

APPRASING THE TRAJECTORIES OF RESISTANCE IN MUSA IDRIS OKPANACHI'S *EATERS OF THE LIVING* AND OLUSEGUN ADENIYI'S *AGAINST THE RUN OF PLAY*

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Abstract

*This exploration is undertaken within the context of the precarious political situation in Nigeria. It examines in concrete terms both Musa Idris Okpanachi's and Olusegun Adeniyi's attempts at apprehending the ferments of resistance and extent to which such concerns are circumscribed within the socio-political configuration of Nigeria. In this frame, the literary aesthetics of Okpanachi and the non-literary paradigm of Adeniyi have been appropriated within the purview of New Historicism to underscore and repudiate the plethora of issues bordering on political tyranny, corruption, mis-governance, ineptitude, social and economic decadence and other hot-button issues that are a common place in the country along with how such perturbations epitomize the contemporary Nigerian reality. By and large, these writers' works engendered profound propositions that provide fresh insights into the dynamics of resistance and power and their overall implications for the Nigerian populace. In a nutshell, this paper explicates the trajectories of resistance within the social space of domination and how these considerations have directly impinged on Musa Idris Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living*(2007) and Olusegun Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play* (2017).*

Keywords: New Historicism, Resistance, Corruption, Power
Conceptual paradigm

Nigerian literature in English is also renowned for its vast body of poetry. The reason is that aesthetic writers in Nigeria have

severally deployed poetry as a cultural tool to give depth to momentous issues that have shaped the contours of the nation's existence. Umezurike (2018) avers that "the military rule was a catalyst for the growth of Nigerian poetry. The denunciation of military action especially the annulment of the 23rd June 1993 Presidential Election by General Ibrahim Babangida nurtured the explosion of 'anti-military poetry'" (64). Invariably, the growth of Nigerian poetry was given stimulus by the failures of the military governments in Nigeria. More still, the subsequent letdowns of the democratic dispensations marshaled the prevalence of this genre in the Nigerian literary tradition. Worth noting also is how the various historic events spanning through independence to post-independence in Nigeria crystallized the poetics of anti-establishment.

Within this purview therefore, Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* can be located within the discourse of resistant literature especially because the thrust of this poetry collection resonates with the perspective that is typically opposed to systems of leadership in Nigeria. Thus, this paper lenses concurrently on how resistance is constituted both within the pitfalls of political power and the dynamic context of the country as evidently conveyed through Okpanchi's *The Eaters of the Living* and Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play*. In one sense, while Okpanachi's fictive verse is concerned with how resistance is perpetuated within the larger activities of the dominated (the micro-politics of social relations in Foucauldian sense), Adeniyi's non-fictive delineation interrogates resistance within the activities of sovereignty (the Foucauldian principle of macro-politics of power) in Nigeria.

Contextualizing Resistance in the Nigerian Space

Given the scope of New Historicism, resistance is to Robert (2000) "any act by the subordinate class that is intended to mitigate or deny claims by super-ordinate class" (56). By this submission, any

attempt to advance the potions of the subordinate class constitutes resistance. This is so especially because the effort to project the perspectives of the subordinate class potentially undermines the powers of the dominant class or what Scott refers to as super-ordinate class. Resistance therefore is an activity that is oppositional to the social, political, economic and cultural order within a given geo-political construction. Bennett in Barker (2012) opines further that “resistance is an essentially defensive relationship to cultural power that is adapted by subordinate social forces in circumstances where the forms of cultural power in question arise from a source that is clearly experienced as external or internal” (445). Essentially, Bennett’s postulation is a pointer to the counter reactions of subordinate groups in Nigeria to the aggressive kinds of leadership in the country and by extension to the general categorization of resistance which can be located within the frame of public and disguised opposition. On the one hand, Vinthagen (2013) avers that public resistance is one that is overt, visible and dramatic such as rebellion, riots, demonstrations, civil war or others such organized, collective or confrontational articulation of protest, on the other hand disguised resistance is covert, quiet, dispersed, veiled or otherwise seemingly invisible such as silence, submission, foot-dragging, sarcasm, slander, theft, passivity, disloyalty etc (56). Arguably, this piece contends that all the variants of disguised resistance can successfully pass for different forms of protests in Nigeria especially because they are always initiated with the sense of opposition.

Respectively, Okpanachi and Adeniyi appropriate the foregoing notions to avow that even though public resistance has assumed a popular place in Nigeria, disguised or veiled protests are significant in comprehending the dynamic nature of the nation’s political space and the tactics that the exploited people in the country use to survive and undermine repressive domination in the country. To

these writers, the Nigerian populace has consistently adopted the strategy of every day resistance against the dominant symbolic order especially in situations where rebellion or revolution is too risky to engage. To them, certain behaviors which constitute disguised resistance or “infra-politics”, as noted by Greenblatt, are not always what they seem rather they are viable covert strategies deployed by the masses in the country whose miseries are caused by the hostile leadership style of the government to perpetuate domination.

To a large extent therefore, Okpanachi’s *The Eaters of the Living* is accordingly poetry of resistance. It is an exploration of the various forms of resistance by the subordinate and exploited masses in Nigeria. The volume is an embodiment of resistance against the stronghold of power. The literary compendium is a signification of resistance in its entirety. Umezurike (2018) posits that this collection is “a stand against power” (55). In other words, the volume responds to the brand of tyrannical political leadership that has failed and is still failing in Nigeria. Collectively, both Okpanachi’s *The Eaters of the Living* and Adeniyi’s *Against the Run of Play* are the writers’ encapsulations of the many ways in which dissenting voices convey what Chinua Achebe rightly termed as botched leadership in the country. To Achebe in Umezurike (2018), “the problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership” (1). Achebe’s position describes the overriding tone deployed by the both writers in their works. To these writers, the tone of disenchantment, disappointment and disillusionment foreground the ferments that are visible in the collective experience of the Nigerian public. The writers interrogate the post-independence Nigerian context marked by bitterness and the struggles by the subordinate class to survive the vexing social conditions in the country. To a large extent, the synopsis of Okpanachi’s verse sums up both writers’ consciousness of the attempts by resisters within Nigeria’s hegemonic space to register

their disdain for a system that has raped, ravaged and devoured their common heritage and patrimony. Overall, this paper is concerned with disguised resistance as the silent or covert means that the Nigerian public engaged severally to weaken the activities of the political class in the country.

Contextualizing the Dialectics between Resistance and Power in Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living*

Okpanachi begins *The Eaters of the Living* with the poem titled "*Silence of Time*" (10). He does this within the logic of Foucault (1982) to establish that "where there is resistance there is power" (23). This entails that resistance is significantly implicated in power. Okpanachi's appropriation of this concept can be located within the frame of the complex relationship between domination and the dominated in Nigeria or within what Foucault refers to as the micro-politics of social relations. This is underscored in the poet's use of stream of consciousness technique to examine the psychological state of mind of the persona in the poem, who has been arm-twisted to raise an eyebrow over his predicaments as a Nigerian. The persona has been coerced to silence and submission by the sort of atrocious leadership in the country. On this ground, he must refrain from speaking out about his experience. As he ponders over his thoughts, the persona reveals that he, like other citizens, is a victim of "bones crushed under the menace of boots" (line 1-3). The strong imagery exemplified in these lines depict the persona as one who is traumatized by the oppressive power structure constituted via state apparatuses as police, military and the like to completely carry through tyranny, on the Nigerian masses. With this the persona is alive to the desperate political means by which the Nigerian government via its various institutions exercises power and control over its citizens. In essence, the state apparatuses in the country in the perspective of Umezurike

(2018) function as death machines, dealing death at will, wielding the power of life and death over its citizens (65).

Evidently, the poet uses condensed metaphor of crushed bones, to describe how power constitutes domination in Nigeria. The extensive imageries of “strangled voices”, “liberty stifled”, “sheathed knives” “gods” and “sacrifice ourselves” have remained recurring decimals which further epitomize the contemporary political realities in the country and the implication of intimidation in the Nigerian democratic space. In what seems to be an unstructured soliloquy, the persona recounts his experience and those of his like by contending that sprinkles of public resistance or protest didn’t seem to quell the kind of morbid political anarchy in the country. There were, he asserts “riots on the street/blood flooded/ and dying was more precious” for the resisters (line 8-10). For fear of cruelty and spates of horrific attacks of different kinds, the persona is constrained to adopt silence and submission as reversed and unusual kinds of confrontation to undermine the stifling effect of the dominant political order in Nigeria. The persona takes up silence and submission to the ruling-class as forms of disguised resistance (or something Foucault termed “counter-hegemony” and Nnolim termed “Infra-Politics”) to the mayhem that have become a commonplace the leaders glory in.

Further, the persona’s response to the genocidal cruelty in the nation is apparent in a form of covert resistance, suggested in “we dived into the ocean/ and found it shallow/we took poison/it became inert/we wanted to hang/there was no rope” (line 20-25). The unprecedented tactic deployed by the persona to willfully submit to oppression explains the paradox of resistance in the country. These suicidal attempts by the persona in the poem are forms of deviance which can be regarded as extended protests. By not speaking out publically rather choosing some suicidal routes, the persona’s silence enunciates deviance. His silence ironically echoes the silences of other

Nigerians who have been marginalized in many mean ways. To the poet, silence is a satirical form of resistance adopted by subordinate Nigerians to subvert the dominant style of leadership in the country, especially as democracy offers almost no positive change in the lives of its citizens. No wonder, Foucault avers that “resistance is never in the position of exteriority” (95) rather resistance is embedded in “interiority” which gives the masses power against the perpetrators. Beyond the visible revolutions, revolts and protests in the circle, Okpanachi like Foucault is concerned with other silent or intrinsic actions that the masses deploy when they are discontented with the throes imposed on them by the elite class in Nigeria. To him, silent and covert forms of resistance can sometimes be more effective than public resistance in the country.

The paradox of disguised resistance is further conveyed in the poem titled “*We give you this country*” (11). The poet-persona begins the poem with a sneering tone of voice saying “we give you this country/without reservation/every speck of its dust/the space of your footsteps/the size of your grave” (line 1-6). Here, the persona deploys sarcasm as another form of protest. He adopts this covert resistance as a means to mock or convey contempt for the ruling-class. Using ironies, the persona on the one hand seems to be invoking his own domination willfully and on the other hand he mordantly calls for the death of the leaders of the country in the sixth line of the poem. By so doing, he wittingly promises to give the leaders “the size of their own grave”. The persona is careful about open confrontations with the powerful political class in the country. Thus, he disguises his desires in what seem to be a form of social manipulation to resist the power and the trauma of domination in Nigeria. To drive home this position, Aboh (2012) posits that Okpanachi’s poems seek to “denigrate and delegitimize the ruling class, thus revealing its inhuman tendencies” (85).

The poem titled “*Code of silence*” (13) is equally instructive on how silence constitutes resistance. Against the background of intense socio-political, cultural, religious as well as economic crisis, the persona affirms that “the code of silence is written across our lips/hanging on our noses/destinies written in the mud/on the ruts of tanks...with muzzles and bayonets” (line 1-12). In this poem, the persona describes how the subordinate class in Nigeria has been silenced. Through compelling metaphors like “tanks”, “muzzles” and “bayonets” the persona legitimates the view on how hegemony and resistance meet in this poem. Interestingly, “tanks”, “muzzles” and “bayonets” serve as hegemonic instruments used by the political forces to oblige silence and submission on the masses in Nigeria. Ironically, the masses are therefore left with the option to resist subtly through the same condition they are coerced in. They are in this poem referred to as “youths who dare to face the sun” (16-18). By so doing, Okpanachi is fundamentally saying that silence for the persona creates an alternative space opposed to the ruling-class culture of impunity and aggression in Nigeria. The alternative space created by silence in this poem is used by the vulnerable class as a space for counter domination. As such, those “who dare to face the sun” have adopted a form of disguised hegemony that is enabled by the structures of political power in Nigeria.

The persona builds further on the narrative of silence and sarcasm as forms of resistance in the poem titled “*Where to stand*” (19). He describes himself as one who is confused and lost in a land where even “the songbird calls the tune of disaster” (line 12). A hint of hopelessness is discernable from this poem. The persona draws from a tremendous sense of alienation implicated in silence to depict the mean-spirited nature of Nigerian leaders and how their political activities have metamorphosed into “Katrina and quakes jolting the ground he stands” (3-5). The persona alludes to “Katrina” and

“quakes” as metaphors to depict how politics in Nigerian has translated into a kind of hurricane that has fractured the entire fabric of the nation. For this reason he “trembles to face the floods/drowning my (his) heart/leaving the imprints of dead faces on the sill of my (his) retina” (line 20-26). To face the situation in the country head on, the persona like the dominated in Nigeria employs sarcasm. Through some sort of scorn the persona probes the divisive kind of politics in the country that has deeply severed the nation into many parts. Thus, “dead faces on the sill of his retina” explain the vilest form of dehumanization in Nigeria. To a large extent, the persona’s annoyance in this poem gradually morphed into full blown rage when he asked: “where do I stand/to escape your wrath/ for the crime I have/not committed/but for which you have titled/ the scales against me” (13-19). Again, this exemplifies how Nigerians have become hapless victims of political deception and bigotry that is intended to dehumanize the country by the political class. This is further accentuated by the “speedy siren of power suitcases” deployed in the poem to underline the mean political atmosphere in Nigeria.

What emerges therefore is the echo of similar sentiments on how resistance is incorporated in a complex and interactive process with power in Okpanachi’s collection. The persona exposes further the antics of the leaders in the country in another poem titled “*The eaters of the living*”(28). This poem employs slander as an additional dimension of veiled resistance. To underscore this, the persona begins the poem by establishing that:

Ours is a nation of the eaters
They eat everything and everyone
They eat like the termites
They eat like locusts
They eat like the cancer cells
They eat like acids

They eat the festering sores of the people
They eat our corpses
They eat our names and reputation
They eat our money (line 1-10)

The persona conveys sturdily several instances which depict the cannibalistic nature of Nigerian leaders. The verb “eat” is deployed as a metaphor in the poem to delineate the greedy nature of the political class in Nigeria and their insatiable quests to amass everything the nation has. By slander, the persona evokes an alternative space that allows him to disparage the tragic domestic trope the nation has been compelled into by corrupt leaders. The persona posits further:

They eat the skin of the poor
And drink the beverages of their sweats
They eat our patriotic service...
They eat the flag
And munch the anthem
And chew they pledge
They masticate the constitution (11-20)

The persona’s tone is yet again an expression predicated on the consciousness that shows how Nigerian politicians are completely devoid of empathy and conscience. Symbols like “flag”, “anthem”, “pledge” and “the constitution” in the poem, reiterate in strong terms how unpatriotic Nigerian leaders are. The kind of disservice and the lack of political dexterity and acumen by politicians in Nigeria are unmistakably contrived in the lines. Apparently, the persona creates a counter-context through slander that allows him to create vivid imagery of Nigerian politicians as predatory animals who careless about the country.

Similarly, in what seems like a combination of slander and sarcasm the persona continues the poem titled “*The god we made*”

(34) with furor. Both sarcasm and slander are integral to the meaning of the poem. For instance, through sarcasm the persona refers to Nigeria's political elites as "My lords and my masters" (1). By such sarcasm the persona engages the tactics of the weak to denounce the activities of Nigerian leaders. In fact, sarcasm in the view of Heller (1996) is "a maneuver within the enemy's territory" (37). In other words, the persona employs the use of acerbic language as a diversion to convey contempt for Nigerian leaders that have a thirst for brutality and have consistently robbed the masses blind of their commonwealth. To the persona, the elites in the country have become "lord of the streets/and market place/lord of the eternal Order of the nation/lord of slavery/lord of sapped economy and emaciated babies" (2-11). The highly sustained images of repression and viciousness through the length of the poem untangle the extent to which Nigerian leaders engage policies and programs for maiming the vulnerable in the country. Such policies are aptly termed "insane decrees" (line 34) or iron-fisted laws by the persona. For reasons like this, the leaders have become "false lords of the winds/hurricanes and tornadoes" who intentionally stir up chaos in the nation by wielding "tanks, fighter planes and missiles" to induce submission on the weak in the country. The leaders' authoritarian turn has eliminated any iota of hope in the country. Thus, Okpanachi in this respect is saying that because Nigeria is shrinking from despotism, sarcasm and slander have become convenient weapons deployed by the vulnerable almost on a daily basis to defy the political class in the country.

In brief, Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* has demonstrated the Foucauldian principle of "where there is resistance there is power and vice versa" (23). Okpanachi's assimilation of this concept can be contextualized within the relations between the vulnerable class and the elites in Nigeria. He does this to establish in *The Eaters of the Living* the dialectical relationship between resistance

and power and the precedent this has set for Nigerian political history. Given the nation's myriad woes, Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* untangles the various subtle means deployed by the Nigerian masses to resist Nigeria's leadership brands. With subtle forms of resistance, various statements are made by the vulnerable class in such a way that they are deeply coded with underlying meanings for the political elites in the country. The poet is saying, to borrow Der Spiegel view in *The Economist*, that Nigeria has become an "island of madness" (3), where cheer chaos, catastrophe and authoritarianism loom on the horizon and that the masses' silence in many stance is an ironical and sarcastic weapon adopted to survive the harsh realities in the country. Thus, subtle resistance by the vast mass of Nigerian people is also a somewhat silent and hidden way of undermining political power in the country.

Contextualizing the Dialectics between Resistance and Power in Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play*

In a similar fashion, Olusegun Adeniyi's appropriation of the dialectics of resistance and power in *Against the Run of Play* can be circumscribed within the ambit of sovereignty or what Foucault termed the macro-politics of power. Adeniyi's contention is that even within the highest hierarchy of power the elites negotiate a space to resist certain encumbrances against their interests. The optics of this trend within the Nigerian political space can largely be taken from the rifts between the former President of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the then Governor of River State, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, the former First Lady Dame Patience Jonathan and the former Speaker House of Representatives Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, the winner of the PDP gubernatorial primaries Timipre Silva and President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the former First Lady Dame Patience Jonathan and the then governor of River State Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi to mention a few in Adeniyi's *Against the*

Run of Play. Although the text is about how an incumbent president was defeated in Nigerian politics, it is also about how resistance is always in opposition to power.

Adeniyi begins the second chapter of *Against the Run of Play* titled “*The Seeds of Rebellion*” (43), by underscoring silence as reversed weapon of protest often deployed by those within the corridors of power in Nigeria. He draws from the schism between the former First Lady Dame Patience Jonathan and the former Speaker House of Representatives Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambulwal, to designate silence as a symbolic tool for counter-hegemonic reaction forged on the terrain of hegemonic struggles by members of the same political class in Nigeria. In the text, the dispute between Dame Patience Jonathan and Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambulwal stems from the First Lady’s suspicion of the forces that brought the former Speaker to power against the prevailing zoning arrangement by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The emergence of Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambulwal to Speakership against the preferred choice and the endorsement of presidency triggered the anger of the First Lady. In fact, the election of Tambulwal rattled the presidency and the First Lady particularly felt slighted that she could not produce a female Speaker (Mrs Mulikat Akande-Adeola) who was hitherto penciled by the President. The Adeniyi opines that “Jonathan and his wife saw the aspiration of Tambulwal as an affront and did all they could to dissuade him from running; firstly by using the governors to remonstrate with him. When this move failed, the security agencies were deployed to apprehend him”(45).

However, subsequent subplots played to Tambulwal’s favor which enabled him to file a suit against the Inspector General of Police and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) before the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, in quest of protection from being intimidated or arrested. Against all odds, Tambulwal later

emerged speaker to the aggravation of the First Lady and the President. This further stimulated the First Lady's contempt for Tambulwal to the extent she called him on his cell number purporting thus: "You this Hausa boy! You want to bring down the government of my husband; you want to disgrace him out of power? Una no fit! God no go allow you" (43). According to Adeniyi, while the vituperation lasted Tambulwal was quiet. He didn't utter a word to the First Lady. The former Speaker's silence is captured in "what do you want me to say to the wife of the President? I just kept quiet and allowed her to vent her anger on me. After a while she paused . . . and dropped the phone" (43). Going by New Historicist logic, Tambulwal's silence on the First Lady's invective is a sarcastic form of a reversed protest. His silence speaks not only of an internal war with the First Lady, but also of the brave defiance against the highest political order in the country. Barry (1995) describes more clearly Tambulwal's silence as "a clever trick and knowing how to get away with hunter's cunning, maneuvers and polymorphic situations" (38). From this stance, the former Speaker's dissent to the former First Lady's tirade needed not be recognized as it remained relatively invincible to her. In this respect, Tambulwal's silence echoes the silences of many other Nigerian elites who are consistently marginalized in rampant ways even within the highest echelon of power.

More tellingly is the exploration of visible resistance in the text particularly within the domain of power. Adeniyi captures how certain elites act in ways that might undermine power in the country. This can apparently be drawn from the rift between President Goodluck Jonathan and the winner of the PDP gubernatorial primaries in Bayelsa State, Timipre Silva. The schism was compounded by the Jonathan's outright rejection of Silva as the authentic flag-bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state. In return, Silva

demonstrated the resolve to challenge the status quo publically through an open letter to the President. Silva lamented thus: “the totally unjust way, manner, reason . . . people were used to remove me from office and the wave of state persecution is rather appalling. Most painfully, is that it is you the President that is at the center of it all” (50). Adeniyi attempts to appraise the vortex of power complexes in Nigeria by hinging on the perplexing socio-political and historical power tussles in the nation. In view of this, Silva further referenced how he was marked out as an enemy to be crushed by the former President in the letter. This highlights the chronically tensed relation between the President and Silva. By the open protestation against the former President of the country, Silva led a fierce campaign and became a strong opponent of the President. Such open resistance to the President is what Foucault (1982) termed “agonistic struggle” where “an individual upon permanent provocation can refuse the normalized identity or otherness” (72). Invariably, what Foucault is saying is that resistance is sometimes a hostile rejection of the normative to register defiance and difference. So therefore, Silva’s open confrontation with the President exemplifies the extreme form of counter-hegemony that exists in the strategic field of power relations.

In the same breath, Adeniyi further describes how outright public resistance can be directed, against what During (1992) referred to as the “general system of domination exerted by one group over another” (92), in *Against the Run of the Play*. In the text, President Jonathan’s conflict with Silva opened up a bigger front in River State where Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi was compelled into the opposition camp to resist President Goodluck Jonathan and his wife Dame Patience Jonathan. The escalation between Amaechi and the President was to Adeniyi rooted in the former’s refusal to submit his mandate to “a woman in Abuja, even if such a person is the wife of the President” (51). More still, the relationship between the two broke

down irretrievably when Jonathan took and gave the oil wells in Soku, River State to Bayelsa State. With Amaechi as the chairman of Nigeria Governor's Forum (NGF), the rift became a public spectacle. Amaechi interrogated the President's mismanagement of the Federation Account, his failed policy choice in respect to the power and oil sectors to mention a few. These marked him out as the President's political enemy. To this extent, David Mark in Adeniyi (2017) affirmed that "it was President Jonathan and his wife who radicalized him and turned him into a political foe" (48). This view was further proclaimed by Ihedioha as cited in Adeniyi, who believes that Jonathan needlessly "sowed the seeds of discord and division not only in the House of Representatives but in the PDP itself" (48).

From the foregoing, Amaechi's political action has some pertinent symbolic implications. First off, his identification with an alternative camp and subsequent public altercation with the President are forms of overt resistance. In other words, his resistance to presidential powers is an essential form of defense. Bennett in Baker (2012) puts this clearly when he posits that Amaechi's resistance is an "essentially defensive relationship to cultural and political power" (454). Such confrontation issues from relationship of power and subordination, especially where a dominant hegemonic power seeks to impose itself on a subordinate power. By this supposition, identifying with the opposition camp and interrogating the policies of the President empower Amaechi to undermine the hegemonic powers in the country. Significantly therefore, his resistance to the President and his wife constitute an expression of difference from the dominant hegemonic political culture in the country. More so, the formulation of difference invariably constitutes a new form of identity for him. Such identity to Hall (1976) stands a "distant space opposed to the ruling-class culture" (455).

Conclusion

In a nut shell, by placing Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* within the framework of Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play*, this paper contends that literature is not a self-contained entity and must consider other influences. Invariably, such juxtaposition attains what Clifford Geertz in Barker (2012) refers to as "thick description", that is, a more enlightened and detailed account on the Nigerian experience. More still, the New Historicist parallel reading of Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* and Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play* enable this study to contend that the Nigerian political terrain constitutes a context where power and resistance are complexly and consistently negotiated. In the spirit of the theory, Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* and Adeniyi's *Against the Run of Play* represent Nigerians as people who are enmeshed in some sort of trauma and dilemma constituted by the hegemonic powers they must resist. These writers' similar aesthetic vision encapsulates resistance as a continuum between hidden subversions and public confrontations. To them, resistance is a post-independence reality that has become entrenched into the fabric of the Nigerian social life. To this end, the foregrounding of the different cultural materials of both writers untangles diverse perspectives on how resistance can sometimes be covert and overt depending on the material situation.

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