished by the reader" (1974: 274) it becomes clear that because of fear which dwells and reigns in humans, these two vices: greed and pride, cause much harm and violence at individual and collective levels. The journal, *Morning Star* published an article on the October 10th, 2023 in which it recommended: "if you cannot stomach the violence of the oppressed, then halt the oppression" (*Morning Star*, 10th October, 2023). That is, the right answer to violence is to stop oppressing people, which Ogochukwu links to how people are socially responsible. As the speaker decants his fears, he is 'unclothed' and humble as he prostrates himself to the humanity in "this total self-giving: soul, skin". Humility as the other ingredient in the poetess's redefinition of the humanity as a philosopher allows her to cajole the reader in "let life, its spirit and essence embrace your grandeur" which must be "made manifest in the care of man, earth and means", because "indeed greatness is born of giving that knows no other way to exist". The effects of these dictions, their mood and emotion, on the reader's psychology drags and paralyses him to disagree with the poetess on her new world order and new dispensation. The implication of Ogochukwu's redefining values results from the reader's psychological awareness and response to the poems as Rosenblatt accounts for reader response theory.

As we read a text, it acts as a stimulus to which we respond in our own personal way. Feelings, associations, and memories occur as we read, and these responses influence the way in which we make sense of the text as we move through it. Literature we've encountered prior to this reading, the sum total of our accumulated knowledge, and even our current physical condition and mood will influence us as well (1978: 21).

The reader's response as Rosenblat points out in the above quote as the poems are read, revives religious wisdom and moral not in form of homily but in pungent, synaesthetic and poetic manner wherein all senses are required for the purpose. For Ogochukwu, societal harmony, peace and development result from the quality of the people. By quality, are meant the values people embody and abide by in their daily lives, for the peace and the harmony the world is dearly looking for, "requires cultural, social, historical, psychological, and theological analysis" (Graff, 1984: 122) of individuals peopling the earth and how they are daily responsible. In her philosophy, love, toleration, humility and fearlessness are foreground principles for equitable society, since she is "calling humanity to a feast of friendship" (WL: 23) where there will be only "a meaningful offering of love" (WL:26). In the poetess's "let us redefine humanity" (WL: 27), she means no exclusion and disparity among people as the persona soliloquizes as follows: "It is hard to think of any man who is not deserving of kindness/ The armed bandits terrorizing the highways/The ones sitting at the State House, bjeweled/ Others, yawning by the shit-filled canal" (WL: 31). The list of these different people in the verses showcases of the societal layers that need to cooperate as they are composites of the humanity, because "since great artist sculpted a pretty piece/ it need not be fragmented, conked out, run over" but rather "let each one reach out to the other in comradeship" (WL:43). As it is explained in the first section of this study, it is these neglected people who take up arms to launch violence. Convincingly, it is through love, humility, fearlessness, tolerance that the poetess's would-be society without pride and greed can hope for peaceful and harmonious life. The poetess's humanity redefinition creates in the reader new "relationships that will empower our self-healing" (Nakashima, 1989: 16).

...all we owe the earth is charity
 Abiding courtesy for lowly

 But the duty we owe everyone out there
 Our highly imaginative selves nonetheless
 Is the choice of right we make over wrong;
 Breathing ethics of scrupulous enterprise,
 Finding expression in the way we live and are. Impeccable!
 Nothing more will be asked of us,
 If we but partake in and bear.
 How else can we create shared value
 If we do not engrave in our very soul and output
 From our work's DNA, accountability, so fluent (WL:47)

The use of first plural personal pronoun “we” shows the poetess’s conviction that her suggested “shared value” - charity and courtesy – is “all we owe on the earth” to everyone. This justifies then Guerin’s comments that:

in literary interpretation, the text is not the most important component; the reader is. In fact, there is no text unless there is a reader. And the reader is the only one who can say what the text is; in a sense, the reader creates the text as much as the author does (2005: 351).

These two values - charity and courtesy - added to the poetess’s exigence of love, humility and fearlessness as an alternative for the humanity become the duty every human being owes each other and this results from “the choice of right we make over wrong”: that is “ethics” over “scrupulous” and selfish enterprises. The persona knows that the choice of ethics over scrupulous enterprise is not easily made if we do not find “expression in the way we live and are”, because apart from this “nothing more will be asked of us” as citizens and composites of the humanity. And as her philosophy, the poetess refers to her redefinition as a creation of “shared value” that must be engraved “in our very soul and output/ from our work’s DNA, accountability”. These values - love, toleration, fearlessness, charity, courtesy – are neglected and inconsiderate in our modern capitalist societies leaving unbearable aftermaths, especially in this Artificial Intelligence era. Conclusively, the poetess sees no other alternative for the world to better without her suggested shared values.

The ambiguity that is true for me and the rest of the world is:
There comes a time when we live our lives through someone else’s body
And that quite frankly, very often, we do not even realize it. Going different ways
In long silences molded by space only to realize we started missing those we left even
before our exit. And all there is to give whether we leave or stay is love (WL: 63).

The ambiguity the poetess is highlighting here in this stanza is the inevitability to cooperate with people you may dislike, because events force people to depend on one another willing or unwilling. The unawareness of such a reality and truth, leads to regret and complications in human relationships. As a philosopher, Ogochukwu, through the speaker, challenges her readers to understand that there is no alternative apart from sharing love among human beings, because “we influence people without realizing the impact we have made on them” (Amaniampong, 2012: 2). The poetess stresses that “my love has no boundaries, no language, no tattoos (WL:77)”, “and how would we know filial love/ if we have never even loved a brother, a sister,/ someone we do not know even though she is/ there all along, looking in on us” (WL:97), “love is all we have/ for the abundant gift love is, we are” (WL:105). Because humans are social beings and should live together and the values that should prevail in all their relationships are tolerance, love, humility, charity and courtesy which are dormant in every human nature. These values are to be developed by all as the poetess holds onto them as her philosophical ingredients to redefine the humanity for the best.

Conclusion

It has been the objective of this article to discuss Ogochukwu's redefinition of the humanity and her philosophy of new world order in the collection of poems *Wild Letters*. On the whole, the work has proved the poetess's project to redefine the humanity through her philosophical ideology. The analyses in the study have shown how the poems offer some values as a new world order. This objective is achieved in first part of the work which pictures the chaotic image of the actual world as resulting from people's hypocritical way of carrying out their responsibilities whether at individual or collective levels. It is shown that we are all responsible to some extent for the present situation of the world through our attitude to one another, especially the poor. At this level, human vices and propensity such as greed, hypocrisy, nepotism, fear, and carelessness are pictured to govern too much our social responsibilities and engender henceforth disparities, violence and oppression. To counterbalance these negative images, the work in the second part has elaborated on Ogochukwu's redefinition of the humanity or her philosophy stressing the inculcation and development of some values and manners in people so as to transform the world from worse to the better. The work discovers, on the one hand, that people from parents do not enjoy carrying their responsibility as they enjoy sexual intercourses that bring forth these street children and, on the other hand, the responsibility of every individual who is careless and indifferent vis-à-vis these children when they were trying to make both ends meet either through begging or selling in the streets around traffic lights. Additionally, the poems reveal the poetess's shared values such as charity, love, courtesy, tolerance and accountability in people's social relationships and responsibilities as a new world order. These values of the humanity as Ogochukwu suggests and advocates is far from "atheism and communism (Marx, 1981, pp. 140)" to lay finger on humans as moving and interacting values that physical laws and regulations hardly control. It has been discovered that it is with these values inculcated in people that laws and regulations could be easily and freely respected. Prisons, weapons, oppressions and other deterrent means so far experienced have all failed leaving only one room for the humanity to survive: new world order as the poetess highlights it as her philosophy.

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