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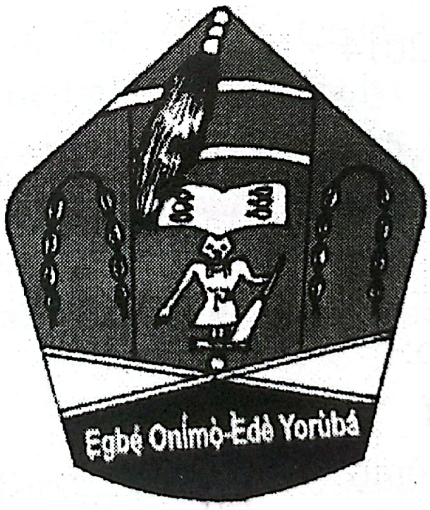
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A New Historicist Analysis of Power and Politics in the Works of Two Yorùbá Playwrights

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Abstract

Literary studies have utilised the historical lens in examining the political intrigue and power play in Yorúbà society. While such efforts are commendable, it is apparent that substantial success has not been recorded in the drive towards the examination of power formation and power use from the perspective of New Historicist theory (Tíọ́rì-ìfojú-ìmọ̀ ìtàn tuntun-wò). Using the Althusser and Foucault's model of the theory, this paper examines Olú Owólabí's *Àbíkú Solóògùn Dèké* (1977) and Láwuyì Ògúníran's *Àtàrí Àjànàkú* (1985) to see how the authors represent the issue of power and politics in their plays. The work is a corpus study. The research methodology is descriptive. The theory is used to identify power in the family, religious, economic, and political spheres. Our findings from the selected play-texts show that religion institutes divine or sacred notion of power and reinforces history to strengthen the authority of the dominant class. The paper shows that there is relationship among discourse, power and politics, that discourse constitutes cold command, and such command should be resisted. The paper concludes that as long as power is considered to be sacred among the Yorùbá,

unscrupulous dominant class and knowledgeable few will continue to exploit and dominate the majority. Hence, the study of literature and appropriate theory like New Historicism is suggested as a foundation for academic knowledge.

(Key words- Power, Discourse, Ideological apparatuses, and New Historicism theory).

Introduction

Human interrelationship in any society is based on power relation. In discussing such interrelationship, historical moment of a nation has always been focused on. Such analyses always focus on overt power of the rulers in the political/public arena. While such efforts are commendable, it is important to note that by focusing the public arena, limitations will be put on what constitute power and politics, and by extension, on factors of underdevelopment and solutions to the problems. Thus, substantial success has not been recorded in checking power misuse because the covert power in the private social arena is not being focused. There is a need to re-examine: what constitutes power, what is political, and what exercising power entails. This constitutes the problem we have set to solve in this paper. Therefore, the specific objectives of this paper are as follows: first; to identify and describe the distinctive forms of power and their formation; second to determine the factors that brought change to Yorúbà view about power; third, to examine the symbolic relationship between discourse (socio-cultural constructs like history and literature), power and politics, as

depicted by Láwuyì Ògúnníran and Olú Owólabí in their dramatic recreations of Yorùbá social and political experience; and fourth, to identify and highlight the dominant literary styles of the authors in interrogating power and politics.

Concept of Power in Yorùbá Society

Among the Yorùbá, the philosophy about power is derived from their religious beliefs. The Ifá literary corpus (with encyclopedic knowledge), recited and narrated by the Babaláwo (Ifá priest) explains the metaphysical realm, in which a Supreme Being directs the affairs of men. On the issue of power, Ẹlẹ́buìbọn (2008: x) states that Olódùmarè (God Almighty) is the ultimate source of power. Even though he dispenses and re-possesses power at will, he delegates power to lesser deities. Èjìogbè narrates the myth of origin, which says that Ọbàtálá was charged to create land and human beings. When he completed the task half way, he relaxed with palm wine, got drunk and slept off, following which Olódùmarè sent Odùduwà to complete the task (Adédèjì 1975: 336).

Ẹlẹ́buìbọn (2008: x) explains further that the Yorùbá believe in two types of supernatural powers: the good and evil. The good supernatural powers are *Òrìṣàs* (gods) and the *òkú ọ̀run* (ancestors), and the evil supernatural powers are *Ajogun* (belligerent enemy of man) and *eníyán* (witches) who use their powers to work against man's interest. The good supernatural

powers protect man from the evil supernatural powers. The belief system institutes idea of divine theory of ancestor, lineage, kinship and kingship. Under this circumstance, it is not difficult for the Yorùbá man to accept that the ancestor has a link with the living. Their belief in ancestral lineage makes the system of transfer of power from lineage to lineage reasonable.

The priests of the gods play prominent roles in the running of the affairs of the society. Through the ritual power of the herbalists (babaláwo), the physical and mental health of the people and the fertility of the family are sustained. They are renowned to cure barrenness or childlessness by applying medicine and magic (Awólàlú and Dòpámú, 1979: 79-80, 209). Everybody desires not only to acquire power, but to sustain, exercise and safeguard it (Ẹlẹ́buìbọn 2008: 16-17).

It is clear that the genealogy of power in Yorùbá society is located in the religious Ideological apparatus. Most of the discourses that inscribe identity, that assign roles and spread power are derived from religious practices. They are circulated in myth, legend, history, praise poetry or panegyrics (Oríkì), proverbs (òwe), list of personal names and places. The belief is reinforced in both Yorùbá orature and now in Yorùbá written literature, especially Yorùbá drama.

Existing Critical Works on Yorùbá Drama and Power Relation

Issues of power and politics are closely linked, and scholars in their criticism of Yorùbá drama agree that artists make these issues their preoccupation. Hence, scholars' like Ògúnṣínà (1988) focuses events he calls 'the big movements' in history. He believes that power and politics operate in such events. Aróhunmọ́làṣe (1997) also identifies power with the ruling class who are oppressors. He arrives at the conclusion that there are oppression and exploitation, struggles and protest between the ruling elite or capitalist oppressors and the masses. He uses Marxist criticism to analyse class struggles in several Yorùbá written plays, and concludes that Yorùbá historical and protest plays are political.

The theme of power and politics has played a serious factor in the classification of drama in Yorùbá literary studies. Scholars arrive at various categories such as political, protest, revolutionary and the like. Scholars like Ìṣọ̀lá (1981, 1988) and Ògúndèjì (1992) define protest play as always protesting against a person, group or government, rulers, and employer that use their positions to oppress their subjects.

Critics who have used the traditional historical approach in analysing the problems plaguing the Yorùbá society in literary works hold the view that such literature is concerned with what really happened in history, which make them remain

faithful to history. Hence, Aróhunmọ́làṣe (1997) agrees with Ògúnṣínà (1995) that *Líṣàbi Agbòǹgbò Àkàlà* may be representing the real historical events of Òkèehò uprising and the Ẹ̀gbá's revolt against Ọ̀yọ́ Empire. Scholars like Ìṣọ̀lá (1981) therefore accuse authors of Yorùbá historical plays of being too close to the fidelity of history. This has made Ògúnbìyí (1981) to conclude that Yorùbá writers have not made great literary impact. The belief that power is exercised by leaders alone restricts politics to the public arena and limit history to real events. Hence, this paper extends the concepts of power and politics to the private arena in order to show that Yorùrbá writers have made great literary impact.

Aróhunmọ́làṣe (1997) also preoccupies himself with the characteristic features of protest plays in relation to the presentation of the class struggle and revolutionist development in them. He establishes that the oppression and exploitation of the masses and the poor working classes lead to class struggles and revolution. The idea of categorisation into historical, religious, moral, didactic and the like is desirable; however, this idea of categorisation limits the scope of power and politics, as if oppression and exploitation, struggles and protest are limited to the public or political arena alone. If we go by Achebe's (2012) assertion that it is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment or some kind of protest' (58), we will see that a writer is either in support of a course or

against it. The common factor that cuts across the play texts is power use. The method Owólabí and Ògúnníran adopt in exposing these power is our concern.

In his analysis of *Àtàrí Àjànàkú,* Aróhunmọ́làṣe (1997) holds the view that the author uses revolutionary struggle, ideologies and commitment that do not lead to successful revolution. This play-text according to Aróhunmọ́làṣe (1997) is part of bourgeoisie's literature that legitimises the ideologies of the ruling elite in a class society. He notes that the author seems not to have weighed the implication of a defeatist artistic vision. He identifies the lack of necessary awareness that could inform inter-class struggle. His study does not analyse the ideological apparatuses that prevent this awareness. Hence, discourses of power are scrutinised in this paper. In the same vein, Adágbádá (2008) examines *Àtàrí Àjànàkú* using the Feminist theory. She reveals the negative position assigned to a woman in the play. She advocates that power be given to women as history shows that they have played revolutionary roles in history. Her analysis does not cover the institutions or charter of life that constructs power for the dominant class.

Ògúnṣínà (1987) analyses the belief in magic and medicine in *Àbíkú Solóògùn Dèké*. He espouses the value of children in Yorùbá society, but does not locate it in the family ideological apparatus. Also, he does not regard religion as a power on which other powers revolve. His analysis does not

portray the play-text as a representation of form of power in history. This is because his approach does not identify religious ideological apparatus as form of power. He does not discuss the process of change as evolving new variants of power. However, his paper provides a stepping stone for a New Historicist analysis/interrogation of religion as apparatus of power. His analysis restricts power and politics to the public domain. It throws more light on our fuller analysis of concept of power, construction of power and politics.

Ramesh (2012) in his paper uses the New Historicist theory to analyse how old culture finds no place in modern materialistic society laws. He submits that powerful dominant class sustains the condition of the masses by making pleasure the ultimate end of life. He concludes that this benefits the state. He is concerned about the modern method of suppressing the masses, whereas this paper analyses traditional and modern methods.

From the foregoing analysis, previous theories (like sociology of literature, Marxism and historical approach) used in analysing Yorùbá play-texts in general and the selected play-texts of Ògúnníran and Owólabí in particular identify power and politics; they could not reveal how culture takes part in power formation, how discourse perpetuates subjectivity through the identity they construct and the roles they assign. Using New Historicism, this paper analyses identified ideological

apparatuses in the family, religious, economic, and political domains as artistically created by Owólabí and Ògúnníran to see where the authors' ideas relate to the principles of New Historicist theory.

Theoretical Framework: New Historicism (Tíọ̀rì-Ìfojú-ìmọ̀-ìtàn-tuntun-wò)

New Historicism emerges from the Historical theory, which sees literature as a recorder of history or historical events. New Historicism resists the notion that history is a series of events that have a linear or causal relationship. According to Dobie (2012), the theory emanates from Marxist perception of the economic basis of social organisation, class ideologies and class conflict, which holds that economy forms the bases of human organisation. It is a reaction to the view that lower and upper classes exist based on economic power, and that those who own the means of production establish dominance over the subordinate or oppressed class. The proponents of the theory include Foucault (1978, 1979, and 1980), Greenblatt (1980, 1985) and Montrose (1989).

Foucault (1979 and 1980) argues that intricately structured power relations in a given culture at a given time depends on the structure of thoughts that shapes everyone and everything within a culture, that is, 'episteme' and not on economy. Society controls its members or direct the behaviour

of the citizens through constructing and defining what appears to be "universal" and "natural" truths called 'consensual discourse' (Foucault, 1981: 93). These are the rules that render an expression discursively meaningful.

According to Montrose, cited in Branningan (1999, 418), techniques and procedures designed to direct the behaviour of men are found in religious beliefs and practices. These are the cultural forces and providence that dictate the concepts of power, politics and history. According to Montrose

> ...all texts were embedded in specific social and cultural contexts...all our knowledge and understanding of the past could only exist through the surviving textual traces of the society in question (cited in Branningan: 1999: 418).

Greenblatt (1980, 1985) contributes to the idea by saying that the idea about our basic and mostly held feelings towards identity, femininity, masculinity, childlessness, power, oppression, and love are all products of culture, and can be traced to certain historical events and occurrences.

Althusser (2013) locates power relation in the cultural domain. He links such power with ideology. He calls them Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), which work in the private domain. These are unlike Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), (that is, political and legal institutions, police) that work in the public domain. He labels them the religious, cultural, political,

legal, family and the communication ideological state apparatuses (ISA). He argues that ideology has the power of constituting individuals as subjects who then recognise themselves in the way they are constructed. This makes any action resulting from this misrecognition seem obvious and normal.

Foucault (1979 and 1980), in his 'genealogy of knowledge' defines power as being continually articulated on knowledge, that is, knowledge of how to create institutions that take part in the formation of power and subjectivity, and knowledge about how to use such constructions to track individuals throughout their lives. For Althusser (2012), ideology operates covertly to form and position the users of language as 'subjects' in discourses, in a way that in fact 'subjects' them- that is, subordinates them- to the interests of the ruling classes. Misrecognition is easy because the interests of the dominant economic group are represented as the interest of the society in general. These discourses are socially and linguistically constructed to perform specific functions within a network of power relations in the society. They are constructed to aid the reigning ideology in any era.

Aspects of Althusser's ideological apparatuses and Foucault's notion about knowledge are adapted in this study. According to Althusser, we can come close to perceiving the ways that we are inscribed in ideology by complex processes of

recognition' through a rigorous 'scientific' approach to society, economics and history. We focus on the knowledge about discourses in the: religious, family, historical, and communication ideological state apparatuses (ISA) as suggested by Althusser. He argues that ideology has the power of constituting individuals as subjects who then recognise themselves in the way they are constructed. This makes any action resulting from this misrecognition seem obvious and normal.

Foucault (2000) emphasises how any text constitutes a cold command, and thereby favours a form of reading that constitutes a form of resistance. Hence, how these stories mark the effectiveness of the apparatus of oppression is our concern. Such recognition depends on the idea of subject who will perceive its alienation and then overcome distorted representation of it. It teaches that 'subject' needs education and understanding to overcome this. It calls for radical response to the repressive institutional policies. This, we see power of the dominated class as being continually articulated on knowledge, that is, knowledge of how to read, decipher and interrogate constructions, and also resist the power and political practice that subjugate them perpetually for the dominant class.

Power and Politics in *Àbíkú Solóògùn Dèké*

Àbíkú Solóògún Dèké is an expression of the systemic lived experiences of the Yorùbá. It reflects on the period when traditional religion and the spiritual leaders wielded power, and when there was a prevalence of lineage and kinship ties in Yorùbá society. The belief in the existence of the ancestors; the òkú ọ̀run, makes everybody strive to join the ancestors after death. The ideas constructed around lineage and kinship ties make child bearing a paramount factor in any marriage relationship. The importance attached to child-bearing is expressed in the following sayings:

> *Ọmọ lèrè ìgbeyàwó, orí jọ́mọ ó sin wá.*
> *Ọmọ ọ̀mọ́ ọ̀sìn, ọmọ niyùn, ọmọ nidẹ, kò sí láṭẹ, olówó kò rí i rà.*
>
> the reward of marriage is child bearing,
> Children, the prized thing, the valuable coral bead, the bronze, not commodity that the rich can purchase.

These age old beliefs make children a form of power to those who have them. In this type of setting, childlessness becomes a curse. The idea is to replicate oneself for the continuity of one's lineage. Infant mortality is attributed to the handwork of the belligerent enemy of human beings. The belief was that *àbíkú* child lurks around, ready to come to the world again and again.

The desire for children that will survive the main character of *Àbíkú Solóògún Dèké*, Sùnmọ́nù, forms the core

theme of this play-text. He associates childlessness with poverty and makes his choice or takes decision based on the social beliefs surrounding the importance of child-bearing in Yoruba land. The use of the name Ọmọníósinmí tells readers the kind of anxiety, fear and tension that we are likely to come across in the middle of the play. We are anxious to know if his desire for children is actualised. The character expresses the Yorùbá ideology about childlessness in a moving speech as stated below

Sùnmọ́nù: *Ẹni ní owó tí kò lọ́mọ.*
Owó olówó ló ni
Ẹni kọ́lé tí kò bímọ.
Ilé onílé ló kọ́
Ẹni ralẹ tí kò lọ́mọ
Ilẹ onílẹ ló rà (o.i: 30)

Sùnmọ́nù: Whoever is wealthy without children.
The wealth is somebody else's.
Whoever owns a house without children.
The house is somebody else's.
Whoever owns landed property without children.
The land is somebody else's (p.30)

Sùnmọ́nù and Raliatu his wife, run from pillar to post to find lasting solution to the torments of the "àbíkú" child. They seek the able assistance of different herbalists; Adáríológbòṣoògùn, Ṣẹ̀gbẹ̀jì Ajíṣanyìn-níṣẹ́ and Òjíkùtù–bárá-ọ̀run-sọ̀rọ̀ each time the wife conceives and gives birth. Sùnmọ́nù begs Adáríológbòṣoògùn the herbalist, to perform the feat of resuscitating Gbékúdè, his dying son, thus:

> Sùnmọ́nù: *Wa ṣe iṣẹ́ ọwọ́ rẹ. Gbà mí. Jọ̀wọ́ gbà mí! Ma jẹ n bóṣì kú. Jọ̀wọ́ jọ́mọ ó sin mí* (o.i:7).
>
> Sùnmọ́nù: Come and perform your skill. Help me, please. Don't let me die in poverty. Please let my child bury me (p.7).

The plea for deliverance is based on the divine power associated with the priests, the power is the prerogative of a selected few who have knowledge in herbs, incantations and divinatory poetry in the society. Their voices constitute the voices of the gods. Each of them boasts of his knowledge. The first herbalist, Adáríológbòṣoògùn, confidently asserts as follows:

> Adáríológbòṣoògùn: *Irọ́ ni ọmọ yẹn ò lè lọ ni ẹ̀ẹ̀kan yìí. Ṣé gbogbo ìgbà tí ó ti ń ku kì í bá mi nílé. Èyí ṣojú mi ná* (o.i:7).
>
> Adáríológbòṣoògùn: It is a lie, that child cannot die this time around. All periods he has been dying, I am not always at home (p.7).

He gives the family the hope of resuscitating the dying baby if the father can make necessary sacrifice. Despite all sacrifice, the baby dies. The event is used to interrogate the institutional beliefs about the traditional medicine in stemming the tide of infant mortality in the preliterate period.

Owólabí shows that the Ifá divinatory verses usually chanted by the babaláwo provide a link between the event that

occurred in the past and the problem at hand, but he chooses to expose the guess work involved in consultation with an herbalist. When Òjíkùtù who is supposed to see the hidden past and the unknown future chants Ifa divination poetry to interpret the problem of his clients, the verses he chants provide no link with childlessness or torment of 'àbíkú'. Aríkúyẹ́rí, Sùnmọ́nù's friend, calls him to order that he has gone off the track:

> Aríkúyẹ́rí: *Baba ẹ ti bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí sọ ohun tí kò bá nǹkan ti a bá wá mu (o.i:16).*
> Aríkúyẹ́rí: Elder, you have started saying what is outside the scope of our request (p.16).

Despite all efforts made at sacrificing and propitiating the power behind 'àbíkú', the child continuously dies to show the belief in 'àbíkú' is false. Another friend of the protagonist, Jọọnu, a Christian, is used to interrogate the traditional belief. He comments on the herbalist's practice of cheating Sùnmọ́nù. He expresses shock not over the death of Gbékúdè, but over Adáríológbòṣoògùn's callousness in collecting huge sum and material goods from Sùnmọ́nù. The exploitation is possible because of the importance attached to children. He shows that religious belief constitutes cold command.

The play shows that the specialised knowledge of the herbalist can be abused. It is easy for the few initiated knowledgeable groups to exploit the ignorance of the uninitiated group. Sometime, they give distorted information

due to selfish reasons or ignorance, in which case they oppress the people without power. People like Sùnmọ́nù, his family and friends are subjected to different kinds of exploitation. Each time such child is being expected, they are at the mercy of the custodian of the indigenous medical knowledge, who at times oppresses them with impunity. The author scrutinises this oppressive application of spiritual power in *Àbíkú Solóògùn Dèké*.

The play shows how the herbalist in need invokes that people with calamity should come to him. Òjíkùtù in appeasing the gods for blessing says

> Òjíkùtù: *Ifá mi akòkokolókun,.. o ṣeun o. Ṣé ìwọ lò ń ṣe é tí mo fi ń yó. Ohun tí ajá yóó jẹ èṣù ní ṣe é, Ohun tí Ifá ó jẹ, alámodi ní pèsè rẹ̀. Pèsè fún mi, Ọrúnmìlà, pèsè o (oi: 23).*
>
> Òjíkùtù: My Ifa, which I met as the Olókun (goddess of the seas)...thank you, it is you that kept me fed, it is you who cloth me with the best. Èṣù provides what the dog eats. People afflicted with sickness provide what Ifá will eat. Bring my provision Ọ̀rúnmìlà (p. 23).

The play shows that the priests make false demands. At the naming ceremony of the 'àbíkú' child, named Gbékúdè in Act Three Scene One, the apprentice, Akótinúewúrẹ́jiyán displays the gluttonous nature of the oppressive group. His songs depict the initiated class deserve better part of the food being served at

the ceremony (p. 36). Sálísù, the apprentice of Ifá, choruses it in Ifá lyrics:

Ifá ò fẹ́ ẹyẹlé
Ifá kò f'ádìẹ...
Òbúkọ onírùngbọ̀n yèùkẹ̀ ni Ifá ń wá.
Ifá ló ní o mẹ́dọ̀ yìí jẹ,
Ọ̀mẹ́dọ̀nmẹ́dọ̀ (o.i: 23, 25).

Ifá rejects eagrets
Ifá rejects chicks
A big he-goat with beards is what Ifá desires
Ifá grants you this piece of liver (pp. 23, 25).

One is not surprised that Sùnmọ́nù Ọmọníósinmí lavishes money on securing a fruitful future. His ideology is "kọ́mọ ó ṣá ti yè" (let child survive), and his action validates this. He justifies his actions for indulging in the three faiths and lavishing money on securing a fruitful future. Sùnmọ́nù, who claims to be a Muslim, discloses as follows:

Sùnmọ́nù: *Émi Sùnmọ́nù Ọmọníósinmí,*
Èmi abágbàgbọ́ jẹ bí ẹni mọ'Bíbélì í kà.
Èmi ayàbàrá b'ónímàle dáwákà bí ẹní kọrin awo
Mo bá onífá dá ifá títí mo mọ ifá dá,
Mo bọlọsanyìn ṣọ̀sanyìn títí mo mohùn ọ̀sanyìn
Mo bẹ́lẹ́bọ gbé ẹbọ sí ibi ẹbọ yẹ
Nítorí kín ni,... ebí nítorí kí n le rí ọmọ gbé mi sin ni
Ẹ má bá mi wí o....

Ohun ti ẹ bá mi ṣe ni àdúràa k'Édùmàrè jẹ́ kọ́mọ ó gbẹ̀yìn mi (oi: 30-31)

> Sùnmọ́nù: I, Sùnmọ́nù Ọmọníósinmí, I, who eat with the Christian like someone who can read the Bible well. I, who sing with the Muslim, as if singing a cultist song. I divined with the diviner until I become a diviner. I joined the spiritists in consulting the spirit until I became grounded in the lores of the spirit world. I joined them in sacrificing at the proper places. Why?... it is all in effort to have a child to bury me, Do not accuse me I am only being pushed by my destiny. What I need from you is prayer from Almighty God for a child to survive me (30-31).

The author draws this image of Sùnmọ́nù for a purpose. His intention is to interrogate institutional beliefs in religious and family ideological apparatuses which take part in the formation of power. This play-text shows socio-economic change paved the way for new ideologies about the power of *àbíkú* and those believed to be powerful or knowledgeable in the act of tying them down.

The judge uses new knowledge in medical sciences and faiths in Islam and Christianity to unmask the lies of the herbalist oppressors. He demythologises the constructions about 'àbíkú' children. He affirms confidence in prayer and orthodox medicine. He encourages Sùnmọ́nù to find solution to his

problem in the hospitals so that his children will not die again (61-62). Sùnmọ́nù, not satisfied with the court verdict that Ṣẹ̀gbẹ̀jí should return every material he collected, finds means of assassinating Ṣẹ̀gbẹ̀jí. After due investigation, Sùnmọ́nù and his accomplices face the firing squad for taking law into their hands. Events move from private arena to the public (political) arena. Institutions of the state like the police force, the court of law and counselors are introduced at the end of the first fight between Sùnmọ́nù and Ṣẹ̀gbẹ̀jí to show that power operates at all levels. They all take bribe from both parties with a promise to favour them in court. He uses this to expose a society riddled with corruption. Owólabí frowns at the use of power for exploitation oppression.

Power and Politics in *Àtàrí Àjànàkú*

The theory of New Historicism calls for the analysis of the social forces that surround a text, particularly the power structure. The theme of a work is the author's perception about the world, life or human situation. Láwuyì Ògúnníran's thesis is explicit from the beginning of the play. He is concerned with the religious and historical ideologies that inscribe the rulers and elders with power. According to Foucalt (1979) and Althusser (2013), ideology is an essential factor necessary for reproduction of power relation. It provides the structure of thought that affects how the various cities and sub-groups

solidify their identities and plot their politics. The divine status kings enjoy is derived from the Yorùbá's belief in the active existence of the deceased ancestors, who act in conjunction with 'Òrìṣà' to aid man.

Religious account of creation of the world and the founding of Ilé-Ifẹ̀ inscribes Òrìṣàálá and Odùduwà with power. The status of 'òrìṣà' is transferred to Odùduwà's children who spread the legacy of divine kingship across the land. The play-text shows that religious ideological apparatus that institutes political power install rulers and back them with historical constructions. Paramount rulers constantly refer to historical facts to affirm their authority and power. Literature enlivens the beliefs, myth and history.

> Aláàfin: *Àwọn baba mi ló tẹlẹ̀ yìí dó. Tẹ̀tú, mú idà Ọ̀ràànmíyàn baba mi kí o lọ gbé e dúró gangan lẹ́yìn àwọn wọ̀nyí... bóyá idà Aláàfin yóò jẹ́ jẹ wọ́n (oi: 102).*
> *...Ogún tí mo jẹ lọ́dọ̀ àwọn baba ńlá mi ni ìjọba ńlá yìí .. Ọmọ àlè níí ba ogún baba rẹ̀ jẹ́, èmi yóò tún tèmi ṣe ni (o.i.: 108)*
>
> Aláàfin: My forefathers founded this land. Tẹ̀tú holds the sword of Ọ̀ranyan, my forbearers behind these people... maybe the sword of Aláàfin will consume them (*oi: 102)*..
> ...This large empire is my inheritance from my forbearers. Only a bastard will destroy his inheritance, I will redeem my own (p. 108).

The people whose forbearers participated in founding the community promote lineage aristocracy. These few privileged groups dominate others. Power resides within the enclave of such lineages who constitute the dominant class. The throne is their birth right. This ideology circulates the notion about divine or sacred nature of power. It circulates, reaffirms and reconfirms the identity and power of the dominant class. It relates the fictional narrative to the factual world and actual experience. The king's exposition functions as assertion of power. Everybody agrees to the practice of progenitors bequeathing power to their descendants, and the privileged group guides it jealously.

Even the dominated group accepts these facts and guides the long cherished values that constitute cold command in order to leave the world the way they met it. Thus, the elders of Gbáńdú rationalise that their forefathers have always been subjects under the king, and they will not be the ones to change the status quo. They gladly subjugate themselves to Aláàfin and even condone subservience from Ìlàrí, who, according to tradition, serves as the voice and eyes of the king in a subordinate town. Baálẹ̀ declares for Aláàfin's representative thus,

> Baálẹ̀: *Ọmọ abẹ́ yin ni àá ṣe, a kò ní ta yín lẹ́nu gẹ́gẹ́ bí àwọn Baba wa kì í tií ta yín lẹ́nu (o.i: 7)*

> Baálẹ̀: We are under your authority, we will not challenge your authority, as our forefathers did not (p.7).

The chiefs exhibit the desire of the privileged group to continue enjoying the legacy that society bestowed to their lineage. The chiefs of Gbáńdú, Baálẹ̀, Ìyálóde and Òsì express their desire to bequeath power to their children. They speak in the same voice as seen below:

> Ìyálóde: *Ká lò ó pẹ́ tí tí tí.....Ká fi lé ọmọ lọ́wọ́ (o.i: 11)*
>
> Ìyálóde: May we continue to hold power for long and may we bequeath it to our children. (p.11).

This play-text shows that hierarchical power exists at different levels. The structure put in place by the society for social cohesion is being misused by the privileged group at all levels. Even though the king of Ọ̀yọ́ who stands for the overall ruler in *Àtàrí Àjànàkú* is not present in any event of oppression, his agents of oppression are Ìlàrí and Tẹ̀là; Tẹ̀là is the crown prince, who desires Fọlárìn's wife and takes her by force. He maims Fọlárìn for daring to challenge him. No other person but the king can chastise him. When the case is brought before Aláàfin, the King can only chastise him for not guiding the royal lineage inheritance. The Ìlàrí collects tribute forcefully in the name of the king.

The character used to interrogate the king's power is the village head of Gbáńdú. Baálẹ refers to the expanse of land under Aláàfin's jurisdiction that is generating income for the overall head of the Yorùbá land to justify why he should also enjoy the same privilege. Therefore, the ruling class feels the populace must be made to produce everything they need. The elders of Gbáńdú who double as the rulers are able to further their personal interest by subjugating themselves under the representative of Aláàfin. They lament their poor economic condition and unite to exploit the masses physically and financially in a meeting. The leaders put it in clear language that they should not lack anything as rulers (o.i:7, 11-13).

At the beginning of the play, the author chooses to use Gòǹgòbíàgbà as the agent of interrogation. He challenges the idea of using ancestral lineage and age for assigning power. He creates Gòǹgòbíàgbà with leadership qualities like charisma, intelligence, boldness and truthfulness. The youth possesses the qualities, but he cannot act like one. He is not supposed to sit with elders in council. The people of Gbáńdú recognise these qualities in Gòǹgòbíàgbà and choose the youth to represent them at a council meeting. Baálẹ's comment depicts the limitation imposed on Gòǹgòbíàgbà as a youth.

> Baálẹ: (*kọjú sí Gòǹgòbíàgbà*) *Pẹ̀lẹ́ o ọmọ mi,*
> *ìwọ ọmọdé kékeré yìí ni ìlú rán wá síbi ayẹyẹ*
> *pàtàkì bí irú eléyìí*

Gòǹgòbíàgbà: *(ó dọ̀bálẹ̀) Kẹ́ẹ pẹ́ baba, ìlú rí i pé mo kún ojú ìwọ̀n ni wọ́n ṣe rán mi wá (o.i: 3).*

Baálẹ̀: (turns to Gòǹgòbíàgbà) Greetings my child, the community sends you little boy to represent them at this important occasion.
Gòǹgòbíàgbà: (prostrating) May you live long your highness, the community send me because they find me competent (p. 3).

The group of returnees from foreign land, who have socialised with foreign culture are the new breeds that have been influenced by foreign ideologies and philosophy.

Baálẹ̀: *Eléèdi lọmọ yìí o!... ọlọ̀tẹ̀ ọmọ ni wọn lóòótọ́. .. Gòǹgò burúkú yìí náà sì ni olórí wọn... .Awọn ọmọdé, pàápàá àwọn tó ṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ tì ilẹ̀ àjèji dé ló wà nínú ọtẹ̀ náà. Àwa àgbàlagbà ni wọ́n fẹ́ bá jà (o.i: 37)*

Baálẹ̀: This boy is accursed, they are truly rebels, *Gòǹgò* is their leader. Specifically returnees from foreign land are behind this plot. We elders are the target of their protest.

The thesis of a work is the author's assertion about the world or the human situation. The author of *Àtàrí Àjànàkú* is concerned about issues of good leadership. The selection of the characters is symbolic. The author highlights the qualities of good governance from the characters of Ọ̀tún and Etíọ́bákún the dead Ìlàrí. The two are the custodians of true culture. They are

caring, loving and compassionate. According to Foucault, power is not synonymous with oppression, but with knowledge. Ògúnníran uses Gòǹgòbíàgbà to extol their virtues. He eulogises Etíọbákún for his positive impact on the life of the common man as follows:

> Gòǹgòbíàgbà: *Èèyàn ree ni Ìlàrí to kú. K'Ọlọun bá ni dẹlẹ f'éèyàn re, k'ó bá ni mú èèpẹ̀ búburú kú'ò lójú rẹ̀. Ó ṣe ìwọn tó lè ṣe nígbà tó wà lọ́dọ̀ wa. Kò f'ara ni ìlú, kò gbà kí wọ́n f'ìyà jẹ mẹ̀kúnnù. Àjàgà rẹ̀ fúyẹ, olùgbèjà ará ìlú sì níí ṣe. A sì ní ìrètí pé ẹ ó ṣe jù bẹ́ẹ̀ lọ fún wa (o.i: 7).*

> Gòǹgòbíàgbà: The late Ìlàrí was good natured, may God make his grave comfortable, and make his passage to heaven easy. He did his best when he was alive. He made the town comfortable, he did not allow the people to suffer, he was an easy going leader, he protected the people as well. We hope you will bring more benefits for us (p.7).

However, the elders and rulers of Gbáńdú hold a different view. Baálẹ̀ and Sériki are the characters used to give a contrasting view of the virtues listed above. They lament how the late Ìlàrí deprived them of enjoying their rights as rulers, Sériki describes him as *Olórí kọ̀gùnnù* (one with bent head-whose thinking faculty is faulty), and Baálẹ̀ says:

> Baálẹ̀: *...Olóríburúkú rẹ̀, lọ́nà ọ̀run, ló sọ àwa ìjòyè ìlú di ẹdun arinlẹ̀... (o.i: 2)*

Ńṣe ló ba ọla wa jẹ́, ó tẹ̀ wá mẹ́rẹ̀, ó sì gba gbogbo oúnjẹ tí àwa ọlọ́la máa ń jẹ lọ́wọ́ wa porongodo- ìhòhò kolobo ló jù wá sí báyìí (o.i: 7).

Baálẹ̀: The vagabond, condemned in death turned us into miserable leaders (p. 2).
He turned our greatness to misfortune, depriving us of the rights enjoyed by dominant class, he stripped us naked (p. 2).

To this crop of leaders, power is synonymous with oppression; they use the privilege to subjugate and suppress the followership. Among the bad eggs, Chief Ọ̀tún distinguishes himself from the beginning of the play to the end. He warns them against any act of wickedness and the repercussion such as follows:

Ọ̀tún: ...*Ẹ̀yin èèyàn wa. Ẹ jẹ́ ká ṣọ́ra, ká má ṣe di ẹrù wúwo lé ará ìlú lórí. Ẹ rántí pé, 'àrùn tí ń ṣogójì ní ń ṣe ọ̀ọ́dúnrún. Ohun tí ń ṣ'abọ́yadé, gbogbo ọlọ́ya ní ń ṣe. ẹ jẹ́ ká ṣọ́ra láti fi àjàgà wúwo bọ arán ìlú lọrùn kí á má baà ba ìlú jẹ́. Ẹ má torí 'èèkù-idà tí ìlàrí alááàfin fún yin ṣe ńńkan láìrò ó jinlẹ̀. Ẹ rántí pé 'abánidá a kì í bá ni tán-an.* (p.12).

Ọ̀tún: Our people, lets be careful not to overburden the community. Remember that, we all feel the burden of poor economy. Let's be careful not to destroy the land. Do not exercise power without thinking of the

> repercussion. Remember, those who encourage evil do not shoulder it (p.12).

He is the only one who admits that the allegations of oppression levied against the rulers by the youths are true to the disgust of elders.

Ògúnníran frowns at the practice of using age and birth to assign power. Gòǹgòbíàgbà puts it bluntly that it is a matter of coincidence that some lineages are rulers; others have sacrificed far more for the society than the ruling class. The political class requires the knowledge and expertise of such groups for their sustenance. The efforts of the other groups like warriors, hunters, youths and even ordinary slaves sustain the society. Aláàfin cannot do without them. Therefore, the question of superiority of rulers over these groups should not arise. The point is that the powerful groups are sustained by the blood and sweat of the masses.

Ògúnníran's assertion is that when a group is not given the chance to be relevant; the experience of such group is genuinely frustrating. This makes them live with the intent to correct such "error" once they have the opportunity to do so. The complication in this play reaches a climax when the youths are not given the chance to be relevant. Aláàfin stresses this diplomacy in the lines below:

> Aláàfin: *Tí jeyínjeyín bá ń jẹ wọn léyín, wọn a ní Àtàrí àjànàkú kì í ṣẹrù ọmọdé. Ta labàyà*

gbàngbà tó le gb'ájànàkú rù? Àtàrí àjànàkú l'Ayé yìí jẹ́, Ẹnìkan ṣoṣo kò lè gbé e. Àtèwe – Àtàgbà ló le gb'ájànàkú rù. Ẹyin èwe ìwòyí, Ọwọ́ yín kò tó pẹpẹ. Bẹ́ẹ̀ ni t'ẹyin àgbà kò wọ'kèngbè. Bá a m'ọ́gbọ́n àgbà kínún Ká sì mú tèwe pẹ̀lú, Onikálùkù wọn ló ní'hun,tó le ṣe f'áyé wọn (o.i: 119).

Aláàfin: When people are afflicted with tooth ache, they say the head of an elephant is not the load for youths. Who is the one that is strong and bold enough to carry the elephant alone. This world is the head of an elephant. No single person can carry it. Only the combined effort of youths and elders can lift it up. You youth of today, your hand cannot reach the rafter. In the same vain, the elders' cannot enter the gourd. If we combine the elders' wisdom with the youths', they will complement each other (p. 119).

The argument here is that the place of the youth in our democratic space is jeopardised when the elite in our state decide to model our government after a 'gerontocracy'- government by the, and for the elderly (Ribadu, 2013).

Representation of Power and Politics by Olú Owólabí and Lawuyi Ògúnníran: Convergence and Divergence

The two artists demonstrate that ideologies are socially and linguistically constructed by the society to perform specific functions within a network of power relations in the society.

They are constructed to institute divine theory of power to promote social cohesion in Yorùbá society. Every group or individual has the opportunity to misuse power. The privileged groups engage in oppressive application of such power. Those that have the opportunity and refuse to do so are good people, like the Ọ̀tún of Gbẁńdú and the deceased Ìlàrí in *Àtàrí Àjànàkú*. The message is about the travail of the dominated class (youths and the uninitiated groups), and the triumph of the dominant class. They present power in the usual way, that is, as sacred. They construct a powerful sacred identity for the dominant class; thus, leaders, elders and initiated group are represented as divine, while they construct powerlessness and voicelessness for the dominated group.

From the perspective of New Historicism, discourses are mere construction that subdue dominated group. Any form of domination brings deviance; hence revolt is common to the two play-texts. New knowledge; religion and science raise the consciousness of individuals and groups to challenge the institutional discourses. The two authors adopt different literary styles to interrogate institutional ideologies about power through events and characterisation. They both adopt traditional aesthetics for their literary communication.

Owólabí uses straight plane prose style sprinkled with proverbs to accentuate his points. He employs appropriate Ifa divinatory poetry and incantations to create awe around the

priests of the deities and satirises deceitful herbalists. Òjíkùtù chants to diagnose Sùnmọ́nú's problem as follows:

Kí á lọ abẹ kó mu, kí ó le báa tó orí íjá
Kí á lọ èédú wùrùwùrù kí ó le báa tó agbàwẹ̀ kùn
Kí á ran èjìkò gbùrùgùdù kí ó le tó òkú mú rọ̀run...(o.i: 13)

Let us file the knife so that its sharp edge will shave hair
Let us ground charcoal so that its powder will be enough for the person fasting
Let us make the big size of the funeral cloth so that it can suffice the dead (p. 13)

The verses insinuate that the child will die; yet the priest goes ahead to collect sacrificial materials.

In naming his characters, the author employs word-play. The 'àbíkú' child is Àmínù, his father is Sùnmọ́nù. Both names end with the sound 'nù' to depict 'loss'. He also plays on the name Gbékúdè given to the child by the herbalists to interrogate the belief that herbalists can tie 'àbíkú' child. Sùnmọ́nú's friends discuss other means of preventing the death of another baby as follows:

Aríkúyẹ́rí: *Èmí mọ babaláwo mìíràn tí ó le de ọmọ Sùnmọ́nù.*
Jọ̀ọ́nù: *Dídè báwo? Ṣe dídè pẹ̀lú ẹ̀wọ̀n ni tàbi pẹ̀lú okùn ìjàrá tí àwọn Fúlàní fi ń wọ́ màálúù yẹn? Bi wọ́n tilẹ̀ dè é mọ́ igi kò tún ràn án mọ ẹ́ni ti kú ti lọ* (o.i:10).

> Aríkúyęrí: I know another herbalist who can tie Sunmọnu's child.
> Jọ́ọ́nù: Tie him as how? Is it tieing with chain or with special rope that the Fulani use in dragging cow? Even if he is tied to a tree, it is no more effective, the dead has gone (p.10).

The repetition of 'dè' corresponds with Gbékúdè, the baby's name. It is a joke that serves the function of relieving the tension of multiple deaths in the play. The tittle of the play is a Yorùbá axiom that confirms the helplessness of the herbalist over "àbíkú". Rather than herbalist overpowering the "àbíkú" child, "àbíkú" successfully turns them into liars.

While Owólabí uses straight plane prose style, Ògúnníran demonstrates good knowledge of proverbial language. The title of the play-text is coined in a proverb, *Àtàrí àjànàkú kì í ṣẹrù ọmọdé*, which puts a limitation on what the youth can do in the society. All events and characters in the play are used to deconstruct the myth surrounding age; youths can perform better than elders who are greedy.

Another Yorùbá proverb the play interrogates is *Erin kì í ṣọn, k'ọ́mọ rẹ̀ náà ṣọn* (The Elephant and its calf do not blow their trumpets simultaneously). The play is used to show that ideological change has occurred when Baálẹ̀ laments:

> Baálẹ̀: *Ìyẹn ni pé kí erin máá ṣọn, k'ọ́mọ rẹ̀ náà ṣọn ló kù? Ǹjẹ́ kò ha doódì kí baba máa sọ páṣẹ dọwọ́ ọmọ òun lọ́run?*

Baálẹ̀: Does that mean the elephant and its calf will be blowing their trumpets at the same time?

The youths constitute a threat to elders who are not receptive to change. They are not only ready to force the elders out of the land, but actually eliminate them.

Apart from piling up proverbs in his characters' speech, Ògúnníran dramatises a number of proverbs in a play within this play to emphasise the thesis of the play, which is that, no group is an island. All groups need to complement each other. Some of the proverbs dramatised are:

Ọwọ́ ọmọdé ò tó pẹpẹ, tàgbà o wọ kèrègbè
Ọmọdé níṣẹ́ àgbà níṣẹ́ la fi dá Ilé Ifẹ̀
A child's hand cannot reach the roof unassisted, while an elder's hand is too big to enter the gourd's mouth,
Ilé Ifẹ̀ was founded on acknowledgement of division of labor between youths and elders.

Ògúnníran adopts the folkloric motif, theme and characters about power misuse in the animal kingdom to drive the morals about oppression home. His style enhances the plot structure and language use.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper identifies different forms and formations of power in *Àbíkú Solóògùn Dèké and Àtàrí Àjànàkú*. It shows that formation of power is through ideologies rooted in religion, and

that ideologies work through persuasion as state apparatus. Religion institutes hierarchical power structure that makes lineage ancestors a powerful force. Owólabí concerns himself with religion as it institutes supernatural power. He deconstructs the belief or power attached to "Àbíkú" to show that no form of power is permanent. We must not hold any idea as everlasting truth. Ògúnníran shows that religion reinforces history to strengthen the authority of the dominant class. All these give room to oppressive application of power. However, contact with external culture that brought new knowledge in religion and education has changed the Yorùbá world view about power.

The paper shows that there is relationship between discourse (socio-cultural constructs like history and literature), power and politics as depicted by Láwuyì Ògúnníran and Olú Owólabí in their dramatic recreations of Yorùbá social and political experiences. The paper concludes that the study of literature with the use of appropriate theory like New Historicism provides a foundation for academic knowledge and as avenue for mastering power. It will teach how most writings constitute cold command. It will further teach the act of resisting such cold command. It is useful to decipher journalistic, legal, historical and political reports. Religious report can also be scrutinised in a way that will open believers' eyes to the lies or truth used in subjecting them to any kind of oppression.

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