



---

**JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES (GOSAJOLLCOS)**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**MAIDEN EDITION**  
November, 2020

©Department of English, Gombe State University

**MAIDEN EDITION**

November, 2020

**All rights reserved.**

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the Department of English, Gombe State University.

**PUBLISHED BY:**

Jos University Press Ltd.,  
No. 15, Murtala Mohammed Way,  
Jos Plateau State, Nigeria.

**COVER DESIGN:**

Saviour Bassey  
Phone: 08068160241  
E-mail: savior4real75@yahoo.com

## **A Marxist Appraisal of Dictatorship and Hero Worship in Hisham Matar's *In the Country of Men* (2006)**

Leah Iliya Jalo and Verla Hilda

### **Abstract**

*The paper examines Hisham Matar's In the Country of Men (2006) within the ambit of the Marxist theory for the purpose of censoring the excessive use of power in the Libyan State during the Qaddafi regime and the fate of the populace in the face of dictatorship, torture, victimization and outright execution as suggested by the writer. Matar's presentation dwells on the predicament of the Libyans which is seen in the novel marked by disillusionment and frustration. Marxists crave for a just socio-political order in the system of governance for which they abhor leadership crisis, military misadventure, and state oppression of the people which manifest in the nation's socio-cultural and political life. They also pervade their works with issues of corruption and poverty as well as other socio-economic issues. Marxism in a broad sense engages in a radical critique of Western capitalism and the ruthless inequalities in which human societies are categorized based on their relationship with the mode of production. The study contends that Marxism is appropriate for interpreting various dimensions of dictatorship, hero worship, sycophancy, mediocrity and corruption as captured in Matar's In the Country of Men (2006). The study consequently advocates an end to self-perpetuation in office and the abuse of human rights. It calls for an improvement in the practice of democracy in African countries.*

**Keywords:** Africa, Democracy, Libya, Power, Dictatorship.

### **Introduction**

Over the years, literary scholars have dwelt on the themes of politics, military rule and misrule in their literary output spanning through the genres of literature. Edwin Onwuka opines that: "literature is a veritable sit of representation where societal forces and conflicts are explored so that art becomes a moral prism through which social issues could be viewed to appreciate their diverse ideological colourations" (149). African writers have continually tapped from the socio-political events in the continent for the production of their literary works. This is mainly because the political and historical experiences in the continent have to a very large extent, provided impetus for the imaginative output. They have critiqued the various forms of dictatorship, betrayal and oppression prevalent in the continent; Adebayo Williams aptly captures this when he writes that "African writers have resisted oppression and injustice on the continent with great force and courage. Literature is fundamentally incompatible with tyranny...while the dictator seeks a total domination of men and society; literature seeks their total liberation" (350). This serves as the impetus for the relentless engagement of writers in enumerating the fate of the state. Using Hisham Matar's *In the Country of Men* as focus, this paper examines the representation of excessive use of power in the Libyan State. The paper adopts the Marxist Literary Theory with its purposive sampling technique for its

analysis. This is necessitated by the need to bring to light the dynamics of military dictatorship which has been a recurring motif in African Literature. Matar offers us a picture of the predicament of the populace which is marked by disillusionment and frustration. His fiction also reveals a contradiction between the social reality mediated by childhood innocence and the transcendental moral values which that innocence embodies.

The novel recounts the terrible events in Tripoli in 1979 as Suleiman sees them: kidnappings, surveillance by the military police, show trials, public executions of “traitors” working against the revolutionary committee, the crushing of students protest, families fleeing into exile in Egypt (guardian.com). It advocates for democracy and can be likened to Soyinka's *King Baabu* which indicts tyranny, despotism and other modes of undemocratic forms of governance. *In The Country of Men* (2006) emphasizes the need to rediscover the Libyan identity that suffered greatly under the Pan-Arab nationalism policy imposed by the Qaddafi regime. To buttress this, some of the Arab writers present their personal, intimate, and in some cases autobiographical experiences of the kind of life they were living in Libya.

Annie Gagliaano writes that the novel, *In the Country of Men*, is a satire on despotism and the abuse of power in a lasting testament to the horror inflicted on Libya by the leader (31). It equally exposes lack of responsible leadership as the bane of politics in Black Africa. The portraiture of Qaddafi depicts him as a dictator and inept leader who relies on brute force, compulsion and violence to consolidate his leadership and power over the citizenry. The novel is a socio-political treatise through which Matar projects the themes of corruption, exploitation and oppression. The regime of Qaddafi which overthrew King Idris proved to be a huge albatross on the collective psyche of the Libyan people. The regime was characterized by intolerance to opposition, human rights abuses, assassination, usurpation of political power and poverty to mention but a few.

Matar's *In the Country of Men* (2006) is set in Tripoli, Libya during the reign of Muammar Qaddafi. The characters suffer extreme violence and ruthless transformation which leaves them disillusioned and battered. Life in the country is characterized by lack of freedom of movement and expression as well as battery, victimization and sometimes death. Matar examines the despair, disillusionment and hopelessness in the lives of the Libyans and suggests that bonding, rediscovery and recognition of a common interest by the masses will go a long way in alleviating the people's misery. The novel thus exposes the humanitarian conditions of the people and their experiences. In addition to this, it also reveals the under-running effects of corruption on the economic, social, political and family life of the people.

The dictatorial tendencies highlighted in the novel can be likened to what obtains in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Here, Chris, the military leader engages in excessive use of absolute power which eventually ruins the country and

the leader. According to Onwuka, “The military in *Anthills of the Savannah* exhibit despotic abuse of power bereft of the common good and this is synonymous with military dictatorship” (152). He goes further to note that the military as a metaphor of trepidation through intimidation is clearly manifest in the text (154). This is also the crux of Soyinka's *A Play of Giants*, *The Beatification of Area Boy*, and *King Baabu*. Olusegun Adekoya discusses African leaders' obsession with power in *A Play of Giants* he describes it as a seductive drive that breeds moral corruption, dictatorship, delusions, economic distortions and ruination (1). The play caricatures four despots revealing a hidden struggle for power discernable in the tyrants' long conversation.

Matar has one overwhelming subject that runs through both this novel and his next novel, *Anatomy of a Disappearance*; it is the subject of the lost father. In this novel too, he expresses absence and longing and at the end of the novel we come to realize that it is not only the father who has disappeared; but the son too suffers a “life lost in loss”. Libyan writers such as Ibrahim al-Koni: *The Seven Veils of Seth* and *Dust Gold*; Ahmed Fagih: *Homeless Rats*; and Khaled Mattawa: *Tocqueville*; among others have all contributed to the development of Libyan Literature. This notwithstanding, very few Libyan authors have received much attention outside the Arab world due to the repressed policy of the Qaddafi regime. Despite these challenges, they have underscored the social inequality, political persecution and lack of freedom of speech in Libya. These writers have reflected themes of daily struggle to secure livelihood, the desire to break taboos and old traditions of society, and an urge to rediscover and redefine the Libyan identity. It is pertinent at this point to briefly peruse through the history of Libya so as to unravel the background of the novel.

### **Brief History of Libya during the reign of Muammar Qaddafi**

On September 1<sup>st</sup> 1969, 27 years old Qaddafi, a Libyan army captain led a successful military coup against King Idris 1 of Libya. The government was toppled in a bloodless coup and the monarchy was abolished. Consequently, Qaddafi ruled as an authoritarian dictator for 42 years before he was overthrown in 2011. His regime was known for corruption, military interference in Africa, and record of human rights abuses. Although many Libyan writers initially lauded the new government of Muammar Qaddafi, most of them later found it to be a mirage. Subsequently, writers were seen as threats to the regime, most of them were captured, imprisoned and tortured. Their style of writing gives much of Libyan literature, a sense of being veiled, wherein multiple layers must be parsed to understand their novels.

Qaddafi's intelligence agents travelled throughout Libya and around the world to intimidate and assassinate Libyans who opposed him. During his reign, most of the population lived in poverty as the disparity between the ruling family and the masses became even more apparent. Furthermore, in February 2011, unrest

spread through much of the Arab world, and by extension, massive political protest against the Qaddafi regime was sparked in Libya. This led to a civil war between revolutionaries and loyalist. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Libya's interim government announced that Qaddafi had died after being captured. The Libyan civil war brought global attention to Libya both politically and culturally. It also highlighted the paucity of western recognition and understanding of writers and poets from Libya, many of whom live in exile from their homeland.

### **Marxist Literary Theory**

Marxism is a concept presented by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their book, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). It embodies the authors' materialistic conception of history. According to Abrams, Marxist criticism, in its diverse forms, grounds its theory and practice on the economic and cultural theory of Karl Marx (1818-83) and his fellow-thinker Friedrich Engels (1820-95); it is founded on the following assumptions: Changes in the fundamental mode of material production effect changes in the class structure of a society, establishing in each era dominant and subordinate classes that engage in a struggle for economic, political and social advantage. Terry Eagleton writes that "Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies-the ideas, the values and the feelings by which men experiences the society at various times. And certain of those ideas, values and feelings are available to us only in literature" (12).

Marxist Theory according to Lois Tyson, proclaims that the struggle for economic power is the underlying motivation for all socio-political activities. Furthermore, Marxism envisions that this stratification would eventually result in the revolution in which the proletariat will oppose the excesses of the bourgeoisie as evident in the text under study. A Marxist approach therefore, seeks to expose the dominant class, to demonstrate how the bourgeoisie's ideology controls and oppresses the working class, and to highlight those elements of society affected by such oppression (Bressler 173). This is with a view to spur the masses to action, social change and to a revolution.

Matar's presentation of life in Libya endorses Peter Singer's opinion that Marx theory of history is a vision of human beings in a state of alienation. Human beings, he insists, cannot be free if they are subject to forces that determine their thoughts, their ideas, and their very nature as human beings (46). It is the Marxists' desire that the people are liberated from these limitations so they can have some form of control over their lives.

This theory has what can be summarized as 'a globalizing imperative, a political agenda, and often a polemical style (Goring et al. 184). It also has some sort of commitment to a historical perspective. (185). Similarly, Marxist criticism, Fredric Jameson assertions 'subsumes' all the other 'interpretative modes' by

retaining their positive findings within a 'political interpretation' of literary text – which stands as the 'final' or 'absolute' horizon of all reading and all interpretation (qtd. in Abrahams 209). Eagleton concurs with this view when he states that the task of Marxist criticism is to provide a materialist explanation of the bases of literary value (162) and that once men are liberated from material scarcity; they will live in the play of their mutual significations, and move into the ceaseless excess of freedom.

It is from this perspective that the paper adopts this theory as its analytical framework. In this context, literature is examined as a product of the economic and ideological determinant specific to an era. In this context, Marxist Literary Theory involves applying Marx ideas to literature, both in terms of the interpretation and evaluation of existing literary works. The active and interventionist nature of Marxism has recurrently led to attempts to use literature for social and political ends. The Marxists crave for a just socio-political order in the system of governance and they also pervade their works with issues of corruption and poverty as well as other socio-economic issues.

Matar's indictment of the society is total. He paints a vivid picture of the masses that languish in poverty, squalor, and ignorance while the leaders fatten themselves on the country's riches. He also suggests that these ills are inimical to the progress of the nation. The paper examines the manner in which Matar focuses on the representation of class distinction and class conflict in the selected novel as well as the social and political elements that shape the conflict embedded in the society. Linked to this is the oppression of the populace and their concerted efforts towards overcoming oppression.

### **Profiling Dictatorship and Oppression in the Novel**

Dictatorship engenders an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Many of the characters in Matar's novel are victims of the excesses of the regime; this affects individuals, families and the country at large. Before the arrest of Ustath Rashid, members of the Revolutionary Committee had arrested a clothing factory owner who they accused of being a bourgeois and a traitor (32). Suleiman grew up to accept that no one is beyond their reach. Subsequently, the man is seen being tortured on television. After Rashid's arrest, rumours were being spread that he has been a traitor too. When Um Masod comments thus “that's the fate of all traitors”, Baba vehemently disagrees with her. Rather he states “that's a lie. A lie the authorities spread to justify the disappearance of the innocent...” “weeds like rumours need no help” (38-39). Rashid's arrest affects his immediate family physically and psychologically. A certain sadness entered Kareem's eyes the day his father is taken. Matar writes: “it wasn't the sadness of longing; it was the sadness of betrayal, the silent sadness that comes from being let down” (40).

Even at the family level, Matar reveals another level of tyranny. Najwa, Suleiman's mother is crushed by the authority of her father at the age of 14, when she is married off to a man more than twice her age after being seen holding hands with a boy in a coffee shop. The Libya which Matar projects in the novel is one where age gap is an important consideration in marriage. "A woman had to be young and strong enough to bear children and serve the man well into his old age, so that her locks would remain black as coal when his head was bald as the moon" (151). Uncle Khaled's report is used against Mama and this singular act earns her not just thirty days in strict confinement, but also a hurried arranged marriage to Faraj (Baba). As a result of this, her education is also brought to a halt.

Marxist Literary theorists emphasize on oppression and its overall effect on the populace. In the novel being studied, Matar reveals the denial of the people's fundamental right by the regime through the machinery that endorses the compulsory recruitment of all young males from the age of fifteen into the Libyan military. It is also from this that the young Suleiman flees when his parents arrange his exit from Libya to Egypt. Baba represents the voice of opposition. He claims his involvement is necessary because "we must inspire the young" (80). The committee members that torture and arrest the people are the eyes of the regime. They are synonymous with Orwell's portrayal of Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Ubiquitous and domineering. This same committee implements the agenda of the regime. They are thus responsible for Ustath Rashid "vanishing like a grain of salt in water" (95) as Auntie Salma puts it.

Mama laments about Rashid's believe in the revolt as spearheaded by Baba. After his arrest, she tells Baba: "God knows if Rashid will make it, the poor man, stupid enough to believe in your dreams" (96). Rashid is shown on live television being questioned. Tears gathered up in his eyes, he looked thirsty; his Adam's apple rose and fell as he tried to answer the questions of the interrogator. According to the regime, the live broadcast of these interrogations is meant to "*show the nation, the faces of the traitors*" (115) (emphasis added). Despite the torture, Rashid refuses to accept that Baba was in the meeting where a group conspired against the government. He does not betray Baba and by so doing reveals the essence of bonding among the proletariats.

During Rashid's execution on live television, a member of the revolutionary committee sums up the ideals of the regime and the manner in which it represses the masses thus:

Dark elements...Traitors who despise and envy our revolution have been detected. We, the Revolutionary Committee, the Guardians of the Revolution have captured all members of this misguided group and those who harboured and funded them and will punish them severely... The enemy has been



miserably defeated. Long live the Guide, long live the September Revolution. (181)

Rashid pleads for mercy, he cries, yet his life is not spared. On the contrary, the crowd keeps shouting 'hang the traitor' (187). At every rung of the ladder he was made to climb, he begged, all to no avail. So, Rashid dies by hanging on live television. It is through the public execution of Rashid in a televised ritual of cruel power and mob mania that Matar relays the brutality of the regime. This compels Moosa to cry and when Mama sympathized with Rashid's wife, Salma, Moosa prays that God should compensate her and grant her patience. The death of Rashid leaves a lasting impression on Suleiman that survived well into his adulthood. He has no illusions that Baba, Mama or himself are immune from being burned by the madness that overtook the National Basketball Stadium as anybody could be a victim. Matar's attention to details gives the novel an air of verisimilitude. It is in this perspective that the scene of the hanging is absurd, painful and terrifying.

Only a few people are able to stand up against the regime. When the students stage a demonstration against the extremes of the regime, a lot of people feel there is no need but Moosa asserts that "they had a duty to call injustice by its name" (52). Through his portrayal of Moosa, Matar enunciates the universal desire for freedom and liberty. Moosa's father, Judge Yaseem who is from Egypt had been invited by King Idris to work in the Libyan Judiciary; though not Libyan, Moosa nonetheless passionately shares the predicament of Libyans under Qaddafi's regime and joins hands with Baba to plan a revolt. He believes that Baba is an honourable man who wants a better Libya for all.

Moosa criticizes the actions of the regime when he raises an alarm in a state of agitation: "Tripoli is being turned upside down. They took everyone, gathering them like sheep" (180). The exaggeration here is used to emphasize the magnitude of the arrest. When he has the chance to leave Libya, Moosa chose to remain as he says: "this is my country. I've lived here half of my life" (209). Mama quickly reminds him that: "the only reason you're still alive is because it's not your country" (209). It is ironical that Libyans cannot live freely at home.

Baba is also arrested but the timely intervention of Ustath Jafer helps to secure his release. When Baba comes home, he is badly injured and battered. Mama keeps him confined to the room and removes the mirrors to stop him from seeing what he looks like. This is similar to the ploy of the regime to keep the people in the dark and deny them access to the truth. Suleiman's inability to see Baba long after his return compels him to ask a series of questions. "Is Baba dead? Has he begun to rot, is that why your room stinks?" (201). When he is allowed to go in, Suleiman gets a first-hand experience of the height of brutality Baba has been through. This he expresses thus: "The stink of death was unbearable" (201). Baba's back is crisscrossed in dark glistening lines, some oozing blood. It is a horrible sight to behold. Moosa unlike Mama does not believe in hiding Baba's injuries from him. He takes off the sheets on the mirror because Baba did what he had to do, "let him see for himself what he really

is” (208).

Matar movingly charts the ways in which love endures in situations of great repression, but also shows how repression threatens everything, even love, putting relationships under a strain that can be unendurable. The boys with whom Suleiman interacts are sons of government officials or of dissidents. Their parents are connected in a web of arrests, favours, confessions and betrayals. And as the neighbourhood games grow darker, Suleiman learns about betrayal, violence and shame.

The cruelty of the regime is also evident in the manner in which children are exploited to their detriment and to the advantage of the regime. For instance, when Sheriff is sent from the committee to keep an eye on Faraj, he lies to Suleiman that he is a friend of his father's. He also tries to get Suleiman to give him a list of his father's friends and associates. By exploring childhood innocence, Sheriff gets some information extorted out of the young lad. Sheriff does not at any point give up on his assignment. He endures several hours in the white car under the heat of the sun, proving his commitment and loyalty to a cause. The phone lines of the citizens are also intercepted such that an adult who eavesdrops on Suleiman and Naseer's conversation cajoles Suleiman into providing Naseer's house address. Privy to this information, Naseer is subsequently arrested. Naseer's father is distraught about his son's arrest and laments: “they took my boy. I looked everywhere, Nasser has vanished. This is a dangerous path. These people have no mercy” (150-1). His anxiety is heightened by the fact that Naseer is his only son whom he refers to as “the only shelter in the world” (151). From the foregoing, the study affirms that the dread of dictatorship in the society is palpable.

### **Issues of Hero Worship and Betrayal**

During the reign of the Qaddafi regime, the people were expected to be totally submissive and applaud the torturing leading figures. In addition to this, the display of the presidential portrait was mandatory in every home and public space. This accounts for why Moosa brought a large framed enlargement of the Colonel to Baba's house prior to the thorough search by the committee members. Matar emphasizes the evil associated with hero worship as he writes: “the brass plaque on the portrait reads: “Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi; The Guide of the Libyan Popular Revolution. The Benefactor; the Father of the Nation, the Guide” (90). The leader, whom the reader does not have an encounter with; remains a prevailing figure in the lives of the characters, both young and old alike; The Guide-Qaddafi who is godlike, remains unseen but ever present throughout this haunting debut of growing up in a world of uncertainty. (guardian.com.); at another instance, The Guide is described in these words:

The consummate revolutionary leader of the world revolution for a new civilization, Muammar el Qaddafi, the Leader of the Libyan people, the symbol of hope and freedom, the son of the desert.....the savoir of the nation,

our Great Teacher and Benefactor, the Father of the Great el-Fateh of September revolution..... This purest of hearts, the emblem of single-mindedness, the symbol of courage, dedication and self-determination, our consummate Leader and Benefactor, who teaches us abundantly by example has prevailed. (183-184)

The people engage in sycophancy and hero worship. They become elements in the hands of the government which does not serve them but desires to be served. That is why they chant, “with our blood! With our soul! We'll defend our Guide!” (184).

Mama does not share Baba's believe in setting up a revolt. She believes the best alternative is to leave the country. She fears that Baba and his team are not strong enough to oppose the regime – their only weapon “writing pamphlets criticizing the regime” (95) is not in any way a guarantee for securing freedom. On the contrary, it gets them implicated, arrested, tortured and in the case of Rashid, even killed. In her opinion, the anti-government activists are 'foolish dreamers'. As a mother, she states that their actions will not attract her sympathy and support because she fears that it will put her son in danger. In her opinion, Baba is simply a family man and did not have the powers with which to face the volcano, a reference to Qaddafi's regime. Mama is worried that her husband's anti-state activities put him constantly under threat of discovery by the Guide's men. This is the other side of the dissident's life: the price paid by the family, for they live in fear at all times.

In the face of persecution and torture, loyalties are tested. This is illustrated in the relationship between Mama and Aunt Salma; initially they were like sisters. They would drink tea and talk endlessly, hunch over into whispers, occasionally clap their hands and burst out laughing. Nevertheless, the moment Rashid is arrested; Mama severs her friendship and even goes a step further to forbid Suleiman from seeing Aunt Salma's son, Kareem. On the contrary, Suleiman sympathized with Kareem to the extent that he wished his own father would also be arrested so they could be “united again by that mysterious bond that had up to that day felt like an advantage” (40). Similarly, Mama's family members disconnected their link to her and her family due to Baba's political involvement. People were sometimes arrested just by association; this means Mama and her family are isolated.

The manner in which Baba's case is handled suggests that there is little or no hope in the justice system of the country which is at the whim and caprice of the leader. Suleiman sums up Baba's dilemma thus: “he died two deaths, both existing simultaneously in my heart” (240). There is an element of intrigue in Baba's behaviour, till his death, he continued to delude himself that he could still change things, preferring death over slavery.

Subsequently, as Suleiman grows up, he recognizes in himself, a shameful pleasure in submitting to authority. The novel shows by implication how a political system of repression can wrap an individual's character. Suleiman often felt hollow due to the nature of life in Libya. He expresses himself thus:

Concern. I think that was what I craved. A warm and steady and unchangeable concern. In a time of blood and tears, in a Libya full of bruise-checked and urine-stained men, urgent with want and longing for relief, I was the ridiculous child craving concern. And although, I didn't think of it in these terms, my self-pity had soured into self-loathing. (168)

Suleiman feels a continuous nervous wave ripple around him and his family. His parent's decision to send him to Egypt was not something that appealed to him. Therefore, he goes only under compulsion. Mixed feelings continue to taunt him—the fear of not seeing his father again and being disconnected from his source and being. Libya subsequently grew distant in the background and began to mean little. He questions his allegiance to his country and comes to the conclusion that “Nationalism is as thin as a thread; perhaps that's why many feel it should be anxiously guarded” (231). The students who staged a demonstration in their attempt to fight for freedom are all behind bars now, they gave their lives for their country but the government betrayed their trust. The novel thus arouses in us a deep compassion for people who suffer from the wrath of evil, victimization, violence and ruthlessness.

Suleiman is exiled from home. He had to flee to another country (Egypt) so as to increase his chances of survival. Thus, he offers hope for the next generation. Despite his flight however he keeps receiving threats from the regime as they make concerted efforts to bring him back home and deny him of this 'supposed freedom'. The Libyan government orders that “all stray dogs who refuse to return will be hunted down” (231). The regime is portrayed as a metaphor of trepidation through intimidation.

## Conclusion

The paper observes that military rule impedes democratization and development in the country. In the Libyan state, military rule results in the collapse of the rule of law, economic mismanagement and threat of disunity. Matar's creation of 'The Guide', Muammar Gaddafi, manifests the oddities of absolute rule. He presents us with the iconic representations of military (mis) rule which is a crucial factor in understanding the causes of underdevelopment and instability in post-independent Africa. The military's inclination to deal ruthlessly with its perceived enemies is exemplified in the text with the treatment of Baba and Rashid.

Bressler's submission on Marxism sums up the Marxist theoretical explication of this paper and its significance on our selected text. He states that: “society shapes our consciousness and that social and economic conditions directly influence how and what we believe and value” (162). Marxism advances plans for changing the world so that opportunity and education is accessible for all people as this will spur them into action. This is vividly illustrated in the students' protest and Moosa's resolve to help the oppressed.

The paper has explored dictatorship and hero worship in Matar's *In the Country of Men* (2006). It revealed the negative impact of military presence in the

Libyan State. Dictatorship leads to outright arrogance and disregard for the people's freedom of expression. The excessive use of power consequently leads to a disregard for democratic ethos. On the whole, the novel condemns bad leadership, aggression and tyranny. Till date, Africa continues to grapple with the ills of undemocratic rule, abuse of human rights, disregard for due process, manipulation of constitution for sectarian purposes and self-perpetuation in office. This study suggests that there is a need to demystify and devalue military dictators so that the state can move on to an emerging democracy that repels repulsive despots and works towards a holistic re-democratization and de-militarization of the polity for the benefit of humanity. Despite the enormous challenges towards building an evolving and embracing democratic society which respects the rule of law and seeks to end nepotism; it is hoped that African writers and intellectuals will pave a path that will witness a democratic change in all aspects of society and a new wave of literature.

#### Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H and Harpham, G. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. Heinemann, 1987.
- Adekoya, Olusegun. "Psychopaths in Power. The Collapse of the African Dream in *A Play of Giants*". An Abstract.
- Al-Kon, Ibrahim. *Gold Dust*. American U of Cairo P, 2008.
- Al-Kon, Ibrahim. *The Seven Veils of Seth*. Garnet P, 2008.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. The U of Minnesota P, 1996.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology. A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*. Verso, 2006.
- Fagih, Ahmed. *Homeless Rats*. Quartet Books, 2011.
- Gagiano, Annie. "Ice-candy-man and *In the Country of Men*: The Politics of Cruelty and the Witnessing child". *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 39(2010): 25-39.
- Goring, Paul, Jeremy Hawthorn and Domhnall Mitchell. *Studying Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

- Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Matar, Hisham. *In the Country of Men*. The Dial P, 2007.
- Matar, Hisham. *The Anatomy of Disappearance*. Viking P, 2011.
- Mattawa, Khaled. "Tocqueville". *New Issues Poetry and Prose*, 2019.
- Onwuka, Edwin. "Exploring Power Dynamics of Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* in Focus". *Ikor Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. Vol 11, 2018: PP. 149-157.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Penguin, 2008.
- Singer, Peter. *Marx: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Soyinka, Wole. *A Play of Giants*. Methuen, 1984.
- Soyinka, Wole. *King Baabu*. Methuen, 2002.
- Soyinka, Wole. *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope*. Spectrum Books, 1995.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today*. Routledge, 2006.
- Williams, Adebayo 'Literature in the time of Tyranny: African Writers and the Crisis of Governance'. *Third World Quarterly*, 17(2), 1996: pp. 349-362.
- [www.the-guardian.com](http://www.the-guardian.com).
- [www.biography.com/people/muammar-al-qaddafi-39014](http://www.biography.com/people/muammar-al-qaddafi-39014). The Biography.com

**Leah Iliya Jalo** is the Head of Literature in English Unit, School of Basic and Remedial Studies, Gombe State University. She is also a PhD Student at University of Jos. Her research interests are gender studies and feminism. Email: [leahjalo@gmail.com](mailto:leahjalo@gmail.com)

**Verla Hilda** is the Head of English Language Unit, School of Basic and Remedial Studies, Gombe State University. She is currently a postgraduate student in the Department of English, Gombe State University. Her research interests are semantics and phonology. Email: [aishahilda@gmail.com](mailto:aishahilda@gmail.com).