

# Reflection of the Struggle for a Just Society in Selected Poems of Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya

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**Niyi Osundare**

Courtesy: [www.theofipress.webs.com](http://www.theofipress.webs.com)

## Abstract

Over the years many Contemporary African poets, present their struggle for a just society by reflecting the socio-political events and ills prevalent in their various societies in their poems. This presentation is usually noticed in their simplicity of language, thematic preoccupation and authorial vision. The poems of Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya from West and East Africa were selected for analysis in this study. The analysis and close reading of the selected poems reveal that Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya were able to present their struggle for a just society through their simplicity of language, presentation of prevalent themes relevant to their various societies and a genuine authorial vision/social commitment in their various poems. It is believed that this study will give readers an idea of the injustice, inequality, poverty

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and some socio-political events in Africa reflected in contemporary African poems together with African poets' vision and struggle for a just society.

## 1.0 Introduction



**Mildred Kiconco Barya**

Courtesy: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mildred\\_Barya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mildred_Barya)

Africans have gone through a lot of experiences that have strongly influenced their poetry. Some of these experiences include slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. These experiences brought about the need for a struggle for liberation. As a result of these, African poets saw a need to put down their experiences in the written form, talking about their different experiences and their feelings about those experiences.

The central themes of most Contemporary African poems range from that of corruption, oppression, injustice, violence, social inequality, poverty, inhumanity, marginalization, bad governance and other social problems. Poems with reflections of these themes are written as a result of the poets' authorial vision or social commitment to their various societies which is their own means of putting an end to the social decadence prevalent in their various societies. Often times, contemporary African poets employ the use of a simple language in order to make their works accessible to the common man and to the perpetrators of these social ills in the society.

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## Focus of This Article

The two contemporary poets whose struggles for a just society is presented through their use of language, thematic preoccupation and authorial vision discussed in this paper are Niyi Osundare from West Africa and Mildred Kiconco Barya from East Africa.

Osundare and Barya are not the only African poets who have shown their poetic or social commitment to the public interest in their poems. Other poets in this category as observed by Ushie (2005) are Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Odia Ofeimun, Tanure Ojaide, Onuora Ossi Enekwe, Femi Oyebo, Harry Garuba, Catherine Acholonu and Femi Fatoba, among others.

## Things Common between Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya

With a close reading of the selected poems of Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya, it is discovered that they have one thing in common; the struggle for a just society through a reflection of the socio-political events and social decadence prevalent in their societies in their poems in other to create a just society. All these were presented with a simple and assessable language, prevalent thematic preoccupations and a just authorial vision/ social commitment.

## Niyi Osundare

Niyi Osundare, one of the selected poets, is one of the most prominent contemporary Anglophone Nigerian poets. He was born in 1947 in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State of Nigeria. He studied at Ibadan, Leeds and Toronto. He is currently a professor of English literature at the University of New Orleans. He has been regarded by many as the greatest living Nigerian poet. Most of his books are published in Nigeria. Some of his works are: *Songs from the Marketplace* (1983) *Village Voices* (1984) *The Eye of the Earth* (1986) *Moonsongs* (1988) *Songs of the Season* (1999) and *Waiting Laughters. The Word is an Egg* is his latest collection. His work has been translated into Dutch, German, Korean and French. He has won many literary awards such

as the Noma Award which is Africa's most prestigious literary prize. English and Yoruba are intertwined in his poetry, and his imagery and settings are essentially rural.

### **Mildred Kiconco Barya**

Mildred Kiconco Barya is a Ugandan poet born on 1st August, 1976. She attended Mwisi Primary School and Kigezi High School. In 1996, she was awarded a full government scholarship to attend Makerere University in Uganda where she graduated in 1999 with a BA in Literature. In 2002, she rejoined Makerere University to earn a Master's degree in Organizational Psychology. She won the 2008 Pan African Literary Forum Prize for Africana Fiction. She is a writer-in-residence at Trust Africa, the Dakar-based pan-African charity. She has written two poetry collections; *Men love chocolates but they don't say* (2002), and *The price of memory: after the Tsunami* (2006). She has worked as a Human Resource Advisor for Ernst & Young in Uganda.

### **2.0 Methodology**

The study conducted in this article is based on a content analysis and textual interpretation of selected poems of Niyi Osundare and Mildred Barya. Barya's poems were selected from her two anthologies, *Men love Chocolate But they don't say* and *The Price of Memory: after the tsunami*. While Osundare's poems were selected from his anthology: *Songs of the season*, Senanu & Vincent's *A selection of African poetry* and Raji-Oyelade & Omobowale's *Modern African poetry: A selection*.

These poems were analyzed with a discussion of the poets' use of language, thematic preoccupation and authorial vision/social commitment. Osundare's poems selected for analysis in this article are: *Poetry is*, *A song for Ajegunle*, *They too are the earth*, *Echoes from the rural abyss*, *Letter to Fawehinmi*, *I sing of change*, *Crying hyenas*, *Not my business* and *I Sing of Change*. Those of Barya selected for analysis are: *The blood bath*, *I see images*, *Bust Cisterns*, *Men love chocolate but they don't say*, *Gaza*, *They asked too many questions*, *A woman called tradition*, *Just another day*, *The Inauguration of the pauper*, *Crowded ghettos* and *The Inauguration of the pauper*.

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### 3.0 Comparative Analysis of Osundare and Barya's Selected Poems

This section examines the language, thematic preoccupation and authorial vision/social commitment of Niyi Osundare's and Mildred Kiconco Barya's selected poems.

#### 3.1 The Language of Niyi Osundare's selected Poems

As stated by Ogoanah (2003) Osundare in an interview says his poems has a primary purpose of demystifying poetry hereby making it accessible to the ordinary man for whom he writes. His poem *Poetry is* justifies this as refers to poem as *man meaning to man*. He writes most of his poems in Standard English but with a reflection of his background as a Yoruba man by making use of indigenous Yoruba concepts. Anyokwu (2011) observes that he combines concepts and tradition of Yoruba culture and Marxist ideology that locates him with other revolutionary minded radical poets such as Pablo Neruda, Octovio Paz, Niccolas Gullen, Agostinho Neto and Okot P'Bitek.

Osundare in an interview personally acknowledged the fact that his poetry is influenced by Yoruba poetics. This is observed in his *A song for Ajegunle*. The language used there reflects his attitude to nature as he makes reference to images that can be found in that immediate environment (Ajegunle which is located in Lagos city in Nigeria). He adopts this style in order to give readers of his poem a firm grasp of his subject matter. In his *A song for Ajegunle*, he uses images like *weed infected, calloused hands, portholes, barns, mosquitoes, weeping wives, idle kitchens, beer palour*, to give readers a picture of the indecent social condition of the place. In *They too are the earth*, his choice of words presents images of underprivileged citizens in the society.

The use of expressions such as *brimming gutters, swansongs of beggars* in the first stanza depicts the social condition. Images of poverty are portrayed with the use of the phrase *snakeskin shoes* and that of affluence with *Mercedes tyres*. His use of language in *They too are the earth* show a contrast between the rich and the poor in the society. His repetition of *They too are the earth* in this poem emphasizes the theme of the poem which is that of recognition of the less privileged who are considered insignificant by the society.

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In his *Echoes from the rural abyss*, he makes use of local images like *hawk, chick, jungle college* and *footpath* in order to give readers a vivid description of the villagers' poor living conditions. In his *Letter to Fawehinmi*, the images used by him are those that readers are familiar with. The first is Gani Fawehinmi who is a great and well known human right activist in Nigeria. *Turf* is another image in the poem used to refer to the masses who silently suffer under the oppression of our leader. *Horsemen* in *Letter to Fawehinmi* refer to Nigerian leaders who are the oppressors. *We* in the poem indicate Gani's association or empathy for the poor, while *they* is repeated and used to refer to Nigerian leaders.

Anyokwu (2011) notes further that Osundare makes use of simple language to write about physical objects which acts as metaphors and imagery. Not only that, his language shows a reliance on the use of rhetorical strategies of Yoruba oral poetry such as repetition, parallelism, word play, alliteration, assonance which has far reaching implications for rhythm. This makes the language used in his poems meaningful to his audience. These features are noticed in *Letter to Fawehinmi, They too are the earth, Echoes from the abyss* and *I sing of change*. In *Crying hyenas*, the language used makes the readers feel at home due to its folk tale narrative technique used at the beginning of the poem:

*Once upon a time  
When ears were far from the head...*

In *Crying Hyenas* the expression; *The king who owns a thousand thrones* symbolizes a corrupt and greedy leader, *slaves* symbolizes the masses and oppressed in the society. *Crimson stars* symbolizes affluence, while the expression: *he had more jewels than sense* is used to show the king's unnecessary acquisition of wealth, selfishness and foolishness. *Hyena* in the poem *Crying Hyenas* symbolizes social vices and other forms of disaster that has occurred in the society for years and the king's response shows his insensitivity to the plight of his people.

With a close reading of Osundare's poems, it is obvious that he is a poet conscious of his words as he carefully chooses them and at the same time pass his message across to his readers. In an interview, he says: "*Uttering a word is like breaking an egg – you can't put the pieces back together again...*" He often does this with the use of words that gives a vivid picture of the

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oppressor and the oppressed in the society. This shows his consciousness of the presence of tyrant leaders in his society and a need to criticize them. In an excerpt of an interview with him, he says: “*I survived all those dictators by hiding behind my words. I used animal images, the hyena representing the dictator, for instance, and the antelope the people*”.

To him, his audience must understand what he is saying to avoid a waste of time. He believes common words can be used in an uncommon way to describe a scenario. These are observed in his *Crying hyena* and *Not my business*. In *Not my business*, the image of *yam* is used to describe daily bread. The phrase *Stainless steel* is used to show there was no offence committed by Chinwe and *jeep* is used to symbolize the police’s presence. Verbs like *picked*, *dragged*, *booted* were used in the poem to describe the brutality of the Nigerian police.

A close reading and analysis of Osundare’s poems portray him as a poet who believes in the principle of communication by adopting a simple language style. Not only that, his language shows creativity as he brings into his works Yoruba transfers consciously or unconsciously. These are observed in *Crying Hyena*, *A song for Ajejunle*, *Letter to Fawehinmi* and *Not my business*. For instance, in *Crying Hyena*, Yoruba folktale narration and hyperbolic language are used. Song as a form of poetry in the Yoruba tradition is transferred to his poem: *A song for Ajejunle*. The language of *I Sing of Change*, *A Song for Ajejunle*, *Echoes from the rural Abyss*, *They too are the earth*, *Letter to Fawehinmi* show Osundare’s Marxist concerns for his country.

Apart from the class conflict and inequality expressed in these poems, the call for change is evident through the use of a simple and clear language. This style helps to make his message of change accessible to every common man, for whom the poems are meant for.

### **3.2 The Language of selected poems of Mildred Kiconco Barya**

Barya’s use of language in her selected poems is simple and satirical. Her use of language shows a criticism of the bloodshed prevalent in her society. The language of her poem *The blood bath* is vulgar. She adopts this style to attack the murderers in her society. With her language style, she vividly and perfectly captures Ugandan’s pathetic situation. Apart from this, she employs the use of paradoxical language to build the satire intended in her selected poems. With

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this language style, she is able to voice out her observation that the murderers in her society enjoy senseless orgies of violence and sit on carcasses to amuse themselves. Through her language style, her society is portrayed as a sadist, inhuman and crude one. She uses crude language to describe the bloodshed, torture and pain her people are subjected to. This evokes an emotional feeling of hatred for the society by readers of her poem.

As noted by Atuhaire (2011), Barya's language is soft spoken and subtle as she uses strong biting satirical language to criticize the bad political regimes. She uses a clear language to call for the restoration of the undermined rights of the people in the society. Her language vividly describes the carcass found in water bodies. To show the effect of this situation on commoners, she makes reference to them in *I see images* as:

*the poor fisherman  
whose children are starved  
cast their nets  
in deep rivers of blood*

In *The bloodbath*, the repetition of the word *blood* helps in emphasizing the theme of bloodshed, grief, insensitivity of our leaders and murder presented in the poem. The language used in her *Bust Cisterns* is an indication of the fact that many atrocities are committed in the night as many people have lost their lives due to the gunshot and many women had become widows as a result of the war and bloodshed which is everywhere;

*Night brings the moon stricken with sadness  
And grief swells in our hearts  
Gunshots declare the dirge  
Terror claims us  
Wails of a thousand widows tear the environs  
Rivers of blood  
Congeal in thick black clots*

In the poem, she uses images like *guns and bullets* as symbols of oppression, murder, tyranny and torture in the society.

### **3.3 Thematic Preoccupation of Niyi Osundare's poems**

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The common themes in the selected poems of Osundare used in this article are that of positive change, poverty, corruption, injustice, insecurity, violence, insensitivity of our leaders to the plight of the masses and their wickedness/inhumanity.

The theme of his *Crying hyenas* is that of corruption and insensitivity of our leaders to the masses' plight. The king in the poem fails to solve the problem presented to him, and he became consumed by the same problem because of his insensitivity, selfishness and nonchalant attitude. That of *Not my business* is that of insensitivity and nonchalant attitude of masses to the molestation of their fellow masses. The poet believes that if masses do not rise to stop the molestation, injustice, corruption and other social vices experienced by their fellow masses, in the society, then they too will be a victim of such circumstances one day.

The themes noticed in *Letter to Fawehinmi* are that of liberation, change and violence. Those of *Echoes from the rural abyss* are that of poverty, negligence and oppression as the poem discuss the pathetic social living conditions of the masses in the village. As discussed in the poem, they do not have access to basic social amenities. This makes their children uneducated and underprivileged. As presented in the poem, despite the poor social condition of these villagers, it is amazing that taxmen still come there for tax collection. This annoys them, and they plan a revolution. Osundare's *They too are the earth* focuses on things that make up the earth. As depicted by him, they are individuals that are not seen as part of the earth but are actually a part of it. This poem shows Osundare's commitment to nature and the masses living on earth. He recognizes the beggars, manual workers, miners who died of *gold dreams and blood banks*, other poor citizens living in terrible social conditions, the neglected and poor housewives who he refers to as:

*the old dying distant deaths  
in narrow abandoned hamlets*

Osundare believes these people are responsible for the preservation of the earth and uses the poem to point the authorities' attention to the plight of these people and show their relevance to the society.

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The theme of social inequality, injustice, poverty, negligence, indecency and oppression are observed in Osundare's *A song for Ajejunle*. Senanu and Vincent (2003) comments that the poem is a song and a protest poem that draws attention to the gross inequalities that are allowed to persist in the society and warns of the threat which such injustice pose to social order. As presented in *A song for Ajejunle*, the government refuses to improve the social condition of the people living in Ajejunle which is a ghetto in Lagos where poor people live.

The title of the poem depicts and justifies a theme of poverty. It inform readers that Ajejunle is a social problem in Nigeria because of the indecent conditions and experience the inhabitants of the place go through daily as a result of poverty and the government's negligence of the place. The poet presents the theme of social inequality in *A song for Ajejunle* by making reference to the fact that that sweat and effort of the inhabitants of Ajejunle ensures the beauty and luxury of Ikoyi and Victoria Island as they tend and water their lawns. He sees the government's negligence of the place and its inhabitants as an act of injustice and a form of oppression.

In *I sing of change*, Osundare discusses the themes of the dichotomy and conflict that exist in the society as a result of the disparity in the distribution of economic resources. The poem deals with the Marxist concern for change in the society and presents a picture of what Nigeria is and what it ought to be. Four words are important in the poem. They are: *beauty*, *Athens*, *without*, and *slaves*. With these words, Osundare exposes those issues in the poem.

### **3.4 The thematic preoccupation of Barya's poems**

Like most Ugandan poets, the themes of death, tyranny, bad governance, and poor living conditions are some of the characteristics of Barya's poems. This makes her poem contribute to humanity's existence and the development of her society at large. Her selected poems treated in this paper address the social and political concerns of her society as she advocates for human rights irrespective of their gender.

The theme of hypocrisy is discussed in her *Men love chocolate but they don't say*. The poem address this by showing the hypocrisy displayed by men in despising certain feminine

practices like eating chocolates when in actual fact they find it delicious. The poem also discusses the intricate political, social and economic aspects of Uganda.

According to Atuhaire (2011), her poems are reflective, provokes contemplation and imagination and they come in categories, as indicated by the headings she puts on them. Poems of weakness and strength, of identity and renunciation form her collection; *The price of memory*. The categorization of her poems presents her as a realist with a classifying mind who looks at life and her society objectively.

In *I see image*, the theme of death, inhumanity, bloodshed and poverty are observed. Fisher men cast their nets into the blood of murdered people as water bodies have become dumping grounds for these people whose bodies are floating and whose fingers have become part of the fish. As a result, the water and fish becomes contaminated and inedible and there is more blood than water in the lake. The terrible situation contributes more to poverty in the society as the fishermen and their children are starved.

The theme of bloodshed, death, inhumanity and poverty are extended in her poem *The blood bath*. The entire poem presents an indifferent attitude to the situation on ground; the gun symbolizes the horror of death and bloodshed, while reference to the girls symbolizes slavery and captivity. The poem shows that plenty of blood is shed such that people can bath in it. The poem is an attack on a community that has accepted bloodshed as part of life as there people are mutilated. The community enjoys violence and human carcass seems to be comfortable seats for the propagators of the murder and bloodshed. In summary, *The blood bath* is an attack on the endless wars, bloodshed and inhuman practices against humanity that are not alien to Uganda as war have been fought for many years there. The entire poem reflects this:

### **The Blood Bath**

*Don't look at me with kind eyes  
Don't ask me water for your bath  
In this land we bathe in blood  
And delight in meals of mutilated flesh  
Served on human skull unfit for the museum.  
Trouble not yourself going to the market*

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*You will find meat on the road side  
 The fragrance of piled bodies will attract you.  
 We quench our thirst by cutting men's throats and  
 Drinking their blood, licking our lips as it oozes out  
 We've drunk blood before, we still drink blood.  
 We inflict pain on the defenseless ones  
 Pulling out the 'untimely-fortunate un-borns.'  
 We enjoy the senseless, orgies of violence  
 As we send the virtuous to their graves so early.  
 Seated on the mounds of human carcasses to amuse ourselves,  
 We love to stare at the accursed lot  
 We set ablaze human beings as pleasing offerings  
 And give a ghoulish laugh at deed done in secret  
 We carry a banner painted with blood  
 Betrayal and treachery, our theme song.  
 News of sweet massacres, plundered homes  
 And girls take into captivity make headlines  
 Our fires are cooled in the blood bath  
 Prepared for the old and young  
 The good, the wicked, the innocent imps.  
 Look on keenly and admire me  
 I'm not adorned with beads of my ancestors  
 I have no anklets, ringlets or necklaces  
 Yet, I carry on the work of my predecessors  
 Who have taught me how to dance.  
 I wear blood marks on my face  
 I have blood shot eyes  
 I drink blood, I live in blood.  
 Come nearer and give me a handshake  
 Notice my hands are covered with blood  
 I've sank deep in blood, my soul is drenched with blood  
 In the night I hear the howling melody of the banshee  
 Yes, I have drank blood, I've sunk deep in blood!*

This poem further shows the government's inhumanity and nonchalant attitude to the negative effects of the war going on in their country. It also shows that almost every facet of the society has been affected by the war.

The theme of injustice is noticed in her poem *Gaza*. The people there don't have a right to own a land, the women plead for mercy and soldiers take over their land:

*Give us our Gaza!  
 Her shouts fall upon dead hearts of captors*

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*Her mouth sags and drools  
Releasing a tale of detention in old age...*

Barya, in this poem, advocates the right to own property and use it at one's own discretion for social, economic and cultural development.

Barya's advocacy for basic human freedoms is further traced in her poem; *They asked too many questions*, as the people's right to freedom of expression has been undermined. The theme of her poem titled: *A woman called tradition* is that of women liberation as we are presented with an endless list of duties a woman has to perform in a single day. The woman does not only wake up but springs out of bed before dawn, tethers the goats and sets the sheep to go and graze with the baby tied on her back, a *panga* and a hoe in her hand and shoulder respectively. As if that is not enough, she carries a heavy basket on her head, goes to till the land, clear the whole field and return home in time to prepare meal for her drunkard husband who only comes home at noon stinking of booze and expecting to find a ready meal. This theme is presented to effect a change of attitude by men.

### **3.5 The Authorial Vision of Osundare's Selected Poems**

Niyi Osundare is a contemporary voice in African poetry whose works contain unapologetic criticism of social injustice. Though he calls himself a humanist, and denies being a Marxist, his philosophy as well as the content and form of his works is fundamentally Marxist. He is committed to a change and a fight against social injustice in the society. He is a voice of the people. As observed by Anyokwu (2011), Osundare believes in the denunciation of all forms of injustice, oppression and corruption in the society. He condemns the ruling class in his works and in general calls for a positive change in every facet of the society. His poems are focused on the condition of the ordinary people like peasants and workers in the society. He criticizes the injustice and social deprivation of these people as observed in *They too are the earth, I sing of change, echoes from the rural abyss, A song for Ajegunle* and *Crying Hyenas*.

Osundare's creativity and commitment to the public is displayed in the manner he makes his poems accessible to them. His anthology *Songs of the season* is a compilation of the poems he writes in his weekly poetry column titled *Songs of the Season* for the *Nigerian Tribune*

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*newspaper* from 1985 to 1990. He discovered that poetry writing is a dangerous activity in the country most especially during the Abacha regime and he knew he could never be a dictator's friend with his kind of poetry. For instance, he wrote on the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995 and the unlawful imprisonment of journalists.

To Osundare, there is also no choice for the African poet or writer but to be political, He emphasizes that one cannot keep quiet about the situation in the kind of countries we find ourselves in most especially when one wakes up and there is no running water, a massive power outage for days and nights, no food on the table, no hospital for the sick, no peace of mind, the image of a dictatorial ruler with gun in his hand and on the international level, where one lives in a world in which one's continent is consigned to the margin; a world in which the colour of one's skin is a constant disadvantage everywhere one goes. He believes there is no other way than to write about these as an attempt to change the situation for better.

Due to his experience, Osundare confirmed the idea that literature has a significant role to play in the society. As observed Lasisi (2011) Osundare is a committed writer and profound hater of anti-development who is always eager to air his view on matters that relate to books and education in general. Besides, he is always eager to criticize policy makers whenever he feels they are not taking the right steps.

The end of Osundare's *Crying hyena* shows his commitment to a positive change in the society. Through this medium, he pass across the message that if they do not solve the prevailing problem in the society, they or their household will also be consumed or destroyed as a result of the problem with time.

In *Not my business*, Osundare sees insensitivity to others plight and a nonchalant attitude as a social vice that must cease in the society. His poem *Letter to Fawehinmi* is an indication of the fact that he appreciates the effort of human right advocates who fight for the liberation of the oppressed in the society. It is his way of criticizing Gani's imprisonment and the maltreatment

suffered by him while in prison. He also uses the medium to criticize our leaders' corruption and indirectly appeals to them to waken their conscience:

*Look beyond The brittleness of office,  
The transience of POWER*

In *Echoes of Hard time*, Osundare shows that revolution is the solution to the masses' problem in the society;

*Let him come like an iron hawk:  
he will find us waiting,  
a flock of iron chicks*

In *They too are the earth*, he believes that the common but significant people are what makes up the earth and in *A song for Ajegunle*, he contrasts the rich and the poor and advocates for better living conditions for the them.

Another proof of Osundare's authorial vision or social commitment is observed in the manner with which he presents his *A song for Ajegunle*. The poem is a description of the place based on his personal impression of the place when he visited the area. As observed by Senanu & Vincent (2003), *the poem conveys a depressing picture of hunger, of drunks and others who take their frustrations out on their wives, and of desperate people who have turn unthinkingly to religion for solace*. Osundare refers to the place as *dregs* which mean the sediments or worthless part of anything. To him, Ajegunle represents the portion of the society that can only develop when the dead conscience of those in authority is awakened as they are only interested in the luxury of their class to the neglect of other members of the society.

Osundare's authorial vision/social commitment is also observed in *I sing of Change*. In the poem, Osundare seeks a world where *warlords* and their *armories* of physical and psychological subjugation would become to an end and a world where the proletariat would no longer be trapped in their hate and fear of the bourgeoisie. In summary, he seeks for a revolution. The society Osundare wants is a world where capitalism has given way to socialism. It is a world

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where the *sun* loses its significance and becomes ignorant, and the stars attain the status of significance. Osundare describes a world where the government is in the hands of the proletariat who would redistribute the economic resources in the society equally.

### 3.6 Barya's Authorial Vision

Most of Barya's poems are reflections of the socio-political incidents in Uganda. These incidents are usually centred on the political unrest in her country and other social conditions of her people. She advocates for fundamental human rights for all irrespective of gender and specifically makes reference to the marginalization experienced by women from men in order to effect a change. She addresses human right issues, criticizes an imposed leadership characterized by tyranny and murder of innocent citizens, makes reference to the firing squad and decries the use of the gun. All she is interested in is a positive change in her society.

In *Just another day*, Barya condemns the bad leadership that subjects the masses to poor living conditions, starvation and hopelessness. The poem relates a condition of depression and exhaustion and shows poor housing conditions in *crowded ghettos*. She is against the situation where by women cannot afford to look after their babies, flies buzz over the carcass of the dead and the street filled with homeless children.

In *A woman called tradition*, Barya gives a picture of the hectic nature of a woman's chore. She sees this as unfairness as the woman does not complain. She sees the tradition where the man over works a woman as an unfair treatment. She also criticizes the government who had resorted to war and tyranny in her society. She believes these leaders promote the rampant war in Uganda and Africa leaving people orphaned, widowed, tortured and in pain.

In her poem *At The Inauguration of the pauper*, Barya examines the problems faced by job seekers and the futility of education. She also exposes the challenge of inflation on educated and employed individuals with low salaries. All these societal issues discussed by Barya shows her commitment to her society. She believes the government contributes more to poverty in the society by their refusal to stop the ongoing war, inflation and joblessness in the society.

### 4.0 Conclusion

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Niyi Osundare and Mildred Kiconco Barya write on prevailing issues in their societies that affects common citizens. They both employ the use of a language style that can be found accessible by their audience. The style employed by them help them in presenting socio-political problems such as dictatorship, bad governance, injustice, war, bloodshed, poor living conditions, oppression, marginalization, poverty and corruption which has greatly marred Nigeria and Uganda and the fact that they desire a positive change. The only difference in their works is that Barya addresses some issues that affect the female gender while none of the selected poems of Osundare address gender issues. With the seriousness of the issues discussed in the selected works of these poets, it could be said that the language style employed by them is appropriate and they are committed to creating a just society by putting an end to all forms of oppression and molestation in the society.

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