



**DISSECTING THE BITTER TRUTH ABOUT OUR POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP:
A STUDY OF EMEKA NWABUEZE'S A PARLIAMENT OF VULTURES**

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ABSTRACT: *In our contemporary Nigerian society, the mantle of leadership rests wholly in the hands of selfish mediocrities. The elites with positive intentions to redeem the nation are frustrated with politics. The shameless mediocrities in politics are daring and ready to maim in order to achieve their selfish aims hence the masses and unfortunate elites watch without action. Emeka Nwabueze, like other concerned Nigerians, believes that the trend needs to be changed. They believe that the only sure means to fight the malady is through satire and not with guns and matchets. In his A Parliament of Vultures, he vividly X-rayed the activities of the politicians and presented the same in such a way that people's consciousness would be awakened for corrections to be made. The researcher observed that Emeka Nwabueze got the inspiration for the play from society and therefore, in this research, the researcher aims to parse the facts about Nigerian polity as satirised in the play. In doing so, he considers the Realistic Approach as the apt theoretical framework for the work.*

KEYWORDS: Satire, Society, Politics, Play, Parliamentarian



INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

Habib, M.A.R. in his *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present: an Introduction* has disclosed that Realism, as an approach to literary criticism, came into existence in 1840 and it spread in many parts of Europe and America. According to him, the approach was made popular by Flaubert and Balzac in France, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in Russia, George Eliot and Charles Dickens in England, as well as William Dean Howells and Henry James in America. He clarifies that the most general aim of realism is to offer a truthful, accurate, and objective representation of the real world, both the external world and the human self. As he puts it,

To achieve this aim, realists resorted to a number of strategies: the use of detail; avoidance of what was imaginary and mythical; adherence to the requirements of probability; inclusion of characters and incidents from all social strata, dealing not merely with rulers and nobility; focusing on contemporary life rather than longing for some idealised past; and using colloquial idioms and everyday speech (169)

Habib emphasises in addition to the points so listed, the direct observation, factuality, and experience since the concept is a direct reaction against the idealisation, historical retrospection and imaginary worlds of Romanticism. Realism is all about the true picture of contemporary life as exemplified by Nwabueze in his *A Parliament of Vultures*. As a satire, Nwabueze has subtly exaggerated some facts but in all, the work is a realistic representation of the contemporary happening in Nigerian politics. A Nigerian reading the play appreciates it as he or she is only being reminded of what he or she is already aware of and a foreigner who reads it is given a real fact about how politics is played in the country.

A Parliament of Vultures as Satire

In his “Political Culture as Product of Social Constructs in Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures*,” Emeka Aniago says that through the play, *A Parliament of Vultures*, Nwabueze brings to the public domain the very serious social concerns in a bid to re-ignite the dexterity of their intellect, as a means of spurring their thinking abilities into action (69). Aniagu’s submission here is exactly what satire does – to spur into action for correction to be made. According to Chris Baldick in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, satire denotes a mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn. He makes it vivid that in the classical tradition, an important form of satire is the “formal” or the “direct” satire. Here, the writer directly addresses the reader (or recipient of a verse letter) with a satiric comment. On the other hand, he sees “indirect” satire as the alternative form of satire usually found in plays and novels and which allows us to draw our own conclusions from the actions of the characters. Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* falls under this category of satire. In his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams, M. H. discloses that indirect satire makes use of fictional characters to ridicule rather than using the personal pronoun “I” as in the case of direct satire. According to him, “The most common indirect form is that of a fictional narrative, in which the objects of the satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious by what they think, say, and do, and are sometimes made even more ridiculous by the author’s comments and narrative style (286). Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* is a play and through the actions and speeches of the fictional characters, the subject of the ridicule is made obvious. The aim of satire as evidenced



in *A Parliament of Vultures* is to correct impressions. Nigerian politicians are daring and ready to unleash mayhem when corrected or criticised. Concerned Nigerians, therefore, resort to satire as the only best means of attacking the prevailing ills. William Flint Thrall and Hibbard, A. Addison in their *A Handbook to Literature* had made it categorical that the essence of satire is not just to ridicule but to use laughter to correct impressions. They put it succinctly that satire uses humour and wit as tools with the aim that human institutions may be improved. This means that if a work of art only criticises without correcting its impression, such is not satire. In their own words, “If the critic simply abuses he is writing inventive; if he is personal and splenetic he is writing sarcasm; if he is sad and morose over the state of society he is writing irony or mere gloom (386). *A Parliament of Vultures* is, therefore, a political satire with almost all the features of indirect satire well blended by the author. In satirising the ills in our polity, Nwabueze has meticulously X-rayed hyperbolically, the misdemeanours of our politicians.

Women in Politics

In Nigeria and in many other parts of Africa, politics is seen as a dirty game. It is a dirty game, in the sense that decent people with positive intentions for society who are in politics are frustrated by the powers that be. During elections, wolves in human flesh are given tickets to run for various posts even as against the wish of the masses. Dubious men who have nothing to offer society go into politics just for their own selfish interests. In the contemporary era, women in large numbers have begun to join politics. Nothing is wrong with women being in politics. However, in Nigeria, women who join politics are not looked at as responsible wives.

In Nigeria, politics is lucrative and election into any position is usually not based on merit; an average politician believes that one should use what one has to get what one needs. Most times, women who join politics and who aspire to be elected to any post-offer their bodies to their sponsors. They are usually seen in many prominent hotels with affluent and prominent men and they tend to see their husbands as worthless. This is why men bluntly oppose their wives’ aspirations to join politics. This picture, Nwabueze vividly painted in the play. He uses Madam Omeaku as representing such Nigerian women in politics. Having joined politics, Madam Omeaku begins to see herself as superior to her husband. Her daughter, Nkechi is amazed by her recent attitude towards her husband. Madam Omeaku rants to her thus “... What do you know about politics?” she exemplifies the fact that she no longer values her husband when she vents, “You have started to tow the path of your father. To have a bushman for a husband is already too much. Yet, you must make me have a bush daughter on top of that” (8). Madam Omeaku never realised all the while that her husband was a bushman until she joined politics. Nwabueze uses Madam Omeaku to make it categorical how wayward most Nigerian women become as soon as they join politics. Madam Omeaku further says to her daughter, “I married your father when my eyes were not yet open” (8). The audience understands perfectly well that politics abysmally corrupt women. Since she joins politics as a member of the parliament, Madam Omeaku no longer has any iota of regard for her husband. She begins to welcome male lecherous politicians to her house with impunity. Bob Brown, a male parliamentarian is one of them. Having visited her in her husband’s house the first time, he complains about how difficult it was for him to locate the compound. Madam Omeaku, without regard, tells him that her husband is a bushman.

Nwabueze is of the opinion that women should remember their responsibilities in society and shun politics which in Nigeria in particular, is a major agent of corruption. He believes that most women are too docile and gullible and that when they join politics, they easily get



brainwashed to flirt around with other men. He makes it vivid that as soon as they begin to mingle with the male politicians, they tend to disparage their husbands. Brown visiting her in her house, consolidates the fact. He eulogises her beauty and Madam Omeaku is willing to offer whatever to him not putting into consideration, the fact that she is a married woman. She sees her husband as worthless and when Brown tells her how beautiful she is, she is delighted. Brown understands that she is succumbing to his woos and he says to her, “Your husband is very foolish....” (13). Ordinarily, no woman would delight to have her husband insulted by anybody but Madam Omeaku believes that her eyes had been opened by politics and that she has seen that indeed, her husband is no longer her match. At this point, Mr Omeaku comes in and is surprised to see a male visitor in his house with his wife. He demands to know who the man is and all he receives from his wife is a diatribe. When Mr Omeaku demands to know who the man with his wife is, Madam Omeaku disrespectfully responds to him before her visitor, “Who is who? Isn’t it enough that you disturbed our discussion? And now you ask me “Who’s that”?” (13).

To further remind him that a great disparity now exists between them, she commands her husband to walk into his room and remove his clothes which she describes as his ancient coat. Mr Omeaku reminds her that he is her husband and that she should mind how she talks to him. At this point, Madam Omeaku makes it clear to him that they are no longer equal. Politics has corrupted her and she now sees herself as a first-class citizen far above her husband. She sardonically reminds her husband that they are no longer compactable when she says to him, “Is that how you talk to an Honourable member of parliament?” (13).

Nwabueze is of the view that women should be role models to their children. From inception, women are helpers to men in families and their primary role was to take care of the home and children. However, in contemporary African society, politics has initiated an aberration so that women now rub shoulders with their husbands. Nwabueze believes that when women derail in their responsibilities, things fall apart in their homes. Madam Omeaku becomes a bad influence in the home. Mr Omeaku comes home and sees his daughter dressed shabbily to the delight of her mother. Mr Omeaku frowns at this but his wife dares the daughter not to answer her father. (16). She eulogises her daughter and quickly reminds her husband that she has become the breadwinner of the family. However, Nwabueze is of the opinion that whatever a woman achieves in life is made possible by her husband. This is well demonstrated using Mr Omeaku and his wife. When Madam Omeaku begins to brag, Mr Omeaku quickly says to her, “You built your business on my gratuity. You couldn’t have had the Wayside Hotel if I hadn’t parted ways with my gratuity” (16).

Misappropriation of Public Funds

The reason why every Dick, Tom and Harry jumps into politics and aspires to be elected to political power is not that they want to contribute meaningfully to society but because they want to enrich themselves to the detriment of the masses. Wealthy businessmen become political godfathers to many people whom they sponsor to vie for elected positions. They spend heavily campaigning for them because they know that eventually when their political godsons win the election, they would gain a million folds what they had spent to plant the person. Nigeria is blessed with a lot of resources which when well harnessed, would be enough to elevate the country but selfish rulers amass the wealth among themselves. In *A Parliament of Vultures*, Nwabueze discloses that it is not a fallacy to say that Nigerian lawmakers carry money home with enormous Ghana-must-go bags. They go to the parliament only to discuss



how to amass the country's resources. Brown tells Madam Omeaku that a lot needs to be changed about her now that she is a member of the parliament. In his own words, "Politics is no child's play. You will even do your shopping in London or New York, or even Rome" (12). Nwabueze, like other aggrieved Nigerians, alleges that the lawmakers in Nigeria only converse to talk about frivolities and to squander the public fund. Madam Omeaku makes a motion that the parliamentarians are entitled to an inconvenience allowance. She emphasises that their major responsibility as parliamentarians was to enrich themselves thus, "What are we parliamentarians for?" All the members of the parliament support the motion of Madam Omeaku and the chairman of the parliament immediately approves the whopping sum of two million naira for each parliamentarian as his or her inconvenience allowance (26). To further expose the show of shame of the parliamentarians, the chairman, Habamero passes the motion that they shall authenticate the bill by officially calling for an Emergency meeting of the Political Affairs Committee at the Hilton hotel where more funds shall be squandered (27).

To be able to achieve their selfish aims without any obstacle, the parliamentarians weed off members of the parliament who they see as hindrances. Dr Parkers, an international political guru and Otobo have good intentions in the parliament but they are frustrated when the corrupt parliamentarians discover that their continued membership in the parliament will be a hindrance to their selfish desires. Otobo's dialogue with Dr Parkers clearly consolidates the fact that the parliamentarians only aim to milk the country dry. Otobo says to Parker, "... And when you were spotted during the American tour, you thought you were honestly called to return and serve the nation? But I know what they thought of you. They felt that they needed somebody who would help them to transfer their loot abroad. When you started talking about accountability, they wrote you off..." (35). This is exactly what happens in Nigerian politics. Recently, the selfish and corrupt people in the executive arm of the Nigerian government see the controversial Senator Dino Melaye as a threat to their selfishness. Like the Parliamentarians in Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* ousted Parkers, Senator Melaye is always been abused, a way of trying to get him frustrated out of the Senate. Melaye has always criticised the maladies in the government and he has, on many occasions, been ignominiously abused.

Neglect of the Teachers:

Teachers are builders of society and an aphorism has it that any society without teachers is in perpetual darkness. Nwabueze observes with dismay, the abysmal neglect of the teachers by the government. Teachers, despite their herculean task to educate and enlighten the citizenry of society to ensure the continued existence of society, are only paid a peanut. In most cases, they are owed for months. Nwabueze through Madam Omeaku vividly gives a pathetic picture of how poorly the Nigerian government treats the teachers. Teachers are supposed to be paid the highest wage for their onerous tasks but the reverse is the case. When Mr Omeaku reminds his wife that she became rich through his thirty-five years of efforts as a teacher, she quickly mocks him by x-raying the poor condition of Nigerian teachers. According to her, "What was such a service worth, Mr Omeaku? Thirty-five years as a teacher in a primary school. What is such service worth in the present age" (17)? She makes it obvious that teachers are worth nothing in the country and that they have no wherewithal to do whatever they want to do because of the meagre salary they are paid. She adds that if she had not brought him out from the village, he couldn't have smelt township life in all his days of life (17). Government neglect of the teachers is further made resounding on page 71. While the parliamentarians are busy devising means of sharing the government resources among themselves, Mr Brown suggests that they make a budget of ten million naira for their flamboyant dresses for thanksgiving. This



amount, the parliamentarians see as being too infinitesimal and Madam Omeaku rejects the estimate as she sardonically says, "... Are we teachers? This parliament cannot afford to be as miserly as teachers. Nonsense!

Members of the parliament squash that the money ought to be used to improve the welfare of the teachers. In order that their ill intentions are actualised, they always evict responsible members of the parliament who would have vehemently opposed their sinister intentions. Having agreed among themselves that they would appear aristocratic at the thanksgiving through their kind of lavish wears, the chairman of the parliament, Habamero says:

You have seen, Honourable Otobo, 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 expenses will be accrued through the making of appropriate dresses for members, and hiring the music group. I, therefore, approve the sum of two billion naira for this purpose. Approved? (72)

This lofty arrangement appals Parkers and Otobo who quickly object to the proposal. The two argue that the resources ought to be channelled into something positive in society and the chairman quickly overrules the matter and the members make caricatures of the two responsible persons in the parliament. Madam Omeaku says, laughing heartily, "Do you blame them? They are not used to good things" (73).

Otobo and Parkers who are in the parliament to genuinely work for the masses, opt to abscond than be in the parliament and watch aberrations happen. Madam Omeaku gladly says "Mr Chariman, this will increase our allowance. We're not going to reduce the budget because some people who are allergic to enjoyment have opted out (73). This statement of Madam Omeaku quickly reveals the ill intentions of the parliamentarians; they are not there to represent the people who voted them in but they are there simply to enrich themselves. Concerned Nigerians bemoan the corrupt practices of our elected and political leaders who rather than fight for the interest of the masses that elected them, prefer to milk the society dry. Uche Nnyagu fiercely harangues them in his *To Unknown Destination*. Uche Ogbuagu, a popular opera artist in one of his performances, criticises our elected senators and legislators whom he regards as being wicked and greedy.

Nwabueze agrees completely with Ogbuagu that our elected leaders are wicked and selfish when he makes it vivid in his play that they aim to swindle the nation and subject the people who get them to power to perpetual suffering. Each time there is a transition in the government of the nation, the new government talks of recovering lots of the past administration. The loot is always deposited in foreign banks. It seems to have become the tradition in the nation that once one is elected into an elevated position, the first thing is to loot the nation and transfer the loot to foreign accounts. Nigeria is rich but the wealth goes into the pockets of the few top political and government officials while the masses suffer and wallow in abject penury. Brown laments that Dr Parkers fail to live up to their ill expectations. He tells Madam Omeaku that the reason for bringing Parkers into politics is to help them transfer their loot to foreign banks. He says to her, "Having lived in the United States of America for more than fifteen years, we felt he should have enough connections to help us put money in foreign banks. After all, what was the worth of his campaign (10)? He, at this point, consolidates the fact that election in Nigeria is not based on merit; it is always grossly rigged. He says, "Fortunately, the Returning Officer was my classmate. It wasn't difficult for me to negotiate the right figures for him as I



did in your own case (10). This is a real fact about elections in Nigeria. During elections, many people refuse to vote on the ground that their votes do not count. During the Presidential election that ushered President Mohammad Buhari in as the President of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2015, it was obvious to all and sundry that the election was grossly rigged. This has been the custom in Nigeria and it is pathetic. That is why Nwabueze is X-raying it here for correction to be taken.

The Role of Women in an Ideal Home

Women are home builders. This is why in Igbo, married women are addressed as *Odozi Aku* or *Ochekwa Aku* – Preservers of Wealth. Men are breadwinners of their various homes and women, no matter how well placed, must be under their husbands. Families are interesting and enjoyable when members of the family live up to their expectations. In modern African society, women, irrespective of their level of civilisation, obey God's injunction and they still humble themselves to their husbands. Ifeoma Okoye vivifies this in her *Behind the Clouds* using the character – Ije Apia. Ije Apia is well educated in an elevated western university. She has lived abroad for many years and when she marries Dozie, she humbles herself and never seeks equality with him.

From creation, according to the book of Genesis, women are created out of man. The scripture records that God took a rib from the first man whom he caused to fall into a deep sleep. With the rib, God created the woman and enjoins her to be a helper to the man and to humble herself before him. As helpers in their various homes, Nwabueze believes that when they derelict from their divine responsibilities, things would fall apart. Things begin to fall apart in the family of Omeaku when Madam Omeaku begins to neglect her duties and aspires to be above her husband. Nwabueze makes it clear to the audience that women tend to exhibit different traits when they assume the responsibilities of men. Madam Omeaku has been living with her husband with little or no qualms. Madam Omeaku joins politics; she becomes a Parliamentarian and she begins to see herself as superior to her husband. The Igbo saying that any society governed by a woman is in a mess is made obvious by Nwabueze on page 16. Madam Omeaku forgets so soon that Mr Omeaku's salary, no matter how meagre as a teacher, has been sustaining the family. She becomes a parliamentarian and she sees herself as a demigod to be worshipped by her husband. She abandons her responsibilities as a woman and takes control of the family. She buys flamboyant wears for her daughter whom she wants to use to attain a height in her political aspiration. Mr Omeaku is amazed to see his daughter wearing skimpy clothes and practices cat walking under the supervision of his wife. Mr Omeaku asks to know what is happening and Madam Omeaku shuns Nkechi, "Shut up, Nkechi. You don't have to answer every question. Don't you know that you're now grown up" (16)? This appals Mr Omeaku. He asks, "Do you mean that my daughter should not answer my question? What's this house turning into?" Mr Omeaku is aware that things begin to fall apart when his wife assumes the responsibility of the man. He understands the meaning of the Igbo aphorism that a dog trained by a woman would always eat eggs hence, he bemoans that "I can't allow you to misuse my daughter as you misused yourself." At this point, Madam Omeaku quickly insults him thus, "You should be ashamed of yourself. I don't blame you, anyway. Go ahead and insult me. If I hadn't fed you these last six years, you couldn't have been alive to call me names (16).

Mr Omeaku absolutely loses the respect and love of his wife to the parliamentarians. He observes that his wife has become a whore, flirting with male parliamentarians. Thus, he meets Dr Parkers and Otobo and vents his anger on the lecherous parliamentarians.



You people are condoning evil in this parliament. You people are elected to pilot the affairs of our land not to destroy families. (*raises his voice*) You people should check the amorous affair between that stupid Mr Brown and my legal wife. Did you hear that? Legal wife! (40)

Nwabueze is of the opinion that when the character of one of the spouses becomes abysmally unbearable, it seriously affects the other. Mr Omeaku has borne the ill behaviour of his wife since she joined politics and he resorts to drinking as a way of coping with the stress. Recall that as a teacher, Omeaku has been a responsible person. That is why he has been able to save from the peanut he was receiving as a salary to maintain his home. We often hear some “innocent” men turned perpetual drunk say that the condition of their home put them in this condition. This fact is consolidated by the action of Mr Omeaku, an erstwhile gentleman whose home was peaceful before his wife became a parliamentarian. What probably aggravates the whole thing is the fact that his cherished daughter, Nkechi is awfully corrupted by his wife. When he can no longer bear the peril, he resorts to drinking. Drinking, no doubt, gives even the taciturn men the courage to speak their minds without fear. Being inebriated, Mr Omeaku goes to the parliament to lash them. When he comes, the parliamentarians are busy as usual, sharing the public fund among themselves.

Nwabueze uses Mr Omeaku to give a true picture of what our parliamentarians do in the parliament as Mr Omeaku, as drunk, staggers all through as he lashes them thus, “So this is what you people are doing?” He calls the ignominious parliamentarians vultures and the parliament, he calls a parliament of vultures for eating the nation to death, leaving nothing for the masses to quench their thirst” (31).

The Problem with the Masses

Nigeria is wealthy. According to Wikipedia.org, Nigeria is referred to as the “Giant of Africa”, owing to its large population and economy”. Nigeria is blessed with lots of mineral resources. The pathetic thing about Nigeria is that management of the affair of the country is in the hands of mediocrities. In his *A Man of the People*, Chinua Achebe vivifies the genesis of the problem of Nigeria to be selfish and irresponsible Nigerians taking over the mantle of leadership. Nigerians, as Achebe has disclosed, are brainwashed to believe in the sweet lies of the selfish politicians who promise the masses heaven and earth just to get their support. The politicians, when they are voted to power, become rather beasts. In Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures*, corrupt and selfish people are perpetually voted to power by the poor and gullible masses. The people with positive intentions for society are not voted for because they do not share money with the masses. Illiterate, corrupt and selfish individuals who are moneybags, share money with the hungry masses to buy their conscience. The masses praise them and they are willing and ready to vote for them irrespective of the fact that they have got absolutely nothing to offer society. The masses believe that any politician who gives them money during politics is the person they will support during the election. They thus, turn their backs on the genuine politicians who have shared no money with them. During politics, politicians use sinister bickering to demean the sages in the politics. Nwabueze makes this fact very glaring when Ashili brainwashes the masses by casting aspersions at them just to win sentiment. Dr Parkers and Otobo who mean good for society are presented as devils to the too-docile masses. Madam Omeaku, a stack illiterate and avaricious dupe and her cohorts who are ready to milk the society dry are held in high esteem because they have offered the poor masses some money. Ashili tells them to forget Dr Parkers and Otobo because they haven’t given them any money. He says to them, “I tell you, my people, what you eat is what you get from politics” (38).



The masses shout their support for Madam Omeaku and her team. In the play, the setting, Anioma stands for Nigeria. Ashili, as the campaign manager, is encouraged to speak further with vigour,

“My good people of Anioma, what you eat is what you get from politics. Now is the time for a little less talk and a little more action. (*Dips his right hand into his pocket, brings out a wad of currency notes and raises it high for the crowd to see*) This is the courtesy of Madam Omeaku” (39).

The masses shout in one voice that Madam Omeaku is their man. This is a typical example of how politics is played in Nigeria. The powers that be in Nigerian parliament are aware of the incapability of the people they plant to power. But for their own selfish interests, they impose the gullible fools they can always manipulate. Madam Omeaku is known to the parliamentarians as an “ignoramus” as observed by Jossy who says, “My concern is Madam Omeaku’s educational status” (29). Madam Omeaku quickly exposes the fact that parliamentarians in the country are only game payers. She knows that she is not educated and she still vies for the position of secretary. In her argument, she says, “What does the secretary do that anybody cannot do? I shall remember what’s been discussed, put them in the way we members of the inner circle will like it...” By this statement, Nwabueze makes it clear that the people we elected to certain political positions are only interested in what interests them and not those who have elected them to power.

Even the so-called men of God are today deeply involved in politics not just to sanctify it but to enrich their pockets. Because of the lucrative nature of Nigerian politics, many charlatans go by the nomenclature “Men of God” to have open access to politics to amass wealth. The so-called men of God who should act as gadflies to put the excesses of the politicians to check are rather, the people helping to abet evil. Reverend Jossy aided in ousting Dr Parkers, Otobo and other good people from politics. The Parliamentary Secretary is overthrown just because he does not support the sinister plans of the corrupt and illiterate Parliamentarians. Reverend Jossy is in the conspiracy. Brown says, “We can’t consolidate the ruler-ship of this parliament unless we also remove the Parliamentary Secretary. He’s very fond of Dr Parkers.... (28) In her illiteracy, Madam Omeaku is elected the Secretary. Habamero reminds them that having Madam Omeaku as the secretary is in their own interest for as he puts it, “With this method, we can control parliamentary decisions, and deal with Dr Parkers and his group. Idiot. He doesn’t know that the place for academics is in the university. And when we incapacitate him, Mr Otobo, his accomplice, is reduced to nothing (30). With this submission by Habamero, the audience understands that sages are abhorred in the Nigerian parliament. The Parliamentarians are comfortable when all of them are illiterates and they reason alike. The presence of well-meaning people in the parliament is seen by them as an obstacle against their evil intention. During their sittings, Parliamentarians are busy talking about what to do to appease their retinue of girlfriends. At their regular lofty hotel parties, they pay an incredible sum to get call girls to romance their back. Miss Nkechi Omeaku is given the contract for getting young university girls for them. This is where the enormous Nigerian wealth goes into and the country is left undeveloped. Madam Omeaku reminds the Parliamentarians of the need to get a car for her daughter, Nkechi whom they have been using for their selfish interest. Without ado, the request is approved and she is offered a brand-new Honda Accord.

There is no orderliness in the Parliament, the Parliamentarians act without decorum. During their sittings, Habamero acts with impunity and when Dr Parkers calls him to order, without



decorum, he commands him, “Sit down, Dr Parkers” (46). With the support of the chairman, the Parliamentarians who see the presence of Dr Parkers and Otobo as a hindrance to their ills, insult them. Dr Parkers tells them the simple truth that the Parliamentarians should not start the meeting in absence of the Secretary, oblivious to the fact that everything is simply stage-managed, Reverend Jossy and Madam Omeaku harangue him. Instead of calling Jossy and Madam Omeaku to order, the Chairman instead, supports them. It only dawns on Dr Parkers that everything has been preplanned when the Parliamentarians insist that the sitting would hold and they nominate and approve Madam Omeaku as the Secretary of the parliament.

Appointment of Key Posts

A society or an organisation thrives when dynamic, intelligent and resourceful people are given the opportunity to showcase their talents. Many countries are developed today because their leaders are resourceful and focused. Nwabueze gives the major reason why Nigeria has remained backward and underdeveloped to be bad leadership. The play aptly relays the pathetic fact about contemporary Nigeria that only mediocrities are at the helm of leadership of the country. He sees this fact as the reason for the poor state of the nation. The illiterates in the administration of Nigeria are comfortable working with fellow illiterates and they see the presence of elites among them as a threat. This is why they have fought doggedly to frustrate Otobo and Dr Parkers. The mediocrities at the helm of leadership, as is the case in contemporary Nigeria, appoint fellow mediocrities to key posts. The Parliamentarians deliberate the appointment of chairmen of various boards. Dr Parkers nominates a sage and a veteran lawyer who could have served well as the chairman of the board of the Vegetable Oil Company but the parliamentarians vehemently oppose the nomination and rather opt for an illiterate whom they could control. As the name of the proposed candidate sounds, one understands immediately the message of the playwright here. Madam Omeaku suggests Alhaji Sir Barawo Oleh who sells vegetable oil at Gelegele market. The word “Barawo” in the Hausa language means “Thief” and likewise “Ole”, in the Yoruba language. This immediately gives a true picture of who is in the leadership of the nation. The fact that the proposed candidate is a vegetable oil seller, without any trace of educational background, consolidates the fact that illiterates are at the helm of leadership of the nation.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact well acknowledged that for whatever problem to be solved, the cause of the problem needs to be identified. This is the belief of satire, to expose the ills in the society, individual, religion or politics and then proffer solution. The playwright has meticulously selected his diction which coheres with the message he aims to pass across. An average Nigerian reading the play is simply reminded, in a funny way, of what he or she already knew and a non-Nigerian reader is given a true picture of how politics is played in the country.

Nwabueze has been able to identify the problems with Nigeria. He understands that identifying the problems without proffering the solutions to forestall the repeat of the problem is nothing but a futile effort. He, therefore, reminds the prospective politicians that whatever goes up will eventually come down; there is punishment for whatever crime. While the selfish parliamentarians are busy planning how to further ransack the remaining wealth of the nation, the aggrieved hungry masses revolt. The playwright gives vivid illustrations of the plights the



parliamentarians find themselves in. This is made known by the parliament chairman who says, “Are we going to stay here and get roasted alive? They are setting the building on fire!” (113). The play discloses that the parliamentarians try to rush through the door, but it is too late. A group of militant youths rush into the House, singing war songs. They arrest the honourable members and proceed to tie them up with ropes... (113). The playwright, while vivifying that it is better to carry out any responsibility well and be free from any perpetual agony, at last, suggests that revolution is a sure solution to the problem of this nation.

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