

**Legislative Lawlessness, Intrigues and
Sustainability of Democratic Ideals in Nigeria:
A Paradigmatic Study of Emeka Nwabueze's *A
Parliament of Vultures* and Ubong Nda's *House
of Intrigues***

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Abstract

This paper is designed to critically examine the concepts of Legislative lawlessness and the sustainability of democratic ideals in Nigeria using Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* and Ubong Nda's *House of Intrigues* as cases in point. Laws are meant for the peaceful operation of the government which also enable the citizens have a sense of belonging in a country they call their own. Using the content analytical method where plays written by professionals in the academia are analysed, the paper finds that most lawmakers pursue personal goals and aggrandisements at the detriment of the masses through the institution and passage of obnoxious laws. Instead of serving as a wheel of progress for the development of the economy, these laws have retarded development and have often times brought shame and disgrace to the country in the international arena. The paper also observes that the dexterity with which these lawmakers pass these obnoxious laws add to the intrigues and bewilderment of the poor masses. It concludes that the relevant agencies put in place to checkmate this ugly trend such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Corrupt Practices Commission (CPC) should be proactive and truly self-directed in the real sense of the word. The paper recommends, among other things that playwrights are encouraged to bring their talents to bear on this problem and that attempts should be made to make politics unattractive by reducing the pay package of our legislatures and the allowances given to them which at the long run will restore the real reasons behind seeking elective positions which is to serve.

Keywords: Legislative, Lawlessness, Intrigues, Sustainability and Democratic Ideals

Introduction

The road to Nigerian nation state and democracy started after the amalgamation of Southern and northern protectorates in 1914. Olaniwun (2009:xvii) has it that:

The country known and called Nigeria came into being in 1897 as a result of an article in *The Times* of 8 January 1897 by Flora Shaw, pressing that the aggregate of all the towns and villages or the protectorate consisting of many ethnic nationalities should be called Nigeria.

From these earliest beginnings, the nation state has seen indirect rule, various constitutional reforms, parliamentary democracy, military regime and presidential democracy (Nwosu 2011:143). In all these, the enactment of laws has been part and parcel of it. Under the indirect rule system, laws were made that enabled the western colonialists to effectively collect their taxes through the warrant chief officers. However, evidences abound that some of the existing laws were circumvented by the local warrant chiefs in order to enrich themselves. When eventually Nigeria was granted independence by the colonial masters in 1960, there were series of constitutional conferences from where the first constitution evolved. According to Soludo:

From a legal-institutional perspective, the supreme institution of a country is the constitution, which is supplemented by the other enactments of the legislature and pronouncements of the courts.... as the supreme institution, the constitution in many cases prescribes the procedural aspects in terms of how law is promulgated and enforced and includes the functioning of the necessary legal and administrative institutions (2006:30).

In all the different systems of government practised in Nigeria since its inception therefore, different constitutions/laws have been put in place to support and make it function. As conceived by Ebaye (2004:157), “every nation has law system”. Therefore, in this present democratic dispensation, the system is not different.

Democracy is rooted in the principles of separation of power and the political theory of the separation of powers requires legislators to be different individuals from the members of the executive and the judiciary who have

different responsibilities altogether (<https://en.wikilinks.org/wiki/Lawmakers>). In any sovereign state, the act of making law remains important so as to create a society that is anchored on the rule of law. Law making therefore is a universal phenomenon that permeates all strata of governance be it that of the local, state or federal level. The role of the legislature in the democratization process of the Nigerian nation is vital because parliamentarians are direct representatives of the people. Thus, they are responsible to the people. Legislations, which seek to regulate the political, economic and social life of a state, are indispensable for the enthronement of the rule of law and democratic ideals. The functions of law are to create an ordered atmosphere in a polity, which enhance peaceful development of the state. However, because of the nature of democracy practised in Nigeria, lawmakers wield so much power to the extent that it has started intoxicating them. This intoxication manifests in the acts of lawlessness exhibited in law making process. Evidences abound from national dailies as to the veracity of this assertion. Most times, transgressions in the form of physical assault, quarrelling and back biting have all become the order of the day. Embu (2013:505) writes that “the obvious implication is that money and power are of course the forces behind the unsavoury attitude of some of the politicians and officers. The painful thing about the process is that the civil society loses”. Not too long ago in Ekiti State, there was once again impunity, subversion of the democratic order and brazen illegality because of the impasse between the governor, Ayodele Fayose and some members of the State House of Assembly. Even in Ogun State where eleven (11) Ogun lawmakers pass #106bn Budget out of the twenty-six (26) in 2011 resonate an act of legislative lawlessness. *The Vanguard* of March 1, 2011 further reports that though the house was closed down on the order of the immediate past President, Goodluck Jonathan to avoid break down of law and order, but the lawmakers gained access to the assembly complex under heavy security and passed the #106 Billion Appropriation Bill for the year 2011. Investigations show that Lawmakers in Nigeria earn around 32 Million Naira annually more than British Lawmakers. While the lawmakers earn so much, regular Nigerians survive on the 18,000 naira monthly minimum wage (The Garki Gazette 2015). This indeed has implications on the development of democracy in Nigerians. This paper is therefore preoccupied with the onerous task of interrogating the problems and implications of legislative lawlessness and how it affects Nigerian nascent democracy and the provision of democratic dividends using two contemporary plays as cases in point. These plays include Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* and Ubong Nda’s *House of Intrigues*.

Theoretical Framework

Theories and practice complement each other, and the practice of theatre is rooted in theories. These theories are such that help explain the foundations of some of the basic concepts used in theatre practice and theatrical productions. There is therefore no gain saying the fact that, the viability and sustenance of theatre practice, especially in the context of play text analysis, is anchored on the understanding of, and practical application of these theories. However, it has to be stated that each of these theories have varying degrees of complexity and challenges for the director. For the purposes of this paper, it is going to be anchored on psychoanalytic and materialistic theories. Psychoanalytic theory is a theory that is associated with the way that the human psyches are being formulated and it is synonymous with Sigmund Freud. Basically, the theory postulates that:

the human psyche is constructed; it is segmented and it is gendered. These also manifests in oral, anal, genital, pre-oedipal and oedipal. It argues that human beings are not so much born as made and believes so much in the gendered psychic development whereby males and females are allowed to develop differently.... In other words, for this theory to be fully grasped, it suggests a particular understanding of human relations with the outside world (Mark 1997:55).

From the explanation above, this theory is related to the topic in question because psychoanalytic theory deals with art and literature in many ways. People study or read and analyse dramatic text for so many reasons depending on their intentions and desire. One of such desires may be to have an insight into the particular psyche of the author or character in order to understand them well. Another such desire may be to analyse the text with a view to understanding the entire text with particular reference to the theme(s). According to Mark (1997:64):

As a matter of fact, any drama text, theatre, playwright or dramatic character is open to and susceptible to psychoanalytic analysis, and in the realm of character, drama has yielded particularly rich material for psychoanalysis. Therefore, both theatre and psychoanalysis believe that human beings are neither monolithic nor transparent.

This psychoanalytic theory, in the context of its usage here, entails a thorough and critical analyses of the selected texts with a view to not only assessing their social relevance in terms of understanding law making and the acts of lawlessness in the law making process but also apprise the inner workings of the legislators and what motivates them into doing what they do.

On the other hand, materialistic theory, as the name implies deals with how to understand the elaborate relations between language, literature and art on the one hand and society, history and the material world on the other. It is a system where people are bought to identify with the roles capitalism needs them to play. In the words of Raymond Williams as quoted by Mark (1997:104-105).:

These forces are the dominant, the residual and the emergent. The dominant are those hegemonic forces (of capitalism in our world) which are most strong at any moment in history; the residual are those once strong forces associated with the past which are now weakened yet still capable of influence; the emergent are forces in ascendance which have not yet come into full force. In any era, the dominant forces exert the most influence. The residual and emergent forces, however, can also have effects. A work of literature can combine elements of all three forces thereby rendering complex and even relatively autonomous its relations with the socioeconomic order.

Materialistic theory permeates every aspect of our lives, especially as it concerns elective representatives of the people. These capitalistic and materialistic tendencies are found in most of the performances mounted on the Nigerian stage, especially the bourgeois theatre which focuses all its attention on the hero, thereby aligning itself with the patrician cause. Explicitly, most of these plays deal with the class struggle that exist in the society where the rich are getting richer while the poor are perpetually get poorer. Materialistic theory has continually posed a lot of problems in the society and has contributed negatively to the perpetual subjugation of the poor in the world. The characters in the two plays are replete with materialistic tendencies. Indeed, their act of lawlessness is hinged on the desire to acquire wealth at all cost. It is often said that human beings are insatiable and have the tendency to acquire landed and material properties even when it is obvious they don't need some of them.

They are ready to kill, maim and destroy in order to achieve this feat. All these can be gleaned from the two plays under investigation.

Lawlessness and the Nigerian Nation/Legislature

It is evident in Nigeria that lawlessness is present in the affairs of the legislature. Given the criminal nature of Nigerian legislators, (as is evident in their acts which will be adumbrated further in the course of this paper) one cannot disregard the possibility that Nigerian legislators who ‘*make, amend or repeal laws for a nation or unit of a nation*’ can change illegal laws and make them legal on some levels for their own benefit. After all, the constitution states that the legislature “*shall have the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation...*” (See Section 4(2) of the legislative powers). Using the law as a shield, the legislature can pass laws, amend laws and repeal laws to fulfil their selfish intent. Even in the passing of the budget, their importance cannot be underestimated. As a result of its power over the pulse, the Legislature determines what its own budget should be in a fiscal year. It determines its allowances while leaving the salary portion to the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC). The former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Mallam Sanusi Lamido, accused the National Assembly of spending 25% of the recurrent expenditure of the nation (Eke, 2012, p. 25). This is pure illegality. Though the National Assembly is an independent arm of government but should it determine its size of the budget? Determines its own allowances? Thereby consuming 25% of the resources of the Nation? (Sagay, 2010 and Brown, 2008 and Saraki, 2014). It currently allocates N150billion per annum to itself as against N 50billion in 1999.

A 2010 survey carried out by the *Business Day Newspaper* found that the Nigerian legislature had gulped a whopping 684.6billion in eleven years of Nigeria’s democratic experience. According to the survey, a little of more than half of that fund, being 361, 986, 319. 482 were drawn in three years between May 2007 and May 2010. The survey went further to say that: “The National assembly during the first democratic dispensation from May 1999 to May 2003 got N118, 680,869,649 from the national budget. The second term running from 2003-2007 saw the federal legislators spending N203, 886,047,401.” (*Business Day* August 16th 2010). Inexplicably, the cost of running the legislature shot up by a spiralling 75% during the Yar’adua/Goodluck administration from 2007-2010. While the recurrent vote of each member of the House of Representatives which was N3million in 1999 has jumped to N27.5million per quarter as at 2010. With corrupt acts like this in motion, there is bound to be

discrepancy and friction between different parties as it affects the budget thereby leading to “*disorder and confusion*”. Speculatively speaking, one can ascertain without an iota of doubt that the presence of disintegrating ethics in legislature will lead to lawlessness. It is the opinion of these writers that when one distorts the law, it will eventually lose its aura of influence and security. Making matters worse, the principle of Checks and Balances, which is created specifically to guard against the aforementioned, is not operational. Corruption in Nigeria is synonymous with the term “government”. Thus, no one is held accountable as all are involved in corrupt practices. The observation of Ade Ajayi as quoted by Ejembi (1986:78) has it to the effect that:

Our political culture was yet to break out of the colonial framework which revolved around the idea that the aim of government was to exploit the people for the benefit of those in government is quite correct. But we cannot afford to remain and operate within that framework any much longer. Colonial administrative framework and democratic politics are strange bed fellows.

Even in times where these legislators are brought to meet the Law, one cannot be assured that they will be held accountable before the law as is the case in Dimeji Bankole and the EFCC. Dimeji Bankole (a former speaker of the House of Representatives) who was arrested with a 16-count charge against him over the alleged 894-million-naira fraud case was discharged and acquitted on the grounds that the EFCC did not prove their case enough. “The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had charged the former speaker with using fake companies to defraud the Federal Government of the said sum” (*Nigerian Tribune 2004*). Similar incidents occurred in the case of Hon. Mrs. Olubunmi Etteh involving a scam of 628 million naira and to the shock of the Nigerian society; she was cleared by the House and was not brought to justice! Recently we witnessed another corruption saga involving Farouk Lawan and his 3million naira bribery scandal. In fact, it was rumoured that legislators of several categories were given the sums ranging from \$1m to \$10m to decamp to the PDP. The above illustration shows criminality in action. It is evident that Nigerian legislators actively carry out acts that constitute crimes in the eyes of the law.

Legislative Lawlessness contextualised in the Plays

A parliament of Vultures is a political play immersed in corruption and legislative lawlessness. It portrays a typical Nigerian situation where the stock in trade of political leaders is to amass wealth without any recourse to the plight of the ruled. The dictionary of sociology defines a leader in two senses:

The broadest, and the restricted. In the broadest sense, a leader is defined as “one who leads by initiating social behaviour, by directing, organizing or controlling the efforts of others or by prestige, power or position”. In the restricted sense, the leader is defined as “one who leads by means of persuasive qualities and voluntary acceptance on the part of followers” (1986:439).

The questions we need to ask ourselves are do our leaders conform to the above qualities? Are they morally, politically, socially and religiously upright? Norbert (2011:99) captures most of the answers when he writes that:

A parliament of vultures, which appeared in the millennium year – 2000, is perhaps, the first published play that examines the vulgar realities, indiscipline and unflattering characters that infest our nascent democracy. In this play, the playwright, through his exposition of the activities of legislators, weighs the democrats in the balance of power, and finds them much more vulnerable than the military in their mis-rule and inability to improve the quality of the life of the people.

The play has six scenes, each describing the Nigerian situation where corruption and its related vices such as immorality, political manoeuvring, prostitution and personal aggrandizement are the order of the day. In the words of Obuh (2010:76), “the prevailing immorality, hypocrisy and flirtious tendencies of highly placed persons are aspects of our national psyche that are subjected to criticism”.

The play opens in the living room of Mr. and Mrs. Omeaku where the relatively peaceful family is thrown into confusion, name calling and disrespectfulness because of Madam Omeaku’s victory in the state assembly polls. She becomes arrogant and disrespectful to the husband and starts scheming how to get a better portfolio in the house. To her, what matters is not the fact that one is serving his/her country, but rather what one is able to make out of the service. For instance, Madam Omeaku and Brown argue thus:

- Brown:** Look, madam, you have to leave this neighbourhood as soon as we settle down to business. You don't belong here any longer.
- Madam:** That is if things work out well for me. To be an honourable member is not enough. What matters is the position you get in parliament. That's what determines your financial security. By the way, what would you like to drink?
- Brown:** Scotch-on-the-rocks
(Madam Omeaku goes to the cupboard and brings out a bottle of whisky and two glasses. She places them on the mathematical centre of the table. Mr. Brown opens the bottle and pours out a significant quantity of liquor into his glass then looks at madam)
- Brown:** Madam, I prefer it on the rocks.
- Madam:** I'm sorry, Mr. Brown. Our fridge is not working. The compressor is bad.
- Brown:** Too bad! *(Sips the drink)* That's why you have to support me in my quest for the chairmanship of the Purchasing Committee of Parliament. In a couple of months, you'll have enough refrigerators to give as present to your friends.
- Madam:** But what is going to be my reward for supporting you?
- Brown:** Reward? That will wait. ...
- Madam:** What will wait? Do you think I'm a teacher? Do you think I left my hotel business to go into the house of Parliament to wait? Imagine the likeness! I want half a million naira before I support you. I say my own ho-ha and that's why they call me madam ho-ha.

So right from the beginning, plans and strategies have been mapped on how to better their lots negatively. That is why politics has become a very profitable business and one that should be won at all cost; leaving at the wake of its call destruction of lives and properties, heartbreak, unemployment and other vices. Ezeh (2011:157) writes that:

... the greatest problem that faces Nigeria today is wrong perception of power. Leaders do not perceive power as service to the people, nor protection and promotion of their good but an avenue to intimidate, amass wealth and gain financial security. It is evident that political leaders' wield power for self and against others and that the compelling need to dominate often overrides public welfare.

All these are no exceptions in the Nigerian parliament because cases abound where political leaders, especially legislators exhibit acts of lawlessness in the process of making laws. As a matter of fact, Lawlessness is so pervasive that it is not only a feature but another name for the country (Mamman. <http://www.gamji.com/article6000/NEWS7636.htm>).

In the case of *House of Intrigues*, the house members leave their legislative functions which they were elected for and spend almost one session deliberating on the order of precedence in the state. This can be considered act of lawlessness because the intent behind it is not for the general good of the house but an effort in futility, basically designed to make themselves important elements in the state with all the attending benefits. This is also akin to the amendment of the legislative vote from six million to eight million simply because they feel it is so small. This is indeed an act of lawlessness as the lawmakers have totally disregarded the primary essence of legislation, which is to make laws that will benefit the common man. Instead, personal aggrandisements such as Oversea travels, allowances and the fringe benefits have beclouded their sense of responsibility. This is in close conformity with the opinion of Angahar (2014:49) when he writes that “there is corruption within the legislature itself. The legislature, instead of performing its constitutional role has often sold its conscience by collecting gratification from the executive arm of government”. Most times, members of several State Houses of Assembly are known to have collected ‘gifts’ from their Executive Governors and consequently failed to perform functions. For instance, to induce parliament to change the Constitution to enable him remain in power, former President Olusegun Obasanjo is alleged to have offered fifty million naira (about three hundred and ninety thousand dollars) to each legislator. However, the Presidency denied the allegation (Doe 2007:24). The President wanted to tinker with the constitution using the lawmakers but his calculations did not see the light of the day as the law makers foresaw the danger inherent in his proposal and for once in their lives decided to do the right thing.

Some may be said to be discipline when it comes to making the right laws, however, a lot of others are still trapped in persistent pervasive lawlessness. Furthermore, in *House of Intrigues*, the speaker in his bid to serve the interest of his party masters vigorously pursues the passage of obnoxious laws at the detriment of the general public. Because of the passage of some of these nefarious laws, the “National Association of Assembly Correspondents, call on the legislature to show some more seriousness in its handling of public issues” (Nda 2004:58). But one thing they seem not to understand according to Nwosu and Onwuasoanya (2015:114) is that:

In a paradigmatic and respected democracy, the people are the kings. There is no decision that is taken without the interest of the people considered sacrosanct. Those who are opportune to be chosen by the people to represent them either as parliamentarians, members of the executive arm or in any other capacity are not supposed to see themselves as having arrived. It goes without saying that political representatives who appropriate the period of their assignments as the people's representatives to improve their economic, social, academic and even professional fortunes are the biggest saboteurs of the people.

The pandemic corruption and legislative lawlessness is still here with us and the playwrights believe that two-third of these corruption and lawlessness are perpetrated by our political leaders. These are all manifested in the plays where there is a rat race to acquire landed properties both at home and abroad. Through this, funds meant for developmental projects are diverted to private pockets. The interest of the nation is slaughtered at the altar of selfishness. Brown in *A Parliament of Vultures* argues in the play when they were discussing the need to build at home that apart from building at home that "there is nothing wrong in building abroad; London, Amsterdam, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago". Even when Dr. Parkers argues that such a colossal waste of public money is unnecessary going by the fact that the value of naira was very low, the suffering of the masses and salaries of civil servants in some states having not been paid up to six months; but because he is in the minority, coupled with the fact that they see him as opposition, they disregard his honest appeal and go ahead with their plans. Udigwomen (2003:102) writes that:

Nigerian governments have found the institution of the opposition extremely difficult to accommodate. The ruling party has always harassed the opposition until it was impotent or dead. To avert such an embarrassment, some members of losing parties in an election often switched over to the winning party to grab what offices they could.

Aleleti in *House of Intrigues* says "you must realize that the minority will always have a say while the majority will always have the way (2004:10).

In furtherance to that, the impunity with which political leaders embezzle public funds is manifested in the words of Brown and Madam Omeaku.

Brown: To go straight to the matter. I've acquired some plots of land at the government Reserved Area, and I want to start developing it immediately. It's the yam which has started to grow that needs staking.

Madam: Wise man. It's important for a man to have landed property. I'm sure you must have gathered enough money for that purpose. You need to complete that project quick and join others in the quest for properties in foreign countries. It's important to build at home, but more important to have a house in a developed country

(Enter Mr. Omeaku. He is wearing an expensive brocade and embroidered hat to match, and a beautiful walking stick).

Madam: What is it?

Omeaku: I'm just from the wharf. The goods have arrived.

Madam: So? I think I've given instructions about them

Omeaku: I thought you would like to know about it. I just rushed down here to tell you. Nothing else

Madam: That's good. Now go and inspect the building in Victoria Island. They are putting up the tenth decking today, and I want it to be completed today. Put more men if necessary.

Omeaku: All right (rushes out).

Brown: You've really achieved a lot, madam.

Madam: What have I achieved? Because I now live in my own fifty-acre estate, completed three buildings in Commercial Avenue, and set up an import and export business for my husband to manage, you think I've achieved much. I feel I'm too slow. So far, I've been able to purchase only three different models of Mercedes, one model of BMW, and a Lexus and sent my children to study in America, (2002, pp. 68-69).

This is a true reflection of what politicians do with the Nigerian money. According to Ikpe as quoted by Effiong (2008:22) "... the political elite assumed the role of ethnic patrons who competed with other patrons for the communities'

share of the ‘national cake’ though, for most of the time they ate the cake on behalf of their communities...” Furthermore, the real problem with Nigeria is squandamania mentality which narrows down peoples’ horizon by defining and determining progress, social importance, social values, power, authority almost exclusively in terms of material success and achievement. Their main objective for getting into parliament is simply to partake in the ‘sharing’ of the national cake. Like senator Arikpo in Irobi’s *Nwokedi*, they go into the senate not “to make argument for anybody’s betterment”, but “to graft some skin on the scar – of poverty, to hang their portrait on the walls of the senate” (1991:72-73). In most situations, existing contracts are revoked and given to those who have greased their palms and are likely to play ball in the future. Successive governments do it and they see it as a culture that need to be propagated. Ngozi (2011:125-126) argues that:

Budgets are inflated to accommodate their interest and where such did not take place; those in the position to approve it make it difficult to be passed. Fictitious companies are registered to win government contracts dubiously. The political elite absolutely negate the rule of law and due process so much that the system breeds law breakers instead of law makers.

As a result, rather than observe the right norm, political culture and urbanity, we sadly see anomie, rape of democracy and negative attributes of “indiscipline, executive lawlessness, national crises” (Chinwe 2008:26) to mention but a few. Habamero, the Speaker in *A Parliament of Vultures* tells the members that:

Habamero: Good. Members who have private companies or those who have fronts should make such important information available to me as soon as possible.

Jossy: I’ll put together one company in the name of the church, (2002:74).

From the foregoing, it would appear that the playwrights are of the opinion that all political leaders are to an extent, corrupt, and we agree with them. Perhaps, the difference lies in the degree of corruption between one and the other. As can be gleaned from the plays, majority of them own monumental edifices at home and abroad, underdeveloped acres of land, assorted range of cars, foreign accounts and other things that their children and children’s children may not be able to exhaust in their life time.

Corruption and lawlessness breed moral decadence and moral decadence according to Bajoki (1997:4) “has eaten deep into every aspect of the society. Like a rotten egg, the society shines outside but stinks inside”. Nigeria is a case in point. Corrupt legislators are morally backward and manifest it in different ways. Because they lack the fear of God, they use their ill-gotten wealth to entice and corrupt young girls and undergraduates, thereby encouraging prostitution in the process. Soon after her election, Madam Omeaku ‘brushed up’ her hitherto shy and timid daughter to become sophisticated and soon after becomes the unofficial liaison officers of the house in the area of organizing girls during important functions. To her, she cannot afford to have a bush girl as a daughter now that she is an honourable member. In preparation for one of their numerous get-togethers, Brown says;

Brown: In that case, we shall all bring our girl friends with us. Politics is no child’s play. The hand that writes the law must also touch (Laughs heartily) (2002:15).

Jossy: What about the girls? How do you plan to procure them for the party?

Brown: Thank you for that reverend. The chief of protocol, whose responsibility this is, has already taken care of that. All he has requested from the committee is ten air-conditioned vehicles and a modest sum of one million naira to fuel the vehicles to collect senior girls from the university campuses and take them back after the party, (2002:56).

This is also the case in *House of Intrigues* where Chief Adini, the Speaker of the House of Assembly and Aleleti, the Majority Leader throw caution to the wind and start frolicking with girls as a way of celebrating their victory in the just concluded polls. Even when he (Adini) is reminded that he is married and a church elder, he simply retorts by saying that “today is not Sunday” (2004:17). The mere fact that his wife calls to find out the outcome of the elections send shivers down his spine because he thinks she is coming back to spoil his celebrative mood with his girls. The playwrights, being Nigerians and university dons have only used the environment they know too well and the things that go on there to paint a vivid picture of the level of moral decadence among our political class and their condonation and encouragement. The likes of Nkechi in the play, *A Parliament of Vultures*, and Abi and Anita in *House of Intrigues* are found in Nigerian universities whose stock in trade is to organize girls for

these politicians. They call themselves pimps and specialize in making contacts. During any of the visits of these so called 'big shots', the campuses vibrate with the girls getting ready for action. Such students are usually dull in the morning but active in the night. Immorality among politicians themselves is also common. The case of Brown and Madam Omeaku in the play is a typical example. Here in Nigeria, many are known to have slept together even when they have their wives and husbands at home. Just recently, during Patricia Etteh's leadership of the House of Representatives, it was alleged that the root cause of the disagreement between honourable members who travelled to London for an official assignment over allowances was because the honourable members who travelled with their female (girlfriends) colleagues abandoned them and went after the white ladies. The playwright therefore argues that such erotic overtures have a cataclysmic effect as there are bound to be misunderstanding and deceit at the long run. This is what Ezeh (2011:157) meant when he argues that:

The Leadership can destroy or transform the prospects of a nation. Where the leadership is self-centred, intellectually bankrupt, morally and ethically bad, government policies, the economy and social life will be affected negatively. Nigeria has always had the misfortune of falling into the hands of leaders who are incapable of satisfying the yearnings and aspirations of her people.

The legislature is the second to the last hope of the common man. This is because those who make up the legislature in a representative democracy are close to the people than their executive counterparts. This fact informed the idea of the oversight function given to the legislators in any democracy, Nigeria not excluded. Unfortunately, most Nigerian legislators have seriously abdicated their oversight responsibility due to their corrupt and greedy attitudes. Legislators are supposed to be respected members of the society who are expected to be above board in certain situations, especially as it concerns moral behaviour and etiquette. However, because some of them have thrown these things to the wind, they now exhibit acts unbecoming of them. Such acts include fighting in the house and the use of foul languages without any recourse to its effects on the watching public. This is, from the perspective of these writers, the highest act of lawlessness. Most times, chairs are broken, electronic gadgets and documents destroyed. For instance, during Dimeji Bankole's Administration,

the Progressives led by Dino Melaye efforts to get Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Dimeji Bankole to account for the resource accrued to the house met a brick wall (Tsuwa 2014:96). This led to a free for all fight where house members publicly disgraced themselves and the offices they occupy. This is a major challenge in the political life of not just Nigeria but the entire African continent. This phenomenon in no small measure hinders genuine democratization and affects the rule of law, thereby reducing accountability and affecting negatively the economy of third world countries.

Some of these acts of lawlessness exhibited by our legislators are as a result of their selfishness. The two plays replicated this in the actions and inactions of the lawmakers. Habamero and his cohorts are clear cut examples in *A Parliament of Vultures* while Adini and Aleleti can be described as self-centred individuals in *House of Intrigues*. For instance, Adini's selfish interest also manifests when the election results in totality did not favour his party at the centre. He places his personal interest above that of his party. Even when his friend, Aleleti is disappointed with the outcome of the results, he argues thus:

Adini: our party has won in our state of greenwood both the Governorship and the state assembly and that includes you and I, Prince. I don't see why you should...

Therefore, it is an undeniable truth that the electorate clamour for dividend of democracy has been drastically hampered by the activities of corrupt Nigerian legislators. One therefore hopes that there will be a change of attitude from them so that the true meaning of democracy will be established in Nigeria.

Intrigues in the Law Making Process

The art of law making has been polarised in the Nigerian system given the fact that legislators now deploy a whole lot of intrigues to dumbfound their fellow legislators. Lawmakers seem not to be interested in the goings on in the society so long as they are comfortable and their demands met. Even if it means trampling on the rights and privileges of their fellow lawmakers, they seem not to bother. This is a true reflection of things in the two plays under investigation. In *House of Intrigues*, Chief Adini and his friend, Aleleti had their plans long before the commencement of the parliament; and all that they did during the plenary session was to actualize those plans. Firstly, they made sure that they were put in key positions in the hierarchy of the parliament. Secondly, they

made sure that the script written by the Governor in terms of approval of commissioners were properly rehearsed and implemented. Thirdly, they also ensured that opposition did not have much to say in the house thereby allowing the ruling party to always have a field day during deliberations. Most times, meetings before meetings and meetings after meetings are held in order to perfect their plans. In this kind of meetings, certain decisions and agreements earlier reached are discarded and new agreements and alliances formed. Money usually exchanges hands in this kind of situation.

However, what is intriguing in all these is the dexterity with which they are done. Of course, it involves high level of manipulation and politicking. With money, most legislators are able to hoodwink the electorates and eventually succeed in making them vote against the candidate of their choice. This tactic was employed by Adini in *House of Intrigues* when he made his first appearance in the village square. Madam Omeaku in *A Parliament of Vultures* also explored this method in the play. Unfortunately, the speed with which people rush for these easy monies dumbfounds even the learned.

In *A Parliament of Vultures*, Dr. Parkers and Otobo were smartly schemed out of important positions in the house and even the ones they were occupying before, were relieved of them. Even when some of their rights were granted them in the house, they capitalized on their majority to win certain dubious decisions. Take for instance the following conversations.

Habamero: Good. Now, let us proceed to the issue of swearing in the members of parliament.

Parkers: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. There's a traditional method of swearing in members of assembly of this nature. The bible is the traditional instrument...

Madam: Opposed! Don't you know that people don't respect the bible any longer? Some people swear by the bible and still tell lies in court.

Brown: And furthermore, the bible is a western affair. This is an African parliament, and we have to do things the African way.

Habamero: Now, we have two alternatives: the bible and the ancestors. And I believe the members want the ancestors. But since this is a democratic parliament, I'll put it to vote. Those who want the bible say Aye.

Parkers

and Otobo: Aye!

Habamero: Those who want the symbol of our ancestors, say Aye.

Others: Aye!!

Habamero: Our ancestors have carried the day. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, please administer the swearing in of members, (2002:37).

Corrupt tendencies and lawlessness in the making of laws breed manipulations, manoeuvrings and back stabbing. As it is the case with the Nigerian polity, the playwrights carefully weave these things together in their plays to demonstrate that they are full of intrigues. For instance, prior to the commencement of the plenary session in the house and knowing full well the non-conformist tendencies of Parkers and Otobo, the other remaining house members connived among themselves to schedule a meeting before the actual meeting so as to give themselves ample opportunity to perfect their plans before bringing them to the floor of the house for deliberation. This they did by stating different time in the circular given to Parkers and Otobo and the speaker claimed that he did not know anything about it and that it could be a typographical error. The playwright, through this, gives us an insight into the happenings in Nigeria, where there are cliques and cabals who take decisions on behalf of others and if anybody dares raise an eyebrow, he is either made to join the band wagon by making him an offer he can't resist or annihilated. Habamero in the play says that such people are "mere radicals, and it is easy to handle them. A radical must be caressed or else annihilated. First give him political appointment as a form of settlement. If he still doesn't dance to your tune, then annihilate him completely". Most times, when annihilation becomes too dangerous, the person or persons are framed up such that they will never escape execution. This is also gleaned from the play when the house members were discussing the fate of Dr Parkers and Otobo. Habamero, the speaker informs them that:

They are still in detention without trial. They will be charged with treasonable felony. Their trial will start as soon as other accomplices are apprehended, and a tribunal set up to ensure that they don't escape execution (2002:71).

Nigeria is replete with such instances and the cases of Dele Giwa, Bola Ige, Harry Marshal and others are all clear cut examples. Up till this very moment, the mysteries surrounding their deaths are yet to be unravelled and

made public. However, Nigerians are not fooled because they know that they are all political murders because somebody somewhere sees them as clog of spanners in the wheel of their progress. Even the packaged news of the arrest of the perpetrators and the appearance of criminals and dissident fools before the cameramen has not yielded any result because everything has been a charade to make the populace believe that the government is doing something. At the long run, they will be made to die a natural death just as these ones have been. In *House of Intrigues*, the disgruntled house members played a fast one on the speaker when they worked on his intelligence by substituting the order paper of the day with a new one which incidentally happens to be his impeachment order. Through this means, they were able to rid the system of bad elements retarding the progress of the parliament in particular and the nation in general.

Conclusion

In the two plays studied, the playwrights decry the parlous state of the Nigerian democratic set-up where those entrusted with the power to make laws for the smooth operation of government and wellbeing of the people have jettisoned their primary responsibility in pursuance of personal benefits. They do this with total disregard of the feelings of those who voted them in. The writers believe that to deepen democratic ideals in Nigeria, it has become absolutely critical to tackle this phenomenon as a sustained national priority. Legislative lawlessness is a spanner in the wheel of progress of democratic ideals in Nigeria. The relevant agencies put in place to checkmate this ugly trend such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Corrupt Practices Commission (CPC) should be proactive and truly self-directed in the real sense of the word. They should desist, especially, EFCC from engaging in selective justice where people known to be in the bad book of government are apprehended and made scapegoats. This does not speak well of the agency. Nigerians deserve the best and if things are allowed to continue the way they are, we may be heading for a revolution.

Recommendations

- ◆ *Transparency of the other two bodies of Government:* It is highly important that the principle of Checks and Balances be operational to curtail the problem inherent in the legislature. By ensuring that there is transparency and accountability in the executive and judiciary, the powers of the legislature will be in check. Also, it is essential that the judiciary be independent so as to safeguard the tenets of the law and dispense justice

without prejudice. If this becomes possible, the powers of the legislature cannot be distorted to answer to the voracious greed of corrupt legislators.

- ◆ *There should be stricter measure on the qualification needed to be a legislator with focus on ethics.* By putting this in place, we can ensure that the majority of the members of the legislature are truly there as the representatives of the people and their needs. By making meticulous measures, we allow ourselves as a nation to enjoy the beauty of standing tall with a morally upright legislature as the backbone of the government and the nation.
- ◆ *Immunity Clause:* It is recommended that the immunity clause should either be amended or expunged. The Code of Conduct Bureau which is responsible for the declaration of assets should be properly equipped to conduct verification of Assets and Liabilities and follow them up even after the expiration of the person's tenure in office.
- ◆ *Making Politics Unattractive:* It is recommended that attempts should be made to make politics unattractive by reducing the pay package of our legislatures and the allowances given to them. Recently, the Governor of the Central bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido, informed the house and of course Nigerians that the apex legislative house consumes a greater percentage of the Nigerian budget. The house went gagger and threatened fire and brim stone in an attempt to make him swallow his words. To prove what he said, he invited them for a debate on the issue and nobody showed up thereby confirming and reconfirming the Governor's statement. If it is made unattractive, the real reasons behind seeking elective positions which is basically to serve will be restored. This will help to reduce fraudulent practices and improve accountability.
- ◆ *Ban on INEC from sharing Monies to Political Parties.* The current trend where Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) no longer gives money to political parties during elections is a welcome development. And that is why a good number of them did not have much to share during the just concluded general elections. However, where there are cases of corruption in any of the political parties, special 'corruption Courts' should be set up to speedily look into them. Government should not interfere in the prosecution and the decisions of these special courts and these cases (if there is/are any), should be subject to appeal only to the Supreme Court. This will serve as deterrent to others. Existing corruption cases should as a matter of urgency be trashed out without any delay otherwise the whole effort in curbing legislative lawlessness may be in futility.

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