

The Nigerian state, war and youth disempowerment: Reflections from Femi Adebayo's *Jagun Jagun 1*

By Nurudeen Adeshina Lawal, PhD and Taiwo Opeyemi Akinduti, PhD

Department of English and Literary Studies, College of Humanities and Culture, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines how Femi Adebayo deploys character and setting in *Jagun Jagun 1* to interrogate the Nigerian state, its habituation to war and youth disempowerment. Deploying postcolonial Marxism as the theoretical lens, the study contends that, although *Jagun Jagun*'s setting is in the pre-colonial Yoruba era, the film is a profound critique of the Nigerian state and its oligarchic elite that uses violence to perpetuate its interests. The film depicts that democracy in Nigeria, as captured in *Jagun Jagun*, is synonymous with war, state plundering, dictatorship and the precarity of the youth. *Jagun Jagun* shows that members of the gerontocratic elite promote interpersonal and inter-communal wars to colonise the youths and the masses. The film, however, indicts some Nigerian youths as complicit in their disempowerment as they form alliances with the gerontocratic establishment. The study concludes that Adebayo's artistic engagement with the Nigerian sociopolitical crises in *Jagun Jagun* represents a significant introspective evaluation that challenges the binary opposition between Western colonisers and the Nigerian ruling class on the one hand, and the gerontocratic Nigerian elite and the disempowered Nigerian youths on the other. Adebayo, thus, calls for genuine democratisation, healthy intergenerational collaboration and inclusion as alternative strategies for achieving democratic governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Femi Adebayo, *Jagun Jagun 1*, Nigerian State, War, Youth Disempowerment

Introduction

Many countries in Africa, including Nigeria, are challenged by various crises of governance which manifest in corrupt leadership, grinding poverty, social inequality, youth exclusion, terrorism, and war. Just as the (colonial) Western state grafted its sovereignty in "bare life" (Agamben, 1998, p.1), many postcolonial African states and their governors and rulers in the twenty-first century continue to replicate colonialist hegemonic practices in a manner that dispossesses the common people (including the young people) of genuine citizenship rights. In Africa, many individuals (excluding the members of ruling class) are constituted as mere biological objects with little hope of being transformed into political subjects with agency capable of effecting socio-political change. Oşundare (2023:29) alludes to the reality that "Africa today is still that abyss of marginal silence. In many countries, the situation has gotten worse. And the urge for diaspora flight has intensified into a gripping compulsion." He notes further that "in many ways then, Africa has become a place to leave not to live, a place to shun not to cherish; the graveyard of dreams for the young and old, especially the anxiously young" (2023:29). On the grim condition of the young people in Africa, Abblink (2005) also claims that "they (the youths) are growing up in conditions of mass unemployment and are facing exclusion, health problems, crisis within the

family due to poverty and the AIDS pandemic, and a lack of education and skills. They also are marginalised in national state policies and have a weak legal position” (p. 1). He notes further that “African youths are over-represented in armed rebel or insurgent movements of various kinds as well as in criminal activities, to which they are so easily recruited (p. 1).

Indeed, Oşundare and Abblink’s foregoing perspectives are typical of the dire fate of youths in Nigeria. Disillusioned by the perennial failed promises of representative democracy and its gerontocratic capitalist ruling class, many youths in Nigeria face socioeconomic and political disempowerment and other forms of violence, including war. The 2006 National Population Census’ provisional result shows that the country’s population is one hundred and forty million people and that one third of this population is young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years (*Second national youth policy document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 2009, p. 2). Despite this data, many young people in Nigeria are subalternised and their potential underutilised or, most times, exploited. Quite often, this is destroyed by the deliberate mis-governance of the members of the oligarchic ruling class. For example, while many youths lack proper education and relevant skills which, inevitably, make them victims of unemployment, they are often recruited into various forms of violence such as political thuggery, militancy and terrorism. Ezemenaka (2021:6) underscores this point thus: “when unemployment and poverty are merged together, they expose youths to vulnerable situations in finding whatever means necessary to fend for themselves”.

The foregoing shows that the Nigerian state cannot be exculpated from the wretched condition in which many Nigerian youths are trapped. This point underscores further the gross deficit in human security in Nigeria, for any country that is incapable of guaranteeing protection and safety for its citizens, including youths, possesses a questionable legitimacy. Emphasising the peculiar state of war that threatens the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Nigerian state and its governors, Okeke and Onwuasoigwe explain that “people are endlessly kidnapped for ransom and their heads cut-off eventually. Because leadership is rocket science in the country, the police are overwhelmed by such developments. Paradoxically, the police in Nigeria also kill people at will and the murderous officers are never held accountable for their crimes nor punished as the applicable law demands” (6). Comparing Nigeria’s degeneration into confounding disorder to a descent into the Hobbesian state, Okeke and Onwuasoigwe (2023) note further:

Sundry terrorist and quasi-terrorist groups are on the loose in the country, killing and maiming in large numbers. These include the dreaded Boko Haram Group in Northern Nigeria, the ones called Fulani Herdsmen that contextually originated in the North with murderous spread everywhere in the nation. And there are the ones variously described either as Unknown Gunmen, Eastern Security Network, etc.; but based in the eastern part of the country. (p. 6)

The study contends that *Jagun Jagun*’s setting is an insightful critique of the twenty-first century Nigerian state and its oligarchic capitalist ruling class that often deploys violence to perpetuate its interest. It demonstrates that representative democracy in contemporary Nigeria is used by the ruling establishment to promote war, state looting, despotism and youth subalternisation. *Jagun Jagun* shows that members of the

Nigerian gerontocratic capitalist ruling elite evolve and sponsor inter-personal and inter-communal wars, and use the youths as cannon fodder.

The study is based on the notion that literary arts, including filmic ones, constitute important epistemological sources capable of offering multiple and alternative perspectives on existential challenges assailing the postcolonial African state. Adeoti (2015) argues that “literature is one of the knowledge tools designed by man from ancient times to dissect and straighten the crooked ribs of a society” (p. 3). He further remarks, “in its oral, written, performative, narrative, poetic or screen-mediated forms, literature speaks to the people, and confronts the dynamics of history. It is a vintage observatory from where the writer is strategically placed to observe the ongoing in the society” (p. 3).

The youths are regarded as young male and female Nigerians who are between 18 years and 35 years of age in this study. This definition aligns with the *Second national youth policy document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (2009), which defines youths as:

... all young males and females aged 18–35 years, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. While it is true that this definition is broad, it is understood that this is a time in life when most young people are going through dramatic changes in their life circumstances as they move from childhood to adulthood. (p. 6)

Although the study shares the foregoing definition, especially with regard to the age categories, the classification of youth is much more complex than the age indices. Therefore, the category of youth are implicated in complex socio-cultural and political identities such as gender, class, religion and ethnicity. In spite of this, the majority of young people in Nigeria, especially those from the lower rung, are socio-politically and economically marginalised and disempowered. Adebayo’s *Jagun Jagun* depicts the youth as cannon fodder. A majority of members of the Nigerian gerontocratic ruling class undermine and dis-empower many Nigerian youths. However, some youths, as captured in the filmic text, are complicit in their disempowerment.

In addition to the ‘scientific’ approaches often deployed by various scholars in the social sciences, this study contends that the discourse of youth disempowerment and war is also addressed by many artistic works of Nigerian filmmakers to offer diverse perspectives to policymakers with a view to providing multidisciplinary solutions to the myriad of crises confronting the polity. Underscoring the crucial roles of Nigerian filmmakers and their works in addressing national crises, Utoh-Ezeajugh and Anijah (2017) remark that “Nigerian filmmakers often make movies, with themes that are very educative and entertaining, bearing in mind that films are essential means of societal transformation. The film medium readily volunteers itself as a platform for the investigation of human conflicts that recur in various societies” (p. 3). It is against this background that the current study derives its justification and relevance. Through close interpretation of Adebayo’s *Jagun Jagun*, the study examines how the filmmaker, through elements of character and setting, addresses the recurring issues of war and youth disempowerment in the Nigerian state.

Theoretical insights

The fusion of insights from postcolonialism and Marxism provides the interpretative paradigm. There has been a considerable contestation between postcolonialism and Marxism, especially over which between the two is more useful to the interpretation of existential crises confronting contemporary Nigeria and other countries in Africa. However, postcolonialism and Marxism are not mutually exclusive. Both theories, when properly contextualised, are relevant to the sociopolitical and economic and cultural conditions of life in contemporary Nigeria and Africa in general. Hence, postcolonial Marxism is a strand of Marxism that is relevant to sociopolitical and economic condition of the postcolonial African state, especially Nigeria.

By definition, postcolonialism is a reaction against colonialism and neocolonialism. It interrogates the underlying assumptions, distortions, omissions and silences regarding colonisation, neocolonisation, racism, geography and all forms of domination that characterise former colonies. It is not just a historical marker, but a theoretical matrix used in decolonising “othered” societies from dominant structures. Thus, postcolonialism, in theory and praxis, covers “all the cultures affected by the imperial processes from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1995, 2). Tyson (2006) also asserts that postcolonialism “seeks to understand the operations—politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically—of colonialists and anti-colonialist ideologies” (418).

The main thrust of postcolonialism is to question and subvert the universalist claims of “self/other” and “centre/margin” which do not only homogenise the “other/ marginal” as inferior, but also regard the “self/centre” as superior. Underscoring this point further, Appiah (1995) contends that the “post” in postcolonialism “is also a post that challenges earlier legitimating narratives. And it challenges them in the name of the suffering victims of ‘more than thirty republics.’ But it challenges them in the name of the ethical universal; in the name of humanism” (p.119). Ashcroft *et al* (1995) emphasise the same point when they note that postcolonialism signifies a “continuing process of resistance and reconstruction” (p.117). Postcolonialism is neither restricted to the colonial era nor the period after independence. It is the totality of practices that characterise postcolonial societies from the beginning of colonialism, through colonialism and to post independence era. It is a practice of subverting the dominant ways of interpreting the world and representing reality in ways which do not replicate hegemonic or colonialist values.

Postcolonialism also intersects with Marxism. As postcolonialism advocates the dismantling of the centre/margin binary logic of imperial discourse, Marxism also engages in a radical critique of Western capitalism and the inequalities across human societies are categorised based on their relationship with the mode of production. Marxist theory, according to Tyson (2006), asserts that the struggle for economic power is the underlying motivation for all socio-political activities, including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media, and so on (p.53). Economics is, therefore, considered as the *base* upon which the *superstructure* of socio-political and ideological realities is built (p. 54). While contending that the history of the world is a continuous struggle between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” Marxism envisions that this stratification would eventually result in a revolution in which the *proletariat would depose the bourgeoisie*. This revolution, according to Marxism, would bring about a classless society.

Despite the link between postcolonialism and Marxism, Marxism has been subjected to a number of criticisms by some postcolonial scholars. First, Marxist theory’s linear interpretation of history is antithetical to

postcolonialism and postcolonial realities. Second, it is suggested that Marxism implicitly privileges “grand-narratives” because its monolithic notion of history replicates the logocentric master narratives of European culture. This indicates that the univocal idea of history espoused by Marxism not only involves incorporation of the histories of the colonised people of non-Western world, but it also signifies the expropriation of non-European societies by the West. This shows further that Marxism is involved in the suppression of the colonised people of non-Western world. Thus, Marxism is accused of complicity in the oppression and inequalities it envisions to eradicate. What the foregoing submission implies, according to Ashcroft *et al*, is that Marxist theory is limited in dealing with postcolonial societies by its own unconscious Eurocentricity (p. 173).

Nonetheless, postcolonial Marxism, as used in the context of this study, appropriates and combines some useful Marxist theoretical ideas with postcolonial perspectives in the interpretation of the existential condition in the postcolony. Considering the complexity of neo/colonialism in the postcolonial African state, the infusion of Marxism with postcolonialism is quite appropriate. Indeed, Fanon, one of the major precursors of decolonial scholars and whose writings were largely influenced by Marxism, justifies this appropriation when he explains that “Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem” (p. 31). This implies that, despite its perceived flaws, Marxism is still useful to postcolonial realities. Notable postcolonial thinkers whose works are rooted in Marxism include Fanon, Amir, Onoge, Ake, Ngugi and Femi Osofisan.

This study adopts Fanon’s perspective of postcolonial Marxism in the interpretation of the roles of the Nigerian state and its ruling elite as depicted in *Jagun Jagun*, in the recurring manifestations of war and youth disempowerment in contemporary Nigeria. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963) criticises the violent character of colonial rule. He explains that colonialism is inherently a violent enterprise. He demonstrates that the colonialists deploy various forms of violence to extract raw materials and labour from the colonised people. Fanon shows that the colonialists stereotype the colonised people as savages and barbaric in order to justify their colonising agenda. While using various forms of violent and Manichean tactics to subjugate the colonised people, the colonialists, Fanon explains further, proclaim European culture as the model for the colonised to emulate. Fanon, therefore, advocates a counternarrative of counter-violence as a means through which the colonised people would free themselves from the yoke of colonialism. Although he rejects the idea of relying on the urban proletariat in a revolutionary action, Fanon extols violence as an inevitable weapon of decolonisation.

Fanon (1963) equally criticises the African political elite for their complicity with the colonialists. He contends that the collapse of national consciousness in many post-independent African countries is the failure of the national middle class to dismantle the colonialist political structures. He asserts that national consciousness degenerates into petty identity politics because the African political elite, like the colonialists from whom they inherit power, are concerned with their selfish economic gains to the detriment of the masses. The struggle of the middle-class for power, Fanon notes, is not meant to lead the African state to sociopolitical and economic development and democracy, but it is meant to secure profits for themselves, obtain government concessions and become new colonial masters (p. 48). This accounts for the recurrent violence in many African nations, including Nigeria.

Although Fanon speaks of Western colonialism and its impacts, his perspectives are relevant to various forms of internal colonialism and neocolonialism challenging the Nigerian state. This is because not only that

Nigerian rulers continue to collaborate with Western imperialists to undermine the development of Nigeria, but they have also continued to perpetuate master-slave relations that characterise conventional/Western colonialism. By deploying Fanon's postcolonial Marxist perspective to interpret the representations of the Nigerian state, war and youth disempowerment in *Jagun Jagun*, this study illustrates how the members of the Nigerian gerontocratic ruling class, just like the Western colonialists, promote various forms of violence to disempower the youth and under-develop the country while advancing their socioeconomic and political interests through the same means.

Femi Adebayo's *Jagun Jagun*: A Synopsis

Set in a precolonial Yoruba country, Adebayo's *Jagun Jagun* (also known as *The Warrior*) is a 2023 Netflix epic-satiric film that revolves around Ògúndìjì, a tyrannical warlord and mercenary, who works for some powerful gerontocratic politicians in various Yorùbá communities. By waging wars against ordinary people, Ògúndìjì imposes on the communities as Kings many corrupt older politicians. It is also a part of Ògúndìjì's responsibility to invade the communities which are not in tune with the members of gerontocratic capitalist class, and plunder their resources.

Ògúndìjì manages a war school where young people from various communities in the Yorùbá country come to learn the art of war with the intention of defending their communities from internal and external aggression. However, many of the young war trainees neither return to their communities alive nor realise their ambition of defending their communities because Ògúndìjì often turns them into his slaves. He uses them to wage wars sponsored by members of the gerontocratic capitalist ruling class. For instance, for feeding some detained "erring" warriors, Weyinwo, a war trainee, on Ògúndìjì's order, is tied to the stake and burnt to death.

However, Ògúndìjì's several plots to eliminate Gbótija, one of his war apprentices from Iwon Kingdom, lead to his waterloo. He organises a murderous public combat between Gbógunmì and Gbótija with the aim of destroying to destroy the latter's life, for Gbógunmì, Ògúndìjì's long standing lieutenant, is known as "a curse that fights like a wind" (Adebayo, *Jagun Jagun*). In addition to being an experienced warlord, Gbógunmì is renowned for his formidability in warfare. But contrary to Ògúndìjì's expectations, Gbótija not only wins the fight, but he also kills Gbógunmì during the combat. Incensed, Ògúndìjì orders that Gbótija be incarcerated in a sealed coffin for seven days without food and water. Three days later, when he realises that Gbótija is still alive and hearty, he orders that the coffin in which Gbótija is incarcerated be thrown into the river. But Gbótija not only survives, he also returns to the war camp alive. Not done yet, Ògúndìjì sends Gbótija with only three feeble, inexperienced warriors on a war mission to Aje Kingdom. He equally sends *Agemo* to murder him. But Gbótija comes out unscathed in all these plots. Gbótija eventually mobilises other young warriors, rebels against Ògúndìjì and kills him, thus bringing to an end Ògúndìjì's regime of terror.

The Nigerian state, war and the representations of youth disempowerment in Adebayo's *Jagun Jagun*

As evident from this synopsis, Adebayo's *Jagun Jagun*, though metaphorically set in precolonial Yorùbá country, reflects the violent methods often deployed by the members of the postcolonial Nigerian gerontocratic ruling class to perpetually colonise the youths. Adebayo, just like Fanon, shows that the Nigerian state is a Manichean society where members of the older generation politicians such as Kayeja, the King of Keto Kingdom,

Alárinká, the King of Mòḍḍé Kingdom, and Aláyélúwà, the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom, like the colonialists, use diverse forms of naked violence, including war, to suppress ordinary people, especially young people while they entrench their power. Just as the colonialists deploy its army to suppress the natives, the colonising Kings in *Jagun Jagun* enlist the support of Ògúndijí, a tyrannical warlord and mercenary, and empower him to wage wars against various communities and their youths, especially those who have the capacity to challenge their hegemony. For instance, Alábàtà, a hardworking, young man, who is the rightful heir to the throne of Mòḍḍé Kingdom, is dispossessed of the Kingship by Alárinká. On the instruction of Alárinká who illegally becomes the King of Mòḍḍé, Alábàtà's thriving plantation farm is attacked by Oḡúndijí and his militia. Although he resists, Alábàtà is eventually killed and his plantation ceded to Alárinká, the illegitimate King of Mòḍḍé.

Alárinká and Ògúndijí are replicas of the colonialists. Indeed, their colonialist attitude underscores Fanon's (1963) view on the nexus between colonialism and politics in Africa. According to Fanon, "the dialogue between (...) political parties (in Africa) and colonialism is never broken off" (60). Fanon maintains that "the native intellectuals, including leaders of the political parties, mask their aggressiveness in their veiled desire to replicate the colonial world. They also use their aggressiveness to serve their individual interests" (60). Thus, the aggressive manner in which Alárinká imposes himself on the people of Mòḍḍé Kingdom against their consent, dispossesses Alábàtà, a vibrant youth, of his rightful throne and enlists Ògúndijí to invade his farm, and murder him and his entire family in Ota Efon indicates that Alárinká, an archetype of contemporary Nigerian gerontocratic capitalist rulers, is on the throne to serve his parochial material interests. The cruel manner in which Alárinká enlists Ògúndijí to attack Alábàtà's farm and kill him recalls the way in which the gerontocratic operators of the Nigerian state often recruit thugs, militants, even men of the military and the police to kill and maim many Nigerian youths who demonstrate the courage to protest against mis-governance. By instigating the elimination of Alábàtà (together with his family members) and by taking over his thriving plantation in Ota Efon, Alarinka sentences Alábàtà to a permanent state of disempowerment and silence. Thus, the destructive character of Alárinká, the illegitimate King of Mòḍḍé, is used in *Jagun Jagun* to expose as well as condemn the destructive character of the Nigerian gerontocratic ruling class. They are represented as a despotic class committed to disempowering and destroying the lives of the young people in the country.

The invasion of Alábàtà's plantation by Ògúndijí's armed men portends food insecurity to Ota Efon and its environs. The invasion also shows how state-sponsored terrorism undermines peace and kills entrepreneurial activities, especially farming, in contemporary Nigeria. By helping to cede Alábàtà's plantation to his paymaster and ally, Alárinká—the illegitimate King of Mòḍḍé Kingdom—Ògúndijí foment the economic crises in the land. This is because food items produced from the ceded farm will not only be hoarded by the predatory ruling elite, but they will also be sold to the people at inflated prices. This point implies that food insecurity, inflation and poverty are byproducts of corrupt and predatory leadership.

Apart from waging wars against youths who express dissenting views, many members of the Nigerian gerontocratic ruling class also deploy the colonialists' method of divide and rule to exclude the youth from power. Writing on the divide and rule tactic of the colonialists, Fanon (1963) explains that "they (the colonialists) mobilise the people of the mountains and the up-country-dwellers against the townfolks. They pitch the hinterland against the seaboard, they rouse up tribespeople, and we need not be surprised to see Kalondji crowned king of Kasai" (p. 89). As depicted in *Jagun Jagun*, antagonism reflects the manner the youths are usually

manipulated by the older generation of neocolonial Nigerian rulers to undermine and destroy one another. For instance, in Ògúndijí's school of war, the senior student warriors who are themselves youths subject the new and junior ones to various degrees of torture. They even kill some of them without reason. Similarly, as ordered by Ògúndijí, Wèyìnwò is tied to the stake and burnt to death by his fellow war trainees who are mainly youths. Wèyìnwò's offence is that he provides food for the "erring" fellow warriors imprisoned by Ògúndijí. Also, those who are conscripted by Ògúndijí to wage a war against Alábàtà, a youth and thriving farmer in Ota Efon, are themselves youths. Instigated by Aláyélúwà, the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom, Ògúndijí equally pitches Gbógunmì against Gbótijà by ordering a murderous public combat between the duo with the intent of eliminating Gbótijà owing to his mounting popularity among his colleagues occasioned by his demonstrable extraordinary war skills, rare courage and metaphysical power. As captured in the film, the use of antagonism by the members of the gerontocratic ruling elite represents a veritable political manipulation aimed at foiling solidarity among the marginalised and disempowered young people. This is the reality in contemporary Nigeria. Ezemenaka (2021) underscores this point: "political manipulation and marginalisation/exclusion of youth in political leadership" are among the major factors that drive many Nigerian youths into violence. The divide and rule method that Ògúndijí uses to conscript his war youth trainees into fighting the wars orchestrated by the corrupt old Kings is similar to the deceptive methods often used by many war agents of the corrupt Nigerian older politicians to recruit many Nigerian youths into fighting in wars that they neither understand nor of benefit to them. For example, in Nigeria, many members of the gerontocratic capitalist class keep thugs and gangs of militia comprising mainly young people who they often control and use to unleash violence on their political opponents and on the ordinary people during electioneering.

Jagun Jagun also shows that although the older politicians manipulate the young people and use them for their parochial political ends, they hold the youths in high contempt and treat them with absolute impunity. For instance, Ògúndijí treats his youthful warriors like slaves. When Gbógunmì exercises his freedom of thought by refusing Ògúndijí and the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom's order to wage a war against Eléesun Kingdom, he is subjected to humiliation by Ògúndijí and the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom. Indeed, the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom expresses pleasure over the death of Gbógunmì in a deadly combat that he instigates Ògúndijí to organise between Gbótijà and Gbógunmì. Also, because Gbótijà demonstrates exceptional military skills and courage which make him very popular among his peers in Ògúndijí's school of war, Ògúndijí, acting on the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom's advice, makes several attempts on Gbótijà's life. Aláyélúwà, the King of Ìlúdùn Kingdom, is afraid that the young man, Gbótijà, owing to his war talents and extraordinary bravery, may supplant the hegemony of Ògúndijí and that of the gerontocratic capitalist ruling class. In a dialogue among the corrupt ruling class, their hatred towards the youths is captured:

Àrólé Oyèníkèké: Ibi Ògúndijí fẹ́ kí igi ó wó sí, ibẹ́ kó ló mà

wá padà wó sí! (Ògúndijí's wish didn't turn out as expected.)

Aláyélúwà: Ah! Ibi ó wó sí un náà dùn mó mi. (Ah! The

outcome of it sits so well with me.)

Àrólé Oyèníkèké: Èhén? (Really?)

Aláyélúwà: Ibi ó wá wó sí un dùn mó mi. Inú mi dùn. È è mó

pé ọmọ burúkú gbàà ni ọmọ ti wọn ní pè ní Gbógunmì un. Kírú mi rán an níṣé kó máa warùn kì. Ògúndìjì sì tún sọ fún un, ó kò, kò jíṣé ọhún (I'm quite pleased that it turned out that way. I'm so happy! Didn't you realise that Gbógunmì, or what was he called, was indeed a bad boy? Imagine him decisively refusing to wage war against the enemy in stubborn disobedience to my command! A whole me! Ògúndìjì even counseled him on the matter, but he remained resolute.)

Àrólé Oyènikèyè: Èhin, Ṣebí ó sì ti á tẹ. Ó tẹ, ó fí atẹ tédìí. Tó bá ń rákòrò, yòò ti dé ọrun keje. Aláyélúwà, ẹ dákun Moróhunmúbò ń kọ? (You see! He had paid dearly for his uncompromising noncompliance! He has stripped himself of honor! No matter how slow his journey, he must have reached the seventh heaven by now. Aláyélúwà, please where is Moróhunmúbò?)

Aláyélúwà: Á á wà nínú ìyèwù rẹ tó ń wa ẹkún mu bí i gaàrí.
(She must be inside her room, drinking tears like gaàrí.)

Alárinká: Sọ ti padà wálé ní? (Is she back home?)

Àrólé Oyènikèyè: Á mà ti padà! Kí ni o máa dúró ẹ ní ọhún nígbà tí ọkọ rẹ ti kú? (She must have come back. What is the essence of staying put after she has lost her husband?)

Aláyélúwà: Mo pàṣẹ. Mo pàṣẹ wí pé kó máa bọ ní ààfín mi nínìn-ín. Bó bádúró lóhùn-ún, wọn lè máa dáábàá wí pé àwọn ọò sú u lópó, mi ò sì fẹ rádaràda. (I commanded! I asked her to return to my palace. If she stays there, they might want to perform widow's wedding for her. I wouldn't expose her to such absurdity.)

Àrólé Oyènikèyè: Bó bá wà rí bẹẹ, Aláyélúwà, ẹ jẹ ká mu ohùn wa kó relẹ dáadàá, nítorí Ọmọ un ò (Should that be the case, Aláyélúwà, I suggest we speak in low tones lest she overhears us.)

Aláyélúwà: Láàfín mi! ẹ wọn mọ n ké mọ onígbègbè kó gbé tẹfun ẹmì ní? Ẹ dúó ná, Àṣé Gbógunmì kò ní oògùn kankan. Ẹ wò bí Gbótìjà ẹ pa á tú! Ọmọnú rẹ. Kí wá ló ń gba owó ká sí, tó ń bá wọn jagun? (In my own palace! Does one shout on an intending speaker to keep his/her lips sealed? Wait a moment, so Gbógunmì had no charms at all! See how Gbótìjà sent him to the grave without ado! A mere boy that he is old enough to father. Why exactly did he go around sourcing for fund in preparation for battle? (Adébáyò, *Jagun Jagun*)

Ògúndìjì's character raises multiple yet contradictory issues on the violent character of the Nigerian State and the unequivocal dedication of its gerontocratic elite to youth disempowerment. On the surface, it may seem valid to read Ògúndìjì as an 'Army General' who is in control of the national army that is responsible for defending the country from internal and external aggression. This reading would presuppose that Ògúndìjì is a patriot and defender of the integrity of the state and the lives and property of the people, including those of the youths. However, Ògúndìjì's actions defy this interpretation. A more careful, deeper interpretation would show

that Ògúndìjì is a private ‘soldier’ (a war mercenary, political thug and militia leader) who operates an ‘illegal’ school of war where he recruits youths into violence and uses them for his personal mercantile gains and that of the ruling class. Ògúndìjì’s character, as a war mercenary and militia leader who, at once, functions as a non-state actor, the agent of the gerontocratic state actors and an invisible-visible state actor with the full capacity to dispense unlimited violence, underscores Mbembe’s (2003) perspective on the ubiquitous nature of violence in the postcolony:

Many African states can no longer claim a monopoly on violence and on the means of coercion within their territory. Nor can they claim a monopoly on territorial boundaries. Coercion itself has become a market commodity. Military manpower is bought and sold on a market in which the identity of suppliers and purchasers means almost nothing. Urban militia, private armies, armies of regional lords, private security firms, and state armies all claim the right to exercise violence or to kill. (p. 32)

Ògúndìjì not only claims the rights to exercise violence, but he dispenses it in an inestimable measure, thus deciding who lives and who does not in his war school and the surrounding communities. This is evident in the cruel manner he orders that Wẹ̀yìnwò be tied to the stake and burnt to death and the callous manner he kills Gbótìjà’s father, Lágbàyí, and Ìròyìnogunkìtán’s parents when he attacks their communities. Fanon (1963) notes that “in the colonial countries, (...), the policemen and soldiers, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action, maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force” (p. 38). Fanon’s statement is not only true of the colonial countries, but is also a disturbing reality in many neocolonial nations in contemporary Africa, including Nigeria. In fact, postcolonial Nigerian rulers have perfected and expanded on this colonial technique of repression and fear. For example, apart from using the official repressive agencies of the state (the army, the police, etc.) to subjugate opposition, including the youths, and provide security for themselves and their immediate family members, the members of the ruling elite often enlist the services of political thugs, militia leaders and war mercenary like Ògúndìjì, and empower them to suppress and kill dissents in order to perpetuate themselves in power. Omotola (2009) offers insight into this ugly situation that “prominent actors in the leadership of these militias such as (...) Mujahid Dokubo Asari (...) and others functioned as electoral mercenaries for top politicians (...) during the transition to civil rule” (93). This shows further that politics, indeed democracy, in contemporary Nigeria is a violent enterprise. It is a game in which only those who, like Ògúndìjì and his paymasters, exhibit the most notorious capacity for violence can survive. On the violent nature of Nigerian politics, Anifowose (1982) equally concludes: “in Nigeria, to the victor would belong not only the spoils of office, but potentially permanent, that is, indefinite control over the most significant means of acquiring wealth and social prestige. Political power means success and prosperity for the man who holds it” (p. 39).

Nonetheless, Ògúndìjì’s character in *Jagun Jagun* inverts the notion that the youths are always the victims of the gerontocratic capitalist ruling class. This is because Ògúndìjì serves the interest of the ruling class. Through the use of flashback, the audience sees that in his youthful days, Ògúndìjì sacks Oniyò village,

Ìròyìnogunkìtán's village. He equally brings down Iwọn Community. Because of his notoriety for unleashing aggression on innocent people and communities, many youths erroneously see him as their 'hero' and troop to his school of war to learn the art of war to defend their communities or avenge the violence visited on them or both. Because they assume, though wrongly, that he is invincible, many youths desire to be like Ògúndìjì. Therefore, they not only revere him, but they also hero-worship him. This is evident in the dialogue among the three senior warriors sent by Ògúndìjì to sack Alábàtà's plantation at Ota-Efọn:

Jagunjagun Kìn-ín-ní: Sẹ ẹ ti gbúròó wọn?

(First Warrior: Have you heard from them?)

Jagunjagun Keji: Ìgbòò náà náà wá ni ọn lọ? Bí ó tiẹ jẹ pé Ogun Mòdedé kì í

şe Ogun gidi, kò sì wá lè yá báun.

(Second Warrior: When did they eventually leave? Even though, Mòdedé warfare is not a serious one, it couldn't be that fast)

Jagunjagun Kìn-ín-ní: Baba tiẹ bù ú kù. Sọ wá yẹ kí ó jẹ irú wa

yii ni Baba ọò mọọ rán lọ sí àwọn ogun kéékèkèké yii? Àwọn ịsáwùrù àti ikérégbè tò yẹ kó lọ náà la ti íwájú un. Báa wá şe wà yii, ká wá mọọ fami ára, ká sì mọọ yòtòmì.

(First Warrior: Papa was quite deficient in his action. How on earth would he belittle us so much that he would be mobilising us to stage war against feeble enemies? We have delegated the denigrating service to mere warfare apprentices. Let's keep dining and winning, and whiling away the time.)

Jagunjagun Kẹta: Tòótó lo sọ. Bóyá Baba ọ tiẹ mò pé ọkà wọn ti

bímọ sílẹ ó bóró (*wọn bú sẹrìn-ín*) àkèkèke wọn bímọ sílẹ ó bí ijàngbọn, kódà wọn bí ògbòlùgi pẹlú. Bóyá wọn ọ mò pé àwà náà kì í şe màjèsín nínú ogun mò.

(Third Warrior: You are quite right! Maybe Papa doesn't know that he has trained us to be deadly(*laughs*) ferocious and brutal. Maybe he didn't know that we are no longer baby warriors. (*Adébáyò Jagun Jagun*)

From the above dialogue, the youths are not just victims of the oppression of the older generation politicians, they are also their collaborators. The dialogue shows the deceptive heroism that often drives youths into participating in elite-induced wars. Although some youths in contemporary Nigeria often criticise the gerontocratic capitalist ruling class, the reality is that many youths in *Jagun Jagun* are willing agents of the ruling class. Just like the three warriors, many Nigerian youths consider the corrupt older politicians as their role models and heroes, thus aiming to ascend into their positions now or in the near future. As evident in *Jagun Jagun*, other than violence, abuse of power and tyranny, many of the youths often fail to offer alternative perspectives that can engender genuine democratisation and development in the postcolony. It can, therefore, be argued that some youths are not better than the gerontocratic rulers, for they are complicit in the perpetuation of tyranny, exploitation, corruption and gerontocratic dictatorship in the postcolony. The action of the three warriors validates this point by their self-confession that they have so internalised Ògúndìjì's instructions that they are now master-purveyors of aggression, torture and death. They describe themselves as poison, trouble and anarchy.

Although *Jagun Jagun* does not offer the audience insight into Ògúndíjì's history, especially how he becomes a war mercenary, a probe into his psyche shows that he is a necrophilous character. This is ascertained through his expressions associated with violence, death or destruction of lives. This is also supported by his absolute belief in using war to resolve issues. Providing insights into necrophilous character, Hentig, as cited by Fromm (1973), explains:

Necrophilia, in the characterological sense, can be described as the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely mechanical. It is the passion to tear apart living structures. (p.332)

Fromm (1973) explains that the language of a necrophilous person is often characterised by the predominant use of words referring to destruction (p.332). Fromm also maintains that "another manifestation of necrophilous character is the conviction that the only way to solve problem or a conflict is by force or violence" (p. 332). Ògúndíjì perfectly exhibits the aforementioned traits. In a kind of self-praise, Ògúndíjì confesses to being a necrophilous character when he declares: "Iná ni mí o. Bí n bá bínú tán, n ò mojú ẹni dá mi!" ("I am a fire! When my anger blazes, I don't recognise my maker!") (Adebayo, *Jagun Jagun*). In another instance, he describes his war school as:

Ògúndíjì: Ilé Ológun, Ilé olóògùn. Ilé tí ọmọ kú, tégbée rẹ yò sẹsẹsẹ. Ilé akoni, ilé ikú, ilé àrùn. Ikú n bẹ nílẹ ológun tíí pani. Èrín diẹ ẹkún púpọ lẹ lẹ fí bá mi gbé tí ò fí ní sí jàngbọn. (**Ògúndíjì:** House of warriors, house of sorcerers. House, where a youngster dies, and his peers are jubilant. The house of hero, house of death, house of pestilence. Warriors' house is the abode of death that kills, you can reside under my roof with little laughter and untold cries. Thus, you would not have to experience a face off. (Adebayo, *Jagun Jagun*)

The spatial setting, Ògúndíjì's school of war, serves as a site of interrogating political socialisation and culture in the postcolony. The manner in which the young people troop to Ògúndíjì's war school can be likened to the way in which many youths participate in political activities so as to become politically empowered. However, contrary to their expectation, the youths are often manipulated by the older generation politicians who control the socialising institutions of the state (such as schools, political parties, mass media and religious institutions) and they use them as tools of violence to advance their material and political interests. Thus, Ògúndíjì's war school illustrates how political education constitutes a colonising tool that is often used by the ruling class to undermine the consciousness of the young people. Rather than offering the youth a liberatory form of political education that will make them politically conscious and patriotic citizens, Ògúndíjì and the old Kings mis-educate them, turn them into willing slaves and use them to prosecute wars in order to promote the political and economic interests of the ruling class. Ògúndíjì's school of war is a nexus between politics of knowledge production and dissemination, and sociopolitical and economic domination. Indeed, Freire (2005) alludes to this

reality by noting that “education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (...) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (p. 78). By adapting to the world of oppression through colonialist form of education, the youth see oppression and its attendant violence as norms.

The genocidal attack visited on Alájé Town and its people by Ògúndìjì shows how hapless minority communities in the postcolony are often subjected to various forms of violence by the repressive agents of the ruling class. That the people of Alájé Town are attacked and killed by Ògúndìjì's warriors when the town is celebrating ájé festival—a ritual ceremony of prosperity, reproduction and renewal—shows that Ògúndìjì is a ruthless aggressor. He has earlier killed Wèyínwò by burning him to death. Wèyínwò is a young man who is sent to Ògúndìjì's war school by the people of Alájé Town to learn the arts of war so that he can return home to defend Alájé Town and its people. That Alájé Town and its people do not get justice for the genocide inflicted on them by Ògúndìjì shows how minority communities in contemporary Nigeria are perpetually victimised and yet denied access to justice. Hence, just like the young people from the lower class, the minority communities are often victims of the violence of the ruling hegemony.

An adept and courageous young warrior, Gbótìjà, the son of Lágbàiyí, debunks the claim that the youths lack the agency to change their condition of disempowerment and marginalisation. Gbótìjà uses his innate mystical power to communicate and command trees not only to protect himself from Ògúndìjì's tyranny but also to initiate the liberation of his fellow young warriors enslaved in Ògúndìjì's school of war. Although he, just like other student warriors, initially obeys Ògúndìjì's war order and abides by his dehumanising instructions, he eventually gains political consciousness as a result of various forms of torture that Ògúndìjì inflicts on him. His ultimate realisation that Ògúndìjì is responsible for attacking his homeland, Iwon Kingdom, for killing his father, his awareness that Ògúndìjì also wants him dead coupled with the death of his lover, Ìròyìnogunkìtán, which is caused by Ògúndìjì make him mobilise his fellow young warriors to revolt against him. By mobilising his fellow young warriors to bring Ògúndìjì's tyrannical reign to an end, not only does Gbótìjà realise his vision of avenging the killing of his father, but he also points out the path to end war and youth disempowerment orchestrated by the gerontocratic capitalist rulers. He unveils gerontocratic capitalism and exposes its evils and rotten underbelly:

Gbótìjà: Sábiyamọ niyẹn àbí abiagba? Èyàn niyẹn, àbí ikà? Ó kó gbogbo wa

jo, ó sọ wá derú. Ó kó gbogbo ọ̀dọ̀ dà sẹ̀wọ̀n! Ó bèrẹ̀ sí lò wá nílòkulò. Tẹ̀ẹ̀ bá tí rí ẹ̀nì tó fẹ̀ gbọ̀n nínú wa, ẹ̀ẹ̀ kojú wa sára wa. Hówù! kín nì èrè wa nígbà tí wọ̀n pa Gbólunmì? Kí lèrè rẹ̀? Kò tán? Hówù! Ibi tí a bá gbà gungì nì ojú gbogbo wa rí, Ibi tí a bá gbàbò, ojú ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ kì í rí i. Èrò̀ngbà gbogbo wa nì pé kí a wá kọ̀sẹ̀ ogun. Ká kọ̀sẹ̀ ogun tán, kí a lè máa gbẹ̀jà ilú wa. Gbogbo wa kọ̀sẹ̀ ogun tán, a tún bèrẹ̀ sí kojúùjà síra wa. Àbí bèẹ̀ kọ̀? Ẹ̀ jẹ̀ n biyín, kín nì wọ̀n sẹ̀ fún wa nílúú Alájé tí a fì dojú ogun kọ̀ wọ̀n? Kín nì Wèyínwò sẹ̀ tó fì bógun lọ? Ẹ̀yin ọ̀dọ̀ ẹ̀ jí! Ẹ̀yin màjèsín, ẹ̀ má sùn! Ẹ̀ yé é jẹ̀ kán lò wá fún irin isẹ̀ àwọ̀n olówó! Àwọ̀n olórí burúkú tá à n wí yíi, ajá mọ̀ ọ̀mọ̀ tiẹ̀ fún lómú nì, wọ̀n mọ̀ tòdù ọ̀yà kì mọ̀lẹ̀! Ẹ̀ lọ̀ bí oníkálukú wọ̀n léèrè, níbo làwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ tiyẹn wà? Níbo làwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ tiyẹn wà, tẹ̀ ẹ̀ n mú àwa, tí ẹ̀ sọ wá di olòsì, tẹ̀ ẹ̀ n kojú ara wa síra wa? (Adébáyò, *Jajun Jagun*)

(Gbótijà: Is that an ideal parent, or one that is quite defective and evil? Is that actually a human or a cruel figure? He gathers all of us and enslaves us. He imprisons all the youths. We are being subjected to hard labour. Whenever you observe that an apprentice is waxing stronger in wisdom than others, you 'll engage him in a deadly competition with another. Why? What did we stand to gain while Gbólunmì was put to death? What did you benefit? Has it not dawned on us? Why? We all keep our focus on the antecedent, but overlook and treat as of no significance the concomitant effects. The primary aim of each and every one of us was to learn warfare, and after graduation, we become well equipped to defend our home country. Having learned warfare, we conflict with one another. Is that not? Now, let me ask you, what crime did the inhabitants of Alájé Town commit to necessitate us waging war against them? What crime did Wèyìnwò commit to deserve agonising death? Wake up, oh youths! Sleep not upcoming youths! Stop letting yourselves be instrumentals in the hand of the rich! These sets of individuals with awful destiny know how to guard and protect their own children, but they take sadistic pleasure in exposing the offspring of the poor to danger! Go out there, ask them individually, where are their own children? Where are your children, when you strip us of dignity, make us wretched and hardheartedly engage us in unnecessary battles with one another?) (Adebayo, *Jagun Jagun*)

By exposing the corruption, duplicity and tyranny of the gerontocratic capitalist ruling elite, Gbótijà conscientises the oppressed youths and violently turns the table against Ògúndijí and his collaborators. Hence, Gbótijà's character validates Fanon's (1963) notion that "the naked truth of decolonisation evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists" (p. 28). Fanon (1963) notes further that "that affirmed intention to place the last the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (...) the well-known steps which characterized an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence" (p. 28). Inspired by Gbótijà, the collective struggle that results in the death

of Ògúndijí in the final resolution of *Jagun Jagun* suggests that the Nigerian youths need a revolution to liberate their generation from the oppression of the ruling class.

However, beyond a violent revolution, *Jagun Jagun* does not offer any other pragmatic developmental agenda to the youths and the country in general. Although the call for revolutionary violence against the ruling class in the final resolution of the film is relevant and plausible, experiences have shown that a violent revolution does not always bring about the sociopolitical transformation that are needed to liberate the oppressed class from the yoke of oppression. At best, a violent revolution often replaces a group of oppressors with another group of oppressors, thus compounding sociopolitical crises in a country. This is evident in Orwell's *Animal Farm* where the animals on the Manor Farm stage a revolution against their perceived oppressor, Mr. Jones, but later realise that the new leader, Napoleon, together with his cabinet members, is similar to Mr. Jones. This underscores the fact that violent revolution does not always lead to a resolution of sociopolitical crises.

Jagun Jagun's representations of state violence and youth disempowerment in the postcolony also intersect with issues of gender. Adebayo shows that young female-folks suffer the same fate as their male counterparts at the hands of gerontocratic capitalist elite. This is foregrounded through the character of Ìròyìnogunkíítán, Ògúndijí's slave-daughter who later falls in love with Gbótijà owing to his exceptional courage and gifted war skills. From her childhood, Ìròyìnogunkíítán, just like Gbótijà from Iwọn Town, is made an orphan by Ògúndijí when he and his warriors invade her community, Oníyò Village. Because he discovers that Ìròyìnogunkíítán is endowed with supernatural powers, he captures her and begins to manipulate her for his sadistic ends. Against her wish, Ògúndijí hypnotises Ìròyìnogunkíítán, inverts her spiritual powers and turns her into *Agemo*, the harbinger of death—a metaphor for a modern-day assassin. He uses *Agemo* to wipe out Alábàtá and his family at Ota Efon during Mòdèdè War instigated by Alárínká, the illegitimate King of Mòdèdè. Similarly, despite the affection between Gbótijà and Ìròyìnogunkíítán, Ògúndijí summons Ìròyìnogunkíítán's spirit (*Agemo*) and sends it to kill Gbótijà when he realises that Gbótijà, against his expectation, survives the Alájé War. This eventually results in Ìròyìnogunkíítán's death, which ironically, leads to the downfall of Ògúndijí. What these instances suggest is that young people across genders, regions and religions in contemporary Nigeria are victims of the gerontocratic capitalist class. Just as Ògúndijí secretly keeps his son with Arólé Oyènikèè in a secure distant land and uses young people from poor background to prosecute wars, many Nigerian gerontocratic capitalist rulers often keep their children in Western countries while using youths from the lower class as cannon fodder for violence.

The representations of state violence and youth exclusion in *Jagun Jagun* show how contemporary Nigerian literary arts—drama, prose fiction, poetry, film, cartoon, etc—speak back to the hegemonic forces within the postcolonial margin. Indeed, *Jagun Jagun* demonstrates that, in the twenty-first century, the Third World countries (in this context, Nigeria) remain the “Centres” of postcolonial discourse. The film shows that, contrary to the notion that the Nigerian socio-political crises are engendered by Western colonisers, the members of the ruling elite in the country are responsible for creating a condition of chaos in the country. This view is supported by Osofisan (1999) when he notes that contemporary African literary texts, produced by Africans based in Africa, are more concerned about internal socio-economic and political crises orchestrated by failure of leadership than conflicts between European colonisers and colonised Africans (pp.1-11). He notes that contemporary African literary arts are now much more concerned with the task of interrogating and exposing the manner in which

internal colonisers—Africa’s ruling class—inflict political and economic oppression on the continent than the ways in which European colonialists contribute to the continent’s underdevelopment (1-11). Osofisan declares: “If we have a great battle to fight for survival at all, the first place to start *must be on the home front*” (p. 5). Hence, *Jagun Jagun*’s engagement with Nigerian crises aligns with Osofisan’s idea of post-Negritude.

Nonetheless, the film does not totally exculpate the imperial centres from the violent crises assailing Nigeria and, indeed, other countries of the Global South. For example, in a conversation with Gbógunmì, Ògúndíjì shows that some new sophisticated guns are gifted to him by some White men who visit him. Apart from indicating the alliances between the imperial centres and local colonisers, the new sophisticated guns given to Ògúndíjì by some White men allude to how Euro-American powers continue to promote violence in the many countries of the Global South. By turning the countries of the Global South, including Nigeria, into a market of sophisticated weapons, the imperial centres endorse the fascist character of the ruling elite and other violent groups in the region. Hence, the imperial centres and the local colonisers are collaborators in the underdevelopment of the Nigerian state.

Conclusion and recommendation

This study examined how Adebayo uses elements of characters and setting in his film, *Jagun Jagun*, to interrogate the Nigerian state, its habituation to war and youth disempowerment. Through the deployment of postcolonial Marxism, the study showed that *Jagun Jagun*’s depictions of the Nigerian state, its condition of war and the disempowered state of the young people are relevant to the Nigerian sociopolitical realities in the 21st century. Just like other works of Nigerian playwrights and filmmakers, *Jagun Jagun*, the study has shown, is an insightful assessment of the contemporary Nigerian state with its gerontocratic ruling class that deploys violence to perpetuate its material interest. As observed in *Jagun Jagun*, the study reveals that democracy in contemporary Nigeria is synonymous with various forms of state orchestrated violence which include war, thuggery, terrorism, looting, autocracy and youth disempowerment. The reading of *Jagun Jagun* shows that members of the Nigerian gerontocratic capitalist elite evolve and sponsor wars and manipulate the youths, both male and female, to prosecute them. Nonetheless, the study discovers that some youths are involved in their disempowerment owing to their dubious collaboration with the ruling elite. The study concludes that Adebayo’s filmic depiction of the Nigerian sociopolitical crises in *Jagun Jagun* represents an important introspective evaluation that destabilises the binary opposition between Western colonisers and the Nigerian ruling class on the one hand, and the gerontocratic Nigerian political elite and the disempowered Nigerian youths on the other hand. Adebayo, thus, advocates genuine democratisation, healthy intergenerational collaboration and inclusion as alternative means of achieving peace and good governance in contemporary Nigeria.

Jagun Jagun’s self-reflexive critique of leadership failure in contemporary Nigeria is, indeed, remarkable. Equally noteworthy is the manner in which the film establishes, in its final resolution, the possibility for the emancipation of the marginalised youth from the dictatorship of the gerontocratic capitalist class. However, the relentless corruption, violence, death and disorder that permeate the universe of the film tend to suggest that it implicitly validates the colonialist notion that countries in sub-Saharan Africa (in this case, Nigeria) are essentially obsessed with violence and disorder and that these countries are grossly incapable of achieving

civil order and good governance by and for themselves. Apart from Ògúndíjì's necrophilous behaviour, the unscrupulous and violent attitudes of all the Kings depicted in the film tend to support the colonialist stereotype of Nigeria as a land of unrelenting chaos, violence and mis-governance. However, this Afro-pessimistic depiction of Africa as a space bereft of civil order and good governance is not new as it is also evident in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and *Madmen and Specialists*, Oluogbe's *Bound to Violence* and Zwick's *Blood Diamond*. However, in the twenty-first century, it is high time African writers, film-makers and culture activists imagined an alternative Africa that is grounded in the philosophy of Afrofuturism—an artistic expression that emphasises and envisions positive black identity, agency and liberated future for black people.

References

- Abbink, J. (2005). Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal. In *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, politics and conflicts in Africa*, edited by Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel, pp. 1-37. Brill Academic Publishers.
- Adeoti, G. R. (2015). Introduction: Present tension in future tenses—Re-writing Africa into the twenty-first century. in *African literature and the future*, edited by Gbemisola Adeoti, pp. 1-14. CODESRIA.
- Anifowose, R. (1982). *Violence and politics in Nigeria*. Sam Iroanusi Publication.
- Appiah, K. A. (1995). The postcolonial and the postmodern. In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, pp. 119-124. Routledge.
- Ashcroft, B. Griffiths G. and Tiffin H. eds. (1995). *The post-colonial studies reader*. Routledge.
- _____ (1989). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in postcolonial literatures*, Routledge.
- Ezemenaka, K. E. (2021). Youth violence and human security in Nigeria. *Social Sciences*, 10:267, pp. 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10070267>
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Federal Ministry of Youth Development—Nigeria. (2009). *Second national youth policy document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Federal Ministry of Youth Development, Nigeria.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group

Fromm, E. (1973). *The anatomy of human destructiveness*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public culture*, 15:1, pp. 11-40.

Odeh, N. (2023, July18). Japa syndrome: Why African rulers are to blame for mass migrations to Europe, America

Osundare. *The News*. https://thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2023/07/18/japa_syndrome_why-african-rulers-are-to-blame-for-mass-migrations-to-europe-america-osundare/

Okeke, R. C and Chioma A. O. (2023). Leadership as rocket Science and descent of the Nigerian nation to the state of nature. *World Scientific News*, 185, pp. 1-11.

Omotola, J. S. (2009). From political mercenarism to militias: The political origin of Delta

Militias. In *Fresh Dimensions on the Niger Delta crisis of Nigeria*, edited by Victor

Ojakorotu, pp. 91-124. JAPSS Press.

Osofisan, F. (1999). Theatre and the rites of post-Negritude remembering. *Research in African literatures*, 30.1, pp. 1-11.

Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today*. New York: Routledge.

Utoh-Ezeajugh, T. C. and Ekene E. A. (2017). “Gender domination and domestic violence in Nigerian video films: A paradigmatic appraisal. *UJAH* 18:3, pp. 1-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v18i3.1>

Filmography

Adebayo, Femi. *Jagun Jagun (The Warriors)*. (2023). Netflix/Ebony Life Studios.