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# Corruption as a Perennial Theme in Nigerian Literature

*Psalms Chinaka*

## ABSTRACT

Literature in its form is not only about oral or written artistry, it equally encapsulates nonfictional writings including works with autobiographical elements. In this study, the comparison of a fictional and nonfictional narrative enforces the interface of both genres and also accentuates the verisimilitudinous qualities encapsulated in fictional writings. The subject under study is the question of the enigmatic nature of corruption in Nigeria. Through a sociological approach, the study comparatively evaluated some of the archetypal characters in Festus Iyayi's *The Contract*, a fictional text, with those in Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's *Corruption is Dangerous*, a nonfictional text. The presentation of both author's storyline provides a comparative background in terms of characterization and theme. The essay argued that corruption in Nigeria has become a phenomenon that has been viciously animated by Nigerian public servants who are vulnerable to the frenzy of unethical acquisition of wealth; this compulsion has bracketed and confined Nigerians within a system of savagery. In other words, the archetypal behavioral pattern of all the identified characters in Iyayi and Okonjo-Iweala's fictive and non-fictive narratives, not only revealed the vulnerability of the characters in terms of baiting, compulsion and indulgence in corrupt and criminal practices, but equally exposes the implication of the exploitative actions of these public administrators at the detriment of the collective wellbeing of the people. In its conclusion, the study proposed that unlike Ogie's failed reformatory posture in *The Contract*, Nigerian leaders must, like Okonjo-Iweala, be compelled to devise a sustainable political will capable of re-ordering the fate of the state by reviewing the transparency strategies and policies in the Nigerian constitution, placing it above self.

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# Corruption as a Perennial Theme in Nigerian Literature

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## ABSTRACT

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*sustainable political will capable of re-ordering the fate of the state by reviewing the transparency strategies and policies in the Nigerian constitution, placing it above self.*

## I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND DEFINITION

The peculiar nature of this mode of comparative literary scholarship foregrounds the enforcement of the concept of verisimilitude in order to emphasize the sensitive nature of the subject at hand. The scope of the study is extended beyond fiction so as to appreciate the essence of literature not only as written works with artistic value, but also, to appreciate it from an etymological or a much more general perspective. In other words, literature, according to Joseph Nwachukwu-Agbada, can also appear in the form of "written or printed material ... books on history, chemistry, navigation, sociology, economics, geography ... Articles and monographs ..." (373). Ultimately, literature is not only about artistry but can also be experienced in nonfictional writings such as works with autobiographical elements. Therefore, in this discourse, the comparison of a fictional and nonfictional narrative will not only underscore some of the elements bridging the two fields, but will also accentuate the verisimilitudinous qualities encapsulated in fictional writings. No subject demands such comparative approach in the Nigerian literary history than corruption. This is true since it is apparent that Nigeria's lengthy and troubled history in her nationhood has failed to outlive corruption, a term Stanley Igwe identifies as "one of many social pathologies ravaging Africa" (88).

Igwe defines corruption as “any organized, interdependent system in which parts of the system are either not performing their duties as ethically expected or are performing them improperly to the detriment of the system’s original purpose” (88). Within the first epoch of Nigeria’s history, the pioneer writers were able to diagnose or observe corruption as a postcolonial phenomenon which is exemplified in Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*. Sequel to this publication, Nigeria’s historiography recorded a substantial number of fictional and nonfictional works on the subject from 1960 to date.

The two texts selected for this study, one fictional and the other with autobiographical elements, are considered to be significantly representational as a result of their incisive nature. In other words, Iyayi’s text is a suitable example of a fictional work that focuses on a very sensitive and problematic Nigerian social condition, while Okonjo-Iweala’s text corroborates this fact in reality. In this context, Iyayi’s *The Contract* represents the corpus of fictional texts that present characters who irrespective of their peculiar circumstances and socio-political statuses have recurrently become archetypal in Nigerian fiction. In other words, Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, Alhaji Chief Senator Suleiman Wagada, Chief Koko and T.C. Kobino in Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, can be critically deconstructed as characters who exhibit a pattern of acquisitive predisposition as other characters in other fictional works like Chief Obala in Iyayi’s *The Contract*, Chief and Queen Obofun in Iyayi’s *Violence*, Chief Ikaki, Chief Opala, Gabriel Akassa (the Amanayabo) in Chimeka Garricks’ *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, and Brigadier Otunshi in Iyayi’s *Heroes* who dispatches his troops in a suicidal mission on the eve of their payday and found other reasons to summarily execute the few that made it back. The only major difference in these novels is how the peculiarity of each plot yields the sum total of its own events.

More so, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala’s text represents the corpus of nonfictional narratives focusing on corruption as subject matter. In the discussion,

there is also an attempt to prove the recurrence of these archetypal characters in Nigeria’s nonfictional texts too, even though in some cases some of them remain faceless and anonymous. For instance, such archetypal characters like Iyayi’s Brigadier Otunshi in *Heroes* can be identified in a similar autobiographical narrative as that of Major Debo Basorun’s *Honour for Sale* in which he writes:

The corruption fever was so high that officers in the field would abandon their troops without leadership for days or even weeks rather than be left out of the bonanza. While this barefaced-roguery was to a great extent responsible for turning the army into an embodiment of inertia, it was however not the only way through which dirty money could be made in large amounts. (109).

Corruption in Nigeria has become so endemic that Ebenezer Babatope, one of Nigeria’s social critics, could not help but conclude that “Nigeria has been an alternate name for corruption” (7). Achebe is even more forthright in his view, stating that “Nigeria ... is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun” (*The Trouble*, 11). The implication of such image can then be conveyed with Fela Durotoye’s popular quote that, “ordinary citizens of a great nation will forever be treated better than successful citizens of a failed country” (<https://www.straightfromnaija.com>). In other words, the protracted nature of corruption in the Nigerian social context, as Babatope and Achebe’s statements imply, has become an existential threat to Nigerians in the diaspora, like the biblical mark of rejection imprinted on the forehead of Cain in the book of Genesis.

From a historical perspective, critics like Achebe believe that the seed of corruption in Nigeria, was implanted during the colonial era. Achebe makes this point through the story of Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease*. Elsewhere, he emphasizes this same point by stating that it was only but a matter of time after the colonialists “left” that, “Within six

years of this tragic colonial manipulation Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule (*There was a Country* 51). In consonance with Achebe's view, Charles Nnolim also believes that the history of corruption in Nigeria should be traced to the act of colonialism which introduced new social values to those Nigerians who failed, "not because of indiscipline or inner depravity but because, caught in the vortex of inexorable historical changes, they read the signs wrongly or upside down, and held on a moment too long, to the status quo, and got swept away in the unrelenting eddies of history" (228).

The significant timeline between Iyayi and Okonjo-Iweala's publications in which corruption yet remains an inefaceable national threat may perhaps justify Achebe and Babatope's earlier comments which some critics may find derisive.

## II. A COMPARATIVE READING OF THE TEXTS

The driving force of corruption in Iyayi's *The Contract* revolves around the multi-million-naira Ogbe City Council contract in Benin City by Ogie, Chief Eweh Obala's son, contractors and other government functionaries. The story exposes how these stakeholders are intensely desirous to steal Nigeria's resources in vicious ways. Such acquisitive frenzy to loot the national treasury is what Grace Okereke conceptualizes as "grabmania" (434), a term that exemplifies the nature of embezzlement by Nigerian politicians. Elsewhere, Achebe in his conversation with Ernest and Pat Emenyonu, describes the act as a syndrome of "grab and keep" (36). Okonjo-Iweala's own account of her personal experience with Nigerian corrupt officials, according to Gordon Brown is "Fearless, principled, compassionate for Africa's poor and passionate for Africa's future" (Blurb). Her text is a nonfictional revelation of how she fought what she calls "a small kleptocratic ruling elite" (xvii). The notion one gets at the end of the text is in a sense suggestive of a nation state turned into a political sea of corruption teeming with all sorts of

cold-blooded creatures desperately questing for wealth through frightening orchestrated circumstances as is the case with the abduction of her mother. The "small kleptocratic ruling elite" include the Nigerian governors whom she thus describes: "Nigeria's group of thirty-six state governors is powerful" (55). There are also the legislators who are equally powerful. Her words: "If governors were a tough political group to deal with, federal legislators were hardly easy. They are indispensable in the budget process and it was in that context that difficult battles took place on budget process and content" (71).

Okonjo-Iweala's account shares a lot in common with Iyayi's fictional account. From a thematic perspective, both narratives center on the enigmatic nature of corruption in Nigeria. The plots of both texts are weaved around Ogie in *The Contract* and Okonjo-Iweala in *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, respectively. Iyayi tells the story of Ogie from a third person point of view while Okonjo-Iweala tells her own story from the first person point of view. Each plot exposes exaggerated contract figures, fabricated contracts and poorly executed contracts, all designed and manipulated by two major sets of actors – corrupt government officials and corrupt contractors. They both describe the negative consequences of corruption and its implication before the Nigerian people. They both expose the strategies of the corrupt characters in the system. Their plots are interestingly filled with suspense and intrigues, but also disaster for Nigeria. They share gloomy endings.

In terms of characterization, both texts deal with binary conflicting forces. In terms of differences in their structure, Okonjo-Iweala's text can be classified as an autobiographical account while Iyayi's text is an artistic enactment of the same Nigerian corrupt system. By training, both key characters (Ogie and Okonjo-Iweala) are presented as individuals who have undergone foreign education and orientation which lay more emphasis on the individual's integrity. In the end of both stories, Ogie in *The Contract*, differs in some significant ways from Okonjo-Iweala in

*Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*. Even though they are both disposed toward ensuring a reformatory process in Nigeria's socio-economic system, even though they are presented as resolute, assertive and idealistic, Okonjo-Iweala succeeds where Ogie fails. She is able to sustain the focus of her mission irrespective of her adversaries till the end of her story. Unlike Okonjo-Iweala, Ogie is unable to sustain his initial principle and focus, thereby compromising his initial ethical stand. This is the ultimate message one is bound to deduce from the final analysis of characterization in both texts.

Okonjo-Iweala's text is set in Abuja, the hub of the Nigerian nation. Her setting helps to significantly elucidate how decisions, policies and their execution from the presidential villa can affect the entire nation. Iyayi's own setting is Benin City, a geopolitical part of Nigeria. The significance of his setting when reconciled with that of Okonjo-Iweala is that it not only reveals the implication of corruption in one part of the country, but as well exposes the consequences of bad policies originating from Abuja, the seat of power. Benin City is thus described in the novel as a city where,

Little mean houses squatted on both sides of the street ... Lean men in cheap trousers and shirts walked slowly to and fro ... In the night such a man entered his burrow and he was empty ... And when he slept with his wife with this same emptiness, with this same nothingness, small children, black and tiny like the faeces of dogs were eventually excreted into this cycle of misery. (129-130)

In this context, Benin City becomes a microcosm of the entire Nigerian state. In a way, it equally connects to Okonjo-Iweala's exposition of the socio-political signals transmitted through the decisions of politicians at Aso Rock – the presidential villa. Nigerian critics by Okonjo-Iweala's publication are provided a counter narrative that explains some of the political events under Ex-President Goodluck Jonathan's administration (2011-2015). The

publication expounds some of the political backstage events that were publicly manipulated in the sensational/propagandist reportage of some fake news media organizations. Thus, she explains her authorial motive:

So telling my story is risky. But not telling it also is dangerous. Silence would allow these same vested interests in my country, the same corrupt people, to distort events, twist factual accounts, and hide behind lies, half-truths, and obfuscations to protect themselves and harm others. With the co-optation of unscrupulous media, they turn truth into lies and promote lies as truth. Their currency is propaganda and fake news and it must be challenged by transparency and sustained ethical actions based on lessons learned. (121)

The above statement reverberates a similar ideological statement in Wole Soyinka's own personal narrative entitled *The Man Died*. Thus, he states: "The man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny" (13). The ultimate motive of both authors hinges on the implication and image of corruption in the Nigerian state. Such image is noticed in Okonjo-Iweala's description of Nigeria: "Nigeria is one of the most interesting countries in the world. It is energetic and sometimes chaotic" (xv). This euphemistic/scathing description of Nigeria juxtaposes Iyayi's very scathing description. Though conveyed through a fictional mode, one still gets a sense of Iyayi's perspective of the Nigerian state through Ogie's observation in *the Contract*:

Everywhere there was dirt and filth and chaos. Chaos was there in the way the houses stood, in the way the refuse spilled into the roads, in the way drivers used whatever parts of the road were usable. They drove on the wrong side of the roads ... And there was nothing but abuse and curses and the blaring of horns and the screeching of brakes and then more abuses and finally, swift physical violence and then death. (7)

This portrayal is reflective of the point Garricks makes in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* symbolically conveying a similar chaotic message about Nigeria's statehood:

Like most shanty towns, Asiana Waterside looked like it had been built by a mad child. The houses were confused: facing every direction, and backing every direction at the same time. They were built with anything that gave cover – corrugated iron, wood, cement, mud plastic sheets and thatch ... There were no streets in Asiana Waterside: just tiny, filthy, dark labyrinthine alleys. The alleys and the Dockyard creek allowed for the smooth and steady flow of black-market petrol, drugs, sex and guns. (237-238)

Achebe had earlier confronted this nature of statehood when, as part of his earlier quote in this discourse, he added that, "Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world ... It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short it is one of the most unpleasant places on earth. (*The Trouble*, 9-10). In spite of the backlash that trailed this statement which no doubt is garbed with "inflammable" adjectives, the fact remains that these adjectives have one way or the other vividly conveyed the measure of rot created in the Nigerian system by those Okonjo-Iweala tags "small kleptocratic ruling elite."

In the global ranking, Okonjo-Iweala assesses Nigeria as,

Africa's largest economy, with an estimated 2017 gross domestic product (GDP) of \$400 billion. Nigeria constitutes 71 percent of West Africa's GDP and 27 percent of the continent's GDP ... [it] was the fifteenth-largest oil producer in the world in 2016. It has the world's eleventh-largest oil reserves and ninth-largest natural gas reserves. (xvii)

The glaring problem in a country with such potentials and enviable quantity of resources is, according to the taxi driver who drives Ogie from the airport, actually created by the politicians who

are as well "aided in the enterprise by the cream of the military, whether still serving or retired" (8). This thesis supports Eustace Palmer's findings in his diagnosis of the perpetual poverty in most African states, explaining that "this was partly because in some countries the available resources were squandered by the ruling elite, including the army" (13). Ikechukwu Nwosu, decries this situation, accusing the Nigerian government of what he calls "domestic recolonization." His argument is that,

Neo-economism focuses on the activities and significance of multinational corporations and argues that they are able to function in all capitalist states and to cross state boundaries at will. The freedom of imperialists' oligopolies to enter into nations at will and their alliance with national governments provides the stage for internal imperialism. (544)

As Iyayi's novel reveals the nature of corruption within the administrative circle of the Nigerian government and their local/foreign contractors as depicted by Mr. Oloru/Chief Ekata and Miss Gasfield, Okonjo-Iweala's text, by extension, explores the criminality behind the politics of Nigeria's oil. Contract in *The Contract* is a reflection of corrupt events in the Nigerian system. Such events include the contract that is to be awarded at the cost of "one hundred thousand naira" (55) which is consecutively upgraded thrice in the novel. This is revealed through Chief Obala on three different occasions. In the first occasion, he tells Ogie: "The value of the contract has gone up ... by five times the original sum.' Ogie calculated the new total in his mind. 'That means half a million,' he said" (64). In the second occasion, the text thus reveals: "Chief Obala ... had had a word with the Commissioner and they had agreed that the value of the contract was to go up still higher, this time to one hundred million naira" (83). In the third occasion, Chief Obala tells Ogie again about the agreement of the very top Council members: "The value of the contract has been increased to five hundred million naira" (93). This is a brazen display of uncontrollable greed and unchecked impunity by such corrupt

Nigerians. This fictional event of the 1980s in many ways re-enacts Okonjo-Iweala's experience with a similar group of Nigerians and other sets of stakeholders in the millennium age. These vested interest groups benefitting from the system are determined to resist her reformatory vision since it would not favor them. They have formed into a coalition of counter-progressive force against the general development of the public. Consequently, her opinion is that "for every coalition put together to fight corruption, there is an opposing coalition trying to persuade the President to block it" (130). The opposing coalition is similarly resonated by some of the characters one finds in *The Contract*. A typical example is Chief Ekata who eventually murders Mr. Oloru whom he perceives as a competent rival. Thus, he ruminates: "After all, he told himself, nobody really wants any roads built, nor any houses erected. All that was needed was to give people the impression. Once people were under the impression that things were being done, the rest didn't matter" (71).

The consequences of what Chief Obala and his corrupt colleagues represent in Nigeria are reflective of the findings of the Ad-Hoc Committee Okonjo-Iweala initiated during her tenure as Finance Minister. The committee's goal was to verify and determine the actual subsidy requirements under Resolution No. HR. 1/2012. Thus, the outcome is multiple layered:

Essentially, the Committee found that there was indeed fraud and mismanagement in the oil-subsidy regime; subsidy claims for products not delivered; overcharging of the government by oil marketers; requisition of foreign exchange for imports of refined products, with the foreign exchange diverted to other uses; unauthorized deductions by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to itself; and mismanagement by government officials. (35-36)

It is the fear of such investigatory instruments and other forms of "due process" mechanisms that may have triggered panic among the "small kleptocratic ruling elite," hence, one way or the

other they need to get across to whoever that is in charge. This is the depiction of Donald Duke's and Eunice Agbon's errand in the respective texts. In other words, what Duke is to Okonjo-Iweala in *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, is what Eunice Agbon is to Ogie in *The Contract*. Both characters are presented to undertake an ill-motivated errand on behalf of the "small kleptocratic ruling elite." The difference in Duke's own mission and that of Eunice is that whereas Eunice succeeds in luring Ogie into the net of the "small kleptocratic ruling elite," Duke was unable to accomplish his own mission behind his "friendly" visit to Okonjo-Iweala at her UN's Bureau in Washington DC.

It is interesting to note that Duke is introduced into the text under the subtitle "A Strange Warning" (17). His story is that "a group of 'concerned' people" would want to dissuade her from accepting the offer to serve as Finance Minister as it will "give Jonathan and his government credibility and he [Jonathan] did not deserve that (17). This presentation is arguably deceptive. The real mission that can be deduced here is not actually in the story of the so-called powerful political cartel trying to frustrate Ex-President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, but it is that this cartel is afraid of her reformatory approach towards Nigeria's economic system which is not in their own interest. This is the point Okonjo-Iweala attempts to make when she explains that, "Nigeria's deep fiscal decentralization means that governors have tremendous freedom and little accountability in the use of monies under their control. There are few checks and balances because state legislatures are typically weak" (55). In other words, her accountability reputation was enough to stir some of the Nigerian politicians who witnessed her tough stance during her first tenure as Finance Minister under Ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. Thus, she writes:

On the finance side, I was surprised to learn that work started in 2004 ... to build institutions, systems, and processes to stem revenue leakages from the budget had slowed



considerably after I left and had in fact stalled. Government transactions were still largely cash based, leaving plenty of room for corrupt diversion of funds ... The vested interests benefitting from the old system still seemed to have the upper hand. (16)

Obviously, no member of the “small kleptocratic ruling elite” really wanted her to serve in that capacity again. On her part, she knew how tough the fight was in her first tenure as Finance Minister, and she recounts how it forced her into resignation at the time:

It also had been politically and personally difficult, especially toward the end. I resigned when I felt no longer able to serve under adverse conditions, and the resignation was seen as a bold and controversial move on my part. No Nigerian minister resigns; they are only fired. Stepping down from my post had earned me the ire of those at the top. (15)

Eunice, in *The Contract* goes on a similar errand to persuade Ogie to award the contract to “Chief Ekata and Construction Company” (78), without recourse to due process. Ogie who initially refused the position of Principal Secretary on the basis of ethics/or morality disappoints Iyayi’s readers as he accepts Eunice’s offer of a sensual relationship in addition to other kickback packages from Chief Ekata. By this decisive action, Ogie alters greatly in his worldview after chapter eight. This alteration in ideology occurs partly because he fails to design an effective modus operandi that would protect his policy in respect of his career. In his unpreparedness, he takes up the offer and was bound to fail for lack of strategy. This is the lesson one learns from Okonjo-Iweala who must have considered some sensitive political factors before turning down the ministerial position offered by “President Yar’ Adua ... in 2008” (15). But in a subsequent year, precisely “August 17, 2011” (27), she takes the same offer from Ex-President Jonathan after negotiating a reliable workforce and favorable environment with the presidency. Ogie lacks this tact. He fails to negotiate favorable working terms with his employers. He also lacks

experience hence his untested reformative instinct could not effectively confront some of those unforeseen realities that led to his downfall. He merely had a theoretical orientation of ethics/morality impulsive base from his foreign training which was not sustainable in the face of corruption in a practical sense. This is the message the author conveys through the following passage:

I am going to be decent and straightforward and clear-headed about money. ‘You are an idealist,’ the knowing part of his mind said ... You have ideas, and ideas are like the smoke. Put a little wind under it and it disperses, scatters in different directions.’ ‘Then you do not know me,’ the other, second part of him answered now. ‘You do not know me at all, in spite of the fact that we have lived together all these years.’ (21)

But on the other hand, Okonjo-Iweala’s resilience was sustainable because she saw what was coming from the “small kleptocratic ruling elite” and strategized with the support of her team, boss and her transparency mechanism in which the public is made the judge between herself and the “kleptocrats.” She knew they will attempt to infect her, upset her or indict her. In defiance, she makes up her mind:

But I would not be easily intimidated. In fact, the attacks had the effect of tilting me toward accepting the job. To some extent, it was defiance ... If Nigeria was to fight corruption successfully, it needed not just to arrest and prosecute people – which was vital – but also to build the institutions, processes, and systems that enhance transparency and make corrupt practices more difficult in the first place. (21-22)

At the end of both stories, Okonjo-Iweala eventually succeeds where Ogie fails. Ogie resigns into a world of defeatism, negotiating new personality for himself as he distances himself from his earlier posture as an idealist. Thus, his inner self accuses him: “You cannot escape it now. Not anymore.’ For the first time, he could not readily produce an answer to this ... Ogie Obala’s

eyes suddenly clouded again with tears. He was no longer sure of himself” (67/68). The initial personality he professed is no longer sustainable and as a result succumbs to his other half. He presents the result of his inner conflict clearer with the single statement: “I am not a revolutionary” (77).

To the intelligentsia class, Okonjo-Iweala concludes that “Nigeria’s ideologues have remained largely silent about facts that do not reflect their preconceptions” (120). By this statement she attempts to implore the intelligentsia to live up to the task of taking firm stand against the “kleptocrats” responsible for Nigeria’s corruption saga. Joe, the trade unionist who belongs to the intelligentsia class in Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, is also of the opinion that this problem has lingered in Nigeria because, according to him “we are too nervous” (79). This notion has been re-echoed in several other narratives since after the publication of *A Man of the People*. For Kizito Osudibia,

The larger numbers of Nigerians are suffering more not on account of the excesses of the political heavy-weights but on account of the pernicious silence of all the good and well-meaning people of this country. In a country of over 120 million people, evil thrives because the good permit it. (3)

For Teresa Njoku the people “are dead because they keep silent when they should speak” (335). For Eldred Jones, while the “kleptocarats” enrich themselves through impunity, “the people, with the philosophy born of despair tamely lie down under the imposition” (Qtd., in Ojinmah 67). In other words, the generality of the people, according to Udentia Udentia are “gullible, easily fooled” (ix).

### III. PROPOSALS AND CONCLUSION

From her story, Okonjo-Iweala could then be said to have succeeded in enforcing her reformative policies as a Minister under the Jonathan’s administration because of the reasonable support

she enjoyed from her boss who perhaps was equally conscious of the presence of the “small kleptocratic ruling elite.” This is evident in the fact that Jonathan insisted in working with her in spite of her initial decline of the offer of ministerial position. One of her strategies was to negotiate, in her own favor, with the Ex-President. Her words:

President Jonathan was gracious. He listened carefully to all I had to say ... We went over my terms of reference ... He also approved of creating an economic team that he would chair ... As for the composition of the team, I mentioned the need for a small core of reformers ... The discussion with the President was substantive and reassuring. (23/25)

The implication of losing that very important support which a reformer requires is exemplified through what happened in her tenure under Obasanjo’s administration. As a result, she took a smart step by resigning. This is another important lesson many so-called reformers must learn; it is better to resign from being part of a corrupt system than adding to the mess itself. Thus, she says: “I resigned when I felt no longer able to serve under adverse conditions” (15).

This is one of the spots where Ogie fails. In his case, he accepts the offer without a firm negotiation and refused to resign even when he realized he was not able to serve under those same adverse conditions similar to Okonjo-Iweala’s predicaments. The consequence is dire. The likes of Ogie would be later destroyed by the same system. The destruction will happen not only on account that they will always stay back, but on account that they will pretend to be infallible reformers with necks above Nigeria’s sea of corruption - they are bound to always end up like Ogie, a preacher in conflict with his ideals.

More so, it is important to observe that Iyayi’s story stops at the point where that of Okonjo-Iweala starts. Okonjo-Iweala’s story has taken care of the bleak future and vacuum created by the simultaneous end of Ogie and the novel.

Iyayi only warns of a looming doom that awaits a society with such propensity of corrupt acquisitive tendency. But Okonjo-Iweala lays out a descriptive and practicable economic template that enabled the success of her administration which helped her in checking the excesses of the corrupt “kleptocratic class.” She did not stop at merely exposing, criticizing and pontificating ideas, but she risked her life, that of her family and that of her team of reformers. By her narrative, risk has been suggested and must be prescribed as part of the constituents of reformation. Risk makes the hero, in this case heroine.

Unfortunately, Ogie was not strategically ready hence he fails. He came back presumably from a less corrupt system into a deep-rooted corrupt system without adequate preparedness. He was quickly swept away into nothingness like many other such confused self-proclaimed reformers in the same and other social climates. He made the second mistake by surrounding himself with characters who do not share his reformative views, ending up as his detractors and eventually overwhelming him. Some of them attempt to persuade him out of the notion of being a reformer, such as his father, his uncle and his mother. Others encourage and entice him to become part of the corrupt system, such as Mallam Mallam, Eunice Agbon, Chief Ekata and Mr. Oloru. Others like Rose, the self-acclaimed realist, mock his idealist posture. For her, his idealism amounts to nothing but naivety. In other words, Ogie surrounds himself with characters that were ever ready to make him fail in achieving his original cause. But Okonjo-Iweala on her part ensured she worked in the midst of fellow reformers: “Dr. Akin Adesina ... Dr. Muhammad Pate ... Dr. Nwanze Okidegbe ... Professor Sylvester Monye ... Dr. Bright Okogu” (23/24). With this strategy, she was able to ward off the likes of Chief Ekata, Chief Obala, Mr. Oloru, Mallam Mallam, Eunice Agbon and Rose in *The Contract*.

Ogie equally lacks the political will to confront the “small kleptocratic ruling elite,” the type Okonjo-Iweala constantly engaged. Even though

the government that succeeded the one she served under would later reverse some of her policies after she left office, like the monthly newspaper publication of federal allocation to States, the point has been made. Okonjo-Iweala has indirectly informed Nigerians that the mechanism that can be used in ensuring transparency and checking the excesses of corrupt government officials is not the exclusive right of western civilizations. It is about selflessness, determination, focus, risk and, above all, creating a transparent mechanism that will make the public sit in judgment over the “small kleptocratic ruling elite.”

Finally, Okonjo-Iweala and Ogie had the necessary platforms that could positively impact their Nigerian system. Okonjo-Iweala sustains and defines her commitment in the course, while Ogie compromises the cause itself. In the end, one learns from both stories that a proposed reformative process for a corrupt system must take more than just courage, determination and political will. These qualities are essential, but the reformer must be strategically and intellectually prepared for every shape of dart thrown by the “small kleptocratic ruling elite.” In fact, the reformer must expect these darts and prepare for each one of them or else end up like Ogie. With no hope in sight as a result of recurring reformers like Ogie, the entire Nigerian system becomes even more corrupted, dysfunctional and chaotic. But with more characters like Okonjo-Iweala and her transparent mechanism, there is bound to be a glimmer of hope across the horizon.

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