



‘Maiduguri’ as Parable of Postcolonial Condition: Interrogating the Contexts of Patrick Oguejiofor’s *Maiduguri Requiem*s

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Abstract. In Patrick Oguejiofor’s collection of poems, *Maiduguri Requiem*s, ‘maiduguri’ is metaphorised as a weird landscape noted for endless lamentations, especially over the horror of terror, instability and permissive tragedies of human disaster and disillusionments. The poems resonate a disruptive parable of postcolonial African encounters that invite critical attention. This work adopts a qualitative method of analysis in which the collection is read purposively and examined critically, relying on trauma theory and post colonialism as theoretical parameters. The selected entries are examined towards situating the connections between poetic imagination and socio-political and historical realities of a nation that has remained atomistic, ill at ease with itself and as citadel of terror, banditry and appalling contradictions. The analysis unravels ‘maiduguri’ beyond the assumed locale but as symptomatic of a nation that held great promise at independence but has continued to drift many decades after independence till deep into the 21st century, when others are growing at great speed on the scale of living standards and meaningful progress. The work concludes that the postcolony has remained too long at the brinks of human tragedy, and must exert as much energy as possible to brace up to the reality of postmodernity through systemic repair and reorientation in every ramification.

Keywords: Maiduguri, the postcolony, extremism, human disaster, lamentation, Oguejiofor.

1. Introduction

In every society, the artist carries the mirror of the universe high up for purposeful reflection and serves as both ‘rememberer’ and reminder in terms of socio-

cultural reality and human progress. The creative artist thus serves as agency for self-retrieval and self-examination so that the present and the future generations can benefit through appreciation of the dynamics of human society across time and space. S. E. Ogude rightly points out that “literature... is not simply the reflection of a people, but the collective experience of a people expressed collectively” (1). In the African traditional world and even in the contexts of ‘postmodern’ reality, the artist plays the role of embodying the collective mind of the universe of his/her existence. Uwem Affiah, David Udoinwang and Offiong Eneh Amaku aver succinctly that the artist brings his/her ingenuity to bear on the prevalent existential reality as the work, among others, rouses attention of social participants “...stimulates thought, creates suspense, yields amusement, and compels participation on the part of the audience” (13). The audience in this case is constituted in the consciousness of sensitive populace who are alive to the realities of the society in the artist’s imagination. The poems that we are going to deal with in this analysis utilize the symbolic geo-physical and socio-political landscapes to recreate the reality that are embellished in them.

In this regard, Oguejiofor’s collection simply serves as artistic reflector as well as mediator of the banal order of the postcolony envisioned in the setting of the poems by creatively echoing persistently and stridently the gruesome moments of the collective experience of a people whose chequered history hinges at the multifaceted troubling parables of and paradoxes that palpably weave the unfortunate encounters and bleakly songs in the poetic rendition. In the metaphors of the poem, the citizenry of the universe which

'Maiduguri' aptly depicts in the poet's imagination, clearly intertwines a postcolonial Africa where socio-political crisis and existential malaise are common place and symptomatic. Reminiscing on the half a century of African liberation, Martin Meredith hints at the dynamics of this shared agonising heritage of postcolonial African condition thus:

Although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African states have much in common, not only their origins as colonial territories, but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced. Indeed, what is so striking about the fifty-year period since independence is the extent to which African states have suffered so many of the same misfortune (14).

The above statement is bound to project one's guess into the backdrops of the pessimism that continues to permeate artistic vision on African situation. The assertion above draws attention to the prevalence of traumatising encounters that have been pervasive in the real life drama of living in the African postcolony where daily existence has remained harsh, brutish and despicably contradictory. The leadership elites of the postcolonial societies behave with impunity of power even when 'democracy' and democratisation have been realized and trumped up as the continental norm. The elites largely corner the patrimony and leave the mass of the citizenry in dire straight, and the latter struggle hopelessly in the bids for bare existence.

The universe in the poetic imagination of *Maiduguri Requiems* focused in this critical context is a milieu that is still grappling with existential setbacks which rests at the fringes of human development, without a significant flicker of sustainable hope and optimism. The poetic unctio and simulating symbolisms that adumbrate 'maiduguri requiem' could be utilised as the aesthetic figuration by which the reality of the moment can be re-defined and interrogated to illustrate the reality, tragically though, in Africa's postcolony even in the present digital age. Elleke Boehmer while citing Achebe, puts it thus succinctly that, "In the postcolonial period, too, as Chinua Achebe has said, stories define us" (5-6). The writing in every genre with the critical interventions of scholar across humanities disciplines point at the dire situation of postcolonial encounters that echo through the lines in the anthology analysed in this work.

About a decade after independence of most African states, in the second half of the 1970s specifically, Areoye Oyebola lamented the unpleasant situation that points at the reality of black man's backwardness in his book, *Black Man's Dilemma* (1976) stating pessimistically that:

"No black country has successfully developed or adapted the technology of Industrial civilisation to

assure its citizens of high standard of living. I don't know of any black country which has made any meaningful beginning in the development of, at least, parts of modern technology or science. No black country has solved the problem of poverty among a great majority of its citizens. None has found any concrete solutions to the problem of poor nutrition, endemic diseases, inadequate basic education and infrastructural facilities" (10).

The situation articulated in the passage above has not in any significant sense of it changed several decades after the above author's outburst. What most of the nations have had has been harvest of violence and crudity and mutual destruction under one label or the other that have formed the grieving parable of postcolonial Africa of which 'Maiduguri Requiem' is merely echoing the situation. J.P. Clark's poem 'Here nothing Works' from the anthology *State of the Union* (1986), vividly echoes the sordid realities of postcolonial state situation. The prolonged nightmare that overhangs postcolonial African universe has unleashed barrages of human tragedies, and the blame hinged on the misfortune of weak, self-serving and visionless leadership. The baffling footages of violence, genocidal conflicts, starvation and the cataclysmic carnages that continue to ravage and weaken postcolonial states, especially those states geographically located down the equator, including Nigeria, where the dark testaments oozing out of *Maiduguri Requiems* is set, give writers in every genre the humming ferment for artistry energy, biting rebukes and the unending quest for national redemption in each of these hapless postcolonial states.

The reality of postcolonial encounters has continued to ginger creative engagements among scholars, creative writers and humanists in the bid to remind, negotiate or re-negotiate the awful condition of the African postcolonial condition. Consequently, Elizabeth Erukora asserts that African writers have continued to powerfully resonate their voices with defiant outrage by utilizing literature as a dissident tenor to confront and dissipate their venomous anger against bad leadership, violence, poverty, disintegration, violent crises, exploitation and foreign dominated economy (101). This scenario informs what James Tsaaior[a] refers to as "the historical scene" that map 'modern' African poetry" (115). 'Modern' African poetry since inception in the 1940s has remained fervently committed and deliberate in appropriating artistry as tool of socio-cultural re-engineering and nationalism in the face of the political culture that has remained wayward, atomistic and inhibitive to progress.

Focusing specifically on Nigeria, James Tsaaior[b] puts it aptly and specifically this way:

Nigeria's monumental failure to lead has continued to receive literary and critical attention from its many creative minds. Nigerian writers spanning the generic and generational gamut have reached deeply into their quivers to cast barbed arrows at their nation which inspired great optimism at birth but has chosen to squander its patrimony (11).

Much of the crises that continue to truncate postcolonial African states are mostly man-made and often traced to leadership failures. Most of the states are victims of misrule held captive and bound in the claws of self-serving tyrants, a bird's eye view across the African continent and a journey through history book and inquiries through creative literatures, all point at this same proposition of state failure as source of the multifarious human disasters that characterise most of African states.

The thematic issues that run through the collection vividly reverberate the idiolect of angst and awaken memories of horror that characterise social ambience captured in the renditions. There are evidently undertone of multifaceted reversals and human disasters which the persona tries to scene-map or recount in every title that makes up the collection. Each of the subtitles rememories landmarks of fatalities and tragedies that result into the trauma of human horror, brigandage, banditry, terrorism, and the imagery of the dead, burials and morning house situations in the poetic presentation. It is quite numbing that at the historical moment when well-meaning nations are competing at great speed in the bids to catch up with the all-encompassing digital globalization and development (David Udoinwang and Ikpe Akpan 2023), the Nigerian postcolony is depicted as a universe that still languishes at developmental crossroads. These images are symptomatic of the continually drifting status of the postcolony. 'Maiduguri' as captured in the poetic lenses has become a milieu that has been sorely violated, broken down and devastated. The landscape is depicted metaphorically as a haunted world; a place of lamentation, despair and sorry tales. In its social context of the subject matter, Maiduguri thematised in its infamy as the vast, ever-yielding graveyard waiting to receive its uncouth victims, creating space for mourners and the dead. It is a picture of a place of horror and terror, littered with shallow graves, bones and skulls. The landmass in the allusions of the poet persona appears to be wired with lethal mines, bombs and grenades.

In the 21st century postcolonial Nigerian, the concept of 'Maiduguri' draws some remarkable attention that is bound to strike some dread and hysteria. The global community has come to associate the word 'Maiduguri' with death, horror and human disaster. But this has not always been the character of Maiduguri, as history bears records of its pre-terror glowing heritage as a place of trade and commercial center of the Sahel African zone. But this was before religious extremism erupted and at the moment the land lays maimed with nauseating sore. In the introductory part of the book, the author points out that, as 'eye witness' with vivid guess, that this violently ravaged milieu was once "...a beautiful city that serenely housed individuals from various parts of Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa" (v). It is globally reported that Mohammed Yusuf founded the Boko Haram sect in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State, which was hitherto one of the most serene and important historical cities of the north-eastern zone of Nigeria. He found ready hands and foot-soldiers to recruit in the sprawling homeless, poor and castaway mendicants that marked the face of the otherwise peaceful city; and with it, the Islamic preacher established a religious complex that became averse to Western education and modern technology and development. Gillian Dunn reports that the crisis of Boko Haram in the north-eastern Nigeria and other related incidences started to manifest with temperaments of force and jihad. This prepared the grounds for the mutation of Maiduguri to a cauldron of woeful tales as adapted in Oguejiofor's *Maiduguri Requiems*. An extract from Dunn's report goes thus: *Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and among its most diverse with over 400 ethno-linguistic groups. The country is affected by several conflicts based on overlapping ethnic, religious, political and regional divisions including over resources in the Niger Delta, Christian-Muslim divides in the middle of the country, and most recently, the rise of Islamist groups in the north, most importantly, Boko Haram* (1).

The above elicits the chequered narrative of the ever-festering crisis bedeviling the Nigerian state which is aptly captured in the poetic binocular of the poet persona in the texts being analysed in context. The specific setting of the poet's experience might be Nigeria, but the wider perspective stretches to other similar and variegated tales of woe, beyond one specific state to cover the length and breadth of the whole postcolonial African landscape.

The author of the text poses as a witness or life experience in an attempt to give glue to the audience or reader of his rendition. This foregrounds the lamentations that pervades the landscape of the poems

in the collection. The author puts it further at the introductory pages concerning the social world that compels the temperament of the poems in the book thus:

Though first composed in 2007, 'Maiduguri Requiem' was inspired by the moon eclipse of April, 1996, and the senseless and mindless killings that followed it which I witnessed while serving the mandatory NYSC scheme in that alluring but now devastated city. No compensation was paid to those who lost their loved ones. Nor was any one charged for the atrocities by the authorities. Not too long after that, the city witnessed yet a worse waste of the innocents in what has come to be known as the Cartoon Riot instigated by a newspaper cartoon in faraway Denmark. An estimated 80 people died in this particular incidence... Then the mother of them all: the Boko Haram insurgency. As I write these lines, the Boko Haram sect continues its rampage of terror laying waste thousands of innocent lives including those who share the same faith with them... The killing of scores of students of Federal Polytechnic, Mubi... The kidnap of 200 school girls from their college at Chibok village, countless bombings of market and other public places in Maiduguri, Jos, Abuja and several towns and villages and so on are crimes the earth will never pardon (iv-v).

This prelude to the collection sets the tone and temperament of the collection and kicks started the issues that need to be continually interrogated in the committed quest for redress over the multifaceted crisis and conflicts that have benighted the African postcolonial space. The writer, the scholar or critic cannot fail to visit these landmarks, no matter how odious, nauseating, mind-numbing or troubling they may be, for the writer as well as the critic is socially responsible to the real universe of their existence. The writer must continue to bring these situations back to mind for the sake of remedying shared humanity and as elected duty that must be carried out with commitment. Stephen Lynn aptly asserts that "Literary works are, in a way, like places we can visit... Some call us back again and again: others we feel obliged to experience, knowing they'll do us good, even though we never quite enjoy them. Inhabiting a literary work, we can ... We can momentarily transcend the boundaries of our lives (xvii). The renewing memories of the puzzling circumstances in the postcolonial encounters serves to perpetuate the needed radical, revolutionary temperament (David Udoinwang and Kufre Akpan 2023) and for keeping with human progress and socio-cultural dynamics of postcolonial history and encounters.

2. Musing the Dirges and Allegorical Requiems Over the Postcolonial Ferment

The titles of each of the poems in the sections constitute and constantly echo the agony and dreadful milieu that is enshrouded in 'maiduguri'. The sphere is cast as a badly battered landscape. The choice of words or idiolects, coupled with the aura or atmosphere under which the poet persona selects in building the lines in the verses invokes solemnity and enchanted the universe of which the reader or audience is emotionally aroused. The tone of the words and symbolic usages deployed by the poet persona are weighty, penetrating and intensifies the gruesome atmosphere, sobering temperament and traumatising feeling one gets. The rhythm pointedly embodies a rather banal symphonies and disruptive mien of disquiet that transports the reader to a nightmarish unconscious. The reading of the collection tends to evoke a state of violence and anomie that results in a mourning mood situation. This unpleasant situation is also necessitated by the myriad of tragic scenes and disastrous repercussions.

The persona appears avidly traumatised, and the audience of the delivery cannot feel less so. Nastrullah Mambrol asserts that "The concept of trauma, itself as a source of critique is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self's emotional organisation and perception of the external world. 'Trauma studies explore the impact of trauma in literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance" (2). Sequel to the above conceptual explication, the titles such as 'The Funeral Dirge', 'The grave lay unmarked', 'I dread your names', 'Dreams under siege', 'Graveyards of Dreams' and 'In the Scorching Desert Sun', the atmosphere is set for a journey round sites and situations of horror, accentuated by such images as 'morning houses and graveyards' in the milieu referred to as 'Maiduguri'. In the figuration of the surrounding situation, the notion 'maiduguri' in the artistic construct serves as the icon of postcolonial state condition.

Maiduguri is then deconstructed as a tumultuous, fragmented or disoriented universe which pronouncement elicits fear in the immediate poetic moments; a contrast to the pristine notion or reality of the glowing and flowering heritage that Maiduguri was supposed to project to the minds of people before now. In the four stanzas of 'Funeral dirge', the first line of each stanza of the poem begins rhetorically by screaming the word, 'Maiduguri!', and the words that follow serve to intensify the momentum and tension of what Maiduguri translates into since the upsurge of the

extremism. The multiple allusions, symbolic statements, coupled with the poet's power of eloquence and apparent intensity of vision sundry devices puts the metaphoric 'maiduguri' on trial in the court of history. The ancient ideals of peace, harmony, commerce and mutual equanimity that was the then 'maiduguri' has now been violated, distorted and disfigured. Maiduguri now lay moribund, having been turned to a site of obscenity. The third stanza of 'The Funeral Dirge' in the work sums up the 'maiduguri' in the personified case scenario that now appears to be grappling with prostrate condition:

Maiduguri!
I know an ancient city, a conquered land
Forgotten memory on tripod pillars
Peace- but disaster reigns like the stars at dark
Faith- faith of killer tanks
A caged history of celebration ambushed (3).

In essence, Maiduguri as captioned in its socio-historical context, personifies a universe of "...barbed-wired, muzzled souls, unfettered cosmos..." (3) where graves lay unmarked and the very name 'maiduguri' strikes a chord of fear and dreams botched "under siege" which now seems grossly aborted, "Like sex-starved prisoner" ('Dreams under Siege', 7).

The collection is arranged in five movements or sections and the labeling of each section, in some ways, portray the specific landmarks of particular trajectory of what 'Maiduguri' represents in the sensibility of the poet persona. Section Two opens with a statement captioned, 'A Tragic Heritage'. The first poem in the section is entitled 'The Myth Has a New Name' (11). Here the persona expresses the tragic circumstances that now define the notion of 'maiduguri' as victim of cannibalistic ambush, and for that reason, 'maiduguri' has become a myth and riddle, inundated by a shaming condition which the persona describes as 'halitosis' – 'a condition of a fetid breath' about which the persona does not hide his traumatised state, as he meditates on his feelings thus: "For I have wept on the cradles of ancient faiths" (11). Maiduguri as portrayed by the persona is 'a tragic heritage' for those who still remember what it symbolised before the ambush of terror brought it to the present state of captivity.

The other poems continue to intensify the gloomy and death imagery of an obviously ravished heritage and environment. The many troubles that conspire to bring 'maiduguri' to the present deracinated state include the activities of those the persona described variously as '...praise singers in traditional songs/AK47 in each hand'; with brutal agents tagged as: "Boko Haram,

excrement of imported gods in penitence" (12-13). The violators are described as renegades of imported gods that have stripped the natives of their identities and then made infidels of the pre-islamist ancestral natives, who freely embrace the ancestral spirits, who knew no violence of cohesive worship. The captive universe in context has been brought to its knees, and is now located at "...crossroads of Civilization" (14), having been fatally seduced by "...the pestilence that strikes at night" (15). Tragically the persona insinuates that 'maiduguri' has become associated with 'Poisoned rain', and that 'Hiroshima' and 'Nagasaki' are her namesakes ('Poison Rain', 16). It now lays 'forlorn hope', overrun by 'holy murderers' (19); who relish in bloodsheds and fiery, maddening rampages. Maiduguri symbolises anguish of perfidy, fragmentation, treachery and disillusionment which is symptomatic of a typical postcolonial condition.

In section three of the collection sub-headed 'Beyond Dreams,' the searchlight stretches the poetic binocular beyond a specific locale that implicates 'Maiduguri' as a microscopic setting, to take a continent-wide landscaping of postcolonial African sphere. In this historical excursion, the persona remembers the many tragedies that have befallen postcolonial African history. He invokes memories of Samuel Doe's Liberia and reflects on the travesty of the birth of Biafra in the annals of postcolonial history. Also, he meditates on the various legacies of alienation and mutual transgressions that continue to wrack memories of what has become of the postcolony and points at the hopeless state of the moment, while decrying the solitude situation of the larger humanity at the moment. The persona on the other hand, eulogises the heroes of the failed attempt at redeeming postcolonial societies from the humiliation of history, invoking Jonas Savimbi with a sense of pride. This sensibility is actualised in the poem 'To Jonas Savimbi':

Man of the African jungles
Man of subdued deep sea
Whose bowels echoes lust for name (33).

Reading down the lines, the persona seems to indict international imperialism and their internal collaborators as agents responsible for the truncation of sustainable development that has birthed the multifaceted crisis that bedevil postcolonial societies. In this poem therefore the persona regurgitates on the obvious state of anxiety, while musing on the many travesties of postcolonial history. From the third stanza of the same poem the persona reflects on these interrupted memories thus:

I dreamt of Museveni
Charles Taylor and Fidel Castro

*In my dreams subdued by floating moon
Across my rusty verses and lakes
Sweeping over the Sahel, winding path...*

*With songs for Samora Marcel
Harvesting victory at last in the wind...
Blueprints for peace in Africa?
See Taylor, lovers I hide and seek
And they killed Gaddafi
Meditate on the drumbeats
Of Laurent Kabila against cattle rustlers
Ponder on the lifestyle of Marechera...*

*A war against our peace...
With western civilisation swarming the creeks...
Riddles and mysteries are tag
And launching pad... (33-34).*

These lines vividly echo the contrastive symphonies of the back-and-forth strutting of postcolonial African states in the perennial struggles to find footings of true independence in the face of western meddling that have contributed to interlock the erstwhile colonies to the apron strings of the former colonial powers which has resulted in instabilities and underdevelopment that characterize the postcolonies. The lines above constitute the riddles and mysteries of instability, misrules, arrested development and sundry tragedies that define postcolonial African states.

In the fourth movement tagged 'Deserted Homestead', the persona intensifies his authorial voice of lamentation and gloom over a universe that has been estranged through many seasons of vicissitudes. There have been landmarks of setbacks, paradoxes and illusionary hopes. He touches on "crumbled" value system and moral poverty that bedevil his imagined landscape; an environment that is entangled in a circle of "Uncared for cemeteries/Without mercies, powerless prayers..." ('Our Forgotten Shame', 54), and haunted by the grueling despair and frustration unleashed on the living by forces of imperialism and terror. But the poem 'Lament for My Land' caps it all with statement such as "... the drifting seasons: "...blood is raining"; "...highways of death/where youths, children of several seasons/lay wasted" (56-57). These and such dreary images keep reverberating through the lines in the verses that make up the anthology.

The last section of the collection captioned 'Twilight Dirges' raises yet a higher tempo of outcries over complicated crises that have brought the traditional world order of equanimity to the present state of near anarchy in most of the African postcolonial spaces. The first poem in this section titled 'The Virus',

reimagines the origins and conditions that paved the way for the incursions of alien cultures and religions from the western and eastern world into Africa; an experience that brought in strange, alienating and violent religions with their credos of imposition and rule of force. In most cases, the enthronement of alien values were done by forces of arms or by inducement which all tended to blacklist everything indigenous to African people. In the first stanza of 'The Virus' the persona raises his solemn dirge to lament the prevalent situation:

*They came from distant lands and from across the sea
and from across the desert
From the East, they swarmed over, and from the West
They pulled her down, her rapists
Pearly of thunder echoed her voice
Agonising centuries of inhumanity...
(‘The Virus’, 76).*

The above extract tries to buttress the repercussions of imperial contacts that have brought most of the now postcolonial Africa to the present crossroads. These include imported religions, cultural worldviews and ideology which continually induced violence that stalk the landscape and truncate sustained socio-economic development.

The next two poems namely 'Requiem Maiduguri' and 'Twilight Elegy' bring the dirge on Maiduguri to what reels like a crescendo. In the first situation, 'Requiem Maiduguri' raises the tempos of the murning song and laments afresh the strident forcefulness towards a pausing limit. It reflects again the tempo of the mourners' gathering, just as the poet seems to take another glance across the graveyards with mix affection in the face of the scattered, unmarked gravesides that adumbrate this landscape:

*I shall write you a poem
I shall sing you a dirge at twilight
Tears rolling through the night
I shall observe the various Stations of the Cross
My sweats thick like blood
Like Jesus on Golgotha.*

*So the AK47s came
Mass burials, the bulldozers
The onlookers, silent carnival
Burial of humanity... ('Requiem Maiduguri', 78).*

This is a solemn memorial enacted with great grief for a universe that has become notorious for bloodsheds, tragedies and disasters which is continually so for over a decade of horrible agony and unending despair despite great prices that have been paid to redeem the metaphorised maiduguri from her seemingly irredeemable state of sickening experience. In the

same temperament, the next poem 'Twilight Elegy' gives another, but yet, related angle of perspective on what makes sense to the world as postmodern Maiduguri. This sounds like a photographic passing glance where the zoomed sphere reveals the broken pieces of a world that is captured in the lenses of the observer.

*Their bones lay scattered
Scattered on the balcony
Awaiting mourners
Humanity lay in mystery chemistry
Waiting for burials by installments...*
(‘Twilight Elegy’, 79).

This dirge is an addressed to what appears like a deserted homestead where the inhabitants seem to have taken flight, having abandoned the otherwise rich and glowing ancestral heritage to vampires who have continually raped their homes, farmlands and place and have continually laid siege on her hitherto warm and welcoming environment, leaving on their heels trails of blood, broken skulls and unmarked graves. Hope of recovery and reparation seems to have been lost and the dirge elicits the depth of the prevalent nostalgia, disillusionment and despair on the whole place.

The poet who can be said to be an avowed optimist and positively forward looking, ends the anthology with a breathe of hope and optimism. He tends to see the future as bright by feeling that the sordid situation of things that exists will improve as he is confidence that there will be bright future at the end of the tunnel. The last poem in the anthology entitled ‘And the Gods Shall Clash in the Street’, turns prophetic. The audacity of the rendition is obvious and seemingly grounded on the persona’s feeling of patriotism and nationalism. The poet persona’s temerity and outburst seem predicated impliedly on what could be considered his abided faith in his society and the anxiety over the direness of the moment captured in the renditions. The lines sound both elegiac and audacious, just as the onus of the poetic statement on the other hand elicits courage on the path of the victims as well as the persona who seems to still nurture hope that time could spring up reawakening in the minds of the subjugated and compel them to resort to drastic actions toward a restoration or historical self-recovery and awareness even if it comes through confrontation “in the streets” as the persona seems to insinuate, so that the lost glory and self-esteem of a ravished ‘maiduguri’ might be restored regardless of the travesty and despair of the present situation. The first stanza of ‘And the Gods Shall Class...’ is captured thus:

And the Gods shall clash in the streets

*Though they kill us by our sacred forest
They shall have our vanquished voices strip their
vampire
The stars shall be our guide... (85).*

The extract here points at the role of the poet as a motivator, a social mobiliser and a teacher of the way out of the present malaise, seer or visionary and as a role model in the project of redeeming human dignity that has been badly disoriented, disfigured and abused owing to the hangovers of colonial encounter and imperialism in the subjugated and disoriented African postcolonial societies.

3. Conclusion

The above analysis extrapolates specific repercussions of socio-political and cultural imperatives of postcolonial crisis and the perspective of artistic interventions in the discourse of human liberation, social reengineering of the universe and prospects of realising purposeful and dignifying existence among a disoriented people. The tone of the poems analysed elicit historical memories that intertwines contemporary crisis of extremism that further aggravate the sorry state of postcolonial African societies. Furthermore, the analysis engages the artistic strategies of commitment to human value and dignifying social evolution of societies in the pursuit of a better world order, and in opposition of the present condition of religion or ideology-induced wars, human suffering and the prevalent near anarchy situation of most postcolonial African states, where terror and horror, power tussle, weak governments and uncertainties have remained daily companion of the majority of the people. It is important to note that the engagements with the present reality are anchored on the need to awaken creative consciousness towards addressing the multifarious malaises that bedevil postcolonial Africa; where existence from state to state has become continually brutal, harsh, appalling and despairing with heavy toll on the part of the toiling millions of people whose daily existence has become highly excruciating, especially for the vulnerable and the direly disadvantage victim of the confusing situations.

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