

loyalty he commands amongst a small group of trusted friends.

He has remained unmarried: in a 1990 interview for African Concord magazine he describes himself as "an international polygamist" and goes on to add: "You can have a certain understanding [with a woman] about your relationship. If you're happy together, why get married? If you're not happy together, why get married?"

Chinweizu began writing his first book, The West and the Rest of Us, in the United States in 1971, and worked on it through a period when he was also working on the earliest of the materials that comprise a book that in some senses complements this, Toward the Decolonization of African Literature (1980). The West and the Rest of Us (WRU for convenience) was published by Vintage Books in 1975, Chinweizu's editor at Random House being Toni Morrison.

WRU is essentially a historical account of the relationship of the West with the underdeveloped world (the focus being mainly on Africa), through which account Chinweizu draws conclusions about possible sources for political, economic and cultural regeneration. The book's early chapters give a summary history of Western imperialism from 1415 to the present. Chinweizu attributes Africa's collapse during the slave trade to a lack of effective and properly politically motivated leadership. He extends this idea to an analysis of the continent's modern history, arguing that effective resistance to imperialism, and a more comprehensive species of independence than obtains today, would have required a deeper questioning of the political, economic and cultural foundations of the colonial order than was offered by the generality of Africa's nationalist élites. Instead, the nationalist petit-bourgeois^e almost invariably placed its own "narrow class interest" above the national interest. Chinweizu's

ADIRABE
INTERVIEW
P 52.

WRU
P 142.

highly contentious example of a contrary and preferable model is Sekou Toure's Guinea.

The middle section of WRU deals with the "tributary character" of African economies. The achievements of the 15--16th century States of Benin, Songhay, Ethiopia, are given as a "template" through which we might recognize those "social repairs" needed for the present. The slave trade is again analyzed, with particular emphasis on the damage this inflicted on inter-State relations in Africa: "the play of African initiative was severely limited to meeting the demands of Europe". Reconstruction in the 19th century (Sokoto, Alhaj Umar, Samory Toure) was thwarted by European colonial conquest. Moving to the present period, Chinweizu discusses how aid, trade and investment patterns under a "liberal recipe for underdevelopment" have been engineered for the benefit of the West: an argument that remains crucial twenty years after the book's publication. Many of the case studies in WRU are summary: one that Chinweizu develops in detail is that of the Animation program^e for popular political and economic initiative in the period around the time of Senegal's independence.

Later sections of the book deal with failures to stimulate African cultural awareness (the chief focus of Toward the Decolonization of African Literature), a problem Chinweizu sees as being inseparable from that of political subordination, and with the malfunction of African political institutions. Here Chinweizu shows how "in a poor, weakly integrated multi-party system, with strong ethnic identification, the parties become ethnic patronage machines": a theme later developed into a detailed analysis of prebendalism in the contemporary State by writers such as William Graf and Richard Joseph. The final

WRU,
p208.

WRU,
p254.

WRU,
p348.

section discusses covert imperialism by the United States. Chinweizu concludes that between Africa (and other parts of the underdeveloped world) and the West, the "basic conflict of interest, unchanged in more than five centuries" has had to do with the control of resources. Pre-echoing the major theme that informs virtually all of his later work, he argues of Africa "we have lost our ability to define ourselves"; in order to achieve a "gigantic reconstruction" of African society, there is the need for Pan-African political and economic unity and for a deconstruction of dominant Eurocentric values.

WRU,
p 480.

WRU
pp 491-93.

WRU does not entirely break fresh ground: many of Chinweizu's arguments are close to those in earlier writings on underdevelopment (a term which first emerged in the 1950s), for example, the work of René Dumont and Gunnar Myrdal and, especially, Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1972), at the time an extremely influential book amongst Nigerian academics and one which, like WRU, attempts a historical account of Africa's underdevelopment. As Onwuchekwa Jemie pointed out in a 1980 review of the work, WRU received a troubled launching, ignored by major journals in African studies and with a prospective British publisher withdrawing from a planned edition for Britain and Africa. The book was only effectively distributed in Nigeria when a local press, NOK, republished it in 1980. WRU is, nevertheless, an impressive work of synthesis, significantly drawing attention to the need to collate findings from different disciplines (history, economic^s, cultural theory), and expressed with an often vehement eloquence. In his essay "Aesthetic Illusions", Wole Soyinka, not generally an admirer of Chinweizu, described the book as timely and "an impressive tour de force" (even though he saw the sections on culture as the weak point in a finer whole).

Soyinka,
Aesthetic Illusions,
p 86.

While working on The West and the Rest of Us Chinweizu was also occupied writing poetry and short stories: his early work in these two genres appeared in journals such as Okike and Presence Africaine, and were later reprinted in the collections Energy Crisis and Other Poems (1978) and The Footrace and Other Satires (1981).

Some of the early poetry satisfies those preferences for simple form and diction, and for a subject-matter that sidesteps references to the products of Western technology, that Chinweizu was to campaign for in Toward the Decolonization of African Literature. An example here would be "The Kingfisher":

Do you see, high on that tree,
That kingfisher on his perch,
Surveying the fishes as they gambol in the lake?
Do you see his high indifference?
Now watch him plummet like a stone;
Watch him fly up again to his perch.
What's that between his beaks? You see?
At last I learnt to wait for love
Like the kingfisher for his meal.

Other poems key in directly to the political concerns explored in The West and the Rest of Us. "Elegy on the Middle Way", for example, is an effective, caustic satire on the Western "liberal predicament", taking as its focal point the downfall of the Allende regime in Chile (an interest in the political condition of Latin America is a subject Chinweizu returns to in his later journalism). "The Anger of Ancestors", like much of Chinweizu's work, focuses on the cultural alienation provoked under colonial and neo-colonial regimes:

The smouldering anger of ancestors!
 And their eyes
 Before this high circus of absurdities
 Are thirsting for the new black man
 the black man who would not be whipped;
 the black man who would not sell his kind . . .
 the black man who would not suffer his brains
 to be inflated with flattery.

The stories collected in The Footrace and Other Satires generally focus on the concerns Chinweizu voices in The West and the Rest of Us and Toward the Decolonization of African Literature. The title story is a variant on the tale of the race between tortoise and hare: a traditional tale encountered in different parts of West Africa (several versions of which are used as a demonstration of successful and unsuccessful tale-telling and transcription in Decolonization). Here Chinweizu's own skill in pacing and the vigorousness of his language produce a highly effective allegory on cultural imperialism. Perhaps the most striking of the other stories is "Angwo Tanda". The subject of this piece is a young Nigerian whose "unstable ego" leads him to folly and then madness while a student in England in the years immediately preceding his country's independence. Becoming a "combination of social snob and revolutionary fantasist", he pursues a white girl, "a symbol of so many things he considered himself deprived of". Rejected by her, degenerating into insanity, he is sent home by his friends, where he ends living on a rubbish-dump. The story ends with a conference of elders attempting to understand the tragedy by placing it in its historical context.

From 1973 onwards Chinweizu served as Associate Editor of Okike, a journal of the arts and criticism edited by Chinua

Achebe at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. During this period Okike provided a major outlet for Chinweizu's own work: seven major essays appeared here between 1973 and 1978, as well as numerous poems, short stories and reviews. Especially significant are a series of essays co-authored with two fellow Nigerians who were, like Chinweizu, based at that time at universities in the United States: Ihechukwu Madubuike, who was to become Nigerian Federal Minister of Education under the Shagari regime, and Onwuchekwa Jemie, author of a study of Langston Hughes and later to join the staff of the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. These essays were to form the basis of one of the most influential--and controversial--of all studies of African literature: Toward the Decolonization of African Literature. In the Preface to this work, the three authors style themselves "bolekaja" critics: a term borrowed from Yoruba bus-conductors, who pride themselves on their irreverence and aggressiveness. As TDAL (abbreviated for convenience) began to make its impact, the three became widely known by a name applied to them by Wole Soyinka: the "troika".

Work on the TDAL material began in 1971. Three core essays appeared in Okike in 1974 and 1975, under the same title as the eventual book. The troika took up work again after the publication of books on African literature by Adrian Roscoe, Charles Larson and Hustace Palmer provided them with fresh ammunition for their dissection of an allegedly Eurocentric criticism, and after their original essays had prompted responses from, inter alia, Donatus Nwoga and Wole Soyinka. The final book comprises a skillful synthesis of the three core essays and two later pieces, "The Hopkins Disease" and "The Leeds--Ibadan Connection". There is little rewriting, except that the authors take the opportunity

to respond to criticism of the early essays with some passages of fierce polemic. Other essays which closely relate to the TDAL thesis, ^{but} ~~though which~~ were not incorporated in the book, are "Prodigals, Come Home!", arguing for a return to the techniques of traditional African poetry, "Beyond European Realism", which prescribes Amos Tutuola and the Latin American novel as valuable models for African fiction, and the review article "African Literary Criticism Today". All of these were authored by Chinweizu alone. He was to return to the essential themes of TDAL frequently in the 1980s: to take one example, in the essay "The Responsibilities of Scholars of African Literature", ~~in which~~ he restates one of his principal concerns, that African writers and scholars should maintain an Afrocentric viewpoint and should not be influenced by Western representations of African experience that are partial or distorted.

TDAL develops this theme at length, prescribing techniques for African poetry and fiction that are drawn from African oral tradition, and, in a critique that is nothing if not forthright, identifying Eurocentric perspectives in existing criticism of African literatures. The intention, then, is both reclamatory--insisting on African literature as a distinct, even autonomous entity, and foregrounding the strengths of oral poetic and narrative traditions--and corrective, the chief target here being that "eurocentric" criticism that has nurtured a "Euromodernist" literature in Africa: one that is negligent of the oral heritage. (A second volume, an anthology of exemplary texts, was advertised as forthcoming with ^{the} publication of TDAL, but ^{has} ~~by 1993 had still~~ not ^{yet} appeared).

The first of three main chapters--and one that occupies the first half of the book--tackles the African novel and its critics.

"Eurocentric" objections to the novels of the 1950s and '60s--that they are largely didactic, situational, weak in description and characterization--are rejected; African literature, the troika argue, has its own constituency and must set and refer to its own standards. Eurocentric critics have failed to give due weight to the oral antecedents of the African novel and, compounding that failure, have underestimated the ability of oral form to carry large-scale structures and have overlooked the richness of its repertoire of devices (which do not always emerge in written transcriptions). The troika's defence of oral narrative, against claims that written narrative (for example, the European realist novel) is inevitably superior, leads to some slippage in definition-forming (does an oral epic like Beowulf really, as they claim, display all the complexities of A la recherche du temps perdu?). It must be remembered, however, that in the mid-1970s the African oral heritage was widely underrated and misrepresented, and the troika's initiative in stating its claims was bold and valuable.

The latter part of the chapter deals with the written novel. The troika note how Western and Western-influenced criticism has tended to take as its preferred model the 19th century European novel. Focusing on common misconceptions in this criticism, they tackle commentaries on the treatment of time and space, on plot, structure and dialogue. Throughout, their focus is on the narrowness of existing critical perceptions: on the disdain for "situational construction", for example, they demand "who says a novel must focus on an individual rather than on a group or community?" Much of this section is given over to the dissection of the work of individual critics: Adrian Roscoe, Charles Larson, Gustave Palmer. This is the kind of material that

has lent TDAL a high degree of notoriety. Certainly the troika's case is weakened by a nervous aggressiveness in their approach and by occasional misreadings (does a Western critique of the characterization of whites in Ngugi's early novels reveal only discomfort at the denigration of white colonialist morals, as they claim, or is there in fact, even accepting Ngugi's didactic framework, a problem in execution here?) Looking back, however, one is chiefly struck by the inanity of the critical material the troika seize upon, and it is difficult not to acknowledge their justification in ridiculing texts that can be so hopelessly confused and distorted. As they later make clear, their chief concern is the impact these texts may have on African critics and creative writers: a situation they describe as a "cooperative tutelage in deracination" ^h

The second main chapter deals with poetry. Here the troika focus on Nigerian poets such as Michael Echeruo, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo: the so-termed "Ibadan-Nsukka school" (school in the sense that these poets knew and cross-influenced each other and were granted early prominence from the late 1950s onwards). The troika object to this poetry's frequent use of archaism, of "imported" imagery and phrasing, and of oblique and compressed or multi-referential diction generally. A specific extension of these objections is that poets such as Soyinka, Okigbo and J.P. Clark have been heavily influenced by Hopkins (with his broken syntax and neologisms) and by Pound and Eliot (with their private or esoteric references). Attempts by such "Euromodernist" poets to write "in traditional African modes" flounder on account of their self-consciousness and their failure to "engage" ^h

To support the latter argument the troika quote two poems in full as examples of "modernist" failure and "traditionalist"

CHINWEIZU,
TDAL,
P157.

achievement, respectively: Wonodi's "Midnight Play" and Markwei's "Life in Our Village". This strategy provided ammunition for critics such as Soyinka, who found it difficult to see any distinction in the Markwei poem (he derides--and parodies--its banality in his response to the troika, "Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Tradition"). Certainly in this chapter the troika's methodology is problematic, with value judgments supported by virulent assertion rather than detailed analysis. This tendency combines with a vehement aggressiveness in what have become some of the most commented-upon sections of the book. The chapter on poetry ends, for example, with a section on the négritude movement and a response to Soyinka's critique of the early TDAL essays. The négritude section argues that a "British cultural coup", stage-managed in conjunction with Soyinka, has succeeded in alienating Nigerian poets from the initiatives and techniques of négritudinist poets such as Senghor, and that as a result, "England's literary tradition continues to hold sway in Nigeria today". Here there is no analysis of the nature of négritudinist thinking or poetic practice, no consideration that it might contain within itself reactionary and assimilationist trends. The section that follows on Soyinka derides "his craving for European acclaim, and his terror of European blame".

Much of the book's final chapter, "Issues and Tasks in the Decolonization of African Literature", restates and summarizes earlier material. Here, though, the troika extend their prescriptive argument into detailed commentary on exemplary texts. Throughout this section, their emphasis is on the finding of form and subject-matter most appropriate to patterns of experience in contemporary Africa, though they acknowledge this may be achieved in different ways. Amongst novelists, they cite Chinua

CHINUA
 TDAL
 p237.

Achebe and Ahmadou Kourouma as having succeeded in reinventing European languages for African narrative. A long excerpt from Batouala, by the Martinican René Maran (resident in Central Africa) is given as a model of the virtuoso use of ideophones, praise-naming devices and so on. Ousmane Sembene in his Gods Bits of Wood-- a novel about a railway-workers' strike--is praised for his "adoption of the point of view of the ordinary people in treating his material". Masters of African poetry are those who have best succeeded in revitalizing the techniques and devices of the oral tradition: Kofi Awoonor, Mazisi Kunene, Okot p'Bitek, and Christopher Okigbo in his final work, "Path of Thunder". The role of the critic is seen as being in part prescriptive: that of a "critical intelligence guiding the transmission of African cultural values".

An earlier section of the book argues that, under present circumstances, European languages remain valid as a vehicle for African literature. In a passage that pre-echoes but qualifies the views to be developed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in the 1980s, the troika state that the ethos of a text does not reside in the language it employs: "Although language does embody and is a vehicle for expressing cultural values, it is not the crucial generator of those values and cannot alone be relied upon to supply literary criteria". In the final chapter, they turn to the question of literacy and argue that African literary production will remain the possession of the few until literacy rates increase. Again, Ngugi was to move in a different direction, with his emphasis on live performance--both of drama and in the form of recitation of written texts such as novels--in indigenous languages.

Summarizing their thesis, the troika write that the desired

CHINWÈRÈ
 TDAL,
 p274

DO,
 p287

DO,
 p12.

DO, p240.
DO, p242.

re-connection with the oral heritage is not on behalf of antiquarianism; rather, it has to do "with the function of a literature in its society". An ideal African literature is one addressed to a community "for whose situation the work is resonant with meaning, a community which finds itself expressed in the work".

TDAL attracted controversy even before it was issued in book form. In a critique of the three core essays, titled "Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Tradition", Wole Soyinka charged the troika with serious misrepresentation of the nature of African oral poetry and, while not questioning the value of prescription per se, rejected their criteria for evaluation, arguing that the oral corpus they so much admire is frequently more complex than they admit. His overall judgment: "The serious search for a black aesthetic is a healthy move towards self-apprehension in the United States . . . it is a pity that contributions towards this quest from supposedly authentic African voices should be marked by so much mis-information and irresponsible scholarship".

SOYINKA I
ADO, p325.

The troika's response to Soyinka ("Soyinka's Neo-Tarzanism: A Reply") is marked by an acerbity that was to become increasingly a hallmark of Chinweizu's writing, and by a tendency to defend points by simply reiterating them ("Prompted by Soyinka's evaluation, we have re-examined Egudu's 'First Yam of the Year'. We find no grounds for altering our original view of it"). Writing a few years later than Soyinka, Donatus Nwoga acknowledged the excitement TDAL had generated and accepted the troika's basic thesis, but regretted the book's virulence, and argued that it both oversimplified the relationship between tradition-derived and modern African poetry, and presented a naive picture as to what constitutes the repertoire of current African experience.

CHINWEIZU I
'SOYINKA'S NEO-TARZANISM', p50

Commenting on what had by then become a well-publicized row, he suggested "Soyinka's reaction to the Chinweizu troika was unfortunate in its violence but perhaps it was a valid over-reaction to overstatement".

Two later critiques were contributed by Chidi Amuta and Anthony Appiah. The former described TDAL as "a necessary but problematic book", seeing it as flawed in "its inherent ahistorical, undialectical and ultimately idealist conception of the relationship between literature . . . and the socio-economic processes which overdetermine other aspects of contemporary African experience". While their crusade for cultural decolonization was admirable, the troika were mistaken in conceptualizing an African world view as "an absolute, fairly homogenous, immutable and eternal mode of perceiving reality". Appiah, too, saw the troika failing to recognize the historicity of analytical terms such as "culture", "literature" and "nation". Paradoxically, he argued, despite its emphasis on cultural decolonization, the book achieved no real "dis-identification" with Western epistemology: "while Western criteria of evaluation are challenged, the way in which the contest is framed is not".

In trying to place the significance of TDAL it is important to acknowledge it did not quite appear in a vacuum. Essays by, for example, Ali Mazrui and Omafume Onoge, had already broached the questions raised by the troika. There had, too, from the mid-1970s developed an astringent critique of African cultural production on the part of young Nigerian critics such as Femi Osofisan, Odia Ofeimun, Kole Omotoso and Biodun Jeyifo, appearing especially in the monthly Afriscope. The fact that these writers are unmentioned in TDAL--a startling omission--suggests its perspectives, formed in the early 1970s, were not adjusted over

NWOGA,
p 43.

AMUTA,
pp 33-4.

DO,
p 38.

APPIAH,
pp 70-1.

the years before it appeared in book form.

Nonetheless, as Chidi Amuta suggests, TDAL did represent the first full-length, systematic study of its kind. Its impact on teaching faculty, especially in Nigeria, was to shift the parameters through which theory of cultural production was discussed, and it stimulated a new appraisal of the nature of African literatures and of the cultural and intellectual interaction of Africa and the West. Enthusiastic recognition of TDAL's importance was shared by Dennis Brutus and Andrew Salkey. The latter saw in the troika "our new truth-seekers" and added "with them we'll all find our way back home" (letters to Okike in 1975). Some years later M.S. Wallace argued the book had stimulated a new anti-colonial movement, in the way that Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth had stimulated nationalist thinking in the 1960s.

Eight years after completing TDAL Chinweizu edited an anthology of African writing, Voices from Twentieth-Century Africa: Griots and Towncriers (1988) for the British publisher Faber and Faber. Voices is prefaced by a disclaimer, "this . . . is not the long-awaited Volume II of [the earlier work]". In three important respects, certainly, it falls short of the projected TDAL anthology: it covers only twentieth-century voices, it excludes non-fictional work, and it restricts itself to Africa rather than embracing the diaspora. It does, though, correspond to the earlier project in that it comprises what are, clearly, for Chinweizu "exemplary works . . . models of memorable thoughts and utterances". Voices provides, in fact, an extreme example of the anthologist selecting only those works he can personally identify with. A large proportion of the texts are drawn from

CHINWEIZU
VOICES
p. xl.

CHINWEIZU
TDAL
p. 2.

oral poetry and narrative; not a single item is included whose language is complex or whose message is elusive. Amongst the 60-odd items from Nigeria, Igbo authors provide almost half. In a gesture more polemic than absolute exclusion would be, Soyinka is represented by two of his most accessible works, "Telephone Conversation" and an excerpt from "The Trials of Brother Jero". The longest of the book's eleven thematically organized sections is on "The Afro-European Encounter".

The introduction to Voices forms a substantial essay, which largely restates the positions of TDAL, decrying "Euro-assimilationist junk" and the distorted valuations "perpetrated by the conventional academic view". A new extension of this theme--and one that had come to preoccupy Chinweizu in the mid-1980s--is the identification of the Nobel prize as a weapon of cultural imperialism. In that it marks no advance on Chinweizu's position in 1980--rather, restates this in ossified form--the Voices essay lends some support to Adebayo Williams's observation: "the occasionally irrational and poorly theorized Afrocentrism of Chinweizu [et al] soon ran out of intellectual momentum".

Chinweizu's personal reputation as controversialist, individually and as member of the troika, grew steadily through the 1980s. A characteristic instance is the 1986 debate with James Gibbs, sparked off by a critique by the latter, published in Research in African Literatures, of the troika's assessment of Soyinka in Toward the Decolonization of African Literature. Gibbs's charges of "emotional imbalance" and of "misrepresentation" in the troika's approach is countered by them in a reply in the same issue (Spring 1986) accusing Gibbs of being a "Western interloper" whose views are responsible for "polluting African judgment". Gibbs's response (in the next issue of the journal)

CHINWEIZU
VOICES,
p. xix.

WILLIAMS,
pp. 7-8.

is countered again by the troika, casting doubt on the validity of his "fragmentary and unrepresentative" published sources. The debate was capped the following year with a substantial contribution from Willfried Feuser, arguing the troika seriously misrepresented Soyinka's role in what was, in Nigeria and elsewhere, "a rising curve of resistance to the negritude ideology". Simultaneously with the Gibbs row Chinweizu clashed swords with the dramatist and critic Femi Osofisan. After Chinweizu had attacked the latter in the Guardian, as part of a wider critique under the heading "Reflections of Nigeria's Literary Culture", Osofisan replied in an article entitled "The Assassin as Critic" in which, expressing a view that was now becoming increasingly widespread, he admitted to an enthusiasm for much of TDAL, but noted that Nigerians were now paying for their willingness to shut their eyes to the book's venom and its restrictive prescriptiveness. Osofisan continued: "it is through the use of abuse that [Chinweizu] has come to enjoy a reputation far in excess of his demonstrated talent or accomplishment".

Increasingly in the 1980s it was Soyinka who provided the focus for Chinweizu's assault on Nigeria's cultural establishment. In the short story "Simple Simon Learns About Art-AS-ART" (1981), Soyinka is pilloried as "the panther pontiff of African ART--The nemesis of Ebonism", a puppet in the control of "Sir Reginald Shepherd, head of the Royal Escort Service of the British Society for Commonwealth Culture Heroes". Soyinka's winning the Nobel Prize in 1986 only exacerbated Chinweizu's criticism. Already the latter had published an article, "Pan-Africanism and the Nobel Prize", in which he argued the purpose of the award was to foster Western hegemony. Once Soyinka's prize was announced, Chinweizu responded with one of his most vitriolic pieces, in

FEUSER)
p695.

OSOFSAN)
PART ONE)
p8.

CHINWEIZU
DAM,
P/87

which Soyinka is denounced as a "Nigger Tom" and the Nobel as a "Neocolonial O.B.E. Lollipop" whose award prompts Africa to "give vent to a boundless joy: 'Massa says we smart! Massa says we smart! Rejoice, all you niggers, rejoice!'" (Both essays are reprinted in Decolonising the African Mind, 1987). By the end of the 1980s Chinweizu's polemic against Soyinka was sufficiently familiar to form the subject of a play by Esiaba Irobi, Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, a caustically funny satire in which Chinweizu and Soyinka battle it out--and the latter emerges as clear winner.

Since the early 1980s Chinweizu has been domiciled in Nigeria, spending most of his time in Lagos, though making frequent trips to the United States and Britain. He has continued to write poetry; much of his energy since the mid-80s, however, has been given over to journalism, an option taken up by other Nigerian writers during this period (for example, Femi Osofisan, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Bode Sowande), who saw in the emergence of newspapers such as the (Lagos) Guardian an opportunity to air a serious critique of Nigeria's political, economic and cultural development.

In 1985 Chinweizu won the ANA (Association of Nigerian Authors) prize with Invocations and Admonitions (which appeared in print the following year. The fact the collection was still unpublished when the ANA selected it as prizewinner created some disquiet at the time). Chinweizu's poetry at this stage is notable for the vehemence--and occasional brilliance--of its satire, and for the frequency with which its subject-matter coincides with that of his journalism and historical writings. In "Colonizer's Logic" he uses burlesque to point insights close to those in The West and the Rest of Us, as the colonialist

CHINWEIZU,
INV, p63

proclaims: "These natives are unintelligent / We can't understand their language". "Professor Derrida Eshu" takes up again the theme of the entrapment of African writers and scholars in Western epistemology, while "Invocation on a Day of Exile" reveals Chinweizu's growing interest at this time in Egyptology and in the scholarship of the Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop. The long poem "Admonition to the Black World" returns to the concerns of WRU, but with a growing emphasis on the equal unacceptability of influences from the West, the Soviet bloc and the Arab world. Here Chinweizu refers to Africa's rape by

Do, p27.

. . . every passing white dog
The dog of the crescent sword
The dog of the militant cross
The dog of the red star.

The poem "Nuns and Orphans" satirizes sexual harrassment, while in "The Penis of a God" burlesque on a Chief's outrageous sexual demands is employed to make a political point.

Much of Chinweizu's journalism in the 1980s appeared in the form of a weekly column titled "From the Observatory". This first appeared in the Lagos Guardian, a paper which, with its launch in 1983, had swiftly gained a reputation amongst Nigeria's dailies as the one most amenable to serious and searching journalism and one with an unusual willingness to give high prominence to the arts. Chinweizu was the Guardian's Economy and Business editor from 1983--85. Later he transferred his column to the Lagos Sunday Vanguard, where it has run sporadically ever since.

In 1983 Chinweizu was asked by the London-based South magazine to work as associate editor on a quarterly series to be entitled "Decolonising the Mind". The series was never, in

the event, sustained, but Chinweizu did contribute an article, "Opening the Third Chapter", to the first number, focusing again on the theme of "cultural decolonisation" and the project gave him the title for his 1987 collection Decolonising the African Mind. The phrase "third chapter" derives from Frantz Fanon's idea of the third stage, after assimilation and rebellion, when a "new and genuinely national culture" emerges. The cover illustration for this issue of South--used again for Decolonising the African Mind--shows a black man peeling off a white face-mask, a direct reference to Fanon's classic text on alienation, Black Skin, White Masks. Some would argue Chinweizu's polemical approach represents only a pale echo of Fanon's work, lacking its rigorous socio-historical analysis. Particularly disturbing are assertions such as that Soyinka and V.S. Naipaul are "now usually dismissed as neo-colonialist". This and other claims seem to attempt an auto-authentication of Chinweizu's earlier critiques--though, given the influence of Toward the Decolonization of African Literature especially in Nigeria, they have some bearing on current perception. The South essay does mark one new departure, an emphasis on the need to disestablish the English, French and Portuguese languages in Africa and for writers to employ indigenous languages. Here Chinweizu is allying himself with an argument that was to be voiced with increasing insistence during the 1980s by, especially, Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

The collection Decolonising the African Mind contains 21 articles and conference addresses from the period 1976--86, representing Chinweizu's thinking in the decade after The West and the Rest of Us and Toward the Decolonization of African Literature on economics, history, politics and culture.

Chinweizu's approach to economics at this stage is to focus

on consumer / producer capabilities and--though he phrases this in terms of "culture", in terms of patterns of behavior--on the political management of these. Africa's non-productive consumerist élites and the political implications of development aid are strongly critiqued. A series of articles on the debt trap may contain no especially original analysis, but they do function as eloquent statements for a Nigerian newspaper readership--and this is in no way to patronize that audience--of the causes of Africa's economic malaise, and should qualify the charge ^{that} Chinweizu in the 1980s was producing nothing new, simply reiterating old grudges.

In the article "Decolonising African History" Chinweizu argues for a reconceptualization of African history, for example by recognizing the short duration of the European intervention and by seeing this in the context of a larger, dynamic process. Here he leans heavily on the work of Cheikh Anta Diop: an instance of Chinweizu the skilled re-presenter. "For a Black World League of Nations" contains one of the clearest statements of his rejection of "white-sponsored universalisms" (Christianity, Islam, Marxism) and the prioritizing of black nationalism. Several articles confront what Chinweizu sees as Africa's material and ideological domination by the Arab world, which he argues is correlate to Western domination. Certainly political influence from radical--or at least, anti-Western--Arab States and from Iran provided a major cause for concern for some African governments in the 1980s. Much of this concern focused on the political adventures of Muammar Gadaffi--and one of Chinweizu's articles is entitled "Gadaffi: Arab Expansionist". In this group of essays, though, rage frequently overcomes reason. In "Seasons of White Invaders", for example (the title glances at Ayi Kwei Armah's virulently anti-Arab novel Two Thousand Seasons), he argues that

CHINWEIZU,
DAM,
p.110.

in the face of a "renewed Arab attempt to spread their hegemony over the whole of Africa", "Arab settlement" in the whole of North Africa must be put to an end and the entire Arab population shipped back to the Arabian peninsula^g.

Three years after Decolonising the African Mind, Chinweizu published Anatomy of Female Power (1990), a book that seems designed as a deliberate affront not to reactionary opinion, but to all those who acknowledge the oppression of women in patriarchal society. The subject^y matter is almost, but not quite, unprecedented in Chinweizu's work: it does have a pre-echo in the poem "Energy Crisis" (published in Okike in 1975 and reprinted as the title-poem in Chinweizu's first anthology). Here Chinweizu presents a dialogue between a woman desperate for a man to "fill her up" and a man bewailing his temporary "energy crisis"^v. Written in (a modified) American hip, the poem's satiric distancing is very much more targeted on the woman than on the man. Equally outrageous in tone, Anatomy of Female Power leaves the reader uncertain at what level, if any, it is supposed to be taken as serious analysis.

CHINWEIZU,
AFP,
pp 22-3.

The basis of Chinweizu's argument is that even while few women participate in the public structures of political, economic and cultural power, women generally maintain domination over men through their control of womb, kitchen and cradle. Man's subservience is exacerbated by his psychological immaturity, relative to woman, and his reason-dissolving sexual urge. It is this very ubiquity of female dominance, and the fact that "it tends to be subtle, manipulative and indirect", that sustains the illusion that power is the male sphere. Rather than discussing, say, the situation of African peasant women (^acrucial focus for progressive analyses of patriarchal domination), Chinweizu records mythic

CHINWEIZU
AFP, p100.
Do, p123.
prototypes of woman the seductress--Ishtar, Eve, Calypso, Circe, the Sirens--and concludes: "Their common lesson to man is: FEAR WOMEN!" At first sight, it might seem surprising that feminists emerge in the book only as a marginal target, but Chinweizu dismisses the feminist movement as a cluster of aberrant versions of mainstream matriarchal tyranny: "feminism has succeeded, world-wide in enlarging women's opportunities without reducing their traditional privileges".

Though the book's title and its sub-title (A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy) both suggest it will proceed by way of rigorous analysis, Anatomy of Female Power is more of an anthology of wisecracks, cemented together by Chinweizu's own endlessly reiterated polemic. The whole book is organized on the model of widening concentric circles: the modes of "female power" first listed, then described, then one by one described again in greater detail. Assertions of matriarchal domination come in the form of old saws ("the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world") and quotations from authorities such as Aristotle Onassis, "Remark at a Nigerian party," and Allen and Sheldon's joky Picking on Men Again. Chinweizu is heavily dependent on the latter, as well as on the generalized unattributed source ("It is said that..."). His overall intention, to invert the norms of feminist analysis, leads him to statements as extreme as his claim that in clitoridectomy women have discovered "a great strategic weapon against men".

Do, p126.
In Anatomy of Female Power Chinweizu totally disregards the economic and legal conditions under which the great majority of women live in Africa. It is a very Western text in terms of its emphases, range of reference points and style of humor. In this book, also, Chinweizu has renounced one of the cardinal

features of his earlier work. Here the most reactionary British and American authorities are quoted with full approval.

From the mid-1980s Nigeria saw a proliferation of quality current affairs magazines, examples being African Concord, Newbreed and TSM (The Sunday Magazine). These offered writers new openings for extended articles on the Nigerian political and economic scene. A notable contribution from Chinweizu is his 1993 essay "If we want democracy...", a substantial (10,000 word) piece in which he critiques President Babangida's strategies for a return to democracy (~~due to be completed in August 1993~~), in the context of examples of the democratization process drawn from Turkey, the Phillipines, Ghana and (especially) Latin America. Much of this essay comprises an extensively researched historical account of demilitarization; despite Chinweizu's trenchant criticisms of Babangida's strategy, it is one of his least polemical works to date.

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