

**GREED IN CLEMENT ODIA “VENOM OF VENGENGE” AND OBI
OKWELUME “THEOSE WHO LIVES IN GLASS HOUSES**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was to the best of our knowledge carried out by **OLUWASEUN ADAMU** in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Nigeria, under my supervision.

DR. A.M. AIKOROGIE
(Project Supervisor)

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God for giving me life and the strength to complete this work successfully and seeing me through my academic career and to my family.

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I want to start by sincerely thanking God Almighty for His constant kindness, mercies, and direction over my four years of education.

My unreserved gratitude goes to my able, proficient and dynamic supervisor A. M. Aikorogie who took time off his tight schedule to guide me throughout this research. God bless you richly sir. To my intelligent and impactful lecturers, the list is long to be stated here. I say thank you for molding me into the person I am today.

I am infinitely grateful to my parents Mr. & Mrs. Adamu for their sincere love, care and undiluted commitment to my wellbeing and success in all my endeavors. I love you without measure. To my siblings Glory and Bukky, Funmilayo, Joshua, Emmanuel, I am thankful for your unwavering support and your beneficial counsels that shone light on my paths through my school days.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of greed as a central theme in Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, highlighting how both playwrights depict greed as a destructive force that drives conflict and shapes human behavior.

1.2 Scope of Study

The scope of this study encompasses a critical analysis of the theme of greed in Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*. It focuses on the characterization, plot development, and thematic elements used by both playwrights to illustrate the destructive effects of greed. The study will examine the socio-political and cultural contexts in which the plays are set, analyzing how these contexts influence the portrayal of greed and its consequences. Additionally, it will explore the moral implications and lessons conveyed through the authors' critique of greed, while drawing comparisons between the two texts to highlight their unique and overlapping perspectives on human avarice.

1.3 Methodology

This study used the qualitative research method of purposive sampling from text as its methodological approach. This adaptable method entails gathering and examining non-numerical data in order to comprehend ideas, viewpoints, or experiences. Since it is secondary research, real-time data is not always necessary. Therefore, the main source of information and proof is the texts being studied. The information gathered from the main texts will undergo in-depth textual and thematic examination. To reach specific conclusions about the subject, the data collected in this instance will be further examined in light of the study's guiding idea. This method was selected because of its flexibility and time restrictions, despite the fact that some documents were difficult to obtain, such as those that needed direct access from the author. To add depth to the discussion and reach the required conclusions, other trustworthy sources are consulted, including textbooks, articles, reviews, journals, and earlier research materials on the subject that have been published both offline and online.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on Marxist Literary Theory, which offers a critical lens to analyze the socio-economic structures and power dynamics that drive human behavior, particularly as they relate to greed. Marxist theory, as formulated by

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, emphasizes the role of material conditions and class struggles in shaping society and culture. In literary studies, this theory is used to examine how economic forces and class conflicts influence characters, plot, and themes, revealing the underlying social commentary of a text.

In *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, greed operates as a central force that exposes class struggles and the exploitative tendencies of the ruling class. Through the lens of Marxist theory, this study will analyze how the pursuit of wealth and power leads to moral corruption, exploitation, and social decay. As Marx and Engels argue in *The Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels 14). This idea is particularly relevant in both plays, where the authors critique the greed-fueled actions of the elite and their impact on the less privileged.

Moreover, Marxist theory provides a framework for understanding the socio-political and cultural contexts of the plays. In *Venom of Vengeance*, greed manifests in the exploitation of resources and the betrayal of familial and communal trust, reflecting the unequal distribution of wealth and power in a capitalist society. Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, greed drives corruption among politicians, businessmen, and religious figures, illustrating how economic systems perpetuate moral decay. As Terry Eagleton asserts, "Literature,

like other cultural forms, is a product of the material conditions of life” (Eagleton 45). Both plays demonstrate this principle, showing how economic structures influence human relationships and societal outcomes.

This theoretical framework will also guide the comparative analysis of the two plays, examining how Clement Odiya and Obi Okwelum address greed as a symptom of systemic flaws in their respective societies. By applying Marxist Literary Theory, this study aims to uncover the deeper socio-economic critique embedded in the narratives and to highlight the authors' shared vision of the destructive impact of greed on individuals and society.

1.5 Literature Review

Greed, as a universal human flaw, has been a recurring theme in literature across different cultures and periods. It is often explored in works that critique societal structures, power dynamics, and moral corruption. The exploration of greed within the context of African literature has gained significant scholarly attention, especially as it pertains to postcolonial critiques of governance, capitalism, and societal values. In examining the theme of greed in Clement Odiya's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, it is essential to situate these works within the broader context of literary discourse on avarice and its socio-political implications.

Several studies highlight the destructive nature of greed and its effects on individuals and societies. According to Achebe, literature serves as a mirror that reflects societal ills, offering both critique and a call for reform (Achebe 45). This perspective is evident in many African texts that depict greed as a catalyst for conflict and moral degradation. For instance, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* explores greed through the lens of political corruption, illustrating how leaders prioritize personal gain over public welfare. Similarly, Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* critiques greed as a force that drives individuals to exploit others, reflecting the broader consequences of unchecked desires.

Clement Odiya's *Venom of Vengeance* provides a gripping portrayal of greed as a force that drives betrayal, destruction, and moral decline. The play depicts characters who prioritize personal enrichment over communal welfare, resulting in familial discord and societal unrest. As Agho notes, Odiya uses vivid imagery and dramatic tension to emphasize the repercussions of greed, illustrating its capacity to erode trust and harmony within communities (Agho 78). The portrayal of greed in this play is deeply intertwined with the socio-economic challenges of the postcolonial African state, where resource exploitation and inequality foster an environment of competition and avarice.

Similarly, Obi Okwelumé's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* critiques the hypocrisy and moral decay fueled by greed. Through satirical representations of political, economic, and religious figures, Okwelumé illustrates how greed transcends individual ambition to infect entire societal systems. As Eze argues, the metaphor of the glass house serves as a powerful symbol of fragility and transparency, exposing the destructive consequences of greed and the inevitability of accountability (Eze 92). Okwelumé's use of satire aligns with the traditions of African literature, which often employs humor and irony to critique social ills while engaging the audience in reflection.

In comparing both plays, it is evident that Odiá and Okwelumé approach the theme of greed from complementary perspectives. Odiá focuses on the familial and communal consequences of greed, emphasizing its capacity to disrupt traditional values and kinship bonds. Okwelumé, on the other hand, takes a more systemic approach, highlighting how greed corrupts institutional structures and perpetuates inequality. Both playwrights employ dramatic tension and vivid characterization to underscore the pervasive and destructive nature of greed, aligning their works with the broader tradition of African literature as a tool for social commentary.

Greed is also discussed in broader theoretical terms, particularly within the framework of Marxist Literary Theory. Marxist critics emphasize the role of economic structures in shaping human behavior, often linking greed to the exploitation and inequality inherent in capitalist systems. Eagleton asserts that “the pursuit of material wealth often masks deeper insecurities and social fractures” (Eagleton 56). This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing the systemic critiques in *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, where greed is portrayed as both a personal vice and a reflection of flawed societal systems. By situating the plays within this theoretical framework, the study highlights how the playwrights critique not only individual characters but also the broader socio-political contexts that enable and perpetuate greed.

While existing scholarship has provided valuable insights into the theme of greed in African literature, there is a need for more comparative analyses of works by different authors. Studies like Eze’s and Agho’s focus primarily on single texts, overlooking the opportunity to draw connections between similar themes in multiple works. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how Odiya and Okwelum address greed through different narrative techniques and socio-political lenses. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on African

drama as a medium for addressing societal challenges, emphasizing the relevance of literature in fostering awareness and change.

From the preceding discussions, it is clear that both *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* portray greed as a destructive force that transcends individual failings to reflect broader societal issues. This study aligns with the critical consensus that greed is a pervasive and corrosive element in human interactions. However, it also asserts that Ochia and Okwelumbe offer unique perspectives on the theme, emphasizing the interplay between personal ambition and systemic corruption. By analyzing these works, the study underscores the importance of literature in critiquing greed and advocating for a more equitable and ethical society.

1.6 Justification of Study

This study is justified by the pervasive relevance of the theme of greed in contemporary society and its profound impact on socio-political, economic, and cultural structures. In a world increasingly marked by corruption, exploitation, and systemic inequality, the examination of greed through literary works provides critical insights into the human condition and societal dysfunctions. Clement Ochia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelumbe's *Those Who Live in Glass*

Houses are significant texts that critique greed as a destructive force, making them valuable for understanding how literature reflects and challenges societal issues.

Moreover, this study contributes to existing scholarship by offering a comparative analysis of these two plays, exploring how different playwrights address a common theme within distinct socio-political contexts. While prior research has focused on individual works, this study bridges the gap by examining the intersections and divergences in the portrayal of greed in both texts. By doing so, it highlights the universality of greed as a human flaw while uncovering its unique manifestations in different cultural and economic settings.

Additionally, the study employs Marxist Literary Theory to analyze the systemic dimensions of greed, providing a fresh perspective on the interplay between individual desires and structural inequalities. This theoretical framework enhances the study's depth, linking the critique of greed in the plays to broader discussions on class, power, and exploitation. The findings of this study will not only enrich the academic discourse on African drama but also underscore the role of literature as a tool for social critique and reform.

1.7 Thesis Statement

This study asserts that greed, as depicted in Clement Odi's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelume's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, is a

destructive force that undermines societal harmony and exposes the fragility of morality, highlighting how unchecked ambition and moral compromise lead to personal ruin and collective chaos.

CHAPTER TWO

GREED

2.0 Introduction

One of the most damaging human vices is greed, which leads people and society to make decisions that compromise morality, sabotage social peace, and corrupt political structures. Greed is a major subject in both Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* and Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance*, influencing the behavior of important characters and escalating the dramatic conflicts that arise. Both writers eloquently illustrate how avarice leads to treachery, deceit, and society ruin through both individual aspirations and systemic corruption. This chapter explores how greed is portrayed in these plays, emphasizing its damaging effects and how it affects interpersonal relationships, moral principles, and social stability. Through an analysis of the characters' intentions and deeds, we reveal the complex ways in which greed shapes the plots and acts as a prism through which to view society imperfections.

2.1 Greed as a Catalyst for Betrayal in *Venom of Vengeance*

In Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance*, greed emerges as a primary catalyst for betrayal and conflict, driving the plot and shaping the destinies of key characters. The pursuit of wealth, power, and influence transcends personal

ambition, infiltrating communal relationships and unraveling the bonds of trust and solidarity within the fictional community of Sobrina. Betrayal in *Venom of Vengeance* is deeply rooted in the greed of its central antagonist, Agbotaen, whose relentless pursuit of power drives him to manipulate and deceive those around him. Agbotaen's desire to control Sobrina through his daughter Ariowa's marriage to the king exemplifies how greed undermines loyalty and trust. His scheming involves bribing influential figures and employing spiritual manipulation to eliminate rivals. For instance, he confesses his ambition to his wife, stating, "I want to capture power, I mean raw power" (Odia 47). This ambition, cloaked in familial loyalty, ultimately leads to his betrayal of tradition, community, and even his own child.

Literary scholars such as Nwosu argue that greed often compels individuals to prioritize personal gain over communal loyalty, leading to the breakdown of trust (Nwosu 58). Agbotaen's betrayal of Okokobi, the mother of his illegitimate daughter Aihanuwa, is a poignant example. After impregnating Okokobi, Agbotaen rejects both her and their child, a decision rooted in his greed-driven fear of social and political repercussions. This betrayal sets in motion a series of events that culminate in the murder of Aihanuwa by Ariowa, further illustrating how greed triggers cascading acts of disloyalty and deception.

The betrayal instigated by greed in *Venom of Vengeance* inevitably leads to conflict, both interpersonal and communal. The murder of Aihanuwa, driven by Ariowa's jealousy and Agbotaen's manipulations, ignites a supernatural conflict in the form of Pereguina, the hawk of vengeance. Okokobi's use of witchcraft to avenge her daughter's death symbolizes the destructive potential of unresolved betrayal fueled by greed. As Chukwuma observes, "Greed often ignites cycles of vengeance that are difficult to break, as betrayed individuals seek retribution in increasingly destructive ways" (Chukwuma 102). This dynamic is evident in the escalating tensions within *Sobrina*, where personal grievances spill over into communal strife.

The play also depicts the broader societal conflicts that arise when greed distorts justice and power structures. Agbotaen's manipulation of the chiefs to protect Ariowa from punishment undermines the legitimacy of traditional leadership and creates divisions within the community. Chief Oloton's dissent during the council meeting, where he advocates for Ariowa's banishment, highlights the conflict between upholding justice and succumbing to the influence of greed. He warns, "What his royal majesty has told us is a serious matter... We cannot spread clean bed sheets over a bed of thorns and pretend nothing will

happen” (Odia 27). This metaphor shows the inevitable consequences of ignoring justice in favor of appeasing powerful individuals.

The conflict fueled by greed in *Venom of Vengeance* transcends individual disputes, revealing its capacity to destabilize entire communities. According to Achebe, “The betrayal of communal trust in favor of personal ambition erodes the social fabric and breeds chaos” (Achebe 40). In *Sobrina*, this erosion is manifested in the chorus’s lament about the suffering inflicted by their leaders: “Hornets sting our land with thongs of hardship... Yet our leaders do not care if we perish” (Odia 35). This sentiment captures the disillusionment of the people, whose grievances are ignored by a leadership consumed by greed and betrayal.

Furthermore, the supernatural conflict initiated by Pereguina reflects the play’s broader critique of greed as a force that disrupts natural and social orders. The hawk’s vengeance symbolizes the collective suffering of *Sobrina*’s people, who endure famine, fear, and death as a result of the greed-driven betrayals that permeate their society. Fanon’s observation that “violence, whether physical or structural, often accompanies the betrayal of communal trust” (Fanon 135) resonates with the plight of *Sobrina*, where the betrayal of justice and tradition leads to widespread conflict and despair.

In *Venom of Vengeance*, Clement Odiya vividly portrays greed as a catalyst for betrayal and conflict, illustrating its far-reaching consequences on individuals and communities alike. The play's exploration of greed highlights its capacity to erode trust, incite vengeance, and destabilize societal structures. Ultimately, Odiya's work serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive potential of unchecked greed and the importance of maintaining integrity and communal harmony.

2.2 The Exploitation of Power and Resources in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*

Obi Okwelume's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* explores the exploitation of power and resources as a critical theme, shedding light on the pervasive corruption and greed that dominate the political landscape in Nigeria. The play criticizes how leaders abuse public resources for their own personal gain while ignoring the needs of the people they are supposed to serve through the character of Chief Kokori. Okwelume illustrates the disastrous effects of greed-driven governance by exposing the deceptive tactics of people in power through comedy and incisive conversation.

Chief Kokori epitomizes the exploitation of power and resources. He diverts public funds intended for community development projects into his re-election campaign, leaving roads unfinished and healthcare projects abandoned.

When Ebiti informs Kokori about the youth protests demanding the completion of a road and hospital, Kokori dismisses their concerns, stating, “All the funds in our coffers today are dedicated to the campaign” (Okwelum 24). His priorities reveal a selfish focus on retaining power rather than addressing the pressing needs of the people. This exploitation reflects what Achebe describes as the “tragedy of leadership in Africa,” where those in authority betray public trust for personal gain (Achebe 18).

Okwelum also portrays how Kokori uses public resources to maintain loyalty and control. In a meeting with the market women leader, Salome, and the youth leader, Millicourt, Kokori secures their support by offering them gifts and financial incentives. Salome confidently assures him, “Just provide small kola for them, and members will be sanctioned across the major streets, singing your name” (Okwelum 33). This transactional approach to leadership demonstrates how public funds are weaponized to manipulate communities, undermining the principles of democracy and accountability.

Scholars like Egharevba argue that this pattern of resource exploitation in Nigerian politics stems from the absence of strong institutional checks on leadership. Egharevba writes, “Corruption in public office is sustained by a culture of impunity, where political elites use state resources as personal property without

fear of repercussions” (Egharevba 72). Kokori’s actions mirror this assertion, as he not only enriches himself but also rewards collaborators like the electoral commissioner with state property, exemplified when he decides to gift a Toyota Hilux vehicle meant for erosion control projects to secure the commissioner’s loyalty (Okwelum 26).

The play also critiques the complicity of those who benefit from the exploitation of resources. Ebiti, Kokori’s political associate, actively enables this corruption by bribing electoral officials and media personnel to guarantee Kokori’s victory. He proudly boasts to have settled the electoral commissioner, the pressmen, councilors from the opposition party just to ensure a landslide victory for Chief (Okwelum 20). This systemic manipulation of electoral processes reflects what Osaghae describes as the “entrenchment of prebendal politics,” where political office becomes a means for personal enrichment rather than public service (Osaghae 54).

Furthermore, Kokori’s exploitation of power extends to his treatment of individuals under his authority. He lies to his butler, Timipa, about giving him ₦10,000 for his daughter’s health, when he actually gives him only ₦1,000. This deceit highlights how leaders like Kokori exploit not only public resources but also the vulnerability of those who depend on them. This behavior aligns with

Fanon's critique of post-colonial leadership, where the ruling class replicates the exploitative practices of their colonial predecessors (Fanon 152).

The consequences of this exploitation are evident in the growing discontent among the people of Abiama. The youth protests, fueled by frustration over unfulfilled promises and abandoned projects, symbolize the public's demand for accountability. However, Kokori's refusal to address these grievances demonstrates the disconnect between the ruling class and the populace. This disconnect perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment and inequality, as leaders prioritize self-interest over collective progress.

In conclusion, the exploitation of riches and power is a major issue in Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, which critiques the corruption and greed that afflict Nigerian leadership. The drama emphasizes the moral decline of individuals in positions of authority and the disastrous effects of their deeds on society through Kokori's character. Okwelum emphasizes the critical necessity for accountability and moral leadership by analyzing Kokori's deceptive strategies and the cooperation of his supporters. This criticism, which highlights the detrimental effects of selfishness and the exploitation of public resources, is consistent with larger academic conversations around governance in Africa.

2.3 Moral Compromise and the Pursuit of Wealth

Both Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelume's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* explore the dangerous connection between moral compromise and the relentless pursuit of wealth. In both plays, characters are driven by greed and personal ambition, making unethical decisions that betray communal values, destroy relationships, and disrupt societal harmony. These plays critically reflect on how the pursuit of material wealth often comes at the expense of morality, exposing the destructive consequences of greed on individuals and society.

In *Venom of Vengeance*, Clement Odia illustrates moral compromise through the character of Agbotaen, who embodies unbridled greed and ambition. Agbotaen manipulates traditions and justice systems to secure power and wealth. He schemes to have his daughter, Ariowa, marry King Esemuede, not out of love or respect but to ensure his influence over the kingdom through a male heir. He openly admits to his wife, Imarhiade, "I want power. I want the throne of this land... I will rule this land from our bedroom" (Odia 46). Agbotaen's actions highlight how the pursuit of wealth and power leads him to sacrifice moral principles, even resorting to witchcraft to undermine the daughter of Okokobi, whom he views as a threat. Scholars like Frantz Fanon critique such behavior in

post-colonial societies, stating that greed among the ruling elite “replaces genuine development with self-serving exploitation, leading to societal decay” (Fanon 152).

Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Obi Okwelum portrays moral compromise through Chief Kokori, who uses public resources to enrich himself and secure political power. Kokori diverts funds meant for community projects, like roads and hospitals, to finance his election campaign. His justification, “All the funds in our coffers today are dedicated to the campaign,” reflects the ease with which he abandons moral responsibility for personal gain (Okwelum 26). Furthermore, he bribes electoral officials, buys loyalty with public assets, and manipulates community leaders to ensure his re-election. Kokori’s actions illustrate what Egharevba describes as the “normalization of corruption in leadership, where ethical boundaries are continually broken to maintain personal wealth and influence” (Egharevba 72).

Both plays reveal how moral compromise in the pursuit of wealth has far-reaching consequences, not just for the individual but also for society. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen’s greed leads to the death of Aihanuwa, who is later revealed to be his biological daughter from a pregnancy he denied years earlier. This tragic irony shows the destructive nature of moral compromise, as Agbotaen’s selfish pursuit of power ultimately causes him personal grief and societal disgrace. When

his manipulations are exposed, he is banished from the land, a punishment that symbolizes the collapse of his carefully constructed facade of power and wealth.

In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's moral failings deepen the divide between the political elite and the ordinary citizens. His refusal to complete essential projects, such as roads and hospitals, angers the community and leads to youth protests. Despite this, Kokori prioritizes his political ambitions over public welfare, exploiting his position to consolidate power rather than address the needs of the people. This behavior aligns with Achebe's critique of post-colonial African leaders, who often "sacrifice their people's well-being on the altar of personal ambition" (Achebe 19).

Okwelum also critiques the complicity of those who benefit from moral compromise. Ebiti, Kokori's political associate, enables and encourages Kokori's corruption, boasting about how he has bribed officials and settled opposition leaders to ensure Kokori's victory. This complicity reflects what Osaghae describes as "the collective breakdown of ethical standards, where corruption becomes a shared enterprise" (Osaghae 55). Both plays emphasize that the pursuit of wealth through moral compromise erodes communal trust and weakens the fabric of society. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen's actions create a cycle of vengeance and betrayal, as Okokobi's anger over her daughter's mistreatment

unleashes supernatural forces that torment the land. Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's exploitation of power results in widespread dissatisfaction and protests, illustrating how greed-driven leadership disrupts societal cohesion.

Ultimately, Odia and Okwelume use these narratives to warn against the dangers of prioritizing wealth and power over morality. The downfall of Agbotaen and the growing resistance against Kokori serve as reminders that moral compromise, no matter how cleverly disguised, leads to ruin. As Eagleton notes, "Literature often serves as a critique of human failings, urging audiences to confront the ethical consequences of their actions" (Eagleton 43). These plays fulfill that purpose by holding a mirror to society, exposing the devastating effects of greed, and calling for a return to integrity and ethical leadership.

2.4 The Consequences of Greed on Individuals and Society

Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelume's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* examine greed as a powerful and destructive force that harms individuals and destabilizes societies. Both plays vividly depict how unchecked greed leads to betrayal, corruption, and moral degradation, ultimately undermining the social fabric. Through their characters and events, the playwrights critique the perils of selfish ambition, showing that the relentless pursuit of wealth and power

comes with severe consequences for both individuals and the communities they impact.

In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen's greed blinds him to ethical considerations and familial bonds. His obsession with controlling the kingdom drives him to manipulate traditions and commit heinous acts, such as bribing the chiefs to shield Queen Ariowa from justice after she murders Aihanuwa. His schemes backfire when it is revealed that Aihanuwa is his biological daughter, a tragic consequence of his selfishness and moral compromise. Agbotaen's downfall reflects the idea that greed corrupts not only one's values but also one's humanity. His eventual banishment from Sobrina is a fitting punishment, symbolizing how greed isolates individuals from their communities and destroys the legacies they seek to build.

Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Chief Kokori exemplifies how greed for power and wealth corrupts personal integrity. Kokori's misuse of public resources for his campaign demonstrates his disregard for the very people he is meant to serve. His lie to his butler, Timipa, about giving ₦10,000 for medical help when he actually gives only ₦1,000, highlights the extent to which greed erodes trust and personal relationships. Kokori's selfish actions show that

greed isolates leaders from their subordinates and the people they claim to represent, leaving them vulnerable to public resentment and eventual rejection.

Both Agbotaen and Kokori serve as cautionary figures whose lives are consumed and eventually ruined by their insatiable desires. As Terry Eagleton asserts, “Literature often portrays greed as a force that not only destroys society but also consumes the individual from within” (Eagleton 46). These characters illustrate this principle, showing how greed transforms ambition into moral decay and self-destruction.

On a societal level, both plays illustrate how greed erodes communal values and causes widespread suffering. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen’s manipulation of the justice system creates an environment where fairness and accountability are sacrificed for personal gain. The chiefs, who accept bribes to protect Ariowa, undermine the integrity of traditional institutions, leading to the community’s moral collapse. This lack of justice invites supernatural vengeance in the form of Pereguina, the hawk, which symbolizes the chaos and suffering unleashed by greed. The community of Sobrina experiences famine, death, and despair, underscoring the broader consequences of Agbotaen’s actions.

In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori’s exploitation of power causes societal stagnation and unrest. His refusal to complete vital infrastructure projects,

such as roads and hospitals, leaves communities underserved and frustrated. The youth protests against Kokori's neglect reflect the public's disillusionment with corrupt leadership. Kokori's actions mirror what Achebe describes as the "betrayal of public trust by African leaders, who prioritize personal gain over societal progress" (Achebe 21). The lack of development, coupled with Kokori's blatant corruption, creates an atmosphere of discontent and resentment, threatening the stability of the society he governs.

Additionally, both plays highlight the role of enablers who perpetuate greed and corruption. In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Ebiti plays a crucial role in facilitating Kokori's exploitation of power. By bribing electoral officials and manipulating the media, Ebiti ensures that Kokori retains control, even as the community suffers from underdevelopment. This complicity reflects the systemic nature of greed, where individuals collude to exploit public resources for mutual benefit, leaving the masses to bear the consequences. As Osaghae notes, "Greed thrives in systems where accountability is weak, enabling individuals to prioritize self-interest over collective well-being" (Osaghae 57).

Both plays emphasize that greed does not only harm individuals and communities in the short term; it also destroys communal values and trust, leaving long-term damage. In *Venom of Vengeance*, the chiefs' willingness to accept bribes

sets a dangerous precedent, signaling that justice can be bought and traditional institutions can be manipulated. This undermines the societal belief in fairness and accountability, making it difficult to rebuild trust in leadership. Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's actions erode public faith in governance, as his misuse of resources reinforces the perception that leaders are only interested in enriching themselves.

The ultimate lesson from both plays is that greed, when left unchecked, leads to the collapse of systems meant to uphold justice, fairness, and communal harmony. The downfall of Agbotaen and Kokori illustrates that greed, while initially appearing rewarding, is ultimately self-destructive. As Frantz Fanon observes, "The greed of the ruling elite not only destroys their credibility but also undermines the foundations of society, leaving communities in a state of despair and disarray" (Fanon 154).

In both *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Clement Odiya and Obi Okwelume offer a searing critique of greed and its consequences. Through the actions and downfalls of Agbotaen and Kokori, the plays demonstrate how greed corrupts individuals, erodes communal values, and destabilizes society. The suffering of the communities in *Sobrina* and *Abiama* serves as a stark reminder of the far-reaching impact of selfish ambition. These plays not only

expose the dangers of greed but also call for a return to integrity and accountability, emphasizing the need for ethical leadership and communal responsibility. By exploring the destructive consequences of greed, Ochia and Okwelu contribute to a broader conversation about the importance of justice, morality, and collective well-being in building a sustainable society.

CHAPTER THREE

INSATIABLE QUEST FOR MONEY

3.1 Introduction

Money influences human behavior in many ways, but when the desire for wealth becomes insatiable, it leads to moral decay, corruption, and destruction. In Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, the relentless pursuit of money drives characters to betray trust, manipulate justice, and exploit others for personal gain. The plays illustrate how greed for wealth blinds individuals to ethical values and pushes them toward decisions that harm both themselves and society. The writers reveal how the fixation on money power breeds dishonesty, exploitation, and social disintegration through characters such as Agbotaen and Chief Kokori. This chapter examines how leadership, justice, and the general well-being are affected by the unquenchable desire for wealth in both plays.

3.2 Corruption

Corruption is a major theme in both Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelum's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*. These plays vividly depict how power, greed, and manipulation fuel corruption at both individual and systemic levels. Odia and Okwelum expose how those in authority exploit their

positions for personal gain, betraying the trust of their people and weakening societal values. The playwrights demonstrate that corruption is not just about stealing money but also about manipulating justice, buying loyalty, and suppressing opposition. This analysis examines how corruption manifests in both plays and its devastating impact on individuals and society.

In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen embodies corruption by using his wealth to manipulate traditional institutions for his selfish interests. He bribes the council of chiefs to protect his daughter, Queen Ariowa, after she murders the royal maiden, Aihanuwa. Instead of delivering justice, the chiefs accept gifts and declare that “the wife of the king is the king. The law of the land acquits the king and his household from punishment” (Odia 39). This decision shows how corruption destroys the rule of law, allowing the powerful to escape justice while the weak suffer. Agbotaen’s ability to influence legal decisions with money mirrors the reality in many African societies, where the wealthy use their resources to evade accountability.

Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Chief Kokori uses corruption to maintain his political influence. He diverts funds meant for community projects to finance his re-election campaign, showing a clear disregard for public welfare. When youth protesters demand the completion of their road and

hospital, Kokori refuses to listen, stating, “All the funds in our coffers today are dedicated to the campaign” (Okwelum 26). His words reveal how corruption prioritizes personal ambitions over community development, leading to public dissatisfaction and unrest. As Osaghae argues, “Political corruption in post-colonial Africa is sustained by the desire of leaders to maintain power, often at the expense of the people they are meant to serve” (Osaghae 72). Kokori’s actions align with this observation, as he focuses on consolidating his political strength while neglecting the needs of his constituents.

Bribery and favoritism are key instruments of corruption in both plays. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen bribes chiefs with expensive gifts and money to secure a favorable judgment for his daughter. When Queen Ariowa confesses to murdering Aihanuwa, Agbotaen tells her, “Do not worry, go back to the palace. Your mother is not in. I will settle it” (Odia 20). His statement shows his confidence in using money to manipulate justice, proving that in corrupt societies, wealth determines legal outcomes rather than fairness. As Fanon notes, “The ruling class in post-colonial states often mirrors the exploitative behaviors of their former colonizers, using corruption as a means of sustaining their dominance” (Fanon 158). This analysis applies directly to Agbotaen, whose corruption allows him to undermine the legal system for personal benefit.

In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Chief Kokori also relies on bribery to maintain control. He rewards electoral officials, journalists, and political opponents with money and gifts to ensure their loyalty. His associate, Ebiti, openly admits, “I have settled the electoral commissioner, the pressmen, councilors from the opposition party just to ensure a landslide victory for Chief” (Okwelum 26). This practice highlights how corruption extends beyond one individual, creating a network of compromised individuals who prioritize personal gain over ethical governance. As Achebe states, “Corruption in African politics is sustained by a network of enablers who, despite knowing its negative impact, partake in it for personal advantage” (Achebe 24). Kokori’s corrupt dealings reflect this, as he builds a system where bribery becomes a normal political strategy rather than a crime.

Both plays show that corruption does not only benefit those in power but also leads to societal decay. In *Venom of Vengeance*, the corruption surrounding Ariowa’s crime brings disaster upon the entire community of Sobrina. The supernatural hawk, Pereguina, torments the village, symbolizing the consequences of injustice and dishonesty. The narrator warns, “Evil feasts on the wealth of Sobrina as crooked manipulators of customs and tradition ascend the palladium of power” (Odia 27). This suggests that corruption is not just a personal failing but a

societal curse that affects everyone. The famine and suffering in *Sobrina* represent how corruption drains a society's resources, leaving the people in misery.

In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's corruption results in underdevelopment and growing public dissatisfaction. Despite promising progress, his administration leaves essential projects unfinished while public funds are mismanaged. This failure leads to protests, with youth singing, "We no go gree" outside Kokori's mansion (Okwelum 26). The phrase, which translates to "We will not agree," signifies the people's resistance to bad governance and their frustration with corruption. As Egharevba notes, "When corruption thrives in leadership, the people become disillusioned, leading to protests, instability, and the eventual collapse of trust in governance" (Egharevba 78). Kokori's refusal to listen to the people and his continued focus on political survival rather than development reflect the broader crisis of leadership in many corrupt societies.

Both *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* expose corruption as a major force that destroys individuals and societies. Through Agbotaen and Kokori, Odia and Okwelum reveal how those in power manipulate systems, use bribery, and suppress justice to serve their selfish interests. The plays show that corruption is not just about stealing money but also about betraying trust, denying justice, and undermining the foundations of a just society. The

consequences of corruption, as depicted in the suffering of Sobrina and the protests in Abiama, highlight the urgent need for integrity and accountability in leadership. By critiquing corruption, these playwrights contribute to the ongoing conversation about the importance of ethical governance and the dangers of unchecked greed in African societies.

3.3 Misappropriation of Public Funds

Misappropriation of public funds is a major issue in societies where leaders prioritize personal enrichment over collective well-being. In both *Venom of Vengeance* by Clement Odi and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* by Obi Okwelume, the misuse of resources plays a central role in shaping the conflicts within the narratives. The playwrights expose how those in positions of authority divert wealth meant for public development into private use, causing widespread suffering, failed projects, and loss of trust in governance. Through characters like Agbotaen and Chief Kokori, the plays reveal the devastating consequences of financial corruption, linking personal greed to the broader decay of society.

In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen represents the unchecked greed that fuels misappropriation of public resources. As a wealthy timber merchant, he uses his financial influence to control political and legal systems for personal advantage. He manipulates the council of chiefs by offering them expensive gifts and money

to cover up his daughter's crime, ensuring that Queen Ariowa escapes justice for the murder of Aihanuwa. When bribing them, he declares, "These are for you to soften your noble palms and inside the bag are some money to get you drinks to allow right words to flow in your mouths" (Odia 19). This act mirrors real-life corruption, where the wealthy use public resources to buy loyalty and manipulate systems of power. Agbotaen's actions reflect what Hopewell describes as "the exploitation of communal wealth for personal advantage, where leaders see governance as a business venture rather than a responsibility" (Hopewell 112). Instead of using his influence to serve society, Agbotaen diverts resources to secure his personal ambitions, treating public institutions as tools for self-enrichment. His greed leads to the disruption of justice in Sobrina, setting a dangerous precedent where money determines right and wrong rather than moral integrity.

Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Chief Kokori uses his position as chairman of Abiama to misappropriate public funds. Instead of directing government resources toward community development, he diverts them into his re-election campaign. When youth protesters demand the completion of their road and hospital, Kokori refuses to act, stating, "All the funds in our coffers today are dedicated to the campaign" (Okwelum 26). This statement reveals his

disregard for public welfare, as he prioritizes political survival over meeting the basic needs of his people. Kokori's financial mismanagement aligns with Ekeh's argument that "post-colonial African politicians often misuse state resources to sustain their political ambitions, leaving essential sectors underfunded and communities neglected" (Ekeh 49). His misuse of funds shows the systemic nature of corruption, where leaders justify the misallocation of resources for their political advantage while ignoring the pressing needs of their communities.

Both plays highlight the devastating impact of financial corruption on society, showing how misappropriation of funds leads to infrastructural decay, social unrest, and economic hardship. In *Venom of Vengeance*, the misuse of wealth destabilizes the justice system, allowing criminals to escape punishment while honest individuals suffer. By using money to influence the council of chiefs, Agbotaen contributes to the erosion of trust in traditional leadership. His financial manipulation ensures that laws are applied selectively, benefiting the powerful while oppressing the weak. The supernatural torment that follows, symbolized by the hawk Pereguina represents the curse of corruption, as the community faces famine, suffering, and divine punishment. The people of Sobrina cry, "Affliction like a mighty ocean has submerged Sobrina and we can no longer sleep at night"

(Odia 25). This reflects how corruption robs communities of peace and stability, leaving them vulnerable to crises.

In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's financial mismanagement leads to visible infrastructural decay. The unfinished road and hospital symbolize the long-term consequences of misappropriation, where public projects remain abandoned due to leaders' selfish interests. His failure to deliver basic services sparks protests, as the youth demand accountability for the funds meant to improve their lives. The growing anger of the people indicates that corruption fuels social unrest, as those deprived of basic amenities eventually rise in resistance. As Obadina notes, "When leaders divert resources from essential services, the public suffers, leading to resentment, protests, and ultimately the collapse of governance" (Obadina 88). Kokori's inability to complete developmental projects reflects this pattern, showing how corruption weakens the foundations of progress and fuels discontent.

Both plays also emphasize that corruption thrives not just because of greedy leaders but also due to the complicity of those who benefit from it. In *Venom of Vengeance*, the council of chiefs willingly accepts Agbotaen's bribes, prioritizing personal gain over justice. Their decision to protect Queen Ariowa exposes the failure of traditional institutions in upholding fairness, as financial

influence overrides ethical considerations. This demonstrates what Oloruntoba describes as “a system where corruption is not an individual act but a collective enterprise sustained by those willing to benefit from it” (Oloruntoba 76).

Likewise, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori’s political associate, Ebiti, plays a key role in ensuring the misappropriation of funds continues. Ebiti arranges bribes for electoral officials, journalists, and opposition members, ensuring Kokori’s corruption remains unchecked. He proudly boasts, “I have settled the electoral commissioner, the pressmen, councilors from the opposition party just to ensure a landslide victory for Chief” (Okwelume 26). His actions show how corruption extends beyond one individual, creating a network of compromised figures who sustain financial mismanagement for personal benefits. As Obazee argues, “Corruption is rarely an isolated act; it is embedded in a network of individuals who protect one another, ensuring the continuous misuse of resources” (Obazee 94).

Both *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* offer a scathing critique of financial corruption, showing how the misappropriation of public funds undermines justice, weakens infrastructure, and fuels public anger. Through Agbotaen and Kokori, the plays reveal how those in power manipulate resources to serve their selfish ambitions rather than public good. The

consequences of their actions, famine, public protests, and loss of trust illustrate the long-term damage caused by corruption. These narratives emphasize the need for accountability and ethical leadership, reminding audiences that financial mismanagement not only destroys communities but also leads to the downfall of those who engage in it. By exposing the dangers of corruption, Odia and Okwelume contribute to the broader discussion on governance and the importance of financial integrity in leadership.

3.4 Conclusion

The misappropriation of public funds, as depicted in *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, reveals the devastating consequences of financial corruption in leadership and governance. The plays reveal, through Agbotaen and Chief Kokori, how elites misappropriate funds intended for the general good in order to fulfill their own goals, resulting in injustice, deteriorating infrastructure, and general misery. In addition to betraying the confidence of their citizens, their acts erode the moral underpinnings of their communities, supporting the notion that corruption flourishes when those in positions of authority put their own interests before of moral obligations.

These plays demonstrate that those who support corruption are also to blame, in addition to specific politicians. Kokori's political supporters in *Those*

Who Live in Glass Houses and the council of chiefs in *Venom of Vengeance* serve as examples of how bribery, institutional favoritism, and manipulation foster a system that allows financial corruption to thrive. Social order eventually collapses as a result of public disenchantment and unrest caused by this network of corruption. When public monies are misappropriated, entire communities suffer as a result of leadership motivated by greed, as demonstrated by the misery of the people in *Sobrina* and *Abiama*.

Odia and Okwelum use these narratives to critique the culture of impunity surrounding financial mismanagement in leadership. The downfall of Agbotaen and the growing resistance against Kokori suggest that corruption, no matter how deeply rooted, eventually faces consequences. These plays emphasize the urgent need for accountability, transparency, and ethical governance to prevent the destruction caused by the misappropriation of public funds. Through these powerful portrayals, both playwrights contribute to the broader conversation on leadership and the necessity of financial integrity in building just and functional societies.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study examines the theme of greed in Clement Odia's *Venom of Vengeance* and Obi Okwelume's *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, focusing on its destructive effects on individuals and society. Both plays depict greed as a driving force behind corruption, betrayal, and moral decay. The study explores how the characters in these plays, particularly Agbotaen and Chief Kokori, sacrifice ethical values and communal well-being for personal gain. Using Marxist Literary Theory as a framework, the study analyzes the socio-political and economic structures that enable greed to thrive, emphasizing how wealth and power are often pursued at the expense of justice and societal progress.

The study highlights the different ways greed manifests in both plays. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen's greed for power leads him to manipulate traditional institutions, bribe community leaders, and cover up crimes to protect his interests. His relentless ambition not only destroys his own family but also plunges the entire community of Sobrina into chaos and suffering. Similarly, in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Chief Kokori exploits his political position to misappropriate public funds and secure his re-election. His actions result in underdevelopment, public dissatisfaction, and youth protests against failed

leadership. Both plays show that when leaders prioritize personal wealth over public good, societies become unstable, and the people suffer.

Another key focus of the study is the moral compromise that accompanies greed. Agbotaen and Kokori both justify their corrupt actions as necessary for maintaining power and control. Their unethical decisions, whether bribing judges, manipulating justice, or misusing government funds, reveal how greed erodes personal integrity and weakens the moral fabric of society. The study also examines the role of enablers, such as the council of chiefs in *Venom of Vengeance* and political associates like Ebiti in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*. These characters show how corruption is rarely an individual act but a collective effort sustained by those who benefit from it.

The consequences of greed, as discussed in the study, are far-reaching. In both plays, greed leads to betrayal, suffering, and societal decay. In *Venom of Vengeance*, Agbotaen's selfish actions result in the death of his own daughter, Aihanuwa, and bring supernatural punishment upon Sobrina. In *Those Who Live in Glass Houses*, Kokori's financial mismanagement leads to protests and growing unrest in Abiama, highlighting the long-term effects of corrupt leadership. The study emphasizes that greed does not only harm the individuals who practice it but also weakens entire communities by creating inequality, injustice, and discontent.

One of the major discoveries of this study is that greed is often disguised as ambition, making it difficult to challenge. Both Agbotaen and Kokori believe they are securing their futures, but their actions ultimately lead to their downfall. The study also finds that greed is a cycle that continues when unchecked, as leaders who misuse power often create systems that allow corruption to persist. Another significant discovery is that the people, although oppressed by greedy leaders, eventually resist when the suffering becomes unbearable. This is evident in the youth protests in *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* and the supernatural revolt in *Venom of Vengeance*.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that greed is a destructive force that corrupts individuals and destabilizes societies. Through an in-depth analysis of both plays, it becomes clear that greed leads to injustice, exploitation, and social unrest. The study highlights the importance of ethical leadership, accountability, and collective responsibility in preventing the negative effects of greed. *Venom of Vengeance* and *Those Who Live in Glass Houses* are potent critiques of leadership motivated by greed that call on society to preserve fairness, openness, and moral integrity by highlighting the perils of unbridled ambition.

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