

Poetry from Contemporary Africa: Discursive Issues of Nigeria's Leadership Debacle and Socio-political Impasse in Idris Amali's and Halima Amali's Poetry

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Abstract

*In the annals of African poetry, Idris Amali emerges as a prominent figure, his poems serving as a reflection of Nigeria's tumultuous socio-political landscape spanning decades. On the other hand, Halima Amali contributes to this narrative with her incisive anthologies. This study undertakes a deep dive into their respective bodies of work to shed light on Nigeria's persistent leadership challenges and the resultant socio-political impasse. Focused on a postcolonial approach, a qualitative textual analysis unfurls the intricate tapestry of Nigeria's history, with its foremost outcrops of authoritarianism, kleptomania, political maladministration, religious intolerance, and terrorism. Through the poets' language, we witness the haunting impacts of postcolonial legacy, the maleficent rise of corruption, and the looming specter of incompetence that plagues post-independence leadership. Yet amid the prevailing gloom, a glimmer of hope emerges as the study advocates for effective leadership paradigms anchored in transparency, accountability, justice, fairness, and equality. From Idris's seminal works such as *Generals without War* (2000), *Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed)* (2012), *EFEEGA: War of Ants* (2014), and *Tears of Desert War* (2020), to Halima's poignant contributions including *I Want to Join Them* (2016) and *Faces of Shame* (2020), these poems serve as reflective mirrors, illuminating Nigeria's societal conditions and underlining the pressing imperative for transformative change. Through this meticulous analysis, the study beckons a Nigeria emancipated from the shackles of its past, embracing a future defined by visionary leadership and collective rejuvenation.*

Keywords: Africa, Nigeria, Leadership debacle, Socio-political impasse

1 Introduction

A close reading of Idris Amali's and Halima Amali's poems reveals the historical tenors of leadership struggles and socio-political quagmires confronting Nigeria's modern epoch. Studies on Idris Amali's and Halima Amali's poetry by various scholars have explored few themes in their works. Although the collective findings of their scholarly endeavors have discerned the deleterious impact of leadership malaise on the nation's developmental trajectory, a wide-ranging exploration of the thematic issues of leadership debacle, socio-political impasse, and their consequential influence on the contemporary Nigerian landscape, remains to be updated within the existing literature. Within this scholarly lacuna is the impetus for the present research endeavor.

Idris Amali, a professor of oral literature at the University of Maiduguri, is a prominent voice to reckon with in the Nigerian poetic scene. His critical and literary contributions to unjust social contradictions in his country may date back to the 1980s. The epochs between

the mid-1980s and the late 1990s marked the reign of unbridled authoritarianism that gave birth to political instability and socio-economic adversity in Nigeria. *Generals without War* (2000), his first publication, eminently launched him onto the African literary scene. The publication typifies these concerns about the country bedeviled by draconian regimes. He is the editor of *Let the Dawn Come: Voices from North-East Nigeria* (2000), an anthology of poetry by poets burdened with the issues roiling North-East Nigeria. Since his first poetry publication, he has proven a consistent voice in the country's social, political, cultural, and historical transitions with other publications such as *Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed)* (2012), *EFEEGA: War of Ants* (2014), and more recently, *Tears of Desert War* (2020).

Amali emerges as a beacon of societal conscience, his mantle of social crusader earned through unwavering dedication to the betterment of humanity. His latest work, *Tears of Desert War* (2020), is a harrowing testament to the tumultuous upheaval plaguing Northern Nigeria, particularly the besieged city of Maiduguri and its surrounding environs. Within its pages, a kaleidoscope of themes emerges, each echoing the discordant symphony of war, terror, death, inhumanity, violence, trauma, and religious strife perpetrated by the fanatical and insurrectionist forces of Boko Haram. Through the searing imagery and lyrical urgency of his verses, Amali lays bare the stark reality of untold tragedy that grips the region, compelling readers to confront the depths of despair and the crucial need for resolution in the face of relentless conflict.

Halima Amali, a professor of English at the Federal University of Lafia, marked her debut with *I Want to Join Them* (2016) as an emerging voice in the African literary scene. Her publication is currently receiving a wide readership with engaging commentaries, essays, articles, and reviews written by scholars and critics of Nigerian literature. In her poems, she kicks against kleptomania and the degree of rot in politics. Her recent book, *Faces of Shame* (2020), gives exclusive updates on the pervasive forms of corruption and the preponderance of resource mismanagement in governance. Her poems also reverberate with enduring streaks and matching drifts of civic consciousness that advocate for a change in Nigeria's fraudulent political institutions. Remarkably, these thematic concerns situate her as a change advocate, whose strident and redemptive path to the nation's leadership challenges stimulates the need for vigorous debates.

In the subsequent sections, the conceptual definitions, significance of literature and socio-politics, issues of socio-political impasse in African poetry, reviews of selected poetry collections, methodology, theoretical approach, discussion, conclusion, and findings will suffice.

2 Conceptual Definitions

The ability to guide, instruct, order, and lead others or groups of people within a geographic area—who may be referred to as followers—is known as leadership (Ikegbu et al., p. 351). In a group setting, leadership is the exercise of influence, with individuals having the most influence over the group or organization, according to Eyo and Udofia (2016: xviii), as referenced in Craig Johnson. Equally, leadership is the willpower to lead and control people or groups to develop them for the productive and progressive pursuit of direction for a goal or achievement. Finkelstein & Hambrick (1996: 369) describe a leadership debacle as “a severe and visible event in which a leader or leadership team experiences a dramatic downfall due to errors, misjudgments, or misguided actions.” Certain factors, such as resource allocation rivalry,

power tussle, lack of transparency and accountability, corruption, budget padding, contract scams, authoritarianism, fraud, greed, sycophancy, resource mismanagement, and political deceit, are impeding forces to leadership success in society.

Socio-political refers to the interrelation of social and political factors in a given society. It encompasses the social, economic, and political structures and the institutional practices that shape and influence power dynamics, resources, and opportunities. The socio-political, as defined by sociology scholar Mayer (1980), refers to the relationship between political structures and processes, and social structures and institutions, which determine how societies are organized and governed. Giddens (1981) defined socio-political as the interplay and shaping of social structures and political power via the mutual impact of social and political institutions and processes. Weber (1947) sees social politics as the “interplay of social and political forces in shaping the structure and dynamics of a society.” However, a socio-political impasse refers to the obstacles that hinder progress within society and its political activities. Such impasse includes religious/ethnic rivalry, poverty, corruption, bribery, unemployment, armed robbery, youth crisis, insecurity, inflation, and class inequality. These few examples are forces against modern societies’ peace, progress, and development.

3 Literature and socio-politics

Literature and socio-politics have a synergic connection, where literature becomes a reflection of society and its politics. Both are intrinsically linked, as one influences and reflects the other by serving as a tool for social commentary in critiquing political systems and norms. It is evident in the writings of authors such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka, who have advocated for its importance in polemics and scholarly works in addressing the specific needs of the African context. Thus, Soyinka (1976) argues that “literature is not just a vehicle for politics but also a mode of resistance.” In his works, he highlights the political oppression faced by Africans under colonial rule and subsequent postcolonial governments. Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) depicts political and cultural clashes in Nigeria during the colonial era. Another African scholar, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, argues for literature as a tool for political liberation. In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Wa Thiong'o (1986) states that colonizers erased the languages and cultures of Africans, leading to a loss of identity and power. He believes that African languages and promoting African literature can reclaim cultural identity and empower marginalized communities. African and non-African scholars see literature as an essential tool for reflecting on and challenging political systems. Through literature, they raise awareness of political issues, resist oppressive regimes, and reclaim cultural identity. For instance, George Orwell's *1984* critiques totalitarianism and the abuse of power, while Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* highlights racial inequality and prejudice in the American South.

Conversely, socio-political factors such as government policies, cultural values, and historical events can shape the themes and messages conveyed in literature. During the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, many authors wrote about racial inequality and discrimination, reflecting and amplifying the political debates of the time. Such literature readily lends itself as a means of resisting oppressive socio-political systems. Books like Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* give voice to individuals who have been silenced by totalitarian regimes. These show that literature and socio-politics are co-dependent, as literature provides a means of exploring and critiquing

socio-political systems, while socio-political factors shape the themes and messages conveyed in literature.

4 Socio-Political Impasse in African Poetry

The ongoing discourse among African critics and scholars of poetry revolves around the socio-political impasse prevalent across the continent. This prevailing trend underscores the multifaceted challenges stemming from political, social, moral, religious, and ethnic conflicts. The liberation of African societies from imperialist rule marked a pivotal moment of independence for many nations on the continent, offering African poets an opportunity to articulate their sentiments, viewpoints, and stances on issues such as colonialism, anti-colonialism, culture, identity, history, racism, politics, and nationhood.

While some poets idealize Africa's values and identity, others adopt a realist approach to lament its fate. Yet others, in their endeavor to enlighten the public, focus on internal societal problems. These poets are categorized as pioneers, modernists, Marxists or leftists, contemporary/avant-gardists, alter/native, environmental activists, feminists, and humanists. Regional affiliations also shape their perspectives, delineating them as Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, and Northern and Southern African poets. They tackle diverse themes relevant to their social contexts.

Despite the prevalence of these themes, virtually all post-independence publications carry undertones of profound concern regarding socio-political decay. While earlier poetry postulated against colonial rule, identity crises, military abuse of power, and moral decay in the public sector as pivotal subjects that instigated awareness regarding their impact on the continent's developmental trajectory, these impasses persist, fostering Africa's current predicaments.

Even the political aspirations of ambitious elites who ascended to power in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s with the intent to effect change and reflect the optimism and aspirations of the populace, based on sociological humanism, failed to assuage Africa's challenges. The failure of successive leadership attempts to sustain socio-economic policies addressing issues such as unemployment, poverty, social unrest, and, notably, corruption, underscores one of the continent's most pressing challenges today. Corruption has exacerbated social vices, altering collective lives and aspirations across the continent.

By drawing from contemporary events and ideological perspectives, African poets have sought to reinterpret the past to envisage a better future. However, despite their eloquent, representational, and satiric articulations, their interventions have not stemmed the tide of these challenges. The continued proliferation and exacerbation of these issues necessitate the continued engagement of African poets, demonstrating how these challenges defy humanity's resolve to survive and transcend their recurrence.

5 Contemporary African Poetry and Intervening Voices

Discussions of contemporary African poetry often examine a wide range of concepts and points of view about the history, politics, science, and culture of African societies. The poetic landscape explores complex experiences of global trends and socio-political processes, representing the essential and reasonable objective it strives to within the changing African

world. Nwosu & Adeshina (2021: 19) shed light on the identity and ethos of contemporary African poets, stating:

This group of poets, vibrant and equally recalcitrant, strongly and directly condemns prevailing social ills. Owing to their novel trend of thoughts and affable disposition, they are labeled avant-garde, and one thing unites them: their bold aversion to socio-political and economic irresponsibility.

Although Niyi Osundare and Odia Ofeimun have referred to contemporary African poets as the “CNN” and “claptrap generation of writers” (cited in Inyabiri, 2006: 68), these poets undoubtedly share an underlying and unyielding discontent with their country’s devolution into chaos. As a result, Ifejirika (2013: 158) proposes that the contemporary (African) literary artist functions as an intentional town crier who works by educating the populace of their nation about the numerous cases of injustice, greed, poor leadership, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, abuse of power, insecurity, general poverty, oppression, and deprivation (among so many other ills) so that they become aware of them and take action against them.

These observations highlight the interventionist role of contemporary African (Nigerian) poets in rescuing the continent’s (country’s) political and public spheres from impending collapse. Thus, they reinvent such dystopian fantasies in their poems and offer to align themselves with the virtues of African literary artists in awakening the sensibilities of citizens to the fortunes and afflictions that attend to their daily existence. They also advocate what Okon (2013:107) refers to as “recent echoes from a now globalized world” while expounding on the notion of art for art’s sake. In addition to being at home with the anxieties and goodwill of their immediate surroundings, they address what Orhero (2017: 161) perceives as “issues of globalization, corruption, the ICT, migration, exile, and others... taught by the alternative poets” in their compositions.

In various collective anthologies and individual poems disseminated across diverse platforms such as national and international journals, conferences, the internet, symposia, and colloquia, a good number of poets including Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Remi Raji, Akachi Ezeigbo, Idris Okpanachi, Idris Amali, Gomba Obari, Eddie Onuzuruik, Ifowodo Ogaga, Gbemisola Adeoti, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Ikechukwu Asika, Halima Amali, Joe Ushie, Darlington Ogbonnaya, Rome Aboh, James Eze, Saddiq Dzukogi, Chijioke Amu Nnadi, Romeo Oriogun, Denja Abdullahi, Nnimmo Bassey, Sam Omatsaye, Femi Adedina, Kola Oke, Francis Odiniya, Ikeogu Oke, Sunday Okpanachi, Harry Garuba, Odia Ofeimun, Charles Ihuoma, Cecilia Kato, Afam Akeh, Peter Umezurike, Toyin Adewale, Sophia Obi, Amanze Akpuda, Hope Eghagha, Onokome Okome, Isidore Diala, among others, have undertaken the formidable task of charting a progressive course for Africa’s (specifically Nigeria’s) leadership and socio-political regeneration.

Their contributions are showcased in collections such as Idris Okpanachi’s *The Eaters of the Living* (2007), Akachi Ezeigbo’s *Heart Songs* (2009), Hyginus Ekwuazi’s *The Monkey’s Eyes* (2009) and *That Other Country* (2010), Enoch Ojotisa’s *Commoner’s Speech* (2011), Pius Okoro’s *Vultures of Fortune and Other Poems* (2011), Ibiwari Ikiriko’s *Oily Tears of the Delta* (2012), Rome Aboh’s *A Torrent of Terror* (2014), Udentia O. Udentia’s *37 Seasons before the Tornado* (2015), Ade Ajakaiye’s *Fire in My Soul* (2016), Zakari S. Musa’s *Echoes from the*

Theatre (2016), Charles Akinsete's *Do Not Preach to Me* (2017), El-Mubashir Abdulsalam's *Hope Still for My Raped Land* (2018), Kola Eke's *June 12 and other poems* (2018) and *October 1960 and Other Poems* (2018), Sunday Okpanachi's *So Long a Journey* (2019), and Idris Amali's *Tears of Desert War* (2020), among others.

Moreover, recent journal publications and anthologized collections have further amplified thematic depictions of leadership debacles and socio-political impasse. Younger poets have emerged with creative and avant-garde visions that captivate audiences. Works such as Jecinta Ozoh's "Revolution", Raphael Onyejizu's "Barawo", Jumoke Verissimo's "Nigeria Will Not End Me," and James Yeku's "In Memorial" exemplify this trend.

For instance, in "Barawo," a Hausa term denoting a criminal, the poet crafts a scathing indictment of Nigerian politicians, employing rhetorical devices to provoke critical introspection among audiences. The poem resonates with indignation, questioning the actions of those in power who exploit and betray the trust of the populace. Through evocative imagery and piercing questions, the poet exposes the systemic corruption and abuse of authority prevalent in Nigerian society.

Verissimo and Yeku echo similar sentiments in their poetry, focusing their creative lenses on the plight of Nigerian youth. In "Nigeria Will Not End Me," which borrows its title from the final words tweeted by Okechukwu Obi-Enadhuze before his tragic death, the poet condemns the rise of police brutality and extrajudicial killings targeting Nigerian youth. This culminated in the nationwide #EndSARS movement, demanding the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of Nigeria's police force. The poem vividly portrays the anguish and despair of a generation facing systemic violence and oppression, symbolized by the stark imagery of being denied necessities and stripped of life itself.

Similarly, Yeku's "In Memorial" recalls the tragedy at Lekki, where peaceful protesters were mercilessly shot by trigger-happy military officers. The poet mourns the loss of innocent lives and the stifling of dissent, depicting a haunting scene where voices are silenced, and songs of freedom are muted by the brutality of power. The reference to the "Canary bird" serves as a metaphor for silenced voices and suppressed resistance, perpetuated by the instruments of state violence.

Across the African continent, contemporary poetry continues to exhibit vibrancy and dynamism, reflecting diverse experiences and perspectives. Emerging voices are using their poetry as a tool to intervene in the socio-political impasse afflicting many African nations, shedding light on issues such as corruption, inequality, and human rights abuses. Notable poets like Warsan Shire, Safia Elhillo, Koleka Putuma, Nadifa Mohamed, and Leila Aboulela are challenging traditional power structures and advocating for change through their evocative language and compelling narratives. Through their poetry, these voices serve as vital interventions in the ongoing discourse surrounding leadership and socio-political challenges on the African continent, envisioning a more just and equitable future for all.

6 Literature Review of Idris Amali and Halima Amali's Poetry

In Lar's (2022) analysis of Amali's *Generals without War*, a critical examination from the perspective of military dictatorship and mismanagement in public office reveals a nuanced portrayal. Lar underscores that while each military regime purported a "Messianic" role of national salvation, the reality often devolved into despotic rule, marked by a culture of impunity and corruption. Despite the poems' lamentations of national tragedy, they ultimately convey a tone of triumph.

Equally, Eguavon & Aikoriogie (2022) employ Freudian psychoanalysis and metaphor theories to dissect Amali's *Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed)*. Their study illuminates how Amali employs metaphor-laden poetry to mourn the loss of contentment and good leadership, expressing his dissatisfaction and advocating for societal change.

In a study by Ogba et al. (2020), Marxist aesthetics are applied to analyze *EFEEGA* and *Back Again*. Their exploration reveals Amali's descent into despair and frustration, reflecting disillusionment with both military and civilian leadership. The poet's indignation toward the ruling elite's exploitation of the underprivileged is palpable.

While Akwu (2016) provides a critical review of *EFEEGA*, characterizing Amali as a committed social critic advocating for non-violent revolutionary measures, Akinsete (2021) delves into the significance of metaphors in Amali's poetry, particularly in *EFEEGA*.

Nwosu & Adesina's (2022) study on corruption in contemporary Nigerian poetry sheds light on Amali's aim to raise public awareness of the fight against corruption in *Back Again* and *EFEEGA*. However, their analysis is limited to corruption as a postcolonial legacy's influence on present-day socio-political outcomes.

In *Tears of Desert War*, Alagbe (2023: 146) analyzed the concept of insecurity and examined the linguistic techniques employed by the poet. He observed that the poem employs a combination of the historical present and past tense, aiming to establish immediacy, actuality, and historicity within the narrative. Furthermore, the use of phrases, clauses, and simple sentences contributes to the brevity of expression, a characteristic typical of poetic language... that the insecurity depicted in the poem predominantly manifests as insurgency and banditry, with the perpetrators identified as the Boko Haram sect and bandits.

However, in a semiotic examination of the covers of Amali's four collections, Adamu and Ibrahim (2022: 63) assert that the photographs featured on the anthologies' covers, taken by Idris Amali, serve as a narrative representation technique aimed at illustrating the adverse circumstances in Nigeria hindering the country's progress and development. While Alagbe's analysis delves into the poet's stylistic choices in depicting insurgency in the North-East as one of several socio-political issues addressed, a notable thematic limitation arises in his focus solely on insecurity to the exclusion of other socio-political concerns in *Tears of Desert War*. Additionally, Adamu and Ibrahim's (2023) study confines its examination of the visual messages conveyed through the covers of Amali's poetry collections, utilizing a semiotic perspective.

Halima Amali's literary works, *I Want to Join Them* (2016) and *Faces of Shame* (2020), have received limited critical attention, with few credited studies associated with them. According to Alagbe (2021: 176), Halima Amali is recognized as a dedicated satirist who employs her writing to critique societal decay for the sake of progress, particularly evident in *I Want to Join Them* (2016) and *Faces of Shame* (2020).

Furthermore, while Orji-Mbah and Dogoh (2020) delved into the concept of irony and the profound use of satire as a prominent technique in *I Want to Join Them* (2016), Onyejizu (2021:124) examined the postcolonial themes of political corruption and oppression prevalent in her poetry, particularly emphasizing these aspects in *I Want to Join Them*. However, neither Orji-Mbah and Dogoh (2020) nor Onyejizu (2021) expanded their studies to encompass Nigeria's leadership and socio-political issues in *Faces of Shame*. Both critics focused solely on the ironic portrayal of satire and the representation of postcolonial corruption and oppression in *I Want to Join Them*. Thus, Onyejizu (2021) emphasizes the urgent need for a just socio-political system, free from endemic corruption and oppression, as depicted in Halima Amali's poetry.

Furthermore, in *Faces of Shame* (2020), Alagbe (2021:179) highlights the poet's condemnation of the rampant corruption and injustice within Nigeria's political sphere: Throughout *Faces of Shame*, Halima Amali vehemently expresses her disdain for the flagrant corruption and injustice perpetrated by political elites against the citizenry. She satirizes the ostentatiousness and shamelessness of public officials who embezzle public funds, squander them on frivolities, and leave the masses in abject poverty and deprivation.

Additionally, Alagbe (2021: 183) analyzed the stylistic and syntactic features of one of her significant poems, "Faces of Shame", pointing out various syntactic structures and linguistic devices employed by the poet. However, despite recognizing these stylistic elements, the critic fails to acknowledge the broader spectrum of leadership and socio-political concerns addressed in Halima Amali's other poems.

The body of research on the poetry of Idris and Halima Amali has addressed several topics, including political decadence, corruption, oppression, and socio-political conflicts in Nigeria. Nonetheless, a discernible deficiency exists in the impact of the postcolonial heritage on Nigeria's leadership and its function in molding the current socio-political terrain. While scholars discuss the effects of poor leadership and mismanagement in the country, they often do not delve into how postcolonialism laid the groundwork for these issues. Moreover, less attention has been paid to the interaction of postcolonial frameworks such as post-independence administrations, marginalization, religious/ethnic intolerance, money laundry, inequality, moral bankruptcy, indulgent luxury, pervasive decay, and terrorism.

Thus, a thorough analysis of the extent Nigeria's colonial past has influenced the emergence of current socio-political problems, as shown in the poetry of Idris and Halima Amali, is needed to close this study gap. This involves investigating how postcolonial legacies—such as political divides, economic exploitation, administrative systems, and cultural impositions—have impacted Nigeria's societal dynamics, governance models, and leadership styles in the years thereafter. This kind of study would illuminate the poets' criticisms from the perspective of larger historical trends and offer a more nuanced view of the causes of Nigeria's socio-political issues.

7 Methodology

The methodology is qualitative research in the textual analysis of selected poems from the six poetry collections. The nature of the texts and the issues addressed, justify the use of the method to dissect the leadership and socio-political concerns emanating from the thematic and formal elements of *Generals without War* (2000), *Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed)* (2012), *EFEEGA: War of Ants* (2014), *Tears of Desert War* (2020), *I Want to Join Them* (2016), and *Faces of Shame* (2020). Textbooks, academic journals, and printed mass media are among the library items, which will be used in this study's data-gathering process.

8 Postcolonial Approach

In the analysis of the poetry of Idris Amali and Halima Amali, this research employs a postcolonial approach. Postcolonial criticism encompasses any analysis of a postcolonial literary work, irrespective of the theoretical framework employed (Tyson 1999: 365). Conversely, postcolonialism is viewed as *a process of postcolonising* (Quayson, 2020: 9).

Emerging in the late twentieth century, postcolonial literary theory serves as a critical approach focusing on the political, social, and cultural consequences of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized. Central themes include identity, hybridity, nationalism, and cultural exchange.

The postcolonial approach, as defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995:2), encompasses aspects such as migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, race, gender, place, problems of global culture, and the relationship between cultures and global forces before colonization. Generally, postcolonial theory examines the disruption of Indigenous culture upon first contact with the colonizer, the subsequent attempt by the colonized to emulate the dress, behavior, speech, and lifestyles of the colonizers, experiences of exile, post-independence disillusionment, struggles for individual and collective cultural identity, and themes of alienation, unhomeliness, and hybridity. Additionally, postcolonial critics evaluate whether a literary work is colonialist or anti-colonialist, analyzing its alignment with or opposition to the oppressive ideology of colonialism, regardless of its content (Tyson 1999: 374).

Key discursive terminologies derived from the postcolonial approach include Homi Bhaba's *Hybridity*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and Gayatri Spivak's *Subalternity*. Other concepts central to various perspectives on postcolonial studies include neocolonialism, slavery, binarism, Manicheanism, aborigine, appropriation, colonization, center/margin (periphery), worlding, Commonwealth, hegemony, Diaspora, identity, mimicry, miscegenation, abrogation, colonial ideology, and hegemony, among others. The postcolonial textual analysis aims to engage in political liberation, ensuring equal access to material resources, contesting forms of domination, articulating political and cultural identities, examining the effects of colonialism on both colonized peoples and colonizing powers in terms of politics, economy, and culture, and exploring the decolonization process (Young 1995: 11).

9 Results and Discussion

Generals without War (2000) is structured into five sections: "Greed of Arms", "A Week of Broken Pains", "In the Womb of Our Ancestral Past", "Water as Gold," and "The Will to Be Free." This collection primarily examines the deleterious actions of Nigerian military officers, ostensibly undertaken in the name of revolutionary change and the restoration of order, long distorted by politicians during the First Republic (1963–1966). While other poems in the collection explore diverse themes such as the primordial past, nature, and freedom, our analysis will center on "Generals without War" and "Don't You See!."

The emergence of the military in Nigerian politics, aimed at remedying the rampant venality and political malaise in the wake of post-independence, began in the mid-1960s and persisted until the late 1990s. The coup d'état of January 15, 1966, triggered by the misconduct of post-independence politicians, marked the beginning of military involvement in politics, leading to subsequent successful and failed coups. However, the military leadership of the ensuing decades failed to meet the egalitarian expectations of the populace, as greed, incompetence, and abuse of power prevailed, as depicted in *General without War*. In this poem, Amali laments the atrocities committed by young soldiers whose pursuit of power exacerbates the economic woes experienced during despotic rule. The poem portrays how these soldiers, devoid of combat experience, fail to uphold the progress of society, leading to shattered dreams and societal stagnation.

In “Don’t you see!,” the poet-persona stresses the detrimental impact of military officers on Nigeria’s political landscape. The poem highlights how these officers, often claiming to bring about revolutionary change, instead perpetrate deeds that serve their interests, waging war against the land and its people. The poet urges citizens to recognize the injustices perpetrated by corrupt leaders and to take action against them by standing up for their rights and holding those in power accountable for their actions. The citizens are implored to confront the realities of hardship and oppression, symbolized by the trampling of life’s seeds and the erosion of hope, and to demand accountability and justice.

Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed) (2012) represents Amali’s second collection of poetry, succeeding *Generals Without War* (2000), his initial offering. Throughout this collection, Amali delves into the pervasive influence of greed, which extends its grasp across various spheres of society, including interpersonal relationships, cultural norms, political landscapes, governmental structures, and economic systems. The political milieu of the 1980s, amid the post-civil war military era, fostered an environment marked by debauchery and moral decay. The literary outpourings of the 1980s and 1990s resonated with themes of militancy, kidnapping, robbery, corruption, and terrorism, reflecting the societal dissonance wrought by draconian regimes such as those of Muhammed Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, and General Sani Abacha.

Comprising forty-nine poems, *Back Again* is organized into seven sections, including “Before We Leap”, “Let Them Die”, “Strings of Emotions”, “Lineage of Rage”, “Abodes”, “Towers of Neglect,” and “Back Again”. The selected poems for analysis—“Back Again (At the Foothills of Greed)”, “Let Them Die”, “Peace Forgotten”, and “The Dance of the Rich”—draws attention to the transition from military to civilian rule, evoking a sense of discontentment. Following the advent of civilian governance in 1999, Nigeria’s trajectory witnessed a resurgence of fiscal mismanagement reminiscent of its military past. The poet-persona bemoans the continuity of kleptocracy among civilian politicians, who, instead of learning from history, perpetuate the cycle of embezzlement and exploitation.

In “Let Them Die”, the poet-persona employs motifs of hope and resilience amidst the backdrop of military executions conducted at the bar beach. These executions, emblematic of the state’s brutality under successive regimes, symbolize the enduring struggle against social unrest, armed robbery, and militarisation. Despite the harrowing circumstances, the poet encourages the masses to maintain optimism for the future, refusing to succumb to despair in the face of oppression and injustice.

In “Peace Forgotten,” the poet-persona reflects on the haunting memories of the Nigerian-Biafra war, a conflict that ravaged the nation from July 6, 1967, to January 15, 1970. Lasting two years, six months, a week, and two days, the war exacted a devastating toll, claiming the lives of more than a million Biafran civilians, with women and children bearing the brunt of the casualties. Despite the passage of time, the psychological scars of the war persist, as evidenced by the persona’s lament over the resurgence of conflict rhetoric among the younger generation. Amali dedicates this poem to the tragic legacy of the secessionist movement, underscoring the avoidable nature of the fratricidal conflict. Nigeria, in his portrayal, emerges as a nation maimed and debilitated, its landscape scarred by the specter of impending violence: “on hand amputated/ like a waste-broken granary/and as cannons of threats and rhetoric transform into cannons of smoke and fireworks at dusk/Silent destruction takes its stead/ with men maddened by actions of war” (*Back Again* 22). The poem depicts the plight of innocent victims, particularly children, caught in the crossfire of conflict, their lives shattered by the relentless onslaught of violence.

In “The Dance of the Rich,” the poet-persona critiques the conduct of democratically elected civilian leaders who have succumbed to greed and avarice, forsaking their moral and ethical responsibilities to the populace. The poem condemns the rapacious appetite for wealth accumulation displayed by these leaders, which stands in stark contrast to the hopes and aspirations of the people they are meant to serve. Despite the transition to democracy, the advent of civilian rule has only ushered in a new era of moral decay. The persona denounces the betrayal of trust by these leaders, who have enriched themselves at the expense of the nation’s welfare: “They have stormed the city with a furious wind of wealth and death/ The men we loaned/ Our demanding voices... /The men we gave our metallic costumes:/ To dare the daredevil terrains of our land / The men we loaned our voices/The men we loaned our hearts / And the men we loaned our blood:/ While we remain hopeful without life /They have grown into voices / Not our voices;/ They have grown into eyes, cataracts that no longer see filth” (p. 92). The poem serves as an indictment of the moral bankruptcy and ethical decay plaguing Nigeria’s political elite, showing the urgent need for accountability and transparency in governance.

Amali’s *EFEEGA: War of Ants* is a reflective account of the growing tensions and gloomy path that contemporary Nigeria witnesses today. The poems examine the contradictions and variations of despair that surge in a landscape overtaken by greed and its byproducts. But through the tenor of non-violent revolt for the oppressed, hope, like embers of flames by the poet, is kept alive in the end. The collection consists of sixty-five poems, subdivided into “Desert of Needs”, “Pride in Filth”, “Restless Abodes”, “Struggle”, “Exchanges”, “Dine with the Past” and “War Without Arms”. In this study, ‘The Hyenas Are Here’, “Rise!”, “To Jos,” and “Efeega: War of Ants” are chosen for analysis.

The categorization of animal qualities into four tribal leaders from key sections of the country in “The Hyenas Are Here” reveals Amali’s creative ingenuity. The inference highlights their struggle for political leadership. The endowment of animal attributes goes from the hyena to the leopard, the jackal, and the wolf; this reflects the unsavory images of politicians in the country’s dismal political past. From a literary standpoint, the hyenas represent the North; the Jackals represent the minority regions; the wolves symbolize the South-West, while the Leopards represent the South-East. The wolf, like the leopard, hyena, and jackal, are compatriots in the journey towards upholding shared values of sustaining the nation’s power tussle and dominance along the lines of ethnicity and divide and rule. These symbolic creatures—hyenas, leopards, jackals, and wolves—represent Nigeria’s corrupt leaders from various ethnic backgrounds, jostling for power. Through this imagery, Amali vividly portrays the unsavory characteristics of politicians, as predatory animals clad in deceptive garb. The use of animal attributes serves as a metaphor for the political landscape, revealing the cutthroat nature of power struggles in Nigeria. Despite their nationalist rhetoric aimed at steering the country’s political affairs for the benefit of the masses, their promises often lack substance. Furthermore, the poet reiterates the notion of their ambiguous leadership ideals, emphasizing how they continue to use eloquent language to deceive the public. The poet does not arrogate to these men any “messianic” status of significance; instead, he refers to them as plunderers, who are always up to some mischief in the guise of saving the country from collapse. Thus, until the masses at the receiving end consciously rise to eliminate them from power, the nation’s treasury, or “barns of grains and groundnuts / Stands on steads cordoned by ravenous rodents” (36).

In “To Jos,” the poet recounts the turbulent memories of the religious crisis and insecurity in Jos, Plateau state. The history of Jos cannot be complete without reference to the

haunting accounts of bloodbaths and the gruesome ethnic wars that exemplify the fate of victims and eyewitnesses in that part of the country. Indeed, war brings back memories of fear, death, and uncertainty. In 2001, Jos witnessed a series of religious crises between Christians and Muslims that began on September 7. It was a crisis that led to the deaths of over a thousand people and ended on September 17, 2001. A renewed crisis occurred in 2008 between November 28 and 29, and in 2010 on January 6 and 7. The poet, however, harps on the most recent crisis of 2010 to bemoan the carnage of the ethnoreligious conflicts in the country. The name Jos, according to the poet, connotes a city of death, given the historical accounts of ethnoreligious skirmishes recorded in that part of the country for more than a decade: “Jos you boil again / While the wounds, pains, and scars /Of the immediate past /Live with us... /This is Jos /The city of easy death /That has known no peace... /God save your people in Jos /And the nation—Nigeria” (90).

In “Efeega: War of Ants,” the pursuit for political change, extends beyond public awareness campaigns. The poem advocates for a transformative approach orchestrated by a select group of courageous individuals within the masses, metaphorically depicted as ants. These individuals are implored to embark on a revolutionary path aimed at overcoming the oppressive forces symbolized by the elephant—a representation of terror and suffering. Notably, ants are classified as “eusocial insects” known for their colony formation and defensive aggression when provoked. They employ their mandibles to ward off territorial threats. Thus, Amali calls upon the populace to emulate the ants in confronting internal oppression and advocating for societal transformation: “Let us line this triumphant route / Where the elephant threads / And the bush cow dares not pass / And wave leaves and three branches vibrantly / To shake this earth with our fragile beings /Clenched feeble fists with shouts of war heroes.” (108). This stanza is suggestive of the revolt that characterizes the predilections of poetry in contemporary Africa for socio-political change, which seeks in this context, among other things, to rid the politician, a behemoth of oppression and corruption, off the seat of power. The use of ancient “drums of war”, “bardists,” and “seers” is suggestive of the spiritual modes of conduct and serves to intensify the lyrical and courageous zest for the impending fight against the politicians. The authenticity and urgency of the poet’s demand align with well-meaning crusaders of change to engage in a collective war against exploitation if generational plights must be nipped in the bud, without which no significant impact can be made: “Bring out the ancient drum of war/ To wake a legion of ancestors of brave/ Line the bardists and seers/To count and re-chant genealogies of heroes past /Let us line this brave route /To embrace returning gunless trotting ants /Without eagles decking any commercial /Shoulders at arms.” (108). The poet employs the metaphor of ants to illustrate a vision of revolt, urging the masses to reclaim their optimism. However, achieving this goal necessitates uniting against the multifaceted monster of injustice, unfairness, and inequality. Drawing inspiration from the collective nature of ants within a colony, the poet emphasizes the importance of mustering the resolve to resist oppression, even in the face of adversity. This call to action, the poet asserts, is not for the faint-hearted but for the courageous. True heroes of the struggle are not identified by outward displays of militarism but by their willingness to take risks and stand firm in the pursuit of freedom. Thus, the path to meaningful change lies in the hands of the brave and resolute, who refuse to be deterred by the obstacles that lie ahead: “Brave the canon charges/ Who raise naked arms/To down steal birds of war/Turn the stable of war hostilities into rubbles/Who took evil heads like those of animals/And perfected war terrains of other lands/To overwhelm their foes in their thousands.” (108). The undertone of the succeeding stanza is confrontational, as there are references to “arms”, “canon”, “steal birds of war” and

“hostilities into rubbles”. The poet’s reflection on a battlefield where the war of “downing steal birds” takes place metaphorically describes the scene of a bombarded war-plane that triggers the gravity of his call. These are accompanied by passionate guerilla lyrics that help to ensure readiness and grit for victory, which only the brave, enlisted for the battle, must meet: “Let us line the returning route of our pride with melodious voices to sing a song: one, two, three go!” (108).

In “Rise!”, the poet issues a call to action, urging marginalized groups to unite and rise above their current circumstances. The collective voice of the marginalized is invoked to reclaim everything that has been unjustly taken from them since the dawn of independence. These losses encompass not only material possessions but also moral integrity and fundamental human rights that have long been withheld. Failure to heed this call risks perpetuating a cycle of eternal enslavement and suffering: “Let’s rise, brothers and sisters/ With one solid voice / Stone voices on concrete minds / Resolved to regain our stolen wealth. / Let’s rise, brothers and sisters, / Like the broken dyke / Against these brethren / Of this season of loot / We shall be our ... slaves /If this warning game persists /Let’s RISE!” (111).

In *Tears of Desert War* (2020), Amali leveraged his personal experiences in the North-East and Maiduguri city of Nigeria to recount the traumatic tales of insecurity, conflicts, wars, religious crises, military sabotage, and terrorism ravaging the region. Forty-five poems in this collection are categorized into three sections: “Season of Disruption”, “War of the Sun,” and “Beguiles of a Failed General.” This article explores “Attacks on Maiduguri Again” and “Sinators” without district.”

In “Attacks on Maiduguri Again,” the poet deploys a narrative style to tell a tale about the horrendous experience of the Boko Haram carnage at Maiduguri, the Bornu state capital. The history of Boko Haram can be traced to 2009 when a group of Jihadists and combatant rebels rose from the North-East to fight against the Nigerian government by declaring war against Western education. Their rebellion spread throughout the Northeast which lasted for decades. The effects of the Boko Haram menace are untold hardship, psychological trauma, socio-economic woes, wanton destruction of lives and properties, closure of the ivory tower, and insecurity: “As the city of Maiduguri scampers for her life/Weak walls of weak works crumble into sand dunes/ As feeble inhabitants are buried, swallowed by crumbling walls.... /The city groaned/ Under the heavy boots of armed struggles/ As the innocent/ Who know no codes of war/ Took to their heels to unknown fields of war/ And the ivory tower, home to wisdom, lost its bearing....” (67).

In “Sinators” without district,” there is barefaced angst in the poetic persona’s diction, as he feels betrayed by the actions of the legislators of his district for failing to live up to their responsibility. He, thus, encourages the public on a general note, to call their representatives to order. The reckoning and awareness he creates show that, some senators from a certain district are not held accountable by those electorates who elected them into office. Thus, senators whose presence in politics is not felt by the locals and who cannot point to any significant project accomplished are derided. Such leaders unconsciously kill by denying others the right to sustainable existence. Thus, in the light of retributive justice, the poetic persona wishes for their exit from the surface of the earth: “For long seasons of neglect /In search of “sinators” to bail us/ From our legendary woes/ Let those that kill by denying others their right/ Die, split by the unforgivable god of thunder/ As we invite *Esu* the trickster god/To lure these “sinators” alive/ In yawning graves of mass burials” (46-47).

I Want to Join Them (2016) is a grim testimony to the woeful and endless tales of looting and political decay that have become a regular narrative in the leadership discourse of ideological writers and vanguards of change in contemporary Nigeria.

In “Seats of Oppression”, the poet does not hesitate to decry the degree to which positions of power and authority become a symbol of exploitation. Physical opulence, occasioned by greed and ostentatious living, are resounding indices that highlight the case in point of Nigeria’s corrupt politics. Thus, from the poetic stanza, one comes to terms with descriptions of extreme shows of wealth, as a tendency that results from looting, culminating in gluttony or “ballooned buttocks” that “rock(s) on mountains of money”: “We watch them/On their seat on the hallowed platform/From where these oppressors of man/Rock on mountains of money/Palpating corruption for the living/And harboring evil” (31). In this stanza, the poet vehemently identifies with the idea of change that views robbery, organized by the mismanagement of the public treasury, as an unethical practice. She laments the wastefulness of public officers, especially those who strike out nefarious deals and contracts for personal gain. They mismanage the nation’s meager resources, which ordinarily should assist in upgrading the social and economic conditions of the deprived. The poet, therefore, vows to unleash a war that seeks to end the extreme wealth displayed by the political class, as it agitates the minds of the oppressed and does fellow citizens a great deal of dishonor. By “puncturing their ballooned buttocks, filled with wealth, and revamping our treasury” (31), the financial institutions may experience a positive transformation. This quest, therefore, to restore accountability, transparency, and sanity largely holds a salient place in the overall crusades sustained by contemporary poets. The prospects for these perceived indignities in the succeeding stanza are seemingly hopeful: “We shall hijack their stand /Pulling off their seats, from underneath/ their unholy wealth-inflated buttocks /and incise their money-carrying veins/ to recall our wealth” (32).

In “I Hate Them,” the poet articulates a poignant lamentation regarding the prevalent avarice characterizing leadership across the African continent. While the poet’s sentiments may initially appear to be directed towards her native country at a microcosmic level, a discerning reader recognizes the broader implications, highlighting the imperative for critical examination of Africa as a whole. The poet’s stirring resentments, prominently featuring corruption, extend to encompass issues such as money laundering, indulgent luxury, and pervasive decay, which collectively afflict the Nigerian societal landscape: “Our thieving leaders/ These thieves at the top/ Daily climbing our towers of hope/ And pouncing onto our reserves of life/ Devouring the produce/ Like the red monkey in a maize farm/ I hate them” (38). The disgust expressed by the poet is justified by the fact that some men in power loot the “towers of hope” and “pounce on the reserves of life” (38). Each “pounce” or embezzlement suggests the degree of financial misappropriation done at the political level. As the custodians of the economy continue their various methods of exploitation, they persist in hoarding the nation’s wealth without restraint. They are like the famed “red monkey”, which returns to its source for material gratification after the owner chases it away. In the second stanza, the poet shifts focus to gender-related issues, criticizing female leaders whose integrity and value have diminished due to excessive and unnecessary travel expenditures that drain the nation’s already limited resources. Also, the poet criticizes the extravagant lifestyles adopted by “first ladies.” This critique highlights a concerning trend wherein women in leadership roles, instead of championing meaningful change, indulge in opulence at the expense of the populace. This observation underscores the deviation from the aspirations of gender inclusiveness in leadership, a cause for which many African women continue to advocate in the twenty-first century: These first ladies of no

honour/Daily on tours unnecessary/ Claiming to attend to the needy/Their necks adorned with jewels/Built form the gold towers of Rome/As our fate hangs in the wild/While our bloodstreams are sucked dry/Fostering their journeys of deceit” (38). In the third stanza, the poet reaffirms her dissatisfaction and disdain for the “scavengers in government.” Despite their active involvement in “battering” the nation’s “stronghold of life,” which symbolises its national resources, these individuals display a notable absence of remorse or regret for their actions: “These scavengers in government/Daily on pilgrims of loot to our treasuries/Battering our stronghold to life/As allocations for national survival/Are bulldozed /And these men of no shame /Gallivant in pride /With grabs of our wealth...” (38). The poet emphasizes the futility of politicians’ initial resolve to address pressing issues in the face of their relentless pursuit of natural wealth, which they greedily hoard within their expanding and insatiable “elastic bellies.” Furthermore, the poet delves into the intricate challenges plaguing the health and education sectors. The dire state of the health infrastructure necessitates urgent government intervention and renovation to prevent its deterioration into habitats for rats and rodents. Similarly, the education sector suffers from a lack of government funding and infrastructural development, leading to the crumbling of school buildings due to inadequate maintenance. Moreover, teachers endure poverty, and Nigerian universities are characterized by a lack of seriousness in learning, exacerbated by neglect and frequent strike actions. Meanwhile, corrupt stakeholders revel in their ill-gotten gains, symbolized by lead, diamond, silver, and gold. Thus, the poet declares, “I detest(s) / Where we live/Unsure of tomorrow / Hospitals remain complexes for rats / School buildings crumble / Teachers wallow in hunger / Universities degenerate to playgrounds...” (39).

In “Guards of Our Treasury,” the poet unveils the deceptive rhetoric employed by politicians who promise change and economic revitalization to the nation. This thematic exploration of political deception serves to underscore and illustrate the manipulative tactics employed by power-seeking politicians who position themselves as guardians of the nation’s treasury: “They come in scores / Honey-tongued/ With promises of pious vows/ To guard our treasuries/ And yield our economic desires” (34). It appears that despite the efforts invested in electing leaders into power with high expectations, the outcomes of their leadership often fail to justify the efforts expended to install them in positions of authority. In the third stanza, the electorate, who have voted these leaders into power, begin to realize their deception through a noticeable shift in attitude, accompanied by their arrogant demeanor and extravagant lifestyle, which directly challenge the audacity of the masses.: “But/ Here they go/ In tall mobile four-wheeled houses/In Jeeps, they pride high /And from the top looking down /They spit on us the downtrodden /While smiles open on their faces/ In fulfillment of their victorious sins against humanity” (34). Beyond divulging the antics of political leadership, the poet, from a reformist outlook, establishes the need for development that comes with changing the status quo. This is the poet’s motive in “Guardian of our Treasury.” In stanza five, the poet prognosticates a grim fate for politicians who neglect their responsibilities towards various societal groups. Failure to ensure timely payment of teachers’ salaries, provision of pensions for retirees, allocation of allowances for vigilante groups safeguarding communities from insurgency, support for impoverished widows, and allocation of constituency funds for capital projects aimed at improving the quality of life are highlighted. The poet’s steadfast focus on these issues, which directly impact the welfare of ordinary citizens, underlines the importance of addressing people-centered concerns. This unwavering commitment to advocating for social, political, and economic transformation lends credence to the validity of the quest pursued by poets striving for positive change: “Woe unto these thieves/With fat bellies creamed in/Unpaid salaries of

teachers/Stolen funds of pensioners/Earned allowances of vigilantes/Constituency funds /And benefits of widows/Magnetised into their pockets...” (35).

Faces of Shame (2020) is Halima Amali’s second poetry collection, published by Kraft. The anthology is divided into “Broken Hopes”, “Faces of Shame”, “Wishes,” “Mirage”, and “Pains and Piety”. Each sub-heading features six to ten poems. For this paper, “When Budgets Are Padded”, “When Thieves Legislate”, “Season of Manifestoes”, and “Our Daughters of Chibok” are chosen for analysis.

In “When Budgets Are Padded,” the poet laments the pervasive culture of kleptomania evident within both the legislative and executive branches of government. This corruption manifests in the nefarious practice of padding the national budget. Following approval by the House of Representatives and the Senate, the budget receives the presidential assent, becoming law. However, the legislative branch, entrusted with law-making duties, engages in the illicit inflation of the budgetary allocations for the fiscal year. These inflated figures serve as a means to siphon funds from the nation's treasury, achieved through the manipulation and falsification of allocation and expenditure figures for capital projects by the budgetary planning, implementation, and execution committee. Consequently, the hands of the legislators become metaphorical “swindle-needles,” systematically draining the nation's wealth and leaving its citizens with diminished prospects and dwindling hope: “Fingers turn to needles/piercing into the naira barn/to naira-harvest spree... /When budgets are padded /Change is buried in padded lines/ For a rebirth of padded theft/ Yet another reign of padded corruption” (52).

In “When Thieves Legislate,” the poet echoes similar sentiments regarding the legislative branch of government, portraying it as a vehicle for perpetuating Machiavellianism, shame, deceit, and moral degradation within the nation. Indeed, Nigeria finds itself plagued by an assemblage of shortsighted leaders whose actions contribute to the country’s descent into a state of irreparable degeneration, where moral bankruptcy reigns supreme. The poem portrays Nigeria's post-independence lawmakers as dismal failures and accursed parliamentarians, perpetuating a cycle of systemic decay. These legislators enact policies that shield themselves from legal repercussions and safeguard their interests, neglecting the welfare of the populace. This underscores the imperative for legislators to prioritize ethical governance and enact laws that serve the interests of the people, thereby addressing the entrenched culture of corruption and injustice prevalent within Nigeria's legislative chambers: “The nation is doomed/Shouldering failure/In cursed theatrical performances/ Legislated in chamber of shame.../As failure dances in acrobatic displays/ Certified by thieves in hallowed chambers” (60).

Amali's poem “Season of Manifestoes,” illuminates a phase characterized by national or state-level campaigns, during which political aspirants vigorously solicit votes from the electorate. This endeavor entails extensive outreach efforts through various media channels and public forums. Concurrently, political party manifestos meant to elucidate proposed agendas and policies to the populace are disseminated. However, the poem unveils an ironic truth: notwithstanding the fervent campaigning, the post-election outcome often belies the initial promises. Instead of tangible results, the electorate encounters a disillusioning reality characterized by hollow rhetoric and unfulfilled pledges, rendering the entire electoral process akin to a theatrical display of political gimmickry: “In blarney tongues/ Manifestoes roll out/In bigoted promises.../ Streams shall be upgraded to rivers/ Rivers shall be turned to seas/ Seas will be rebuilt to oceans.../Water beds shall flood the hospital /And patients shall roll in luxury... / There shall be darkness never? With ceaseless electricity power from the clouds.”(55-56). Moreover, an instance of war against deceit in the items of party

manifestoes manifests itself in the poet's urgent call for all and sundry to revolt against such incidence with brutal force: "Here comes this manifesto/ Of the poor and the pious: That time is nigh/ For these gimmicks to cease/ For the bigots to melt into death/ For heavens to shower fire unto the rich/For the poor to rise/ To trample upon these aspirants of deceit..." (56).

In "Our Daughters of Chibok," abduction and insecurity are serious concerns depicted by the poet. The emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria heralded the presence of hapless insurgents in the Northeast. The radical activities of Boko Haram include the orchestrated campaign for the "Islamisation" of Borno state and surrounding areas, aiming to establish them as Islamic territories. This agenda involves forcibly converting non-Muslims to Islam and perpetrating the abduction of females, who are then coerced into becoming wives or concubines for their captors. The infamous case of the Chibok girls epitomizes this pattern of abduction and forced conversion, featuring themes of religious extremism and kidnapping. The events, particularly the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, brought international attention to the volatile state of terror and instability in the region. The failure of successive Nigerian administrations, including Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, to provide immediate and effective solutions further accentuated the gravity of the situation. The poet, conscious of these historical events, laments their traumatic impact on the lives of residents in northern Nigeria, who grapple with the constant fear of violence and insecurity: "Global outrage dominates the media/Cries for our unseen Chibok love/Carted away in unholy mission/ Our government beckons to us no haven" (66).

10 Conclusion

This investigation has examined the historical and present socio-political problems in Nigeria through the genre of poetry authored by Idris Amali and Halima Amali. The results show the enduring influence of postcolonial legacies, the intricate interplay between literature and socio-politics, the intersection of African poetry with socio-political predicaments, and the advocacy function fulfilled by modern African poets.

The thematic analysis highlights political deception, marginalization, ethnic/religious crisis, kidnapping, general civil unrest, terrorism, insecurity, money laundry, indulgent luxury, pervasive decay, religious extremism, and inequitable wealth distribution. Literature, particularly poetry, emerges as a potent tool for critiquing societal norms and fostering transformative change. The oeuvres of Idris Amali and Halima Amali serve as models of this phenomenon, contributing thoughtful visions to the Nigerian society and its enduring quest for justice and equality.

Moreover, the research underlines the role of contemporary African poetry, as exemplified by these poets, in condemning social injustices, challenging established paradigms, and envisioning a more just society. This study provides valued perspectives into Nigeria's socio-political environment by highlighting the imperative for substantive reform and advancement.

The poetry authored by Idris Amali and Halima Amali symbolizes resilience, defiance, and optimism in the face of adversity. Their literary contributions inspire a collective aspiration for a future characterized by fairness, inclusivity, and socio-political rejuvenation by invoking their voices as guiding lights amidst Nigeria's complex historical and contemporary challenges.

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