

Sociological and Therapeutic Significance of Poetic Performance in Yoruba Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Poetry, as an oral literary genre, is an age-long tradition, the performance of which serves as a traditional medium of communication exchange. Its modality, aesthetics, entertainment and performance-styles are titillating narratives that give its audience nostalgic feelings of the socio-cultural past and contemporary socio-political realities. However, more scholarly attentions have not been adequately given to oral literary poetry in the area of its therapeutic significance and social criticism. This paper, therefore, discussed its therapeutic significance and social criticism of oral literary poetry by examining the Yorùbá contemporary oral literary poetry and other devices deployed by the poet with a view to determining the role of an oral artist as a social critic and therapist. Schechner's Performance, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse poetic orature of the selected oral performer, Oláńrewaju Adépoju. Three digital audio discs of live performance recordings of Oláńrewaju Adépoju that were purposively selected were: *Ewi' Special* and *Mo Fẹ̀sùn Kan O*. The selected live recordings were based on the informing sociological realities, choice of satiric mode and performative styles. They were critically subjected to performance and literary analyses after being translated from Yorùbá to English.

Keywords: Oral Poetry, Therapy, Performance, Social Criticism, Techniques.

Introduction

Oral poetry is an age-long tradition, the performance of which serves as a basis for communication exchange (Adekunle 2009, 2014, 2017). It is a part of everyday life among indigenous Africans and orally transmitted through the words of mouth (Oripeloye 2017: 58). Poetry takes into account, the historical achievements of ancestors whose lifestyles serve as a symbolic role model for the younger generations. It is also a speech act that is accentuated and rendered alive by various gestures, social conventions and the unique occasion in which it is performed. It is also a discourse whose beauty of form and art of its articulation or recreation is orally performed (Akporobaro 2012: 4). To Ong, poetry is an artistic value of human

identity (Ong 2002: 1). The above oral critics viewed poetry as a spoken literature. The artists who engage in this medium of the spoken words involved in a creative essence of orality through dramatic gestures, vocal expressions, emotional tones, pitch changes, facial expressions, pause-effects, melody and rhythms of delivery. These artistic engagements of the poets are the phonological-aesthetic possibilities that make poetry performance lively. Apart from all these, there are other physical accomplishments, like movement, acting techniques, mime, types of drums used, props, music, costumes, and drumming styles (Dasylva 2005). On this note, Nwahunanya (2014: 90) avers that: “the dramatic dimension which such demonstrations add to the performance makes the story come alive and sustains the interest of the audience.” According to Okpewho (2003:16), “An audience feels a performance through rhythm; aesthetic’ enjoyment is made up of this multicuity of excitements and moments of respite, of expectations disappointed or fulfilled beyond anticipation.” Based on these assertions above, it means that the poetic orchestrations and musical instruments are aesthetic values that make oral poetry a pleasurable performance to its live audience. It is a poetic medium which gives room for call and response between the performer and the audience.

Oral poetry as an art of poetry that is born with man, which means that, man and oral poetry are inseparable (Adekunle, 2009: 1). It is a spoken art that is naturally bestowed on man by the Supreme Being as a medium of expression or interaction in the society he live. This is the reason Adekunle (2009:1) further says: “It is the first scientific vocalic natural endowment that serves as an innate ability of man that grows with him from birth to his death.” Man takes from his social realities and his personal experiences to form is poetry. This is why Afolabi (2002:8) says: “indeed, one of the most effective means of expressing the intellectual, physical and spiritual experiences of man in its most natural form.” To support Afolabi’s view, Nwahunanya (2014: 90) states: “we suggest also that such texts were actually performed orally as a routine practice in societies where they are found”. Also, Kekeghe (2014) affirms: “oral poetry simply means that the indigenous and folkloric materials of the people which are not written down, but rooted in their tradition. In the way, the total act as well as the context or environment is involved in the delivery of oral literature (Okpewho1990:16).

On this note, oral poetry, as a praise chant (oríkì), also serves as a soul healing in the YorùbáAfrican past (Adekunle 2009: 39). It is a feeling of solidarity with one’s blood relations and of pride in one’s ancestry, as well as confidence for the present and courage for the future (Ọlatunji, 2005: 67). It is a mode of interaction between the living and the dead and also a way of receiving blessings from ancestors. Ọlatunji (2005: 85) examines further that: “The imagination shared between the oríkì poet and his audience and which informs the structure of the poetic form accepts the morality of the oríkì as against quotidian commonplace code of conduct, at least while the performance of the oríkì lasts.”

Also, a court poet, known as clown, jest, entertainer or silly slave, is a comic character that often exploits his defect to delight others (Adélékè 2001). In Yorùbá, court poet is meant to create fun, praise-sing, and draw the attention of the king to king's flaws. He has the immunity to freely lampoon and speak biting truths to his lord (Adélékè 2001). He is also called "Asa", that is, an individual without shame (Ajayi, 1982:13). He is a gifted minstrel that has the capacity to enliven the world of his audience with jokes and laughter.

In the vein, Okunoye (2011:175) observes oral poetry as: "*Ewi*, a modern genre of Yorùbápoetry that is freely draws on the vast repertoire of traditional oral literary forms and inhabits the intersection between the written and oral, is gaining ascendancy within the urban space." He further affirms that the impact of literacy and missionary education on the Egba people of Yoruba race of Southwest Nigeria in nineteenth century has drastically propagated the performing art of oral poetry in written and oral forms (Okunoye 2011:175). Oral poetry could now be performed in social media and print media. It could be performed on radio and television stations. It is also put in audio and video discs. It is written in pages of newspapers and books, such as *Ewi Iwoyi*, an anthology (Akinjogbin 1969). It now also called media poetry (Barber 2007:163). The long-standing educated professionals in modern-days, who have promoted and shaped the course of oral poetry through media, are Adebayo Faleti, Olanrewaju Adepoju, Tubosun Oladapo, Alabi Ogundepo, Yemi Elebuibon, Adelakin Ladebo, Ayo Opadotun and Kunle Ologundudu, but Adepoju and Oladapo are the most active promoters of the genre since 1970s (Okunoye, 2011; Barber, 2004; Waterman 1990a). To confirm this fact, Adepoju (2006:14) states that: "My major contribution is that I modernized and professionalized *ewi*. In other words, I raised it from mere mendicancy to professionalism. Nobody can be identified in Yoruba history as having achieved that feat."

In the above, oral literary poetry as art and act of orature is purely sociological. The performer takes oral materials from his society. His cultural root informs his line of thoughts in his performance. This is the reason Dasylyva and Jegede (2005: 5) say: "Poetry arises from the effects of social life. On a larger note, Dasylyva (2017: 12) views oral poetry as: "the literariness of a collection of expression and celebration of culture-related communal experiences which gives voice to loric values, and it is rooted in the philosophy of a predominantly indigenous society."

In a nutshell, oral poetry is largely a product of the society that produces it. Therefore, this paper largely examines it from deeper sociological import and therapeutic significance.

Significance of the Study

The paper examines the sociological and therapeutic significance of poetic performance in Yoruba on temporary society with a view to determining the role of an oral artist as a social critic and therapist. It also investigates the embedded satire, cultural significance and other literary devices employed by the poet as an aesthetic poet.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Schechner's Performance, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the embodied behaviours of the oral artist and the rationale behind his phenomenal popularity with his audience. Two digital audio discs of live performance recordings were purposively selected. The selected live recordings were based on the informing sociological realities, choice of satiric mode and performative styles. The oral artist that was purposively selected was Olánrewaju Adépoju. The audio discs selected were: *Ewi Special* and *Mo Fèsùn Kàn Ò*. They were translated from Yoruba to English and subjected to critical performance and literary analyses.

Data Analysis

Oral Poetry as Social Criticism

Olánrewaju Adépoju is an activist, and one of the great Yoruba contemporary oral literary poets. His lack of formal education made him a local intellectual. Adépoju was born into a family of twelve in Okepupa, an agrarian settlement close to Ibadan. He has used several of his oral chants to champion the course of his society. His performative aesthetics and heroic mock poetry are deployed in a way that expose societal excesses and, at the same time, give a thoughtful healthy sensibility to his target audience. As a broadcaster, he produced and presented many programmes, such as *Káààrò o ò jìire?* [Good morning], *Tiwa-ni-tiwa* [What is rightly ours], and *Bàrikà* [Blessing/greetings] but the programme that brought out his professional skills into limelight was *Ijinle Akéwì* [The poet at dawn] that was often aired at 6.15am (Okunye 2011: 179). Adépoju's poetry targets multi-religious society. These social topicalities can be seen in Adépoju's poetic renditions analysed below:

In Adépoju's poetic monologue, *Àwọn Ońílara*, the Jealous Ones, he sarcastically lampoons man's inhumanity to man. He ridiculously reveals the malicious act of the wicked ones against the innocent. Besides, he dramatically showcases how the wicked ones keep evil eye on their neighbours' successes.

Yorùbá Version:

Eyé fi ojúkójúwo isé ońísé
A kíí bínú oríIt
Ara gbìgbóná lefi yí ilé ayé po
Ìlara èniyàn kòjè kí olówó fi owo rẹ
gbáduńallow
Tí óbá sepé oju nípani ní ilé ayéIf

English Version:

Don't set an evil eye on your neighbours' works
is impossible to repel against someone's destiny
You are living a hostile life
The malicious act of the wicked ones does not
the rich to enjoy their wealth.
it were possible for eyes to kill on earth

Oju ońilara ni ò bá bá ayé jé	The malicious eyes of the jealous ones would have destroyed the world.
Ìbá sepé ojú àwon òsikà leè pa kádàràdàIf	it were possible for the eyes of the wicked ones to
Ólówó ayé ibá je igbádún di iyálẹ̀ta kótóthwart	destinies, the rich would never enjoy their máa lo wealth to their old age
Ojú awọn òsikà iba wa ta olórò lóṣì	The evil eyes of the wicked ones would have made the rich poor
Aǎ́ aniwayé ti dá tiwọn mo igba ori olowo	But the Creator has made the power of the evil ones of no effect on the rich
Olúwaà mi gbõn kojá àwọn òsikà Awo aṣo mímó ínù ru wõn	My Lord is wiser than the wicked ones We dress in clean attires they are provoked
Apààrò èwù ní ojú òtá won dorí kodo ní iyewù won	We change our clothes, it saddens the enemies in their secret closet.
Wõn woni bí kákúkákú ká parun	They look at one as if one should die
Qba òke ló je ki abori eni	It is the King of heaven that has given us victory over them
Abínú ẹni kì nfe kà lògbà	He who hatesone would not want one to prosper
Omo aḡbole tío ti bára won jowú	Members of the same household that envy one another
Ọrẹ̀ iwòyíbarawõn se ọ̀rẹ̀ àpàpàì	Friends of this age that pay lip service to dodo one another
Ọ̀rẹ̀ iwoyí tún wa ṣe ońilara ọ̀rẹ̀	Friends of this age envy one another.

In the excerpt above, Adépòjù poetically demonstrates how apoetic performance can be used as social criticism. He metaphorically used “*ojúkójú*” [an evil eye] in the first line to portray the reality of evil practices that goes on around him. He reveals how people are cruel to one another. “*Ojúkójú*,” [an evil eye] symbolizes “danger”, “ill-luck”, “retrogression” and “backwardness”. This figuratively connotes how the evil ones wish their neighbours ill-luck, retrogression and backwardness through their behaviours. Also, Adépòjù sarcastically displays how the jealous ones through the evil eyes thwart the destinies of their neighbours. They set evil goals of destruction against the laudable achievements of their neighbours. This is the reason he rebukes the perpetrators of this evil act by saying: “*E yé fi ojúkójú wo isé ońisẹ̀*” [Don’t set an evil eye on your neighbours’ works]. This suggests that everyone should be his/her brother’s keeper and coexist without fear or doubt and, at the same time, work for one another’s progress.

In the same vein, “evil eyes” implies potentiality to use all forms of atrocities to destroy one’s neighbour’s successes without considering the consequences of the actions. This is the reason he says: “*A kì í bínú orí*” [It is impossible to repel against destiny]. Therefore, it is a general admonition that one should not wish another person who is successful evil, because if it is his/her destiny to be successful, there is nothing anyone can do about it. He believes that destiny cannot be thwarted since it is ordained by God. He wants everybody on the surface of the earth to accept his/her fate according to God given grace. He uses this poetic monologue to reach “love”, “peace” and “unity.” Adépójú wants everyone to be hardworking, serious, and reliable. He wants everyone to be a goal-oriented or go-getter instead of envying one another’s progress.

Also, Adépójú lampoons the act of jealousy by wicked people against the rich in the society. He sees such jealous people as villains or antagonists to such successful people’s progress. He reveals such evil people as miscreants who pose death threats to the rich in the society. He decries the wicked act by saying: “*Ìlara ènìyàn kò jẹ kí olówó fì owo rẹ gbádun*” [The malicious act of the wicked ones does not allow the rich to enjoy their wealth]. The evil ones in the society do not allow the rich to enjoy their wealth which they had laboured for in the past years. They are revealed as the criminals who commit all sorts of nefarious activities in the society. They burgle houses of the rich ones and make away with their property. Sometimes, if such rich ones are unfortunate, they get killed by the miscreants. The rich are molested. The rich do not have freedom of movement and association as they like. They are constrained by the social upheavals or unrest caused by the miscreants in the society.

Again, to support the acclaimed assertions revealed above, Adépójú mockingly exposes the evil activities of the wicked ones by saying: “*Tí ó bá se pé oju ñpani ní ilé ayé, Oju oñilara ní ò bá bá ayé jẹ, Ìbá se pé ojú àwon òsìkà leè pa kádàràdà, Olówó ayé ibá jẹ igbádun di iyálẹta kó tó máa lo, Ojú awon òsìkà iba wa ta olórò lóshì*” [If it were possible for eyes to kill on earth, the malicious eyes of the jealous ones would have destroyed the world. If it were possible for the eyes of the wicked ones to thwart destinies, the rich would never enjoy their wealth till their old age. The evil eyes of the wicked ones would have made the rich poor]. As illustrated in the excerpt above, the main evil intention of the wicked ones is to wreak havoc on the rich people. They want to bring the rich ones down to the level of abject poverty.

Besides, to show how dreadful the situations of the rich are in the cruel world of the wicked ones, Adépòjù metaphorically uses a sympathetic narrative technique through the use of “if,” the conditional clause”. The use of “if were possible” shows how hostile the environment is to the rich. Here, the “if clause” is used to satirize the follies or social vices of the jealous world of the wicked.

On the other hand, Adépòjù also shows the triumphant victory of the rich over the wicked people through God’s saving grace “*Ad’ aniwayé ti dá tiwon mo igba ori olowo Olúwaà mi gbọn kojá àwon òsìkà*” [The Creator has made the power of the evil ones of no effect on rich

ones and, at the same time, that God is wiser than the wicked by turning their evil plans to foolishness]. The divine protection of God over the rich gladdens the poet's heart. He sees God as a faithful Lord that keeps guard over the rich. This is the reason he says: "*Ọba ọke ló je ki a bori eni*" [It is the King of heaven that has given us victory over them]. He reveals that "enemies" can be members of one's household or friends, "*Omo agbole ti o ti bára won jowú, Ọrẹ iwòyí bára wọn se ọrẹ àpàpàndodo*" [Members of the same household envy one another" and friends of this age also envy one another].

Again, the use of "household" and "friends" as enemies by Adépòjù shows "the element of distrust" that characterizes his society. This underscores the fact that no one can be trusted except GOD. A family member can be an enemy and one's bosom friend can also be an enemy of one's progress. He ridiculously shows how callous people are always unhappy with the progress or successes of others.

In a nutshell, the poet persona, being an activist and advocate of the masses, satirizes the deeds of the wicked ones and, at the same time, uses the medium to call Nigerians and all African nationals to sober reflection. He believes that everybody should invest on one another positively instead of tearing one another apart. He wants everybody to be his/her brother's keeper. He wants everyone to build walls of protection and progress around one another.

In *Mo Fèsùn Kàn Ó* [I Have Charges against You], Adépòjù scornfully ridicules the act of corrupt practices in Nigeria and Africa in extension. He metaphorically demonstrates how top government functionaries and political gladiators have corrupted their nations in every sphere of life. He employs "an apostrophic poetologue" to address his target audience. He uses this "apostrophic narrative technique" to wittingly attack and, at the same time, purge his audience from societal follies as illustrated below:

Yorùbá Version

English Version

Lágbájá mo fẹ kọrin tótó si o fún ọ	Sir, I want to sing an appropriate song that soothes your status
Ọrẹ mi, ọrò re gba ewi ò gba àsàrò	My friend, your case needs a thoughtful song and a remorseful meditation
Mo gbó pé gbogbo ohun tí ó yẹ kí osá fún	I heard that all those things that you are supposed to eschew
Gbogbo wọn ni iwọ ti òsún mọ	Are those things you embraced.
Gbogbo igbà lolu ọfin ọrò tí adàniwàyé kà léewọ	Every time you break the forbidden laws of the Creator
Èfùfù wá fẹ gbogbo aráyé ti ri ńkan adiyẹ	The wind has blown and whole world has seen the genitals of the hen

Yé farapamọ́ lásán ọmọ aráyé rí ọ	Stop hiding yourself, the whole world apparently sees you
Àsírí re wà lọ wọ ọmọdẹ pẹlú àgbà	Your secret has been exposed to both young and old
Atì gbá ọ mu lọwọ oò rí bi bọ mó	You have been caught red-handedly, you can no more escape
Sebí wọn ti fèsùn ibajẹ kàn ọ nínú gbogbo ìweiròyìn	You have been alleged for corrupt practices in all the daily newspapers
O ti fi etàn ba orílẹ̀ èdè yii jẹ	You have corrupted the nation with your fraudulent lifestyle
Areáye gbọ òkíkí rẹlẹ̀yìn odi	The whole world has heard of your sharp practices across the globe.
Ore, te pe beko, sebi iwọ wọn ni lee ta igbo?	My friends, if you deny the allegation, are you not part Of the Indian hemp pushers?
Se bí wọn ká odidi ọmọ mọ ọ lọ wọ gbangbain	A full grown child was found at your domain a broad day light
O nbe nínú omo èniyàn tí nfi ọmọ èdá sòdògún	You are among mortals that use human beings for rituals
Eh! Oorọ́ tí Oba oníkùmò ibáwí Oba tó njé	Eh! Have forgotten the God of retributive justice as He is called
Emíni emí ni ó tóbi lọba Oba olọwọ́ agbára	I AM THAT I AM, the mighty King The King that is mighty in power
Lágbájá, se lo gbé orúkọlórí o ó gbé işé ire lórí	Sir, you bear good name but do not have any good works
Añiyàn rẹ dá ọ lébi Oò se síwọ işé dúdú	Since your conscience condemns you, Why can't you forsake your evil practices?
O wá wonkoko máyé, Bi ajá to wonkoko mo egungun eranas	You are clung onto things of this world hungry dog clings to a piece of bones
Màa ba ile ayé nişó níwájú Iku á bá o leyin	Ride on in your worldly acts Death will soon catch up with you
Ikán ǹbọ́ wa jẹ tirẹ nínú ojú	Termites will soon take their portion in your eyes

Èrà à ó jẹ̀ ipín tirẹ̀ nínú ẹ̀dò	Ants will also take their portions of your kidneys
Ìdí tí akolèkè sí láyéni ikan yòò fi jẹby	The waist that is adorned with beads will be eaten up worms
Àti ọba àti ijòyè lónbò wá dara pò	Both the kings and their subjects will become soil one day

Mó érùpẹ̀

In the excerpt above, Adéjòjù creatively opens the poetic rendition in a sarcastic way to ridicule his target personality whom he knows inside-out and, at the same time, uses the poetic rendition to again emotional support of his audience. He applies this medium in his performance to draw the attention of his target audience to something crucial. This is why he says: “*Lágbájá mo fẹ̀ kọrin tó tó si o fún ọ*” [Lagbaja, I want to sing an appropriate song that soothes your status]. He goes further that: “*Ọrẹ́ mi òrò re gba ewi ò gba àsàrò*” [My friend, your case needs a thoughtful song and a remorseful meditation]. “Lagbaja” is a form of respect, while “my friend” shows “mutual affection.” He employs the device to eulogize and, at the same time, brings his target personality to a thoughtful and remorseful meditation. The use of “I want to sing”, a first person narrative technique, is to arouse interest or cause suspense in his audience.

On the other hand, the poet lampoons the societal anomalies of his target audience or target personality. “Lagbaja” above connotes “everybody”. This means that all members of the society are included. Adéjòjù states that: “*Mo gbó pé gbogbo ohun tí ó yẹ̀ kí osá fún, Gbogbo wọ̀n ni ìwọ̀ tí ìsún mọ́*” [I heard that all those things that you are supposed to eschew are those things you embraced]. The poetic lines above show how ill-practices pervade the nation, Nigeria. “Lawlessness” and “corruption” are the order of the day. This is the reason he sarcastically decries the aberration by saying: “*Gbogbo igbà lo lu òfin ọ̀rò tí adàniwàyé kà léewọ̀*” [Every time you break the forbidden laws of the Creator]. These forbidden laws, such as ritual killings, “embezzlement,” “child trafficking,” “corruption,” “injustice,” “inequality,” “inequity,” “dehumanization,” and the like are quintessential factors of social follies. Also, “homosexuality,” “terrorism,” “sexual immorality,” “religious hypocrisy,” “ethnic militia,” “nepotism,” “favoritism,” “oppression,” and “brutality” are good examples of sociological demeanours of Adéjòjù’s community. They are social vices that people disobediently and consciously practice without looking at the consequences of their actions. They have caused social unrest or social upheavals.

Also, Adéjòjù uses a metaphorical expression to expose these vices by saying: “*Èfùufù wá fé gbogbo aráyé tí rí ònkan adìyẹ̀*” [The wind has blown and the whole world has seen the genital of the hen]. This means that there is “no secret” in what everyone does in the society. To him, all behavioural lifestyles are “open-secret”. Nothing is hidden under heaven. This is the reason he avers: “*Àsírí re wà l’ọ̀wọ́ ọ̀mọ́dẹ̀ pèlú àgbà, A tí gbá ọ mu l’ọ̀wọ́ o ò rí bí bọ́ mọ́*” [Your secret has been exposed to both young and old, You have been caught red-

handedly, you can no more escape]. Everybody knows about the ill-mannered behaviours that are being practiced in the society. Not only this, the global society is aware of the evil practices that go on in the country. Those evil acts are daily written on the pages of newspapers across the globe: “*Se bí wọn ti fèsùn ibajẹ kàn ọ́ nínú gbogbo ìweiròyìn, O ti fi etàn ba orilẹ̀ èdè yìi jẹ́*” [You have been alleged for corrupt practices in all the daily newspapers, You have corrupted the nation with your fraudulent lifestyle, the whole world has heard of your sharp practices across the globe]

In addition, the poetic voice mockingly shows how the aristocrat, the bourgeoisies, and the top government functionaries lack integrity. They use highly cleared falsehood arguments and quantifications of word to deceive people. They use their sophistries to obscure the truth. They are too conscious of the mundane things without thinking that they will die one day. They acquired enviable titles and high positions of authority but do not profess or perform their social responsibilities everybody in society expected from them. They work contrary to their status in the society. This is the reason Adépòjù says: “*Lágbájá, ẹ lo gbé orúkọ lóri o ó gbé iṣẹ́ ire lóri*” [Lagbaja, you bear good name but do not have any good works]. He advises his target audience to desist from such a wayward life by saying: *Ańiyàn rẹ́ dá ọ́ lébi, O ò ẹ́ síwọ́ iṣẹ́ dúdú*” [Since your conscience condemns you, Why can't you forsake your evil practices?]. Here, the poet is appealing to the conscience of the evil ones for positive change of mind from evil ways to good ways. Here, “conscience” is used as an intellectual seat of reasons.

Also, the poet uses “simile” to aesthetically portray his point in the performance above. He proves this by saying: “*O wá wonkoko máyé, Bi ajá to wonkoko mo egungun eran*” [You are clung on to things of this world as hungry dog clings to a piece of bones]. The so-called rich and the political gladiators are too greedy and self-centered. They are mindful of the worldly materials and positions at the expense of their people. They are there to perpetuate themselves in power without doing right things for their people. This is the reason the poet likens them to “a dog clinging on to a piece of bones.” They are always hungry for power as “dogs” that hungry for “bones”. They bark like dogs when exercising their power over their people who elected them to office. This means that, they are “autocratic.” Besides, they are like dogs that always return to their “vomits”.

Again, Adépòjù diculously likens them to something but nothing that: “*Ikán n bọ́ wa jẹ́ tirẹ́ nínú ojú, Èrà ọ́ jẹ́ ipín tirẹ́ nínú ẹ̀dọ́, Ìdí tí a kolẹ̀ kẹ́ sí láyé ni ikan yóòfi jẹ́*” [Termites will soon take their portion in your eyes, Ants will also take their portions of your kidneys, The waist that is adorned with beads will be eaten up by worms]. “Termites,” “ants” and “worms” are revealed by the poet as “destructive elements” that will consume human body after death. The rich men’s wealth and glories are consumed in the “grave”. He sees their “wealth” and “glamour” as “vanity upon vanity”. This is why he says: “*Àti ọba àti ijòyè ló nńbọ́ wá dara pò mó ẹ̀rùpẹ́*” [Both the kings and their subjects will become soil one day]. At this juncture,

Adépòjù employs this lyrical technique or strategy to call his target audience to healthy sensibility and remorseful thought.

More importantly, the poet also decries the illicit activities and ritual killings that are rampant in the nation. Many people engage in drug trafficking. Illegal drugs are bought and sold in and outside the country. He sarcastically condemns the act by saying: “*Ore, te pe beko,  e b   w  w n ni le e ta igbo?*” [My friends, if you deny the allegation, are you not part of the Indian hemp pushers?]. Drug trafficking is illegal business among some high personalities and top government functionaries who often use their positions of authority to do nefarious activities. They are popular drug pushers who sometimes use security personnel to carry out the illicit businesses. To actually prove to target personalities that he knows in-and-out of their illegal activities, he called them “my friends.” This is a metaphoric way of calling them to order. It is also a technical way of bringing the mind to a remorseful thinking and mutual interaction with him on the subject matter he is discussing with them. Also, drug trafficking is also commonly practiced among the youths in the country because of the level of poverty in the nation. They have seen the business as an easy way to get rich on time. They have lost their lives in the act of these illicit drug activities and the country (Nigeria) has been given a bad name across the globe because of these illegal activities.

Apart from this, ritual killings are also one of the major things noted by the poet that ruin the nation. Some people are killing innocent people for rituals because of money. They use innocents for sacrifices across the nation. Flesh and blood of the poor people is the major target. People are found missing every day because of this. Nowhere is safe. He shows this by saying: “*Se b  w n k  odidi  m  m    l  w gbangba O   be n n  omo  n y n t  n fi  m   d  s d g n*” [A full grown child was found at your domain in a broad day light, you are among mortals that use human beings for rituals].

Above all, Ad p j , as a Yoruba poet and social critic, uses his oral tradition to expose the social follies that pervade his country, Nigeria, and Africa general. Besides, he employs this oral performance to create moral consciousness in the hearts of his target audience. He has been able to show how an artist as a social critic serves a gatekeeper of his society in a bid to purge his society from sociological flaws.

Oral Poetry as Praise Song and Therapeutic Soul Healing

 y ’s kings are known for their wealth, grandeur, power, fame, and honour with a flourish to the reign of His Royal Majesty, L m di Ol y wol  Ad yem  III. The formalized praise poetry of His Royal Majesty, L m di Ol y wol  Ad yem  III, the Al  fin  y  of Yoruba of West Africa, Nigeria, is a high form of therapeutic soul healing poetry. This therapeutic praise poem can be seen in the poetic rendition of Ad p j  Ol nrew j  entitled “ k  B b   y y .”

Yorùbá Version

Olàyíwolá tíń se bẹbẹ, Olàyíwolá
Ẹ kalọ si ààfin Àtándá,
Oba Làmídì
Igi ọlá ti rúwe
Aláàfin oni parémó Aláàfin
Ọmọ Ìbirónké gòkè àgbà tán
Odi onile láàfin He becomes a
Àtánladi' fi ojoojúmọ jayé ọbẹ Àtánladi'
Èdùmàrè ló mú orí re kẹ ILàmídì

Làmídì Odún kẹrin Ọyínbó ti pé rẹè ti wọn tí
mu
Làmídì joba
Óyẹ ki Olàyíwolá ójó, Olàyíwolá
Ó yẹ kí gbogbo wa bá Olàyíwolá se bée
Ọrọ Àtándá nbe gbogbo ilú bí eré bí
eré Àtándá 's
Odó kán ọso ni Ọyọ fin gun iyan
Ọmọ Ọyọ ò jà mọ o The Ọyọ
Wọn tí jawọ ló bẹ tí kò yò
Làmídì Àtándá lo fi ẹnu ará Ọyọ

jó iná
Gbogbo ọ tẹ ilú lóti dógbón té mólẹ

Ọyọ o bára wọn binú mó

Mo gbọ pé gbogbo Ọyọ tínrérin-in

Ọyọ o bárawon jà, wọn se àşeyeni

English Version

has been doing great things,
Come with me to the palace of Àtándá,
King Làmídì
The tree of honour has blossomed
will never cease to live
Son of Ìbirónké ascends to the throne
chief cornerstone in the palace
often displays his royal glamour
It is Èdùmàrè that bestows this honour on
you,
This is the fourth year since Làmídì has
been elected king
should be celebrated
All of us should do likewise with Olàyíwolá
positive lifestyle becomes a subject of
mystery to his countrymen
The Ọyọ pound yams with only one mortar
are no longer fighting one another
They have resolved their grievances
It is Làmídì Àtándá that makes them speak
with
one voice
He has overcome all forms of societal
conspiracy through wisdom
The Ọyọ people are no longer be at
loggerheads with one another
I heard that the whole Ọyọ citizens are at
peace with one another
The Ọyọ people are no longer fighting one
another rather celebrate with one another

Mo gbọpe gbogbo ẹni tí inú bi nil wọ n ti bímo	heard that all those who were angry with one another have laid off their grievances
Ìtẹsíláájú ti wọỌyọ láyé Oba Làmídì A	lot of progress is achieved during the reign of King Làmídì
Ogbón ọ mọwé ló fin şe ilúỌyọ	He rulesỌyọ Empire with excellent wisdom
Séríkí olówó ọmọ abibaba nígbánígba	Seriki, the wealthy one with multiple honours

In the praise poetry above, the chanter poetically showcases the heroic achievements and great exploits of the incumbent Aláàfin Oyo in a highly aesthetic manner. This is why he says: “*Olàyíwolá ti n se bẹbẹ, E kalọ si ààfin Àtándá, Oba Làmídì*” [Olàyíwolá has been doing great things, Come with me to the palace of Àtándá, King Làmídì]. The poet calls the global attention to good deeds of ObaÀtándáLàmidì. He wants the global audience to see how flourishing Lamidi is, among his countrymen. To prove this, he metaphorically calls him “*Igi ọlá ti rúwe, Aláàfin oni paré mó*” [The tree of honour has blossomed, Alaaafin will never cease to live]. He is now a force to be reckoned with by everyone. This is why the poet paradoxically says: “*Ọmọ Ìbirónké gòkè àgbà tán, Odi onile láàfin*” [Son of Ìbirónké ascends to the throne; He becomes a chief cornerstone in the palace]. He is a “chief cornerstone” that cannot be rejected. Adépòjù ascribed this feat to Èdùmàrè, God, who bestows this great honour on ỌláyíwọláLàmidì: “*Èdùmàrè ló mú orí re kẹ Làmídì*” [It is Èdùmàrè (God) that bestows this honour on you, Làmídì]. Also, he reveals ỌláyíwọláLàmidì as an embodiment of moral values and a man of the people. He sees him as a well-nurtured goodly man. This is the reason he says that Ọláyíwọlá is worthy of emulation and needed to be celebrated by his countrymen: “*Ó yẹ kí gbogbo wa bá Oláyíwolá se bẹ*” [All of us should do likewise with Ọláyíwọlá].

In the above, the poet figurative employed dramatic narrative technique to eulogize His Royal Majesty, ÀtándáLàmidì Ọláyíwọlá, to display his honours and glamour among his subjects. Also, he deeply emphasizes Oba Ọláyíwọlá’s great achievements through paradoxically metaphors. In the first instance, ỌláyíwọláLàmidì is symbolically revealed as a man of peace and of great integrity. He is a peace-maker. He maintains peace and harmony among Ọyọ indigenes by forging unity among his subjects. This is why the poet metaphorically describes him as: “*Odó kán ọso ni Ọyọ fi n gun iyan*” [The Oyo pound yams with only one mortar]. “*Odo*” (mortar) symbolises “unity and peace,” while “*iyán*” (pounded yam) stands for “agreement”. This is why the poet goes further to say: “*Ọmọ Ọyọ ọ jà mó ọ*” [The Ọyọ are no longer fighting one another]. They are now in one accord and often settle their differences amicably. The poet ascribes the peacekeeping achievements to ỌláyíwọláLàmidì by saying: “*Làmídì Àtándá lo fi ẹnú ará Ọyọ jó iná*” [It is Làmidì Àtándá that makes them speak with one voice]. To eulogise Làmidì for this great heroic achievement, the poet, Adépòjù, says: “*Gbogbo ọ tẹ ilú ló ti dọgbón té mọlẹ*” [He has overcome all forms of societal conspiracy through wisdom]. This shows that Làmidì is a “wise king”. He is very prudent in decision-

making. Through the achievements of Lámídi ÀtándáỌláyíwolá, a lot of progress has been recorded in Oyo: “*Ìtẹ̀sìwájú tí wọ Ọ̀yọ́ láyé Oba Lámídi*” [A lot of progress is achieved during the reign of King *Lámídi*]. To further praise and, at the same time, honour the king for his excellent wisdom, the poet says: “*Ogbón ọ̀mọ̀wẹ́ ló fiń ẹ̀ ilú Ọ̀yọ́*” [He rules Oyo with excellent wisdom]. “*ọ̀mọ̀wẹ́*” means “learned one”. This metaphorically shows that the king is well rooted in his cultural traditions and customs and, at the same time, well engrossed in Western education. He blends the two cultural backgrounds to rule his country people. This is why the poet loudly eulogises him by saying: “*Séríkí olówó ọmọ abibaba nígbanígba*” [Séríkí, the wealthy one with multiple honours]. “*Séríkí*” here means a “leader” who is generous. Also, “*abibaba nígbanígba*” signifies “one with two hundred fathers.” This means that Ọláyíwolá is “a demi-god” with two hundred fathers. Ọláyíwolá is a great one with many great ancestors.

Ọláyíwoládi baba kò ẹ̀ ẹ̀ fí ọwọ́ ra ń múỌláyíwolá	has become great, he cannot be relegated to the background
Àtándádi òrìsàỌ̀yọ́ odi eni ajifi ilu ki Àtándá	has become an òrìsà that is adulated with sounds of drums in Ọ̀yọ́
Èni tíà ọ̀se tí à nífi ọwọ́rà nínlèlè fún	He that one has not offended that one crawls before him
Eegun ẹ́ onsó tí parí iké	The chief bone at the apex of the kyphosis,
Obańlá tí í fí oba jẹ	Great king that enthrones kings
Ògìdán ìbèrù oba tí i gbó ramúramúni	The fearful one that roars sporadically in fury kanikanbé
Èni Adéyẹ́mí ba binu si oluwa re aka owo	He that Adéyẹ́mí is angry with will not live to tell the testimonies
Eni Àtándánàka ìjà loj́ ú sí	He that Àtándápoints accusing finger at,
Tí ó bá kọ́ lu igbó kò se nkankan	If he runs into the bush, it is worth it
Tó bá bẹ̀rù bẹ̀rù tí ó bá kọ́ lu omi kòlèèwọ	If the person is gripped by fear and jumped into water, it is not forbidden
Aa! Ibi kìnìún ba tọ́ sí eranko tíó	Ah! Wherever a lion roars on, any animal that
ba bá bẹ̀lọ́ ko ẹ̀ ọ̀ríí ire	walks on that path will surely be devoured.
Ibi Àtándá bá tutọ́ ìjà sí ó ku baba ẹ̀ni tí ó	Wherever Àtándá pitches his battle's tents, nobody
rìn ní bẹ̀ dare	walks on that path
Ìrònú ikookò ní í pa ajá, ìrònú èyìn ọ̀ rọ́ ní í	The fear of the hyena kills dogs, the

pa èke	consequences
Bẹ̀niirònú ọ́lọ́rọ́ ní í pa ọ́lẹ̀ irònúàìṣẹ̀ ní í	of gossip kill the gossipmongers
pa onírìgimọ̀	The fear of the rich kills the lazy one, the fear of
Èni Àtándábá fí ọ̀wọ̀ ijà gùn nímú,	the innocent kills the wicked
olúwa rẹ̀ lolùfin ọ̀ba	He that Àtándá draws into battlefield has
Ọ́láyíwọ́lá ẹ̀ eegun ẹ̀ran tífá orí	violated
olóriỌ́láyíwọ́lá,	the king's order
Òkèlè ràbàtà tí i pinnu ọ̀ kańjúwà	the bone breaker that scrapes the heads kunkun
Ọ́láyíwọ́láṣẹ̀ yín ẹ̀ bọ Ọ̀ṣùṅ Ọ́láyíwọ́lá	of the stubborn ones
Ọ̀ṣùṅ'	He is big morsel that satisfies the greedy ones
Èlọ́ sáré gbé ẹ̀bọ́ fún Iyemoja	offends you, you offer sacrifices to
Béèni òrìsà bíbọ̀dò tánran	goddess
Èniyàn tí ó rúbọ́ bi kòrú ti Àtándáara rẹ̀	You swiftly offer sacrifices to Iyemoja
ní ntan jẹ̀	Whereas offering sacrifices to goddess to
Ojú ire Ọ́láyíwọ́lálébọ́,Ọ́láyíwọ́lá's	placate him does not move him
Àwàdà Àtándá rẹ̀ ékoja ètùtùÀtándá's s	He that offers sacrifices to goddess without
Bí onífa bábọ́ ifá kí o maa bọ́ ti ọ̀mọ̀	making
Ìbírónkẹ̀ mó ifálet	sacrifices to Atanda, is just wasting his time
Àti olórìsà tí ó bán bọ́ òrìsà kí omaa bọ́	favour is the major sacrifice and
Làmídíòrìsà,	ense of humour goes beyond appeasement
Àtándá leegún Ọ̀yọ́, Láyíwọ́láni Oro	Whenever Ifá worshippers offer sacrifices unto
tíÀtándá	Ifá,
gbéinú ààfin is the Oro,	them also include offers of Ìbírónkẹ́'s son along
Atóbi ní ilé atóbi loko	And whenever òrìsà worshippers worship their
Baba mi Ògídán tí í fí ọ̀wọ̀ijà lalẹ̀	let them not forget to worship Làmidí
	is the masquerade of Ọ̀yọ́, Láyíwọ́lá
	god that dwells in the palace
	The mighty one at home and abroad,
	The leopard that is fearful in battle

In the poetic verses above, Àtandá Lámídì is extolled to level of demi-god in Òyó. He becomes a deity that is worshipped and highly honoured by his people: “Àtandá di òrìsà Òyó o di eni ajifi ilu ki” [Àtandá has become an òrìsà that is adulated with sounds of drums in Òyó]. This is why the poet further says: “Èni tí a ò şe tí à òfi ọwọ rá òlèhèlè fún” [He that one has not offended that one crawls before him]. To show his power of supremacy over other lesser kings and their kingdoms, the poet eulogises him by saying: “Eegun ṣ’ónsò tí parí iké Oba òlá tí í fí oba jẹ” [The chief bone at the apex of the kyphosis, Great king that enthrones kings]. He is a king that crowns other lesser kings in his territory. Besides, he is also portrayed as: “Ògìdán ibèrù oba tí i gbó ramúramú ni kanikanbé” [The fearful one that roars sporadically in fury]. “Fury” connotes dreadful punishments mete out to the offenders who disobey the king’s order. The use of “sounds of drums” signifies a mark of honour to great kings and gods in Yoruba land. It is a mode of communication to kings in the great Oyo Empire. It is also part of acrobatic display for worship and entertainment for kings and gods in Yoruba land. It is an art of spiritual invocation during worship and, at the same time, enthusiastic therapy to the king.

Also, there is a copious use of paradoxical metaphors that properly qualifies King Lámídì Adéyẹmí’s superficial outlook as a mark of respect. These attributive adjectives are therapeutic eulogies that give a deeper rational sensibility to Oyo people and, at the same time, accord fearsome respect to King Lámídì Adéyẹmí. For example, he is revealed as a “lion” that devours any animal that walks past his path unlawfully: “Aa! Ibi kìníún ba tọ sí eranko tí ó ba bábè lọ ko şe orí ire” [Ah! Wherever a lion urinates on, any animal that walks on that path will surely be devoured]. “Urinate” symbolically depicts “sceptre of power and authority” of King Àtandá Lámídì Adéyẹmí. “Animal” connotes the “culprits”. He stretches the scepter at will against those who have violated his supreme order.

In the vein, Adéyẹmí figuratively reveals as “ìkookò” [hyena] that is fearsome in judgment delivery, while the “victims” are depicted as “preys,” that is, the “dogs”: “Ìrònú ìkookò ní í pa ajá, ìrònú èyìn ọrọ ní ípa ẹkẹ” [The fear of hyena kills the dogs, the consequences of gossip kill the gossipmongers]. The dreadful ability of a “hyena” is more terrible than of a “dog.” “Aja,” “dogs” are friendly to humans, but “ìkookò,” “hyenas” are “unfriendly.” This “hyena’s like nature” is the negative side of Oba Adéyẹmí that he turns against his enemies who violated his order. This means that, any man that goes against the will of Adéyẹmí will face the consequences of his wrath. This is why the poet says: “Ọláyíwọlá ṣẹ eegun ẹran tí fá orí olórí kunkun” [Ọláyíwọlá, the bone breaker that scrapes the heads of the stubborn ones]. Through hyperbolic expression, the poet also emphasizes further that he is: “Òkèlè ràbàtá tí i pinnu ọkàńjúwá” [He is a big morsel that satisfies the greedy ones]. This is the reason he becomes a subject of rumours of fear among his enemies. On this note, the poet allegorically says: “Ọláyíwọlá ṣẹ yín ẹ bọ Ọṣùn Ẹlọ sáré gbé ẹbọ fún Iyemoja” [Ọláyíwọlá offends you, you offer sacrifices to Ọṣùn’ goddess, you swiftly offer sacrifices to Iyemoja]. The poet sees the sacrifices offer to the goddess as a sheer wasting of time, saying, “Ènìyàn tí ó rúbọ bi kò rú tí Àtandá ara rẹ ní ntan jẹ” [He that offers sacrifices to a goddess without making sacrifices

to Àtandá, is just wasting his time]. To establish this acclaimed assertion of Ọláyíwọlá, the poet, further says: “*Ojú ire Ọláyíwọlá lẹbọ, Àwàdà Àtandá rẹ é koja ètùtù*” [Ọláyíwọlá’s favour is the major sacrifice and Àtandá’s sense of humour goes beyond]. This signifies that the king does no wrong. What the king does is appropriate and final.

In conclusion, the poet, Ọláńrewájú Adépòjù, eulogistically appraises the heroic achievements, glamour and honour of His Royal Majesty Atanda Lámídi Olàyíwọlá Adéyemí III, the Alááfin Ọyọ. Also, he shows how the king is extolled to the pedestal of gods and goddesses in Yorùbá land. This is why the poet called him “òrìsà” [god]. He poetically reveals him as a fearless king that dares anyone who goes against his laws and order. In a way, the eulogies are both psychological and emotional therapies that give inexpressible joy to the king. Besides, it is a reflection on sociological realities in contemporary age as analysed above.

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