

Literary Hypotexts, Filmic Intertexts and Histrigraphic Hypertexts: Money and Power Problematized in Tunde Kelani's *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* and *Saworo Ide*

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ABSTRACT

This essay is an attempt to view two films from Tunde Kelani – *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* and *Saworo Ide* within the binoculars of Intertextuality to reveal both films as exhibiting recognizable resemblances with extant texts. Within this analytical mindset, the films are foregrounded as instances of the Auteur speaking with his audience through the technicalities of cinema. The study therefore reduces notable filmic elements to textual numerates that are representative of histrigraphic iconographs which either predate or succeed the evolution of the films. Consequently with the theory of Intertextuality as tool, both films are viewed as (inter)texts since they are considered as procedural cinematic moment in continuums that capture and define extant scenarios that are codable as texts.

Keywords: Literary Hypotext, Film, Text, Intertextuality, Hypertext

INTRODUCTION

“Once he [Tunde Kelani] discovered the relationship between literature and drama, he adopted literary adaptations as a working model for his filmmaking”

The introduction of Tunde Kelani's movies into the Nollywood's filmic ambience revolutionized the Nigeria's movie industry from that which, to some, had seemingly reached its creative *menopause* as evidenced by the lackluster representation of the Nigerian socio-political seaming peddled by the catalogue of Yoruba expression movies. Drawing from the quote used as epitaph of this essay, it is not by share serendipity that one would notice the convergence of both literary elements and filmic trajectories in Kelani-auteuredoeuvres. Little wonder notable among the array of movies anchored by Kelani as the auteur/director are evidences of adaptations of extant literary texts; among these are *Oleku*, *Koseegbe* and of course *Saworo Ide*. Even where Kelani's film does not draw on literary text, one is bound to believe that, the auteur is sensitive to the literary technicalities that abound in stories for him to depend on them as cinema's apparatuses. Thus, to address Kelani as a director of reputable standing in Africa's film topography is to identify an auteur who always pays attention to

the literary content, and flavour, of the story line at hand. Given this sensitivity to the *literariness* of stories, and also operating from our knowledge of Kelani as a virtuoso of immeasurable experience in cinematographic matters, one may not be far from the truth to label him as a cinemato-creative figure who adequately scoops from both ends of the available continua of filmmaking.

From the foregoing creative traits attributed to Tunde Kelani, one is bound to assume that an attempt at understanding the histrionics in his diverse oeuvres cannot be easily achieved without coordinated links of the trajectories of the literary essence of his stories, the technical and cinematic picturesque foregrounded for the stories and the contextual textures of the stories which present them as recognizable correlates of history in the postcolonial milieu. These distinctions have provided the analytic tripod for this essay as we intend to pursue specific objectives using the movies, *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (1993) and *Saworo Ide* (1999) as the contact points to Kelani's intention to demonstrate that the frenzied pursuit of political 'power' and money is responsible for the creation of Nigeria's endemic dysfunctions. These dysfunctions, typify the country as one of the most (if not the most) corrupt countries of the

world. Such objectives will therefore mandate the researcher to appropriate the selected films as evolutions from textual antecedents of historical politics especially as we argue that both movies have not radiated totally novel scenarios uncommon to the Nigerian audience. Hence, this study intends to capture Kelani's filmic essence as more of the creation from the artifacts of extant historico-literary texts (published or not) which are translatable into interpretable screenplays.

Kelani, like any successful auteur, operates with one basic intention: to speak to the people through the mechanics of the Cinema. To do this successfully, it is obvious that he understands the mandate set for the *speaker* by Michail Bakhtin that,

Any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he proposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances – his own and others – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another ()

To factor Bakhtin's opinion into the matrix of the present discourse, we are most likely circumscribed to grapple with the obvious background that the stories peddled in both *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* and *Saworo Ide* are drawn from extant texts pervasive within the socio-political terrain of Nigeria. Given this reality, this research must rest on the rubric of Intertextuality to understand the likely *modus operandi* responsible in the practical *transfiguration* of texts, the result of which has brought out the *filmic* from the *textual*.

It is therefore apt to probe into the selected films of Tunde Kelani, first via the literaro-textual forms that provided the narrative templates for the auteur; and later through the foreground of cinematic elements. To justify the choice of the theory for the study, it may be rewarding to draw from Christian Metz (1974), as referenced by Mohammad Kosravi Shakib (2013). Metz notes that "films are not only an artwork, but, rather, a textual system that constitutes its own original, singular totality, in which the author, if involved at all, is only a constituent of this system." As occasioned by a reference to the quote, the author of the film is not merely to be

seen as a creator of the textual system but a part of the system. To operate from this standpoint, one must also draw from the scholarships of auteurism to sift usable elements from the auteur theory, if possible, to appropriate theoretical synergy for the study that can be labelled Auteur Intertextuality. Auteur Intertextuality appropriates the filmic text as recognizably festooned with icons from contiguous texts. As Mohammad Khosravi Shakib (2013:4) points out,

Today, it seems to be more appropriate to speak of film as one medium among others which interacts as multimedia, or is connected to one another intermedially. The same film can be seen on cinema, on TV, on video, and DVD. According to Metz, film, picture, color, sound, motion, and adaptation from literature, whether technological or mechanical, make film a sort of technical intertextuality.

From the foregoing, it is possible to discover certain structural nexus that particular films share with one another especially as they radiate microcosms of agglutinated thematic elements from their auteurs. This discovery is made possible through the workings of Auteur Intertextuality.

INTERTEXTUALITY: THEORIZING WITH THE FILMIC TEXT

Intertextuality was coined as a term to describe the connection between two texts. Although Julia Kristeva is often credited as the progenitor of the theory, its theoretical basics could be traced to Bakhtin's notion. For Bakhtin, every utterance is interdependent and interrelated with extant utterances especially if speakers are operating from similar discursive range. With his opinion, Bakhtin has successfully laid the foundation for what was later to be the main critical commitment for which Kristeva would become very prominent. As presented in *Shodhganga: A Reservoir of Indian theses @ INFLIBNET*

The term intertextuality came up during the 1960s as there was a shift from structuralism to poststructuralism. It was Julia Kristeva who is understood to use the term intertextuality for the first time. Kristeva developed her theory of intertextuality with inspiration from Bakhtin who said that no utterance is independent and their meaning and logic are dependent upon what has already

been said and how it is received by others. All utterances, according to him, are responses to earlier utterances and are addressed to specific addressees. Based on Bakhtin's idea of dialogism Kristeva develops her theory of intertextuality (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/134923/9/09_chapter%203.pdf).

In "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept", María Jesús Martínez Alfaro lends support to the foregoing when he also posits that

Intertextuality as a term was first used in Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966) and then in "The Bounded Text" (1966-67), essays she wrote shortly after arriving in Paris from her native Bulgaria. The concept of intertextuality that she initiated proposes the text as a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products. The "literary word", she writes in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", is "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (1980, 65). Developing Bakhtin's spatialization of literary language, she argues that "each word (text) is an inter section of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read (1996:268)

These two instances of definition of intertextuality in terms of its origin and progenitors may suffice for now since the main question for the present research will border on *what it means to practice intertextuality on the cinema*. According to Shakib, the best way to understand the practice of intertextuality is to note that there are two major types of the theory. These are *ekphrasis* and *iconotext*. As Shakib notes,

Ekphrasis was defined by Tom Mitchel, Grant Scott and James Hefferman as "the verbal representation of visual representation" while David Carrier sees it as a "verbal re-creations of visual artwork" (Wagner, 1996, p.10). artwork" (Wagner, 1996). By this definition, both authors mean that ekphrasis comes into being when a writer describes a visual object such as painting or sculpture with a verbal media such as a novel, poem, or other writings. This can be seen in any

literature that tries to describe or portray painting and sculpture...(1-2).

If Ekphrasis Intertextuality amounts to verbal re-creation, then, it can be implied that its main function is to reduce the "graphic" into the "linguistic" via the procedure of iconographic transformation of the *seen* to the *uttered* in man's regular endeavour to evoke meaning from his environment. Shakib explains Ekphrasis Intertextuality further as he notes, "for instance, painting does not have voice but when one describes painting in writing, he is intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly giving voice to this painting" (2).

Of the second category of intertextuality called iconotext, Shakib says it is "the use of (by way of reference or allusion, in an explicit or implicit way) an image in a text or vice versa". As Michael Nerlich notes on this brand of Intertextuality, an iconotextual work is a work of art made up of visual and verbal signs. Also for Alain Montandon, iconotextual intertextuality has occurred when, in an instance of a piece of creativity, writing and plastic elements present themselves in perceivable, and inseparable, totality. Such totality, according to Shakib,

can ... be seen in story like *One Thousand and One Night* in which pictures are used in various parts of the story to give image to the writing. It should be noted that the said novel has been reproduced as film, but we will come to that later when discussing film as an example of intertextuality (2).

Our understanding of Shakib's notion of both Ekphrasis and iconotext is that they both describe the synergy between the graphic and the linguistic. While Ekphrasis gives prominence to the linguistic manifestations that flicker out of the pictorial codes in a graphic piece, Iconotext seems to provide explanations to how the human contextual milieu (translatable in linguistic term) is coded in graphic term to create miniaturized totality that explains the real totality. Any modern film is an instance of both Ekphrasis and iconotext since it coagulates all the semiotic codes and fuses them into one cinematic instance that builds *movement* into sounds and pictures through cineatographic skills. Barthes labels films as the examples of "cinematic artwork" which, according to Shakib, are "works of authors who at certain time and with certain technical and

aesthetic means had managed to create...” (3). With Barthes' opinion in mind, one may assume that a film is a *text* especially given the circumstance that “it seems to be more appropriate to speak of film as one medium among others which interacts as multimedia, or is connected to one another intermedially” (Shakib, 1974:3).

Interestingly, Kristeva describes a text in terms of two axes - the *horizontal axis* which connects the author and reader of a text, and the *vertical axis*, which connects the text to other texts (Kristeva 1980). The unification of the two axes will often fuse the trio of “the author”, “his creativity” and “his muse” into a monolithic aesthetics. Chandler writes:

Uniting these two axes are shared codes: every text and every reading depends on prior codes. Kristeva declared that 'every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it' (cited in Culler 1981, 105). She argued that rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text we should study its 'structuration' (how the structure came into being). This involved siting it 'within the totality of previous or synchronic texts' of which it was a 'transformation' (163)

The *horizontal* ‘shared codes’ between the author and the reader (or the auteur and audience) is what the pragmatists label ‘the knowledge of the world’ which provides the contextual background for both parties. Thus what the author has written is intelligible to the reader not because of the latter’s brilliance but, because, the ability to decode the evolving text, which has been supplied by the contextual codes that are mutually intelligible to them, is based on experience.

Similarly, the *vertical* shared codes which connect substantive text to the ‘other texts’ can also be traced to the knowledge of the world which is responsible for the structuro-textual form-giving of the earlier texts, the substantive text and the later ones. Thus, the most constant element to the different textual manifestations is the knowledge of the world which is supplied by the socio-cultural underpinnings and the historical paraphernalia surrounding the text creator. Consequently, the *structuration* of the text rests solely on the knowledge of the world. This provides the explanation for Kristeva’s opinion that 'every text is from the outset under

the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it'. Every new text therefore has to blend into a universe of extant discourse to operate.

HYPOTEXT, INTERTEXT AND HYPERTEXT

In the coinages Hypotext, Intertext and Hypertext, the common denominator is *text*. A text, according to Heinrich Plett (1991:5), “may be regarded as an autonomous sign structure, delimited and coherent. Its boundaries are indicated by its beginning, middle and end, its coherence by the deliberately interrelated conjunction of its constituents”. The autonomy of a text is restricted because its intratextual structures co-exist syntagmatically to create internal synchrony. A text, according to Michael Halliday, must however depend on other paradigmatic elements outside it to attain *texture*, which actually qualifies it as text. Hence, a text is not a text only because it houses and coordinates internal structural elements, but because it is also dependent on extra-linguistic and extra-literary elements that are outside its constituent’s structural configuration which makes it an instance of meaningful unit. Because a text is referentially situated in-between both *endophoric* (structural elements within the text) and *exophoric* (contextual elements outside the text) elements, it is adjudged an *intertext*. This is somewhat an indication that a text always sandwiched between other texts.

Explaining the intertext, Plett claims that it is

characterized by attributes that exceed it. It is not delimited, but de-limited, for its constituents refer to constituents of one or several other texts. Therefore it has a twofold coherence: an *intratextual* one which guarantees the immanent [structural] integrity of the text, and an *intertextual* one which creates structural relations between itself and other texts (4).

Plett’s explanation of *intertext* adequately correlates with our own opinion about the *text* since both depend on paradigmatic indices and it appears that the complicated alchemy of the (*inter*)*text* is responsible for the paradoxical syllogisms that “all *intertexts* are *texts*” (Plett, 4), and “every *text* is *intertext*” (Leitch 1983, 59). Plett mentions a ‘twofold coherence’ for the intertext which indicates that it relates with the ‘other texts’ before it, **A**, and after it, **B**. It is therefore apt to assume that intertext is a

converging level where **A** fuses with **B** to result in **AB**. Logically, using the *if...then* parameter, the foregoing premise where **A** implies *Hypotext* and **B** implies *Hypertext* while **AB** becomes the emerging *Intertext* is possible. Hence:

A = *Hypotext*

B = *Hypertext*

AB=Intertext → *Text*

As Graham Allen (2000:214) puts it, hypotext, that is text 'A', is 'the earlier text'. Of the earlier text, we can say it represents *what exists before the text*. For Allen therefore, *hypertext* may be labelled as *what ensues after the text* if to go by his permutation that hypertextuality accounts for 'any relationship uniting a text B ... to an earlier text A (... the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary'.

To Kristeva herself, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva, 1980: 66). By *mosaic of quotation* Kristeva has implied that there is the sufficiency of extant text elements from recognizable linguistic, historical and socio-political antecedents in any substantive text. Consequently, the structural and thematic upbringing of a text is tied to its ability to draw influences from what is before it (hypotext) and what is likely to be after it (hypertext).

For the purpose of this study, notwithstanding whether conventional rules are broken, *hypotext* shall be treated as the extant text that exists before the creation of a given text while our assumption is that *hypertext* suggests another text after the given text. Any time a critic considers a text for analysis, such must be regarded as an intertext since it has been proved that texts are bound hypotexts and hypertexts. Plett's explanation proves this further:

Whenever a new text comes into being it relates to previous texts and in its turn becomes the precursor of subsequent texts. What can be said for the production of texts also applies to their reception. No hermeneutic act can consider a single text in isolation. Rather it is an experience with a retrospective as well as a prospective dimension. This means for the text: it is an intertext, i.e. simultaneously post-text and pre-text (17).

FILMS AS TEXTS

As it concerns the present study, two movies – *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (part 1) and *Saworo Ide* – have

been selected from Tunde Kelani's Oeuvres for analysis to yield their intertextual correlations with analogous texts which are mainly sourced from the extant happenings around the time the films are being put together. We shall therefore consider both movies as "film texts". The film text, according to Robert Stam (2000:186), "is not just a random slice of life but a structured discourse" (2000:186). To appropriate any movie as a film text is to agree with Voller and Widdows (1993) that films are texts that tell stories, create characters and contain recognizable messages. Such as has been attempted in this study, the intertextual analysis of films has been variously attempted by several scholars of repute. Consider the following:

Textual analysis in films has been influenced by structuralism, narratology, psychoanalysis, Prague School aesthetics and literary deconstruction. Thus, Metz, Barthes, Lacan, Propp became the base for film analysis. Stam cites the examples of some early attempt at textual analysis of film: Marie-Claire Ropars Wuilleumier's analysis of *India Song* and *October*, Julia Lesage's study of Renoir's *Rules of Games* using Barthes 'five codes' (*Shodhganga: A Reservoir of Indian theses @ INFLIBNET*).

With such notable scholarly activities on films, the filmic essence has emerged to be treated as corollary of literary text and its interpretations analogous to those of text of literature. As Stam has noted, textual analysis of films would always lead to auteurism especially given the circumstance that auteurs like authors are text producers. Intertextuality therefore provides adequately for the analysis of the film texts. Consequently,

[b]uilding on Kristeva's theory of intertextuality films began to be read as related to other texts and cinema had a gamut of artistic traditions to relate to. In its frame is engraved human history, civilization, philosophy, thoughts and beliefs (*Shodhganga*, 73)

Also as María Jesús Martínez Al faro writes, "There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text" one is bound to agree that it is not out of place to adopt the theoretical strategy of intertextuality to evaluate the selected films as macrocosmic texts which satirically reflect influences from the sandwiching texts. Martínez Al faro further insists that the concept of

intertextuality requires... that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures (1996: 268).

Hence in studying films from the purview of intertextuality as attempted here, *Shodhganga* insists that “we are to remember the long cultural and literary histories that have fed the narrative of the films” basically because “in studying the contemporary, we must remember the lineage that film history has left for the posterity”. Most notably, this study takes this advice as vital to its analyses of the selected films to consider the socio-cultural and historiographical backgrounds that predate and succeed the movies, which manifest as their hypotexts and hypertexts, as converging to evolve the filmic texts.

Both films are products of antecedents in cinematographic properties and in the properties of social, economic and political sensitivities. Worthy of note is the way both films have portrayed how the Yoruba society, by implication the Nigerian polity, is ruled by a category of citizens whose interests are mainly to arrogate POWER and accumulate MONEY.

Ti Oluwa Ni Ile: An Intertext of Nigerian Socio-Economic and Political Realities

Ti Oluwa Ni Ile is a film of Yoruba expression from Mainframe Productions which is anchored by Tunde Kelani. That the film was produced in the year 1993 authenticates that it ranks to be labelled as postmodern film. As noted by *Shodhganga*,

Films in the postmodern era are fundamentally intertextual. There is a conscious mix of genre, artistic style, elements and others in the film text that roam in the vast realm of texts already written or produced (75).

At the time of the production of the selected films, Tunde Kelani, who was born in 1948, had seen different ages of film making in Nigeria; and had performed creditably well on other people's sets as storyteller, director, photographer, cinematographer and producer in a career that had spanned more than twenty five years. Having functioned so well in the technical departments of different productions, it was possible for him to factor his wealth of experiences into his own production thereby

agglutinating the various technicalities of the extant genres within the popular -woods (Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood etc.). In an interaction with Akin Adesokan, Kelani explains:

At [the beginning], the home videos already produced were disappointing and had [a] very bad reputation. I was sure that they could be better produced and was determined to select a story that drew on the same dramatic elements employed in the other attempts (2001:86).

It is perhaps because of the foregoing that *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* became an instant success.

To say *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* is intertextual is to corroborate our initial position that the film is an intertext which reflects in its filmic countenance semblances of earlier texts. This is even evident in the title of the film – tioluwaniile (the earth is the Lord's) – which is an adaptation from a notable Bible verse, Psalm 24 verse 1, which reads:

The earth is the Lord's, and
The fullness thereof; the world, and they
that dwell there-in

Christians make reference to this particular verse when they desire to elevate their spirit that God is the custodian of all prosperity and that there is nothing too difficult for Him to provide for His children. That Kelanititled the movie from this very prominent Bible verse, which is also cited in 1 Corinthians 10: 26 and 28, is a pointer to the story line which is not entirely expected to reflect a new thing. The direction to which the story in the film tilts cannot allow the title to align with the Biblical connotations and one may just accept that the denotative translation of “Ti Oluwani Ile” as *The land belong to (or is owned by) God* suffices as the English sub-title.

Ti Oluwa Ni Ile tells the story of Asiyambi, a traditional chief (a role played by Kareem Adepoju aka “Baba Wande”, formerly of the Oyin Adejobitravelling theatre based in Osogbo). Asiyambi conspires with some other citizens of the town to sell a piece of reserved ancestral land to an oil company. He finds himself being haunted by spirits who have presumably killed the other culprits (Sanya and JP) in the fraudulent enterprises of the land's sale one after the other. Ayiyambi visits a herbalist who claims that the only thing that can avert his death is to prevent the burial of the

deceased duo. Asiyambi stages contrivances targeted at dissuading the families of the deceased from burying their corpses and when it seems the families are no longer fooled by his scheme, he confesses that he is the third of the devilish trio that sold the land of the spirits. The story in Part 1 ends.

Kelani confirms that the story is not originally his own creation to justify the incursion of the hypotextual elements in the filmic essence.

We released the film and it was very successful. A few months after the release, a young man phoned me to make an appointment to discuss the film. When he arrived he claimed to have been the person who told the story to my collaborator. He supported his assertion by telling me that it is a true story which was still unfolding in his village. He also informed me that he plans to go back to his village in due course to know where things stand on the story.

When we look at the main crisis of the film, we discover that the thesis is centrifugally linked to the incorrigible crave for money. Asiyambi uses his post as a chief, a custodian of tradition, to defraud the community. The complicity to sell the piece of land, though does not begin with him, is dubiously supported by Asiyambi. He proceeds to bear force witness in the courtroom to swindle the court's audience into believing that the said land does not belong to the ancestors as initially claimed.

The film starts with a stylized prologue resonating a sound track that is reminiscent of the Nollywood horror movies, the likes of Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*. A depiction of grotesque looking creatures and lamp-carrying women in the dead of the night, trafficking the contentious land, instantly suggests that something to come in the main body of the film is likely cataclysmic. To buttress the fact that the main intention of the auteur is to problematize with money-related issues, a number of scenes are quite fundamental to note. The film, for instance, begins with a scene where Sanya leads Mr Johnson, a prospective land buyer, to a piece of land for sale. This scene acquaints the audience with the main focal issue suggested by the title – land.

Sanya: Here we are, from here to that iroko tree (*pointing*), the whole expanse is ours.

Mr Johnson: (*Indifferent*) Can't we get another land?

The topical issue in this dialogue turns to be the leitmotif of the film. Although in the dialogue, no mention has been made of money, Sanya's disappointment at Johnson's refusal reveals his determination to make money, at all cost, from the self-styled petrol business man. Sanya's incorrigible yearning for money, which is at the center of the emergent crises, becomes clearer when Mr Johnson suddenly stops to behold the land that befits his proposed filling station.

Sanya: (*soliloquizes as he sees Johnson pointing to the piece of land that presumably belongs to the community*). This man is looking for trouble.

Mr Johnson: (*looks at the land approvingly*) This is alright, I like it. (*He beckons to Sanya*) Mr Sanya, over here please.... This is the land. This is what I want. Just take a look, good road, electricity, telephone facilities....

Sanya: This parcel of land costs N200,000.

As soon as Sanya notices Johnson's determination to get the land at all costs, he takes the advantage and pegs the negotiation at N400, 000. From Sanya's countenance, one is bound to believe that the land in its totality might cost considerably less than this. For this whopping amount of money, Sanya becomes desperate. This particular scene bears intertextual correlations with the happenings of the time as inordinate sales of land among communities in Oshogbo (the location of the film) and environs. Such sales of land were rampant during that time because Osun State was created in 1991 with Oshogbo becoming the Capital city. The immediate response to this was the upsurge in the economy of the area as government offices and parastatals were relocated to the new capital city and government workers trooped in *en masse*. Youths, the likes of Sanya, emerged in the locality and they orchestrated the sales of family lands which would eventually lead to court cases and sometimes assassination. Sanya's activities thus become a link with the hypotexts of realities tapped into by Kelani's professionalism. It is logical to believe that Oke Ajeigbe, the setting of *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile*, is significant in this wise especially given the circumstance that Oshogbo, the location of the film, is a victim of the post-state creation that made the natives demand money excruciatingly as their own rebate of the creation which had happened just two years before the film was shot.

Most land sales of this caliber also, in most cases, involved the community chief and it is not out of place to say that Otun Asiyanbi, the protagonist of the film represents such. Otun's greed for money manifests in the incipient stage of the movie, in fact in the first scene where we come in contact with him. In this scene, Otun and Osi visit a family in order to convey the king's message in respect of the choice of the family head. As both chiefs set to depart, Otun drags feet in anticipation of palm greasing with money. In this scene, the following dialogue ensues:

Otun: (*Drags his feet and turns to one of their two hosts*) Are you taking us for granted?

Hosts: What are we supposed to do?

Otun: Won't you people entertain us?

Hosts: Oh sorry, we are carried away with the discussion. (*The hosts retreat and bring a ceramic dish which they hand over to Otun who in turn opens it clandestinely to prevent Osi from seeing the content*)

Otun: Your gift is not befitting to me alone, not to talk of a delegate of two sent by the

King our Principal. (*He hands back the ceramic dish to the hosts*) Take back your useless thing.

Hosts: Please don't be offended. (*They retreat again to increase the content of the ceramic dish while Osi moves towards Otun*)

Osi: How much was there

Otun: One Hundred Naira

Osi: That's Ok. Let's accept it.

Otun: Is it Ok. Yes. (*The hosts bring back the ceramic dish and hand it to him. He opens it this time approving its content*). That's more like it. Your household will forever be peaceful. You have done well. Bye.

The foregoing dialogue simply exposes Otun's attitude to money. It is therefore not surprising that he jumps at the offer to swindle the village not minding that he is a custodian of tradition. He is promised N50, 000 out of the N200, 000 fraudulently declared as the proceeds from the sale by the duo of JP and Sanya. Otun's instinct for money still makes him to query his portion of a quarter. He however fully supports the enterprise when he is told that each participant would take a flat of N50, 000 and the remaining N50,000 is to be set aside for court case. His greed is also depicted by the gluttony he

displays at the restaurant where he is hosted in a bid to coopt him into the plan. Otun's character in the film blends into a design that reflects the text of what is historically notable in the real world.

JP, the Court Bailiff, is the master planner of the complicity and he, along with Sanya, takes the larger share of the proceeds of the land sales. He is a quintessence of an unsuccessful and unfulfilled bailiff who is always owed and who is married to a cantankerous wife always demanding money from him. We meet him for the first time in the middle of an argument with a client who owes him money. He enters his apartment to find his undergraduate son, who has just returned from a university that had just been shut down, at home. JP cries out to the son, "How many times will they shut down your school in a year?" Although money is the bone of contention in the movie, the reference to the intermittent closures that paralyzed the Nigerian university system in 1993, perhaps designed by the auteur to indict the ruling class is very obvious. Again to refresh our memory, it was in 1993 that Gen. Ibrahim Babangida annulled the Presidential Election presumably won by Chief Moshood Abiola. Several crises ensued which resulted into industrial disharmony. One can thus develop a thesis that JP's digressive statement that divulges the academic *status quo* of his son is Kelani's own statement about the text retrieved from the history of the moment.

The very first contact with JP reveals him as unfulfilled and when Sanya visits him the same night to coopt him into the enterprise, he jumps at it even with greater frenzy than the initiator. JP therefore personifies the hungry thirst for money by the government agent, perhaps his take-home pay cannot actually take him home. For instance while JP is busy with the land deal brought by Sanya, his wife receives a visitor who comes to pay part of the money owed to the husband. The countenances of both the payer and the receiver towards money are noticeably questionable. That JP takes up the land transaction enthusiastically is that he sees it as an opportunity to get rich quick.

The trio of Otun, JP and Sanya form a formidable triumvirate who mis-direct justice to their favour. Sanya, for instance, evolves a fictive story that corroborates his ownership of the contentious land. This story is substantiated by Otun and JP and the land is given to Sanya. Back at the restaurant where they withdraw to

celebrate the victory, Otun makes reference to the title again, this time with a corrupt phraseology – *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile, atiawon to bamo 'tan re* (All lands belong to God and the fake historians). At this point, Otun confesses that all stories told in the court were mere fabrications, thereby corroborating the fact that he is a fake historian who did what he had to do to commodify tradition. Therefore, Otun seems a misnomer among the ruling class of his town. He becomes Kelani's satirical contact point to all who reduce governance to money.

As noted by Kelani himself,

We released the film and it was very successful. A few months after the release, a young man phoned me to make an appointment to discuss the film. When he arrived he claimed to have been the person who told the story to my collaborator. He supported his assertion by telling me that it is a true story which was still unfolding in his village. He also informed me that he plans to go back to his village in due course to know where things stand on the story (my emphasis).

In the end of part one of the film, Otun Asiyambi still escapes death, albeit he is forced to confess his atrocities at the palace. Here we know that the story is still hanging and still far from the end. It becomes difficult for Kelani to end the story in part one because the supplying hypotext has not concluded as noted in my emphasis in the quote.

The Problems of Power and the Crisis of a Nation: *Saworo Ide* as Nigeria's Political Parable

In "Practicing Democracy in Nigerian Films" Akin Adesokan discusses the response of Nollywood to the transformation of Nigeria's social structure "through the economic and political regimes of global neo-liberalism and Nigeria's military rule, and the aesthetic possibilities enabled by video and digital technologies" (2009:599). Although Adesokan's thesis intersects with that of the present study, his interest pins down his own study to Kelani's *Agogo Eewo* while our focus is on *Saworo Ide*, a film which serves as the prelude to *Agogo Eewo*. Same can be said of Babatunde Onikoyi's article titled "Irreducible Africanness and Auteur Theory...". Onikoyi studies a tripartite among which is *Saworo Ide*. However with a thesis to merely examine Kelani's *Saworo Ide*, *Agogo*

Eewo and *Arugba* as 'political movies', Onikoyi's commitment, though very helpful to this study, is a little off the line of our focus since we are interested in *textualizing* the *contextual*. Similarly, Olubunmi Ashaolu's (2016) study of *Saworo Ide* and *Agogo Eewo* operated with a thesis to contend that both films "register the voices of the common people as a weapon for fighting African authoritarianism which impedes the building of an egalitarian society and nation" (202). With this thesis, Ashaolu's focus may somewhat intersect with the focus of the present study. However in the choice of theory, Ashaolu's study has toed a separate line of analysis.

This study depends on the postulations from the praxis of Intertextuality to view *Saworo Ide* as portraying people's incorrigible drive for political power. This reality cannot be played down in the textual thematicization of the film. As implied earlier in the analysis of *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile*, Kelani's commitment in most of his political films is to reveal, *inter alia*, how political office holders use their offices to manipulate citizens into giving them money. For instance, we see the extent to which Otun Asiyambi uses his chiefly opportunities to swindle the populace. Same can be said of the leaders in *Saworo Ide*. Be this as it may, *Saworo Ide* can be interpreted as Kelani's satire against Nigeria's bad leaders whose activities have turned the Nigerian polity to decrepit nationhood. This perhaps is why Tunde Onikoyi (2016:239) refers to the film as among Kelani's 'politically committed movies', claiming:

[f]irst written and published as a literary work by Akin Ishola, *Saworoide*, produced and directed by Tunde Kelani as a film that illustrates the theme of politics and despotic tendencies of those remaining in power unconstitutionally.

Onikoyi's submission here justifies the fact that *Saworo Ide* is a film text that took off from extant texts. This is partly because it is an adaptation of an extant literary text by Akin Ishola, and also because it illustrates the ongoing political dystopianities that characterizes Nigeria's nationhood. Produced in 1999, the movie seems to reflect Kelani's antipathy towards the two categories of leadership that Nigerian citizens have been exposed to – the civilian and the military. Fortunately for Kelani, Nigeria was just few months old in the nascent democracy, which the

country attained after sixteen protracted years of military rule, and the fear of victimization was in the lowest ebb.

Onikoyi provides stridency for this as follows:

Emerging after the decline of the death of the late dictator Sanni Abacha in 1998, these works [*Saworo Ide* and *AgogoEewo*] are the examples of the politically committed production that foster the agenda of the transformation in the post-colony. Filmmakers had a great deal of opportunity to explore freely their fundamental human rights, without fear of being harassed, incarcerated unlawfully or having their studios or film house closed down (242).

It was therefore possible for Kelani to deploy the film as a critical documentary that relays the dysfunctional governments of the past, albeit exhibiting some hopes in the emergent Obasanjoregime which was a taste of democracy after the despotic rule that started with General Mohammadu Buhari in 1983.

The story in *Saworo Ide* presents a town, Jogbo, which installs a very corrupt king, Lápité. Lápité forcefully aborts the installation procedure because he gets wind of the fact that if he completes the ritual, he might not have the opportunity to be a corrupt king, and with this he might lose the opportunity to defraud the town and enrich himself. Summarizing the story, Onikoyi writes:

Jogbo's Flora and Fauna pitches King Lapite (aided by the timber merchants and some self-seeking members of his cabinet) against the youths, who demand a more transparent and humane economic order. They consequently spearhead a revolt and the ensuing political turmoil ultimately consumes Lapite. The commander of the timber merchants security forces Lagata (Kunle Bantefa), opportunistically uses the revolt to ascend the throne by force, in defiance of all traditional succession processes. His reign saw a gradual descent into authoritarianism and tyranny. It takes a counter insurgency by the youth to conquer Lagata and thereby, initiating a new order as suggested by the commencement of installation rites for young prince AdebolaAdebami (247).

Jogbotypifies a microcosmic Nigeria which, according to Onikoyi, "is searching for a suitable successor to the vacant throne ... after the demise of the old king" (247). This alone is a parable of the political episode that just passed in the death of General Abacha who had orchestrated a self-succession bid. After the death of Abacha, there was the complication as regard who would succeed him, especially given the background that Chief Abiola the presumed rightful owner of the throne was still alive. However, the death of Abacha did not instantaneously erode the military authority. It brought another military, General Abdulsalam to power. By May 29, 1999, Chief Obasanjo emerged as the democratically elected president after several years of military dictatorship. Although Obasanjo was a product of democracy, many people still saw him as a civilian leader like Lågàta who has the army uniform under his *Agbada* because of his own military antecedent.

The foregoing constituted materials for news items which were pervasive as current affairs of the period. These yielded themselves as worthy texts for Kelani saw the cinema as a vantage to realize his goal of speaking his mind. Although Kelani claims that his intention was to improve upon the existing cinematic norms that had proceeded from the tableaux of the Nollywood institution, he cannot deny the fact that what he has done in *Saworo Ide* is not far from the commitment set aside by the Nollywood arrangement which is

a synthesis of historical, political, economic, social, and cultural institutions, as they manifest in the real life experiences of post-independent Nigeria and, indeed, in a number of African countries,...(Ashaolu, 2016:204).

Therefore like his predecessors in the Nigeria's film making industry, Kelani seems to have assigned himself to the role of a social commentator whose film is

a stern rebuke against materialism and crass consumerism on the part of the masses and expressions of disenchantment with aspects of governance, and with activities of agents of oppression- the police and the army (8).

According to Ashaolu, "*Saworo Ide* features Lápitédepicted as a traditional king/civil ruler, and Colonel Lågàta a military head of state and

usurper of Jogbo's throne". In this layout, there is the representation of both the civilian and the military hegemonies. As *Saworo Ide* reveals, both are materialistic. Lápité, who represents the civilian government, is so irresponsible and characterized by excessive greed, profligacy and unruly acts with the consciousness for money. His dealings with the timber contractors are built on the huge financial accrual, ignoring the environmental degradation that the lumbering activities may cause. Lápité is nothing but an archetypal text element traceable to the history of the society that produced the film.

Làgàtà also has his hypotext in General Sanni Abacha. Abacha usurps power from Chief Sonekan, the leader of Nigeria's Interim government, in 1993. Interestingly, the nomenclature, 'interim' suggests that Sonekan was just a transient president and not a substantive one who should run a full-fledge term. This is explanatory of why Lápité's reign is aborted. Basically because he forcefully aborts his installation rituals, Lápité seems to have been doomed to have his reign aborted. As Ashaolu puts it,

Lápité declares ritual incision ceremony closed, threatening the diviners with a revolver and declaring: "moní a tipariorò, a tisetán- I said the ceremony is over as far as I am concerned." His use of a gun illustrates the power of force, a means through which certain rulers smother the voice of the people. The gun represents an anti-democratic symbol, seen via prevalent military coups in post-independent Africa (206).

The gun-wielding king, Lápité is emblematic of most politicians of the Third Republic for whom gun-carrying was a regular norm. Such an attitude is perhaps the result of the lengthy period of militarization of the country which encourage the constant fraternity with power.

Làgàtà provides the cinematic explanation for General Abacha. In the historical experience, Abacha was brought to provide security for the Interim Government only to utilize the opportunity provided by Sonekan's vulnerability. In the same vein, Làgàtà abdicates his primary responsibility to provide adequate security for the loggers who are the economic emissaries of King Lápité. In the final analysis, it can be implied that both Lápité and Làgàtà exemplary greed for power and money which in Nigerian context are Siamese twins.

CONCLUSION

Within the limited parentheses of analysis provided by this study, we have attempted to justify the thesis initiated in the incipient paragraphs. With the focus on *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (part 1) and *Saworo Ide*, Kelani's aesthetics of film making is laidbare with the theory of intertextuality. Within the study, notable filmic icons are referenced to as strategic text items that share significant correlation with paraphernalia of history that form the basis of the two movies. That Kelani himself has noted that the story he packaged in *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* is something that is not originally his, underscores the fact that the movie is an instance of *cinematicized* encoding of reality. Not only this, the historical events that predate the film have been proved as intertextual inspiration in the building of the film. One cannot mince words that the film is a playback of different manifestations of corruption that play out when the love of money becomes the superordinate goal among people in the community. For the film therefore, reality becomes a text of its sort which we have referred to as the 'literary hypotext' which has availed itself for the Auteur to transcribe and transform into filmic text.

On the other hand, of *Saworo Ide*, we can say that Kelani himself and most of his crew members are witnesses to the issues surrounding the monolithic political fiascos that have bedeviled Nigeria as a country. *Saworo Ide*, although has a sequel in *Agogo Eewo*, is a complete film which provides sufficient coverage for the two brands of governments that Nigeria has experienced since independence. Watching *Saworo Ide*, it cannot actually be implied that Kelani sees any of the two government types as preferable to the other. Both civilian and military representatives in governments are tyrannical, dubious, blood-thirsty and money-conscious. It is thus not until Kelani has said it verbally before we know that he meant to say that Nigeria has leadership problems.

Coincidentally, Tunde Kelani was born in 1948. That same year, the novelist and film maker, Alex Astruc published an essay titled, "The Birth of a New Avant Garde: The Camera Pen". In the essay, Astruc foresaw a time when the camera would be regarded just like a pen in the hand of a novelist. He foresaw that time when the 'Avant Garde' who, would manipulate the camera to re-create the world for itself to see

would arrive. Little did he know that his publication has shared the birth year with the anticipated Avant Garde – Tunde Kelani– the maestro of the camera pen.

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