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Corruption and Marxist Tendency in Nigerian Society: A Critical Approach to Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake*

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Abstract

Literature is a tool, a mirror with which writers explore their societies. Writers have become the voice of truth from whose hands and inspirations the society strives towards peace, harmony, peaceful co-existence and above all decorum. Corruption as a socio malaise gave rise to post independence disillusionment. Corruption is an inherent foible that formed the backdrop to most Nigerian post-independence literature. It is imperative that the researcher here did an impressive study of the concept of corruption as explored in Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake* to reveal the pathological effects of corruption in a nation. Subsequently, the fiction under study, reveals to a great extent the issues that serve and address the general interest of the study. The novelist has to examine corruption and its practices in all forms, making the readers comprehend how corruption has brought or produced nothing but economic degradation and social unrest. Indeed, the novelist created awareness, and drew attention to several social issues of her time. The novelist is also against the

deplorable human conditions, against the unbridgeable gulf between the proletariats and the bourgeoisie classes; hence the fiction is a clear example of literary work exposing the evils of selfishness, corruption and materialistic tendencies in the Nigerian society. The theoretical framework is Marxism which refers to the social, economic and political doctrines of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and their disciples. They teach a theory of value based upon labour, the economic determination of all social actions and institutions, the class struggle as the basic pattern in history, the researcher did a thorough analysis of the work under study and identified insincere and corrupt masses as the major challenge in our contemporary societies as portrayed in the novels.
Keywords: Corruption, Marxism, Politics, Bribery, economic, social

Introduction

Literature is widely known and accepted by many scholars and authors as the mirror with which writers and literary artists reflect the society from time immemorial and in different climes around the globe. Literature has become part and parcel of the rich heritage of any viable and worthwhile society. In this regards, literature has continued to fulfill its own unique function in national development. No society exists without its literature and no literature functions in isolation of its society. Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Homecoming*, in recognition of this fact, expresses thus; "Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum. It is a given impetus, shape, direction, and even area of concern by social, political, economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between literature and these forces cannot be ignored especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the glaring background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations" (16).

No society can exist significantly without its literature and this literature has become an inseparable part of the society. Literature as a creative art has been subjected to varying degrees of functions

and usage. Hence, the writer becomes a satirist who could never avoid the temptation of chronicling the various segments of the society in his writing. For instance, before the attainment of independence in Nigeria, in 1960, many thought that immediately the white man leaves the seat of power, the road to having good society will open. They hoped that corruption, degradation, political and economic exploitation would stop. But ironically, these ills rather than diminish, increased with the departure of the colonial masters.

Ngozi Chuma-Udeh, in *Trends and Issues in Nigerian Literature* says; the most prominent feature of the literature of this era was the stiff aggressiveness in which they criticized the post-independence rulers. They openly and uncompromisingly declare that the ruling class was corrupt; devoid of every vestige of vision and common sense (135) Corruption is the bane of a nation and hinders any form of development in the country. An accusing finger could conveniently be pointed at the effects of colonialism on the ruling class who had been alienated from the true value of their people.

Writers, through writing realistic novels try to highlight and document the ills of the society especially within the pedestal of socio-political situations. Such ills which pervert the society have been termed as "Corruption". Chuta S.C in his book, *Corruption in Nigeria* defines corruption as "any act by the public official who violates the accepted standard of behavior in order to serve private or selfish ends" (1). Corruption is a general phenomenon; it touches every nook and cranny of our society. Nevertheless, any form of moral deviance could be attributed to corruption It touches every human nature. Both the phenomenon of corruption and perpetrators exist in every society. One can appreciate the pervasiveness and subtleties of corruption. Those in authority and those under authority should alike share in the blame of this pandemic scourge. According to Chuta, "Corruption presupposes

that in given system, there is a standard or blue print of behavior expected of persons who operate within that system" (2). However, that ethics and decorum of a given society or organization must be maintained strictly in order to resist the concatenation of horror stories that emanate from corruption and corrupt acts. Nigeria as a nation has been drowned in corruption; but the question lies on why and how it arises, what effects it has on polity and economy, and how it-can eventually be brought under control?

The level of perversity and depravity among these Nigerian leaders show that corruption is not just from the public alone rather the leaders are corrupt. Most Nigerian leaders tend to siphon public funds for their personnel aggrandizement. Victor Dike, in *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria* reaffirmed; Wrong doing by those in special positions of trust. The term is commonly applied to self benefiting conduct by public officials and others dedicated to public service (103)

Many concerned Nigerian and public-spirited individuals have postulated poverty and unemployment as the root causes of bribery and corruption, and indeed the social malaise that plagues the nation. Ogbu, as quoted in *Political leadership in Africa* sees corruption as "a problem of scarcity" (69). For him, the root cause of corruption in Nigeria is scarcity. If things are in abundance, situations where people have enough to eat and to spare for future use, then the rate of corruption would be drastically reduced to its barest minimum corruption was so deeply rooted, so widely spread that it was in effect a way of life, one that could not be quickly overturned.

Ngozi Chuma-Udeh is rightful artist who have used her eagle eyes to visualize the pandemic circumstances and the evils of corruption in our society, Nigeria. They have to an extent, surveyed and deflated the depraving "nature of the masses and some top rank officials who have consciously or unconsciously joined in the

cankerworm that has eaten deeply in the fabric of the nation both in politics, religion and social organizations. On attainment of political independence, both the nationalists and other citizens who suffered a lot of exploitation and dehumanizing experiences during the colonial period were, filled with hopes and expectations for a better society. But before long, both them and workers who expected independence to ameliorate their conditions got disillusioned and disenchanted as the situation worsened. The people thought independence to mean that they were to be responsible for the management of their own affairs. They saw independence as a pregnant woman about to give birth to triplets: economic freedom, social freedom and political emancipation.

With all these hopes, the expectant masses willingly gave their support to their leaders who promised to provide them with all those good things that colonialism denied them. At last all turned out to be lofty promises. All they said turned out to be blatant lies. African writers are aware that their leaders have made caricature of the African independence. These corruptible leaders were there to see that nothing has really changed; rather things continue getting worse and worse by the day. This was what prompted some of the African writers to write against the political and social ills in their different societies.

Thus the attainment of political independence by African nations brought along with it many problems of leadership. Corruption and mismanagement were at their peak. These problems which emanated from the leaders and which are manifested in all aspects of African life-political, social and economical-have constituted recurrent themes in the African novels. These new leaders being products of colonial education consciously fail to deviate from colonial indoctrination. Thus, national growth and urgent need to right the wrongs of the colonialists fail to materialize. To the masses, therefore, independence became-a mere illusion. So also all the fantasies created in the pre-independence period became

shattered. The nationalist leaders failed to fulfill their promises of better living conditions. Rather, they fanned class consciousness and encouraged frauds, embezzlement of public funds, looting, exploitation and other atrocities. Under the banner of Africanisation, the nationalist leaders grabbed all the top jobs in the civil service, live ostentatiously (extravagantly) surrounded themselves with excessive wealth by exploiting the masses. . However, according to Charles Nnolim on the blurb of Chuma-Udeh's *Teacher's on Strike:*

Chuma-Udeh has delved into the innermost places of the teachers' heart to unveil the innermost agony of the Teachers on Strike. She has bared it all. The trauma, the hunger, the deprivation ...a real touching story of servitude in the African contemporary society.

Similarly, in his own contribution, still on the blurb of the novel, Rems Umeasiegbu has this to say about the novel:

> Too scathing, too biting, but all real ... A story that touches the core of posterity ...An indelible mark on the society. The agony of the teachers. The agony of the society. The prototypes are all true to type-amazingly true to life.

Both Nnolim and Umeasiegbu seem to be conveying the same feeling of pity of the type of leaders we have who are insensitive to the teacher's plight and all other aspects of our society. For them, the novel exposes the exploitative means and oppression of the teachers by His Excellency, which its adverse effects were very devastating.

Ngozi Chuma-Udeh in *The Presidential Handshake* exhibited her artistic skill in unveiling the follies of the leaders and the led. She to an extent exposed the rate and degree of corruption running in the views of the masses. Corruption has sporadically touched every nook and cranny of the nation's prestige. Unlike many writers and their works criticizing politics of the nation, the writer adopted a different approach by casting aspersion, this time not on our

leaders but on the masses whose actions and inactions provided the taproot with which the leaders continued to exploit them. Insensitivity on the part of the masses that have lost faith in politics and as an avenue to loot and enrich one's generation rather than a call to serve.

The average Nigerian character was full of expectations on political independence. The independence came amidst raised hopes that it would to a large extent solve sociopolitical problems and creates opportunities, which would ensure a more fulfilled life for the average Nigerian. It came amidst anticipations for economic, social, cultural and human development for all the citizens of the new nation. Independence was intended to be an epoch of reorientation from the shackles of colonialism to the righteousness of self rule. It was to mark the end of servitude to the west and end of unfulfllment, rancor, and brutality of western dominance and the pains of economic sabotage. Unfortunately, the euphoria of independence was short-lived. The enticing prospect that was held out to the people became a mirage of unrealistic fantasy as within a few years of independence, it became apparent that the masses and the ruling class could not "keep faith" with the dreams. Corruption took over the new nation. The hopes that were fanned up at the independence collapsed woefully and totally disillusionment took over.

Ngozi Chuma-Udeh in her *Trends and Issues in Nigeria Literature* summed it up thus

> It turned out to be that a group of "black power" elite cult had stepped into the vacated seat of the colonial masters. These leaders started where their masters stopped. The ruling classes were the product of the same evil fought against. Life became more agonizing for the average Nigerian [131].

Countless critics have devoted their time and energy to writing of books and articles condemning the insensitivity of these corrupt men in power and tyrannical government policies, but the problems continued unabated. We are familiar with names like Wole Soyinka, Emmanuel Obiechina, Ernest Emenyonu and many other voices in the academic field with expectation of revolution. Nigerian leaders have been so egoistic and mendacious with lack of vision that their leadership has always yielded nothing but political ineptitude. It could indeed sound absurd to insist that corruption is attributed to the leaders alone rather we should as well believe the fact that it has unraveled everyone, both the leaders and the led. Corruption has engulfed members of the society since it has become a norm; it has become part and parcel of the Nigerian masses.

Chuma- Udeh also expressed:

> However, corruption is no longer regarded as evil but a game. It is not far from being legalized because when the president does it that means it is legal. Achebe therefore, rightly opines in The Trouble with Nigeria that: The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure in leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or ability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility to the challenge of personal example which is the , hallmark of true leadership (1).

Chuma-Udeh through her voice aimed at exposing the touts, public thieves, rogues and hypocritical leaders. She uses her book *The Presidential Handshake* to expose the society living in corruption; that everyone wants their own national cake. Although corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation, Chuma-Udeh in the novel remains optimistic that what must have gone wrong will definitely be ameliorated. Literature mirrors society and literary artists reflect the realities of lives in their various works. Chuma-

Udeh is one of the Nigerian writers who used the literary work to advance political goals all geared and targeted to a more humane and prosperous society. The novel is interested in socio political and economic realizes.

Indeed, the society is corrupt and has been engulfed with fair share of national cake; the elites clung to power with every vestige of strength in them, which the ones outside would indulge in plots and counter plots to get into their cake sharing cadre of the politicians. In the course of this, Chimeka Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* revealed the sad situation in the society thus:

> The system is designed to sow confusion, divide-and-rule and injustice. So naturally, the system will only reap monsters some of our governors loot our state's share of oil revenues, some of our chiefs and youth leaders frustrate development from coming to our communities simply because they won't receive any monetary percent for the contracts [324].

Since literature does not exist in vacuum, many literary works have taken their backdrops from the concept "corruption" expressing dissatisfaction on the leadership that has aptly left the masses with little or nothing to live with. Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake* exposes the corrupting power of privilege and position. We see how people who have been given positions of authority in the society arc tempted to abuse those positions and indulge in self-aggrandizement and personal pleasure at the expense of the majority.

The entire society is thereby questioned by the artist who unveils even the conductor who dabbled into exploiting his fellowmen. Thus, she did not spare even the common man in this social malady. The society is morally decayed and gave inspiration to some other writers like Wole Soyinka in *The Interpreters*, Cyprian Ekwensi in *People of the City*, Festus lyayi in *Violence*, Isidore

Okpewho in *The Last Duty*, and John Munonye in a Kind Fool Theodore Onyekwere in *The Keepers*.

Marxism

Marxism is summed up in *Enearta Reference Library* as a theory in which class struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change in western societies. According to Swingewood Allen in his book *The Novel and the Revolution*, Marxism maintains that a Marxist writer is one who is conscious and fully aware of his own responsibility in the society. No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distanced from the oppressed (23).

The Marxist committed to human liberation does not become the prisoner of a circle of certainty within which he also imprisons reality. It is of paramount to note that since the modern society is a highly stratified one, any committed writer who is oriented towards Marxism automatically sets himself against the political elite.' The political elite who is bent on maintaining the status quo cannot imagine a likely push in the great changes tendency towards modern literature. Marxist theory holds that conflict which leads to radical ideas for a change are borne out of the displacement of the strata in the society.

According to Emmanuel Ngara in his book *Art and Ideology in the African Novel*;

> Social stratification and inequality are a historical part of our society and these are what Marxist writers are continually fighting against in our society. Through the change significant attention of social structures will be made. This will come in form of a revolution which is the displacement of one class by another (31).

Ngara says that Man in all ramifications of life hardly gets optimal satisfaction and so protests against those situations and recommends most probable alternatives. The result of this line of thought is a Marxist literature, a proletariat literature that would

eventually lead to a classless order. Allen Swingewood in P.J. Brown's *The Proletariat Episode in Russian Literature* states:

> In a class society, literature serves the interest of a particular class and only through that class does it serve all humanity. Therefore, proletarian literature is such a literature organized by the psyche and the consciousness of the working class in the direction of the final talk of the proletariat as the creation of communist (classless) society (84).

The Marxist art, therefore, serves as a mirror with which the proletari ats or the masses can see themselves and through which the social consciousness is developed. This kind of art is geared towards a change in basic mode of production and this change in the mode of production will result in a change in the structure of social classes: the eventual overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletarian dictatorship. It is pertinent to note that during the years of proletarian dictatorship, this working class based literature took shape and evolved ideologically into a prominent position in world literature. Some have ascribed this form of literature to Marxist aesthetics and hereafter becomes popularly known as Marxist literature.

As a result of the endowment of the Marxist art, it has become unique and possesses some defining features. First, it must be faithful to life, that is, realistic to true life experiences and its simplicity is highly commendable. This simplicity of a Marxist literature is not just a question of coincidence but a deliberate one aimed at making it interested in academic field of study with great effectiveness. Hence, it is devoid of experiments, individual, religious, mystic, sexual themes and most impor6tantly every sort of formation. Swingewood in his book also says that "Marxist writers pay less attention to form unlike realistic literature where much emphasis is laid not on what is said but on the way it is said" (17). Another feature of Marxist art is the positive hero. They must represent the so-called typical. This does not mean what is

characteristic of the real state of reality but what would be desired for emulation, in all cases, these heroes are usually a manifestation of the ideal Marxist sense.

Charles Nnoli in his book *The Critics of African Literature* talks about "art that contemplates society we expect, art that is propagandist, art that tends towards proletarian concerns and art that has Marxist undertones" (33). Consequently, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake*, and many others stand as examples of this form of art. They could be classified as Marxist arts. The novel clear and projected the fact that we the masses contribute greatly to the social- economic and political problems that perturb us as a nation. It exposed our mindsets, our actions and inactions which in so many ways help our leader to develop political and economic taproot that enable them to exploit and oppress us continually.

Aspects of Corruption in Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake*

Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake* is a satire that focused mostly on the evils and corrupt practices that have created indelible marks on the people of Nigeria and the nation itself. The novelist bitterly satirize the nation on this appalling follies that otherwise mars the progress of nation building. She satirizes the unabashed corruption, hypocrisy, betrayal, selfish and egocentric nature of man in his society.

The novelist sees the leaders and the citizens as being corrupt and most times discuss the subject of corruption as a pivotal disorder that torments the entire nation. Indeed, Nigerians are surely correct to believe that their country would be better off if not for corruption. Meanwhile, very many Nigerians are concerned and worried about this fact which has probably become a deficiency and a barrier to national development. That is why Achebe in his trenchant book, The Trouble with Nigeria notes that whenever two

Nigerians meet, their conversation will sooner or later slide into litany of our national deficiencies"1... (2)

There is profound evidence that corruption has romanticized the people of Nigeria. Chuma Udeh in *The Presidential Handshake* did not vindicate the masses as she satirizes every aspect of political corruption inherent in the society. She indicts the masses exposing the extent of corruption in the society. Even those that import drugs had to make their way in to importing substandard drugs in the country. In fact, everyone is involved, the leaders, the bourgeoisies, the proletariats to the down trodden are all engrossed in this mess. Therefore, Chuma-Udeh in *The Presidential Handshake* delved into the minds of her characters to explore the level of corruption among the people who mar the progress of the nation through these corrupt acts. Invariably, the novel attacks the selfish and egocentric Africans, Nigeria in particular.

Chuma-Udeh through her pungent presentation of her characters exposed these galling abnormalities. Chief Akuika who has no sympathy for human lives imports substandard drugs. He tells the manufacturers what to produce at cheap rates. Sometimes he asks the manufacturers to produce ordinary corn starch or CMC that is like chalk so that people will consume and he gets enough money out of it. He has been in this business and nobody dare question him. Chief Akuika reaffirms:

> I have been doing it this way for years and nobody has ever accosted me. Once you settle the officials, you bring in whatever you want to bring in. There is nothing like checking the standard of drugs in this country. The sole aim of every business man is to make money, not to conform to standards or whatever you call it... (335)

The novelist points out the insensitivity of the masses who have sold out their souls to the devil. The masses do not listen to their hearts any longer; they care no more about money and how to

acquire wealth. The government had their reasons for proscribing motorcycle operations in the cities and had given the deadline in Uma city but people like Nwokike and Chief Okolo had to do anything even going to the extent of bribing teacher Nebe to talk to' the president so as to change his mind. They do not consider the death that results from Okada operations; all they care for is the money that comes out from it as Nwokike states: "Teacher, you are the one with the government now. We want you to help us beg Supo to revoke his quit order. This job is our only means of livelihood"... (293)

One should see the extent some people have sold their consciences. Teacher Nebe's advice to Mr. Okolo fell on deaf ears. He could go at to any length to stop the government from banning okada business in the city. He at the end of the advice from teacher Nebe wants to bribe Nebe to still persuade Supo. Mr. Okolo junior points out thus:

> Well, sir, I do not personally think about life in such very serious terms. If there is no Okada, thieves will still find a way of operating. Death is a necessary end that can occur anywhere, any day. I do not really believe that abolishing Okada in the cities is to the best interest of the citizens. All the same, teacher, my father sent me with a little token for you. He said that I should appeal to you to help make Supo revoke this law. It is hanging on our business like the sword of Damocles.... (306)

The novelist exhibited her artistic skill in unveiling the follies of the masses and how corruption has sporadically touched every nook and cranny of the whole nation. Many scholars who felt that the nation's prestige is at stake roses to substantiate. The novelist thus, looks into the circumstances that Nigerians have been thrown into. Many concerned Nigerians and public-spirited individuals have postulated greed and selfish interest as the root cause of corruption that in the same manner the novelist presented

characters who swim in the same social malaise. Mazi Ike out of his own selfish desire wants to snatch the only land Philo's father had inherited. He is known for taking away people's plots of land either by hook or by crook. He tried his antics on Philo's father. He saw that there is no one to inherit the land since Philo's father has no son of his own and perhaps women had no traditional inherentance and no inheritance rights to own any property in their fathers' houses or in their husbands' houses either. Philo in anger laments thus: "What type of vile rivalry can make a blood relation become as despicable as to his relation's property to the extent of telling you to your face that your life is worthless because you have no son…" (229)

This shows how selfish and corrupt human beings can be even to the extent of going deep to take forcefully what belongs to another. Another aspect of greed and selfishness was treated by the novelist as one of the most causes of social ills and corruption. Mazi Ogwu because of his selfish interest and greed to take possession what does not belong to him, decimated his cousins family, poisoned his brother to death and sentenced his three sons to jail on a trumped up case, took all his lands, yet he was not satisfied. He still wants to kill his brother's wife all in the name of selfish desire. Dife in action roared: "You came to kill a poor defenseless old woman to inherit her house and you have the guts to plead for mercy..." (276) Notwithstanding, even the policemen were tagged corrupt. They detained the children of the old woman without trial and as the case may be, they were innocent and underage. The writer summarized it thus:

> Thee, the court struck off the case, discharged and acquitted them for want of evidence. The presiding judge apologized and lamented the detention without trial of these young men who as at the time of their incarceration were under age.... (277)

Chief Osonuigwe, a businessman who has many estates wants to bribe Teacher Nebe to talk to president Supo to stop the pulling

down of his estates. His major concern was about how to make money from his estates and not the lives of the people living in the estate. The novelist made it clear that his first Estate which was marked for demolition because they claimed part of it was built on top of the central city waste pipe. The estate contained about two hundred buildings made up of bungalows and duplexes. Then, the second Estate, situated in a village not very far away from the capital city was said to have been built under the national electricity high tension wires. Yet chief Osoenigwe was asking to save his property not human lives that would be trapped there. Also, we are led into the character of Mama Adi, a woman who does all she could to make money. She is corrupt and evil. She collected money from so many parents whose children were WAEC candidates with the notion that she will bribe the WAEC examiner.

She spent the money and claimed that the principal of the school was part of the deal. Moreover, out of her greedy nature she collected money from her village women with the intention that she will get a special fertilizer for the breeding of their farm crops. The special fertilizer will make their crops to be three times bigger than their last harvest. She convinced the women and embezzled their money without giving them what she had promised them. Hence, she thereafter took applications of people who are looking for job, collected money from them to give them jobs. She went to bribe Teacher Nebe too to talk to His Excellency. Mama Adi reaffirms thus:

> Simply, you take these applications to Supo and he minutes on them with a green pen. That is all. It will be a case of green pen talk to green paper; attend to the bearer that is all. There are fifty applications here and they are paying a hundred thousand... (101)

Ojiugo, one of Nebe's school teachers had to subject herself to prostitution. She wants to have a fling with the president and wants

Nebe to take her to Supo. She wants to sell her "body just to make money. Nebe said thus:

> Do you ever have hope of settling down, getting married, becoming a mother and living a responsible life? At twenty six, you are no longer a child. Emeka's feelings for the girl underwent rapid metamorphosis. It transformed from impatience to anger to exasperation, then to pity, yes.... Pity and finally pure disenchantment. How can a human being reduce herself to such level of bestiality...(111)

Ngozi Chuma- Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake* revealed betrayal of trust and confidence. Supo's coming to visit his Alma Mater for the first time since two and a half years since he became the president made Teacher Nebe to start thinking otherwise. His coming to visit the school brought so many bad memories to teacher Nebe's soul. It had revived the ghost of buried memory of the long devastating teachers strike action against nonpayment of their salaries by the immediate past District Administrator It was a terrible carriage on the educational sector. The experience taught teacher Nebe a lesson that no politician was worth giving an ear. He sees politics in the nation as a dirty game, a game of sheathed claws of a monster ready to pounce and tear. Nebe summarized it thus: "Whatever it was, be it a promise to build a castle in the moon or his people, tare the roads with silver, he vowed never to be moved like the rest of the gullible people around him...” (17). Teacher Nebe never solicited for any friendship with any politician. Even when Supo invited him at the presidential villa, he quietly turned down the request. He sees himself as a teacher not a politician. He sees himself not having any part to play in the dirty politics of the nation.

Teacher Nebe's presidential invitation brought him face to face with the good and the bad alike. Agaba who heard of the presidential invitation had to meet teacher Nebe to convince him

into using the opportunity to eat his own national cake. He speaks to Nebe that it is a business opportunity for them to enrich themselves. Perhaps, Nebe has a strong asphyxiating aversion for politics and feeble minded people like Agaba who made his repugnance more intense. Nebe out of anger spoke: "Why do people always associate government with financial gratification? Why must every minute contact with the corridors of power zero down to eating the national cake? Do they ever think of ways to move the nation forward..." (83)

Teacher Nebe wondered how many people out there who had ever paused for a second thought on how to improve the deplorable social- political situations in the country. Nebe paused for a seconds. The writer states his feelings thus: "Do you the citizens of this country ever think of making the economy better for all and sundry? In all quarters, every thought, every action, even7 interaction is geared selfishly towards personal aggrandizement. Everyone out there wanted the whole money in his pocket..." (83).

Since literature does not exist in a vacuum, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh took the concept of corruption expressing dissatisfaction on the masses. She paints the society that is morally decayed. She presents a picture of the galling situation that traumatizes Nigerians and her growth. She points out the loopholes of the unholy attitudes of the masses and some selfish men in the society. We see corruption stratifying the society into upper, middle and lower classes. The rich use the advantage of penury on the lower class. The writer uses this work to express in a great way the gullibility of Africans in the African society. She molded her work to suit the social-cultural, economic as well as the political happenings in her society. She expressed and stressed the damages caused by corruption and corrupt citizens. Her sole aim in *The Presidential Handshake* is to teach, correct and awaken a designed response in people for the growth and well being of the society.

Furthermore, we also see corruption stratifying the society into upper, middle and lower classes. The rich uses the advantage of penury on the lower class to induce them into social maladies. They openly and uncompromisingly declared that the ruling class was corrupt, devoid of every vestige of vision and common sense. They criticized them for their betrayal of the masses, for mapping out for themselves a clear but comfortable living, which was out of proportion to the national level of economic production. The masses on the other hand play a greater role in supporting the evils and cycle of doom evident in our nation's polity today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's *The Presidential Handshake* exposes the gullibility of the society; from both the rich and poor. The society that one lives in has a lot to do on one's life. Ours is a society where corruption reigns. All forms of corruption, bribery, murder, embezzlement of public funds, immoral acts, ostentation/opulence, etc. are found within our society. The people have degenerated into the world of money. And in as much as society and environment count on life, majority has taken to this nefarious act. One form of corruption which has killed this country is embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds. Embezzlement of public funds is the slogan we hear every day. We cannot trust anybody any longer; people who claim to protect us are the people killing us.

Chuma-Udeh used her novel to correct the society which she lives in. in the same manner, it is this capacity of literature to reshape society that made Plato to see the artist as an imitator of other men and a deceiver of society and would not allow them in his republic. However, Supo was before being avoided by teacher Nebe but when he gets close to him he found out that Supo wasn't in any way corrupt as he thought. The fact remains that she took a satirical sweep at the absolute corruption of the leaders and the masses. With apt wit and irony, the novelist shows her indignation,

just as her satire is laced with double edge irony. She aimed at exposing the louts, public thieves, rogue politicians and hypocritical leaders.

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