



## 1. Introduction

Aristotle once said that a hero's downfall must be a result of some tragic flaw within the character. This flaw was known as hamartia in the Greek World of Aristotle. Since Aristotle greatly admired Oedipus the king, many people believe that Oedipus must have had a prominent and complex hamartia. Hamartia is a literary device that refers to the tragic flaw of a main character in a story, which ultimately leads to the character's downfall. Errors of judgment or specific character traits like excessive pride, greed, or jealousy can be a character's fatal flaw or lead to a reversal of fortune. The term 'Hamartia' dates back to ancient Greek tragedies. The word 'Hamartia' comes from the Greek word '*hamartanein*,' meaning '*to err*'. The literary device first appeared in Aristotle's *Poetics*; a book on dramatic theory. Aristotle examined hamartia in *Oedipus Rex* (p.429), also known as Oedipus the King, a tragic play by Sophocles. In the play, a sequence of misjudgments leads the titular character to his tragic end. As quoted in Aristotle's *Poetics*, "There remains than the man who occupies the mean between saintliness and depravity. He is not extraordinary in virtue and righteousness and yet does not fall into bad fortune because of evil and wickedness, but because of some hamartia of the kind found in men of high reputation and good fortune, such as Oedipus and Thyestes and famous men of similar families (pp. 7-8). Brian Vickers has different views on Aristotle's meaning of 'hamartia'; He first explains it in the light of moral evil and proposes tragic suffering as a retribution for a tragic flaw in a character while the second rejects this moral interpretation without justifiable meaning to the word. The moral school which began in the 10th century by Arab philosopher, Avicenna, uses the word 'zalal' meaning error to translate hamartia. According to him, this error implies straying from the path of duty and losing sight of what is more noble. He became the first critic to attribute moral relevance to the tragic hamartia. In the same light, in *The Stolen Manuscript*, the character's downfall is not orchestrated by any error or misjudgment rather it is hubris (pride), and unrepentant jealousy that leads to his hamartia (tragic downfall) which is related to Avicenna's thought on morality. A tragic character holds his or her destiny; not always predestined.

## 2. Literature Review

Modern drama and theatre in Africa can assertively be taken as being alive to the social realities of time (p.76). This is because social, cultural, economic, and political issues examined by playwrights with a sense of both philosophical and artistic commitment to bring about the development of the society in which the playwright lives. This places the playwright as a watchdog of the society in which he carries out his or her craft. This is common with new-generation playwrights who see drama as a weapon reflection and a vehicle of agitation for social change. Issues such as corruption, immorality, injustice, and marginalization that destroy society have always featured prominently in African Drama and Theatre. "A very pronounced desire to penetrate deeper and deeper into human consciousness, and place moral problems upon a high pedestal and finally, the search...for a kind of new beauty." (p.731)

Effiong Etim Johnson is a professor of Theatre Arts, an experimentalist in the mold of the likes of Brook, Schechner, Chiakin, and Pappi. His play, "The Stolen Manuscript" sponges the ills in the academic industries and in a way offers a technical solution to the age-long and uncivilized victimization, delay in promotions, and nepotistic appointments in our education institutions.

### 3. Analysis of *The Stolen Manuscript*

The play is set in a university environment where merit is placed sentiments. Bayo, a forty years old assistant lecturer of the Creative Arts Department alongside Dr. Ukeme is a thirty-seven (37) years old senior lecturer, Dr. Martins, a fifty-five (55) years old lecturer who is the head of the Creative Arts Department, and Dr Mrs. Okoye, a forty (40) years old senior lecturer of the same Creative Arts Department. The play opens with Bayo in a temporal settlement of the Creative Arts Departmental office due to the ongoing renovation work at the permanent departmental building. He complains of being kept in such a place for two months all in the name of renovation and vows not to attend lectures until the renovation work is completed. Dr Martins who happens to be his friend and Head of Department persuades him to be more dedicated to lecturing duty as students have started complaining already. He brings out a newspaper and shows him the comment of Prof. Atanifan that describes Dr. Ukeme's *Ancient Masks* as a work of the century. They both lamented why a renowned professor like Atanifan will condescend so low to make such powerful comments on a shoddy work that boycotts popular conventions. They plan to write a rebuttal against the claims of Prof. Atanifan in the name of putting society straight (5). Mr Bayo affirms the reality and truthfulness of the comments made by Prof. Atanifan regarding ancient masks but Dr Martins insists on a rebuttal to reduce Dr Ukeme's popularity and maintain their perceived prestigious position in the department and university in general. Martins acknowledged that Ukeme is a prospective professor as he is currently been examined by the university senate besides, he is a non-indigene and should not be our leader (6). Dr. Ukeme happens to be Dr. Martins' student during his university days and gives him his manuscripts to the vet and writes a forward as an honour but it turns out black. They (Martins and Bayo) believe that nobody can rise above the likes of Shakespeare and Aristotle and as such have stopped making efforts towards stirring their knowledge whereas, Ukeme holds a different view not undermining the inputs made by the above scholars yet believes that the best is yet to come. Martins hides Ukeme's manuscript resulting in a cataclysm. Ukeme repudiates the claim by Martins that his manuscript is lost and insists on getting it back having sense gimmicks. The university senate intervened to no avail and handed Martins to Ukeme to handle it legally. In the end, Martins and Bayo are arrested for theft and conspiracy. Martins lost his father inlaw while Dr. Ukeme is pronounced a professor and the new Head of the Department.

#### 4. Methodology

The term realism came into being in the 19th century as a reaction to Romanticism and its idealism. The realist movement originated in France Circa 1850, 1850, after the 1848 revolution, and spread out to Europe and America. Stendhal, a French writer was famed for helping popularized the realist movement. Also notable is Honore de Balzac who infused his writing with complex characters and detailed observations about society and Gustave Flaubert who established realist narration as it is known today. Realism looked at the totality of human experience in an objective/dispassionate, detached, and scientific manner. There is always a correspondence between the literary work and the reality which it imitates. Arts should be closely related to life. Art, therefore, achieves its virtue by its atmosphere of reality, and its ability to vividly draw a sense of reality.

Realism is a literary theory of criticism that concerns itself with accurate, detailed unembellished depiction of nature or contemporary life. In this paper, the accuracy is contained in the storyline which is a reflection of life in our contemporary universities being it federal or state-owned universities. Realism frequently draws on examples from the past, there is a great deal of emphasis on the idea that humans are essentially held hostage to repetitive patterns of behaviour determined by their nature. Central to this assumption is the view that human beings are egoistic and desire power. This is true about the downfall of the two key players in Effiong's *The Stolen Manuscript*. Realists believe that selfishness, appetite for power, and our inability to trust others lead to predictable outcomes. No wonder we face a series of wars. Niccolo Machiavelli stressed that a leader needs to be a lion and a fox. In Machiavelli's view, rulers obey the ethics of responsibility rather than the conventional religious morality that guides the average citizen-that is, they should be good when they can but they must also be willing to use violence when necessary to guarantee the survival of the state. Lukacs defined Realism as the progressive avatar of truth in post-feudal art, an aesthetic mode uniquely sensitive to and expressive of the movement of history. Literary realism represents reality by portraying mundane, everyday experiences as they are in real life. It depicts familiar people, places, and stories primarily about the middle and lower classes of society. Realism seeks to tell a story as truthfully as possible instead of dramatizing or romanticizing it.

#### 5. The Hamartia of Martin and Bayo

The playwright carefully selected his characters to suit the purpose of this drama piece. For instance, Mr Bayo who is an Assistant Lecturer at the age of forty (40) shows how unserious he is with his professional development while Dr Ukeme who is a senior lecturer at the age of thirty-seven (37) shows his level of commitment and dedication to his profession.

In academics, research is the basis for promotion and it doesn't really matter how long one has been lecturing, what matters is what one has been able to do professionally within those years. It is the major unfolding in the play.

Hubris leads to hamartia meaning, pride leads to one's tragedy or downfall. The selection of these characters based on age is a clear indication that successful people are not envious or jealous of one's success and progress or progressive people as rivals. At the opening of the play, the ongoing renovation of offices made it possible for the staff to be in one office pending the completion of the project. Although Bayo is not at ease with the months-long renovation and threatened to boycott lectures. "What can one do in a ridiculous place such as this? This is more or less a sanatorium to me especially when we have the misfortune of having three or four of us in here. We don't talk academics then....."(p.2)

Bayo complains to the Head of the Department; Martins who encouraged him to be more patient as the patient's dog eats the fattest bone. Dr. Martins drifted away from the discussion on renovation and launched a scandalous and nefarious discussion about the positive appraisal made by a renowned professor, Atanifan on Dr. Ukeme's 'Ancient Mask'. In the words of Martins (2001)

Read it for yourself. The flamboyant merits and sugar-coated appraisal lavishly embroidered on a thing that wasn't much of a success when the performing company dramatized it last season. A shoddy thing that attempted some breakaway from popular conventions but succeeded in being a woeful failure. I can't forget the memory of last season. Just last season. And now, it is applauded. 'The work of the century'. By a renowned professor. (pp. 3-4)

Jealousy and envy have no cure. The only remedy to such malady is doom. With the positive remark from a high-profile academic, it should have been enough proof that the work of Ukeme actually meets the world standard of writing but they are determined to pull him down and prove Atanifan wrong over his comment on 'Ancient Masks'. Tribalism now sets in and I quote:

No listen to me, Bayo. You've lost sight of many things. Our positions in this department are at stake. How can we allow somebody from another tribe to boss over us? Maybe you haven't thought of that already, Dr Ukeme has many points. More than any of us does. He is on the list of prospective professors being examined by the university council. And professor Atanifan was Deputy Vice-Chancellor when our V.C. was at the University of Nigeria. And they worked all those years in unalloyed harmony. Think about these...if you don't use your renowned position as a critic to shut in these er..er. Forays released by Atanifan, then we are finished. He's going to be appointed our boss. (p.6)

Bayo and Martins feel Ukeme is not from the same ethnic clan as they are so no matter how good he is, his ethnic background has rendered him bad. And as such, they are head bent on destroying him in order to maintain their relevance in the institution and department in particular. Dr. Martins actually involved Bayo in this evil act of pervading wickedness on an innocent person: "Listen to me, Bayo. You've lost sight of many things. Our positions in this department

are at stake. How can we allow somebody from another tribe to boss over us?"(P.23). This is common in Nigerian universities where the host communities insist on holding leadership positions of the universities at the expense of the institutions. Merit no longer matters as religion and ethnic background are placed above it. Alfred Habegger has suggested that realism was more specifically opposed to women's fiction presents idealized models of marriage and female roles; realism offered detailed verisimilitude, close social notation, analysis of motives and unhappy endings which were all part of a strategy of argument, an adversary polemic (p.98).

Dr. Martins desires earnestly to destroy Ukeme but lacks the intellectual acumen to criticize a published remark made by a renowned professor, Atanifan. It is only a stubborn fly that follows the corpse to the grave. Martins is ready to end like that stubborn fly in the grave, so he insists that Bayo writes the rebuttal hence he is a critic and to avoid suspicion on his part. Bayo finally agrees to write: "Dr Martins if you really want this scheme to be a success, you need more strategies than one. I will write...but think of other avenues... (p.9). They now have to devise so many means to ensure that Ukeme is seen in the bad light.

The devil is not necessarily a creature with dark skin, a tail, and horns but a normal human being with these attributes inbuilt and he or she is usually an associate of close relationship. The devil is seen in these unrepentant characters. Ukeme lives with his enemies in the same office and converses with them without traces of suspicions. "Bayo: I have been nursing the idea of writing a critique on your celebrated "Ancient Masks"...Martins... then what are his grounds for coming out with a thing as sweeping as that about you? Ukeme: His love for the arts. The appreciation of pedantic attainment" (p.12). The conversation between these three colleagues shows how they reason as individuals. Martins and Bayo believe that a positive appraisal can only be made when both parties are known to each other but their stand is against the independence of the arts; because the appraisal is on the arts and not the writer. What a shallow way of reasoning!

Mediocracy clouds human reasoning and distorts intellectual growth. In education, everything is possible until it fails to be possible, so to accept impossibility without prior trial is an intellectual malady, this is seen in Bayo and Martins's speeches;

Martins: Do you really think there will be another great scholar like Aristotle whose theories have been upheld jealously over the centuries? Or do you think there will come an age that will produce another Shakespeare? And we the lesser beings are struggling to find the path they trod to place our feet on their footprints. Bayo: impossible, try as we may, we can never beat their records. The cream of such men is not for our age. (p.13)

Martins and Bayo have already given up on their level of intellectual achievement. For them to have believed and concluded that no man can beat the records and achievements of Aristotle and Shakespeare is an academic fallacy that prompts them to pull down whoever wants to make a landmark above theirs and next to the likes of Aristotle and Shakespeare. Ukeme, no doubt believes that, the likes of Aristotle did nice work during their time but that notwithstanding, there are other great literary artists too, and many more will emerge.

Bayo calls the use of polished English language in arts as 'pride' but Ukeme calls it 'beauty, virtue and intelligence' (p.17). Ukeme insists that his writing is not meant for motor park touts but educated minds and that is when he deviates from the usual street experience and creates forms out of vision and adds techniques to intuitions. The usage of language in Literature is highly individualistic and permissible for all writers to choose the one that suits the preferred audience. The choice of the audience makes one use a particular diction or style of diction and Ukeme is aware of this and acts accordingly having his audience at heart as opposed to the views of Martins and Bayo who see his diction as pride.

It is dawn on Ukeme that Bayo and Martins are envious of his prowess in arts as he replies Martins; Martins, how wrong you are in hope. They would applaud you with woes. They will celebrate you with rejection...Ukeme: like professor Atanifan has done, isn't it? That is just one out of thousands. One whose mind is not perpetually plagued by a cancerous ailment that could be diagnosed possibly as blind envy.

Ukeme having seen the hatred of Bayo and Martins for him demanded to have his manuscript back from Martins. 'Stay there and rot in your archaic traditions and rules. Let me have my manuscript' (p.18). Dr Martins informed him that the manuscript has been stolen by one of the many people who helped convey his props to his house. (p.19) But Ukeme could not believe the story having noticed their scheme to pull him down.

Okoye having heard the rift between Martins and Ukeme knows that Martins is threatened by Ukeme's growth. She insists that a federal university should have hardworking intellectuals occupying offices of responsibility as against the wish of Martins who happened to be an indigene of the university's host community. She warns that Martins needs to work hard in order to climb the ladder of success rather than feel threatened by the young blood and aspiring ones who sacrificially work hard and have fortune smiling at them. According to Benardete, some even blamed the conventions of romanticism-idealism, chivalry, heroism, and absolute moral stances for fostering a national vision that inevitably led to war, causing Americans to fight when they might have negotiated to seek empty glory though it cost them their lives.

The university senate intervened in the case yet Martins insists that the manuscripts were stolen. Ukeme says men like Dr Martins are everywhere in society; the big man in the civil service who does not want others to get to his position because of envy. His desire to stamp out the evil in Martins's mind is unquenchable evil with the perceived threat. He was Martins to serve as a scapegoat for others who might want to tilt towards destroying highly devoted academics.

Amid these crises, Martins lost his father-in-law. The university through Prof. Idumah, hands off the matter to Ukeme to treat it legally. In line with the proverbial saying that the cry of the chicken does not stop it from being slotted for pepper soup. Martins is also briefed that, Ukeme has been pronounced a professor. Ukeme brought in police officers who arrested Martins for the purported stolen manuscripts. Bayo is also arrested by the police. Before the arrest of Martins, the university senate suspended him indefinitely following the contradiction surrounding the manuscripts under his care. He is being tortured by the police officers which made him confess the truth about the manuscripts and subsequently return them.



## 6. Conclusion

A tragic character holds his or her destiny; not always predestined. He or she can choose to be decent and avoid hamartia or allow hubris to lead to his/her hamartia. Hall Robert (1993) states that we shall reap what we sow or that human aspiration is a small thing since what happens to us is largely beyond our control (p.290). There is a popular saying that whatever one does has repercussions. This research paper is focused on exposing the evil tendencies inherent in man and presents the adverse effect of such evil tendencies that can be eschewed. Summarily, Dr Martins and Bayo who work tirelessly to see to the downfall of Ukeme receive their dues at the end of the play. Ninety-nine days for the thief but only one day for the owner is more pronounced. Evil people toil with innocent people without mercy but request mercy when caught. Ethnicity and religion must not be the basis for appointment and employment. This can only hamper growth in our institutions. The right people should always be considered irrespective of their affinities. This research explains hamartia to be the moral weakness of will which is triggered by pride or desire to maintain an unmerited status quo. A tragic hero gets blinded and overlooks important particular facts and warning signs when pursuing 'fine' and desirable things such as victory, honour, and wealth. This research analyses and exfoliates the ills in the academic industries as presented by Effiong Johnson in *The Stolen Manuscript* and offers a technical solution to the uncivilized victimization, delay in promotions, and nepotistic appointments in our education institutions by presenting the hamartia of the tragic heroes and the subsequent elevation of Ukeme to the rank of a professor and the head of the department.

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