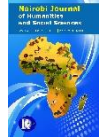




## Ideologising revolutionary egalitarianism in Jared Angira's and John Clare's poetry



Review article



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### Abstract

Accruing knowledge, critical to understanding societal systems and structures constitutes a basal philosophical problematic to the human intellect. Notably, as disciplines that revolve around aspects of human society and culture, imaginative writing and literary studies rank among the major branches of inquiry invoked to generate ideas, solutions and initiatives for the betterment of human life. Comparatively scrutinising the ideological kinship between the poetry of Jared Angira and John Clare, the objective of this paper is to demonstrate that these poems constitute latent grounds for reflection on and critical engagement with the nature of existence and articulation of social thought and ideologies. Thus, this paper is a nominal effort in appreciating their commonality as an ideological catalytic agency of changing and transforming the social and cultural fabric of life in their societies. Drawing from the critical insights of New Historicism theory, the paper employs textual analysis and historical context study towards illuminating how both poets prescribe a common ideological guiding pattern that it designates Revolutionary Egalitarianism.

**Keywords:** deracination, ideology, revolutionary egalitarianism, sociocultural process, subaltern, social justice



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### Public Interest Statement

The ideological parallels between different genres of literatures of African countries and other postcolonial national or regional literatures in the world, as well as their specific and distinctive characteristics have generally been acknowledged in postcolonial literary scholarship. However, as far as written African and European genres of literature are concerned, critics have largely been preoccupied with foregrounding the tension that exists between the two. This paper takes a turn in the direction of investigating ideological kinship between the poetry in the two bodies of writing and thus intervenes in addressing the critical lop-sidedness in current literary scholarship.

### Introduction

This paper seeks to illumine the considerable potential that cultural and humanist ideas, as encapsulated in modern African poetry and European poetry of the first half of the nineteenth century (represented respectively by the works of Jared Angira and John Clare) may hold for the instigation of fundamental change and the gradual and systematic realisation of new levels of societal development. Such an undertaking obtains relevance and justification from the assertion that “the business of imaginative literature is to work upon consciousness” despite the fact that “the practical consequences” of such works – “social, environmental, political in the broadest sense – cannot be controlled or predicted” (Bate, 2002: 23). By comparatively scrutinising modern African poetry and European poetry of the first half of the nineteenth century, this paper further shows how such contribution can be productively compared across the confines of diverse literary traditions and historical epochs. The two corpuses of poetry discussed here are comparable because for reasons of cultural and ideological nature, they have evolved in ways that give rise to similar literary practices in terms of ideology, thus manifesting kinship. The respective historical periods in which Angira and Clare write their poetry were transitional in nature and characterised by stratification along class lines and dominant forms of knowledge designed to ensure that the lower classes remained subjugated by the elite class. The modern African epoch has been quite versatile, with Africa redefining itself culturally, politically and intellectually amidst a myriad of challenges. This has compelled writers to adopt a poetics of involvement. Similarly, the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century in Europe was characterised by vigorous debates and controversies revolving around fundamental philosophical, cultural, political and intellectual principles. The poets of the age actively participated in these debates through the medium of the arts.

In spite of originating in different cultural formations, a close reading of Jared Angira’s poems and John Clare’s poems reveals their shared commonality as an

ideologised mode of discourse in that the very substance of their poetry “make[s] us see, allow[s] us to see, force[s] us to see the ideology from which it is born” (Bennet & Royle, 1996: 132). Ideology refers to a system of social, political and cultural ideas that obtain their being in their affiliation with group/class interests, conflicts or struggle in the social structure (Hall, 1996). Angira and Clare reveal themselves as Revolutionary Egalitarians in terms of ideological identity. This paper proposes the term Revolutionary Egalitarianism to refer to the way Angira and Clare address the class realities of Post-independence Africa, the context of Angira’s poetry, and England in the first half of the nineteenth century, the context of Clare’s poetry. Revolutionary Egalitarianism also denotes their common ideological dispensation that prioritises equity for all within their respective polities while advocating as an indispensable prerequisite, a revolution to dislodge contemporary inequitable political, economic and social systems. Through the inequitable material forces of politics and economics common to these two epochs, the majority became dispossessed within the socio-economic matrix. They acquired a subaltern status as a new class of what Lazarus describes as the “peasantry, the proletariat, the unemployed, the hungry, the uprooted and dispossessed” (1995:16). This became the majority social class in Post-independence Africa and England in the first half of the nineteenth century. The common plight of these subalterns – the dominated social groups who have been relegated “to the underside or to the margins” (Ludden, 2002: 5) is the major preoccupation of Angira and Clare’s poetry.

### **Conceptualising Revolutionary Egalitarianism as Manifest in Angira’s Poetry and Clare’s Poetry**

In order for us to appreciate Revolutionary Egalitarianism as the authorial ideology commonly underlying the poetry of Angira and of Clare, it is imperative to probe into its theoretical contexture. It is by virtue of this ideological orientation that the paper argues of the two poets to double up as social thinkers and intellectuals who in a crucial way contribute to “the sociocultural process” (Rabie, 2013: 5). The scholar coins “the sociocultural process” to refer to the dynamics of the continuous human progression in terms of ideas which in turn governs the pace and determines the direction of societal change. As a liberatory body of thought underlying Angira’s poetry and Clare’s poetry, the study conceptualises Revolutionary Egalitarianism as circumscribed within perceptible ideological principles. These principles are articulated and attested to through the poets’ common thematic preoccupations. Key among these defining principles is the ideological articulation of a pro-change tendency arising from disquiet with existing inequitable social, political and economic institutions and practices. Thus, employing their poetry as a relevant and available means of persuasion to setting right the disequilibrium in the status

quo, Angira and Clare thematically apprehend the social and economic contradictions existent in their day. In a fundamental way too, the ideals of Revolutionary Egalitarianism underlie the two poets' common preoccupation with seeking to overhaul the existing social systems to pave way for the realignment of Post-independence Africa for Angira, and England for Clare, with alternative egalitarian principles.

In the theoretical aggregate, Revolutionary Egalitarianism envisages revolution in the service of the interests of the subaltern classes. This paper conceptualises revolution as the basic transformation of state and class structures which manifests as class-based revolts from below. These revolts are driven by a conjunction of multiple conflicts involving state, elites and the lower classes (Bayat, 2017). Angira's and Clare's common conviction in the inevitable eventuality of a revolution reflects a theoretical aspect of ideological particularity and is based on their understanding of the entrenched dystopian conditions that dislocate the subaltern within their African and English nationspaces. This component of Revolutionary Egalitarianism has socio-culturo-econo-political maneuverability undertones which are thematically reflected in Angira's and Clare's poetic texts through a spectrum of utopian projections. By its nature utopian writing speculates from realistic premises which provide its modes and tropes for imagining a realisable future, a future hopefully distinguishable by "avoidance of plutocracy, the limiting of inequality, and the management of common resources for the common good" (Claeys, 2013: 15). On the basis of this conception, this paper argues that Angira's and Clare's poems are utopian poetic texts that ideologically reflect a realistic understanding of present social relations and a clear vision for more egalitarian societies in the future.

A common poetic representation of the dystopian conditions of Post-independence Africa in Angira's poetry and England in the first half of the nineteenth century in Clare's poetry is the germinal footmark in the two poets' revolutionary pursuit of inclusive justice and equity in their polities. Angira's and Clare's poems are in response to these prevailing dystopian conditions, which deracinate the subaltern majority. The concern with Angira's and Clare's poetic representation of deracination is requisite since as geographically and historically situated epochs, these epochs with their common socio-political contexture that is integrally discordant to Angira's and Clare's common egalitarian ethos constitute the medium in which the two poet's revolutionary egalitarian consciousness arises and has its being. Deracination means "the uprooting of someone from their natural geographical, social, or cultural environment" (Simpson, 2014). At the semantic level, deracination alludes to such uprooting, displacement or dislocation as happening intra, within the spaces of the nation, otherwise also described as dispossession (Lytle, 2015). Dispossession happens when through various mechanisms, certain sections of the populace find themselves robbed off the gratification and assurance that their home

nation should offer. Angira's and Clare's poetry is a vehicle that unambiguously mediates such realities of deracination among the subaltern in their respective polities. The poems unequivocally present the condition as resulting from the working of clearly discernible socio-political and economic forces.

Angira's "*Mistaken Identity*", for instance, is a graphically disturbing portraiture of the prevalent gap between the poor and the rich, a development pattern that separates the elite class from the deracinated majority in Post-independence Africa. The poem problematises deracinating structures of class oppression in the culture of Post-independence African society where "wealth is in the hands of a privileged minority, which surrounds itself with country houses, cars and all other consumer durables that are associated with an acquisitive middle class" (Kehinde, 2004: 232). This happens amidst the growing squalor and misery of the majority in the low social class in the average Post-independence African nation. Actors across both divides "roll in the night with sleeplessness" for different reasons. For the majority, who have "laboured on land until their palms feel like sand paper" yet who are "thin, haggard and bowed with hunger", sleeplessness is occasioned by "coiled intestines" induced by hunger. This is the deracinated subaltern class in Post-independence Africa whose economic situation is extremely precarious. For them, since the dawn of independence, "life is plagued by unemployment, land shortage, crime, hunger, and a general sense of disheartenment, living standards are steadily deteriorating and wages are insufficient to provide for basic needs" (Udenta, 1993: 67). Thus in "*Mistaken Identity*", Angira apprehends the exploitativeness of the prevailing social structures in Post-independence Africa whereby the class that toils hard to generate national wealth has no control over it, cannot meet even the most basic of survival needs and suffers deracination. On the other hand, the anxiety of their privileged contemporaries to safeguard their monopolisation of national capital becomes a source of restlessness and sleeplessness as in the following lines:

The ulcer over the security  
Of millions piled up the bank  
Of property borrowed in line  
Oh what more mortgage can they give!  
... the safety of the luminaires  
stocked one on top  
oh whither the end!  
(*The Years Go By*, p 65)

Angira's disgust towards the ruthlessly self-seeking disposition of the elite minority, the "they" and how this contributes to the deracination of the majority is evident in "*Mistaken Identity*". The series of events presented in the poem revolve around the disingenuous elite culture of material worship and moral recession vis-à-vis the common people's bitter history of exploitation and deracination. Angira emerges as a poet who candidly addresses himself to the social, political and economic conditions of Post-independence Africa. "*Mistaken Identity*" therefore reveals itself as a concrete statement of how the overwhelming majority of Post-independence African leaders abdicate their responsibility to oversee the resolution of development challenges towards the improvement of the lives of their people. Instead, they brazenly preside over the looting of billions of dollars from the national coffers by the privileged elite class. Meanwhile the subaltern class agonises under the sweltering injustice of debilitating poverty and mismanagement of their nations' collective resources with close to half of the entire population living below the line of extreme poverty (Nduku & Tenamwenye, 2015).

Clare's "*An Idle Hour*" and "*Trespass*" reflect similar thematic preoccupations with engaging the class realities in England of Clare's time. In "*An Idle Hour*", he writes that the "drooping blossoms" are "parched", "water flowers", on the contrary, have "more than their share". These images constitute a candid figurative representation of the class structure in the society. Yet, these two contrasting situations co-exist side by side. Such a metaphorical portraiture of class disparities accords with the reality of the English power structure in the first half of the nineteenth century where the socio-economic scales were tilted in favour of a few (Ferrara, 2011). This deduction is in agreement with Summerfield's assertion that it is entirely inadequate for a reader to fail to recognise that Clare's "nature poems are shot through with feelings, beliefs, perceptions and convictions that are inescapably ethical, social and political" (1990: 98). For the deracinated subaltern class who "through manipulation of the law had been disenfranchised and were now seen as an economic burden to society" (Paul, 2011: 33), "the legion of the lost" (Ashton, 1975: 46), their very existence is an act of "*Trespass*", executed "with dread where there is no path/ pressing with cautious tread/ always turning to look with wary eye".

In Angira's "*Mistaken Identity*" and Clare's "*An Idle Hour*" and "*Trespass*", the poets present the injustice of social economic inequality and overall deracination of the subaltern majority as a prevailing and crucial issue in their epochs while simultaneously broaching, even kindling, egalitarian sensibilities. Typical of any capitalistic arrangements, class alienation and social economic inequality are indicted in these poems as real and "excessive and unfair to an immoral degree" (Greenfeld, 2001: 420). What Clare represents in his poems is, for instance, borne out by Hammond & Hammond who assert that "no class in the world has so beaten and crouching a history" (1995: 81 as the English labouring

class pauperised by Enclosure. Enclosure, was a major policy of the Agricultural Revolution. It referred to the capitalistic appropriation by wealthy individuals of land previously free for common use, thereby alienating the customary right of the poor to its use especially for grazing and food production. On the other hand, for the landed class and other better-off social groupings, collectively “the rentier class” (Williams, 1973: 46), Enclosure ushered in economic freedom and prosperity. Within the topical socio-political context of his time, Clare’s sustained criticism on the subject of Enclosure in poems such as “*An Idle Hour*” and “*Trespass*” is hence appreciable as stamping his revolutionary spirit and positive commitment to the search for social justice. In a similar way, Angira’s “*Mistaken Identity*” bears relevance to the African Post-independence actuality where “the increasing gap between the poor and the rich nauseates and pricks the conscience. Equality and human dignity are losing ground. The law is deviated in favour of the ‘haves’ while the poor cry endlessly” (Mayala, 2013: 25).

Angira and Clare engage with the deracination motif through the sub-themes of exploitation, betrayal, disillusionment and poverty among other distresses and conditions of wretchedness afflicting the subaltern class and directly precipitated by classist practices in their epochs. Both poets in definitively bitter tones castigate the deracination of the poor masses as a direct consequence of the capitalistic ambitions of a few. Their committed revelation of the reality of exploitation and betrayal of the majority in their epochs shapes their political consciousness and gives revolutionary intent to their poetry. To this extent, a common authorial ideological orientation is demonstrated in their writing. Set against the economic dictates obtaining in the raw capitalistic dispensation common to both epochs, Angira’s and Clare’s shared thematic preoccupations prove to correlate. This is in so far as the two poets share a sense of urgency to not only interrogate the practices of the dominant class but also to represent how such practices play a causative role in the deracination experience of the subaltern. This is realised through the authorial articulation of the political and economic dislocation and betrayal of the masses, disillusionment and poverty among other conditions of dystopia entrenched on the spaces of the nation for the subaltern. Such thematic focus, grounded on literary commitment to the plight of the deracinated, testifies to Angira’s and Clare’s shared Revolutionary Egalitarian ideological stance.

### **Enfranchising the Deracinated Subaltern: The Egalitarian Vision in Angira’s and Clare’s Poetry**

Angira’s poetry and Clare’s poetry is not merely a record of the socio-political and economic sensibilities that account for the various manifestations of deracination in Post-independence Africa and in England in the first half of the nineteenth century. Evident in

their poetry too is a shift of focus from the representation of the subaltern as victims of deracinating systems to their representation as actors in history. The poets invest the subaltern with the potential to carry out the process of liberating themselves. Attridge & Jolly assert that for revolutionary change to take place, the masses need to be informed and to be conscious (1998). Additionally, “fundamental to a robust democracy are active and informed citizens” (Patrick, 2006:4). It is such masses that Angira and Clare represent in the poems analysed in this subsection. Angira’s and Clare’s poems come across as representing ideologised and politicised spaces. Providing the subaltern with a sense of agency which invests them with the ability to liberate themselves from the present stifling socio-political and economic histories of their societies, the poems reveal themselves as geared for the critical challenge of “opening spaces for new narratives of becoming and emancipation” (Venn, 2006, p. 1).

Angira’s “*Satiety*”, for instance, is a subaltern’s unequivocal confrontation of the social injustice of classism. In this poem, the subaltern interrogate the status quo that perpetually disenfranchises them. The poem is an articulation of “crude voices gasping in the dark, of voices trapped in between despair and existence, of voices caught up in a maze but always seeking to get through” (Angira, 1979). As such, “*Satiety*” stands out in its identification with the subaltern while functioning as a record of experience as well as a voice of vision in Post-independence Africa. Comparable to Clare’s “*Address to Plenty in Winter*” among many other poems in Angira’s and Clare’s extensive oeuvre, “*Satiety*” is indeed an effective tool in the transformation of societal structures towards an egalitarian disposition. In the poem which is imbued with heavy revolutionary consciousness, the masses who are variously represented as “me” and “we” boldly engage “you”, their privileged compatriots, on the other side of the class gap. The conflict between these two social collectivities is clear in the lines:

You conditioned me that  
to clear these miles  
between me and you  
we must venture to the moon  
that spaceship hijacked the pirate sailors  
to clear these miles  
between me and you  
we must venture to the moon  
(*Silent Voices*, p30)



In these lines too, the underprivileged, with a sufficiently aroused power of reason and judgement interrogate the privileged class on their assumptions on class privilege. With an urgent and compelling resolve of their own, the disenfranchised “me”/ “we” class, no longer accept the status quo and their assigned place in it as natural. They question the socially situated discourses that legitimate class dominance and privilege in Post-independence Africa. In a taunting tone, they challenge as false the grounds on which class privilege is premised and on which capitalists’ material and other interests are secured. For instance, in the above quoted lines, the notion that closing the class gap and changing the status quo is infeasible and that such an attempt would be an impossibility comparable to “venturing to the moon” is dispelled. That the “spaceship” that would facilitate such a venture was “hijacked” by “the pirate sailors”, implies the fallacy that embarking on a mission to overhaul classist structures in Post-independence Africa society is impracticable. Thus, the aggressively urgent tone of the poem comes out clearly. Attridge & Jolly (1998) and Patrick (2006) identify this aggression as necessary for political and socio-economic revolutions to take place. The inversion in the line, “that spaceship hijacked the pirate sailors” sarcastically emphasises the mendacity of such a position. The contradiction contained in this line suggests that this is an unreasonable excuse since a “spaceship” navigates in space while “pirate sailors” are found at sea. Though on the surface it appears contradictory, Angira in this line and poem in general endorses the power of a subaltern whose consciousness is sufficiently aroused to initiate fundamental socio-economic changes and provoke a political revolution.

The awakening of the consciousness of the masses begins with their insight and discernment that there is nothing natural or fixed about the stratification of society into dominant and subservient classes. Rather, this phenomenon is artificially created to serve the needs of the current economic system. Angira presents an empowered “me”/ “we” oppressed class that sees right through the distortion and mendacity constituting the bedrock of the discursive practices of “you” in “Satiety”. While “there is very limited chance of upward mobility for the masses in Post-independence Africa” (Udenta, 1993: 67), Angira represents the submerged “me” as nevertheless aspiring to rise above class domination, to assert their human worth in the face of class-based rejection and alienation by “you”. This is captured in the words: “their voice pierces/ from under the deeps’. In the line “The city seemed near”, “me”/ “we” has actually contrived means of “clearing these miles” of class difference “between me and you”, to finally get near, although not yet to, the “city” of “satiety”. Cumulatively, Angira imbues “Satiety” with optimism that an egalitarian revolution is a very real prospect. Angira’s philosophical position nevertheless is that it will be arduous, with the potentiality of danger. This allusion to the preparedness to make sacrifices during revolutionary climates accords with Attridge & Jolly (1998).

From an authorial ideological standpoint similar to Angira's in "Satiety", Clare in "Address to Plenty in Winter" creates vocal and active masses. Though they are presently "hungry" and "shatter'd" in the hard circumstances of debilitating exploitative labour and abject misery, their resolve is not to adhere to the stoic philosophy of suffering in silence. From the remote margins of "low wages", "pain" and "want" where the "sad sons of Poverty", "the sons of Want and Woe" are mired, they in "Address to Plenty in Winter" find a space and a voice to reject the status quo and indeed transcend their presently deprived condition. The poem catalogues the desired objects that the narrator imagines having after a thoroughgoing transformation of their material well-being. Though this catalogue, in itself, serves as the index of the persona's own present deprivation, the poem doubly depicts the persona as managing to acquire a new lifestyle, metaphorically summed up as "taking a nap in plenty's lap". Hence, "Address to Plenty in Winter" is not merely a voicing of discontentment with present deprivation. It is also an expression of the subaltern's aggressive desire to triumph over present limiting circumstances and effectuate for themselves cross-class transformation. Clare's representation of subaltern characters particularly the labouring poor, as roused in matters concerning the injustice and deprivation plaguing their lives has been observed by other scholars. Jayne (2006) reads Clare's poetry, citing "The Summons" and "The Hue & Cry: A Tale of the Times" (published singly in 1829 and 1831 respectively) as "clearly intended by the writer to draw attention to the import of national and individual awakening, or re-awakening, of moral conscience" (25) to ushering change. The same scholar argues that it is evident in these two poems as well as "many other poems he wrote on the subject of widows, wounded soldiers and ill-treated or neglected animals" (Jayne 2006: 131) that Clare perceived such mass moral and political awakening or re-awakening as a mandatory prerequisite in society's transformative practices.

Angira's "Satiety" and Clare's "Address to Plenty in Winter" evince a social justice motif. A strong egalitarian transformative consciousness emerges as a common authorial ideological and thematic denominator of these poems. The poems are, therefore, a representation of the simultaneous voicing of the common people's outcry against injustice and a yearning for justice and equitableness. The collective subaltern re-awakening and passionate aspiration to gradually seize their space in politically, socially and economically reformed and subsequently egalitarian nationspaces is elevated by Angira and Clare, in other poems. For instance, in Angira's "Pogrom: to a friend" and Clare's "The Beautiful Stranger", the categorical ambition and commitment of the downtrodden to changing power and class relations that presently disadvantage them is seen to levitate to the level of a violent and militant mass uprising as the revolutionary struggle intensifies. Angira's poems and Clare's poems analysed in this section reflect a common authorial

confidence in the subalterns' revolutionary potential. Further, the analysis unveils a common authorial conviction in the sufficiency of this potential to radically overhaul political, social and economic systems that presently dislocate the subaltern within their own nationspaces. Thus, in Angira's "*Satiety*" and Clare's "*Address to Plenty in Winter*", the poets represent the subaltern as imbued with a deep conviction to uncompromisingly rise against class-based oppression and exploitation and organisational structures which nourish anti-justice inclinations. This begins with the consciousness and the insight to question discourses which legitimate and secure privileges for the dominant class while deracinating the subaltern majority. This quizzical attitude is reinforced by a robust and passionate aspiration among the lowly and subjugated for class privileges presently inaccessible to them. Through such poems as analysed in this section, the poets open up possibilities for the enthronement of new cultural institutions that are fundamentally egalitarian.

### **Troping Utopianism as Agency of Liberation in the Poetry of Angira and the Poetry of Clare**

This section comparatively engages with Angira's "*At This Time*" and "*Rebirth*" and Clare's "*The Shepherd's Tree*" and "*The Dream*". These poems represent how the entrenchment and aggravation of dystopian conditions that deracinate the subaltern in Post-independence Africa and England in the first half of the nineteenth century instigate border crossing to utopia. The representation of these dystopian conditions dominate Angira's "*Mistaken Identity*" and Clare's "*An Idle Hour*" and "*Trespass*" earlier on analysed. These poems implicitly indict the multifarious indices of dystopia afflicting the masses, such as betrayal, poverty, disillusionment and general dispossession typical of the Post-independence African and England in the first half of the nineteenth century settings. Further, it will also be recalled that Angira and Clare do not merely content themselves with portraying the contemporary setting as untenable and integrally discordant with their common egalitarian ethos. Certain poems such as "*Satiety*" by Angira and "*Address to Plenty in Winter*" by Clare reveal themselves as optimistic revolutionary programmes through shifting gears from the representation of the subaltern as victims of deracinating systems to their representation as actors in history towards the total overhaul of the existing socio-economic structures. Measured against the dystopia of the present, this translates into the fervour for an alternative ethic. To this extent, such poems as "*At This Time*" and "*Rebirth*" by Angira and "*The Shepherd's Tree*" and "*The Dream*" by Clare strongly emerge as hypothetical projections of the utopian possibility of ideal polities, essentially egalitarian.

Utopia, as a scholarly term, has been employed in a variety of ways and from different angles and disciplines of academic enquiry such as literature, history, sociology and archaeology. As such, in assessing this subject, even in literary-centred understandings, there is no consensus on a single understanding of the set of practices and traditions delineated under the rubric of the term. Nevertheless, this paper is in agreement with Claeys' assertion that literary utopia is a form of imaginative discourse, a wish-picture which operates as a fantastic longing or urge anchored on the principle of desire for a better way of living (2013). Claeys (2013) furthermore asserts that it is not merely a mirage or unattainable ideal but one with social and realistic components and a sense of ideological particularity. On the strength of these predications, Claeys (2013) facilitates the reading of Angira's "*At This Time*" and "*Rebirth*" and Clare's "*The Shepherd's Tree*" and "*The Dream*" as radical utopian writings commonly reflecting their authors' revolutionary longing, desire and hope for future egalitarian societies. The poems are so advanced to consciously dream of and reflect the poets' heimatic ideal, placing emphasis on principles of equality in economics, government and justice and positing such an ideal as a possibility. In so far as these poems reflect a realistic understanding of present social relations and commonly outline as a viable proposition, visions for futuristic egalitarian societies, the paper argues them to be utopian texts.

The significant utopian function of art and literature has been underscored by Bloch (1986). Bloch reasons that the *raison d'être* of art and literature is the "anticipatory illumination", the prophetic imaging of a different world. Essentially, the scholar hypothetically conceptualises the feasibility of re-arranged socio-political relationships. In this process is fashioned "Heimat", Bloch's locution for the utopian "home that we have all sensed but never known... [which] may lie in the future but [whose] promise transforms the present" (Zipes, 1989: xxxiii). In Angira's and Clare's poems, "Heimat" commonly abides in the indeterminate "future" ("*The Shepherd's Tree*"), removed in both space and time, "may be tomorrow" ("*At This Time*"). The Heimatic space beheld in a reflective tone in these poems is one in which the contradictions that presently succour class-based injustice have been resolved to culminate in viable egalitarian societies, where all humanity is "a classless family" ("*At This Time*"). Clare concedes that utopian reflections may, at the present, be dismissed as "stirring the soul to vain imaginings" ("*The Shepherd's Tree*"). Nonetheless, his ideological faith in the value of such reflections in inviting the subaltern, suggesting for them, to question the assumptions of present society and thus animate the feasibility of a world qualitatively different is just as unreserved as that of Angira. Clare's ideological conviction in the indispensability of the role of reflexive judgement in envisioning utopian futures and assisting public adjustment to freer futures (Lara, 1998) is manifest in that even the wind itself sings and hums such reflections as immutable songs

or poems. This is conveyed in “the wind of that eternal ditty sings/ humming of future things that burns the mind”. In Angira’s poetry, the self-same ideological conviction manifests in the recurrent projection into the future time through the conspicuously repeated “tomorrow” as well as the modal verb “will”. Appearing in twenty out of the forty-three lines of “*At This Time*”, “will” is deliberately ubiquitous in so far as it facilitates the delineation of conditions and arrangements that register discontinuity from present society and engage the imagination of potential readers from a utopian perspective.

Angira’s and Clare’s authorial boldness and certitude in utopianism, their chosen mode of writing, as a revolutionary force for the transformation of the present is categorical. In all poems, the obscurities surrounding the concept of “Heimat” are configured as a literary vision, of essence, contrived in the disruption of socio-political confines presently defining the respective societies. Angira’s “*Rebirth*” and Clare’s “*The Dream*”, for instance, are in their entirety, literary projections of utopia that provide a clear focus for the revolutionary transformation of contemporary inequitable state and class structures. Thus, the ideological content of these poems is circumscribed in Angira’s and Clare’s utopian fleshing out of the social arrangements of society in appreciation of the transformational potential of Post-independence Africa and England in the first half of the nineteenth century. The poems relish, as a very real prospect, the utopian vision of a time in the future when multiple forces stir into action culminating in the resolution of present contradictions, and the obliteration of all oppressive essences. Angira’s and Clare’s utopian idealism in these poems emerges in a motion picture dream-like unfolding of the effectuation of a fundamentally new socio-economic charter. Their common employment of utopian dreams or visions as an instrument of revolutionary motivation in their poems is an ideological strategy that accords with contemporary utopian theory whereby, “utopia is no longer a place, but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world. The space of utopia has become the space of social dreaming (Sargent, 2000: 8). The lines “And now I hear the drums/ Sound from the levelled grassland/ Announcing a feast”, (“*Rebirth*”) are a utopian suggestion of another social structure. This is the preferable structure, that Post-independence Africa has, from Angira’s ideological standpoint, the transformative potential to be, “most likely tomorrow” (“*At This Time*”). In a duplicate ideological manner, “*The Dream*” in the lines “And o’er the east a fearful light begun/ To show the sun rise—not the morning sun / But one in wild confusion, doom’d to rise” manifests a confident utopian focus on an alternative socio-political construct. This construct is marked by liberty and equitableness. The utopian optimism for a prospective fresh “dawn” (“*Rebirth*”), “in which life’s sordid being hath no part” (“*The Shepherd’s Tree*”), an integral “birth” (“*The Dream*”) for society is the grand utopian idea that commonly suffuses Angira’s “*At This Time*” and “*Rebirth*” and Clare’s “*The Shepherd’s*

*Tree*” and “*The Dream*”. Corresponding “imaginings”, “future things that burn the mind/ To leave some fragment of itself behind” (“*The Shepherd’s Tree*”) find expression in the following lines of Angira’s “*Rebirth*”:

The hill and sea shall unite  
The tower shall break and fall into the sea  
It will never be seen  
It will never be heard  
Like a stone thrown into the sea.  
(*Silent Voices*, p81)

The model of border crossing from dystopia to utopia has been propounded by Kiser & Drass (1987). The scholars proffer that while the two start in the same place, namely, in problematic structures and practices that make society socially and politically unhealthy, utopia, necessarily, arises from dystopia. Angira’s and Clare’s utopian vision in “*At This Time*” and “*Rebirth*” and “*The Shepherd’s Tree*” and “*The Dream*” arises from, yet transcends, the sombre disappointments of the contemporary nationspaces. To the extent that Angira and Clare poetically elevate the public consciousness to see the present contradictions as resolvable through appropriate re-structuring, their poems give cogency to the inferences drawn by Kiser & Drass (1987). Angira’s “*At This Time*” and “*Rebirth*” and Clare’s “*The Shepherd’s Tree*” and “*The Dream*” embody the poets’ common mythopoeic engagement with the utopian exploration of the possibilities of an alternative world. By dispensation, this world is a stubborn negation of the present conformation of Post-independence Africa and England in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, a reading of these poems gives insight into the common ideological perspectives of the two writers as consciously suggestive of how a much different society, egalitarian in organisation, can be realised if certain crucial socio-political aspects can, in the first place, be imagined to be different. Angira’s “*At This Time*” and “*Rebirth*” and Clare’s “*The Shepherd’s Tree*” and “*The Dream*” are hypothetical projections of the utopian promise of an ideal and highly desirable nationspace. Such a space is one in which all benefit from egalitarian and reasonable social arrangements that contrast with the contentious contemporary social life of the respective epochs. It is to this extent that Angira’s “*At This Time*” and “*Rebirth*” and Clare’s “*The Shepherd’s Tree*” and “*The Dream*” reveal themselves to be literary instruments devised for the utopian function of “energising the present with the anticipation of what is to come” (Ashcroft, 2012: 4).

## Conclusion

Angira's and Clare's poetry is infused with a similar ideological orientation. The poetry's common ideological identity reveals itself to be revolutionary and egalitarian, anchored in liberatory thought. The authorial ideological orientation this paper designates Revolutionary Egalitarianism construes, through the poems analysed, existing social, political and economic institutions as untenable. Commonly employing their poetry as agency to setting this imbalance right, the poets thematically apprehend the contradictions existent in Post-independence Africa in Angira's case and England in the first half of the nineteenth century in Clare's case. The poets are also preoccupied with seeking to overhaul the existing social systems to pave way for the realignment of their societies with alternative egalitarian principles. This new social imaginary intersects with the utopian space to encourage as viable, the realisation of boundless liberatory spaces for actual subaltern actors. Angira's and Clare's thematic engagement with class consciousness as the social constraint impeding the fulfilment of the subaltern class within their own nationspaces bespeaks ideological kinship. Also apparent is their common advancement of profound epistemologies of the broad liberation of the subaltern and their societies to culminate in a civil imaginary born out of an egalitarian dispensation. Kinship in their delineation of the course of the disruption and realignment of oppressive classist social economic structures to yield this new dispensation is also manifest in the poems analysed. Of necessity, their political vision is dependent upon the subaltern's active awakening and realisation that their subjugation is not an inalienable cultural aspect of their respective social formations. Though such developments may not per se proceed universally along the uni-dimensional course emerging in the analysis of Angira's and Clare's poems owing to historical and other variables, this paper nevertheless illumines Angira's and Clare's poetry as similar ideological platforms for the negotiation and reconstruction of reality.

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