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Commercialization of Public Enterprises (Government Property) in the Turn of the Century: A Study of (Three Selected Texts) Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Charles Okwelume's *Babel of Voices* and George Orwell's *The Animal Farm*

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Abstract

The study focuses on Commercialization of Public Enterprises (Government Property) in the Turn of the Century: A Study of Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard, Charles Okwelume's Babel of Voices and George Orwell's The Animal Farm. It explores empirical illustrations embedded in texts and bizarre approach most countries leaders are adopting to sale their national pride in the turn of the century which craftily relayed in the texts. The thrust of the paper therefore espouses the evils and unpatriotic acts capable of depriving public property or utilities from the citizenry which should be discouraged to meet up prevailing economic, welfare and social growths. The study uses historical and psychological criticisms to unravel both the intents of the writers and moral themes and communicate it to the audience or readers. The theoretical framework here adopts library method for empiricism. The findings hinged on greed, lust, power, materialism, immunity etc which compelled most of these political leaders to gazette their national pride, property or utilities for sale. It also serves as cautions to countries, leaders and the electorates to be conscious of their mandates in order to correct these anomalies in national or world polity. If what is articulated here is strictly adhered to, the topic discussed will be minimized to lowest minimum.

Keywords: Commercialization, Public Enterprises (Government Property), Study & Selected Texts

Introduction

Abuse, unjust rule or accumulation of power, injustice, dictatorship, autocracy and illegal acquisition of wealth especially in politics are everywhere. The texts of study namely Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Charles Okwelume's *Babel of Voices* and George Orwell's *The Animal Farm* hoist on the title of the article in the exploration of the aforementioned texts in both

Western and African societies. The height of injustices and deprivation of rights, exploitation, siphoning, marginalization and inequalities often observed in society and governance especially in the enforcement and realization of government's goal also plunged the poor masses in untold or intolerable mess, suffering, tyranny, neglect and abandonment.

Poor condition of workers and exploitations of the poor working class where some world dictators and wealthy capitalists or merchants offered nothing to improve the conditions of their subjects or citizens owing to bureaucratic inefficiency and malfunctioning saddled with red tapes, self amassment of wealth were dissected. The textual backgrounds parody on Bolshevik revolution of Russian totalitarian system of 1917 which ignores other forms of government except communism also the sale of Russian or Russian Revolution” of 1911 reviewed by Brinton Crane’s (1965: 17) and amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914.

In this exploratory study or research, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Babel of Voices* and *Animal Farm* had backgrounds in privatization, dictatorship, autocracy class and social mores or decadence as change mantra or reform inspired by the writers to contend systemic failure or administrative lapses, colonialism, and loss of old or cultural values at the turn or dawn of the century. Both works dramatize the auction or sale of Russia and undue exploitative mercantilism of Nigeria (Africa). *The Cherry Orchard*, *Babel of Voices* and *Animal Farm* are designed to critique these ugly situations in the world. *Animal Farm* at worse ridicules privatization policy of government which allows the rich to be in control of government agencies while *Babel of Voices* ridicules colonial exploitation and siphoning of Nigerian resources (African countries) for European interest. These will be craftily conveyed in segments of this article.

Theoretical Framework / Research Methodology

The texts make use of historical and psychological criticisms or approaches to explore these aforementioned works. Historical criticism espouses various epochs or events significant to the works under explorations which imbued or impart meaning to social reality. While psychological approach conveys the intents or minds of the writer and communicates meaning to the readers or audience. Thus, the two approaches are best suited for explanation as applied in these dramas of revolutions.

Research methodology is library which aids in using relevant works to support the article under consideration.

Empirical Study / Analysis

The study uses three selected literary texts namely Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, Charles Okwelum’s *Babel of Voices* and George Orwell’s *The Animal Farm*. The critical approach lies on observation of moral facts and investigation on how these three politically selected texts impact significantly for sober reflection. It also highlights the relevance of the topic to politics in the turn of the century. The moral themes of the texts are tailored to yield impacts across borders in the society. This unveils the context of article and the rising social corruptions in the millennium.

Of importance, the method used to achieve the significance of this paper for sober reflection consists of parodying social corruptions for social change in global dynamic polity. The empiricism aids to unravel, to explain or to weigh the relevance of the paper on the tripod stand of the dividends of democracy, thoughts and assumptions in order to convey on a good note the impacts of these in the society for awareness. The paper is a product of time especially how the texts will acquaint the masses or electorates and politicians to acquire basic morals against social corruptions.

Literature Review

Many literary fictions in world literatures unveil the agonies in commercializing government property or enterprises which hover

around the world like dust laden in harmattan. The empirical trends of discussions in some classic literatures bemoan these ugly migrating policies to the socio-economic global polity. Thus, Anton Chekhov, Charles Okwelum, George Orwell and other writers of contemporary have relayed the blaze of this current trend to the detriment of the people. Attempts shall be geared to review these situations using the selected works in the preceding paragraph segments.

Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* parodies on the “universal drama of Russian destiny” (1904: 43) or revolution especially countries yet to understand or under the plights of democratic transitions and ulterior motives of ‘privatization’ policy going on around the globe. In the opening introduction, Varya, one of the characters in the text reminds Anya that “in August the place will be sold” (1904: 437) - I mean the Cherry Orchard or the garden as it is referred to in the text. Lopahin confided to her daughter Pishchik instead of outright sale (to offset the debts on the mentioned date), he is now proposing to lease part of the garden at the sum of 25, 0000 roubles a year. ‘The Cherry Orchard’ is one of the ‘interesting’ or ‘remarkable’ thing ‘in the province’ which is then under auction whereby the people or the family rejects but there is no turning back because the offer has been made. The millionaire, Deriganov intends to buy the estate – The Cherry Orchard as it is refers to in a plain language of Russia.

With the privatization policy in African societies, some stakeholders or political leaders are turning their states or countries for money through gazettes as “the Germans ... turn Russian into a Frenchman” (1904: 443). Thus, the Cherry Orchard auction was given wider publicity to hinder inimical oppositions after procurement as cherished garden. Thus, Anya affirms that “the house we live in has long ceased to be our own and I shall leave it, I give you my word” (1904: 446). This is a typical situation which reflects or ridicules how some government property or enterprises are sold at the turn of the century.

On the other side, ‘the moon’ (1904: 446) in the text symbolizes or refers to the image of the new Russia. As the moon rises, it radiates happiness and its footsteps are literarily personified. Anya advocated making or carving the former garden as humanity and globalization are advancing the highest truth on the peak of commercialization or technology for development. After commercialization of public or Government enterprise, the focus of living at cross road is toughened; not the end of life or success. That is the yearnings of one’s country by good patriots as in the case of Peter Abraham’s *A Wrath for Udomo*. Thus, the text (*The Cherry Orchard*) parodies on socio-economic forces in Russia at the turn of 20th century which also depicts the rise of middle class after the abolition of Serfdom in the 19th century and aristocratic power.

Thus, Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* shares schemas with Charles Okwelum’s *Babel of Voices* and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* to repudiate some of the nefarious acts, and injustices in human society perpetuated by vagarious and thirsty leaders who squandered their nation’s resources also colonial exploitations which transported Nigerian or African resources primarily for European needs.

In psychological interpretation of *The Cherry Orchard*, Russian is advancing in Lopakin’s idea. As avant-garde of the new Russia, Trombov situates a new vision signified at the end where the drama states, “Welcome to a new life” or ‘new order’. As a

student, he wants to contribute or works in the new Russia which progresses while humanity advances. Lopakin lacks self confidence in aristocracy. The text is ironic in the sense that Aristocracy is idle whereas he is busy, a referent to a love relationship with Lyubov. The playwright is conscious of his past (poverty, hard work and struggles). He represents the new Russia in transition after the collapse of the former Old Russian values depicted in Bolshevik revolution of 1917. As the purchaser of the orchard, he represents the entire Russian which is to be transformed into a 20th century Europe.

On the contrary, Anya represents yearnings for freedom which also castigates Aristocratic wastage. He is referred to as 'sunshine and spring' who labours consciously to reject a family house to 'plant a new orchard' in an era of transition. That is an epoch event of revolutionizing the new Russia or making the cherry orchard to regain her freedom as it represents despites feudal grip or hegemony to rob her hard work as sine qua non or sure post for her success.

Dunyasha is a replica of class struggles between 'the haves' and 'haves not' depicted in Aristocratic bourgeoisie of a working class. Charlotta is a reflection of sadness especially Russian in transition overwhelmed by the revolution as only hope to secure job and to participate (in the new Russia) different from Gaev, Lyubov, Marya, Vilnik and Faers who insist in old Russia. Gaevi represents a man of 'go' of old century that is not relevant in the 20th century. He plays cards which signify idleness of the past Aristocrat while Dish is a dreamer, parasite, feudalist conformist of old adherent of 'the cherry orchard' who prefers to contributing quota to working in the new Russia.

Charles Okwelum in *Babel of Voices* parodies on the 'heavy baskets' (2002: 109-112) that (Nigerians) should be joined hands to lift for social unity, peace and progress after being exploited by the British who colonized and amalgamated her. This aforementioned drama is designed or tailored in mild spirit to canvass for revolution which impinged on colonial exploitation and marginalization of the Nigerian society. This reflects or boils on dialectical politics, enlightenments, amalgamation, revenue or raw material transportations which constipated crises in the socio-political and cultural polity.

Thus, Fredrick Lord Lugard in his amalgamation of 1914 joined the North and South of Nigeria for administrative purpose. Lord Lugard affirms that "The partition of Africa was, as well all recognize, due primarily to the economic necessity of increasing the supplies of raw materials and food to meet needs of the industrialized nations of Europe" (Lugard, 1923: 1; Rodney, 1979: 1; Chinweizu, 1975: 55).

Without due consultation or study of its cultural institutions or diversities, he commercializes Nigerian resources or raw materials only to meet up prevailing needs of Europe with force of law administered through warrant chiefs system and delegated legislation or representations enhanced through Indirect Rule which collapsed or backfired.

Okwelum in this economic drama sits on the fence and plays the role of a seer or prophet to spur or inspire revolution in order to contend cultural and political anomalies in the Nigerian society. Nigeria per se becomes three green bottles standing on the wall after milking and sucking dry her resources; a replica of the sale of Russian in 1911 depicted in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 as relayed in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Going outside

Babel of Voices or leaning on historical and psychological interpretations, Shehu, the product of the amalgamation decides to opt from the union and live independently. On a critical analogy, the playwright is ironic in terms of revealing Nigerian cultural diversities and its reunion because of tribal separation or agitations of Biafra which looms visibly in the text as seen in the on-going national polity while Britain applies diplomacy and watches the bizarre drama caused by architectural design of her amalgamation.

In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell ridicules aristocracy in the modern society presided by totalitarian, theocratic and autocratic leaders who victimized their subjects to remain loyal in order to remain in power and to perpetuate their ulterior motives creating their statues to be worshipped by weaker nations. Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* castigates this act in what he refers to as 'mental syphilis' (1993: 15). Snowball for instance was awarded the animal hero, 'First Class' with 'death sentence' hanging on her afterwards like carcass of abattoir (1945: 9) despites her pains in building the farm dominated by Napoleon. Boxer "I will work harder" (1982: 42) and "Napoleon is always right" signals anarchy, dictatorship, lawlessness and despotism when Boxer was eventually sold to a slaughter company to the amazement of the other animals. This on a critical analogy ridicules capitalist system of government and private enterprises which see man on the other perspective as a piece of orange sucked and jettisoned especially where he is not vibrant or active in service. Thus, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* explores a 'hostile society' (Nwahunaya 2003: 13) which works against individual aspirations or aims propelled by man or extenuating supernatural forces. Willy Loman committed suicide as the only alternative to attract compensation by the government in order to provide financial security to his family (wife and the children) since he has been living in optical disillusionment that he is a rich man also poverty does not exist. Since government work is sometimes, treated as a laissez faire, efforts have made by the present system to privatize some of her investments or utilities to avoid loss and to maximize profits for selfish purpose to the detriments of the poor masses.

On ridiculous platform, 'the Animal Farm' was effected to 'Manor Farm' (1945: 9) to enforce the will of Napoleon as top dog; an autocratic leader who at his command refutes transaction or use of currency with human being and later, altered the animal laws to suit her whims and caprices at the detriments of the animals (1945: 44). This despicably parodies or explores the political conflict between Stalin and Trotsky in Russian on totalitarian system of government of man inhumanity to man or injustices. Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal* also ridicules England as macrocosms of the rich in the 17-18th leaning on indices of ill-human treatments, subrogation, oppression, injustices meted out to poor begging Irish children or peasants by the callous Ireland English world leaders or ruling class who are bent on exploiting or usurping, paying lip services to the people in the parliament to suggest ironically baking the children for food to reduce the stigmas of begging and unemployment in the streets as means of reducing burdens to the parents or nation who suffer the humiliation (1984: xii). This is also vividly captured or explored in his *Gulliver's Travels* where Swift repudiates hypocritical attitudes of self deception, human race, follies and snobbery, prudery often exhibited by (1984: xvii) 'cruel, dishonest and greedy' leaders.

The Battle of Cow shell and Windmill represent two legal battles to ensure who gets statutory rights of ownership or occupancy of the farm. At the end, the *Animal Farm* was legally changed to

Manor Farm which also indicates dominion, superiority or control of man over the animal; an act of God or biblical injunction which serves as a golden rule today. Thus, the text impinges on the Marxist dialectical materialism or revolution of 1917 repudiating Stalin, Russian totalitarianism which ignores capitalism and other forms of governments. That is, the counter play of power tussles between of Stalin and Trotsky of Russia. As a communist bloc (believes in communal property or ownership), Russia does not share capitalist ideology like America which makes the ‘Sherry Orchard’ to undergo series of national gazettes before it was approved by the people or law for sale as auctioned. Thus, Russia and Ukraine boarder war conflict could be linked to The Battle of Cowshed, Wind Mill and Manor Farm in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* over the real owner of the territorial boundary in question and not by invasion.

In *Animal Farm*, Napoleon advanced or created the Windmill snatched from Boxer to ward-off opposition (Snowball) against him as so many leaders follow suit to cage or imprisoned their subjects as Russian government also detained Aljazeera journalist or those in opposition. Napoleon engaging the animal farm to neighbouring farms was intentionally for necessity and not for 1982: 3) ‘commercial purpose’. Thus, the earlier decision or resolution not to engage with any man in trade, economical activity and use of money backfired also reshuffled where Mr. Whymper, an advocate and solicitor was contacted as an (1982: 84) intermediary. While in *Beatification of Area Boy*, Wole Soyinka embarks on pilgrimage for soul winning in order to get things right to ensure sanity in the national polity. The text avers that (1999: 6):

JUDGE: ... my journey to the kingdom of souls begins today. People say the nation has lost its soul but that is nonsense. It’s all a matter of finding out where it’s hidden. ... The route is clearly along the prerogative of mercy. Once I thought it lay along the trail of the majesty of the law but – well, one had to begin somewhere. We grow, we develop

It is high time also to reaffirm or to validate Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Dies* as it concerns the truth that the man always dies in that man who maintains silence in oppositions or tyrannical situations.

Conclusion

Some countries, state governors and government establishments have mounted or planted statues or monuments to honour heroes as a way to please their people. At times, they name some institutions, state roads or federal roads etc after names of such people. As Benjamin ‘felt a nuzzling at his shoulder’ (1945: 92), it is the prayer globally that some leaders of thought will not fall sight of seeing like Benjamin and Clover. I mean staying in power and ignorant of what is happening or strange to know that all the laws enacted were denied assent or abolished except the ones retained to perpetuate them into power as feed marshal or for life President (1945: 92). As a leader, govern well to avoid walking the masses or animals to a state of paroxysm, anarchy, tyranny, lawlessness and despotism conveyed or imbued in these texts as moral lessons to the entire Western and African societies.

Recommendation

The Cherry Orchard, *Babel of Voices* and *Animal Farm* are no longer historical or sociological documents but archival materials which should be reserved for future generation or studies in national parody or satire. These three literary scholars’ legacies

shall remain evergreen or immortalized like William Shakespeare. Thus, the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and Chinua Achebe spurred many Americans and Nigerians for their racial struggles which the world should also appreciate Anton Chekhov, Charles Okwelum and George Orwell as seers, literary artists and freedom fighters.

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