

***Surugede: The music of the deaf in Emeka Nwabueze's  
A Parliament of Vultures and Esiaba Irobi's Cemetery Road***

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**Abstract:** The so-called ‘Platonic dilemma’ is a product of Plato’s under-rating of the capacity of imaginative writing to aid the cause of good leadership in the society. This is probably what impelled Oscar Wilde to claim that “all art is quite useless.” This paper distances itself from such Platonic and Wildean broadside against literary creativity. Rather, the paper argues that imaginative literature conscientizes state steersmen to be positive and useful in the management of the polity and its scarce resources. The paper interrogates the reactionary but progressive dialogic on corruption and misappropriation, neo-colonialism and mal-administration with the consequences thereof, in the African environment as represented in Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* and Irobi’s *Cemetery Road*. Underscoring the necessity for positive change through the reining-in of inordinate, greedy, and self-decapitating power, the paper details how literary creativity and its creators labour to whip power into line for the harnessing and advancement of the society.

**Keywords:** *surugede*, Platonic dilemma, the deaf, *A Parliament of Vultures*, *Cemetery Road*

### **Introduction**

The history of literary theory and criticism shows that the nature and function of imaginative writing have remained controversial since Plato. Despite that Osundare (2008, 5) claims that “all art seeks to affect,” Wilde (1992, 4) denies the utility of imaginative literature, arguably as much as Plato. Plato had banished imaginative writing from his ideal republic on the ground that it is imitative, deceitful and pretentious ([390 B. C.], 2000, 1 –14). For Wilde (1992, 4), “all art is quite useless” and “the only excuse for making a useless thing is that

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one admires it intensely.” This reminds us of Archibald MacLeish’s parody of Horace in the suggestion that “A poem should not mean / But be” (MacLeish 1926, 18).

The Puritans considered poetry as pestiferous to social morality and good tastes. Stephen Gosson ([1579] 2000, 1–7), for instance, inveighed against poetry and all other forms of imaginative writing, pronouncing them deleterious. Like Plato, he took a swipe at the evil impact of much that was shown in the theatres of his day but he is consoled that “burnt children dread the fire.” Phillip Sidney ([1595] 2000, 102), to whom Gosson dedicated the *Abuse* stoutly defended poetry “from the abuse of children and nitwits” and “to stem the tide of a civil war among the muses” (Adams 2010, 155). Since Plato, continual quarrels have raged over art versus nature; and art for art’s sake versus utilitarian art. This study is concerned strictly with the latter.

### **African Writers and Social Commitment**

Although there is no univocal answer to what the role of the African writer should be, majority of them are conscious that “Living in a world that demands action[...] a devout dedication to art is a luxury” (Sartre 1993, 4). As against David Ker’s insistence that social issues, even though present in literary works should be implied rather than stated or demonstrated baldly (Ker 2004, 7), Soyinka (2008, 10) asserts that whenever the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or, withdrawing to the position of a chronicler and post-mortem surgeon.

Africa’s past and present experiences and condition call for committed writing. As Achebe (1975, 38) posits, to ignore the big issues of Africa’s experience is akin to chasing rats while one’s house is aflame. In the same vein Lukacs (1962, 305) insists that “it is difficult for the writer really to free himself from the currents and fluctuations of his time and, within them, from those of his class”. Agbasiere (2000, 71) equally notes that for the writer to be socially relevant, s/he must work to make society a better place to live. Again, it is argued that the writer should strive with his work to prevent the present day society from collapse instead of dwelling unnecessarily in “the discovery of gems of the past” (Soyinka 2008, 37). As Sartre (1993, 5) insists, “The writer must put himself on the side of the majority of the (then) two billion starving, if he wishes to be able to

speak to all and be read by all. Failing that he will be at the service of a privileged class and like it, an exploiter.” As a sensitive needle, the writer captures with differing levels of accuracy and success the conflicts and tensions in the dynamic environment of diegesis (Ngugi 1972, 4). Romanus Egudu (1973, 4) equally views the writer as a “God-sent gadfly [...] persistently endeavouring to rouse the society from its social, political, moral and intellectual slumber”. This connects with Soyinka’s position that writing should embody “A creative concern which conceptualizes or extends actuality beyond the purely narrative making, it reveals realities beyond the immediately attainable, [...] in order to free society” (Soyinka 2010, 66).

There is the contrary view that the writer is hardly the people’s real soldier. That if he does not go for a practical hunt, like Mamman Vatsa, Chris Okigbo, Wilfred Owen, Ernest Hemingway, e.e Cummings, and INC Aniebo, the writer cannot kill a fly (Eruvbetine 2007, 12). This assertion echoes Don Lee’s position that physical confrontation rather than erudite poetry was what the Black American of the 1960s needed to fight off racial oppression in the USA. Thus, while some black revolutionaries insisted on ‘assassin poems’, as well as black aesthetic that will cater for black spiritual needs, Lee defiantly states: “i ain’t seen no poems stop a.38, / i ain’t seen no stanzas break a honkie’s head, / i ain’t seen no metaphors stop a tank, /i ain’t seen no words kill” (Abd-ur-Rahaman 2018, 26, 53).

Notwithstanding Lee’s position, Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, and Irobi’s *Hangmen also Die* and *Nwokedi* are respective instances where metaphors ‘stopped’ a bullet, or became the cause for the *raining* of bullets to check social anomie. Awoonor- Williams (2000, 74) also suggests that “activism is not a substitute for art and should not be confused with it.” Clark (2000, 74-75) and Okigbo (1977, 75) affirm that the writer and the soldier have different calling and should concentrate on their area of expertise. According to Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike (1980, 74), “The duality of a writer’s social responsibility includes engaging in physical attempts to right the societal wrongs as a private citizen; and as a public figure who engages the resources of his trade, his writings.”

Chinua Achebe’s “*nkolika*”– telling is supreme – is instructive. True, the story outlives the war and the warrior (Achebe 1987, 124), but so does it the story teller. In spite of the tendency for the likes of Eldred Jones, Eustace Palmer, David Ker, JP Clark, and pockets of others to excoriate committed African writing, Achebe remains

authoritative in his assertion that “It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence” (Ibid., 124). Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* and Esiaba Irobi’s *Cemetery Road* are committed to ‘singing’ to African leaders who seem deaf and hard-hearted, the song of re-awakening. Such utilitarian literary pens are often the whetstone that sharpens social consciousness and conscience.

Since power calls to power we contend that beauty calls to beauty too! Aesthetic beauty is demonstrable not only in artistic fidelity but also in humane artistry. The starving, the homeless, the insecure, the sick, and the fugitive from horrendous war do not read a poem of leisure and pleasure but consume the poetic psalms of succour and solace, hence the need to sing of ‘what’, not just of ‘how’. This is what we are set to explore in Nwabueze’s and Irobi’s “singing to the deaf,” to parody Nwahunanya’s inaugural lecture title, 2011.

### **Vultures, national carcass, and the hurricane in Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures***

Vultures are birds of prey that scavenge on carrion. A mention of the word ‘vulture’ evokes the imagery of ugliness, greed, and revulsion. This is captured in Hilaire Belloc’s nursery rhyme, “The Vulture.” The vulture “eats between his meals,” so, “He very rarely feels / As well as you and I.” The vulture’s predatory and greedy nature makes him not only sickly and ugly but also callous and despicable! This ugliness manifests in the fact that “His eye is dull, his head is bald,” and “His neck is growing thinner.” At this point my primary school teacher would stress the last line: “Oh! What a lesson for us all / *To only eat at dinner*” (emphasis added, Belloc 1897, 19).

The dramatis personae in Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* – metaphoric representations of national actors in the current democratic process in Nigeria – read no meaning into Belloc’s nursery verse. Obviously, they pretend to not be aware of it. Otherwise, they would have corroborated Sidney’s assertion that “Poetry is nature’s first nurse,” and the “teacher of all wisdom” (Sidney [1595] 2000, 102). Belloc’s poem serves as a metaphoric disavowal of greed manifest in the stealing of national wealth by a tiny crop of covetous, predatory, and greedy rulers. This forms the major thrust of Nwabueze’s swipes on insensate leadership in the present political dispensation in Nigeria which has subsisted since 1999. Like some of his predecessors and contemporaries, Nwabueze satirizes the political

leaders' predilection to mal-administration and misappropriation of public funds. He is properly alarmed at the danger posed by this kind of practice coming as it does from those to whom the destiny of the nation is entrusted. So, he warns of, or rather recommends the possible action that should follow this state of indiscretion and profligacy.

In *Politics in Nigeria*, James Booth shows that Nigeria's founding fathers are complicit in the making of this national malaise. Booth recalls Azikiwe's pledge in 1938 to "henceforth [...] utilize my earned income to secure my enjoyment of a high standard of living and also to give a helping hand to the needy." He also refers to Awolowo's "I was going to make myself formidable intellectually, morally invulnerable, to make all the money that is possible for a man with my brains and brawn to make in Nigeria" (Booth 1989, 49). Achebe (1983, 13-14) decries this "poverty of thought exhibited in the biographies of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo," contending that such comments "are more likely to produce aggressive millionaires than selfless leaders of their people". He further states that it also devalues and undermines the "colonial litany" which African intellectuals have engaged in, since political independence (Ibid., 47).

### **The story and its signposts**

The play focuses on a fictional West African parliament. Here, the legislators are delineated as vultures gorging on the carcass of national wealth. This is in spite of the protestations of minority voices of reason which opt for purposeful and selfless representation. The dilemma of the nation of Nwabueze's representation is compounded by a cult of conspiracy between the two most basic arms of democratic governance – the executive and the legislature. This is why His Excellency, Mr. President appears as a callous and arrogant tyrant who parries all questions tending to essential issues of governance in the brusque style of old-fashioned military dictators. This too is why the illiterate food vendor-turned-legislator, Madam Omeaku, alias Ho-ha, the hypocritical religious charlatan Reverend Jossy, and the lascivious political stalwart Mr. Brown, all in connivance with the pusillanimous Chief Habamero, President of Parliament, thwart the good intentions of Dr Parkers, erstwhile Chief of Parliament and his ally, Mr. Otobo.

In the play the camp promoting good governance and the reverse camp scheme to control the instruments of the parliament for opposite reasons. Parkers and Otobo are in the minority but represent the voice of reason, good conscience and purposeful articulation of issues of the

polity. They stand for due process and altruistic representation. They want egalitarian conduct to govern the affairs of parliament in the higher national interest. Out-numbered, blackmailed, and out-schemed, they lose out to their bellicose and ‘cleverer’ opponents. On the other hand, Habamero, Brown, Omeaku, and Jossy with the tacit help of the Chief of Protocol, outwit their opponents and entrench greed, squander-mania, nepotism and witting misrepresentation of their constituents. To firmly root their criminal designs and antics, they engage all sorts of stratagems to silence the voice of order and reason. They blackmail the opposition and muffle their frantic calls for sobriety in the discharge of national functions.

However, since the voice of caution could not avail, Nigerian students eventually attack and sack the rowdy rogues on the day that their corrupt lives and thieving activities are at the apex. The students, like the retributive thunderbolt of *Amadioha*, visit and ‘kill’ the political misfits on the day that their corrupt lives seem sweetest to them! In the ensuing action, Otobo and Parkers are patronised by the idealistic formulators of the revolution.

In this work, Nwabueze depicts the leaders as irresponsible rulers whose actions lead to their nation’s economic, social, and political stagnation. He, like Achebe, shows that “the seminal absence of intellectual rigour in the political thought [of our leaders] – a tendency to materialistic wooliness and self-centered pedestrianism” is the bane of the national process (Achebe 1983, 13). The playwright warns of the possible consequence of this misguided disposition. This manifests in political mischief and election rigging which enable incompetent persons to take power. This is how the articulate and altruistic Barrister Umeh loses election to the illiterate small-time hotelier, Madam Omeaku through “a campaign of bitter-leaf soup and Canadian wife” (Nwabueze 2011, 36). This shows that Nigeria’s elections are often won through manipulation.

Candidates are foisted on the people *not* in the interest of the nation but on strategic party interest; and because they have the needed connections to help siphon out the national wealth. Mr. Brown conspiratorially tells Madam Ho-ha that the reason for bringing Dr Parkers into parliament was that “having lived in the United States for fifteen years we felt he should have enough connections to help us put money in foreign banks.” So, “it wasn’t difficult for (Brown) to negotiate the right figures for him” just as he did in Omeaku’s case (Nwabueze 2011, 10). Otobo, Parkers’s ally echoes this when he tells

the latter: “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, chose another person and gave him the appellation of Professor to make your doctorate sound meager” (Nwabueze 2011, 35).

Conversely, Rev Jossy was called ‘Reverend’ during campaigns, “because we thought the title could purchase us some credibility from the voters. And it worked!” (Ibid., 11). Understandably, Jossy remains loyal to the cause of greed. He sticks to criminal misappropriation of public funds, and retains his position among the thieving, greedy clique. As Brown intones, “politics is no child’s play!” (Ibid., 8, 9, 11).

The playwright uses bitter satire to frown at mediocrity and ‘bottom power’ that are entrenched in public administration. He shows that matters of national importance are poorly handled through this trend and the nation bleeds for it. For instance, Madam Omeaku knows virtually nothing about law-making but she is imposed on the parliament as a legislator. Not only that, the clique also makes her the secretary of the House due to hers and her daughter Nkechi’s promiscuity. The result is that the parliament is saddled with a secretary who cannot read minutes of House proceedings, let alone understand its contents. The rebarbative effect of the imposition is that deliberations in the parliament are at best servile except where they border on loot, subterfuge, and nepotism.

Yet, to complete the orgy of mediocrity, Nkechi, young, nubile but hardly out of secondary school is packaged for the lascivious appetite of His Excellency, the President, as Chief Press Secretary. The result is that the arrogant President is normally ill-prepared to entertain questions bordering on national interest and often brusquely tells the press off, to his eventual ruin.

Nwabueze thus exposes the incompetence of the Executive and the Legislative arms of government manifest in malpractice, immorality and the incapacity for patriotism. Ministerial nominations and appointment of chairmen of boards are done not on merit but on the basis of party loyalty. When Parkers opines that the House “cannot confer chairmanship of Boards on people merely because they helped the party,” he is over-ruled on the grounds that “Honesty and integrity are relative,” and “Board membership (is) reserved for people who helped the party during elections” (Nwabueze 2011, 74).

Exasperated, Parkers wonders if intellectuals were mere paper tigers who moan in pain from a distance and abandon their nation to

nonentities. Through authorial intrusion, as Otobo's mouthpiece, Nwabueze (2011, 35) comments: "The demand on public officers is too harsh. The fear of the unknown is the problem of our public officers, and the bane of political development in this nation. They are required to resign from their jobs before engaging in politics. They are afraid to do it, and prefer the devil they know".

The above cry of anguish may have informed the Supreme Court judgement in Nigeria enabling civil and public servants to freely offer themselves for elective positions and return to their former duties should they fail (Okenwa 2019, 1). This development vindicates the position that writers are sensitive needles in the African polity and elsewhere. An Igbo proverb says: *He who is committing incest in the night does not reckon that it will soon be day light*. The unscrupulous legislators had a stranglehold on the nation for quite a spell. On trumped-up charges they detain, so as to silence Dr Parkers and Mr. Otobo. But in the process of sharing choice public lands among themselves, the legislators harvest retributive justice. Okigbo's brand of thunder receives 'Hurrah' (Nwabueze 2011, 67) as Nigerian youths in a well-coordinated revolution sack and arrest the parliamentarians. At this juncture, Nwabueze's point is clear: if the Nigerian political class persists in selfish conduct and personal aggrandizement, then the onus is on the youths—in conjunction with the intellectuals to take up the challenge and checkmate them in the interest of all. This justifies the view that the writer is a sensible needle. *A Parliament of Vultures* wears a prophetic garb. In October 2020, Nigerian youths instigated the 'End SARS' protest which threatened Mr. Mohammadu Buhari's government. Although the protest, mooted in 2017 as a twitter campaign was initially staged against police brutality, it later morphed into a near revolution to topple the government. The youths accused the Buhari government of corruption, insensitivity to the security situation in the country, dictatorship, and nepotism.

### **Countering the counterfeiters in Irobi's *Cemetery Road to life***

As Isidore Diala (2014, 26) insists, Irobi's dramaturgy is fixated on the Nigerian postcolony. He is troubled by the "paradoxes that restricted the aspiration of the country to purposeful and responsible nationhood". The sum of his philosophy as a playwright is the need for youths as agents of progressive change to forcefully seize public space and authority from the brigands in power. A checklist of Irobi's explosive plays justifies the above view. These include his prophetic



debut *Hangmen also Die* (1989), *Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh* ([1989], 2010), *Nwokedi* (1991), *The Other Side of the Mask* ([1999], 2009), *The froned Circle* ([1999], 2010), *Cemetery Road* (2009), *The Colour of Rusting Gold* (2013), and *Sycorax* (2014). In these plays, Irobi consistently spoke the language of violence and the macabre. Even his collection of poetry tilts heavily toward the necessity for violence in order to reorder the African society for the better.

Why is Irobi obsessed with the shading of blood in his works? He is expressing anguish and anger over the turn of events in his African environment, particularly Nigeria. This anguish is made more pitiable by the fact that “when a blind man cries” no one “sees the tears beading his eyes,” and none “sees the storm raging in his soul” (Irobi 2009, 24). He is angry that in spite of the plea for mercy, the executioner’s victim is often killed with reckless abandon. So, instead of a plea, the captive chooses defiance and confrontation as the only path to freedom available if not viable. *To gain his life the captive must prepare to lose it*. For Irobi the road to freedom is the way of blood and people should be ready to make sacrifices to appease, contain, and apprehend the gods of greed and the forces and causes of fear, depredation, and dystopia.

### **The story and its beams**

In this play Irobi urges us to resist the forces of neo-colonialism, military dictatorship and all other forms of oppression that have held Africa down since political independence. Dr. Mazeli Anyanwu, a radical university teacher in the Department of Theatre Arts is contracted to produce a documentary for the BBC. He works in alliance with two BBC correspondents – Hazel and Douglas. The subject is colonial seizure of fertile farmland from a beleaguered peasant group in Northern Nigeria. The Oxford-trained BBC correspondent, Douglas wants a denigrating portrayal of the peasants’ suffering to delight and prove to British viewers that Africa is still backward to justify continued economic and other neo-colonialist gains.

However, Mazeli discovers that the BBC is not interested in the human angle like the rape of some of the dispossessed women. Again, the neo-imperial representatives do not wish to pay any reasonable compensation to the peasants. This is coupled with the blinding of some of the victims during their massacre. Mazeli decides to discontinue the project and to circumscribe the master tape containing

the almost concluded documentary. As all efforts to take the tape from him fail the BBC correspondents report him to Nigeria's military junta. Fearing possible repercussions from the British government the army dispatches some soldiers to confiscate the tape from Mazeli. This sets the stage for the confrontation and brutality and resistance that ensue. Meanwhile, Mazeli is in league with his students to present a show on the subject of the tape to the military President that evening at the Nicon Niga Hotel, during which they would kill the President and free the nation from tyranny and backwardness.

Irobi makes a lot of points with *Cemetery Road*. By seizing the tape that offends Africa's sensibility, he justifies the call for Africans to rise up and contain any further imperialist meddling with the continent. He also shows the denigrating self-effacement to which African tyrants' resort, to appease others even when Africa's interest is at stake. Rigor Mortis's boss, the Captain explains why they must force the tape from Mazeli: "We have come because we don't want any trouble with the British Government." This is in sharp contrast with the army captain's boasts while molesting Mazeli and his wife, Somadina and ransacking their house: "Yes, we have the world in our hands. And whenever we like we spin it like a top and watch those who cannot cling fall off like ants" (Irobi 2009, 14).

Again, respect for fundamental human rights like personal privacy, rule of law, and fair hearing do not count with the military dictatorship. When Mazeli opts to plead his case against the British agents, the local lackeys tell him: "As far as the State Security Service is concerned, and by that I mean the Federal Military Government, by which implication means or includes the President, what is happening now is the only hearing this case will get anytime, anywhere, any place" (Ibid., 16).

It is in further demonstration of power-drunk military madness that Mazeli is tortured at the military base and finally injected with poison on the orders of the colonel, alias Pinochet leader of the military torture machine. This is also a commentary on the intellectual emptiness of the local agents of coercion and torture. To this extent, Irobi shows that successive military dictatorships in Africa are reigns of terror. Military ruler-ship is mired in intrigues and random waste of innocent lives. When Somadina protests Mazeli's innocence of any attempt to overthrow the government, Lawani brags that he does not have to plot a coup before he could be executed by the military government. What is needed is for a reliable army or security officer

desperate for promotion to mention Mazeli's name and say he saw him talking or drinking beer with the coup plotters. "[...] We have had three secret executions since January this year. In each execution, there were at least seven civilians" (Irobi 2009, 73).

It is Lawani, the military president's personal aide-de-camp who demonstrates clearly, the mentality of members of the ruling military cabal. Their true intention at all times is to line their pockets and salt away as much of the public bequest as they can. Matters of patriotism which military dictators often tout as reason for their incursion in governance actually count for little. This is how Lawani abuses the privilege of classified information and state security secrets which he sells to the CIA for a fee. Lawani has no regard for even the President whom he guards: "We haven't got a President who is worthy of assassination or a sacrifice as priceless as my life." For him the President deserves "the electric chair or public execution by strangling," in the manner of Noriega" (Ibid., 81).

Professor Madubunjoala represents that crop of despicable intellectuals who boot-lick the dictators and betray freedom and justice. It is, therefore, no wonder that he should take sides with the security men in their ploy to liquidate Mazeli. Irobi depicts Madubunjoala and his ilk as the true problem of Africa. Afraid and envious of Mazeli's intellectual guts and integrity, Madubunjoala like his name – man is the curse of the earth – schemes to destroy Mazeli's files to deny him promotion. Then, he tries to spy on him and ferret out non-existent evidence of Mazeli's involvement in a coup plot. Mazeli is a lone voice crying in the wilderness of integrity and national conscience. He is tortured but not afraid of torture. He is injected with poison but rather than being deterred, he becomes more resolute to enforce his will and recover the integrity of his nation. He wins in the end. For, even though he had the opportunity of saving his life through the overtures of his erstwhile friend, nemesis, and repentant 'evil spirit'—Lawani, he chooses no easy way out but remains inexorably committed to his vision.

As a mark of his success, Mazeli is able to destroy the recordings in the BBC master tape before handing it over to the correspondents. So, in spite of their braggadocio, the soldiers and their pay-masters lose in the end. Again, Mazeli wins as he successfully recruits his theatre students to carry on the revolution. In his attempt to evade Lawani who now tries to stop him from committing suicide, Mazeli kills himself and causes the students' crowd to kill Lawani in retaliation. He had

earlier bequeathed his estate to his equally idealistic wife, Somadina, who is three months pregnant. Interestingly too, the embattled peasants of Kuje for whom Mazeli fought identify with him and vow to continue the struggle. This is equally a mark of victory for order, for freedom instead of quiescence in the face of tyranny.

All said, the playwright in Irobi (1991, 44) has largely proven that “the tyranny of a tyrant is measured by the patience of the oppressed”. At least, Lawani can no longer “send the deliberations of the Supreme Military Council” to the CIA. He can no longer lend his fingers “to the hands that rupture our future” (Irobi 2009, 143). On the contrary, Mazeli’s converts – the students and the peasants – will carry on the crusade to oust the oppressive regime now that “murder matches in their eyes with militant faces” (Irobi 1991, 45). Now, even though Mazeli is an original loner, even though his itinerary seems from the start, too tall for him, he proves like Dr. Stockmann [*An Enemy of the People*] that “the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone” (Ibsen 1981, 215). In a nutshell, Mazeli successfully counters the counterfeiters of national ethos. No doubt, he moves through the cemetery road of suffering and death, but then, the cemetery road to death often leads to the Salvationist road to life, to rebirth, as we often die to live.

## **Conclusion**

This study painstakingly details the interlocking of social commentary aimed at conscience-building in Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* ([2000], 2011) and Esiaba Irobi’s *Cemetery Road* (2009). It shows that each of the writers interrogates greedy, oppressive, repressive, ineffective, and retrogressive power dispensation in the business of state leadership in Africa, with particular focus on Nigeria. Each writer posits that power should always call to power so that violence done to the entire people may be redressed in order that errant power may be whipped into line. This investigation also shows that the writer is a visionary who is enmeshed in literacy and creativity as an effective member of the society. The writer has the concern and capacity to revamp society through imaginative discourse. This bears out our favouring of utilitarian art against art-for-arts- sake since the human condition in the African space calls for concerted efforts to dethrone the forces of dystopia and enthrone an egalitarian society.

Finally, this research posits that “as a sensitive needle,” the writer may often take a sociological stance melding his creative imagination

with issues of the day, as demonstrated in the drama of national rebirth and renascent Africa encapsulated in Nwabueze's and Irobi's plays of focus. After all, if the writer lacks creativity, we do not know what should qualify him as such; if he becomes distant from issues of humanity, of polity, he may not bear the burden of his muse well. But, if he sings and the listeners remain deaf to his music, then it will not be his fault when the errant listeners and dramatis personae of national woes face *surugede*, the music of the deaf, which leads to that inexorable dance of death.

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