

# UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN



**THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SECOND  
(172<sup>ND</sup>) INAUGURAL LECTURE**

## **“YORÙBÁ LITERARY CRITICISM: THEORIES AND THEORIZING IN NATIVISM”**

**By**

**PROFESSOR ỌLÁLÉRÈ ADÉYEMÍ**

**B.A. (Ed.) (Hons.), M. Ed., M.P.A., Ph.D. (Ilorin),**

**Cert. in Public Relations (NIPR, Lagos)**

**Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,**

**Faculty of Arts,**

**University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.**

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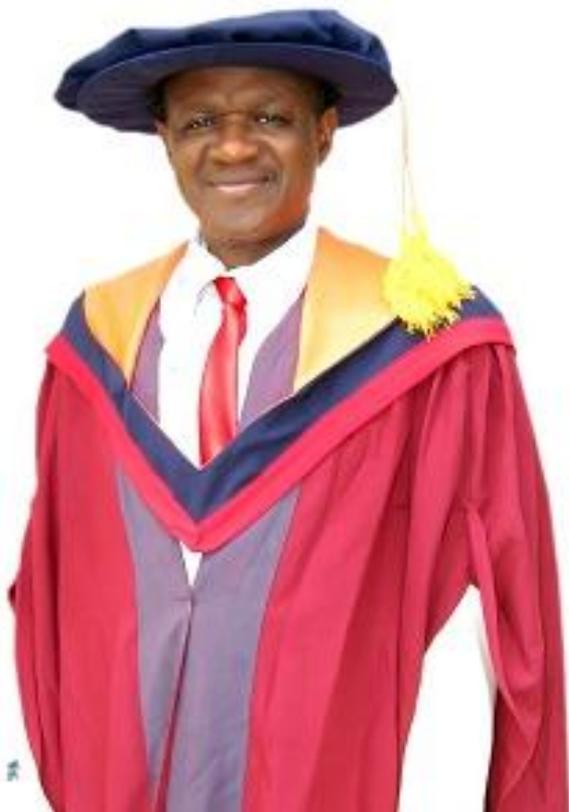
**Professor Abdul Ganiyu Ambali, (OON)  
DVM (Zaria), M.V.Sc., Ph.D. (Liverpool), MCVSN (Abuja)**

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**PROFESSOR ỌLÁLÉRÈ ADÉYEMÍ**  
**B.A. (Ed.) (Hons). M. Ed., M.P.A., Ph.D. (Ilorin),**  
**Cert. in Public Relations (NIPR, Lagos)**  
**Professor of Yorùbá Literature**  
**Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,**  
**Faculty of Arts,**  
**University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.**

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and Nigerian Languages,  
Professors and other Members of Senate,  
Other Members of Staff (Academic and Non-Academic),  
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,  
Gentlemen of the Press,  
My Dear Students from the University of Ilorin and other  
Sister Institutions Here Present,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

## **Preamble**

Kéégún ó tóó jó	Before the masquerade dances
A máa wárí	He pays homage
Kákùkọ ó tó ó kọ	Before the cock crows
Yòò gbònyẹ pìpì	He pays homage
Gbogbo òmùwẹ tí ò bá tí júbàfódò	Swimmers who do not pay homage
Omi ní gbé wọn lọ	to the sea are drowned
Mo júbà Qlòrun, mo sèbà èniyàn	Almighty God and all the people, I pay you homage

Gíwá Àgbà wa,  
È jòde òní ó yẹ mí

The Vice-Chancellor Sir,  
I crave your indulgence, I plead for  
a successful outing

The Vice-Chancellor, Sir. It is with great pleasure and gratitude to the Almighty God that I stand before you today to present this inaugural lecture before this distinguished audience. This is the 38th inaugural lecture in the Faculty of Arts, the sixth in the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, and the third from the literary component of my Department. From the Linguistics component, Professor Ọladélé Awobùlúyì, the founding father of my Department, my teacher and mentor delivered the first inaugural lecture in this University on *The National Policy on Education in Linguistics Perspective* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1979, followed by Professor B.S. Chumbow on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1985, entitled: *Linguistics, Language and National Development* and Professor H.B.C. Capo on the 23rd of January, 1992. His inaugural lecture was entitled *Let Us Joke Over It: Nigeria as Tower of Babel*.

In the Yorùbá component, the first was delivered by Professor Olúdàre Ọlájubù a doyen of Yorùbá oral poetry, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 1987. His inaugural lecture was titled *The Voice of the Artist: The Voice of the People*. Professor Yekeen Ajíbádé Àjàyí my amiable teacher of Yorùbá orature and culture delivered the second inaugural lecture on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 2009, entitled *Yorùbá Cosmology and Aesthetics: The Cultural Confluence of Divination, Incantation and Drum-Talking*. My own specialisation is Yorùbá literary criticism and theories. Today, I feel highly honoured and privileged to be allowed to deliver the one hundred and seventy-first (171<sup>st</sup>) inaugural lecture with the title: *Yorùbá Literary Criticism: Theories and Theorizing in Nativism*.

This lecture highlights some of my contributions to scholarship in the field of Yorùbá studies.

## **Introduction**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, we live in an age indisputably propelled and conditioned by the forces of science and information technology which are critical features of globalisation. It is an era of rapid development in science and technology in which the cultures of developing countries of the world, particularly their languages and literatures are in danger of extinction. It is an age when the Arts are grossly denigrated, distorted and undermined. This anomaly therefore motivated the choice of my topic for today's inaugural lecture. My expectation is that in this lecture, I should be able to convince you that the common heritage, the indigenous languages and literatures must not be allowed to die out. The survival of the cultural heritage from cultural inversion orchestrated by colonialism and now globalisation is on trial. Cultural inversion, according to Awoonor (2006, p. 9), is a process where the conquered have come to absorb some of the features of the cultural matrix of the conqueror, through the process of indoctrination, deculturation and the obliteration of the original cultural ideas of their forefathers, thus submerging their identity and self-worth in European-driven ethos.

Recently, precisely on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, the Yorùbá Students Association, University of Ilorin Chapter celebrated her annual Yorùbá week, and a distinguished Yorùbá poet Olóyè Ọlátúnbòsún Ọládàpò was invited to talk on the future of Yorùbá language and Yorùbá studies in a globalised world. At the end of his lecture, he encouraged the students through a proverb: “*Ti mọ́ínmọ́ín ti mọ́ ti èkuru*

*ló kù*” (The elderly ones have played their part with success; the rest belongs to the youths). The students burst into laughter and asked the speaker to tell them the meaning of *èkuru/àbàrí*, they know of *móinmóin*, meat pie, sausage roll, fish roll, scotch egg, dough-nut, buns, chin-chin, puff puff and Indomie, but they do not know the meaning of “èkuru” and other terms like *òlẹ̀lẹ̀*, *àbàrí*, *oori*, *àádùn*, *ògbókùrù*, *òjòjò*, etc. If such simple expressions and Yorùbá meals/menu such as the above are not known or understood by children who are ultimately the future custodians of language and culture, then there is a problem. Globalisation is really on the rampage and culture is being ravaged. No wonder, Mbat (2005) interprets globalisation as a system with socio-economic cover equipped to destroy the remnants of the African cultural and linguistic identity left by colonialism. The predictions of several scholars such as Brenzinger and Graaf (2006), that up to 90% of the world’s languages may well be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which would reduce the present number of almost 7000 languages to less than 700, may be true after all. The language in focus - Yorùbá, with its numerous dialects is already becoming a potentially endangered language and as the elders say: *Ikán ñ morù, kí akèngbè lọ sọra*. (When the termite is eating up the pot, the gourd should be careful). Since no language can thrive well without its literary aspect, all hands must be on deck to save Yorùbá language and literature from the danger of extinction.

### **The Nature of Yorùbá Literature**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, for a proper understanding of this lecture, the most logical take-off point is to pose the

question: What is Yorùbá literature? This question becomes pertinent, considering the domineering influence of foreign languages and literatures and the diminishing status of indigenous languages and secondly, this audience comprises different people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. When we speak of Yoruba literature, we are speaking of an international form of literature which can be found in two or three continents of the world (Abimbola 1977, p.3). It is a fact that the Yorùbá language, especially by accident of history, can be considered one of the “global” languages of the world. A global language, according to Liberman and Awóyalé (2005, p .260), is a language the spread of whose “native speakers” goes beyond or are found outside the continent of its natural birth. For example, the Yorùbá language and literature are found in the diaspora (i.e. Brazil, Cuba, South America and Benin Republic in West Africa) but not in Yorùbá medium. In Nigeria here, Yorùbá remains the vibrant mother tongue or predominantly the language of the millions of people in the South West Nigeria.

Professor Adeboye Babalola, the first Ph.D. holder in Yorùbá literature and the first Professor of Yorùbá literature, defined literature “as the collection of works of arts produced in a particular language through the creative use of human imagination” (1988, p.16). The creative use of human imagination in a particular language is literature. Ogunsina (1987) states that Yorùbá literature, like other literatures, is an art composed of words in such a way that it generates entertainment, enlightenment, and relaxation. It attempts to develop, elevate, expand, and transform its audience concerned. The features established in Adeboye and other theorists’ definitions are the features of creativity, imagination and the use of Yorùbá medium as the language

of literature. The identity mark for any literature in their views is the language. As there is English literature, there is Russian literature, there is Hausa literature, there is Igbo literature and there is Yorùbá literature. Every living language has its own literature. So Yorùbá literature is the works of art in the Yorùbá medium. It is the work of art through which the literary artist reacts to the events and happenings in his immediate and non-immediate communities and environments. Through his works, he expresses, creatively and imaginatively, his feelings, beliefs and customs.

In my view, Yorùbá literature like other world literatures can be defined in terms of creativity, subject matter, symbolism, figurativeness, aesthetics and estranged or peculiar language that is deviant from the standard language (SL) or ordinary language used on daily basis. Olateju (2016, p. 19) affirms that the use of literary language [LL], which is the kind of language used in literature, is often elevated, non-casual, examined and critical, and that the use of literary language is reduced to the barest minimum in routine communication. The example below is used to differentiate between literary language (i.e. as of literature) and non-literary language (i.e language of non-literary communication):

- (a) *Ará abí, ẹ ẹ fẹ é é o*  
*Ẹ ẹ fe e e, Èrò báyì, ẹ ẹ sùúrù*  
*Ká fètè òkè, ká fì léyàá rẹ múrẹ,*  
*ká fì tiye tọmọ dera wọn*  
*kó máa ró pe pe pe!*  
*Ẹyẹkẹyẹ má ké mó ẹyẹ ògègè gbòde....*  
 Let the audience listen,  
 Be attentive and be patient

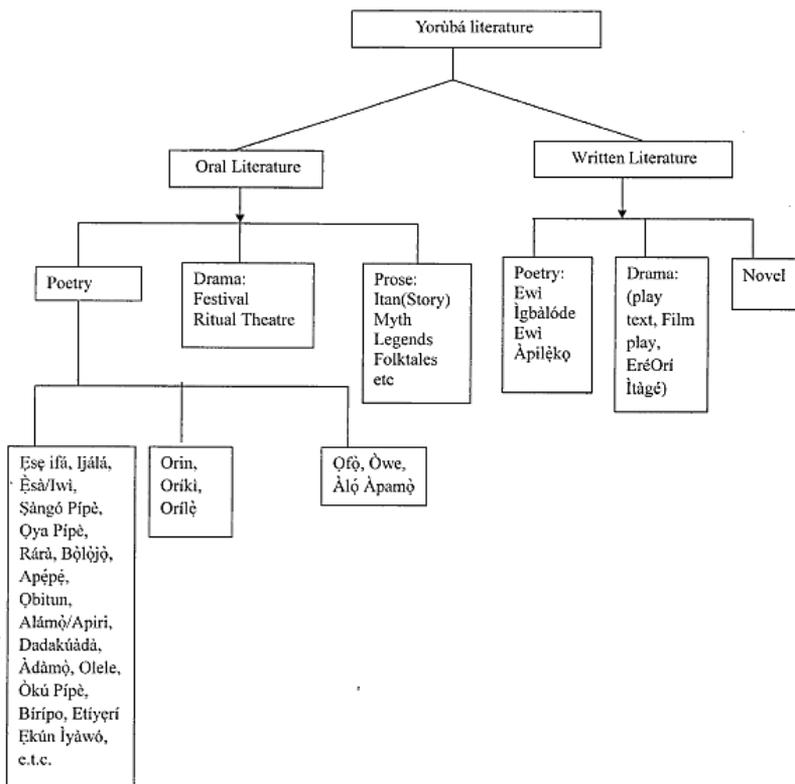
Let the lips cover the mouth and let there be no talking  
Let all the birds keep quiet, the bird of the elders is set....

(b) *Gbogbo èniyán, ẹ dáké mo fẹ ẹ̀rò kan*  
Everybody, keep quiet, I want to say something

Excerpt (a) which is from Eégún Èlẹ̀wẹ's chant is literary language. It is emotional, rhetorical, rhythmical, aesthetic and symbolically expressive, while excerpt (b) is the non-literary version, very simple and clearly understandable. The formalist theorists equalised literary language with deviation to the neglect of other types like prose and drama. In Yorùbá literature, contrary to the formalists' perspective of deviation as the only feature of literature, there are both elements of literariness and non-literariness in Yoruba literary text whether poetry, drama or prose.

### **Classification of Yorùbá Literature**

Yorùbá literature includes prose (novels and short stories), poetry and drama. There is another category called Yorùbá oral literature. In the pre-literate era, the Yorùbá society once enjoyed a verbal civilisation which flourished when writing was unknown. The oral medium served the people as a pool for the preservation of Yorùbá ancient experiences and beliefs. Yorùbá oral literature is still vibrant till today as popular forms of entertainment and as the store house of cultural values and moral codes of the Yoruba society.



**Fig.1: A chart showing the classification of Yoruba oral and written literature (Adéyemí (2017))**

## **Yorùbá Literary Criticism**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the analysis, deconstruction, interpretation and evaluation of all the classes of Yorùbá literature have been my pre-occupation in the last twenty-three years. Literary criticism has to do with critical analysis and evaluation of literary works. Literary criticism is called “*Iṣé/ òrò lámèyítò lóri litírésò*” in Yorùbá

Studies, while the critic is known as “*Oníṣẹ́ lámẹ̀yító*”. Yorùbá literary criticism takes the analyst to a higher level of cognitive thought by evaluating literary material and then synthesising it into an original piece. Literary criticism is likened to *koro jǐjá* (exposing the riddle) by Iṣòlá(1989) and this is why I asserted in Adeyemi (2006), that: *òtẹ̀ tí lítírésò bá dì, oníṣẹ́ lámẹ̀yító nǐ tú u jade sí gbangba* (the conspiracy of literary works are exposed by literary critics). For a critic to do this, he must have a vast knowledge of Yorùbá culture and other disciplines.

Literary criticism helps us to go inside the text and understand the message of the author. Like the social artist, Yorùbá literary criticism is primarily concerned and pre-occupied with the relationship between aesthetic composition and perennial problems of the human condition such as social justice, cultural issues, morality, spirituality and political issues. This means that Yorùbá literary criticism is usually situated in a specific historical, political and economic context for a change-facilitated purpose. This is in agreement with the views of Eagleton (1992) who asserts that “criticism must break with its ideological prehistory, situating itself outside the space of the text on the alternative terrain of scientific knowledge” (p. 43). What Terry Eagleton says is correct to a large extent. Under the form of an illumination, criticism renders natural the text’s necessary self-blindness, but the critic cannot see all that is packaged in a text however deep his knowledge might be.

In order to see clearly and interpret correctly what is in the text under criticism, we need scientific tools to dissect texts. The tool used for the analysis of literary works is called *literary theory*. No criticism is innocent of theory and

what is at times called” literary criticism” is often largely theory-dependent.

### **Theory and Anti-theory in Yorùbá Literature**

Eagleton (1992) explains that literary theory is “a way of emancipating literary works from the stranglehold of a “civilised sensibility”, and throwing them open to a kind of analysis in which, in principle at least, anyone could participate”. Deleuze (2005) defines a theory as an arrangement of ideas within a demarked space: one has the author, the reader, the text, society, etc, and a theoretical position that will articulate the importance and the nature of the various relations among them. I define a theory as a tool just like a surgical blade used by medical doctors to operate and dissect the patient. A theory is the critic’s surgical blade for dissecting works of literature in order to expose and interpret the hidden meaning embedded in them (Adeyemi, 2006).

As noted by Kolawole (2005, p.2), there has been a polarity between the advocates of purism or arts for art’s sake and those who uphold the versatility of literary theorising. Seaton (2014, p.56) asserts that “no position is free of theory, not even the one called “common sense”. Those who regard literary theory as a turn-away from literature and its central concerns are called “Anti-theorists” or “Dissenters”. The anti-theory position advocates a return to studying literature for itself. In her essay entitled: “The Race for Theory”, Babara (1987) observes that critics are no longer concerned with literature, but with other critics’ texts. Thus, she rejects the application of theories for the analysis of literary works.

In Yorùbá studies, there is hardly any literary critic in contemporary times that does not use one theory or the other to analyse Yorùbá literary texts. I uphold the versatility of literary theorising. Literary theory is not an abstract, intellectual exercise; rather, it is a natural human response to literature using tested ideas as critical cornerstones and pillars for the analysis of literature. There is nothing esoteric in the use of theories; after all there is no particular body of theories of literature. Virtually all the theories in use today in literature are borrowed from other disciplines. For instance, Formalism, Structuralism, Genetic structuralism, Semiotics among others come from Linguistics; Marxism and Postcolonialism come from Economics and Political Science; Psycho-analytic and Archetypal theories are from Psychology; Moral criticism and multiculturalism come from Philosophy; Hermeneutics is from Religion; Sociology of Literature and feminism are from Sociology; Eco-criticism comes from Ecology, Geography and Environmental Studies; Historical theory and New Historicism come from History while Disability theory comes from the Health Sciences. Application of theories to analyse, interpret and evaluate literary works (novels, poetry and play texts) has been quite rewarding in Yorùbá studies.

### **Yorùbá Literary Criticism and Theories in Historical Perspective**

While literary criticism has been in existence from time immemorial in Yorùbá traditional society to interpret, analyse and evaluate literary works in oral forms, the application of theories to Yorùbá literary criticism is a recent phenomenon. Contrary to the views of Tedlock (1977, p. 516) that “members of primary oral cultures generally limit

themselves to brief remarks about performances when they say anything at all, and such remarks are quickly forgotten”, criticism is part and parcel of traditional Yorùbá literature. In the pre-colonial Yorùbá society, there were three levels of criticism for oral poets, especially chanters. The first level is the pre-performance criticism usually during training sessions. Every dance step, song or chant is watched, corrected and evaluated by the experienced chanters and singers. No mistake is overlooked. Once a wrong word is used or a wrong chanting mode is noticed, another chanter takes it up. The next level of criticism comes during the actual performance; this is called Communal Editing and the third level is the post-performance criticism mostly by the trainers.

As for literary criticism, as it stands today, my research reveals that critical attention to the Yorùbá novel began in 1963, when the late Adégòkè Olúbùnmò, a mathematician, wrote an appraisal entitled: “D.O. Fagunwa: A Yorùbá Novelist”, which was published in *Olókun: Journal of Yorùbá Studies*. Olubunmò’s criticism does not state any theoretical framework, but Beier (1967) adopts the formalist theory to analyse Fagunwa’s novels. Beier’s adoption of the formalist approach makes it difficult for him to appreciate Fagunwa’s novel in relation to the Yorùbá society. In my work, (Adeyemi, 2003), what Beier calls “rambling episodic plot construct” and “nauseating sermonising” in Fagunwa’s novels are not so. The plot construct of Fagunwa’s novels is in consonance with the plot construct of Yorùbá folktales. The sermonising quality of *Ògbòjú Ode nínú Igbó Irúnmòlẹ̀* qualifies the novel as an instrument of moral education located in the Yorùbá “Òmọ̀lúàbí philosophy”. Dasyilva (2016) asserts that the òmọ̀lúàbí philosophy is capable of

fostering understanding and peaceful co-existence among people across the globe, regardless of region, religion or race.

The first set of Yorùbá literary critics in the 1960s placed the aesthetic and artistic contents of a book over and above its social and historical concerns. Their first mission was to make judgments about the faults and the aesthetics of a work of art. In the early 1970s however, it was realised that Formalism alone cannot handle the varieties of curiosity that Yorùbá literature may stimulate, and that analysing a Yorùbá novel in piece meal like a machine without any relation to the Yorùbá society is absurd as Formalism could not account for all the allusions in the Yorùbá novel.

Even though the application of theories by early Yorùbá literary critics was not very common, the series of seminar papers on the sociology of literature presented by Karin Barber among others between 1978 and 1979 at the departmental seminars at the University of Ifè, Ilé-Ifè (now Obafemi Awolowo University) opened up the gate of theories to Yorùbá literature, especially the novel. The seminar papers actually motivated Yorùbá literary critics to embrace the use of theories in the analysis of Yorùbá written literature and Ogunsina (1987) was one of the first literary critics to adopt the theory in an elaborate manner at the doctorate degree level at the University of Ibadan. Since then, literary theories have been accommodated in the Yorùbá literature curriculum in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and at the University of Ilorin in particular.

## **My Research and Contributions to Scholarship**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the primary thrust of my research activities has been the criticism of Yorùbá literary texts (novel, play and poetry), using various theories of literature. My approach is multi-disciplinary and cross-generic. Even though I value the instrumentality of the text as very essential in literary criticism because no theory can minimise the text as the baseline of criticism, I do not regard the text as all-sufficient. I consider textuality and contextuality as germane in my analysis of Yorùbá literary texts. The cross-disciplinary demands of today's literary criticism go beyond textual criticism. My research reveals that literary theory has remained the most fundamental aspect of literary studies and Yorùbá literature cannot be an exception. Literary theories connect literature with our lives. Theories make us to examine values and practices that are so much part of our lives. Even though some scholars consider 'theory' abstract, I agree with Jeyifo (2012) that 'theory' can play a decisive role in clearing up the confusion and sterile acrimony that have characterised many attempts to define a role for the scholar of African literature and to stake a claim of validity and legitimacy for the discipline of African literary studies. I have tried to make theory concrete, simple and relevant to Yorùbá literature by domesticating modern theories and injecting originality into them. Canonisation of Yorùbá political texts constitutes a challenge for me. I worked on writers whose works have received much attention such as Fágúnwà, Fálétí, Yemitan, Ogunniran, Òkédijí, and Ìṣòlá. I also worked on those whose works are classified as contemporary such as Olú Owólabí, Afólábí Olábímtán, Jíbólá Abíòdún, Bamiji Ojoand emerging

feminist writers such as Adejumo and Adékéyè among many others.

In order to make literary theories accessible to Yorùbá students and lovers of Yorùbá literary works, my book (Adeyemi, 2006) *Tiòrì Lítirésò Ní Èdè Yorùbá* demystifies the abstractness and obscurity of modern theories in lucid and splendid Yorùbá language. The book was the first comprehensive text on Yorùbá literary criticism and theories. With all modesty, the book has become a student's companion in Universities and Colleges of Education where Yorùbá Literary criticism is taught in Nigeria.

Some of the dominant theories in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been domesticated for use in my research. In my choice of theories for the analysis of Yorùbá texts, I always consider the nature of Yorùbá literary traditions which are dominated by a sensibility derived from the Yorùbá culture. My objective for this is to add aesthetic flavor of tradition to criticism. I also consider the audience/reader of the literary texts as critical stakeholders. The Yorùbá writer thinks and feels in his/her mother tongue and also writes in the language. So also, I use the medium of Yorùbá language for criticism, I also use English language medium in line with Adrian Roscoe's advice to African poets and critics to view themselves as "inheritors of a universal tradition of art and letters and not just as recipients of an indigenous legacy" (cited in Appiah, 2012, p. 243).

Permit me, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, to quickly present three dominant theories I have domesticated for use in Yorùbá literary criticism.

## **Marxist Theory in the Analysis of the Yorùbá Novel**

My interest in Marxist theory was ignited by Dr. Bayo Ogunjimi of blessed memory, a literary critic of the left-wing, an Orthodox Marxist and a great scholar to the core. In 1994, I wrote an essay entitled: “Yorùbá orature in contemporary advertisement” and then gave it to him to help me assess. After reading the paper, he returned it and advised me to use the Marxist theory so as to bring out the economic values of the selected Yorùbá poems in modern advertisements. He loaned me some of his write-ups on Marxism and particularly materials on Gramsci’s theory of Economic determinism and literature. While I enjoyed the critical features of Marxism such as the dialectical relationship between literature and social struggle, ideological critique of literature, role of the African writer as the vanguard in the revolutionary efforts towards a better society among others, I rejected the anti-God principle of Marxism because I regard it as unacceptable.

The Yorùbá people believe in the existence of God and everything they do in life is greatly connected with their thoughts and beliefs in Olódùmarè. Class structures do not breed conflicts in traditional Yorùbá society, the kings, and the chiefs, powerful as they were in the pre-colonial era knew their limits. Other classes such as the hunters, religious leaders, priests, diviners, workers and the wealthy people do not engage in class conflict so as to change the social status quo. Colonialism brought capitalism into Yorùbá society and divided the society into three mutually suspicious classes of the upper, the middle and the lower. The means of production (land, industries, the banks, etc.) are firmly in the hands of the upper class and the lower class lives in perpetual poverty and weariness without love, laughter and creative fulfillment

in labour. A Marxist theorist such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012, p. 481) believes that "true humanism is not possible without the subjection of the economy, of the means of production (land, industries, the banks, etc) to the total ownership and control by the people".

I am mindful of the apparent weaknesses of Marxism in Yoruba society and in Nigeria. Marxism developed as a philosophical response to capitalism and the liberal idealism of the bourgeoisie. In other words, "its theoretical inspiration and conceptual categories were formulated in the context of industrial capitalism in its infant stages" (Amuta, 2012, p.504). However, the contextualisation of the theory to our environment is in order. Every society is faced with the domination of one class over the others thus leading to class conflicts. Our society is not immune to class conflicts and domination. In fact, the fundamental opposition in Nigeria today is between a small class of native 'haves' which is tied to international capital on the one hand and the class of 'have-nots' on the other hand. This is what Okédìjí (2005) in *Atótó Arére* and Àyándìran (2016) in *Ewu Iná* portray where politics, culture and other social systems are tied to economic benefits thereof in our society. Since literature is about the society and Marxism is essentially sociological, I have contextualised the Marxist theory in my analysis of Yorùbá political novels (Adeyemi, 1998, 2001 and 2004) and I have discovered that unequal distribution of the national wealth is a major cause of class conflict and crime in Nigeria.

Yai (1977) was a pioneer in the application of the Marxist theory to Yorùbá literature and his study is solely based on the political criticism of the novels of D.O Fagunwa particularly *Igbó Olódùmarè*. He regards Fagunwa's ideal hero as a conformist, a reactionary, an

egoist who is completely deaf to the problems of the Nigerian masses. Thus, Yai (1977) concludes that Fagunwa's greatness in Yorùbá novel writing is a myth. I (Adeyemi, 2003) acknowledge the pioneering effort of Yai (1977) and agree that Fagunwa truly belongs to two traditions - the foreign Christian tradition and the Yorùbá tradition. Fagunwa tries to protect, promote and project the Yorùbá cultural values and at the same time embraces the foreign cultural values he considers useful to the Yorùbá society. Thus, in my view, Fagunwa's poetics does owe ideological allegiance not only to Christian values but also to Yorùbá culture. I also (Adeyemi, 2011) argue that it is not completely correct that all Fagunwa's main characters or heroes are egoistic, and selfish based on the principle of individualism which is a core feature of capitalism.

The heroes in all the novels represent the will of the society in all their journeys and their struggle for the whole society. In *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irúnmalẹ̀, Àkàrà Oògùn*, the leader of the group says: *Àwa tí a jẹ̀ akọ̀ni jẹ̀ méje* (We are seven heroes). The seven heroes are: Àkàrà Oògùn (medical doctor), Kàkó (Strong warrior), Ìmòdòye (Scholar), Èfòyẹ̀ (Flight Engineer), Olóhùn Iyò (Musician), Elégbèdè ọ̀dẹ̀ (Linguist/Polyglot) and Àràràdà ọ̀kúnrin (Magician) use their talents, wisdom, strength and courage to fight for the progress of their society. A close observation of Ìmòdòye's speech in the novel and the actions of all the main characters in the various expeditions show their loyalty and commitment to the Yorùbá nation. I do not say that the heroes are not conscious of their class. In fact, Àkàrà Oògùn's representation of both his social status and the professional interest of his fellow leaders to Òkè Lángbòdó is not to benefit the hunters but the whole society. Ìmòdòye

says: “*Gbogbo àwa tí è n wò yìi, Òkè Lángbòdo ni a n lo nítorí ilú wa yìi náà sì ni*” (o.i. 56) (Every one of us you are looking at, it is Òkè Lángbòdó we are going. It is because of our community).

As far as the Yorùbá literary production is concerned, I feel that it would be a grave injustice to completely reduce Fagunwa to colonial ideologue instead of a writer who in practice has proved to be a forerunner of a true national literature. Given the very cultural framework within which he was working in order to exercise his literary creativity, should he not be given credit for attempting to assert his “Yorùbáness”, however rudimentary his attempts may have been? Fagunwa did not only project Yorùbá cultural values, he endorsed Yorùbá political ideology rather than colonial ideology, and he attempts a recreation of traditional life as it was before European intrusion. It is against this background that I (Adéyemí, 2003& 2010) agree with Barber (1995, p 14) that: “In the colonial period, Yorùbá written literature was never either purely oppositional (inverse ethnocentrism) or purely imitative (colonial mimicry)”. In that study (Adéyemí, 2003 &2010) my comment portrays the early Yorùbá writers as liberal ideologically. They were neither strictly against the colonial ideology nor actually in support of it.

## **Gender Discourse**

In my research, I have domesticated the feminist theory to analyse the novels of D.O. Fagunwa and other contemporary Yorùbá novels and plays. In Yoruba literary circle, gender discourse is christened “*Ìṣègbèfábo*” (Feminism). The term “*Ìṣègbèfábo*” has been challenged by Yorùbá feminist writers such as Adebòwale (1999),

Adejumo (1999) and Sheba (1999) who suggested “*Ìṣètófábo*” (doing the right things for the women) instead of “*Ìṣègbèfábo*” which carries a connotative trait of impressionism and mark of sympathy and partiality in its semantic configuration. While the issue of terminology has remained significant to several African women writers, indigenous writers inclusive, many have objected to the use of labels in the struggle for women’s empowerment. Nevertheless, the varying terms that are being created and championed in the light of the inefficiencies of western feminism, are bound by a common interest - the complete liberation of Africa’s land and peoples.

One of the most discussed issues in feminist theory in recent time is what Leela Ghandi (1998, p. 83) calls "double colonization" of women under imperialism. Such a view postulates the "Third-world woman", as victim per excellence - the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology and native and foreign patriarchies. Spivak (1993) calls it "marginality". According to this view, they are voiceless due to patriarchal repressions which have gagged their mouths. My research argues that the theory of “voicelessness” among the Yoruba women is no longer potent in contemporary time. Contrary to the views of Kọlawọle (2005) that “Fagunwa’s Mount of Langbodo symbol dramatises a gender tension-man as custodian of the master key to societies’ multiple problems”, my research shows that Fagunwa actually represents the Yorùbá world-view on the indispensability of both men and women in the society. Lesbianism and Gayism have no space in Yorùbá world-view.

In *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* for example, Fagunwa presents two cities, one city for men and one city for women. The

women city is populated by women alone with no single man, while the men city has no single woman in it. The main character observes the following events and scenes in the two different cities:

*Ní ilú ọkunrin, mo ẹ̀ àkíyèsí wí pé ifẹ́ tí ó wà láàárín àwọn òbí sí ọmọ níbẹ̀ kò ju kékerélo awọn ọmọ kò sì n gbòràn sí òbí wọn lẹnu, nítorí àwọn tí ó ni wọn kò ẹ̀ aáponkí ó tó rí wọn, wọn kò mọ̀ iyì ọmọ nítorí wọn kò ní ọwọ̀ nínú bíbì wọn... àwọn ọkùnrin ya ará oko, nítorí ọ̀pòlọ̀pò ní ó n sán ibàntẹ̀ kiri láàárín ìgboro. Ariwo pọ̀ ní ilú náà lójú tẹ̀mi nítorí bí wọn n sọ̀rọ̀ ohùn wọn a máa le koko bí wọn bá sì n rẹ̀rìn ín, ẹ̀rìn wọn amáa ta ni léti ẹ̀sá. Kò sí nńkan tí ó rọ̀ ní nńkan wọn, ijó wọn le, orin wọn le, ilù wọnle, bí wọn n ẹ̀sírẹ̀, irẹ̀ lile ni wọn máa n ẹ̀. Wọn n ẹ̀ ọ̀rẹ̀ ara wọn lóòdótó sùgbọ̀n kò sírú ifẹ́ jìnlẹ̀ tí ó máa n wà láarin ọkùnrin àti obìnrin méjì nígbà tí wọn bá n fẹ́ ara wọn, ifẹ́ tí ímáa ru bọ̀ wọn bí ọ̀tí, tí máa pa wọn bí ẹ̀mu, tó sì máa n mú kí tọkùnrintobìnrin di afọ̀jú ti wọn kò lè rí nńkan tí ó dára mọ̀ eyini kò sí ní ilú náà. Wọn kì sáàbà jà, bí wọn bá jà, wọn a pári rẹ̀ kíá, óúnje wọn dára sùgbọ̀n ọ̀bẹ̀ kò dùnjù bẹ̀ẹ̀ lọ. Wọn kò n ẹ̀ ẹ̀tò ilẹ̀ wọn dáadáa, gbogbo rẹ̀ rí gbúrugbùru... (o.i. 108).*

In the men's city, there is no parental love toward the children. The children are disobedient to their fathers. The fathers have no time for the children; they attach less value to the children because none of them have childbirth

experience. They are very crude in action, shabby in dressing and coarse in speech. There is so much noise in the town because they talk loudly and laugh noisily. Whatever they do, it is done with harshness and hardness. When they dance, sing or drum, it is always with hardness. There is nothing like deep love. They hardly fight and when they fight they settle the matter immediately. They prepare good food but their soup is not always delicious. They do not know how to organise their sitting rooms.

In the women's city, things are not equally satisfactory. The narrator describes his experience in the women's city thus:

*Àwọn obìrin tí mo rí wọnni kò fi ara wọn pamọ bí obìrin rárá, púpọ nínú wọnló n rìn ihòhò nínú ilé wọn, àwọn wúndiá gbogbo n ró aṣọ ni, wọn kò n wọbùbá wọn kò sì bikítà nígbà tí aṣọ wọn bá tú tí wón n tún un ró ní ìgboro. Şùgbón ó yà mí lẹnu láti rí pé gbogbo nńkan tí ọkúnrin n ẹ se ni àwọn náà n ẹ, oko wọn tóbi, ó nílárí, iṣu wọn ta, àgbàdo wọn yọ ọmọ, erée wọn sì so. Fààrí wọn ju ti àwọn ọkúnrin lọ, şùgbón wón gbádùn àti máa sọrọ ara wọn lẹhìn kiri. Ilú wọn kún fun koriko. Aṣọ wọn kò ní èèrí şùgbón wọn lè di ẹrù púpọ sí iyàrá wọn, bí wọn bá n lọsí ọdewọn a di ẹrù kítikítì, kò sí nńkan ti wọn kì i dì tán. Şùgbón wón lè bèrù púpọ.Èdá tí ó tètè n sọkún ni wón, şùgbón ọpọlọpọ àánú n bẹ lójú wọn. Olùfọkànsin ni wón, àwọn onígbàgbọ kì ípa sọ̀sì jẹ, àwọn onímọle n lọ sí mọsalásí lákòókò àwọn abọ̀rìṣà sì n lọ sí ilé ọ̀rìṣà wọn..... (o.i. 112).*

Most women walk about naked in their houses, the young ladies dress well but they untie their clothes and drop them anywhere. All the works of men are done also in the women's city. They are more fashionable than the men but they love to backbite. Their houses are not as neat as the men's city, the town's street are full of bushes and trees. Even though their women are neatly dressed, they occupy their rooms with excess luggage. Whenever they are going on any journey, they go with different bags of loads. The women are always in fear in the night. They are emotional, and can weep on any matter. They are more merciful than the men. Some of the women are simple; some are good while some of them are hard and harsh on their servants. They are deeply religious, committed and faithful.

The experience of the main character in the two cities makes him to conclude that:

*Nígbà tí mo wo gbogbo wọ̀n, tí mo sì tún wo ohun tí mo rí ní ìlú àwọ̀n ọ̀kúnrin, mo rí i pé ọ̀gbọ̀n Èlédàá pọ̀ púpọ̀ tí ó da ọ̀kúnrin àti obìnrin sí òde ayé, àwọ̀n ọ̀kúnrin dúró bí egungun, àwọ̀n obìnrin sì dúró bí i ẹ̀ran ara èniyàn. Láìsì egungun, ara kò lè ẹ̀ nńkan. Láìsì ẹ̀ran, egungun kò lè ẹ̀ nńkan (o.i.109)*

When I looked at all of them and looked again at what I saw in the city of men, I realised that the wisdom of the creator is great to have created human beings male and female in the world. The men stand for the bones, while the women stand for the flesh. Without the bones, the body cannot do anything, without the flesh, the bone cannot do anything either (p.109).

The metaphor of 'bone' and 'flesh' to depict male and female symbolises the symbiotic relationship between the two sexes. Neither of the sex is created to live separately from the other. The creation of human being as male and female has a divine purpose. The co-existence of men and women in the society is to bring out the potentials in each sex to complement each other. They are to live together, plan together, enjoy life and struggle together.

In *Ogbójú Oḍẹ Nínú Igbó Irúnmolẹ̀*, when Àkàrà Oògùn escapes to *ìlú àwọn iwin* (the city of spirits) in his second trip to the forest and finds himself in a dilemma, he invokes the spirit of his dead mother as follows:

*A! ìyá mi ọ̀wọ̀n, ìyá mi tòótó, ìyá tí ó pé, ìyá tí o níláárí, ìyá tí ó mú yányán, ìyá tí kì í ẹ̀ ìyá lásán, ìyá tí kì í ẹ̀ ìyá kékeré, ìyá tí kì í ẹ̀ ìyá búburú , ìyá tí ó jẹ̀ bọ̀kíní láyé, ìyá tí ó jẹ̀ gbajúmọ̀ lọrun, ìyá tí ó rí jẹ̀ láyé, ìyá tí ó rí mu lọrun, A! Íwọ ìyá aláìlábàwọ̀n, ibikibi tí ìwọ bá wà lónì, má sàì jẹ̀ kí n rí ọ (o.i . 39).*

A! My dear mother, my true mother, the mother that is complete, the mother that is

important; the mother who is smart, the mother who is not vain, the mother who is not small, the mother who is not wicked, a very famous mother in the world, important dignitary in heaven the mother who has food to eat on earth and has something to drink in heaven. A! You spotless, stainless mother, wherever you are today, let me see you. (o.i . 39).

The mother of the hero appears, full of mercy, concern and love for her son. She comforts him, counsels and guides him to the place of safety. In the invocation of the hero, the attributes of a mother are clearly brought out even though he had earlier said of his mother *ògbólógbòò àjé ni ìyá mi* (My mother was a deadly witch) (p. 6). But now that he is in trouble, the woman is a saint. The mother is a dearly beloved one in the Yorùbá society. She cares for the child and she is always ready to sustain the happiness, progress, safety and protection of the child. Even though, Àkàrà Oògùn, at that time is of age, the intervention of his mother at that critical time confirms the saying of the Yorùbá people that: “*Abiyamọ kì í gbékún ọmọ rẹ kó má tati were*” (the mother never hears the cry of her child without heeding to it).

My research re-iterates that Western feminism cannot and should not be a yardstick to evaluate women in the Yorùbá society. It is therefore, not surprising that African women, Yorùbá women especially are observed to have adopted that brand of feminism that is relevant to our cultural values. Although mothers are merciful, and utilise whatever power or resources they have to sustain the family,

the incursion of colonialism seems to have reversed the virtues of women as today, some mothers encourage their own children to get involved in trafficking and prostitution.

### **Historical Theory versus New Historicism in Yorùbá Literature**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, and distinguished audience, I have applied the theory of New Historicism to Yorùbá historical novels. In a study entitled: “Literature and History: A study of Nigerian indigenous historical novels,” I used the theory to analyse Ládélé’s *Igbì Ayé n’ yí, Jẹ n’Lògbà Tèmi* and Owólabí’s *Òtẹ̀ Nibò* among others and came to the conclusion that New Historicism is relevant, and is more embracing and innovative than historical theory. This paper was published in an international journal *Yorùbá Studies Review*, 2016. Also, one of my Ph.D. students Dr. (Mrs.) Hamzat, S.A.O domesticated the theory of New Historicism to analyse selected Yorùbá plays successfully. New Historicism assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it. Unlike the Historical theory of the past, which asks two questions such as ‘What happened?’ ‘And what does the event tell us about history?’; New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. It is more broad based than historical theory and is quite new in Yorùbá literary scholarship. New ideas usually bring innovations and I have contextualized New Historicism to extend and enrich our understanding of Yoruba historical novels.

In my application of New Historicism to the novels of Delano’s *Lójò Ojòun*, Aiyè Daiyè Oyinbo, Ladele’s *Jẹ n*

*Lògbà Tèmi*, *Igbì Ayé n' yí* and Owólabí's *Òtè Nibò*, it is discovered that the Yorùbá novelists generally use their knowledge of Yorùbá oral traditions, personal experiences, and other written sources to represent and interpret Yorùbá history. However, Ladele unlike others, is not only concerned about the misuse of power by the Yorùbá Qbas against their subjects in *Igbì Ayé yí* during the pre-colonial and colonial periods; also the novelist is not interested in the benefits of the new political dispensation brought about by the colonial masters. His sole interest is change. Political power has to change from a monolithic leadership to a democratic dispensation; a change that would bring prosperity, equality and justice to the masses; a change that will end oppression of the masses by few lineage-offspring in the society. Ladele's novels were written in the 60s and 70s and he was using his novels to clamour for change. That was some decades ago. Today things have hardly changed from what the writer was condemning; indeed, they are even worse. We are witnessing an economic recession, suicide because of poverty, disease; want and what have you is on increase. Nigeria needs prayer and determination for a true change for the better.

### **Theorising in Nativism**

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, our colonial past and the negative representation of our collective civilisation in the literary canons of our colonial masters and inheritors of the colonial legacy still hunt us till date. According to Bhabha (1994, p. 63), the painful and humiliating "memory" of colonialism has affected the image, status, functional use and loyalty to the African indigenous languages and literatures, especially the Yorùbá language and literature till today.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, after fifty-seven years of Nigerian independence, the virus of colonialism has continued to affect our vision and perception of indigenous languages and literatures to the extent that people hate cultural values that belong to them and love what belongs to other civilizations. The Yorùbá elders say: *Ọ̀ṣọ́ Ọ̀lọ̀ṣọ́ kò yẹni bí ká ní teni, àgbàbò ọ̀kòtò kò yẹmọ ènìyàn bí kò fún wọn lẹ̀sẹ̀, a sọ wọn rẹ́gírẹ́gí lohun ẹni í báni mu.* (An imitated fashion cannot be compared to one's original creation. A borrowed pair of trousers cannot completely fit the wearer, if it is not too tight, then it will be too loose. One's own garment is a perfect fit).

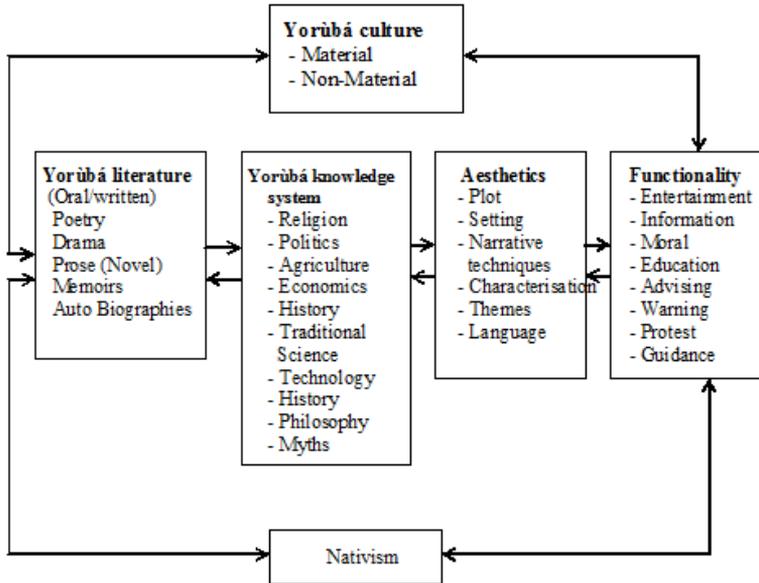
Due to the large scale ignorance of many, the psychological fallout of colonialism and deliberate disdain for indigenous languages and literatures, particularly among the elite speakers, there is therefore the need to look inward and engage in theorising derived from our indigenous knowledge system, which in literary parlance is called *Nativism*. The theory of Nativism, which is called *Tíòrì-ìfojú-ìmọ-ìbilẹ-wò* in Yorùbá meta-language, is one of the most important aspects of my work as a literary theorist. I adopted the nativist model of Postcolonial theory for my doctoral thesis which was ably supervised by Professor Bisi Ogunṣina, Professor Bade Ajayi and Professor Victoria Adunṣola Alabi. Postcolonial is a theory of resistance to colonialism and its attendant codes in African literature. It refers to a way of reading, theorising, interpreting, and investigating colonial oppression and its legacies that are informed by an oppositional ethical agenda (Adeyemi, 2003). My interest in nativism, postcolonial theory and multiculturalism which are all counter discursive theories was kindled from the recognition that the world has been built on exclusivist paradigms and African language literary

criticism cannot continue to be raw material for testing unstable theories from Europe and other foreign nations. The ease and complacency with which Western theories take over the global literary and intellectual arena, and the way they are inscribed on criticism as though the other parts of the world are “tabula rasa” do not go well with me. Osundare (1994, p.6) states that such universalism is “an attitude and behaviour which constitute the world’s literary discourse into a monumental western monologue”.

Within the context of Yorùbá history, Nativism (Nativity) has been a two-fold concept, one negative and the other positive. The negative concept is used to abuse the people through socio-political, cultural and lingual subjugation and oppression, terms such as ‘native authority’, ‘native people’, ‘native language’, ‘native medicine’, ‘native dress’ as forms of anthropological descriptions of ‘savage natives’. The positive concept of nativism refers to the notion of being attached to a particular place, where aliens, imported values, languages and cultures coming from outside are restricted vehemently for the protection and survival of local culture. The theory of nativism is not a subversive one per se; it calls for reaction against the peripherisation of African language literature. It also calls for cultural revival especially the cultural values that can help the society to move forward and create a definite identity for African language literature in the comity of world literatures. Nativism is for re-invention and re-construction of Yorùbá morality which the “master” had tried to destroy through literature. It is a “look back” to the relevant aspects of our traditional civilisation. I believe that Yorùbá literary criticism and theory must have its roots deep in Yorùbá culture; must take its birth from Yorùbá experience and

culture and must pulsate with Yorùbá feelings and knowledge system.

In his epoch making book entitled: *Proverbs, Textuality and Nativism in African Literature*, Adeleke (1998) classifies Nativism into three groups: namely; thematic or classical nativism, structuralist or speculative nativism and linguistic nativism. Classical nativism demands relevance as African aesthetic principle, linguistic nativism demands that indigenous languages must be the language of African literature or at worst translate those in foreign languages to indigenous languages, while structuralist nativism campaigns for the identity makers for African literature. Contrary to the views of Appiah (2012, p. 249) that” we need to transcend the banalities of nativism - its images of purgation, its declarations, in the face of international capital, of a specious “autonomy”, its facile topologies”, I hold and believe in the tenets and principles of Nativism for the following reasons: it recognizes the centrality of indigenous languages in the project of post-colonial transformation because we think and dream in our mother tongues; and it advocates representation and preservation of indigenous Yorùbá knowledge system in literary criticism.



**Figure 2: Schematic representation of theory of Nativism (Adéyemí, 2017)**

It is clear from the foregoing Mr. Vice- Chancellor Sir, that Nativism is not afraid of the universal criteria for evaluating literature; rather it advocates indigenous standard with its own principles. I have used Nativism to analyse the theme of politics in the works of Afọlabi Oḷabimtan. For example, the theme of politics is the focus of *Baba Rere*, *Orilawẹ Àdìgún* and *Oláòrẹ Afòtẹjoyẹ*. In *Baba Rere*, Oḷabimtan condemns the ideology of ‘god fatherism’ in Nigeria politics because the god fathers appropriate the benefits of the nascent democratic dispensation to themselves rather than to the masses. In *Orilawẹ Àdìgún*, Oḷabimtan uses proverbial strategies to bring out the theme

of the novel in line with the tradition of the Yorùbá elders. The author creatively weaves proverbs into the plot, and characterisation of the text with strategic selection of events in a variety of ways. Through the creative use of proverbs the novelist brings out many fundamental issues in Nigerian politics and presents messages to his readers. Olabimtan depicts and satirises the civilian government of the post-colonial Nigeria. The ruling party is called *Egbé Nínálowó* (Money –is-for-spending) while the opposition is called *Egbé Motótàn* (*I can do it alone*). The name of the ruling party is symbolic of the financial recklessness of the ruling class. The ideology of the ruling party is primitive capitalism, where money is ‘god’ and accumulation of material things is taken as an article of faith.

Olabimtan’s heroes always get involved in political life as constructor, organiser, permanent persuader, victim and victor and lover of the teeming masses. Olabimtan always makes an asymmetrical arrangement of his characters to illustrate the oppressor/oppressed syndrome in his novels and plays. For example, Àlàbí versus Aleksanda the Chief Immigration Officer in *Àyànmó*; the people of Owode and the political class in *Orílawè Adìgún*; and Obalòwò versus Olàòrè in *Olàòrè Afòtèjoyè* (*a play*) among others. Such a construction patterning shows class contradictions as contrasted in the lives of the people of Nigeria since independence. The theory of nativism has made me to discover in Olabimtan’s literary texts the fact that the lopsidedness in the distribution of the national wealth, negation of African moral values in politics and excessive love for materialism by the ruling class constitute critical problems in Nigerian society (See Adeyemi, 2003,2009 & 2011).

In Yorùbá philosophy, everything that exists, visible or invisible, human or superhuman, has secret names or epithets. The seen and unseen forces can be manipulated or controlled through rituals, sacrifices, and spoken words (Adeyemi, 2010 a). The reactions of Yorùbá writers to this type of mystery cannot be evaluated within the western criteria; rather, it is only in Nativism that meaningful explanation can be given. In Ladele's *Jẹ Ng Logba Temi*, a novel that satirises the negative influences of colonialism on Yorùbá cultural values, we record an event that cannot be explained on the ground of logic. Strands of hair from Eésítà's head are combined with other ingredients, tied together and placed under the big-stone anvil at the blacksmith's foundry. As the blacksmith hits hot iron on the anvil, Eésítà, though many kilometers away, begins to suffer a splitting headache until she dies. The narrator states: *Fòrò tí wọn yọ irin, ó di orí ògún; ó di ke, ke, ke, ke, ke...! Bí owú ti ñ bọ lu irin lórí ògún ni Eésítà ñ ké: Yéè! Yéè!. Ori ñ fọ mí, orí ñ là mí, ẹ gbà mí, ẹ rà mí, mo gbé o, mo dáràn. Yéè! (o. i. 68).* (They hit the hot iron and Esther cried of headache saying: My head, help me, deliver me, I am dying). There is no way one can explain the logic behind this episode outside the theory of nativism.

Another amazing event is the story of the returning coin in Jẹboda's *Olówólayémò*. Jẹboda situates his narrative in the events surrounding Nigeria's independence and the turmoil that followed it. The novel presents and condemns bribery and corruption in post-independent Nigeria; the love of money and the craze for materialism become the order of the day. The dependent economy cannot sustain the people, so when the main character, Olówólayémò, becomes jobless, he goes to a medicine man to procure *Ánábò* - a two shilling

piece that returns to his pocket each time he spends it. He would spend part of the money, take his change and immediately the original two shillings piece would come back to his pocket. This event cannot be explained within the context of foreign theories; it is marvelous, and it can only be fully explained through the African indigenous knowledge system. However, later when the character is caught and sent to jail for the offence, the reality of the mystery manifests.

My research has revealed that what western theories cannot explain, *nativism* has explanation for it and this is fully explained by me in Adeyemi (2010). The editor of *African Studies Series*, in Beyreuth, University of Germany that published the paper, states that Adeyemi's magical realist views of some Yorùbá texts "is a seminal contribution to the theoretical reading of indigenous literary works" (p. 9). The argument here is that magical realism from the point of view of nativism enables us to locate the literary text from wider possibilities. Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I have coined nativism from postcolonial theory and have successfully trained many of my undergraduate and postgraduate students in the theory such that whatever foreign theory they use, adopt or adapt, it should fall within the criteria of nativism which makes Yorùbá knowledge system the basis of literary criticism.

### **New Trends and the Future of Theory in Yorùbá Literary Criticism**

The new trend in Yorùbá literary criticism is to use theories to analyse societal challenges and proffer solutions because theory is now tantamount to critical and creative thinking and thinkers are the fundamentals of development. It

is gratifying to note that unlike before when the use of theory for analysis and interpretation was optional, literary scholars have come to see the benefits inherent in the application of theories in Yorùbá literary criticism. The new trend therefore is that the use of theories in Yorùbá literary criticism has come to stay as evident in many of my research publications. For example, I examined alienation and hegemony in Jibólá Abíódún's *Adiye Bà Lókùn* within Genetic structuralism and confirmed the position of literary sociologists that the values of literary works transcend ordinary aesthetics of literature (Adeyemi, 1998). Also, I applied the theory of nativism to study oratory style in Lawuyi Ogunniran's *Omọ Aláte Ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* (Adeyemi, 2001). The title of the play *Omọ Aláte Ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* connotes the status of the Yorùbá race before the commencement of the sporadic disintegration of the Yorùbá kingdoms, which reduces them to *Omọ Aláte Òrúnlá* literally, the offspring of dry grounded okro seller/ and symbolically the children of the peasant, second class citizens of the society. Èyinlàárò the lead character warns:

*Èyin omọ aláte ilẹ̀kẹ̀, èyin omọ aláte àkùn,  
èyin omọ tó bọ́lá nílẹ̀.*

*Èyin eni a bíire, ilé olá tẹ ẹ wó yìi, sẹ ẹ tẹyin  
Odùduwà sẹ ni?*

*Àfàimò kí tefetefe má yowó ojà, àfàimò kí  
sake sake ma dádíí*

*Àfàimò kómọ Aláte ilẹ̀kẹ̀ kó má dómọ aláte  
òrúnlá... È dá a rò láààrin ara yín. (o.i.87).*

You the offspring of bead sellers/kings, you  
the offspring of costly bead owners/kings.  
You that inherit honour, you children of great  
heritage, the house you have destroyed have

you done this to honour Odùduwà your progenitor? Unless something is done quick, there is no how the offspring of kings and the nobles would not become the offspring of dry okro sellers (peasants). Think about all these among you (p. 87).

The message of the quotation is a call for unity among the Yorùbá people especially the political leaders and kings who are constantly in battle for political or leadership position in Nigeria.

In my critical examination of Afọlabi Ọlabimtan's *Orilawẹ Àdìgún* and Olú Owólabi's *Bóbadé Onígègé Ọtẹ*, I discovered the intersections of proverbs and politics in the Nigerian context. In that study, the relevance of linguistics to literary analysis by using speech acts theory thus confirms the existing views that the functional use of proverbs by both novelists shows sensitivity to context of interaction. My nativist approach to theory of Ecocriticism in Adeyemi (2012) is a pioneering effort in the ecosensitive reading of the novels of D.O Fágúnwà. In the study, I adopted conservationist ecocriticism to analyse the concept of climate change used by Fagunwa in *Ìrìnkèrindò* to convey in a symbolic manner, the timeless truth that nothing or no condition is permanent in life as everything that has a beginning, good or bad, must surely have an end. Fagunwa presents this fact thus:

*Ìgbèhìn òwúrò ni òsán: ìgbèhìn òsán ni alẹ.  
Ìgbèhìn èniyàn ni ikú: ìgbèhìn óúnjẹ ni orí  
ààtàn; ìgbèhìn ìgbà òjò ni ìgbà èrùn...  
(o.i:3).*

The end of the morning is noon; the end of noon is night; the end of man is death; the end of food is the dung hill; the end of the rainy season is the dry season... (p.3)

The future of theory in the humanities, particularly in Yorùbá literary criticism, looks good as amply demonstrated in my research studies. Also, more and more Yorùbá literary scholars now employ theories in their analysis of literature. In my duties as a trainer and supervisor, I have always encouraged my students, particularly graduate students to make theories the cornerstone of their literary analyses. Three of my graduate students Dr. Adeosun, Dr. Ogunlola, Dr. (Mrs.) Hamzat among many others are good illustrative examples of such disciples who used relevant theories in their doctoral theses.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, and distinguished audience, in this lecture, I have tried to explain my contributions to Yorùbá literary criticism, theories and theorising in nativism. I have also explained my efforts at scrutinising and contextualising major critical approaches in vogue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century relevant to Yorùbá literary texts, the novel especially to the benefit of my students, to provoke their curiosity and ignite their critical consciousness and reflection while Nativist principles from a theory rooted in African's rich and dynamic history and culture, saturate my research works in order to advance the philosophy of Ọmọlúábí and discourage the treatment of Yorùbá literary works as inferior or irrelevant in the comity of global literature.

I have also put my theoretical postulations to practice by being a published creative writer using the Yorùbá language medium. My most recent play is *Ìṣẹ̀lú Onírèké Ògè* (2014) (Politics of Sweetness and Bitterness) and other published creative works in line with my nativist principles are: *Àkùkọ̀ Gàgàrà* (2001) (The Over-mighty Cock), *Ògá Nìyá Mì* (2005) (My Mother is Great), *Kòrò tó Dayò* (2011) (Before the Dawn of Joy), and *Kò Sáyè Láàfìn* (2015) (No Vacancy in the Palace). I have also written a textbook entitled: *Children's Literature and Yorùbá Literary Disability Criticism* to interpret and evaluate how Yorùbá literary productions represent disability and disabled people (Adeyemi, 2013). The book inaugurates literary disability criticism in Yorùbá literary scholarship. Since I became Professor, I have had a fresh impetus to continue to shape and influence contemporary literary scholarship in my discipline.

### **Recommendations**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, an inaugural lecture like this offers one the opportunity to sensitise the society on national challenges as regards indigenous literatures and ways of overcoming them. The identity, civilisation and development of any nation depend on her material and non-material cultural heritage including their literatures. In view of this, the following recommendations are considered relevant to rescue Yorùbá literature in particular, and indeed other Nigerian indigenous literatures, from dying out:

## **A. The Government**

1. The Federal Government should set up a National Literature Committee that would be in-charge of indigenous literary works for documentation and development. The Committee should encourage and motivate indigenous writers by organising literary competitions at state and national levels while prizes are awarded deserving writers. At present, only writers in the English language medium are encouraged, rewarded and recognised. Indigenous writers in Yorùbá medium should no longer be ignored. Each state of the federation should set up indigenous literature committee under the State Ministry of Education to be concerned with the improvement and preservation of indigenous written literature. This kind of committee was established in the Western Region in August 1944 known as Western Region Literature Committee; it motivated the early Yorùbá writers. Such a committee would see to it that indigenous writers and their works do not go into extinction.

2. Indigenous languages and literatures should be given the attention they deserve in the school curriculum. A situation where the teaching and learning of Yorùbá language and literature is made optional at the secondary school level portends a great danger of extinction for Nigeria's indigenous languages and literatures.

## **B. Writers of Indigenous Language Expression**

3. African writers and most especially, African literature in indigenous language expression should come together as a force to ensure that African literature in indigenous languages is given recognition as is being done for literature of English expression.

### **C. Parents and Guardians**

4. Parents and guardians especially the elite should no longer discourage their children and wards from speaking the Yorùbá language; rather they should encourage them to love, speak, read and write in their mother tongue.

5. Finally, the house of Odùduwà (both continental and Global Yorùbá), traditional rulers, corporate groups, individuals, and organisations must not allow Yorùbá language and literature to die. They must support academic researches in Yorùbá studies through awards of fellowships and grants to researchers, scholarships to Yorùbá students, and financial reinforcement or support to indigenous publishers to reduce the burden borne by writers in the publication of Yorùbá texts.

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