

THEATRE ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP TUSSELS: PLAYWRIGHTS AS CATALYSTS FOR RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA'S ECONOMY

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Abstract

*The social and politico-economic growth of a nation is largely dependent on the credibility of her leadership. No organisation, group or association has ever achieved economic, social and cultural growth without being engineered by person(s) who form a permanent leadership caucus. In the world at large, judging from the antediluvian era up till now, there had not been a period of leadership perfection. In Nigeria, the centrifugal force of indecisiveness and perverted judgement has taken over as a modus of leading the masses against the original setting of the constitution. Therefore, this study aims to add voice to the existing voices advocating for adequate restructuring of Nigerian federal leadership in order to ameliorate her economic instability that led the nation into economic recession. The researchers zero in the study on Alex Asigbo's **The Reign of Pascal Amusu** and Emeka Nwabueze's **A Parliament of Vulture** which serve as literary templates in divulging and disparaging the bad actors of governance in the society. This is to ensure equal opportunity to all Nigerians to contribute effectively in national development and economic stability, as well as restoring peaceful coexistence amongst its citizens in different parts of the country. Case study and content analysis research approaches of the qualitative research method are adopted for the realisation of the research objectives.*

Introduction

The clamour for the restructuring of Nigeria's political, economic and social system has garnered much momentum. Prevalently, many political leaders, religious leaders and political activists from all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria have aired their diverse views on this issue. However, the issue of restructuring may not be engineered by the masses without finding dissatisfaction on the existing structure. The act of restructuring when appropriately done, paves way for the alteration and reorganisation of the existing constitution for a preferable and more beneficial one, be it in politics, economic, social and

religious affairs. In the course of this study, the researchers copiously looked into the deficiencies that have characterized the leadership system in Nigeria and the reactions of the masses for restructuring as captured by the literary piece of the two playwrights under study.

Since 1960 when Nigeria got her independence, the nation has been bedevilled by leadership tussles; high level of corruption orchestrated by either the act of converting public property for self-aggrandizement or other reasons best known by the doers. This act has contributed immensely to sucking the nation of its strength and has caused perpetual decline in her economic development. Records have clearly shown that the First Republic of Nigeria is characterised by widespread corruption under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the then President and Prime Minister respectively.

In the light of this, the name Nigeria, leadership and corruption have been viewed by many counterpart countries as sobriquets to Nigerian Government. According to Malam Nuhu Ribadu, in corroborating to the above fact posits that:

The country is endowed with abundant natural resources and brilliant human capital. Yet, the paradox there is widespread poverty due to misused resources and untapped potentials. It is therefore true that wherever Nigeria is mentioned, what comes to mind is Boko Haram, oil theft, kidnapping and corruption (8).

The leadership tussles in Nigeria have led many lives to the world of the dead, to mention but a few, on 15th January, 1966, the first coup d'état took the lives of the First Nigerian Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premiers of the West and Northern governments, the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, Brigadier Maimalari, Colonel Arthur Unegbe and many others. Since this gruesome incident happened due to the thirst for leadership and power, Nigerian political space is no longer a level playing ground where each tribe contributes equally to the economic development of the country. There had been reactions and counter-reactions, many people had the impression that the coup was tribal in nature in view of the way casualties were recorded. In the writings of scholars today, it is unfit to read Nigerian leadership appraisal without the mentioning of corruption as her main threatening hallmark that deter all round development. This is manifest in the submission of Joe T. Ande when he avers that:

The present democratic dispensation in our great country Nigeria is no doubt characterised by corrupt tendencies manifested in many spheres especially in leadership and followership. This cankerworm has eaten deep into the annual of the entire nation and has unfortunately become the order of the day. Its attributes of bribery, advanced fee fraud popularly known as 419, election manipulation (rigging, kidnapping and insecurity to mention but a few have now been deeply entrenched in the polity (168).

Despite these challenges that threaten development which include political instability, economic recession, social stratification, thuggery, kidnapping, schismatic agitations, genocide attempts and so on, which is orchestrated by leadership ineptitude, the theatre artist as an interventionist and mouth piece of the people has stood firm to correct and avert the cataclysm and regrettable ruin that the country is vulnerable to. It is axiomatic that the theatre serves as a mirror that reflects its society but it is also very pathetic that the societal reflections it brings to the optical view of the masses are not things of public botheration rather the masses see these reflections as ensemble arts for mere entertainment galore.

This paper seeks to invigorate the minds of scholars, politicians, religious leaders and masses from all works of life to the meticulous study of the Nigerian situation as exposed in dramatic texts of Emeka Nwabueze in his *A Parliament of Vultures* and Alex Asigbo's *The Reign of Pascal Amusu*. The theoretical foundation of the study is anchored on the dialectical materialism which argues that change in the society does not just happen but it is modelled on the social and economic reality in the society. Discussing "Nature connected and determined", Joseph Stalin argues that:

The dialectical method therefore holds that no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomena, inasmuch as any phenomenon in any realm of nature may become meaningless to us if it is not considered in connection with the surrounding conditions, but divorced from them; and that, vice versa, any phenomenon can be understood and explained if considered in its inseparable connection with surrounding phenomena, as one conditioned by surrounding phenomena (4).

From the above assertion, the researchers uphold that the Nigerian economic recession did not just happen but it is caused by a weak economic structure chaired by the bad actors of governance that have ruled the nation over the years.

Theatre Activism and Leadership Tussles in Nigeria

As every writer is a writer in politics as postulated by Ngugi wa Thiongo, one could say that most theatrical arts are arts in politics. To be political, there must be influence and such influence is achieved through conscientisation, healthy conviction, criticisms and propaganda. Activism therefore, is an action that is red in tooth and claw due to its nature and demand which appears to be a threat to the government of a country. To be a theatre activist entails voluntary act of advocating and speaking for the voiceless, the oppressed, and the handicapped that are left as destitute begging for financial salvation. Activism does not exist in a vacuum, it always fight unfriendly happenings in the society, which the government is in most cases the recipient. Consequently, the target enemy of a theatre activist is not the leaders but their ill policies that bedevil and tyrannise the masses, it could be expressed in writing or in action. When expressed literally, it is manifest in the dramatic works of many revolutionary writers like Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi*, *Hangmen also Die*, *Cemetery Road*, and *Colour of a rusting Gold* among others. Femi Osofisan's

Morountodum, No more the Wasted Breed, Red is the Freedom Road and so on. Emeka Nwabueze's *Dragon's Funeral, Spokesman for the Oracle, Fate of a Maiden, Echoes of Madness, A Parliament of Vultures* and *When the Arrow Rebounds*.

These and many more academic gurus have done well to expound Nigerian Leadership ills with no applause. This spurred Chiduo Obadiogwu to posit that, "popular theatre is a very powerful tool, which sometimes may be misconstrued by people in power, perceiving it to be an opposition to mainstream politics" (91). This is also in line with what happens in an action-packed theatre mass conscientisation exercise. Obadiogwu summarises an experience on this when he narrates a Kenyan ideal thus:

In the production of *I will Marry when I want*, and several rehearsals of *Mother Sing for Me*, the feeling that peasants can understand the truth of a situation and actually communicate what they are thinking was what becomes the biggest threat to the status quo. The Kenyan government in 1982 sensing the power of theatre in raising awareness of the masses demolished Kamirithu Community Education and Cultural Centre and at the same time banned any theatrical activity in the area. Most of the organisers were exiled. The plays questioned the validity of their independence. Independence, instead of giving them freedom has brought them new problems (91).

Theatre has being a workable tool in fighting leadership menace and keeping the government on check and balance towards achieving successes, and eradication of oppression and poverty amongst the masses. In numerous parts of Africa like South Africa, Literary theatre activists like Athol Fugard in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and Lewis Nkosi in *Rhythm of Violence*, have also fought through their writings to ensure that justice will not be reserved for the ruling class alone, but also for those who form the core productive asset to the nation (proletariats). These literary and action-packed reactions precursor national development, which Chigozie Uzoh explains to be, "the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people by providing such things as good education, basic infrastructure and so forth" (181). He further reiterates that in discussing national development, one need to look at economic and political developments, socio-cultural integration and how these contribute to human development. That is one of the sole aims for the practice of theatre activism which cannot be tempered with. In corroboration, Chijindu Mgbemere asserts that:

The artist as social rebel tends always to see the society from the leftist perspective. However, the artist as a seer can use theatre and media to strengthen government policies by conscientising its citizens.... The work of the artist should always gear towards creating a better society where equity, democracy and good governance is emphasised (426).

To achieve the above claim in Nigerian political set up, the masses like a bunch of broom should jointly put heads together to checkmate the government structure that

instigate the leadership tussles experience currently in different corners of the country. Hence, the truth stands out conspicuously, and transparency, by constitutionally enabling the masses to know the true nature of how their resources are managed. By so doing, the reality of democracy becoming the government of the people by the people and for the people becomes true. Supportively, Ayakoroma opines that:

Transparency and accountability on the part of the leaders are antidotes to the cankerworms of corruption. Our leaders are not answerable to the electorate probably because they believe that whether they are voted for or not, they will still find themselves in power through the back door. Where they are appointed into office, they feel they owe the masses no obligation Once leaders are accountable to their followers at every point in time, then excesses could be checked (4).

It is pathetic to see that the ignorance portrayed by most of our leaders has presently given rise to many faction groups who fight the government of the day to ensure that attention is given to them. Some of these faction groups seek to be an autonomous nation with total sovereignty like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB); the Arewa People Congress (APC). The latter resurrected as a counter group against the Indigenous People of Biafra secessionist group. The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) group have continued to launch attacks on oil installations in the Niger-Delta area and so on. In fact, Uzoh further made a good exposition on this when he posits thus:

Analysts say the dissatisfaction with the structure, operation and power configuration under Nigeria's federalism is responsible for the unprecedented emergence of these groups. The increase in crime rate and the helplessness of law enforcement agencies towards curbing crime have been cited by their founders and admirers as reasons for creation of these groups (210-211).

Going by the above developmental exposition, the leadership tussles and promise for change have over the years, instigated calmness and reliability in the policy of the government. Therefore, the theatre as a mirror of its society shall continue through actions and its literature to advocate for the attainment of the desired change that the masses clamour for.

Toward Nigeria's Leadership/Social and Economic Reform

Nigeria, as a country full of dynamism, has over the years witnessed numerous upheavals which have hampered its economic development. As a nation full of dynamism in this context, explores its manifest potentials, both human and natural resources which have been unharnessed. In this light, it could be said that her developmental plan is *epilepticised* by gross misconducts of those who the masses have entrusted the responsibility of her management.

To achieve a virile leadership stance in a non-reformed society as Nigeria, one need to be conscious of the major key determinants which serve as ‘light hoped’ for at the end of the tunnel. They include positive mindedness, fear for posterity, and so on. These, precursor’s the reality of a desired reformation, restructuring, revamping and resuscitation of a healthy new Nigeria capable of competing to the world class standard. Mgbemere further avers:

Nigeria is still grappling with basic developmental indices. Crime and unemployment have remained endemic experiences of the country’s past and subsisting history. While many hold corruption and its allied vices responsible for this state of affairs, others see lack of technological advancement as the arrow-head. The concern here is that the more these issues are discussed, the worse things seem to get. This stands to reason therefore that there is an obvious deviation *abinitio* that missing link is in the development of the psyche of the human agents, who are the necessary vectors of development and nation building (423).

In agreement to the above assertion, the human resources needed for the development of the nation is totally in doubt due to the psychological deficiencies in thinking positively. This is the platform in which the leadership class of the Nigerian society falls. It is a case where the aspiring leadership agents pre-conceive to wield power in order to exonerate themselves from the clique of poverty-stricken masses before assuming office. This justifies why the Nigeria society, even at the age of fifty seven (57), still crawls like a baby. The resources that should be used to enhance the development of rural areas are shared among the ruling class, leaving nothing behind to ensure quality assurance. These are some of the reasons why news of death tolls is heard from time to time when public roads are just macadamised and abandoned due to insufficient fund. Some of the government owned primary and secondary school pupils study under dilapidated buildings. Electricity generation which is another major determinant that aid development is left to ruin, diversification of wealth sources has become a herculean task. One may argue that the focus of Nigerian leaders is streamlined to nothing but the crude oil which is also managed with a monumental deception without transparency and accountability. To uphold reformation, one must take cognizance of the words of Nuhu Ribadu when he posits thus:

It is therefore right to say that what the country needs is honest and modern leadership that would be a rallying point for citizens, one that can tame the consuming tides of corruption and evolve creative solutions to our myriad of problems. It is my belief that firm and sincere leadership is the precursor for industrious and patriotic followership (16).

To ensure honest and truthfulness in today’s leadership, it is also pertinent to have a brief review of the examples already set by the fore-fathers of Nigerian politics. The review will aid the present leaders and followers to have a glimpse of where it all started,

the present situation and a pointer to the way forward. This review is summarised in the words of U. I. Ofor, when she submits that:

The two major principles are truth and confidence in the pre-colonial days, those who want their conflicts resolved must have confidence in the tribunal that would resolve the dispute. It includes elders, secret cult; priests and priestesses. The decisions of the tribunal are binding unto the disputants. Also both disputants must be truthful. The mediator, arbitrator and judge must be truthful because of the presence of ancestral forces (178).

From the above sayings, there is no gainsaying to conclude that the political system has not been besmirched. The criteria for vindicating unerring citizen has not been perverted due to their truthful believe system, orchestrated by trust and dependency on the punishment that follows suit to offenders by ancestral forces, that could quickly remind one of the disparity that exists between then and now. These palpable differences can as well expose modern citizens to the knowledge of the causal harm the western influence on Africa have done in Nigerian leadership system. This traditional African leadership modus operandi, if followed sincerely is an example that could instigate credibility and serve as a sanitiser to the debilitating system of government experienced in Nigeria today.

Synopses of *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* and *A Parliament of Vultures*

The *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* opens with the revelation of Sasha's megalomaniac utterances in Naijaland as a military head of state. As a General, he parades himself as having the power to do whatever he likes even to the extent of squandering public fund just for self pleasure. Though (Sasha) was appointed to lead due to election crises in the land, he drives Sowole and his gang into exile for demanding that he hands over power to Shiwo. Having jailed Amusu, Shiwo and Dayo, Shasha threatens to teach them lessons they will never forget through punishment. The anger escalates when he remembers how he (Sasha) served Pascal Amusu diligently for many years when Amusu ruled Naijaland. This action is interrupted by the call of her Indian Queen.

In the second happening, the chief security officer begins to reveal the ineptitudes of his Masters through a monologue. As a Major, he exposes the level of scheming and "godfatheristic" forces that bedevils the political system, despite the protests from Prof. Sowole and his gang, the end points to their detention as presently suffered by their ilk. At this point, El-Ghandi envisages his General's presence and bows out as Sasha emerges with his threatening words of crushing whoever that opposes him. He bites a chunk of Apple intermittently as he speak, at a point, a fit of cough seizes him as he sinks to the floor foaming at the mouth and there and then he gave up. Salam, who is promised by Masi to be the next leader of Naijaland immediately, begins to question Masi about the fulfilment of the promises irrespective of the activism tension mounted by Prof. Sowole and his group, Masi, tutors him and reassures Salam of his victory despite any human opposing actions that may arise.

In happening three, Pascal Amusu appears as the new president of Naija land having ruled for years earlier before the reign of Sasha who jailed him before his (Sasha) death. Presently, who shall question his authorities? One of his major agenda includes recovering of looted monies from past government administrators. Pascal Amusu in this scene also vows not to hand over power back to Masi who alleges to have back the leadership seat at the expiration of Pascal's tenure. Through the recommendation of Sony Aninta, Bureau for Financial Crimes Investigation is organised and chaired by Mallam Rilwanu Lulu. President Pascal Amusu is characterised by embarking on tours to various foreign countries and to bring to book any individual alleged to be in possession of too much money. As the story unfolds, we see Pascal Amusu, Salam, and Masi who claim to be the leadership ring of Naijaland having problems amongst themselves on whose turn is it to rule and who should step down for the other. Amusu insists that the new reform agenda of bringing to book corrupt leaders must be upheld. From one electioneering period to another, we see high political stratagems employed to ensure election victory by same people who besmirch terribly, the Naijaland political system.

A Parliament of Vultures opens in a living room of a middle class family of Mr. and Mrs. Omeaku who leave in an African Metropolitan city. Mrs. Omeaku who is popularly known as "Madam" just succeeded in winning an election into the Parliament of her nation. Following this development, Mrs. Omeaku makes boast of herself because of her political position even when her husband – Mr. Omeaku caught her (Madam) and Mr. Brown in a compromising position in Mr. Omeaku's living room. As a member of the parliament, Mrs. Omeaku makes mountainous plans of changing her entire life to suit into her present status. In this scene, Brown, a political colleague of Madam exposes his intention of using Dr. Parker who has spent fifteen years in the United States to store their money in Foreign Banks. Again, Rev. Jossy, a character who claims to be a religious leader is deceptively addressed by the title to make the voters have a level of trust in them and vote in support. In situation two, Habamero Nathaniel, the parliament president is seen with his caucus members guzzling some bottles of imported whisky in the entertainment centre of his official residence, Madam, Reverend Jossy, and other parliamentarians are present, billions are approved for wardrobe and inconvenience allowances without proper scrutiny of the approved funds. As this happens, encomiums are poured on the president for his kind gesture. To cover these superfluous expenses in the eyes of the masses, a press conference is organized where the journalists will be entertained and bribed with brown envelopes to enable them keep mute. Mr. Otobo and Dr. Parkers are parliament members who stand for transparency, credibility and accountability. Parliament meetings are done in their absence because of their stance for justice. Instead of meetings to be held in its official venue, the president, Habamero agrees with his supporters and changes the venue, thereby making some parliament decisions in absence of Parker and Otobo. During the election, it is discovered that the masses sold their votes due to immediate pecuniary peanuts given to them by aspirants who have little or no formal education and good intension for the welfare of the people.

During Parliament Meetings, Protocols are broken, minutes are not read, decisions are made by some caucus members before deliberations in general parliament meetings, Parkers and Otobo who are the only two schooled members object to some parliament

abnormalities but Habamero, the Parliament President, having known his synergy with other members will always shut up Parkers and Otobo. The play ends with the invasion of angry youths during a parliament meeting, having learnt about how their rulers feed fat on their wealth; the youths become the present order. The presidential mansion is set on fire and songs of war, freedom and liberation is heard.

Critical Evaluation of Leadership Tussles in *The Reign of Pascal Amusu*

The thirst for leadership position in Nigeria and the world at large has become a re-occurring factor. In extension, the promise for change by leadership aspirants has become a cliché due to the futility that has characterised and enveloped the change mantra. In every electioneering season, lives are maimed, many are left homeless, blood is shed, and kidnapping cases arise, and so on. These vices make it believable that politics is a dirty game. Hence, the press is under the total control of the government as manifest in media authoritarian theory, the playwright therefore takes it upon himself to espouse these ills that have bedevilled the Nigerian society, as a mouthpiece of the citizens. For the masses to become more conscious of their milieu and seek for a lasting solution, Asigbo, has achieved this by creating characters in *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* for proper representation and exposure of the positive (if any) and negative effects of leadership tussles and its accomplices such as god-fatherism and nepotism in Nigerian political terrain.

In the play, political obsessions that have become the hallmark of Nigerian Leaders to a great height have been proven to be the bane of development due to the inquisitiveness of the ruling class to satisfy self in expense of their core duty which Nnaemeka Agbaenyi summarises as, “three basic function, namely: governance, security and production in the society” (99). This total negligence of duty manifested in Sasha’s character as buttressed in the following dialogue.

Sasha: ... kai! Walahi, life is good... especially when you’ve the ruler of a country like Naijaland. Let’s look at it fa. I have paid my dues. I served Masi: the Maradona faithfully but he wanted to dribble me... Shegababanza. Anyway, I’m the ruler now and any day I catch that rabble-rousing Professor Sowole I make him funk his mother. If I catch any of his followers, I put brooms up his prick... I mean, judge for yourself... I mean, duty is duty, I drove Sowole and his gang into exile, Walahi, they don’t have right to demand that I hand over to Shiwo. Did I do the selection? Why is it under my rulership that he should seek the throne? To Shiwo my friend, if you’re looking for something you go to where you lost it. (*Slaps him through the bars*) (1-3).

From the above dialogue, the democratic freedom of citizens who tend to voice out their views on government misdemeanours is surmounted. Though, in this context, it is a reprisal to injustices levelled against the present leader by his master, he succeeded. In whatever light one sees it, the overriding idea continues to be the enouncement that accompanies political position which the occupants have bastardised for self-

aggrandisement. It is in this premise that the general believer that power intoxicates becomes a truism. Amusu, the detained past leader who Sasha served during his tenure presently resurfaces to demand for the dethronement of Sasha. The leadership tussle among these fellows is further espoused in the play:

Sasha: ... And as for you Pascal Amusu, I weep for you. You who ruled this land many years ago and we served you diligently. You turned your farm house into a meeting venue for the plotting of my downfall. Walahi, not even all the religious leaders of the world can save you. (*Unknown Soldier floats in as voice calls from room*) (4).

The dialogue above gives us a glimpse of the past happening in Naijaland. In Nigerian society today, the polity to a regrettable height has been hijacked by few oligarchic cliques who vie or occupy public positions just to enrich themselves. When victory is achieved, the constitutional power bestowed on the winner of an election is turned into a tool for reprisals instead of fighting corruption and other ills that have become cankerworms to the society.

After the death of Sasha, the leadership tussles found in the polity of Naijaland takes up a more sophisticated dimension which is also a clear enactment of what is seen today in Nigerian political system where a particular individual has a great influence of who succeeds the incumbent political leader and how long the tenure will last. The following conversation places the above remarks in the right perspective:

Masi: Yes, it has been decided you have six months in the first instance with possible extension for another six months within that period, you've to organise a credible transition to a popular government.

Salam: That will be hard sir ... with Prof. Sowole and his band of activists traversing the whole world and saying unprintable things about this government.

Masi: That shouldn't be a problem. You see, behind all that mask of activism is a man who loves and courts attention with a Promethean zeal. You will arrange to meet with him in London. Let him feel that his opinion matters and that you're doing everything to heal the land. Assure him that things will return to normal.

Salam: What about Shiwo? He will stake his claims and Sowole will support him.

Masi: Forget about Shiwo! He will go the way of Sasha (9).

The above conversation between these two characters exposes the game of god-fatherism which has being a topical and heart throbbing issue in Nigerian polity. That has subjected opposition of the ruling party to experience perpetual failure in elections.

Purportedly, in the present Nigerian political situation, during the last presidential election conducted in 2015, there was a change, the political terrain of the country, the APC took over from PDP, and promised the masses the seven (7) point agenda and glorified the change mantra. Nevertheless, the populace is yet to experience this promised change. The unfulfilled promises leave the masses with the conclusion that the leadership of the present political party is nothing but the aggrieved members of the past ruling party in disguise, Same rats in different holes (one may say) just for the sake of gaining the votes of the populace, change of nomenclature and slogan were imported respectively. Another pathetic issue exposed in the dialogue between Salam and Masi is the tenure elongation decision made by just a single man for a whole country. What else is the true definition of bad governance? In a related context, O. P. Wariboko explains the resultant effect of bad governance by positing that:

Nigerians have been victims of bad governance. This has precipitated the alarming high rate of crime, militancy and terrorism. Individuals and groups have picked up arms to pursue their courses violently: Truly, the frustration aggression theory is playing out in Nigeria. Citizens are frustrated as a result of poor or bad governance and they react with aggression to meet their needs or force the government to attend to their need... (103).

From the above sayings, there is no gainsaying that the problem Nigeria faces today is orchestrated by Nigerian past leaders who still exercise influences on the present political dispensation as seen in the character of Masi who has transformed the Naijaland society into a private business or property. Secondly, because the recent and possibly future leaders may have same political ideology that politics is the easiest way to break off from abject poverty and appropriate public owned property into private one. It becomes a herculean task to decipher a party or person who has the interest of the masses at heart. Be that as it may, it is a celebrated discovery that the Nigerian society, having known where it pinches her, will one day, break the shackles of the few privileged leadership trend that is prevalently invoke and structure an egalitarian Nigeria full of opportunities for all.

Furthermore, the play at study brings to the forefront how political appointments are made in expense of the alleged ballot voting that is done publicly. Godfathers now stay at home and make selection of who will occupy political positions even before the election is conducted. This is could be seen in the dialogue of Pascal Amusu and his servant Odibo:

Amusu: We've gone a long way boy, and I take you as my son. I see tough day ahead boy. I fear my boy that things may get out of control.

Odibo: We'll survive sir . . . we always do.

Amusu: I hope so boy. Anyway, you may now go back to your people and begin your preparations towards becoming their Governor (45, 43).

Consequently, from the above dialogue, it is seen that Pascal Amusu pumped in huge sum of money to ensure victory for Odibo in his home state, though all proved abortive when the tribunal nullified his election, but in this light, the playwright did not mince words in showing the world what happens behind the scene of Nigeria's political system. Therefore, with this dramatic politico-criticism at hand, the masses will be able to seat back, brainstorm and come up with effective modalities to better the situation of the Nigerian society.

An Evaluation of Economic Extravagance in *A Parliament of Vultures*

At the mention of the term corruption, many seem not to have a clear understanding of it. But it is like a virus, spreading to every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society and the world at large. According to 2016 Transparency International (TI) reports, "For the fourth consecutive year, Nigeria has failed to rise in Transparency International's Corruption Perception ranking" (www.punchng.com). In further disclosure, Transparency International reports that Nigeria ranked 136 out of 176 corrupt countries in the world in the year 2016. Aspects of these corrupt practices are exposed in the play under study. The rate at which public fund is appropriated into individual fund is also captured. This is manifest in the dialogue that ensued among the characters thus:

Habamero: This is only to kick start the day we shall move from here to the Hilton. My special assistant has already made reservations for us...

Brown and Jossy: Up speaker

Madam: Wait! Are we not entitled to inconvenience allowance? I mean, for eating out or sleeping out. What are parliamentarians for?

Brown: You know, she's very correct. Madam Hoha!

Madam: I'm fine.

Jossy: I support the proposition in toto.

Habamero: By the powers invested on me as Speaker of the House, and Chairman of this Assembly, I approve the sum of two million naira for each member as inconvenience allowance.

All: Great Speaker.

Habamero: We shall cover it officially by calling for an emergency meeting of the Political Affairs Committee at the Hilton (26-27).

The playwright being a political activist, in his quest to better the society through his dramatic arts has done well in showing the masses, just like a mirror, the unpardonable sins that are committed by most political office holders. O. C. Israel posits: "Many destinies had been terminated; many prestigious positions forfeited and many lives lost, as a result of abdicating responsibility and abusive use of position" (66). The aftermath of the abusive use of power by the leaders is a big threat to teeming Nigerian youths, to the economic growth of the nation, to the security of lives and property of the citizens and so on. Habamero, a character in the play under study is a good representation of some Nigeria's leaders who have deluded themselves into believing that the people who voted them into

office are stark illiterates who are easily bought over with bags of salt, clothes, umbrellas and some wands of naira notes. This same derision that exists between the rulers and the ruled has given rise to economic recession, unemployment, robbery, kidnapping and many other social vices. When the stipends that ought to be in circulation is amassed by those in power, the masses are hard-pressed to suffer untold hardship. Furthermore, the following dialogue of Habamero, Brown and Madam exposes and re-emphasises their nonchalant behaviour towards the welfare of the common men.

Madam: They can't do anything. They can only talk, the best way to deal with a man who talks much without any action is to ignore him.

Brown: By the way, what does the public know? Who tells the public what it hears?

Habamero: We shall organise a party for pressmen. Call it press conferences if you like, and follow it up with refreshments and appropriate brown envelopes. That will be at the Hilton. Tell them they can sleep over night if they like. After all, we can book the whole rooms in the Hilton in case of eventuality. Nkechi can come with her young friends and chat up the journalists then everything will be reported as we deem fit (28-29).

The conversation among these government top leaders in the play understudy cannot in any way be found wanting in the Nigeria's polity as they devise strategies on how to deceptively cover their corrupt practices. Relatively, the play further unfolds more corrupt practices in the dialogue of Madam and other parliamentarians:

Madam: Wait. I have something to add, you know that my daughter, Nky baby, has been doing a painstaking job for us. And she has no car.

Brown: She can charter a taxi and keep it for a whole day.

Madam: That is not enough. She needs her own car...

Habamero: (*Who has been busy writing*) Ok. It is settled. Nky baby.

Nkechi: Sir.

Habamero: Take these papers. Give it to the Director of the establishment whose name is on it. He will give you a brand new Honda Accord for your use. Approved?

All: Approved (30-31).

The act of purchasing a Honda Accord for Nkechi in the above dialogue and given her the privilege to do painstaking job is as a result of her mother's intellectual ineptitude. Instead of following the right protocol in selecting the Secretarial Personnel, "Madam" presses on, to ensure that her daughter is appointed to do the work on her behalf. This exposition is indeed pathetic and ear tingling to hear that a parliamentarian is occupying a public office without the prerequisite knowledge and the intellectual capability to do the work entrusted into his/her hand. It is a gross affront to the society that he/she claims to represent. These are some of the major contributors of the depreciations in economy that

the Nigerian society experiences from time to time. It is on this foregoing that, Nyigide quoting Acholonu, opines thus:

Our collective predicament is both caused and compounded by our societal ills, as many Nigerian leaders seem to be careless about the welfare of the ruled majority. The many developmental problems facing Nigeria today include the fact of a disintegrated bourgeoisie or middle class, the near-collapse of our Socio-Cultural and Political System and Structures, seriously weakened by the roles of many of our incompetent, dishonest, corrupt, selfish and unpatriotic leaders (142).

All through the play, the issue of misappropriation of fund is a re-occurring factor. In situation four (4), for Madam, Habamero and other top dignitaries to attend a thanksgiving service, a whopping sum of ten million naira is approved even when Ootobo opposes and sees it as a “Circus Show”. Such fund is approved just for the upkeep, purchasing of cloths and invitation of musical band players that will accompany them to the ceremony. From the words of Habamero, one can see that the money is shared among the leaders after Ootobo’s objection of approving such fund. Habamero explains the actual reason for approving such huge sum.

Habamero: You have seen, Honourable Ootobo, that ten million naira will not be adequate to take care of this business. The bulk of the money will be disbursed through the payment of inconvenience allowances to members for attending the thanksgiving service. Extra expense will be accrued through the making of appropriate dresses for members and hiring the music group. I therefore approve the sum of two million naira for this purpose. Approved?

All: (*Except Parker and Ootobo.*) Approved! (72).

Amidst the happenings in the two plays, the playwrights challenge the masses that are oppressed and humiliated, to wake up and fight for their rights. The above wakeup call could be seen as the core doctrine of Karl Marx. Also in the plays, the masses are seen taking radical and revolutionary action, waging war against the corrupt leaders, as such, buildings are set on fire. All these actions are clarion calls for change, in order to make Nigerian society better and fast track its development. The two plays analysed above have shown that stability in government is desired in the country and hence calls for restructuring of the leadership system. Power should be designated to different states of the federation, such as: (i) power to select their own police force that would take no bribe from the masses; (ii) power to make policies that would benefit their own people, and most importantly; and (iii) power for resource control and economic drive for the sustainability and development of the individual states of the federation.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The economic, political and cultural system of the Nigerian society, having been bedevilled by corrupt practices among public office holders still have residual potentials to restore her dignity. The playwrights being aware of this premise have taken it upon themselves to create this consciousness in the minds of the citizens. Bearing in mind the government's anti-responses to the suffering of the masses, the playwrights through their creations of artistic endeavours suggest or fashion out ways to provide succour to the masses, ensure adequate security, equitable distribution of resources, fight against corruption, which encapsulates siphoning of public fund and making private, public investments and so on. This drive has today taken a radical dimension in ensuring that the orchestrators of these ill happenings which have kept the Nigerian society in her sorry and recessive state must be exposed. From one electioneering period to another, promises are made to the masses without fulfilling them. Subsequently, some of the masses are lured with pecuniary enticements to be used as thugs and assassins during and after elections. Also, the masses suffer perpetual shame and humiliations as these top leaders use them as scapegoats just to achieve their selfish interest.

Therefore, to end this impending political, economic and leadership cataclysm threatening to exterminate the entire Nigerian, this paper advocates that both the rulers and the ruled should put hands on deck towards achieving a restructured political and economically revolutionised nation that will pave way for total eradication of recessions that Nigeria experiences prevalently in all her facets. The paper also preaches against the recycling of past corrupt leaders and advocates the emancipation of virile Nigerian youths into the leadership caucus, so as to engender the desired change that the masses clamour for especially in this recessed economy.

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