

**Belligerent Utopianism in The Poetry of
Idris Amali and Romanus Egudu**

By

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Abstract

Postcolonial utopianism thrives on belligerent poetic art in articulating the resentment and anger of the people towards hegemonic powers which hinder the emancipatory strides to freedom while at the same time, pushing for the attainment of an ideal society. This paper explores the interface between postcolonial utopian dynamics and the artistic portrayal of violent activism. Put differently, it hopes to show how the revolutionary vision of recent Nigerian poets are expressed in utopian conscious poems. Through textual analytic praxis and postcolonial utopian theoretical approach, the researcher identifies the following findings: Firstly, that revolution is key to utopian imagination, secondly, that the poets employ diverse poetic images to depict the need for freedom and finally, that provocative language is used to sensitise the people to engage in violence and combat their enslavers. The paper concludes that the poets (Idris Amali and Romanus Egudu) use two strategies of revolution, such as social mobilization and direct physical engagement while depending on belligerent art such as provocative language, defiant imagery and tone of revolt to convey their vision of utopian society.

Keywords: Postcolonial Utopianism, Belligerence, Art, Social Mobilization, Direct physical engagement and Revolution.

Introduction

Recent Nigerian poetry exhibits the character and temper of belligerent utopian consciousness. Belligerent utopianism refers to an ideal society established through a revolution or some form of violence. In poetry of belligerent utopianism there abounds defiant words, combative imagery, angry tone and provocative language which urge and provoke the people to engage in revolt against any system which constrains the attainment of a new social reality. In a nutshell, belligerent utopian poetry anchors on social change through militancy. Therefore, the poems are written to incite, denounce and evoke the sense of bellicosity in order to actualise an ideal social order. For this reason, the poets enrich their poems with hostile poetics contrived to annoy, mobilise and rouse the people to direct

physical engagement with retrogressive forces militating against the attainment of a better society.

Belligerent utopianism combines the memory of the past and the vision of the present with all its imperfections to anticipate the building of a better society. This brand of utopianism is triggered by revolt or violent activism. It has as its utilitarian value, the rebuilding of a dystopian state or society. This paper seeks to establish, among other things, that the general principle guiding the labeling or categorization of utopianism is essentially linked to the method of achieving utopia or building a better society. Hence, when the poets propose belligerence or revolution as a method of building a utopian society, it is called belligerent utopianism or utopianism of combat.

This paper focuses on the poems of two poets carefully selected to reflect the regional diversity of Nigeria. These poets include Idris Amali from the North and Romanus Egudu from the South. The analysis of the poems derive from the poetry collections of the above poets, namely Amali's *Efeega: War of Arts* and Egudu's *Prayer of the Powerless* which are henceforth abbreviated as EWA and POP respectively.

The theory underpinning this essay is postcolonial utopianism. Jacqueline Dutton writes that utopianism involves “social ideals within an explicitly utopian vision for improving the life of indigenous people” (249). This implies that utopianism entails articulating social ideals which are meant for improving society. Accordingly, writers who engage in utopianism are providing ideals or dreams with the aim of inspiring members of society to seeing beyond the pain, frustration and disappointment of the present to embracing the reality of utopian change. Thus the dreams are the ideals which when imbibed will bring about new social order.

Tom Moylan introduces the subversive dimension to utopianism. According to the researcher, an alternative utopian vision began to be muted in the middle of the 1800s. This period coincided with the inclusion of revolution in utopian studies. Thus utopianism in Moylan's view “tended to adopt a stance more concerned with teaching and exposing the reader to the still unrealised potential of the human project of consciously being in the world...” (6). The purpose of the revolutionary element in the utopian literature is to articulate a coherent portraiture of the deficiencies in human world and to point the reader to how the alternative socio-political agenda can be realized. Hence, Moylan adds that political education is pivotal to this endeavour: “the heuristic utopia offered a strength of vision that sought to subvert or at least reform the modern economic and political arrangement from within” (6). This method takes the form of social mobilization for mass action. The duty of the writer in the utopian cosmology is to teach the masses the necessity of utopian change. Moylan seems to posit that subversion is vital to the attainment of the utopian goal of building an ideal society.

Bill Ashcroft has argued that the heartbeat of revolution is the need to confront those who enslave the citizens: “The dynamic function of the utopian impulse is a dual one to engage power and to imagine change” (“Spaces” 12). Ashcroft anchors utopianism on the matrix of anticipation consciousness which must be developed in order to transform “the rhetoric of resistance into a positive anticipation of future freedom” (“Remembering”, 703). One way the African writer has responded to the predicament of the past and the present is by

building the confidence of the reader in the endearing future. Hence, the sense of anticipation for freedom and social change pervades the literature. Thus, utopianism becomes a tool for fighting the disappointment of the people. This explains why Ashcroft postulates that “essential to the literature of revolution and critique is the anticipation of the future” (704).

The focus of utopian literature is the ability to imagine a perfect future. In another essay, Ashcroft confines the function of utopianism to the writer's ability to energise “the present with the anticipation of what is to come” (4). As long as the masses are able to see in the envisaged future the possibility of change, then, it becomes easy to carry them along. One way this can be done is through the instrumentality of social mobilization. Ashcroft further observes that: “the mobilization of society for the betterment of all, for the 'common good' is virtually indistinguishable in utopias and dystopias” (10). Whatever change that is conceived must take into consideration the need for a better society which must be conveyed to the masses. The writer of utopian literature is aware of the task of imbuing the citizens with the hope of possibility.

Ashcroft in a different essay articulates the need for revolution through the fight for freedom:

Freedom can only exist in the act of struggle against coercion, 'freedom to' may only be realized in the struggle of 'freedom from' domination and the transformation of power. This then is the dynamic function of the utopian impulse. Not to construct a place, but to exact the utopia in the engagement with power. Liberation in this way comes through transformations (“spaces”, 16)

In his opinion, revolution is the path to freedom and total freedom is conceived as being related to other interrelated phenomena. There is no freedom if it is not disconnected from the dominating power of the enslaver. Utopianism transcends any one identifiable place to the state of being which is related to direct physical confrontation with those in places of authority.

Karl Hardy examines the role of political education in utopianism as an essential ingredient in the task of achieving revolution. Hardy writes that “utopia operates as an educative heuristic, as an enduringly and emphatically dialogical, processional, and critically self-reflexive imaginary reconstruction of society” (9). The power of imagination is necessary in building a new society. Also, civic education plays a vital role in convincing the masses that the new image of the future society is possible. This educative process entails building a history to articulate the difference that the new society can bring to the masses. It is equally true that the utopian writers often persuade the people that their society with all its ills can be reconstructed provided they are ready to be involved in the entire process.

Utopianism, as examined thus far is characterised by several layers of manifestations, all geared towards improving society. Adding similar voice, Frederic Basso and Dario Krpan write that, it involves “an expression of the desire for a better way of being and living, and identifies three main functions of utopian thought in the literature: criticism, compensation and change” (24). It is the dream of the utopian conscious writer to weave ideas into philosophical principles with which social reconstruction can be actualized. This begins with the expression of the writer's desire to build a better social order. It is then

followed with the invitation of the reader to emulate the dreams and reflect them in their everyday lives. The ultimate dream is that change is achieved. In several instances, utopianism criticizes the socio-political maladies of the present society and proffers solutions to them.

Anna Friberg has highlighted the power of utopianism in envisioning a new social order when the researcher explains that: “utopian visions are heuristic tools for social imagination, constructing a utopia is in itself a critical act toward the present and expresses a need for change” (18). The position of Friberg is essential to grasping the relevance of utopian visions in literary construction. Critical to the imagination are the visions of a better society which the writer conveys through the literary works. These visions are intended for the construction of change in the society, while at the same, critiquing the present socio-political order. Thus, the utopian ideals are disseminated through an educative process of social enlightenment.

In a similar vein, Ruth Prince explains that, utopianism involves “the exploration of visions of the good life, or as the expression of the desire for a better way of being or living” (3). What this means is that utopianism anchors on the exploration of certain visionary principles. The visions of social change, ideals of better social order and the general ways society can be uplifted for the benefit of all. Hence, utopianism explores ways to better society.

Exploring the term further, Michail Ingerlab and Taisiya Paniotova make the point that: “utopias consists in their openness to the future, the ideal of the negative present and the ability to construct socially significant ideals reflected in the individual psychology of contemporaries” (1). Utopianism is an ideal created to improve the future. Hence, it is futuristic in scope and content. It is also aimed at subjecting the present social order to critical review and invention of social ideals that are capable of making it better than it was. Ingerlab and Paniotova add that, utopianism “represents an attempt to create alternative models of the future” (1). This further implicates the focus on the future as a rejection of the aberrant present social realities. The utopian dream is always focused on improving the social conditions of society.

Thus far the review of scholarship has examined postcolonial utopian ideals without taking into consideration the Nigerian poetic experience, especially how utopianism manifests in Nigerian poetry. This leaves a significant void in utopian studies. This paper therefore intends to fill this gap by exploring how the poets articulate social mobilization and direct physical engagement to convey their views of belligerent utopianism in Nigerian poetry.

II. Social Mobilization

Social mobilization is the cornerstone of belligerent utopianism. The term is applied here as the deliberate act of persuading, educating and conscientising the people to see the need to rise up and actualize utopian change. This idea runs through the poetry of Amali and Egudu. Amali employs the tactics of instigating the people to create social awakening. This is prominent in the poem, “How Long?”. The poet is angry at the pervading sense of social indifference which unfortunately has continued to encourage looters to enrich themselves at

the expense of the people:

How shall we pride ourselves?
In this waiting game
Awaiting our turn to loot these barns
Of our treasury
In our million queues. (EWA, 112)

The wealth of this poem comes from the rhetorical strategy which is used to inspire the reader into wakefulness and indirectly condemn the people for their delay in overcoming the forces of corruption. At the same time, the poet demonstrates the need for moral rectitude by exposing through rhetorical question the danger in acquiescing in looting the country's treasury. Apart from the rhetorical question, the poet also uses the image of "barns". The word, "barns" suggests the financial resources or power of the country. According to the speaker, if every Nigerian is to wait for their turn in the queue to loot the country of its resources, it will take many years before one gets one's turn. This presupposes that it will never happen. The only option left for the people is to engage their leaders in serious dialogue for them to act progressively and begin the process of rebuilding the country on certain core values.

The next stanza amplifies the sense of social apathy to the enormous economic ruin in the country thus:

How long shall we look into the sky?
Turn away our eyes
And watch the cubs
We fed devour daily
Our hopes
Our aspiration
Our.
The waiting game
Of the looting of our treasures
For how long? (EWA 112)

By emphasizing the sense of time as evident in the phrase "how long" or "for how long?", the poet instigates the people to rise up and fight those who financially enrich themselves and by so doing ruin the lives of the citizens. The poet is not comfortable with the general state of non-challance by the people to the culture of impunity and naked robbery of the people's future. The poet uses the image of "cubs" to depict the new leaders as fierce and ruthless. Cubs are young bears, lions, or foxes and they connote the new government.

The speaker laments that the "cubs" which the people have raised and enthroned in government have grown into ravenous beasts threatening the nation's future. They are presented as devouring the "hopes" and "aspirations" of Nigerians. The precision and unambiguity of "devour" confirm, in effect, the sense of economic and social devastation that the people are summoned to rise against. Amali seems to anchor the mobilization of the people on serious soul-searching questions which have some critical undertone. These kinds of questions often provoke socio-political revolutions and in the context of this poem, the poet employs them to instigate the people into action and to create a utopian society where

equity, prudent leadership, and economic prosperity for all will be the norm.

In another poem, Amali incites the people against corrupt leaders as a way of achieving social awakening. This is the cornerstone of the poem, “when shall we rise”. The poet continues to interrogate social apathy as the country slides closer to the precipice of economic devastation:

When shall we rise
 Rise against these thickening clouds
 That gather ferocious momentum
 That knows no wet droppings
 To cool our souls and wants. (EWA, 113)

This poem is full of images targeted at provoking the people out of their reticence. There is the appeal to the emotions of the citizens arising from the fear generated by the “thickening clouds” which “gather ferocious momentum”. These “thickening clouds” suggest corrupt and oppressive leaders. There is the sense of irony in the fact that instead of the clouds to emit rains, (a metaphor for economic prosperity), these ones have “no wet droppings” and as such cannot bring the people relief and economic well-being (“cool our souls and want”). For this reason, the poet expects the people to rise up and stop the thickening clouds of rogues and terrible leaders.

The poet then deploys diverse images to instigate the people thus:

When shall we rise
 Against these gluttonous clouds
 That have engulfed and swallowed
 All that the land owns
 And like hurricane
 Sweeps and have our wealth
 For the tunnels for their wards yet unborn. (113)

Gustatory imagery predominates in the above stanza and it awakens the reader and conveys the tragic nature of corruption. The words “gluttonous” and “swallowed” evoke the sense of food and eating. The gluttons in this context are not the “clouds”, but the political leaders in their teeming number in the country. By their large appetite for the nation's wealth, they have “engulfed” and “swallowed” all that the land owns”. They are also compared to “hurricane” because they destroy everything of value. The poet sums up this devastation by remarking that they have stacked our stolen wealth “for their wards yet unborn”. This line is intended to arouse public indignation against their rapacious leaders.

The poet ends the poem with a thought provoking question: “when shall we rise/against these choking clouds/Before they eclipse our hopes?” (113). The brilliance of the poem immediately comes to life with the poet's fidelity to metaphoric language which exposes the dynamism and imaginative prowess of the poet. The presence of the leaders is presented through the effective manipulation of a transferred epithet in which the “clouds” are described as “choking” instead of the leaders themselves. The power of this presentation underscores the threat which they pose to the “hopes” or future of the people. By the strength of imagination, the corrupt leaders as well as their existence is a source of veritable danger to the nation. This explains why the poet is eager to rouse the people to come out of their social

apathy and chase out the corrupt leaders.

Egudu equally expresses belligerent utopian consciousness in the poem, “Chicken and Hawk”, relying on the avian images of the chicken and the hawk to underscore the need for social mobilization, as a tool for instigating the people to attain utopian society. The poet begins the poem by emphasizing the helplessness of the chicken in the throes of death: “the lonely chicken chirped/a dying prisoner/to the bloody beak of the hawk” (POP, 60). Egudu's poems are remarkable for their images as well as for their symbolic connotations. Throughout them, we encounter animals and human figures and this conveys deep and rich imageries of the social realities in our country. The chicken represents the defenceless and poor people while the hawk connotes the tyrannical military and political leadership.

The poet's interest in the above stanza is to expose the precarious condition of the helpless chicken. This is revealed through the sound made by the bird (“chirped”). To chirp is to make a lively sound but as it is used in this poem, it is an irony. Here, the bird is in danger of being killed. Therefore, the sound is made out of desperation to call for help and, not out of fun. Thus, the chicken has become the hawk's prisoner. The persona presents the hawk's ruthless nature through an evocative and alliterative phrase, “bloody beak”, to catch the reader's attention. The alliteration does not just function as sound effect, but rather as visual portrayal of the sadism and mindless brutality which the hawk represents in the context of this poem.

The poet in the next stanza exposes the unfeeling attitude of the modern society thus:

The shrill voice
was heard by the world
that was dreaming
as it lay wide awake. (60).

The poem is not simply about the animal kingdom. (A good deal of it is given to a passionate exploration of human indifference.) A key aspect of the poet's style in the poem is the pervading presence of auditory imagery. “The shrill voice which the dying chicken has made “was heard by the world”, but they ignore it as if it were a sound heard in the dream. The poet informs the people that those who heard the sound were “wide awake”. This portraiture smacks of a deliberate act of indifference to the pain of the suffering masses:

And the world
froze its heart
in bold pretense
And every human sighed
in cold relief
that chicken is not my own. (60)

This is the reality of modern Nigerian society where the predicament of others do not arouse righteous indignation of those who hear and see the pain of their neighbours. This poem is a satire against the insensitive nature of some Nigerians to the suffering of their neighbours. In fact, it frowns at the selfish interest of those in society in which when the plight of those suffering is evaluated to ascertain if they are related to them only to feel relieved that those affected are not their close relatives. The poet is therefore using this poem to inform and urge

the people to see the problems of any human being as the problem of humanity in general. By this, they will be discouraging oppression. The silence of the people at the plight of the tyrannized further empowers the oppressors to continue. The poet indirectly makes the point that when the oppressors find no foe, they may one day afflict the relative of the people. This poem is an indirect call to social awakening as a necessary step in building utopian society.

Egudu employs his poem to instigate the people in order to awaken them to socio-political aberrations in their society with the intention of actualizing utopian change. In the poem, "Bold Song" Egudu depicts the boldness of the choir who sing about oppression:

The melodious choir
was called uncreative
and marked down by the jury
because it boldly sang aloud
of deeds people whispered with fear. (POP,8-9)

There is a strong sense of irony in the above stanza. The choir ought to have been commended for drawing attention to unwholesome practices in the society and for the fearlessness they display in exposing evil. It is therefore surprising that the "jury" labels the group as uncreative and decides to keep a close eye on them for daring to expose "deeds" other people "whispered with fear". By using this choir, who represents protesters, the poet expresses the need for fearlessness, as well as instigates the people to be daring in exposing socio-political iniquities.

In another stanza, the poet presents a typical case of oppression thus:

A chief snatched
the orphan's house
but warmly gave him
a room in it
for the normal rent. (8)

There is a subtle depiction of oppression and exploitation which is couched in paradoxical ambivalence. The chief is a picture of the oppressor or the powerful in the society who uses power to deprive the poor of their belongings. Through Egudu's depiction of the chief's oppression of the tenant, the poet mobilises the people to see the fate of the tenant as similar to theirs. Their political leaders seize public funds and give out little to them while at the same time keeping a large part of it to themselves. By this poetic presentation, the poet instigates the people to combat several manifestations of oppression in their social environment.

Furthermore, Egudu uses the case of injustice in the society to urge the people to rise and seek to eradicate it. This is the focus of the next stanza:

There was a boss
that loved a girl
and to prove his love
made her sign a bond
to wed his house boy. (8)

The boss in this context represents leaders whereas the girl stands for the people. The rulers often profess how much they love their country and citizens. They prove this love by

ironically enslaving the people. This is the case of the parabolic boy and girl. Again, Egudu's purpose in presenting the unjust treatment of the girl is to arouse and alarm the people to the reality of injustice which their leaders perpetrate against them.

In the final stanza, Egudu takes social mobilization to another dimension. Here the poet reminds the people of the unfair treatment which they suffer from the hands of their supposed leader:

We saw a notice
across the sky saying
a labourer should pay
for working hard. (9)

Egudu, as shown thus far, is a master of irony. By making the people to read what was written across the sky, that a labourer instead of being paid for working hard, the persona tells the reader that it is the other way round. By this ironic portraiture of the condition of the Nigerian worker, the poet is able to present the reality in Nigeria and subtly instigates the people to strive towards social reformation by calling their leaders to order. This call to revolt is meant to mobilise the people not to accept the status quo. It appears that Egudu hopes through poetry to indirectly lead the people to the point that they can demand what is truly theirs instead of wallowing in perpetual suffering. Egudu believes that such acts will help in building a utopian society.

III. Direct Physical Engagement

The preceding section has examined social mobilization as one of the key manifestations of belligerent utopianism. This section will focus on direct physical engagement as another strategy of attaining a utopian society. Direct physical engagement presupposes the call to violence, physical force and use of dangerous weapons to fight political oppressors. In the poems of Amali and Egudu, the speakers call on the people to engage the leaders in direct physical combat in order to achieve change.

Belligerent utopianism occurs through direct physical engagement. In Amali's poem entitled, "Rise!" the speaker suggests:

Let's rise brothers and sisters
With one solid voice
Stone voices in concrete minds
Resolved to regain our stolen rights
To feed upon our commonwealth. (EWA, 111)

To help readers understand this poem, it has been considered necessary to comment briefly on the poem's title. The title itself expresses the fact that the speaker wants the people to leave their position of resignation to fate to real action. They are to engage in direct confrontation with wicked and oppressive forces in the country which have kept the people from partaking of the nation's "commonwealth". In the opening line, the persona urges the people to "rise" which presupposes that they were in a state of inaction, apathy and despair. Notice how this direct confrontation is communicated. First, the speaker employs the tone of urgency to inspire solidarity among the people and get them energised and create the sense of belonging to everyone. Next, the persona makes use of symbolic language to reinforce the need for

confrontation. The sense of unity is underscored by the expression “one... voice”. This is further reinforced by adding “solid” to read. “one solid voice”. The “solid”, in the phrase, connotes indivisibility. Therefore, to confront the leaders, the poet suggests that they do so with unity of purpose. To further buttress the point above, the poet introduces the image of stone as seen in “stone voices” and “concrete minds”. We know that “voices” and “minds” are not visible entities and by qualifying them with “stone” and “concrete”, the poet draws attention to the need (for the people) to be firm in their decision to confront their oppressors. The purpose of the said resolve is to “regain” or retrieve their “stolen rights”, particularly that which will bestow on them the power “to feed upon our commonwealth”

In the second stanza, the persona inspires the people with the following words:

Let's rise brother and sisters
Like the broken dykes
Against these brethren
Of this season of loot. (III)

In this stanza, the target of the direct confrontation is identified as “brethren/of this season of loot”. The people are to rise “like the broken dyke”. The beauty of this stanza is in the use of imagery to uphold the desire for freedom when the people may have dismantled the forces of looting in the country. A dyke is a channel constructed to hold back water from flooding the environment. Thus a “broken dyke” is a threat to lives and property. To rise “like the broken dyke” in the context of this poem, means among other things, the violent resistance of looters or the need for the people to confront the looters to the helm of affairs by breaking all socio-political barriers keeping them at bay.

Consequently, the speaker tells the people: “we shall be our own slaves/If this waiting game persists/let's rise!” (III). There is the sense of urgency that is quite intriguing and compelling about this stanza like the two previous ones. The speaker is convinced that the time to act is now and that any further delay will mean a return to servitude. Thus, the poet persona ends on a note of finality and conviction that the people should rise to confront looters in power as a pre-condition for freedom and by extension, utopian change.

Egudu in the poem, “Mouse's Might”, advocates direct physical engagement as a way of achieving political revolution or demonstrating belligerent utopianism. Through the bird image, the poet condemns the people for calling the international community for help in the face of extreme oppression because such an action will encourage their oppressors to further oppress them. The beauty of this poem is that it is written in the form of a folktale:

The chicken enthralled
by the hawk
in the mid-air
and is shouting
to stir its kin to kick,
is merely cheering
the hungry foe. (POP, 24)

Egudu demonstrates a keen attachment to the use of bird images and sometimes they become symbols with which he addresses certain human issues. Two birds are used in this poem: “the chicken” and “the hawk”. The chicken, on the one hand, symbolises defenceless citizens

who often become victims of dictatorship. On the other hand, the hawk represents oppressive leaders and their agents who have no feeling or regards for the people. The poet's penchant for ironical language can suggest so much through indirect portraiture of violent experience. For example, "enthralled" has a positive meaning but in the context of the poem, it depicts painful experience. The word which is evoked in the reader's heart is caught. That the chicken is enthralled when the speaker actually means caught demonstrates the sense of irony. It expresses the speaker's tone of mockery. There is a deliberate attempt to denigrate the action of the chicken which is caught by the hawk. Instead of the former to fight back, it resorts to calling for help by shouting to wake its kindred and this kind of action only boosts the confidence of the latter. The meaning of this story is that direct physical confrontation with the oppressor is an effective weapon for defeating tyrants. They are vicious elements who succumb only to violent resistance. The poet therefore repudiates the act of calling for help when self-help will do and that help from outside the country may delay in coming and by then, the oppressor may have killed the victim.

In the second stanza, Egudu presents a different scenario and this time, animal imagery is used to underscore the need for direct physical violence as a way of achieving revolution:

A mouse was once
Caught by the cat
at cruel midnight,
it shed all its blood
to save its life
and won the battle
by dying once. (24)

This stanza in contradistinction to the previous one demonstrates Egudu's fondness for contrast. The mouse in this stanza functions as foil to the chicken. Egudu exploits the feeble nature of chickens to ridicule the cowardice of the people. Here, the mouse is praised for its courage because the same fate that befalls the chicken also happens to the mouse. The difference is in their approach to getting freedom. While the chicken exhibits reliance on others, the mouse believes in self-reliance. Egudu uses the experience of the mouse to illustrate the virtue of direct physical engagement with the oppressor as the surest way to freedom. The story celebrates the virtue of courage over the shame of cowardice. Against this backdrop, the death of the courageous mouse is meant to buttress the need for direct physical engagement as panacea to oppression. The message is that the people should not be afraid to die because it is better to dare the oppressor and if in the process they die, they win through their death because they can only die once. The fear of death empowers the oppressor and enslaves the oppressed. The poet through this story emboldens and motivates the people to be courageous because fear is the tormentor's weapon of subjugation. Therefore, freedom and victory can be achieved through self help, violent resistance, uncommon courage and death. Therefore, the death of the mouse is an example of paradox and it conveys the fact that death is victory and not defeat. The wisdom in this is that those who die fighting have actually conquered fear. This is the message of this poem.

In another poem, "Vote of No Confidence", Egudu also promotes the idea of direct

physical engagement as a means of actualizing political revolution. The poem begins with a picture of an honest political leader:

They branded him a fool
because like a duteous dog
he refuged to gorge
the bone he swore to guard, (POP, 34)

The hallmark of this stanza is in the poet's use of dog image to underscore the sense of leadership, dedication to service and uprightness epitomised by the governor. It is ironical that the man is "branded a fool" for doing the right thing. The poet relies on ironical expressions to emphasise the sterling qualities of the upright politician. The rhyming couplet ("gorge" and "guard") is used deliberately to bring out the contrast between the two forces. The word "gorge" is built on gastronomical imagery and it connotes embezzlement. The word, "guard", refers to protection. In the context of the poem, the wealth of the nation is symbolised by the word "bone". The good governor refuses to enrich himself by not appropriating the people's commonwealth, instead he protects their nation's wealth. This action infuriates the corrupt members of parliament.

To further strengthen the image of the public servant, the poet writes:

They called him a weakling
because unlike a hardened robber
he would not break
the bank of his people's hope. (34)

Egudu's gift is above all, the gift of irony, and that gift provides the right medium for demonstrating the hypocritical nature of corrupt leaders in society. The incorruptible public servant understands the enormity of public trust and he understands too that the citizens repose so much confidence in him. Therefore, he is unmoved when he is labelled "a weakling". This explains why the people will move maintains to ensure he remains in office to continue his executive duties.

Through apt diction, the poet captures the emotions of the House thus:

And the House assembled
Sharpening their rage
in their quest for a bill
to forge his fall. (34)

As Egudu has portrayed in this poem, Nigerian legislators initiate impeachment processes for all the wrong reasons. They sponsor the removal of honest leaders who stand in their way to robbing the nation. In order to convey the great effort expended in removing the said Governor, Egudu employs the use of metaphor. For example, they sharpen "their rage" which means that they cause their anger to increase in order to "forge" the impeachment of the public servant. A keen attention to "forge" reveals the concerted effort put in the process. The sarcastic tone of the language is meant to ridicule as well as censure the parliamentarians for investing precious time to prosecute personal vendetta to the detriment of national interest.

But before they cast their votes
the crowd he cared for by his reign

smoked them out of the hall
like whining snakes and witching rats. (35)

The people in the context of the poem employ direct physical violence to defeat hegemonic forces in the State House of Assembly who constitute stumbling blocks to the advancement of the state. The hunting image is anchored on the use of smoke to chase out snakes and rats from their hiding places. Similarly, the poet compares the deceptive and dangerous nature of the parliamentarians to destructive nature of snakes and rats. The message of this poem is that the people have a big role to play in protecting their democratic institutions. It is their duty to rise up against those who threaten its existence. By depicting the courage of the people in stopping the impeachment process to save the purposeful Governor of the state, Egudu indirectly propels the reader to emulate this action taken by the people. The revolt of the people forestalls abuse of power and emphasises that direct physical engagement is required to guarantee political revolution as well as building a utopian country.

IV. Conclusion

The basic interest of this paper remains to express the dynamics of belligerent utopianism in the poems of Amali and Egudu. Although their poetic imagination may have diverse purpose and orientation, they however focus on the same idea, that is, the idea of a better society achievable through violent activism. Their poems instigate the readers to embrace a new set of values through deliberate social mobilization. Poem after poem, these two poets employ provocative imagery and defiant tone to call for direct physical engagement with those who hinder the people from attaining a utopian country. The main point that postcolonial utopian poets make with their poems is that once the people can be mobilized revolution or utopian change can be achieved. The artistic use of aggressive language and the creation of mental pictures that suggest violence engender social mobilization and direct physical engagement which are methods of achieving utopian change. The vision of a better future anchored on a re-shaped society after revolution demonstrates that utopian change is possible when the people take action and accept responsibility. The adaptation of utopianism to the Nigerian context through the study of Nigerian poetry expands the frontiers of postcolonial utopian studies.

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