The Abjections of the New Man in Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man*

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Abstract
Scholarly interests in the field of Law and Literature are burgeoning. Nonetheless, prevailing studies on the law in Nigerian literature focus more on reconnaissance, ethics, delinquency and retribution. Not much has been done on the social tempers enabling abjections that infract the law. This study examines the factors of abjections in Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man* with a view to positioning them as the harbingers of contravention. Jean Francois Lyotard's Postmodernism and Kristeva's *Abjection* are used to justify the reasons behind the aberrant reactions by the victims of oppression in the novel. Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man* is privileged herein for its reflections on legal concerns in the Nigerian milieu. The novel is subjected to literary analysis to identify the characters' reasons for abjection. Dysfunctional political and religious leadership, injustice, and corruption are identified as some social tempers of abjection in the novel. While the compliant Ayo tries to uphold and enforce the rule of law, the defiant characters do everything within their powers to flout the law. Sadly, they are often able to win over the hitherto compliant Ayo. The new man, Ayo Badejo, becomes a victim of the iconoclastic vortex of his time and society. The paper concludes that Femi Ademiluyi, through his novel, cautions against behavioural dispositions that are capable of undermining the rule of law.

Keywords: Subversion, dispositions, law, Nigerian milieu, abjections

Introduction
African literature has the conceptual facilities to explore the utilitarianism of Law and Literature in Nigeria and African in general. As Ayo Kehinde (2008) argues, "Nigerian writers have always found the informing vision of their creativity bound by the socio-political experiences of the nation, which their works both reflect and refract" (334). African creative writings are emblematic of the art for life's sake ideology. While aesthetics is encouraged in African literature, its utilitarian function is foregrounded and positioned systematically to mirror the myriads of socio-political challenges facing the African continent. Thinking in this direction, Kehinde goes on to assert that, "it is assumed that literary texts are a valuable locus for studying the interplay of arts and politics; literary works offer an interrogative epic of Nigeria's political history over the past 46 years" (334). Therefore, the firmness and Western origin of Law and Literature have necessitated a conscious and deliberate domestication that is built within a functional literariness designed basically to explore existing topicalities in the African cultural, economic, religious, and political contexts. The need for this deliberate experimentation is mainly emphasised by the burgeoning number of existential challenges facing the African continent. The conspicuous dysfunction of most political and social systems in Africa points both overtly and covertly at abjections arising from social discomfort. Societal progress and development are built on the principles of law, and the law, itself, is an essential

factor that is designed mainly for moral symphony and behavioural decency in every society.

Hence, the retardation that is glaring in Nigeria and indeed Africa today is symbolic of the people's disillusionment with the law and its operational agents. Operational agents of law—leaders, law makers, judges, and security agencies—are usually the direct harbingers of this disillusionment, as this novel will show. Postcolonial disillusionment, in the view of Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu, is the result of:

> Such gory experiences as the slave-trade, the colonial domination, the disappointing post-independence leadership, the carnage of the civil war, military dictatorship and general socio-political anomie, can be said to provide a rough and chequered definition of the Nigerian socio historical experience which has naturally given birth to a national literature of same complexion (57).

The people who are the natural subjects of law often look up to the operational agents of the law for purposeful and quality leadership and disposition in accordance with the rule of law but what they often receive is blatant impunity. Consequently, in search of meaning, human rights, existential identity, and social security, many of these Africans become victims of forced migration caused by economic sabotage and mismanagement of public funds, trafficking, bribery, corruption, cyber-fraud, illicit drugs, armed robbery, and prostitution. These pull and push factors have a gravitational effect that is negatively electrifying, pulling and pushing both the moral will and self-dignity of their victims. Had the rule of law which guarantees their fundamental human rights been enforced and obeyed, this tragedy would have been averted.

In addition, the gradual depreciation of much cherished African mores such as love for African languages, greeting, respect, honesty, diligence, hospitality, belief in God/gods, and patriotism is no doubt also a resultant effect of the abjections. Rallies and campaigns launched by concerned activists to demand quality governance in most African countries are usually crushed with the power of the camouflage, baton and gun. As a form of protest, many African writers have chosen to imbue their works with these existential concerns and achieve through literature that which cannot be achieved in real life. Hence, the relationship between Literature and Law is not only utilitarian but also fluid and aesthetic. As Nicole Thompson (2012) argues, "What is clear is that law and literature come together in various ways" (1).

This paper examines the social tempers enabling abjections in the behaviour of the characters in Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man*. In order to do this, it seeks to, first, analyse the subversive methods used by the characters in the novel; and, second, to identify and study the social tempers responsible for contravention. Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man* is privileged in this study because it is imbued with legal issues. Francois Lyotard's Postmodernism and Kristeva's *Abjection* are used to justify the reasons behind the aberrant reactions by the victims of oppression in the novel. Fran Mason in his *Historical Dictionary of Postmodernist Literature and Theatre*, defines postmodernism as "deconstruction; fragmentation, and decentralization" (xxxi – xxxii). Postmodernism theorises that "truth" and "reality" do not exist as objective

forms (Mason xxxi – xxxii). Hence, truth and reality are subject to the emotive and eccentric nature of individuals. In Lyotard's postmodern thinking, truth is an individual's local narrative against the grand/metanarratives constructed in societal laws, customs, knowledge-system, history, and experience. It is how an individual feels about the law.

Most of the characters in the selected text construct their own definitions of law (truth) and by so doing wear the psychological toga of abjection. They decide to choose what laws to obey and what laws not to obey. This is indeed a postmodern attitude which privileges the primacy of the individual as a subjective factor in defining truth. The law is seen by most of the characters as a hegemonic structure, hence, their recalcitrant protests. Kristeva's ideation of abjection in her *Powers of Horror* is the human reaction or awful poise to the imminent dysfunctionality of meaning or law. This reaction is caused by the obscurity of the difference between relational imperatives – truth and falsehood, corruption and honesty, law and chaos, sanity and insanity. With the characters losing this sense of difference which should ordinarily position them for commitment and patriotism, the result is chaos and defiance.

Of Law and Scorn: A Legal Metamorphosis

Femi Ademiluyi's *The New Man* is an existential narrative premised on the decadence that perverts the socio-political landscape of Nigeria. In exploring this weird and unfortunate reality, Ademiluyi depicts man's insubordination and defiance towards the law. He poses a challenging moral question to the reader, is it possible to be right in the land of the wrong? While he expects the reader's answer, he gives an empirical answer that tickles our curiosity. He submits that our socio-political experiences have refused to give way to the true Nigerian experience. He encourages us to wake up from our moral slumber as our present experience is only but a definition of our colonial legacies.

The phrase, "The New Man" can be deciphered from two main perspectives. It could mean a stranger who comes into the community of Ipaja as a totally different person; a new man just ready to do things differently and in his own new ways. On the contrary, it could also refer to personality metamorphosis, the fate of one who sheds his former self for a new one. However one conceives it, it is a phrase depicting abjection in physical and psychic environments.

The novel is divided in three broad parts, namely: "Book One: The Puritans", with twenty three chapters, "Book Two: A Time of Trials" with seventeen chapters and "Book Three: Lord of the Land" with twelve chapters. Each book is a phase that narrates a particular experience in the lives of the characters, especially Ayo Badejo, the main character.

Ademiluyi tells the story of the young Produce Inspector, Ayo Badejo, who is fatefully made a new man in the new community he finds himself, albeit a corrupt one. His determination to change the perverse community for good pushes him into victimhood, a condition that transforms him into a new man amenable to his new environment and contrary to his former self. As a metamorphosed new man, Ayo becomes an unfortunate intricate part of the corrupt system he fights. His disillusionment is captured in the thoughts of A.J. Agho who affirms that, "Postcolonial literature of Africa is replete with the seeds of disillusionment,

disassociation and alienation" (24). Africans are disillusioned about Africa and indeed the law for so many reasons. Ime Ikiddeh suggests that disillusionment ". . . carries with it disappointment in unfulfilled hopes, leading to mixed reactions of frustration, anger, cynicism, even self-contempt. . . ." (136). In reaction to his frustration, Ayo becomes a new man that fights his old man.

Days of Innocence

The novel opens on a wired note with a prophecy from Prophet Elijah Samuel Asejire who foretells the emergence of an evil man that will bring ruin to the village. This evil genius happens to be Ayo Badejo, a twenty-eight-year-old man, who also happens to be the new Produce Inspector posted to serve in Ipaja village. Belief in superstition is at the heart of African cosmology, and perhaps, also immanent in the ancestry of the Western world by way of analogy. The novel is almost a parody of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* which has a similar circumstance of deleterious prophecy. Though mythical, the prophecy says something of the dualistic nature of life, the reality of the good and the bad. Folkloric culture has greatly influenced the ideals of the contemporary world such that the ideation of the contemporary human being is not divorced from the stimuli of the ancient world.

Ayo's growing up has not been an easy one. He perseveres and paddles his academic boat with diligence and determination. In the cause of building his moral philosophy, "Ayo tried to identify his weaknesses and to vanquish them. Only one held out. Now he detested wealth. He worked hard. He studied African history and culture. He felt ready for any challenge. He regarded his posting to Ipaja as a test of his qualities. Corruption was out of the point" (25).

He surmounts all his obstacles and turns himself into a noble child of the law. Having been convinced of this position with respect to the law, Ayo offers himself up as an instrument of propagating the values of law to Ipaja and her people. Many a time, we see compatriots with zeal and commitment to nation-building being disparaged in the process of doing their best to foster growth and development. Martin Luther King Junior, Malcom X, and Nelson Mandela are ready examples. Ayo represents that microscopic few who have the ingrained desire to turn around the fortunes of their fatherland. His would-be predecessor, Mr. Dodowa, introduces him to the modus operandi in Ipaja and advises him to be careful. Ademiluyi has created in Ipaja village some kind of Sodom and put Ayo therein as a fated Messiah. The people welcome him cheerfully with the belief that they have shared sentiments. Ayo equally finds love in Sade, a young lady he meets the day he attends Elijah's church and that meeting marks the beginning of his emotional troubles. Howbeit, his romantic escapades with Sade continue to blossom. Many strong men of character often have a Sade that is positioned to keep them focused and resolved. Ayo's resolve to be an apologist of the law is threatened when he visits the village Head who tells him never to contemplate changing the world. This is clog that change agents usually get from villains who are bent on keeping them down. It is a spurious societal attitude which has kept much of African down. This epistemically languid Head has heard about Ayo's idealistic disposition to life from Layeni, one of the village chiefs:

> Our world is resilient place, son. Have no trust in those who claim that you can change the earth. The world has never changed. It never will. The

> day still breaks in the morning, and darkness continues to descend at night. Cocks still crow at dawn, and fowls will always go home to roost at dusk. The white's man bible is full of wisdom. Did it not say, "As was in the beginning, so is it, and ever shall be, world without end?" Accept it, son. Accept the world. You may laugh or sneer at it, but learn to live with it, too, for only in that way can you have peace. (59)

That is euphemistic because the Village Head talks about their corrupt ways as if they were normal. He uses the metaphor, "change" and a quotation from the Bible to play down the weightiness of the corruption that has become another definition of the town. The immobility of life which the Village Head bases his advice on refers to their ignoble corrupt ways which violate the law, as we will further show. Many African people are down today because they hardly get the right inspiration to move their world. All they often get to hear is, this is our culture, the ways of our forefathers. This traditional cliché is a systemic ploy that lacks the ability to inspire creativity and innovation. It leaves people stuck to the ways of the ancient whose circumstances of life and time are diametrically different from those of the contemporary times. And we wonder why Africans in Africa, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, are not fired up to align with the developmental pace of the Westerners. Rather than align, they mimic in the words of Homi Bha Bha the cultural values of the colonised which only reproduce them as blurred copies of the colonised.

Ayo comes face-to-face with the people's perverse ways one morning when a farmer named Eyeoke comes to his house for the inspection of his theobrama cacao. He thinks it is static business as usual hence, he asks Ayo after the protocols, "what are the conditions" (67)? Shocked at the farmer's question, he replies, "conditions" (67)? On sensing Ayo's shock, Eyeoke goes on to clarify his earlier statement, "the terms, what should I offer for your help? What percentage? Help? Percentage? I mean your assistance. Your cooperation. You promised to inspect my cocoa beans personally. You did" (67)! At this instance of disambiguation, Ayo replies," I will inspect your cocoa. If it is good, I will accept it. If bad, I shall reject it. If you have twelve bags, then it is twelve, nothing more. Good morning, sir"! (67). As this dialogue shows, "conditions" is a metaphorical way of talking about bribery. Eyeoko and his cronies know the position of the law on fraudulent acts but they will rather disobey the law. They create their own version of the law, the truth they are comfortable with. Things are so bad in the village because the previous leader, Produce Inspector, has set a negative precedent for the farmers. They are now finding it difficult to understand what the new leader is saying with his message of change. Ademiluyi, therefore, suggests that leaders are largely responsible for their followers' willingness to obey the law. Many followers look up to their leaders for moral and legal directions. The actions of the leaders in a society, whether good or bad, go a long way in determining the dispositions of the citizenry towards the law. Today, we have African politicians with massive followership who are often manipulated by politicians for selfish gains. A great number of these followers are deliberately kept in ignorance, and poverty so that they can be easily influenced and used to achieve selfish ends whenever the occasion calls. Ayo represents that microcosm that has been be consistently decent in order not to be influenced. Unfortunately, Ademiliyu seems

to be saying that the beautiful ones are not yet born because the few beautiful ones available are easily influenced by the ugly ones.

The Unlawful Adventure

That encounter with Eyeoke happens to be the beginning of many similar experiences for Ayo. Chief Layeni's driver, Jibrin, brings a parcel to Ayo from his boss. Opening it the next morning, he finds fifty pounds, "Eso", a supposed 'argument' to convince Ayo to cooperate with them. Ayo sees this as a very good opportunity to deal a dirty blow at corruption. He heads for the nearest police station at Iwuya but little does he know that the lethal malady has infested all facets of the community. The people are no longer controlled by the societal values established by local and international laws. Their responses to the law are now determined by self-indulgence. Their leaders have learnt corruption from the colonial masters and consequently have taught their people the same; everybody now lives in quandary.

Ademiluyi continues the motif of leadership failure. The leaders in any society determine the moral and legal temper of the people. The police, another tier of government whose duty it is to execute and enforce the law, are equally guilty of abjection. The author presents the reader with an anti-thesis which puts the police on the side of rebellion and the people on the side of decency—this is quite ironical. Of course, the use of the people here refers to that infinitesimal number of individuals who have vowed to remain honourable in the face of dishonour in society. Having been immersed in corruption and illegality over the years, Sergeant J. J Tamuno finds it difficult to understand why an Ipajan will possibly dare to be different. He asks Ayo in utmost amazement, "But do you really mean that you don't want to keep fifty pounds dash?" (87) "Dash", as we see, is another term for bribery. He fails to convince Ayo to act contrary to his convictions especially now that the matter involves their much revered Chief Layeni, "Look, my friend . . . tread softly. Don't insist on getting this matter to court. Leave it to me. In that way, we can make out more money from him. Layeni is a goose that lays the current eggs. Why kill him?" (88), the police officer uses the metaphor "goose" to designate Chief Layeni, another depraved individual.

Ademiluyi in this scenario paints the picture of the so-called untouchable syndrome in Nigeria. Some highly placed individuals are often seen as being above the law hence, the need to always compromise the interpretation of the law in legal matters that concern them. But with Ayo's insistence that justice must be done, the Sergeant has no choice but to reluctantly oblige action if not for any other reason, at least for the sake of his much cherished job. A law enforcement agent suddenly becomes a law infringement agent. He denies that which he has sworn to protect.

Ayo has just begun a herculean fight that often becomes mortal. This is because fighting mature monsters in a dystopia requires quite a great deal of innate stamina over and above the physical one. He has just drawn the battle line and the ferocious mortal and moral combat has begun.

As Ayo fights Chief Layeni's depravity, he also contends with the distraction that is coming from Sade, the love of his life, who passionately pleads that he drops the matter. Layeni, who is eventually arrested in the name of the law, is released on bail while police investigations continue. News about the bribery scandal suddenly reaches the two communities of Ipaja and Iwuya and the well-entrenched old

tradition of corruption rises to the occasion. The police are speechless and weak to act because over the years, they have taught the people of the two communities what corruption is, negatively. The fear of justice and the new man was palpable:

> The Ipaja knew that the litigation could spell doom for Layeni and their efforts to keep an Iwuya man out of the assembly. In an attempt to avoid litigation, they bribe the police to the hilt. The Iwuyas, on the other hand, knew that the litigation was potentially lethal to Layeni's candidacy. They employ many means to ensure that Layeni was prosecuted. Missiles of currency note from both sides clashed on police officers table. One delegation after the other visited police officers at night, bearing priceless gifts. As a result, the policemen were in a dilemma. Wisely, they postponed their decision, resulting in another stampede by each side to outbid the other in Eastern bazaar fashion. (100)

As we may see, the clause "Missiles of currency note from both sides clashed on police officers table" is metaphorical and hyperbolic. The use of "missiles" is a metaphor that suggests the spontaneous influx of money to the police station for various corrupt interests. It is also a gross exaggeration, although used for emphasis, to describe the presentation of money in this manner as a deployment of missiles. It is shameful indeed to see full assemblies of supposed sages from two African communities acting and behaving in the most ruthless and corrupt manner. Fraudulent acts of money laundering and bribery have suddenly become their anthem. For children from communities of this kind, sorry is a kind description for their future. Having been embarrassingly cajoled with grapes from the decadent vineyard, the police find themselves hanging in the balance. The narrator explains this confusion: "Finally sated with money and with the mirth of it all, the police boss struck a compromise. To the Iwuyas, he said: 'The case is going to court, all right.' To the people of Ipaja, he said 'The case is only going to Barry Odje's Native court at Barau. There, you can do and undo'" (100).

We can notice the inconsistency in the police's answers above. The choice of the Barau Native court is welcomed by both parties because the presiding judge, Barry Odje, can easily be influenced and manipulated. This reality of depravity here truly defines a dystopia whose governance institutions are totally dysfunctional. With proceedings under way, Ayo's testimony is deleterious to Layeni as Jubrin admits to the delivery of the bribe. Ironically, the police in their body-related vocabulary argue, "that Layeni's fingerprints were not found on the sac or the currency notes" (101). As part of the illegal plans aptly orchestrated by the key forces of the two communities in conjunction with the police to silence justice, ". . . a hand writing expert found no similarity between Layeni's writing and that in which the note to Ayo was written. Witnesses came in large number to testify to Layeni's sparkling character and sense of honour" (102).

It is ironical that a liable Layeni is described as having a "sparkling character." This shows the extent to which corruption has inhabited the hearts of the people in both villages. For some selfish reasons, they are ready to commit perjury. As proceedings continue and Ayo attends sessions, "the more he seethed with fury. He knew that sacs of currency notes were changing hands, but he could not prove it.

After some time, his attendance at the court session became irregular" (102). Money is personified as it is said to have hands. It is also metaphorical to say "that sacs of currency notes were changing hands," as their fraudulence is being compared to the mechanical and clever nature of the human hands, commanded by a brain. All metaphors related to life become symbols of the authorities' selfish interest.

The aesthetic representation of law is obvious on the Day of Judgment. The court system is conceived based on the principles of the British Common Law but infused heavily with native colour in order to give the inhabitants of the two villages a sense of belonging: "Many people decided that justice was better obtained at the feet of the elders, who charge no fees" (100). For this reason, "The British met them half-way by establishing the Banwuya Native Court, comprising title holders and men of substance, all over the land" (101). However, this creation is done with the principles of the British indirect rule system in mind. Hence, in the light of this background, "drummers and dancers were on hand from both villages. Charm-flaunting witch-doctors recited inaudible incantations. Colourfully dressed masquerades added flavour to the occasion" (103). "Flavour" is a metaphor for excitement and glamour.

As a dramatic process, the law is presented by the author as an exciting and entertaining art despite the tension that often accompanies it. As the judgment is underway, the judge's body gestures are not only suspicious but dramatic:

> Odje spoke slowly, almost in a whisper. He started with a review of the evidence. "Mr. Badejo's testimony" he summed up, "Should be taken with a grain of salt because of his personal interest in the matter." He went on to fault the police for "equivocation". He accepted the evidence of the finger- print expert. He commended the handwriting specialists for an excellent job. Then, Odje raised his head, removed his sunglasses, and allowed his lips to part in a smile. Spectators gasped. Heartbeats became audible. (103)

Apart from the dramatic features noticeable in the excerpt as suggested by the last three sentences, there are narrative features—explanation and description— evident mainly in the use of the third person singular pronoun "He". The judge continues his explanation as he gives his judgment, "Evidently . . . Layeni is a victim of political conspiracy. The court is unanimous in its decision. All the five of us agree that Layeni is not guilty as charged. He is therefore discharged and acquitted" (103). After the judgement, the court is quiet with spectators visibly overwhelmed with joy and ecstasy. Suddenly, they explode with songs but, just before everything goes completely chaotic, the judge openly shows his partisanship in the matter by admitting that, "the court regards Chief Layeni as a great Banwuyan whose integrity is above board. We warn his detractors to desist from using the police and the court to further their vendetta" (104). The spirit of the separation of power is not engrained in many African democracies. While it is clearly stated in constitutions, it is not practiced in reality. The executive often meddles in the affairs and activities of the judiciary thereby influencing and truncating their efficiency.

The judge's caveat is designed to silence any vulnerable opposition to the corrupt aristocratic class. As if not appeased by the judgement, Layeni and his

supporters head for Ayo's house to kill him. They throw missiles at his building and injure him. Infuriated by their audacious and callous act, Ayo goes inside his house and bringing out the gun given to him by Layeni on their way to the plantation, he shoots Layeni's second son, Laoye. Again, Layeni's alleged integrity is brought to question given the barbaric way he mobilises ignorant young men to Ayo's house. By taking the law into their own hands, they once again contravene the law. The politics of thuggery and vicious shenanigans has become the order of the day in many African political spaces. In Nigeria, we see how the political class engineer violence and all sorts of social chaos in order to achieve selfish political ends. They are ready to manipulate anybody or institution to get what they want.

Poor Sade is assaulted sexually by J.J Taraba, a mentally retarded man. Seeing the shame that now enfolds her in the village, she heads for the crocodile stream to commit suicide in the company of the witnesses who know about the assault. It is an abomination in Ipaja to be deflowered before marriage. Ironically, Ayo also heads for the stream for the same purpose, knowing full well that it is a heinous crime against Ipaja's laws to commit murder. Reaching the stream and seeing Sade about to jump from the cliff, he renounces his suicidal idea and tries to persuade Sade against the decision. Succeeding in pacifying her, he decides to turn himself in to the police for prosecution. He remains optimistic that the worst will be a jail term. Again, by killing a compatriot, even though it is done in self-defence, Ayo indicts himself of murder before the law until proven innocent and exculpated by the same law he has broken. Ayo knows it. His:

> Gun blasted out Laoye Layeni's brain. He fell, writhed for a few seconds, then he was still. Ayo was still, too. The blast had wiped out his rage. He knew that his victim was dead. He had killed! He needed no one to tell him what must follow. He dropped his gun, raised both hands as a sign of submission to the crowd's certain judgement. He expected to be set ablaze or to be macheted, or to be stabbed by a maddened mob. He closed his eyes. He waited. (109)

Through Ayo's murder, Ademiluyi chronicles one of the many reasons people disobey the law. He teaches that certain actions of some persons can sometime force others into crime and illegal acts. Ayo never contemplates murder or any criminal offence but here he is, a murderer. His is the case of extreme provocation even to the detriment of his own life. He laments, "Sorry, brother. It was not my intention to do it. I fired to protect myself from a monster called mob. Forgive, fallen man, forgive" (109). Doing the right thing comes with a high price in African social contexts. Ayo is made to build abjections of the kind of life he once detests. There are many hitherto patriots in Africa who have had to join the bandwagon of evil doers when they try to beat them but could not.

Broken Bond

Ayo is taken to Kukuruku prison in Forcados but he is confident that he will not be given a hard sentence considering the reputation of his lawyer, Barrister Okoro and the number of years he, Ayo, has spent awaiting trial. On the day of judgement, the judge states that his investigations reveal that Ayo indeed committed the murder but

admits that the main areas of misgivings remain the motive and the circumstance surrounding the murder. He raises some crucial questions:

> Was there any animosity between the defendant and Chief Layeni, in other words, was there a motive for a premeditated murder? Did the accused expect a demonstration? Was he warned of it? Was he prepared for it? Arising from that point is a third one: when was the dane gun that killed Laoye Layeni loaded? If the gun was loaded while the protest raged, it can mean that the accused was not prepared for the demonstration and the murder. Was the demonstration violent? Was the accused in imminent danger? Was the shooting the only escape means available to the accused? (120-121).

There are a couple of rhetorical questions in the excerpt meant for emphasis and clarity. Unfortunately, the judge who raises these pertinent questions also answers them in a manner suggesting conspicuous bias and acrimony towards the accused. To the first question, he asserts that Ayo is on a revenge mission having earlier sued the deceased's father, Chief Layeni, on the account of bribery and corruption in the Barau Native Court. To the second question, he acknowledges the testimony of the police which admits that Ayo has earlier been warned to stay away from Ipaja "for a day or two" (121). In anticipation of a possible and imminent protest after judgement, the judge acknowledges Ayo's rebuttal of the claim but doubts why the police will want to malign him with lie. To the third question, he states that the pre-loading of the gun with bullets suggests that the accused premeditated the murder. And to the last question, he submits that, "the fact that his life was spared, even after killing the protester is an eloquent testimony to the peaceful nature of the protest" (121). The judge's arguments suggest that he has been influenced and manipulated by the rigged Ipaja system since he raises critical questions about the sensitive case and answers them with obvious bias and muse of corruption.

The aesthetic representation of the law is also obvious in the legal process. The judge narrates, describes, analyses, argues and explains in the arduous process of reaching his judgement. The dramatic essence of this process is not in doubt. Having exhausted his critical rhetoric and analyses amidst the accompanying dramatics, "the court room broke into murmurs" (122). The spectators murmur because they perceive so much prejudice in his analysis. Gratifying his selfish interest, he again engages his sense of judgement histrionically. He: ". . . paused for five seconds while the spectators held their breath. 'From the evidence before me,' . . . 'I can only come to one conclusion: that the accused is . . .' the judge stopped dramatically. He allowed himself to cough, to sneeze and to sip a cup of water. It was almost a decade before he resumed. '. . . That the accused is guilty as charged'" (122). He displays his abjection of disruption, disruption of the moral codes of his society.

After his dramatic conclusion, he hypocritically asks for Ayo's opinion before he passes his judgement. Expectedly, Ayo erupts emotionally:

> You can sentence me . . . I will not plead for mercy . . . I am guiltless before history and before my conscience. There was shooting, alright, but then, it was forced on me. If I am alive to be sentenced, it is because I fired

> before I was set on fire. Perhaps a shot in the air could have served my purpose, but who, faced with the threat of imminent incineration, can remain perfectly sane, perfectly lucid in mind? (123)

Ayo's emotional outburst is tragic as it is premised on the moral burden of the law. The seeming erosion of justice in the judicial process brings out the beast in him. He unleashes his abjection in full. That once affectionate and puritan soul has now become a sin offering for the sake of posterity. The judge in his usual poise views his reaction as being arrogant and impenitent. He submits that, "In political persuasion, he is an extremist. He appears quiet, but like still water, he runs deep. It is not safe to allow such man remain in our society. I will be failing in my duty to the living and the unborn if I should allow you, Ayo Badejo, to wreck our society for the sake of your erroneous political beliefs" (124).

He then passes his judgement: "In accordance with section 22 of the Criminal Procedure Code, I hereby sentence you Ayo Badejo, to be hanged by the neck till you are dead. I hope that you will review your decision not to appeal. This is only a court of first instance. If however you stick to your guns, may the good Lord have mercy on your soul" (124).

The judge here ridicules Ayo's personality. On hearing the enormity of the sentence the judge passed on her son, Ayo's mother who has the spirit of anger, "lifted her chair and hurled it in the direction of the judge's voice. The court gasped as the chair landed on the learned man's chest, pushing him to the floor" (125). Her action is defiant because she is taking the law into her own hands. She can appeal the judgement if she is not satisfied or even sue the judge for any of his conducts if she feels he has slighted her. She is carried away by her emotions and refuses to obey the rule of the law. Ironically, "the groan from the judge did not rouse the dumb-founded spectators to his defence. Neither did it appease the lunatic woman" (125). They see his judgement as a malicious judgement. Apparently dissatisfied with the seeming injustice surrounding Ayo's trial and the eventual sentence, Chimezie and his mates, friends of Ayo, pounce on the corporal who handles Ayo roughly. They injure several other policemen and set the court room ablaze. They burn every car they see on their way to the city centre. And seeing that the people are gradually but ferociously demanding justice and accountability from the government, the Prime Minister hurriedly promises to pay salaries within a week and stops demolition and women taxation. He commutes the death sentence passed on Ayo to life imprisonment and vows to view the possibility of a full amnesty as soon as possible. This shows that Africa is backward because the peoples have not decided to reclaim their space. They have not decided to hold their leaders accountable for their actions and inactions. It also shows that the leaders know what is right. They only lack the moral and political will to do it. It is only the people that can determine the direction of growth and development for the continent.

The bad leaders know this truth. So, they would prefer to keep the people down with ignorance and poverty so as not to be forced into a self-consciousness and awareness that could disrupt the corrupt empire of the political class. Just recently somewhere in Nigeria, a governor was forced to make a live telecast promising to temporarily release government's buses for free to the suffering public as a palliative measure to cushion the effects of their suffering which is occasioned by

the scarcity of PMS and Naira notes. Now, the governor for many weeks saw the situation but did nothing decisive as a positive response. Making the live telecast only came as a response to the pockets of unrests and protests that erupted and were witnessed in different parts of the state. Apparently in context, he responded to the protests and destruction of public properties, not to the pain that the scarcity of PMS and Naira notes was causing. The governor's reaction is not different from that of the Prime Minister in this novel who knew what was constitutionally right to do as a Prime Minister but was unwilling to do so until he was forced into action by the people's protests. This is the attitude of many Nigerian leaders.

Ademiluyi indicts world governments for most acts of insubordination to the law by the people (followers). The Prime Minister's haste in addressing most hitherto contentious political and economic matters shows his insincerity in governance. Through their hypocritical actions and inactions, they create abjections in the people. Unfortunately, his noble steps are dead on arrival. Ayo is no longer the man he used to be. The depraved system of Ipaja has awoken the sleeping beast in him and now, Ipaja must be ready to welcome the new man that is thoroughly tutored in the antics of Ipaja. While in prison, Ayo's determination to escape from incarceration becomes obsessive. On a fateful day, he attacks one of the prison warders. Other warders who come to the victim's rescue notice that Ayo has been digging an escape route. He kills two warders as he finally asserts his freedom, a promise he makes to himself. His new-found vicious-self forces him into armed-robbery with a strong network with the police. Ademiluyi continues to warn leaders to change from their evil ways through his yet another condemnation of the corruption in the police:

> . . . luckless, in virtue, Ayo Badejo prospered in vice. As his fortunes improved, so too did his police contacts which reached up to the police boss in the city. After every robbery incident, the police went through the motion of investigation and arrests. But neither Ayo nor Gaguh was ever interrogated. The police boss made certain that the dragnets were cast in lifeless ponds. (219)

The police are metaphorically compared to "the dragnets" that are "cast in lifeless ponds." The resulting effect of leaders and officers of the law engaging in despicable acts worthy of violating the law is that followers will soon imitate them. Hence, "with such open space to operate in, Ayo incorporated a few promising youths into his gang. He also branched out into other realms of crimes" (219). The height of Ayo's new malignant and vicious philosophy is made manifest in his sanguine attitude towards the ordinary people. He has suddenly become the commander of the police. He simply, "did not know why the policemen kept demanding his instructions" (261). On one occasion, "The police chief was on the line. As Ayo had expected, he said 'A group of woman are protesting'" (261). The police chief is surprisingly seeking orders from Ayo. The new man then orders, "Disperse them" (261). As if stricken by a spell of tomfoolery, the police chief asks "With bullets?" (261) He receives the unfortunate answer, "With bombs if necessary. Gun down as many as you can. Don't allow them to escape." (261) He also orders the Police General Inspector to shoot elementary school pupils who join the protest. Ayo breaks the laws of the land because he feels slighted by the same laws which he has hitherto protected. On the contrary, and

quite ironical too, the police who are supposed to be the good forces mandated by law to protect lives and property are now the evil forces destroying lives and properties.

Ayo is wrathful in his protest. He now sees the law as a hegemonic force designed mainly for the good of the microscopic political class. Unfortunately, Ayo forgets that man drives the law. And ironically, the law is a supreme factor that is only subject to the idiosyncrasies of the people in the society. He may decide to alter any of its powers at any time. This, however, applies more to the positive law which is presumed to be objective from the perspective of human perfection. The natural law, albeit powerful and divine, allows people the freewill to exercise their own understanding of law hence, its seeming silence in the face of injustice.

Exploring this motif of bad leadership further, Ademiluyi makes the reader see that the abjection which has become the definition of Ayo and Sade is the handiwork of the bad leaders who make laws but do not obey them. Sadly, the passion between Ayo and Sade ends in death. The Allamandists, who can no longer withhold their anger when they see flames effusing from the building which Ayo and Sade set ablaze, go on rampage. They burn every government asset. Angry that the Prime Minister, Monye, escapes, they loot and set the palace ablaze. In effect, law can break down totally when the custodians of the law refuse to be accountable to the laws they have created to protect their people. Ademiluyi's ideological stand is that change and the right attitude towards the law must begin from the top, the leaders. Hence, peace with the law is only possible when leaders are honest, and open-minded with their application of the law.

Conclusion

This study establishes that the preponderance of leadership failure, feeling of injustice, economic hardship, depraved societal and peer group influence, Eurocentric ideals, disillusionment, and corruption facilitate abjections and acts of defiance. The author advocates obedience to the law through irony. The actions and inactions of most of the characters are criticized with the hope of creating a reader-response awareness which the author believes will bring about a change in deviant behaviour. Ayo's personality is symbolic of the exuberance, adventurousness, and innocence of youthhood. With the miserable end of Ayo, the author seems to be saying that it is counterproductive to move from compliance to contravention in any situation. In Ademiluyi's ideation of societal order, the rule of law is indispensable.

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