

Political Commentary on Oppression in Selected Poems

By

Amporn Sa-ngiamwibool
Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University, Thailand

Abstract

Some notable poets throughout history have attempted to inspire change by using their craft to criticize the world at large and bring attention to the unfair features of society. This content analysis examined eight poems to verify this. The selected poems include Oodgeroo Noonuccal's "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," Seamus Heaney's "The Act of Union," David Diop's "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War" by Mazisi Kunene, Naomi Long's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" Wilfred Owen, Isobel Thrilling's "Children in Wartime," and Wilfred Owen's "Arms and the Boy." The assumption was supported by the results of content analysis. The "Aboriginal Charter of Rights" promotes more openness and fraternity between Aboriginals and other Australians on legal and anti-oppressive politics, while the "The Act of Union" displays British preeminence and encourages unity among Irish people. Poems like "Africa My Africa" and "Alabama Centennial" throw light on the battle of Africans against white domination, while "First Day after the War" celebrates the victory of the fight against protracted oppression. These poems all touch on the politics of racism and anti-slavery. As a conclusion, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" mourns the deaths of innocents in war, "Children in Wartime" shows how children's imaginations suffer during conflict, and "Arms and the Boy" shows how violence is inherent in human nature. It is clear that the poets with a commitment to social justice hope to inspire the next generation to take action after being inspired by their work.

Keywords: political commentary; oppression

1. Introduction

Art can inspire individuals to act in addition to appealing to their aesthetic senses and sensibilities, making it a form of soft power (Johnson, 2012; Opara, 2012). Hip hop (Gueye, 2013; Appert, 2018), music (Smith, 2009), and other genres have all seen artists from around the world utilize their platforms to speak their opinions on current events in an effort to promote positive social change (e.g., jazz, linguistics, poetry, and storytelling). You can choose from renowned artists from many genres of art (Langley, 2021).

Poets like Shakespeare, Dante, Voltaire, John Milton, Oscar Wilde, T.S. Eliot, Henry David Thoreau, Maya Angelou, Confucius, and Lao-tse, have utilized their work to critique society just as much as other artists have throughout history. Poets have long attempted to use their works to inspire social change by spotlighting injustices in the world and inviting readers to join them in addressing these issues. Deubel (2012) gives several examples, including the work of Sahrawi poets in southern Morocco, the Western Sahara, and Algerian refugee camps, to illustrate how this literary work is used as a discursive technique to critique modern urban culture, mobilize social capital, and lend authority to the political rhetoric of nationalist organizations.

Poets from every corner of the globe and every walk of life have used their linguistic skills as a soapbox to comment on global and personal issues. Scholars in the field of western

poetry have looked at Irish poetry and social violence (Hufstader, 2014), women and politics (Ross, 2015), American social change (Raines and Walker, 2008), reconciliation in Northern Ireland (Russell, 2003), and northern Irish writing after the troubles (Broom, 2005; Guissin-Stubbs, 2020; Magennis, 2021).

The history of social change in Bengal (Curley, 2008; Pati, 2011), the poetry of South Africans (Allan, 2019), the poetry of Black South Africans (Sole, 2016), and the diaspora (Wenske, 2021; Thorpe, 2022) are all important topics in poetry. Vijaya (2016) argues that Jayanta Mahapatra, a contemporary of A.K. Ramanujam, Nizzim Ezekeil, and R. Parthasarathy, is an important figure in contemporary Indo-Anglo poetry. Mahapatra frequently draws inspiration for his poetry from the world around him. His creative mind makes even the most ordinary things into poetic masterpieces. He offers observations on human interaction and broader social issues. He addresses urgent social, cultural, and political themes without compromising his own creativity. However, he places human survival ahead of a perfect society.

A similar analysis of Shakespeare's "A Fairy Song" was performed by Hrp et al. (2022). The fundamental objective of this study is to make sense of the oblique references and concealed societal commentary in "A Fairy Song." Following the concepts of structuralists like Strauss, Wellek, and Warren, this research followed a structuralist approach, Marxist and Lukacsian interpretations of literary works. The study used a phenomenological technique popularized by Husserl. Alliteration, hyperbole, simile, metaphor, and personification are just five of the figurative language methods employed to demonstrate a point about human nature in the poem "A Fairy Song." Readers can identify the underlying meanings of words that provide insight into our culture and society by using metaphor. Several political and social critiques, including those of injustice, intolerance, and exploitation, can be drawn from the use of figurative language.

Therefore, it is engaging to examine the poets' use of language proficiency as a medium of commentary on power politics, articulated through the numerous meanings given in their work, particularly in regards to oppression and related social issues and the challenges of accepted cultural norms and values.

There are five sections to this paper, each of which contributes to the overall goal of the research. The first section provides some context for the rest of the paper. The second section of this study presents a research framework and research questions based on a review of the relevant literature and the research gap. The analysis's research methodology is illustrated in Part 3. In Part 4, the findings of the investigation are presented. The final section of the study summarizes the findings, evaluates how they compare to those of earlier research, and provides examples of the study's implications, limitations, and recommendations for future study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Prior study on oppression in literature

Scholars (Faulkner, 2018; Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2020; Nelson, 2013) demonstrate that poets have been known to weigh in on contemporary political events by both critiquing and advocating for the political problems of the day. Major political concerns that have far-reaching effects on people are war, oppression, racism and discrimination, feminism, and human rights. Each topic is detailed below.

2.1.1 War

Research on anti-war poetry appears in multiple aspects: war reporting in civilian poetry, 1936–1945 (Galvin, 2017), genuine political expression in poetry (Hickman, 2015), satirical war poetry of Christian patriotism (Holst, 2018), war propaganda and poetry (Boi, 2021), cold war poetry (Brunner, 2004), the literary depiction of war from the Iliad to Iraq (McLoughlin, 2011), and comparative poetry from the World War (Norris, 2005; Stout, 2016; Knudsen, 2006; Bergonzi, 2007). Metres (2007) explains how war resistance poetry from the American home front during World War II served as an "important resource for social transformation," bringing attention to the moral ambiguities of war and its harmful impacts on society as a whole. Famous American writers Robert Lowell, William Stafford, and William Everson — all conscientious objectors who were detained for the entirety of World War II — had their experiences documented as well. As they came up with their own methods of protesting the war, these dudes turned to poetry as a way to express themselves beyond the realm of political dissent and to broaden the ethical and creative qualities of the suffering person.

2.1.2 Oppression

Poems that fight military oppression in Nigeria (Egya, 2012), oppression towards women (Nirwinastu, 2021), and anti-oppression in poetry are studied by a number of researchers (e.g., Denno, 2007; Horrell, 2013; Dill, 2013). Gould (2016) looks into how Islamic law was used to control non-Muslim inmates in Persian prison poetry (habsiyt). Aesthetic confinement was incorporated by Khqni of Shirvn (d. 1199) into Islamic law restrictions for non-Muslim nations (ahl al-zemma). By focusing on the intertextual references to non-Muslim legal conditions found in Khqni's Christian qasida, this work provides a fresh perspective on the politics of poetry in Persian culture (shorut). This shows how a Persian poetics of imprisonment turned into a critique of Islamic law within the country.

2.1.3 Racism and discrimination

Artistically, poets who bravely share their anguish in the face of bigotry and injustice have a better chance of success (e.g., Metres & Nowak, 2010; Widjayanti, 2019; Seputri et al., 2022). Bofelo (2008) compared the poetry renaissance of the 1990s to that of the 1960s and 1980s in South Africa, specifically to investigate the effect of Stephen Bantu Biko and the Black Consciousness movement on black poetry in that country (the so-called "Black Consciousness era").

2.1.4 Feminism

Feminism is part of social justice. Feminist values can be effectively communicated through poetry. Kinnahan (2005) and Castleo-Gómez (2016) Pryce (2014) investigates the work of three contemporary Northern Irish poets released during the late 1990s in order to demonstrate the problematic nature of tradition and its generational impact. Colette Bryce (1970), Leontia Flynn (1974), and Sinéad Morrissey (1972) all came out at the same time. They are part of a new generation of fearless female poets. According to the study, this tradition was tough for the flourishing female poet due to the dominance of ancestor-friends and the superior masculine perspective of the past. It mixes poetry studies with gender-related concerns. This demonstrates that current poets are not afraid to challenge tradition and influence.

2.1.5 Human rights

Inspiring poems delve deeper into human rights concerns. Previous poetry studies have addressed human rights issues such as poetry in the shadows of human rights (Bakara,

2016), poetry on rights (Nikolaidis, 2022), community battles in human rights (Ilesanmi, 2011), and human rights and poetry in a global context (Fhrighil & Karhio, 2022).

2.2 Research gap

This study featured five distinct elements that were based on the aforementioned preceding study. First, as the title suggests, the theme of this study is power, which may be used for both societal advancement and tyranny. Political oppression caused by government supremacy and exploitation is examined in numerous contexts, locales, and countries, including Australia, Britain, Ireland, America, South Africa, and Senegal, regardless of their political, social, cultural, and economic systems.

Second, these countries have a history of political oppression and persecution of the general population by government power, such as supremacy, law, racism, discrimination, and slavery, all of which have an effect on human rights.

Third, poets were inspired by past hardships to advocate for action, change, and government respect for human rights. Some poets may become involved in political and historical events or in the callout.

Fourth, all of the poems chosen express the poets' political concerns about political oppression. The poetry also deals with the darker aspects of human nature.

Finally, the poems provide general commentary on injustice and persecution. They also provide commentary on major political and societal issues such as racism, discrimination, suppression, oppression, patriotism, inequality, human rights, injustice, prejudice, the execution of power, superiority versus inferiority, sadness, freedom, slavery, the dark side of human nature, death, loss of life during war, the struggle of black and indigenous people, sorrow, warfare, innocence, death, bombing, aliens, colonialism, and its disastrous consequences. The poets also illustrate how disasters affect the following generation, the children, or the future of humanity in the long term.

As the prior research overlooked the aforementioned issues, this study therefore investigated the issues with the research framework and research questions as detailed in the next part.

2.3 Research framework and research questions

2.3.1 Research framework

The research framework for this study is illustrated graphically below.

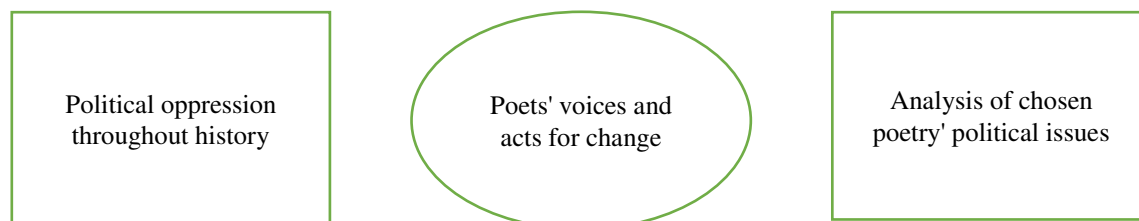


Figure 1 *Research framework of the study*

Figure 1 depicts the study's research framework. Political oppression in historical situations inspired poets who called for better changes and expected their readers to take action. The purpose of this study was to examine the poets' political concerns about important events in selected works.

2.3.2 Research questions

Following the framework of the study, three research questions (RQs) were determined:

What political issues about oppression are the poets expressing in the themes of their chosen poems? How are their concerns related to reality? What do they expect in return for voicing their concerns?

A research method was developed to answer the RQs, as shown in the following section.

3. Research method

3.1 Research design

A content analysis was used to conduct this research. The selected poems were subjected to document analysis. For this analysis, nine poems were chosen: "Aboriginal Charter of Rights" by Aboriginal Australian artist and writer Oodgeroo Noonuccal; "The Act of Union" by famous Irish poet and writer Seamus Heaney; "Africa My Africa" by promising French-born Senegalese poet, novelist, and essayist David Diop; "Alabama Centennial" by great American poet and writer Naomi Long; "First Day After the War" by South African academic and poet Mazisi Kun; "Anthem for Doomed Youth" by notable British poet Wilfred Owen; "Children in Wartime" by British poet, novelist, and activist Isobel Thrilling; and "Arms and the Boy" by legendary English poet and soldier Wilfred Owen.

3.2 Rationale for the selected poems

In this way, all of the poems chosen serve the study's aims. For one thing, they provide wide public commentary on war and persecution. They also provide commentary on major political and social issues such as racism, discrimination, suppression, oppression, inequality, human rights, injustice, prejudice, the execution of power, superiority versus inferiority, sadness, freedom, slavery, patriotism, the dark side of human nature, death, loss of life during war, the struggle of African Americans, sorrow, warfare, innocence, death, bombing, aliens, colonialism and its aftermath, and freedom from oppression. They also show how these major issues will affect the next generation, the children, or the future of humanity in the long run.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection procedure could be represented by Figure 2.

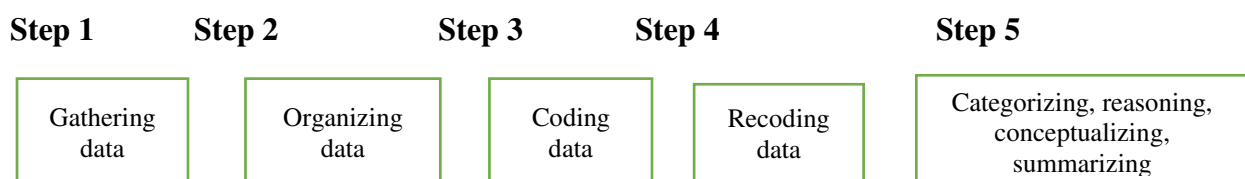


Figure 2 Data collection procedure

Figure 2 illustrates the data collection procedure. There are five steps: (1) gathering data; (2) organizing data; (3) coding data; (4) recoding data; and (5) categorizing, reasoning, conceptualizing, and summarizing the results of the study in response to each research question.

The information that the researchers gathered helped to understand the themes of each poem that was chosen. The following queries were taken into consideration when determining the themes: What does the poem mean in its entirety? What amazing event is currently occurring that is connected to the poet's worry stated in each poem? Who is the speaker? Who is speaking? Where is that coming from? What time does the poetry happen? What are the circumstances? What is the structure of the poem? What makes up the poem's parts, and how do they relate to one another? What keeps the poem cohesive? What are the logical divisions of the poem? What is the logic of the poem? Does it ask questions and then give answers, or does it start a debate? What comparisons are used to back up the claim? What are the poet's academic and creative qualifications? What essential metaphors and figurative language are employed? What are the single most important words in the poem? What is the tone of the poem? What literary techniques does the poem employ? What impact do they have on the poem's themes?

The aforementioned process was followed by each researcher. The analysis's findings were then contrasted. A consensus was reached after discussion of the inconsistencies.

4. Results of the study

In response to the RQs, the analysis of the selected poems revealed these three concerns: politics of law and anti-oppression, politics of racism and anti-slavery; and war and catastrophic impacts. Details of the results are presented below.

The politics of law and anti-oppression

Law can represent oppression, which can have terrible effects on all facets of oppression:

Institutional, societal, and personal. Two poems that were chosen for this examination show the effects. The poem "Aboriginal Charter of Rights" protests the mistreatment of Australia's indigenous people. In memory of the terrible difficulties endured by her people, the poet seeks to bring attention to the injustice and brutality that Aboriginal people have endured at the hands of the racist Australian government and the corrupt political system. The poem "Act of Union," which is titled after the historical event that brought Ireland and Great Britain together, also makes reference to it. This forced union is expected to have consequences for both parties. The suffering of Ireland's natural landscape is the main subject of this poem. The poet compares it to a marriage in which the woman makes significant sacrifices for the groom. However, the dominant male asserts his supremacy as though the partnership were based on a single, all-encompassing goal. The descriptions of each poem are given below. As mentioned in the poem's beginning, "Aboriginal Charter of Rights" discusses the civic, political, and social barriers that Aboriginal Australians face, as well as other significant themes.

"We want hope, not racialism,
Brotherhood, not ostracism,

Black advance, not white ascendance:
Make us equals, not dependents.
We need help, not exploitation,
We want freedom, not frustration;
Not control, but self-reliance,
Independence, not compliance,
Not rebuff, but education,
Self-respect, not resignation.
Free us from a mean subjection,
From a bureaucrat Protection.
Let's forget the old-time slavers”

The speaker emphasized the difficulties faced by Aboriginal Australians, which have an adverse impact on their care. They were treated as aliens by the locals. Through poetry, the poet exposes the violence and injustice that an Australian government that is biased against Aboriginal people and a corrupt political system practice. People become irate, disgruntled, and submissive when they are treated unfairly. Racism's unavoidable effects include discrimination, control, and exploitation in the social, political, religious, and civil domains. The poetry frequently refers to subjects like oppression, repression, inequality, human rights, injustice, and prejudice.

By urging an end to racism, racialism, ostracism, white supremacy, dependents, exploitation, frustration, control, compliance, rejection, and resignation, the poet highlighted the significance of these issues. Mean subjection, favors, bans, settlements and missions, overlordship, whip-hand wardship, defense, aversion, cold coercion, discrimination, segregation, color-consciousness, bigoted bias, prevention, condescension, restriction, crucifixion, poor relations, and the state of being fringe-dwellers, serfs on stations, and aliens are some of the practices that are practiced today.

he poet also demanded the establishment of equal rights for Aboriginal people and all Australians, in which white and black people are treated equally, as well as for hope, brotherhood, black advancement, equality, help, freedom, self-reliance, independence, education, self-respect, freedom from cruel subjection and bureaucrat protection, fellowship, encouragement, homes, love, grip of hand, opportunity, friendship, welcome, choice, status, human rights, pride, goodwill, and amity.

“Make us neighbours, not fringe-dwellers;
Make us mates, not poor relations,
Citizens, not serfs on stations.
Must we native Old Australians
In our own land rank as aliens?
Banish bans and conquer caste,
Then we'll win our own at last.”

The poem "Act of Union," like "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," relates to those who oppose the unification of Great Britain and Ireland. The poem's meaning is clear: The British rule the world. Ireland faces challenges that it must overcome, which is why it is struggling. Even if the two borders were to merge, only Britain would profit from this collaboration. Furthermore, no matter the political climate, the wounds caused by the massacre in Ireland will never heal.

“At me across the water. No treaty
I foresee will salve completely your tracked
And stretchmarked body, the big pain
That leaves you raw, like opened ground, again”
Others say that what's going on in Ireland is like the problems women face when they marry
powerful men.
“And I am still imperially
Male, leaving you with pain,
The rending process in the colony”

Major themes in this poem include the use of power, the greatness of Britain, the sadness of Ireland, and the contrast between the two countries.

“I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder
That you would neither cajole nor ignore.
Conquest is a lie. I grow older
Conceding your half-independent shore
Within whose borders now my legacy
Culminates inexorably”

As the next section will show, racism and discrimination are big problems in both Africa and the United States, where personal, social, and institutional oppression have been going on for a long time.

The politics of racism and anti-slavery

One of the most horrific types of oppression is slavery. Three poems have been chosen that express the suffering of the African community and urge all Africans to take up the fight for freedom and change. Readers can observe the challenges that the African continent suffered as a result of European colonialism in the poem "Africa My Africa." A call to action for Africans to experience freedom and change is also conveyed. The poet certainly loves and appreciates his native country. He tells his readers that in the past, fearless African warriors used to wander the continent and were celebrated with songs by their grandmothers along the riverbanks. He claims to have dark African blood coursing through his veins. He can therefore identify with his people in their moment of need. He emphasizes the whites' suffering and focuses on Africans as a target for their wickedness throughout the poem. He presents the information and claims to have faith that Africa will once again produce fruit and grow like a tree. African Americans' tenacity and determination to achieve civil rights are clearly on display in "Alabama Centennial." The poem captures their tenacity and courage in their struggle for a better future. The themes of the poem "First Day After the War"—liberation from oppression, the delights of independence, and loyalty to one's tribe—indicate how the Zulu people celebrated their freedom from colonial authority. The descriptions of each poem are given below.

The poem "Africa My Africa" conjures up feelings of sadness and grief for many readers. The speaker obviously has a great deal of concern for his country. The song opens with a nod to his home nation and informs listeners that brave warriors once roamed the continent, despite the fact that he had never been to Africa.

“Africa of proud warriors in ancestral Savannahs”

He clearly cares about his country because he brings up his ancestry. He claimed to be of Black African descent. This made him able to understand the misery of his subjects. He emphasizes how white people made Africans the targets of their cruelty and torment throughout the entire poem. He told a bitter truth, compared Africa to a forest, and foretold its eventual regeneration.

In "Africa My Africa," the difficulties of European colonization of Africa were explored. It is a challenge to Africans to usher in a new period of liberty and development. The freedom from patriotism, slavery, and the darker aspects of human nature are the main themes in the poem "Africa My Africa."

The poet expresses his thoughts about his native continent, Africa. He explains that the drop in longevity in the region was brought on by the invading army. Africa's status suffered as a result of their conquests. People in Africa are handled like a herd of cattle. They lost access to their land and way of life. Despite the fact that they were shielded from these crimes on a direct level, but he was emotionally tormented by the tribulations of his forebears. He is aware that he cannot go back in time and change what happened. However, he has big expectations for the future. He has high hopes for the liberation movement in Africa in the long run.

“That is your Africa springing up anew
Springing up patiently, obstinately
Whose fruit bit by bit acquires
The bitter taste of liberty”

The poem "Africa My Africa" is upbeat about the liberation movement in Africa's future. The two poems that follow describe the struggle for independence and its triumph.

Slavery is opposed in Naomi Long Madgett's poem "Alabama Centennial." This 1965 poem captures the persistence and resolve of African Americans in the fight for civil rights. They discuss their difficulties and aspirations for a better life. Thanks to Madgett's use of advanced literary devices and explanations of historical events, the poem became well-known throughout the world.

“They said, “Wait.” Well, I waited.
For a hundred years I waited”

The main idea of "Alabama Centennial" is the contrast between strength and vulnerability. The poem's main themes are the struggle of African Americans and white supremacy. This poem chronicles the extraordinary battle of African people who endured horrendous suffering at the hands of a white supremacist. At first, the power made them live wretched lives. Their plight worsens when they eventually make an effort to shed their African identity. In this poem, the narrator describes in graphic detail how white people treat them. She also recorded the locations where they had to defend their rights. Despite the years of persecution they have experienced, they must now band together and utter a cry that has never been heard in the world.

And other voices echoed the freedom words,
“Walk together, children, don't get weary,”
Whispered them, sang them, prayed them, and shouted them.
“Walk!”

The poet did a fantastic job of equating African Americans' problems with the battle. Matches in the past are automatically displayed. African Americans have endured unequal treatment for a very long time. They suffer from great poverty, torture, and prejudice as a result of historical subjugation and disregard. Finally, after many years, they listened to the voices urging them to stand up for their rights. As the poem develops, the poet demonstrates how they might connect. They mustered the courage to sing in support of freedom.

“March! And I’ll march until the last chain falls
Singing, “We shall overcome.”

Their idea, nevertheless, faces a number of obstacles. They persevered despite their obstacles. Until they do, they won't be able to successfully promote a message of equality and decency. In the final sentence, the speaker reiterates the same point: they are still engaged in battle. Despite the fact that time began a century ago.

“Not all the dogs and horses in Birmingham
Nor all the clubs and guns in Selma
Can turn this tide.
Not all the jails can hold these young black faces
From their destiny of manhood,
Of equality, of dignity,
Of the American Dream
A hundred years past due.
Now!”

"First Days after the War" was written in the 1970s by South African academic and poet Mazisi Kunene to commemorate the liberation of Zulu culture from decades of colonial rule. This is a key concept in the poem. When the people were finally set free, there was enormous joy. He greeted everyone with a handshake and commented on the multicultural nature of the audience. This displays his devotion to the nation's citizens and the length of time they were abused by the clan of Mazisi Kunene, a despotic Zulu leader.

The film "First Days after the War" serves as an occasion for many people to honor their past and their freedom from tyranny. Mazisi uses the plural form of "his people" while referring to them in the song, which is heard by Mazisi's followers. They made gradual, visible footsteps in the grass as they moved. He continued to tell Zulu that they had seen Liberty and had seen it, grinning as he revealed they had been there during the immediate post-war period. He discussed the populace's positive outlook in general. The poet has invited some friends to accompany him on his search for the rewards of freedom. They witnessed their elders go great distances to celebrate the day of liberation with the rest of the populace and members of all tribes.

“Calling people from all the circles of the earth.
We shook up the old man demanding a festival
We asked for all the first fruits of the season.
We held hands with a stranger
We shouted across the waterfalls
People came from all lands
It was the first day of peace.
We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon.”

Others are pessimistic about the struggle against oppression, despite some poets' being so. In light of war, the cruelest kind of oppression, and its effects on mankind, which are shown in the following section, they voice their concerns about the harshness of oppression.

War and its catastrophic impacts

The effects of war on humankind, nations, and civilizations are disastrous. Many of the poems are opposed to war. "Anthem for Doomed Youth" is a poem that serves as a eulogy for a generation that will pass away. The poet's sorrow and pain over wartime civilian losses are evident. The atrocities committed by soldiers are depicted. The poet bemoans the fact that no one sounds the bells to honor fallen soldiers who died on the battlefield. There are never any open rituals done in their honor. The poem "Children in Wartime" emphasizes how war wreaks havoc on a child's imagination, which Albert Einstein believed to be the true evidence of intellect. The poem also demonstrates how war obliterates children's hopes and creativity. The poem "Arms and the Boy" also emphasizes the violence that is ingrained in human nature.

In the poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth," the author laments the deaths at the Battle of the Somme or the Battle of Passchendaele during World War I and expresses desperation. The poem begins with the soldier's horrific death, illustrating the grotesqueness of battle, death, and suffering. The poet bemoans the fact that no one has rung the bell and expresses his pain by praying for the fallen warriors. Instead of bells and prayers, just the sound of a pistol could be heard. No remains were burned. No formal ceremony has ever been held to recognize their commitment to the nation's defense.

“What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—”

No one lit a commemorative candle. Flowers were only placed by ladies with fair skin, including young girls, mothers, close relatives, and close friends. When their relatives learned of their deaths, they were reduced to tears. Instead, the troops, who were equipped on both sides with rifles and other weapons, are outraged. Even though they were constantly battling, they were executed with extreme cruelty. They were executed with brutality. The poet even separated himself from God and religion due to the agony and misery endured by these humans.

“Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes”

Isobel Thrilling, an English poet, author, and peace activist, penned "Children in Wartime." This poem's message is anti-war since it illustrates how war may destroy a child's goals and dreams. As children, the subjects of "Children in Wartime" recall being under aerial bombardment. After the sirens have been silenced, the narrator's characters seek shelter in the darkness as they hear rumblings of an incoming storm. Despite the absence of storm sounds, they reached this conclusion. Following the lightning and thunder, precipitation was expected. The soldiers recognized that the explosion had blown a hole and that they could not appropriately convey their horror in the face of such broad destruction. The small boy

complained that the broken glass prohibited him from viewing the night sky. He appears to be in the midst of a global catastrophe. In his mind, the aerial assault had destroyed the heavens.

“Sirens ripped open
The warm silk of sleep;
We ricocheted to the shelter
Moated by streets
That ran with darkness.
People said it was a storm,
But flak
Had not the right sound
For rain;
Thunder left such huge craters
Of silence,
We knew this was no giant
Playing bowls”

The children are aware that the bombing has caused craters and that they probably shouldn't express their amazement at the severity of the destruction. The child observes that the window pane through which he used to gaze at the stars at night is broken, and it appears that his sky is also broken. His imaginary sky had been broken by falling bombs.

“And later,
When I saw the jaw of glass,
Where once had hung
My window spun with stars;
It seemed the sky
Lay broken on my floor”

The devastation of children's imaginations, as depicted in "Children in Wartime," may not be the most terrible effect of war, despite the fact that imagination is the true intelligence of all people. The following poem illustrates how war's cruelty infuses human nature.

"Arms and the Boy" is an anti-war poem that highlights conflict, childlike innocence, and mortality. In the poem "Arms and the Boy," the speaker is a little boy who is eager to test out his deadly weapon. Furthermore, it demonstrates how these terrible weapons destroy lives and communities wherever they are employed. The poet contrasts the fantasy world of make-believe with real reality to emphasize the underlying cruelty of human nature.

“Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade
How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood;
Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash”

Although the poem does not expressly address war, the description of the boy's weapon suggests that he will use it in combat. The poem illustrates the global devastation brought forth by these evil weapons. The poem depicts the brutality and human cost of war amid the naïveté of a young boy who has never experienced conflict. He was eager to employ those deadly weapons. The poem explores anger, rivalry, and hatred, as well as their development as a result of human nature. The fantastic and the real were separated by emotions. Sadly, this poem underscores the fact that humans are trained to feel this way as a

result of being subjected to antagonism, competition, and hatred as a result of war and other forms of tyranny, which instills these feelings into human nature.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

In retrospect, the purpose of this analysis was to extract political commentary on oppression from eight selected poems, including "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War," "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "Children in War," and "Arms and the Boy." Three research questions serve as the focal point for this analysis: What political concerns pertaining to oppression do the poets' selected poetry address? How do their worries relate to reality? What do people anticipate in exchange for expressing their concerns? The basis of this investigation was content analysis. The study highlighted three concerns: law and anti-oppression politics, racism and anti-slavery politics, and war and catastrophic consequences. From the analysis, three conclusions may be reached.

In the selected poems, the politics of law and anti-oppression are mostly concerned with Aboriginal Australians and Irish people. By addressing this scenario in "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," the poet asks for greater transparency and brotherhood between Aboriginals and other Australians. The speaker was fatigued by the harsh treatment of her people by the Australian government. By adopting a defensive stance and emphasizing government oppression, she demonstrates concern for her people. Her arguments are characterized by religious, political, and civic bias. Due to unfair treatment, they are furious, miserable, and compelled to work for poor pay. This motivates the speaker to fight official racism and seek refuge and autonomy. She is appalled by how these individuals are treated like foreigners in their own country. The poet addresses the lack of freedoms among Indigenous peoples. Similar to "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union" is a symbolic poem expressing resistance to the act. The poem illustrates British superiority. Ireland is afflicted with calamity. Even if the two borders merge into one, Britain may be the sole beneficiary. No political circumstance can mend Ireland's wounds. The poet compares Irish hardship to women in a dreadful, male-dominated marriage.

In addition, the poets' comments on racial and anti-slavery politics reveal their optimism, hope, and longing for freedom. "Africa My Africa" conveys the poet's profound affection for Africa. According to his account, the invaders halved the inhabitants' life expectancy. Their invasion eradicated Africa's distinctive culture. The Africans' land and lives were taken from them, and they were treated as beasts. Even though he was spared these tragedies, his forefathers' agony still haunts him. Even though he is aware that he cannot alter the past, he has optimism for the future. He is optimistic that Africa will eventually realize the rewards of freedom. The film "Alabama Centennial" draws light on the particular struggle of Africans, who faced great hardship at the hands of white tyranny. The poet clearly recounts their torment at the hands of the Whites. She also keeps note of the locations where they were obliged to fight for equality. Even though they have been oppressed for a very long time, they must now stand united to have the world hear their cries. The "First Day After the War" shows the Zulus' victory over long-standing oppression and their celebration of their tribal identity and long-awaited freedom.

The final three selected poems reveal the writers' pessimism and vehement resistance to war, the most destructive kind of oppression for individuals, communities, and societies.

"Anthem for Doomed Youth" is a eulogy for a lost age and a swan song for individuals who will not reach adulthood. The poet conveys her pain and sorrow at the wartime deaths of innocents. There are graphic depictions of soldiers' deaths. The poet laments in verse that no one rings bells over dead soldiers' bodies. There is never any public function held in their honor. The ruin of a child's imagination is the fundamental issue of "Children in Wartime," which is poetically expressed in the poem. The poem also demonstrates how children's hopes and aspirations are dashed during wartime. The most pessimistic prediction in "Arms and the Boy" is that all forms of tyranny, including war, will never cease since violence is intrinsic to human nature. As suggested by the poem's title, war and other forms of tyranny will persist indefinitely.

5.2 Discussion

This study supports prior research. As with other creative forms (Johnson, 2012; Opara, 2012), such as music (Smith, 2009; Skinner et al., 1994; Gueye, 2013; Appert, 2018), poetry can inspire action in its readers. In an effort to bring about positive social change, artists from all over the world have been utilizing their platforms to express their opinions and critique current events. This study's selected poems all serve the same aim. The poets in this study express their feelings about various forms of oppression, such as white authority, a greater government or country, racial discrimination, and war. The poets in this research, like other poets (e.g., Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Voltaire, John Milton, Henry David Thoreau, T.S. Eliot, and Maya Angelou), have used their poetry to criticize oppression in general, as have Sahrawi poets who have critiqued their sociopolitical systems through literary works (Deubel, 2012). This study revealed that poets from various countries (specifically the United States, Australia, Ireland, and South Africa) have critiqued the politics of law and racism in their poems to express their critiques of anti-oppression, anti-slavery, and anti-war in order to call for action against the current oppression in their countries and others.

Several studies (Hufstader, 2014; Russell, 2003; Magennis, 2021) come to the same conclusions as this one about the legal and political violence between Britain and Ireland. The examination of "The Act of Union" illustrates British dominance and Irish hardship as a result of the act. Poets employ their command of language to make sense of indirect references and concealed political commentary in order to achieve their goals. Poetically, in "The Act of Union," the poet equates Irish agony to women in a dreadful, male-dominated marriage. The poet connects the loss of creativity to aerial bombing in "Children in Wartime." In "Africa My Africa," the poet linked Africa to a forest and the continent's regeneration to freedom. All poems in this study rely on a phenomenological approach popularized by Husserl, as it is obvious that all selected poems, such as the poetry of Black South Africans, express the writers' worries about contemporary political situations (Allan, 2019; Sole, 2016; Faulkner, 2018; Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2020; Nelson, 2013). This study's primary political concerns include oppression, racism and discrimination, and war.

Regarding war, this analysis lends support to the following prior research: cold war (Brunner, 2004), war propaganda (Boi, 2021), war reporting (Galvin, 2017), politics and poetic expression (Hickman, 2015), satirical war of Christian patriotism (Holst, 2018), war from the Iliad to Iraq (McLoughlin, 2011), comparative poetry from World War I (Norris, 2005), and World War era culture (Stout, 2016; Knudsen, 2006; Bergonzi, 2007). Specifically, similar to the findings of Metres (2007), which emphasize the moral complexity of war and its bad repercussions on society, the present study emphasizes the moral complexity of war and its negative effects on individuals, societies, and nations, such as death

and devastation. Nonetheless, the findings of this study surpass those of the previous study. One of the chosen poems focuses on the survival of humanity in terms of soft power, which is genuine intelligence. "Children in Wartime" demonstrates how children's expectations, aspirations, and imaginations are crushed during wartime. The other "Arms and the Boy" demonstrates that violence is intrinsic to the human condition. The poem predicts that oppression will endure for all of human history.

Poetry is an indispensable tool for social change (i.e., freedom from oppression in this analysis). Similar to poetry of anti-oppression and liberation, such as resistance to military oppression in Nigeria (Egya, 2012), oppression against women (Nirwinastu, 2021), and anti-oppression (Dill, 2013), the selected poems in this study urge for societal transformation. The "Aboriginal Charter of Rights" asks for brotherhood and equal treatment between Aboriginals and other Australians. For instance, "The Act of Union" encourages fraternity between the United Kingdom and Ireland. Similar to the "Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "Alabama Centennial" advocates for equality and brotherhood between African Americans and other Americans. "Africa My Africa" demands the liberation of Africans from colonial rulers. Lastly, "First Days After the War" demonstrates the effectiveness of the anti-dictatorship movement.

Similar to a number of studies (e.g., Metres & Nowak, 2010; Widjayanti, 2019; Seputri et al., 2022) that depict the suffering in the face of racism and injustice to reflect the brutality of white oppressors and racists. This study's poetry (e.g., "Alabama Centennial," "First Days After the War," and "Africa My Africa") delivers the crucial message that white supremacy, injustice, humiliation, poverty, torture, and prejudice must not be tolerated. One should instead speak out against bigotry and prejudice. These poems eloquently describe how white people have mistreated and tortured Africans.

The findings of this study concur with those of previous research (Bakara, 2016; Nikolaidis, 2022; Ilesanmi, 2011; Fhrighil & Karhio, 2022), indicating that poets are inspired by human rights. The poets in this study examine the following human rights issues: freedom from discrimination ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); right to equality ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); right to life ("Anthem for Doomed Youth," "Children in Wartime," and "Arms and the Boy"); freedom from torture ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); freedom from slavery ("Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); right to liberty and security of person ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); right to be treated with humanity ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union," "Africa My Africa," "Alabama Centennial," "First Day After the War"); right to recognition before the law and right to equality before the law ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights," "The Act of Union"); minority rights ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights" and "Alabama Centennial"). All poets advocate for the obligations placed on states to respect, safeguard, and realize these rights, as well as the equality of all men regardless of color as a human right.

5.3 Implication of the study

This study's poetry depicts historical events that occurred in many worldwide contexts. They provide readers of all ages and races from all over the world with wisdom and worldviews. The cultures and worldviews of the poets are also presented to the readers, who develop their wisdom as they gain knowledge of global morality. When students read these

poems, they learn how to make sensible decisions and how the problems of the world are related to their own struggles and emotions. They are obliged to alter society due to oppression, its consequences, and other historical circumstances. In their imaginations, history comes to life when they combine fictitious depictions of historical events with their own personal experiences. The growing desire to make positive changes ultimately motivates them to take action. Young readers with a strong desire for good change are also proud of who they are and respectful of those of different cultures, races, and identities.

5.4 Limitations of the study

This analysis focused on the global politics of oppression that have had effects on individual, institutional, societal, national, and global levels at large, including the oppressions caused by instrumental power politics of law ("Aboriginal Charter of Rights" and "The Act of Union"), superiority by authority ("First Day After the War," "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "Children in Warfare," and "Arms and the Boy," and white supremacy. The politics of domestic and other types of oppression, such as gender discrimination and feminism, were ignored.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Inquiry

A future study should focus on the involvement of oppression in the politics of domestic power, as well as in other forms, such as gender oppression and feminism.

Reference

- Allan, K. S. (2019). Witness to everything: representations of precarity in selected works of four South African poets (Doctoral dissertation).
- Appert, C. M. (2018). In Hip Hop Time: Music, Memory, and Social Change in Urban Senegal. Oxford University Press.
- Bergonzi, B. (2007). Coming out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars by Janis P. Stout. *Modern Language Review*, 102(4), 1150-1151.
- Bakara, H. (2016). Poetry in the Shadow of Human Rights. *American Literary History*, 28(3), 512-541.
- Bofelo, M. W. (2008). The influences and representations of biko and black consciousness in poetry in apartheid and postapartheid South Africa/Azania. *Biko Lives! Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*, 191-212.
- Božić, N. (2021). The Poetry of the Great War and Propaganda (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zagreb. University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Department of English language and literature).
- Broom, S. (2005). *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Brunner, E. (2004). *Cold War Poetry*. University of Illinois Press.
- Castelao-Gómez, I. (2016). Looking back at Feminism and Poetry: An interview with Jan Montefiore. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(1), 93-105.
- Curley, D. L. (2008). Poetry and History: Bengali Maṅgal-kābya and Social Change in Precolonial Bengal.
- Denno, J. (2007). Oppression and Voice in Anglo-Saxon Riddle Poems. *CEA Critic*, 70(1), 35-47.

- Deubel, T. F. (2012). Poetics of diaspora: Sahrawi poets and postcolonial transformations of a trans-Saharan genre in northwest Africa. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 17(2), 295-314.
- Dill, C. (2013). "The safest place": Anti-oppression in Spoken Word Poetry (Doctoral dissertation, University of Saskatchewan).
- Egya, S. E. (2012). Historicity, power, dissidence: The third-generation poetry and military oppression in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 424-441. (15 citations)
- Faulkner, S. L. (2018). Editorial for special issue: Using poetry and poetic inquiry as political response for social justice. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 3(1), 1-6.
- Fhrighil, R. N., & Karhio, A. (2022). Human Rights and Poetry in a Global Context. *Law and Humanities*, 16(1), 3-7.
- Fitzpatrick, E., & Fitzpatrick, K. (Eds.). (2020). Poetry, method and education research: Doing critical, decolonising and political inquiry. Routledge.
- Galvin, R. (2017). *News of War: Civilian Poetry 1936-1945*. Oxford University Press.
- Gould, R. (2016). Wearing the Belt of Oppression: Khāqāni's Christian Qasida and the Prison Poetry of Medieval Shirvān. *Journal of persianate studies*, 9(1), 19-44.
- Gueye, M. (2013). Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y'en a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 6(3).
- Guissin-Stubbs, T. (2020). *The Modern Irish Sonnet*. Springer International Publishing.
- Hickman, B. (2015). *Crisis and the US Avant-Garde: Poetry and Real Politics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Holst, D. W. (2018). *From Patriotism's Christian Narrative to Ironic War Poetry*. Western Illinois University.
- Horrell, G. (2013). Poetry of oppression, resistance and liberation. In *Teaching Caribbean Poetry* (pp. 56-63). Routledge.
- Hrp, T. K., Chitra, B. P., & Hidayati, H. (2022). Social Commentary in a Fairy Song Poem by William Shakespeare: A Structuralism Study. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sastra Inggris*, 2(2), 108-116.
- Hufstader, J. (2014). *Tongue of water, teeth of stones: Northern Irish poetry and social violence*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Hunter, M. A., Pattillo, M., Robinson, Z. F., & Taylor, K. Y. (2016). Black placemaking: Celebration, play, and poetry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 33(7-8), 31-56.
- Johnson, K. (2012). Art Begetting Art, and Social Commentary, Too. *New York Times*, July, 6, C23.
- Kinnahan, L. A. (2005). *Lyric interventions: Feminism, experimental poetry, and contemporary discourse*. University of Iowa Press.
- Khoo, G. S., & Ash, E. (2021). Moved to justice: The effects of socially conscious films on social justice concerns. *Mass Communication and Society*, 24(1), 106-129.
- Knudsen, T. (2006). *Coming out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars*.
- Ilesanmi, S. O. (2011). Bearing witness: Poetry, prison discourse, and communal struggles in human rights education. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 453-480.
- Langley, A. (2021). Commentary: Paradox as Irony: Inspirations from Jazz, Linguistics,

- Mathematics, Poetry and Other Stories. In *Interdisciplinary Dialogues on Organizational Paradox: Investigating Social Structures and Human Expression, Part B*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Lehman, C. P. (2014). *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era: A Study of Social Commentary in Films and Television Programs, 1961-1973*. McFarland.
- Magennis, C. (2021). *Northern Irish writing after the Troubles: intimacies, affects, pleasures*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- McLoughlin, K. (2011). *Authoring war: The literary representation of war from the Iliad to Iraq*. Cambridge University Press.
- McPherson, J., & Mazza, N. (2014). Using arts activism and poetry to catalyze human rights engagement and reflection. *Social Work Education, 33*(7), 944-958.
- Metres, P. (2007). *Behind the Lines: War Resistance Poetry on the American Home Front since 1941*. University of Iowa Press.
- Metres, P., & Nowak, M. (2010). Poetry as Social Practice in the First Person Plural: A Dialogue on Documentary Poetics. *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies, 12*(1).
- Nelson, C. (2013). *Revolutionary memory: Recovering the poetry of the American Left*. Routledge.
- Nikolaidis, C. (2022). The poetry of rights. *Law and Humanities, 1-22*.
- Nirwinastu, D. G. (2021). Oppression towards Women as Depicted in Marge Piercy's Selected Poems. *Journal of Language and Literature, 21*(2), 453-463.
- Norris, M. (2005). Teaching world war I poetry: Comparatively. *College Literature, 136-153*.
- Oldman, R. M. (2010). The postcolonial "Knight's Tale": A social commentary on post-Norman Invasion England (Doctoral dissertation, Marshall University).
- Opara, R. S. (2012). Art as a media for social commentary: a case study of Igbo bongo musicians, south-eastern Nigeria. University of Louisville.
- Owen, A. J. (2016). *Judith: poetry and critical commentary* (Doctoral dissertation, Aberystwyth University).
- Pati, G. (2011). *Poetry and History: Bengali Maṅgal-kābya and Social Change in Precolonial Bengal*. By David L. Curley. New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2008.
- Pryce, A. R. (2014). *Selective traditions: feminism and the poetry of Colette Bryce, Leontia Flynn and Sinead Morrissey* (Doctoral dissertation, Oxford University, UK).
- Raines, D., & Walker, T. (2008). Poetry for the people: Country music and American social change. *Southern Quarterly, 45*(2), 44.
- Ross, S. C. (2015). *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Russell, R. R. (2003). Inscribing Cultural Corridors: Michael Longley's Contribution to Reconciliation in Northern Ireland. *Colby Quarterly, 39*(3), 7.
- Seputri, D. W., Fikzia, I., & Sujiwa, K. (2022). The Analysis of Racism toward African-American as seen in Selected Phillis Wheatley's Poems. *Rubikon: Journal of Transnational American Studies, 9*(2), 207-217.
- Smith, Y. W. (2009). Hippolytus' commentary "On the Song of Songs" in social and critical context. Texas Christian University.
- Sole, K. (2016). *The Endless Deferral of Value: 'Formal' vs 'Sociological' Criticism in Black*

South African Poetry. Wasafiri, 31(2), 28-36.

Stout, J. P. (2016). *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars*. University of Alabama Press.

Thorpe, A. (2022). Making use of water: Safia Elhillo's diasporic hydro-poetics. *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 1-17.

Vijaya, K. R. (2016). Poetry as social commentary: A study of selected poem of Jayanta Mahapatra. *Journal of English Language and Literature (JOELL)*, 3(4), 21-34.

Wenske, R. S. (2021). "Home is a place in time": Fractals and chronotopes in the poetry of Safia

Elhillo. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 57(4), 469-483.

Widjayanti, E. P. (2019). Building Humanity Values Through Maya Angelou's poems. In *Journal International Seminar on Languages, Literature, Arts, and Education (ISLLAE)* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 143-148).