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Sex, Crime and Urbanism As Motifs of Violence in Selected Thriller Fictions of Leye Adenle

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Abstract

Leye Adenle's thriller fictions, *Easy Motion Tourist* and *When Trouble Sleeps*, complement Nigeria's creative writing landscape with recourse to distinct issues in contemporary Nigerian society, which serve as setting in the two novels. Against the backdrop of a rising spate of creative writing in Nigeria, attention is therefore paid to these literary specimens in relation to how the issues of sex and crime underscore the motif of violence. This study therefore investigated the tropes of sex, crime and urbanism as motifs of violence in Adenle's popular fiction. The selected texts foregrounded the writer's sense of creativity and imaginative prowess in establishing the connection between creative writing and society. Having underscored the rising tempo of Nigerian Thriller fiction in relation to critical issues raised in the texts, this research further established the relationship between literature and the society. Using Aspect of Cultural Studies theory, this study through these texts revealed critical reflections of the Nigerian society in contemporary times through critical investigation of salient thematic preoccupations connected to the notions of sex, crime and urbanism as catalyst which led to streams of violence in the novels. Further findings articulate a critical exploration of inherent literary tropes in the selected thriller texts, which pontificates towards popular fiction as a thriving genre in the Nigerian literary space.

Word Count: 214

Key Words: Nigerian Thriller fiction, Sex, Crime, Urbanism, Popular Literature,

Background to the Study

The relationship between literature and society is an enduring one, as Literature is derived from the society, and the society foregrounds its reality through literary works. Diverse experiences are birthed in human ways of life as represented by culture, politics, government, economy, language and so on. Therefore, one of the many functions of literature is such that it exemplifies human experiences over time. That is why Literature is described as "a feature of any human culture at any time and place" (Miller, 2002). He further added that literature is perennial and universal and would "survive all historical and technological changes."

Through the insurrection of prose fiction, the human world has changed as a result of the influence of prose writers such as Charles Dickens, Jonathan Swift, and the Bronte sisters. From African perspective, writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Sembene Ousmane, Wole Soyinka, J.M. Coetzee, Peter Abrahams, Ngugi 'wa Thiong'o, Ben Okri have also painted everlasting reflections of their respective societies at one point or the other in time. Human experiences define literature to a large extent. There is a symbiotic relationship between Literature and different phases of human experiences. Kehinde states that, "all of us live limited lives. We want to see more, expand our range of experiences, and meet people whose lives are different from

our own...a story enables us, without leaving our chairs to escape our boundaries and broaden our understanding and vision” (Kehinde, 2013).

Fictional stories or narratives provide the opportunity and freedom to explore different worlds and world-views through the use of imagination as procured by the literary writer. Therefore, literature can be viewed or understood from three different dimensions: (a) the totality of all writings made by humanity; (b) language as employed by a people; (c) writings of individual authors, poetry or fiction. This particular description of literature becomes relevant:

The art of literature is not reducible to the words on the page; they are there solely because of the craft of writing. As an art, literature might be described as the organization of words to give pleasure. Yet through words literature elevates and transforms experience beyond “mere” pleasure. Literature also functions more broadly in society as a means of both criticizing and affirming cultural values. (Rexroth, 1998)

Even though Rexroth posits above that literature is much more than the words on a page, it is important to note that the art of writing has arguably done the most for generational expansion, global acceptance and democratization of literature. The art of writing is old; as old as the earliest recorded human civilization. Writing has its beginnings traceable to Sumerian civilization which is credited to have given the world the wheel, the plow, metallurgy and writings on clay in cuneiform scripts. It is recorded that, “the Sumerians seem to have first developed cuneiform for the mundane purposes of keeping accounts...but over time it blossomed into a full-fledged writing system used for everything from poetry and history to law codes and literature.” (Andrew, 2019). By this, the function of literature within any given society cannot be overemphasised.

Thrillers bear close ties to popular fiction in the prose fiction genre of literature which mostly lend themselves to giving pleasure and entertaining readers. The typical thriller fiction writer will use choice vocabulary and skill to weave conflict and denouement as he or she pleases in a work of fiction. To further achieve the goal, the thriller writer embraces certain elements that are foregrounded in the text. These elements include themes that are affectingly situated in the socio-cultural contexts and setting in which the author chooses to expand his literary voyage. This study therefore attempts to examine significant motifs that characterize the thriller fiction and the specific treatment of the subgenre by authors of Nigerian descent. In specific terms, it critically examines sex, crime and urbanism in Leye Adenle’s *Easy Motion Tourist* and its sequel, *When Trouble Sleeps*.

Literature Review

The origins of the thriller tradition in Nigeria can be traced to books like Cyprian Ekwensi’s *The Passport of Mallam Ilia*, *Jagua Nana* and its sequel, *Jagua Nana’s Daughter*, and *Man from Sagamu* by Adaora Lily Ulasi, to mention a few. However, the *Pacesetters* series of novels published by Macmillan were the most significant introduction to Afrocentric thriller fiction for most West Africans born in the late 70s to late 80s in a literary world where poetry, drama, stage plays, romance, coming of age, narrative and historical fiction held sway. Sadly, the popularity of the series experienced a huge wane towards the early 90s, but “the thriller tradition in Nigerian literature did not die with the (*Pacesetters*) series. It merely shifted base, became more elevated and acquired extra heft” (Kan, 2012).

There is a reawakening of the Afrocentric thriller genre and this research intends to examine the thematic

concerns of authors contributing to this resurgence. Critics write about a “new wave” of fiction writers from Nigeria who are experimenting with new genres:

Nigeria has long been a vibrant literary hub, home to prominent and widely celebrated writers like the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri and, more recently, the novelists Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Lola Shoneyin and Helon Habila. In the past, successful African writers often first gained renown abroad, yet weren't widely read in their homelands. But now, many of Nigeria's promising young authors are increasingly building an audience at home, where there is a growing appetite for fiction that addresses contemporary issues. A new wave of thematically and stylistically diverse fiction is emerging from the country, as writers there experiment with different genres and explore controversial subjects like violence against women, polygamy and the rise of the Islamist militant group, Boko Haram (Alter, 2017).

The assemblage of contemporary Nigerian thriller has been made richer with works by young and the not so young writers, such as *Seasons of Rage* by Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale, Toni Kan's *The Carnivorous City*, *My Sister the Serial Killer* by Oyinkan Braithwaite and then Leye' Adenle's *Easy Motion Tourist* which also happens to share the title of highlife songs by celebrated Afro-Highlife musicians King Sunny Ade and late Fatai Rolling Dollar. *Easy Motion Tourist* is followed by a sequel titled *When Trouble Sleeps* also a play on the words of the song with the same title by the late Afrobeat legend, Fela Anikulapo. The objective here is to highlight the features that set the Nigerian thriller apart using *Easy Motion Tourist* and *When Trouble Sleeps* as study texts.

Theoretical Framework: Of Cultural Studies Theory and Nigerian Thriller Fiction

In Northrop Frye's work on literary criticism in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Terry Eagleton, comments that “When we analyse literature we are speaking of literature; when we evaluate it we are speaking of ourselves” (Eagleton, 2008). This speaks, again, to the opening statement of this work about the relationship between literature and society. Cultural Studies Theory is the theoretical framework on which this study is based because of its importance in understanding the ways in which certain aspects of culture inspire dialectical thinking and conversations on past and contemporary presentation of socio-economic issues especially from a literary point of expression. It has also been portrayed as an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the past practice as well as the present evolution of culture.

In lieu of above-mentioned thought, culture can be described as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1874, p.1). Man is said to be a creature of habit and by extension culture because both concepts are repetitive cycles of actions and behaviour perpetuated over lengths of time. Another angle to understanding culture is that it is viewed as “networks of knowledge, consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world” (Wyer, et al., 2007, p.4) Not many mediums offer a variety of veritable indicators of the values that a culture promotes like literature because literary works are noted for engaging culture in depth. In the foreword to *Cultural Studies*, it is noted that “in a connected way, ‘culture’ has become an important thing and much used theoretical and substantive category of connection and relation. Both in academic and popular writing and commentary, we see countless references to ‘cultures of... schools, organisations, regions, ethnicities” (Chris Baker & Willis, 2000).

Stuart Hall is credited as being one of the compelling voices for the recognition and acceptance of culture studies as a means by which the “lived experiences” of a people are examined. In his published collection of talks on cultural theory, *Cultural Studies 1983: An Introduction*. He asserts:

To work in Cultural Studies does not necessarily mean that you think the entire world can be explained from a cultural point of view. Indeed, I sometimes think that working in Cultural Studies is rather like choosing to work in a displaced field, because so much of what one requires to understand cultural relations is not, in any obvious sense, cultural. In that sense Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary field. It draws on and is fed by other disciplines which intersect it (Stuart, 2016, p.4).

In furtherance, there is a submission submits that “cultural studies are not something that can be accurately represented, but rather is constituted by a number of ways of looking at the world which are motivated by different purposes and values” (Baker, 2002, p.2) Hsu aligns with this view when he states that “broadly speaking, cultural studies is not one arm of the humanities so much as an attempt to use all of those arms at once” (Hsu, 2017). Bennett equally admits that cultural studies “is concerned with all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct” (Bennett, 1998, p. 28).

While the selected texts were written with the excitement and entertainment that the combined elements of the thriller genre can muster, they also highlight themes that are at the centre of clashes of conservative ideas as well as contemporary views on issues such as sexuality and the value of womanhood, and the challenges of urbanism and how it affects the relationship between the rich and poor. This research will examine the selected texts as a way to use literature to mirror the life experiences of people in most developing societies in Africa and around the world.

There is an insight into these dynamics in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, where Storey attempts to establish a link between the ‘evolution’ of cultural studies and Marxian philosophies of class struggle. He asserts that:

Those with political power have always thought it necessary to police the culture of those without political power, reading it ‘symptomatically’ for signs of political unrest; reshaping it continually through patronage and direct intervention. In the nineteenth century, however, there is a fundamental change in this relationship. Those with power lose, for a crucial period, the means to control the culture of the subordinate classes. When they begin to recover control, it is culture itself, and not culture as a symptom or sign of something else, that becomes, really for the first time, the actual focus of concern. Two factors are crucial to an understanding of these changes: industrialization and urbanization. Together they produce other changes that contribute to the making of a popular culture that marks a decisive break with the cultural relationships of the past (Storey, 2009, p. 17).

Karl Marx envisaged that a constant conflict within the classes, based largely on a materialistic perspective and divergent ideologies, would eventually lead to a time where socialism would hold sway. This ideology also carried into the literary space such as social realism in literature that focuses on stories of the working

class and commoners. Hence, a handful of critics who belong to the Marxian school often disparage modernist writing for not doing enough to emphasise the social state of affairs. It is believed that “realism, though produced by bourgeois writers, represented not modernist fragmentation, but rather the totality of society, including history and dialectical class conflict, which can lead readers beyond reification to revolutionary class consciousness” (Parker, 2019, p. 277). Parker further establishes a link between Marxism and cultural studies theory by asserting that it is “weaving together literary studies with the study of popular culture, cultural history, Marxism, and the working class” (Parker, 2019:333).

The proletariat may not have seized power from the bourgeois over the years as much as Karl Marx expected but themes of culture theory and popular culture such as industrialisation, literature, urbanisation and the democratisation of new media have often changed the dynamics of power distribution in different cultures of the world. The authors of *Writing the City*, highlight the symbiotic relationship between urbanism and literature, stating that “the city has always been an important literary symbol, and the ways in which a culture writes about its cities is one means by which we may understand its fears and aspirations” (Preston & Simpson-Houlsley, 2002). The literature of every culture reveals where people have been, where they are now and where they hope to be in the future.

The typical experience of African literature is one in which the audience is immersed in cultural norms, values and the identity of Africa with hopes that at least some of these aspects of culture will be preserved and transmitted to the next generation. Incidentally, literature and urbanisation, as much as they contribute to enlightenment and sophistication of societies, are also crucial factors in the formation of popular culture which in turn poses a challenge to the desired generational transmission of cultural ethos. As portrayed in *Pop Culture: An Overview*, “Urbanization is a key ingredient in the formation of popular culture. People who once lived in homogeneous small villages or farms found themselves in crowded cities marked by great cultural diversity” (Delaney, 2007).

Crime and Sex as Motifs in *Easy Motion Tourist*

The novel, *Easy Motion Tourist*, was originally published in 2016. It is a fast-paced thriller fiction set in a contemporary Lagos locale. From the prologue to the end, the reader receives a glimpse into vices of wealthy folk without scruples and the criminal underworld that is pervasive in most urban cities of the world albeit in a Nigerian ‘street-style’ context. The tale weaves through themes of sex, high society power play, and greed that make villains such as armed thugs like Catch-Fire and Knockout, the criminal foot soldiers; the mysterious Malik who runs the secret prostitution harem in a location known only to a few select clients; and Chief Amadi, the brains behind the illicit harvesting of human parts to desire accumulation of wealth by illicit means and the societal rot that is official corruption. The novel captures thrilling events that are relatable to most Nigerians and inhabitants of Lagos in particular. There’s gang violence at a seedy pub in Ojuelegba; upper class revelry at exclusive parties in Ikoyi as well as scenes that depict the typical happenings at local police stations.

The main protagonist is Guy Collins, a Briton who is regarded as a low-ranking journalist in dire need of a big break. He is ostensibly in Lagos, Nigeria for the first time, to cover the national elections and appears to have also accepted the assignment to prove a point to his half-Nigerian former girlfriend. On a night-out-on-the-streets adventure to explore Lagos nightlife, he is ‘arrested’ by the police as witness to a murder that bears the semblances of a ritual killing. A young lady is brutally dismembered in cold blood and what is left of her body is callously dumped publicly on the streets by the assailants as they sped away. His paths cross with the secondary protagonist, Amaka Mbadiwe, the enigmatic lawyer who doubles as a guardian angel to Lagos prostitutes as well as a host of other characters entwined in a near apocalyptic battle of good and evil. A conspiracy of international proportions is eventually revealed at the end of the tale.

Easy Motion Tourist tells a tale of intriguing events and occurrences, using humour, and ample use of colloquial language in Nigerian English and dialogue to unravel the tale while making it relatable to Nigerian and Non-Nigerian readers. The text presents us the thoughts of Inspector Ibrahim on the complexities of police and detective work in a developing nation like Nigeria thus: “Ibrahim didn’t like where the questions were leading. The people arrested at the crime scene were not criminals and everyone knew it. But it would have looked bad in his report if he didn’t make any arrests, even if he later released all the ‘suspects’.” (Easy Motion Tourist, 166) It is imperative to point out that, “as with the tragedy, plot and characterisation are the essential elements of the detective story. The plot must have beginning, middle and ending” (Hoffmann, 2013, p.14). Easy Motion Tourist starts with a prologue that introduces us to Florentine, a character that isn’t very much a part of the rest of the story and ends with an epilogue with Malik, another character that is mentioned but not given much prominence to set the tone for the sequel.

In keeping to the purpose of the crime thriller genre, a gruesome murder has been committed in the novel and it is up to certain state actors such as Inspector Ibrahim and his police officers as well as Ade, the State Security Service officer and non-state actors like Guy Collins and Amaka Mbadiwe working together or sometimes at cross-purposes to solve the crime and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to some sort of justice. State actors in this regard are the police and other law enforcement agencies set up by the laws of the land while non-state actors are aggrieved parties seeking vengeance, self-styled vigilantes and other concerned parties. Protagonists Guy Collins and Mbadiwe, aided by Police Inspector Ibrahim are locked in a battle of wits, guts and determination with malevolent forces that have roots in the criminal underworld of notorious parts of Lagos such as Oshodi, Ojuelegba and Lagos Island.

Crime as a human phenomenon, is constantly evolving in its interpretations, ramifications as well as the various acts initiated to control crime. The practice and effects of crime touch both individuals and communities alike. Whether organised or random, this is rooted in social organisation and cultural socialisation. For example, the manner of the crime committed in Easy Motion Tourist is presented like a ritual killing. This is an occurrence that resonates in a lot of African societies because it has become mainstream in popular culture conversations. Ritual killing is also dubbed “money ritual” because it is presumed that the victim is targeted and killed for their body parts which will then be used in rituals that are purported to bring wealth and prosperity to the person who harvested the parts from the victim. In the novel, the murder that sets off a chain of events is that of a young lady dumped in a gutter with her breasts cut off by members of a criminal gang.

One of the eye witnesses says in pidgin English: ‘one boy selling cigarette find the body for inside gutter. Jus’ like that, they slaughter her and take her breast.’ (pg 20) “Money ritual” is mentioned at least four times while “ritual killing” is mentioned at least ten times across ten chapters of the book. Thus, the presumption that a ritual killing has occurred runs throughout the book and a Nigerian audience would likely relate with this right away. The following is an excerpt of a dialogue between Inspector Ibrahim and an attendee of the meeting with Ikoyi residents:

‘How many ritual murders have the police solved in the past?’ the MD said.

‘To my knowledge, not many, sir.’

‘Give me an estimate. Would you say, fifty, forty per cent?’

‘I do not have the statistics to answer that question, sir.’

‘Give me a ballpark.’

‘Sir?’

‘Hazard a guess.’

‘Maybe 10 per cent, sir.’

‘Or five, or one?’

‘Maybe.’

‘It seems to me that if the police are so inept at solving such crimes, it would be a criminal waste of your resources to try to solve this one. It seems to me that concentrating your resources on policing Victoria Island would be more efficient.’

While reading through a diary found in Chief Amadi’s apartment, Guy Collins and Ade, a secret service officer, make a discovery that brings a different perspective into the nature of the crime they are trying to unravel. It is revealed that the protagonists are likely pitched against a syndicate trafficking in human body parts harvested illegally and sold on an international black market. Here’s an excerpt of how they Guy and Ade come to this conclusion:

Since I’d been researching the killings, a thought had been forming at the back of my mind. I’d not been able to pin it down but it had stayed with me, tugging at my consciousness. It all came together.

‘I knew this juju thing didn’t make sense.’ I said.

‘What?’

Livers, kidneys, hearts, and now flight numbers. It all suddenly made sense.

‘Don’t you see? They are selling body parts. Think about it. You said they take livers, kidneys, hearts. Back in the UK, people spend years on waiting lists for an organ transplant. Why wait to die when you can get a bent surgeon to find you the organ you need on the black market? In Nigeria. I bet you, if we cross-check the medical records of people on those flights with these so-called ritual killings, we would discover a strong tie. They are killing people for transplants.’

He cocked his head to one side as he looked at me.

‘That’s all it is, Ade, we’ve cracked it. They are selling organs to rich foreigners.’

Typical of contemporary popular fiction, sex and prostitution are prominent themes in this novel. In *Easy Motion Tourist*, the prostitutes are generally in a battle for survival and Amaka Mbadiwe is portrayed as a ‘guardian angel’ for them and has taken it upon herself to provide her ladies with information that they need to ‘safely’ interact with their clients. She achieved this feat by keeping a detailed dossier of known male patrons of prostitutes including their addresses, phone numbers, vehicle license numbers and whether or not it was safe for a girl to be with a particular man. However, the book presents another way to view sexuality and transactional sex work; one in which the reader is encouraged to be sympathetic to the challenges of the sex worker; their experiences on the streets and how easy it is for them to be swindled or come to bodily harm and trauma.

The typical African is likely to have an ambivalent view about values and morals due to cultural conditioning that taboos certain proclivities towards sex and sexuality. Such a reader may find it a struggle to appreciate or spare a thought for the real-world motives that may have driven a sex worker into prostitution. In the text, a police raid is ongoing and a crowd has run into Ronnie’s bar where Guy Collins is seeking to experience the Lagos nightlife. Waidi, the barman, seems unperturbed and when he is questioned by Guy, his response is: ‘Prostitutes,’ he said. His face was sufficiently animated to show his disapproval, as if the place he worked in wasn’t a pickup joint for all sorts of working women, and maybe even men; as if his wages didn’t depend on their patronage. ‘The police are doing a raid and they think they’ll be safe in here,’

For most of the women portrayed in *Easy Motion Tourist*, survival is the most important task of the day. For example, the prologue introduces us to Florentine. She is a sophomore student of a higher institution who is paying her way through school and fending for herself with gifts from two ‘generous friends’ - one is a young banker who spends weekends with her in hotels because he is married and can’t take her home and the other

is an equally married and rich businessman, old enough to be her father. On a trip to the Harem, she suffered brutal abuse at the hands of her patron and is left for dead on the expressway. Amaka speaks to Guy Collins about why she stands for the girls:

‘I got a weird call this morning,’ she said, ‘A girl. Her friend followed a man last night and by morning she had not returned.’

She pulled my arms apart, gently, went to get the ashtray and sat back in the chair. I sat opposite.

‘She had the man’s plate number.’

‘Was he on your list?’

‘Yes. Chief Amadi. He has a huge house here on the island.’

‘Is he one of the bad guys?’

‘I’m not sure. He pays well. He treats them well. He usually takes them to his house. Two at a time. Always. He’s only been on my list for a few months. None of the girls have complained about him, but a girl once said she recognised him. She said that about five years ago, on the mainland, he and his friends picked up six girls and none returned.’

Amaka Mbadiwe is the author’s agent, creating a voice for the prostitutes in *Easy Motion Tourist*. Apart from ascribed physical beauty, her character is bold, fiery, highly intelligent, and street smart. Yet, she is passionate about her cause such as safe work for the ladies of the night as well as Street Samaritans - an organisation dedicated to the protection and care for active and recovering prostitutes and the abused. In order to get justice for one of her girls, Amaka takes on the role of a prostitute to entrap the culprit, and putting herself in harm’s way on many occasions. In nations of the world, even in places where prostitution is legalised such as Brazil, Austria and New Zealand, the sex worker appears to constantly have a cloud of danger hanging over them. This is indicative of what is described as “the hierarchy of risks involved in prostitution” (Jaiyesimi, 2017) which ranges from arrests by law enforcement officers, physical abuse from patrons, to being a possible subject of trafficking and ritual killings. These predicaments are nuanced to various degrees by definitions of what it means to be a woman across cultures of the world. But the consensus of contemporary discourse and academic scrutiny in women’s studies is that the inequality gap has tilted unfavourably on the side of the female gender.

Leye Adele infuses a keen knowledge of the topography and urban developments of Lagos into the writing of *Easy Motion Tourist*. He makes relatable descriptions of locales and places like Palms Shopping Mall in Lekki, Eko Hotel, Federal Palace Hotel, and Bogobiri Hotel in highbrow Ikoyi. There are several mentions of Ojuelegba and the socio-economic activities notorious around there such as this excerpt:

At the Ojuelegba flyover, Go-Slow finally eased off the throttle and slowed to a crawl. He drove round the roundabout twice then he pulled up on the kerb. He got out and crossed the road to reach the overgrown enclosure under the bridge. He unzipped his trouser and began whistling as he peed. A disabled man on a wooden board with squeaky metal wheels rolled out from beneath a shelter of cardboard and wooden planks. Go-Slow ignored the man and looked around. He pulled out three pistols from his belt: his, Knockout’s, and the one they had seized from the girl who tried to rob them. Without speaking, he handed the guns to the man who then rolled himself back into his shelter, propelled by callused palms that pulled against the rough ground.

While open defecation and urination are common sights on mainland Lagos, such activities are restricted on the Lagos islands. Egoro observes that “Adenle’s lean, gritty prose conjures the shade of Ekwensi, one of the pioneers of Nigerian literature and the master chronicler of Lagos in the sixties” (Egoro, 2015). In summary, crime and sex, as discussed in this chapter are prevalent motifs in Adele’s *Easy Motion Tourist*. The next chapter will focus on politically motivated crime and its relationship with urbanism in *When Trouble Sleeps* also by Leye Adenle.

Crime and Urbanism as Motifs in *When Trouble Sleeps*

The second novel, *When Trouble Sleeps*, was published in 2018 and it is mainly a political thriller. The plot of the novel focuses on the build up to a Lagos State gubernatorial election and the attendant political intrigues that go with such election cycles in a developing nation like Nigeria. It also keeps up with features of the thriller genre by unearthing a mystery left off in the prequel, *Easy Motion Tourist* and other premeditated murders disguised as mob killings in the novel. The novel contains a prologue and 110 chapters. Just as he intended in the prequel, Adenle has also kept the chapters of the sequel short and written to be fast paced. The narration is in the third person omniscient narrative voice, expounding the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters. The storytelling is narrated using the third-person pronouns such as “he,” “she,” and “they.”

When Trouble Sleeps presents the return of Amaka Mbadiwe in the fascinating sequel to *Easy Motion Tourist*. In this continuation, the ‘Guardian Angel’ of Lagos’ sex workers, is drawn into the intrigues that surround politicking and the machinations of godfathers and would be kingmakers during a typical election season in Nigeria. An ill-fated plane crashes, under bizarre circumstances, into a highbrow Ikoyi, Lagos neighbourhood, killing all aboard including a gubernatorial candidate. To replace him, the deceased’s political party is placing its fortunes in the forthcoming elections on Chief Ojo, a man with scandalous secrets well known to Amaka. She intends to nail him, especially for what took place at the secret sex club run by the mysterious Malik in a forest just outside Lagos. Chief Ojo in turn considers Amaka a threat to his election victory that must be eliminated at all costs. The plot thickens as Amaka is in a race to survive Chief Ojo’s assassins and get justice for her girls. The novel again presents the dark side of Lagos where corruption, violence, sex and thuggery hold sway in a compelling thriller fiction.

The book begins with a prologue that describes the plane crash that kills Chief Adio Douglas, a gubernatorial candidate who is on a trip to Abuja to meet with the president in Aso Rock, Abuja. His travel partner is his young girlfriend, Titi. She is looking forward to flying for the first time on a private jet, tantalised by the news that she will be hobnobbing with a Nigerian president in matter of hours. It turns out that the pilot of the plane is Captain Olusegun Majekodunmi, Titi’s fiancé. Chief Douglas knew about their relationship and deliberately chose the pilot to fly him on this flight in order to both spite him and to pressure Titi into choosing the chief over the pilot as revealed in this excerpt:

‘You knew,’ she said, removing her sunglasses and placing them on her lap. The lenses were wet.

‘In a couple of months, I will be the Governor of Lagos State. You will come and live with me in the State House.’

‘You are married.’ More tears ran down her face.

‘Yes. And so what?’

‘He is my fiancé.’

‘And who am I to you? A sugar daddy?’

‘You are married, Chief. You are married.’

‘You lied to me, Titi. You lied to me. But I forgive you.’

Titi buried her face in her palms.

Douglas held her hand, but she slid out of his grip.

‘Why?’ she said, looking up at him, mascara leaking into the powder beneath her eyes.

‘I will be governor; he is just a pilot. A glorified driver. I want you to choose now. Do you want to come with me, or do you want to remain where you are?’

The plane crashes soon after in an apparent murder suicide, setting into motion a series of rollercoaster of events which begin with Amaka being viciously attacked by a mob at Oshodi because she dared to intervene in the 'jungle justice' being meted out to man accused of being a thief. The accused was doused with petrol and set ablaze trapped in between a used car tyre forced down to his waist. Amaka refuses to take the advice of Inspector Ibrahim to not get involved in the mob action but her penchant for seeking justice for the powerless spurs are on to intervene. In the process of rescuing the burning man's female friend, the crowd turns on her until she passes out.

Crime is a major theme in *Easy Motion Tourist* just as in *When Trouble Sleeps*. The diverging point in both novels is that the latter is written around the criminal enterprise that is part of most political power tussles all around the world, Nigeria not being an exception. Ironically, the British Journalist and protagonist of *Easy Motion Tourist*, Guy Collins came to Nigeria, hoping to write about an election but got swept up in a clash with criminal elements. Leye Adenle saved the real political drama for the sequel, *When Trouble Sleeps*. During the 2019 elections in Nigeria, one political analyst observed that all the elections held in the country from 1999 to date have been marred by sharp electoral malpractices including ballot snatching, rigging, as well as politically motivated violent attacks on voters, electoral officials and members of the opposition with the intention to disrupt voting processes. Less than five elections held before the two decades of uninterrupted democratic rule Nigeria currently experiences, are reported to have been better managed. This is the political backdrop in which the plot of *When Trouble Sleeps* is centred.

When Amaka recovers from the Oshodi mob episode, she wakes up to find that the stakes have changed drastically and she is now the hunted in a world where Chief Olabisi Ojo; the one who she wants to see punished for his crime against one of her girls is contesting to become the next governor of Lagos State, sponsored by his power-broker father-in-law, Otunba Oluawo. She is a stumbling block to Chief Ojo's political ambition by virtue of knowing about his escapades at the Harem despite being married to the only daughter of a powerful politician and that he and Malik had critically wounded his girl, Florentine. Excerpts from Chapter 20, page 79:

'Florentine.' The girl that kind-hearted strangers had brought to Amaka's office, bruised, bleeding, and broken, beaten to within half an inch of her life. They had found her walking like a zombie along an express road, naked and unresponsive. She had barely survived the brutal battering from Ojo. Her luck was that when she passed out during the vicious attack, Ojo and Malik thought she was dead and they dumped her on the road.

Besides the mission to silence Amaka, Chief Ojo and his camp also have to contend with another political heavy weight in the person of Prince Ambrose Adepoju who is backing the opposition candidate, Dr Adeniyi Babalola. The Oluawo and Ojo side believe that the plane crash was initiated by the opposition to kill their candidate. The Adepoju side publicise their innocence, while also strategizing against a possible reprisal attack. Both camps are eventually locked in a high stakes battle of who is able to mobilise the most cunning, violence and bribe money; enough to drown the other side. Amaka, the hunted daughter of an Ambassador, realises that for her to achieve her ultimate goal alive, she must pick a side. Both sides are corrupt and ready to rig the election in their favour. She chooses the Ambrose side because Ojo must "never be governor." Ambrose says to Amaka:

You will be one of my moneybag men. You see, rigging is a leaky business. For every million you spend, only a few thousand gets to the intended recipients. That is why we lost the last election; our own people were stealing the money meant to buy us votes. You will personally handle the dispersal of funds. You will carry the bribe to the INEC officials who can either accept it or hand you over to SSS if they've already been bought by the opposition. Can you do this, knowing who your father is?

In the end, Amaka has to prove that she is a step ahead of the power brokers as she plays a smart twist on the ballot manipulation game to end the election in a tie. The results make Chief Oluawo collapse in a cardiac arrest while Prince Ambrose realises her treachery yet praises her genius in pulling it off, and absconding to London unscathed afterwards. This kind of corrupt, politically charged election season appears to be a common phenomenon around the world. For example, during India's election in 2018, cash and valuables worth millions of pounds were seized from political parties and almost half of the elected representatives of the country's lower house faced trial on criminal charges including murder. In chapter 32, this dialogue ensues between Amaka and Inspector Ibrahim about the possibility of politically motivated violence:

'We're expecting riots. There's been some sporadic outbursts that we have managed to contain, but once the politicians have had time to arm their thugs, we expect full-blown civil disorder. They might even declare a state of emergency.'

'Over the plane crash?'

'You've not heard? They tried to kill his replacement. The party already selected a new candidate. Chief Olabisi Ojo. There was an attempt on his life today.'

'Really. He survived?'

Thus, Adenle uses *When Trouble Sleeps* to mirror a typical situation of the Nigerian society where political opponents deploy corruption, voter suppression and violence to swing results in their favour. This is an example of how literature mirrors society.

One of the idiosyncrasies of urbanism is that it reveals social stratification and the divide between the haves and the have-nots in society. A.R. Desai (1960) describes it as a resultant effect of a "system of property relations" in *Urbanisation and Social Stratification*. The haves are largely to be found living in the part of society that is adjudged to be opulent, well developed, bursting with aesthetically pleasing structures and filled with cosmopolitan members of the society. It is expected that such places would also offer better security and standards of living to inhabitants. In Lagos, Victoria Island, Ikoyi and Lekki are considered to be upper class areas of the state. Inspector Ibrahim encounters a beggar, a strange sight according to him: "A beggar was a strange sight on Ozumba Mbadiwe. Stranger still was a blind one without a seeing child announcing the beggar's affliction to the hearts of passers-by. Ibrahim walked over to him." On the other hand, the have-nots, poor, and the aspirational middle class live in rural, city outskirts and suburb areas that are relatable to their social status especially by virtue of affordability and access to sources of livelihood.

In *When Trouble Sleeps*, there is a clear distinction between life and the administration of security and justice in Ikoyi, Lagos and in a place like Oshodi, also in Lagos. In the beginning of the novel, two incidents are happening almost simultaneously; a private jet crash in a wealthy neighbourhood in Ikoyi has attracted a detachment of police officers and first responders. In chapter 2, the police officer's thoughts reveal this:

Inspector Ibrahim told Sergeant Bakare to kill the siren. It was making it hard for Ibrahim to think. The signal from central control in Panti ordered every available officer to be mobilised. Every available officer. That meant traffic wardens, desk officers, even detectives on active cases. A plane crash in a residential area was enough of a disaster, but this was not some regular neighbourhood; this was Ikoyi, old Ikoyi, where the old money lived.

Incidentally, a mugging is happening in Oshodi and the judgment of the mob also known as 'jungle justice' is being meted out to a person accused of theft. The accused will die at the hands of thugs and a section of people who do not care much for police procedures and judicial processes, especially because adequate policing is almost non-existent in such an environment.

Oshodi was a dangerous place, they said, a place where riots start and spread through the state. A place where you could buy anything including human body parts was not a place to mess with. Cars were passing over the spot where a body had been burning the day before and people were walking past it, trying to give each other space but still brushing against one another. It was as if it never happened - as if Amaka herself had not almost ended up consumed in the flames of their orgy of violence.

The novel mirrors the imbalances dispensation of equity in most developing nations, where justice is far from egalitarian standards desired by the masses and is the exclusive preserve of the rich and politically connected few. In summary, in *When Trouble Sleeps*, Adenle expounds on the motifs of crime and urbanisation in a developing society like Nigeria. With industrialisation comes urbanisation which then leads to class stratification in a manner that often assigns certain privileges and better quality of life to those who control the dynamics of wealth, as well as economic and political power.

Conclusion

The study has examined crime and sex as motifs in Leye Adenle's *Easy Motion Tourist*. Also, the study highlighted the treatment of politically motivated crime and urbanisation in *When Trouble Sleeps*. Through these texts, the author tacitly draws attention to the inequalities that exists when urbanisation contributes to the social stratification of a society. The main objectives of thriller fiction are to excite, thrill and entertain the reader. However, African writers have been admonished to present literature that creates room for introspection about the prevailing state of affairs of their respective societies. The research therefore has amplified the elements and efficacy of the Nigerian thriller in ways that will increase readership, academic focus and general appreciation that may engender national and continental development. In the same vein, the re-emergence of contemporary thriller fiction by Nigerian writers is being driven mostly by a youthful authorship and readership. As a result, it must be important to examine what the youth are saying and how they are saying it using the veritable medium of literature, in terms of textual and contextual relevance.

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