

**IRONY AND THE IRONIC IN SELECTED YORÙBÁ  
TRAGIC PLAYS**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out by Fúnmilólá MorénikéFákéyẹ under my supervision and guidance in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan. Ibadan.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

to God, the father, the Almighty who makes all things beautiful, in my life, in his time; to Jesus Christ, my Redeemer and to The Holy Spirit: my friend, my guide and my faithful companion.

To the glory of His name

For the great things He has done in my life. As I see the little lily growing out of the mighty thorns, I marvel at the wisdom of my God. That I can go this far is the Lord's doing. His name is praised forever and ever.

I give all adoration to His holy name for His mercy endures for ever.

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*Ìdàámù Páàdì Minkailu*

*Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. *Àrè-Àgò* (*Arikúyeri*) as *Àrè-Àgò*

2.Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù) asÌdààmú Páàdì

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**ABSTRACT**

Irony and the ironic , which are prominent features of Yorùbá tragic plays , are stylistic elements used to draw attention to the gap between the speaking position, the posited truth and actions. Previous studies on the use of stylistic devices in Yorùbá literature have examined simile, metaphor, repetition and euphemism, but have not given adequate attention to ironic elements in Yorùbá tragic plays . This study, therefore, examined the types of irony and the ironic, and their contexts of usage. The aim is to establish their stylistic significance and their communicative functions in the plays.

The study adopted Roland Barthes' Semiological theory. Four Yorùbá written plays were purposively selected because they have a high concentration of ironic elements that depict tragic situations. They were Láwuyì Ògúnníran's *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò (Aríkúyẹ̀rí)*, Akínwùmí Ìsòlá's *Efúnṣẹ́tán Aníwúrà*, Adébáyọ̀ Fálẹ̀tí's *Ìdààmú Páàdì (Mínkálù)*, and Oládẹ̀jọ̀ Òkédìjì's *Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún* . The data were subjected to semantic and semiotic analyses.

Five types of irony are found in the texts, namely, verbal irony, dramatic/tragic irony, irony of fate, irony of character and comic irony. The ironic covers situations (dilemma, bareness, extremism, frustration, deception and death) and actions (wrestling, wickedness, vengeance, greediness, treachery, hypocrisy, bribery, conspiracy, malady and role change) that lead to tragedy. Verbal irony, dramatic/tragic irony, irony of fate and the ironic are identified in all the texts. Irony of character is found only in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Páàdì* and *Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún* while comic irony is found only in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò* and *Ìdààmú Páàdì*. Four types of contexts are identified: political (achieved with dramatic irony showing vengeance, escapism, malady and death; verbal irony showing conspiracy and deception; Irony of character showing treachery, bribery, extremism and escapism), historical (achieved with irony of character showing conspiracy and escapism ;irony of fate showing frustration, dilemma and death), philosophical (achieved with irony of fate showing dilemma, bareness, malady and death; irony of character showing frustration and vengeance) and cultural (achieved with verbal irony showing pretence; comic irony showing wrestling and role change). All the four occur in three texts (*Ààrẹ̀-Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Páàdì* and *Efúnṣẹ́tán Aníwúrà*) while only three (political, philosophical and cultural) occur in *Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún*. These ironic elements achieve four stylistic functions: defence mechanism, pre-destination cues, counter dogmatism and protest mechanism. At varying degrees is *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò* and *Ìdààmú Páàdì* , comical effects with ironic twists climaxing at the point of incongruity occur in the political, cultural and historical contexts; only ironic effects with satirical cues are found in *Efúnṣẹ́tán Aníwúrà*. The irony and the ironic elements are connected with three broad tragic themes, namely, death (all the texts), escapism (*Ààrẹ̀-Àgò*) and malady (*Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún*) which contribute to their stylistic function in the plays.

Irony and the ironic elements, with differing manifestations , occur in historical , philosophical, political and cultural contexts , and perform theme and effect -based stylistic functions in Yorùbá tragic plays . These elements , thus, enhance the readers' understanding of the Yorùbá concept of tragedy as evident in the plays.

**Key words:** Irony, Ironic situations, Yorùbá Tragic plays, Literary Context.

**Word count: 484**

## CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

There has been an increasing concern of scholars over the past 150 years on irony as a stylistic device. In relation to Yorùbá studies, however, investigation of irony is still in its infancy, especially in drama. Therefore, this study is significant, in that it unearths the use of irony as one of the pungent resources of language in selected Yorùbá tragic plays. Although complex in nature, irony and the ironic constitute an important device in both literary and routine communication.

In the Yorùbá culture, people feel that one does not say it all; hence, they say, do not be an ‘alásótan òrò’ (a person who “says it all as it is). Among the Yorùbá, people often communicate with one another using irony and the ironic a great deal, they do not say all they intend to say, and sometimes, they choose the variant of the actual word they mean to say and leave their decoder to work out the meaning from the context. The Yorùbá believe that a word is enough for the wise and that their listener who operates within the same contextual background should be able to grasp the actual word or decode the message they want to pass across. This is why they choose the word or sentence that is mild on the surface but has deeper underneath meaning. This manner of communication reflects conspicuously in Yorùbá drama texts, especially tragic plays. It is, therefore, important to investigate the use of irony and the ironic in their different forms if the structure and nature of Yorùbá tragic plays will be properly understood.

This study examines irony and the allied tropes as powerful weapon in the hands of selected Yorùbá playwrights, Oḷádejo Òkèdijì, Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, Láwuyi Ògúnniran and Adébáyò Fálétí, who use irony to strengthen and embellish their writings to achieve different dramatic, tragic and stylistic effects, contributing to the reader’s delight in contrasting the appearance with the reality in the course of reading the Yorùbá drama texts.

### 1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

In their different scopes, forms and functions; metaphor, simile, parallelism, lexical matching, personification, euphemism and so on are essential in literary works and have attracted the attention of a great deal of scholars. However, irony and the ironic have not attracted much scholarly attention in Yorùbá studies. This study,

therefore, focused on irony and the ironic as stylistic devices, motivated by their complexity of nature, semantic ambiguity and peculiarity to drama.

The objective of the study was first, to trace the origin and nature of irony and the ironic from the Western perspective down to the Yorùbá perspective as it reflects in Yorùbá written tragic plays. Another objective was to examine the different types of irony based on the way they are exhibited in the selected tragic plays, and their features in relation to their allied tropes. The third objective was to highlight the stylistic significance of irony and the ironic and establish the communicative functions in the selected tragic plays. The fourth objective was to highlight the factors involved in the semantic interpretations of irony and the ironic from cultural, political, historical and philosophical contexts.

In order to achieve the above objectives, Roland Barthes' semiological theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. This was to facilitate correct and acceptable interpretation of irony and the ironic through denotation and connotation, since irony is recognised as a sign standing for a particular signified within a given context.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

Irony and the ironic in the Yorùbá tragic plays is the focus of this work. There are examples of what is commonly called irony in novels, poems, short stories and narrative verses, the movie and even in life situations. In this work, however, focus is on the study of irony and the ironic as stylistic devices in the tragic plays of selected Yorùbá playwrights. This was to unravel the 'secret communion', which is the basis of irony in drama, between the authors and the readers.

There are numerous Yorùbá drama texts in circulation but for proper and effective handling and for accurate analysis and because of the peculiarity of irony and the ironic to tragic plays, this study was limited to four selected Yorùbá writers whose works have a high occurrence of irony and the ironic. The selected works are *Efúnṣetan Aniwura* (1970) by Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá; *ÌdààmúPààdì Mínkáílù* (1972) by Adébáyò Fálétí; *Réré Rún* (1973) by Oládèjò Òkédíjì ; and *Ààrẹ̀ Àgo Aríkúyẹ̀rì* (1977) by Láuuyì Ògúnníran. Our choice of the texts was dictated by the fact that the authors are accomplished and foremost Yorùbá writers whose literary works are well known . They reflect different spheres of Yorùbá culture , history, politics and philosophy,

where there are high concentration of irony and the ironic elements, richly deployed for tragic purposes.

#### 1.4 The Origin and Nature of Irony

Etymologically, the word 'irony' is a Greek word εἰρωνεία (*eironeia*), meaning 'feigned ignorance', a technique often used by the Greek philosopher, Socrates. This Greek word is derived from the combination of two Greek words: first 'τεῖρων' (*teiron*) which means 'to ask' the one who put up questions to an opponent (rhetorical question) pretending to be naïve and inferior; and second 'εἶπεω' (*eirein*), which means 'to speak', 'saying' or 'asking'. The verb 'εἶπεω' (*eirein*) also has an extended meaning as a verb meaning 'to fasten or to string together in rows. It gives a description of the character or the ironist as somebody who deliberately arranges a series of fact or appearances in order to mislead. It is the combination of these two words; 'εἶρων' and 'εἶπεω' that form εἰρωνεία. When this word first appeared in Aristophanes' and Plato's works, they were used as vulgar expression of reproach meaning "sly, mocking pretence and deception".<sup>1</sup>

In the classical Greek, the concept of irony was not really considered so much as a mode of speech; but rather seen initially as a mode of behaviour. The central fact about the history of irony in Greek use is from the Greek word 'eironeia' which occurred in the dialogue of Plato (428-347BC) with reference to Socrates. It is from that time that irony no longer meant straightforward lying but now an intended simulation which the hearer should be able to recognise. From Aristotle's perspectives (384-322BC) irony is referred to as understatement and as a mere rhetorical figure. Plato and Socrates are also ironists. The Aristotelian concept of irony 'was genuinely deceptive and self-depreciation but it was the Platonic and Socratic use that became definitive for later thought Colebrook (2004:6).

For Socrates, irony is feigning ignorance in order to expose the weakness of another opposition. It was referred to as 'urbane pretence' of Socrates. In other words, Socratic irony was used to describe the Attic philosopher's way of exposing falsehood and a way of getting at the truth; an annoying way of pretending ignorance and humbly questioning his interlocutor until the person convicts himself with his own mouth. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, only the best educated were acquainted with it. According to Thomson (1926), 'irony' was hardly used in Latin and not in use at all in English. As the first half of the seventeenth century progressed,



irony became a more readily available English word. It came into English from the Latin word *ironia*, which can also be traced to the Greek origin of *eironeia*. The Latin word was translated into English as *yronye*. According to Muecke (1970:16-17), it did not appear in English until 1502 and did not come into focus until the early eighteenth century. It began to appear in general literary discourse between 1720 and 1830. In England, like in other European countries, the concept of irony developed at a slow pace, except for its use by Cicero and Quintilia. Their presentation of irony as a way of treating one's opponent in an argument and as a verbal strategy was ignored at first and for more than two hundred years, irony was regarded as merely a figure of speech.

McMurray (1978: 46 ) asserts that:

much of the irony in the twentieth century literature seems to stem out from the erosion of religious faith and the rejection of the absolutes based on the tenets of reason.

In the early Greek literature, irony was presented as a term of abuse. Even the early Greek sense of irony as cunning, deceit, vulgar, mocking pretence clung to the word, in that it sometimes expressed a greater disapprobation than we feel it today. Sedgewick (1948:13) avers that "Socratic irony contains the germs of all the newer ironies which have so afflicted the literature of the last century". This implies that Socrates was the very beginning of irony. It was in Plato's Socratic dialogues that irony is referred to as a complex figure of speech and the creation of an enigmatic personality. Many nineteenth and twentieth century writers also supported this and placed Socrates at the centre of the concept of irony. Colebrook (2004:7) makes this remark about Socrates: "His irony, or his capacity not to accept everyday values and concept but live in a perpetual question, is the birth of philosophy, ethics, and consciousness". This germ is also noticed in Yorùbá concept of irony when a situation occurs in a way that destabilises the established dogma in the community.

Muecke (1970:18) notes that the tail end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century recorded different but new meanings for the word. The old meanings were not disregarded but they were engrafted into the new meaning invented. The contribution of the English classical period was to introduce certain classical concepts of irony into the mainstream of English literary culture and to develop these older concepts in small ways. It is like a transformation with wider scope. Thus, Muecke (1970:7) describes the development of the concept of irony thus:

from its early stage of development down to this time may be likened to ‘a ship at anchor when both wind and current, veritable and constant forces are dragging it slowly from its anchorage’. It changed shape as readily as the old man of the sea.

The word irony does not now mean only what it meant in earlier centuries. It does not mean in one country all it may stand for in another country. The meaning may differ from the one given in the street and what it means in this study. Meaning may also change from one scholar to another. In all, the semantic evolution of the concept of irony has been haphazard but the main features remain from all angles of its evolution.

In modern English, irony itself is even more complex. It is very recently that the word finds its place within the conversational status, together with a certain fashionable refinement. For example, we can now hear people say ‘How ironical!’ in place of ‘What a coincidence’. Recently, people began to look at irony as we look at it today, as a name, and a method that carries no reproach except in being misused. The account of Muecke (1969:7) best summarises the emergence of irony:

The history of the concept of irony is in rather better shape. Otto Ribbeks (1876) in the classical study of *eironeia* in Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries; G. G. Sedgewick’s Harvard dissertation of 1913 traced the history of the word through classical Greek and Latin to Medieval Latin. Norman Knox, in his book *The Word Irony and its context 1500-1755* (1961) carried the history of the semantic development of the English word from its first appearance down to the date of Dr. Johnson’s dictionary... In 1755, the concept of irony in other European countries had not become significantly more complex than it had in England. It was however, after 1755 that the word ‘irony’ began to take on several quite new meanings, though less rapidly in England and France than in Germany

From the Yorùbá perspective, irony is called Èdà òrò which literally means the variant of a word. There is also an irony in the form of teasing which the Yorùbá call ‘ègò’. It is a statement made by someone to another person but without expecting the action to be carried out by the addressee. For example, in *Ààrè-Àgò Arikúyèrí, Òbo Lágídò* is a servant to Ògúnrinde Ajé, a warlord, who has three wives. One of the wives, his favourite (Fátólá), is accused of poisoning the children of the other wife which results into their death. Ògúnrinde Ajé could not hold his anger; he

kills Fátólá immediately he hears that all the children have died. It is in reference to the killing of Fátólá that Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò complains and asks why the penalty for Fátólá supposed offence should be death, when Ọ̀gúnrinde Ajé knows quite well that he (Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò) his servant, could not afford to have a wife, even one, Ọ̀gúnrinde Ajé has three and could still afford to kill one. He opines that if Ọ̀gúnrinde Ajé feels that he no longer wants Fátólá as wife then he should have given her to him as a wife since he has none. *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* (pg 34). It is an irony as teasing, for humorous purpose because, in the real sense of the situation, Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò cannot and should not even ask for the wife of his master to be given to him and he would not have accepted Fátólá if she was given to him as a wife but now he is asking for her after she has died. Irony and the ironic, as Muecke (1970:69) notes, 'is not just something that happens; it is something that is at least picturable as happening'

Irony and the ironic can also be traced down to Ifá oracle among the Yorùbá people of south western Nigeria. It is found in Odù Ifá Ọ̀wónrín Orógbè, which is also known as Ọ̀wónrín Asányìn. In the olden days, there was a man called Asán yìn, who was known for the use of irony and ironic elements virtually in all his communications. He was so fond of speaking in irony that he never learnt his lessons until he lost his two sons to fire and drowning incidents. Asányìn was going out and he gave instruction to his first son like this:

Asányìn: *Şé o rí, bí mo bá sì ti lọ tán  
Şe ni kí o tiná bọlé  
Kó o mọ̀ sì mọ̀ bó ó şe bọ́ta, şó o gbọ́?*

Asányìn: Look, after I've gone  
Just put the house on fire  
And refuse to find your way out.

His son could not decode what his father told him, thought his father meant that he should set the house on fire and must not go out of the house even when the house is burning. In another incident, he told his son who was going to the stream to fetch water thus:

Asányìn: Lọ odò,  
Bóo bá sì ti dódò  
Má wulẹ ọ̀nmi létí odò  
Áárín odò gan-an ni kóo ti lọ ọ ọ̀nmi  
Torí mo mọ irú èyàn tó o jẹ.

Asányìn: Go to the stream,  
And when you get to the stream,  
Don't just fetch at the river bank, just go to the middle  
of the river to fetch, for I know you are so stubborn.

When his son got to the river, he went straight into the middle of the river with the mind of fetching the water according to the description but unfortunately the boy got drowned in the river. This is why people say:

Ọ̀rọ̀ ò dùn ipín Asányìn , ọ̀mọ kan jóná mólé , ó tún lo ẹ̀dà  
ọ̀rọ̀ fún ikeji, ó bódo lọ ,

So thoughtless is Asányìn's destiny who through irony lost one son to fire and still used irony for the other one who got drowned in the river.

After the two sorrowful incidents , Asányìn took counsel and went to consult his diviner. Odù Ọ̀wónrín Orógbè was related to him thus:

Asányìn òdùdù gbèrèdù  
Kònkòsò báa ẹ̀ n ẹ̀ ọ̀ tó  
O tún n kùlùbọ̀  
Ìwọ Asányìn, ẹ̀ni a wí fún ọ̀ba jẹ́ ó gbọ̀  
Ìwọ Asányìn, ẹ̀ni a sọ̀rọ̀ fun ọ̀ba jẹ́ ó gbà  
Ẹ̀ni a kilọ̀ fún, Ọ̀rúnmilà jẹ́ ó gbà  
À wífún ì fẹ̀  
À fọ̀fún ì gbà  
Níí mú kélétí ikún, ó kọ̀wọ̀ "há à" bọ̀nù.  
Ó ní kínni kí òun ó rú lẹ̀bọ̀  
Wọ̀n ní ẹ̀bọ ẹ̀nu ní kó rú  
Wọ̀n ní kó bọ olúbọ̀bọ̀tiribọ̀ baba ẹ̀bọ̀  
Ẹ̀nu ní n kó ó bá a  
Wọ̀n ní kó wá ọ̀gèdè  
Kó rú obì  
Kó sì rú oríjìn (ewé ifá)  
Nígbà tó gbọ̀ rírú ẹ̀bọ̀ tó rú tán  
Ẹ̀bọ̀ rú, ẹ̀bọ̀ gbà  
Ni ò bá sọ̀dàkeji ọ̀rọ̀ mọ̀  
Ni gbogbo ọ̀mọ̀ bá n dúró fún ún  
Ó bá n yin àwọ̀n awo rẹ̀  
Àwọ̀n awo rẹ̀ ní kó máa yin Olódùmarè  
Ni wọ̀n bá fí orin awo sí i lẹ̀nu  
L'oun náà ba yanu kótó

Ní orin awo bá kó sí i lẹnu ikóró ikóró  
Ló n wí pé;

Orin: Ẹnu lẹḅo o 2x  
A kii jògèdè  
Kó wuni lèèkè o  
Ẹnu lẹḅo<sub>2</sub>

Asányin òdùdù gbèrèdù  
Sieve, as we are treating you,  
You are still sieving yam flour  
You, Asányin, may the king allow him that is warned to listen  
You, Asányin may the king allow the person that is instructed to  
harken  
May Ọ̀rúnmilà allow the person that is warned to harken  
Being warned and refusing to harken  
Being instructed and refusing to obey.  
Made a disobedient person regret his action  
He asked what to offer as sacrificial offering  
They said he should offer sacrifice to the mouth  
The greatest of all sacrifices  
He's being affected by mouth  
They said he should prepare banana  
He should offer kolanut  
And he should offer Ifá leaf (orijin)  
When he obediently offered sacrifice  
The sacrifice was accepted  
He ceased talking ironically  
And his children were no more dying  
He was praising his priests  
And his priests said he should be praising Olódùmarè  
He was full of praise songs for his priests  
He also opened his mouth widely  
The song of his priests filled his mouth  
He was saying;

Song: Mouth is indeed the sacrifice 2x  
We cannot eat banana  
And have a swollen cheek  
Its all about what proceeds from our mouth.

At last, things changed for the better for Asányin when he minimised the use of irony and the ironic in his conversations. The important point to note is that excessive use of irony and the ironic could lead to problems and danger . Ifa priests usually refer to the Odù Ọ̀wónrín Orógbè as Ọ̀wónrín Asányin in order to remember the man with his use of irony.

There is another version of this Odù called Ògúndá Borógbè that was performed for a man called Olúsekétewére who was also known for his use of irony and the ironic. This means that we can make reference to two Odù in the Yorùbá Ifá oracle with regard to the concept of irony and the ironic. It goes thus:

Èdà n dà dèdè ègò  
 Èyí tí mo rí yìí, ìwọ ò ri  
 Èyí tí o rí yìí, emi ò ri i  
 A díá fún Ọrúnmilà  
 Ifá n lọ rẹ é sánko méjì lágbàlá  
 Èyí tí mo rí yìí, o ò ri i  
 Èyí tí o rí yìí, èmi ò ri i<sup>3</sup>

The subtle word is the opposite

What I see, you see not  
 What you see, I see not  
 Ifá divination was performed for Ọrunmila,  
 Ifá (Ọrunmila), going to clear the two farmlands at the backyard  
 What I see, you see not  
 What you see, I see not

The above Ifá verse explains the nature and form of irony as a double-edged sword wherein the underlying or the unspoken word is so important in the quest for the actual meaning of the surface expression in the spoken and the written forms. This means that an expression could be approached from different angles. The Ifá verse continues:

Ò n gò mi  
 Ò n rà mí  
 Ògúndá tó borí ète  
 Ògúndá tó borí gbogbo irọ  
 Ògúndá tó borí gbogbo awè  
 Ó ní, èdà n dà ègò  
 Èdà n dà dègò èdè  
 Èyí tí mo rí, o ò ri  
 Èyí tí o rí, èmi ò ri  
 A díá fún Olúsekétewére  
 Níjọ tí n lọ rẹ é pàsamò fún Ifá  
 Ifá ní ìwọ Olúsekétewére  
 àşamò tó o fẹ pa fún mi yìí  
 bó o la á ti sé  
 Ọrúnmilà tún ní  
 Nígba tó ò sọrò sà-n-án  
 Tó ò sì jẹ ká mọ ibi tí o n lọ  
 Tó wá jẹ pé lówe lówe ló n sọrò  
 olúsekétewére ni, lédìdà, lédìdà  
 bèè ni à n rò agogo

Ọ̀rúnmilà ni: ọ̀ ọ̀ sòrò sà̀n-án,  
 Sà̀n-án làá rìn, ajé ní mú ni pẹ̀kọ̀rọ̀  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà ni: oun náà mọ̀ bí oun ó ẹ̀ rìn rìn òun.  
 O ní, bó o ló ó ẹ̀ rìn rìn rẹ̀, iwọ̀ Ọ̀rúnmilà,  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà ni, tọ̀ ọ̀ bá n lọ̀,  
 mọ̀ gba òde ikú kojá o, sùgbón kó o gbiyànjú,  
 kó ò jẹ̀ iyá ikú ní gbèsè ẹ̀gbẹ̀tà owó ọ̀tí  
 Bo bá wá wù ọ̀  
 O le gbòde ikú kojá nígbà náà  
 Ó ní òhun tí iwọ̀ ọ̀rúnmilà n dọ̀gbón sọ̀ fún òun ni pé,  
 kí òun ò lọ̀ rẹ̀ é rí iyá ikú fín  
 kí òun tún wá mọ̀-ọ̀n-mọ̀ kojá lójúde ikú  
 Èdà n dà dẹ̀gọ̀  
 Èdà n dẹ̀gọ̀ èdè  
 Èyí tí mo rí, iwọ̀ ò rí  
 Èyí tó o rí, èmi ò rí<sup>4</sup>

You are fooling me  
 You are tricking me  
 Ọ̀gúndá that surpasses tricks  
 Ọ̀gúndá that surpasses all lies  
 Ọ̀gúndá that surpasses all deceits

He said, the opposite is the subtle word  
 The subtle word is the opposite  
 What I see, you see not  
 What you see, I see not

Ifá divination was performed for Olúsekétewére  
 On the day he wanted to pose a riddle to Ifá  
 Ifá said: ‘You Olúsekétewére  
 The riddle you want to pose  
 How do we explain it?’  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà asked again: ‘When you do not make a clear utterance  
 And we know not what exactly you want to say  
 Your utterances are proverbial’  
 Olúsekétewére then replied,  
 ‘It is indirectly that we mold the bell’

Ọ̀rúnmilà remarked again:  
 ‘Your utterance is still subtle  
 One walks, following a straight path,  
 Only indebtedness forces one to take the jungle’.

Ọ̀rúnmilà said he knew how to handle his own situation  
 ‘How will you handle your situation?’ he asked Ọ̀rúnmilà  
 Ọ̀rúnmilà answered, ‘As you are going,  
 Pass not the front of Death’s house  
 But endeavour to owe death’s mother  
 A sum of ₦1,200 for purchase of alcohol  
 Then if it pleases you,

Pass through the front of Death's house  
 Olúsekétewére responded:  
 What you are telling me in essence  
 Is to be impudent to Death's mother  
 Then foolishly pass by death's house'  
 The opposite is the subtle word  
 The subtle word is the opposite  
 What I saw, you saw not  
 What you saw, I saw not

The story in the above fá verse sheds more light on the fact that irony and the ironic language are as old even as the Yorùbá language itself. It is indeed the opposite of the truth and the example above really presents the nature of irony and the ironic. The instruction of Ọ̀rúnmilà to Olúsé kétéwére was not conveyed in a straight manner. Decoding of the message lies on the hearer. Irony and the ironic, therefore, are pretence tending towards the other side of the truth. Among the Yorùbá we often hear expressions such as:

Ilẹ̀ tutù<sup>5</sup> - The ground is cold  
 when in actual fact the ground is hot because of the hot weather  
 Owó pọ̀ lówọ̀ ọ̀ mi - I have money in abundance  
 when what one really intends saying is I am broke, I have no money

Irony can also be said to have both philosophical and religious undertones. For instance, it has become part of the Yorùbá world view to say

“Àwa púpọ̀ la wà nìlẹ̀” - We are many in the house

when in actual fact the speaker is the only one at home and he is lonely

This is because Yorùbá believes in family and solitary life is totally condemned within the Yorùbá community. This belief also stems from the religious belief that it is wrong to confess negative expression or things to oneself as Murray (1978:46) aver that: ‘much of the irony in twentieth century seems to stem from the erosion of religious faith and the rejection of the absolutes based on the tenets of reason.’ Examples such as the above illustrate that negative confessions are not good and that there are cultural and contextual backgrounds for these. Wardaugh (1986:21) rightly observes that:

The culture of a people finds reflection in the language they employ, this is because they value certain things and do them in certain ways, they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do



From the above explanations, we can conclude that irony is a highly complex mode of literary expression, involving the use of a word or an expression and expecting others to recognize that there is more to what is said in such expression. This is unlike what happens in everyday language. However, in the ironic sense what is said is often contrary to one's intention. In the Yorùbá context, the underlying motive is just to establish that there is a possibility of a meaning that is latent, hidden or implied, a denotation that attracts another connotation that will be brought to the fore by consideration of some factors in the contexts of culture, history, politics and philosophical background which can aid the quest for the meaning.

### **1.5 Operational Definitions of Terms**

Three concepts are so significant in this work. They are Irony, The Ironic and Drama. These are given operational definitions below.

#### **1.5.1 Irony**

The word irony has been defined by various scholars from different perspectives. Richards (1926:250) defines it as 'the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses' in order to achieve a 'balanced poise'<sup>6</sup>. Muecke (1969:53) views irony and the ironic as:

a way of speaking, writing, acting, behaving, painting, etc, in which the real or intended meaning presented or evoked is intentionally quite other than, and incompatible with the ostensible or pretended meaning.

Muecke's definition is broad and well applicable to this work because we are dealing with irony and the ironic in the Yorùbá tragic drama texts from which we will be able to see not only the speaking aspect but also the ironic elements in form of behaviour, situation and events. Arógbofá (1978:51) presents irony as 'a situation where words and sentences are so expressed to mean the exact opposite of their literal meaning'. Holman (1980:236) gives his own definition of irony as this:

Irony is a figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning. Characteristically, it speaks words of praise to imply blame and words of blame to imply praise<sup>7</sup>

In the above definitions, irony in a lighter sense can be regarded as the concept with simple communicative formula, such as saying the opposite of what one

means or violating a communicative maxim. Olátúnjí (1984:56) conceives of irony as “a figure of speech that involves one thing while intending another which is incompatible with an overt meaning. It is unpleasant meanings that are couched in apparently innocuous statement”.

Irony, according to Funk and Wagnalls *New Encyclopedia* (1993, Vol. 10, p 165) is ‘a dryly humorous or lightly sarcastic mode of speech; it is the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, what is done and what is expected’. The above definition makes the speaker a superior to the hearer because the latter is left with the ability to apply wisdom in order to get the true sense of what is really meant. Another definition of irony, by Collier’s *Encyclopedia* (1997, Vol.13, p 297) says ‘Irony in literature is a statement whose surface meaning is qualified by the implication of an ulterior contrary meaning or attitude’. It thus means that the surface form hides more than one meaning, patent and latent meanings, the literal and the implied.

All the above definitions suggest that irony is a term in which we desire more than what is said in order to know the real meaning. Besides, Ermidia (2005:235) opines that irony is a situation when the speaker’s communicative intention is not conveyed in a straightforward way. This implies that it is up to the hearer to identify the real message underlying the utterance. Dasyuva (2005:13) defines irony as ‘a situation or a use of language, involving some incongruity or discrepancy.’ He makes reference to verbal irony, dramatic irony and irony of situation.

The *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (2007, Vol 6 p 390) describes irony as:

a language device either in spoken or written form (verbal irony) in which the real meaning concealed or contradicted by the literal meaning of the word or in theatrical situation (dramatic irony) in which there is incongruity between what is expected and what occurs.

From the above, we can deduce that irony arises from contrast, a difference from ‘what is and what ought to be’, the use of words to signify the opposite of what is said. In other words, the notion of opposition is an important feature of irony. The idea of opposition seems to be the central focus in the definition of irony but it must be context bound. We can, therefore, conclude that the fundamentals of irony are the opposition of two levels (the literal and the real meaning, the plane of expression and

the plane of content, the denotation and its connotation). This implies that the interpretation of irony and the ironic is at two levels;

- the literary and the real meaning versus the hidden meaning,
- the surface meaning versus the underlying meaning
- the plane of expression versus the plane of content
- the denotative meaning versus the connotative meaning,

All the two segments suggest that irony as expression and the ironic in actions and situation should not be taken at the surface levels. Both segments should be considered in order to arrive at the possible connotative meaning.

Now, we can ask: what is the implication of irony and the ironic for literature?

Language of literature is said to be complex. According to Virginia (2000:129), it is this complexity that usually attracts people to literature in all its categories:

What endears many of us to literature is its complexity, which of essence forbids us to take a single view of things and insist on considering the two or more sides to any question; that is the different elements which make up reality

From Virginia's standpoint, we can see that irony contributes to the complexity of the language of literature.

### **1.5.2 The Ironic**

The ironic arises in situations and actions. It is when a situation or an action takes the place of the expression of a language. Unlike irony which is verbal, the ironic is non-verbal. It occurs either in action of the character or in a situational context. It is a purposeful pretence by deed or fact, while verbal irony is a purposeful pretence by word. Thirwall (483-537) describes the ironic as "irony as a practice," and is independent of all forms of speech and does not need the aid of words.<sup>8</sup> It is a practical irony. This is so because the ironic is beyond our dependence on words to get the non-literal meaning. We cannot talk about the ironic and not relate it with drama because drama is its very essence. The ironic is better understood within the framework of situations and actions within the dramatic structure or setting.

The ironic references mostly occur in situations (dilemma, bareness, hypocrisy, treachery, anger, extremism, frustration and deception) and actions (wrestling, death, pretence, wickedness, vengeance, protest, greediness, bribery, strike, conspiracy, malady, change of seats, names and costumes). Such ironic

references may be referred to as ironic elements and are often complemented by speech so that the reader can have a full picture and understanding of the actions. As Sedgwick (1948:37) rightly asserts, 'the dramatic words must have drama behind them: something of which the verbal device is just an audible sign'.

Most of these ironic elements manifest in tragic plays. This is what prompts Muecke (1970:71) to say that 'drama is typically ironic and perhaps essentially ironigenic'. This shows that the dramaturgical characteristic of irony remains implicit. For example, in *Àrè-Àgò Aríkúyèrí* (p 47), we see the fight between Òbò Lágídò, a man (Ògúnrindé Ajé's servant) and Ibídùn, a lady (Ògúnrindé Ajé's daughter). It is an example of an ironic action, because, according to the general belief, though with few exceptions, it is ironic for a woman to beat up a man to the point that the man has to pretend to have fainted in order to avoid more beating that can lead to serious injury.

### 1.5.3 Drama

Abrams (1981:45) notes that 'drama is the literary form designed for the theatre in which actors take the role of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue'. Drama could be a play for the theatre, radio, television and so on. But for the purpose of this work, drama is a play considered as a form of literature, a written text. Another comprehensive definition of drama is the one given by Crow (1983:2), which sees drama as:

a type of theatrical performance in which the active participants impersonate (that is, pretend to be people, beings, or things other than they really are) and through a usually predetermined sequence of physical actions enact a story for the entertainment of an audience.

From Crow's definition, it could be deduced that drama is pretence, predetermined set of events in different forms and has entertainment as its goal. The fact that irony and the ironic are pretence makes them the major features of drama. Dramatic presentation is a planned, predetermined and premeditated work. Therefore, the sequence of events is a deliberate effort on the part of the dramatist and the character. Irony and the ironic therefore constitute veritable tools in the hand of the dramatist, the author and the character to consciously create dramatic and tragic effects. Drama is a Greek word 'which means 'to do' or 'to act'. It is this doing and acting nature of drama

that make it exciting. Naturally, human beings are always keen to see and watch the acts of others. The very nature of drama calls for spectators or readers to place themselves as audience. Generally, drama means any work of art that is meant to be performed on stage by actors and actresses

### **1.6 Types of Irony**

Several attempts have been made by scholars to classify irony from different perspectives. Some scholars see irony as word and opposite, while others see it as a situation that is contrary to expectation. The result of the several attempts at the classification of irony is the different types of irony that is believed to exist, for example, verbal irony, situational irony, irony of events, and irony of fate and so on.

Also, irony has been classified based on its originators. For example, references are made to Aristotle, Plato and Socrates; hence, we hear of Aristotelian irony, Platonic irony and Socratic irony. Those who see irony as an instrument for argument and as a verbal weapon have rhetorical irony among their classifications. Dramatic irony evolved from the characteristics of the drama of ancient Greece. Romantic irony has its source in the Romantic school in Germany.

Thompson (1948: 5-11) gives three forms of irony; they are irony of speech, irony of character and irony of events. Muecke (1970) presents two broad classifications of irony: instrumental irony and observable irony. Instrumental irony has language as its instrument; it is also referred to as verbal irony. Observable irony can be seen in the presentation of a situation, a sequence of events, a character or a belief. Booth (1974) classifies irony into stable irony and unintended irony. Bert (1971) and Sedgewick (1948) identify with dramatic irony.

The multifaceted nature of irony is responsible for the numerous types of irony. Other forms of irony include tragic irony, comic irony, irony of manner, irony of situation, philosophical irony, double irony, rhetorical irony, self irony, cosmic irony, sentimental irony, irony of chance, irony of character, irony of speech and irony of events and the list can go on almost ad- infinitum. All types of the irony share certain essential characteristics that form the basis for their existentialism. These bases are believed to consist in such factors as motivation, function and aesthetics quality.

Despite the different types of irony that exist as enumerated above, five types of irony are identified to be expedient and germane to this work: verbal irony,

dramatic/tragic irony, comic irony, irony of character and irony of fate. However, as far as the ironic is concerned, it covers situations such as dilemma, bareness, extremism, frustration, deception and death and actions such as exclamation, wrestling, wickedness, vengeance, greediness, treachery, hypocrisy, bribery, conspiracy, malady and role change and authors' report, that lead to tragedy.

### 1.6.1 Verbal Irony

Verbal irony is the use of words to convey something else that is different from the literal meaning of the word spoken or written. Thirwall (1883:483-537) says, 'a figure which enables a speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of a contrast between his thought and his expression, or to speak more accurately, between his thought which he evidently designs to express, and that which his words properly signify.'<sup>9</sup> It is also called irony of speech and rhetorical irony. Verbal irony is specifically a verbal utterance that comes mainly in words, phrases or sentences in verbal communication. Muecke (1970) refers to verbal irony as 'the instrumental irony where the ironist says something in order to have it rejected as false, one sided etc'. It is a purposeful pretence of words.

Verbal irony implies an ironist, that is, an author, a dramatist, a character or someone who consciously and intentionally employs a technique that is different or deviates from the semantic principle in the presentation of his message in which the real meaning is context dependent. In verbal irony, there is confrontation or juxtaposition of the incompatible, between what is said and the original intention or what is expected. Therefore, verbal irony is when we see that the actual intention of the speaker or writer is expressed in words that carry the opposite meaning. For example, in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mìnkáílù*, after the robbery attack that takes place at the treasurer's office in the local government council, Chief Ibrahim, Yunusa, the council secretary, meet at king Jubrilu's palace to discuss the sad incident. The king is perplexed and he innocently prays for the official in the council, of which Yunusa is one, because of the trouble and the effects the incident will have on them. Yunusa's positive reply to the prayer is this:

Jubrilu: Hà, Akowe! È mà ku rogodiyan.

Ọlọ'un ó yọ nyin lofin ọrọ nàà.

Yunusa: Amin

Jubrilu: Ọlọ'un o gbe wa jẹ'rí elénìní.

Yunusa: Amin. Baba, irú iṣẹ̀lẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀ kò dá' a rárá.  
Àwọn olè tẹ̀ l'ówó nni d'Èjìgbò nihin ni.  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì* (p 27)

Jubrilu: Ha, Secretary! Sorry for all the trouble  
God will deliver you from this delicate case.

Yunusa: Amen

Jubrilu: God will lift us above the traitors

Yunusa: Amen. Baba, this kind of incidents is not good at all.  
The thieves must have monitored the money down to  
Èjìgbò.

Yunusa is an officer in Èjìgbò Local Government Council . He is the council secretary; and by virtue of his position, he is the custodian of the secrets of the council. He is the one who receives the money from the state representative that brings the money from Ìbàdàn and later hands over the money to Sẹ̀tílù , the council treasurer. The irony is that, with this dignified position and responsibility , he is also the leader of the cult as well as the leader of the robbery gang that planned the killing of Sẹ̀tílù , the treasurer, and the stealing of the same project's money. Therefore, Yunusa's reply is pretence because he knows that the prayer is not for him and his observation is not correct , for he knows fully well that no thief followed the money to Èjìgbò . Rather he is one of the thieves waiting for the money to be brought so that they can steal it.

Verbal irony forms the bedrock for other types of irony because irony is primarily concerned with language; this is why Socratic irony still stands as the reference point for verbal irony. Socrates always pretends ignorance in the course of interrogating his opponents through dialogue, asking questions in order to expose his opponent's weakness and frailty so that the opponent will eventually convict himself with his own mouth. Hence, verbal irony is the apparent disparity between the language phenomenon and the meaningessence. It is a statement whose surface meaning is qualified by the implication of an ulterior effect.

### 1.6.2 Tragic Irony

Tragic irony is also called dramatic irony.<sup>10</sup> Tragic irony is when irony is used structurally in a novel or a play. It is established in the fact that words, circumstances or events which seem to lead to a favourable conclusion produce an unfavourable one. Sedgewick (1948:49) asserts that 'Dramatic irony, in brief, is the sense of contradiction felt by spectators/readers of a drama/play who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition,' the condition that may likely lead to tragedy. Dasylyva (2005) describes dramatic/tragic irony as 'when the poet/playwright implies a different meaning from that intended by the *dramatis persona*'. Abrams and Harpham (2005) asserts that, 'dramatic/tragic irony involves a situation in a play or narrative in which the reader shares with the author, the knowledge of the present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant'. However, tragic irony is more adequate because the Yorùbá tragic plays chosen for this study have a high concentration of ironic elements in which the dramatic behind them strongly depict tragic situations. With the above definitions, we can submit that tragic irony comes in different situations like:

- (i) When the character in question reveals a failure to comprehend a situation that the reader, the audience and the other characters in the play understand. For example, in *Réré Rún*, Moréniké (Láwúwo's wife) is dead, other characters in the play and the readers are already aware but Láwúwo is unaware.
- (ii) When the literary character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstance on ground. For example, in *Réré Run*, we see Láwúwo in his continual defence of the course of the labour union without knowledge of the tricks the Onímògún and his councils are playing on him.
- (iii) when a character expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store. For example, in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò*, Ògúnrindé Ajé expects good returns after offering sacrifice to his Orí but it is tragedy instead.
- (iv) when a character says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not all in the way that the character intends. An instance is Àwèró in *Efúnsetán Aniwírà* who says the worst that Ìyálóde could do is to kill her and she dies eventually even though she does not wish so.

Unlike verbal irony, tragic irony depends more on sequence of events than on a turn of phrase.



### 1.6.3 Irony of Fate

Irony of fate is when a situation turns out with sharp contrast to what we expect owing to the course of events that arise naturally. It is also called cosmic irony. It is a type of irony with philosophical undertone, especially with the Yorùbá concept of destiny and pre-destination. It is mostly through situations, events and actions. Abrams and Harpham (2005:167) describe irony of fate within the literary work as this:

Irony of fate is attributed to literary work which springs up from the fact that a deity or fate is presented as though deliberately manipulating the events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes only to frustrate and mock them.

Irony of fate depicts the life situations that are unquestionable; it goes beyond the scrutiny of our reasoning faculty. This irony seems to stem from the erosion of religious faith, whereby people believe that some situations are inexplicable and that people just have to accept that it is nothing more than the law of nature and luck at work. Irony of fate is all about situations that just happened and for which there is no natural explanation. For example, the death of three children in one day is an irony of fate, a great calamity that is beyond human explanation. In *Àrè-Àgò Aríkúyèrí*, Ògúnrindé Ajé has three wives, Aṣiyanbí, Adépèlé and Fatólá. Fatólá is his favourite wife, the most beautiful among them who is equally the best Ràrà chanter on different occasions. Out of jealousy and in order to eliminate Fatólá, Aṣiyanbí poisons the three children of Adépèlé, and names Fatólá as the killer of the three children. One would have thought that there could have been a divine intervention somewhere that would have averted the tragic incident as well as the killing of Fatólá. Nobody can explain why it all happens like that. It is beyond human reasoning. Also, in *Eḡúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, Eḡúnṣetán Aníwùrà, Ìyálóde of Ìbàdàn, the chief character, is a notable personality and chieftain with slaves and riches. Despite her wealth, she has no child and no one can explain why God has not blessed her, even with a child. This is considered as an irony of fate; That is, it is her destiny or fate that is responsible for her childlessness.

### 1.6.4 Irony of Character

Irony of character is when a person's true character is shown to be in painfully comic contrast to his appearance (Knox, 1961:45). It is also called an irony of manner

and in this sense, irony of character refers to an expression of personality. It comprises a character's manner of speech and action which presents the peculiar and distinct image of the character in the play. In irony of character, the author's focus is on the attitude, a particular kind of behaviour put on a character by the author. Irony of character does not refer to the habitual manner of a character but it refers to the image of his own personality which the author chooses to project in one of his works, if not throughout the whole of his works. For example, in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyerí*, Òbò Lágídò, Ògúnrindé Ajé's servant is projected as a lazy man that can easily be beaten up by a woman. Also, although his name Òbò Lágídò, portrays him as a stupid man, the author has chosen to present him as a wise character who is wise enough to counsel his master and a warlord during his time of crisis. *Ìbídùn*, Ògúnrindé Ajé's daughter, is presented as a character troublesome and energetic enough to beat a man (Lágídò), her father's servant, almost to the point of death. Ordinarily in the real sense of it, the role given to Òbò Lágídò and *Ìbídùn*, in the play is quite different from the character of the monkey/a woman that we all know. The employment of irony of character is an integral part in the workings of the tragic plays because it is through the character's words, actions and situations that we see the irony and the ironic as the instrument to achieve the tragic aim designed for the plays.

### **1.6.5 Comic Irony**

Comic irony is irony in form of words and actions, which are capable of inducing laughter, smile and amusement for comic, sarcastic and satirical effects in drama. The function of comic irony is to serve as interlude, which is used to reduce the tension and also to heighten the tragic elements through contrast. Comic irony is usually an integral part of the tragic play. Many devices, like pretence, remarks, observation and actions such as wrestling, exchange of roles, seats, names, and costumes are put in place to achieve comic irony in a play. When these comical elements are slotted at odd times, in the sense that they come from the character that is least expected or at the time that is least expected, especially in a scene of serious or tragic work in drama, it becomes a comic irony. For instance, in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyerí*, Ògúnrindé Ajé is summoned by Basòrun Ògúnmólá with regard to the killing of Fátólá. He has refused to answer the call for some time, and he does not have the full support of his chief on his refusal to go, so he is confused and he wants to reconsider his stand as advised by his servant, Òbò Lágídò. Therefore, at this point, he needs

counsel on what to say when he appear before Basòrun Ògúnmolá, Òbò Lágídò offers to help and Ògúnrindé Ajé accepts his kind gesture. It is indeed a comic relief and ironic one as we read and perceive the way Ògúnrindé Ajé and Òbò Lágídò exchange their costumes, their seats as well as their names, in serious preparation for the counselling class that will take place between both of them. It is so funny and ironic that a servant gives order to his master, and the master obeys the instructions to the letter just because he is looking for a way out in a state of dilemma he has found himself.

### **1.7 Basic Features of Irony**

The changes in the status of irony based on its historical development with reference to its usage at various levels of linguistic complexity calls for clarification of the features of irony. The following are some of the features of irony:

#### **1.7.1 Irony as Contrast between Reality and Appearance**

The basic feature of every form of irony is that it presents a contrast between appearance and reality. This is a dynamic quality of irony and the ironic. However, not everything that is other than what it seems to be is an instance of irony. Irony is at work only when the listener or the reader already knows that the statement cannot be true except otherwise. For irony to have meaning, we must take note of the contextual situation in which it is used. It is this customary feature of irony and the ironic that forms the basis for the definition of irony as a phenomenon or a device that presents it as contradiction to what is expected. Olátúnjí (1984:57) gives this example of irony and it rightly explains the level of contrast between reality and appearance:

Mée-wáyé-ẹjọ fọmọọ rẹ fọkọ mẹfà

He who says he hates lawsuit offers his daughter in marriage to six men.

The man should be expecting a great deal of trouble with respect to his action because normally a man or a father will give his daughter in marriage to just one man but when a father gives a daughter in marriage to more than one man, he is already looking for trouble. So, in the above excerpt, the man Mée-wáyé-ẹjọ (which literally means 'I-have-no-neck-for-lawsuit) who has betrothed his daughter to six men, he is not sincere. In fact, his neck will be full of trouble, the trouble from six suitors.

### 1.7.2 Irony as Intended and Deliberate Action/Activity

The employment of irony as a stylistic device by an author is a deliberate action. One thing that must be noted about the use of irony is that it is deliberate and not just a mistake, an error or a slip of tongue. For example, when a mother says to a child that has broken a set of plates in the kitchen, 'Ha! Olóríire ọmọ ni ọ' which means 'Ha! Indeed you are a blessed child'. In the real sense, the normal thing is for the mother to abuse or scold the child, but she deliberately prays for the child even with the loss of the plates.

Another example of irony from Olatúnjí's work (1984:56) says;

Òun ni òò sin iyá è  
Ọmọ tí ń forí fọkà remú

He will surely bury his mother  
A child who cleanses his nostril with cobra's head.

The prayer that the child will outlive his mother cannot be answered because of his contrary attitude. The irony is that, the speaker knows the result of the child's action, because it is not possible for the child to outlive his mother because of his deadly play; literally, he would have died from the cobra's sting. Therefore, if it is a prayer, definitely it cannot be answered. It is a deliberate use of verbal irony to warn the child to desist from his dangerous way of living. The use of irony in this form is not just a mere speech but a deliberate effort to say less than you think or less than you know about certain issues. It is not an accident or coincidence of speech or action.

Òkédíjì in *Réré Rún*, presents the standard Yorùbá proverbs in an indirect way, as shown below:

Òjò tó rò ló kẹyẹlé pọ mọ àgbàdọ

It is the rainfall that brings the co-habitation  
of penguin and the corns together.

Ìwọ tá à n wàparò aṣọ rẹ pọn koko,  
The quail is seen as a bird with dirty cloth.

Şùgbọn àlùkò kò paṣọ èsì dà  
The bird is still wearing his last year's feathers.

The irony here lies in the absurdity of co-habitation of birds (living things) and corn (non living things). He knows the legitimate and the standard way of saying the proverbs and he is aware of the connotative values of every word, but he does this

deliberately to achieve some tragic effects. Therefore, the proverbs that proceed from Lawuwo’s mouth indeed present his emotional state at that particular time. The author wants us to hear more than the proverbs and to infer the totality of the message which connotes the condition of the character at that point in time. He knows quite well that in the Yoruba cultural context the proverbs should have been said like the following:

Ojo to ro lo keyele po mo adiye  
The rainfall causes the co-habitation of chicken and penguin

iwo ta n waparo bi ka fi da’la ori eye ni o peye.  
Man’s only imagination of the quail is that,  
it is a good meat for okro soup but her destiny would not permit

Aguntan ko paşo esi da  
The sheep doesn’t change his last year’s wool.

The irony here is that the reader would not have expected such muddling up of proverbs to come from Lawuwo, a character that has been presented as a Yoruba speaker in the beginning of the play, who has once displayed his proficiency in the Yoruba language during his meeting with the labour union after his release from the prison. The proverbs are deliberately put in the mouth of the character in order to show the tragic effect that Lawuwo is really mad.

### 1.7.3 Irony as Pretence and Deception

Pretence and deception are another basic features of irony and the ironic. In these senses, irony is seen as dissimulation and occasional hypocrisy, in that a character or an author hides his feelings or intentions by way of pretending to have different ones. Pretence is the act of behaving in a particular way in order to make people believe that a prevailing situation is not true. For example, Yunusa’s behaviour as a saint with regard to the supposed stolen money that is later found in *Idmu Pdi*. Balogun and the chiefs pleading on behalf of Ogunrinde Aje is a pretence and not out of a truthful mind but because of the bribe already received from Ogunrinde Aje.

This is also associated with Socratic idea of irony. He always feigned ignorance and humility, by going about asking silly and dubious questions of all sorts from people on different kinds of subjects in order to show that their ignorance and mistakes were more profound than his own. This is seen in the process of interrogating the armed robbery suspects in *Idmu Pdi* and in Basorun’s ways of

interrogating his chiefs on the bribery act in *Ààrẹ-Àgò*. The underlying motive for the pretence is just to expose the flaws in the opponent's views.

The reason for the pretence is to conceal, in the weak sense, the real meaning so as to avoid the explicitness of the point in question and to establish the stylistic use of language. For example in *Ìdààmú Páàdì* (pp 2-3), the uncontrollable case of fraudulent activities in the local government council, which hinders the execution of the developmental project of the town, calls for the intervention of the state government. The government feels that the board should be reconstituted. A spiritual person is needed, as suggested by the indigenes of the town, to serve as catalyst for the sanitation process. A letter of invitation is brought from the governor to be given to Páàdì Mínkáílù. Yunusa, the council secretary, presents the letter in company of the council's board and also gives an encouragement speech to Páàdì Mínkáílù, who is not willing to accept the invitation. Yunusa's speech, though inspiring, is shallow and mere pretence, an act of deception.

Páàdì Mínkáílù,  
At' ègbé ilú, àt' ogbà ilú  
Àti Mèkúnnù àti ẹni t' ó jólú,  
Gbogbo wọn ló rán wa sí ọ  
Ẹyin náà ẹ wòlu b' ó ti wà tí ò f' ara ọ  
...  
Aiyé bajẹ, a 'ò r' énià' re t' áiyé ẹ.  
Èyí ni gbogbo ara Èjìgbò rò papò  
Tí wọn fi sún ọrò s' ijoba ipínlẹ létí  
Pé kí wọn ó yan ẹni' re k' ó máa mójú tó wa  
...  
Pé b' írú nyin ba fi wà n' Igbimọ

*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 3)*

Páàdì Mínkáílù,  
All and sundry,  
The poor and the rich  
We are sent by every one  
You too, look at the state of the situation in town.

.....  
The world is corrupt, we found no one to sanitize it  
These are the reasons for the unanimous decision of the  
Ejigbo community, they informed the government about their decision  
That a person of good reputation is chosen to oversee the council's  
affairs

The above statement is to make the people believe that the invitation is a welcome idea even though Yunusa sees Páàdì Mínkáílù as a threat to his evil agenda in the local

government council, which is later revealed in the play. This particular quality of irony reaches its peak in drama when the readers have the knowledge about a character's dubious agenda when other characters in the play do not have it. The character's words and actions will have meanings that are not perceived by the character to the readers. The effect of this pretence, when discovered, often produces comic, humourous or satirical effects as we see the example of Yunusa in *Ìdààmú Páàdì*, who is finally arrested as the brain behind the armed robbery attack at the local council's office. This means that, all his efforts both in words and actions towards having Páàdì *Minkáílù* in the council's board and his concerns about the stolen money are pretence and fake. Even though he is exhibiting actions that may be seen as original, the underlying value is pretence. His arrest becomes a satirical scene for the whole world to see.

#### **1.7.4 Irony as a Secret Communion**

Irony is known for its covert nature. The patent meaning is always hidden from the latent. It is in irony that everything is transparently open and yet deeply concealed. According to Virginia (2000), this kind of characteristic of irony is referred to as the 'secret communion', that may occur between the author and the reader, or between the author, the reader and some characters. This particular feature of irony, says Abrams (1981:9) 'forms the distinct feature of dramatic irony, in which the author invites the reader or the audience to share the same knowledge of which a character is ignorant: the character, therefore, acts in a way that is vividly inappropriate to the actual circumstances.'

The readers may have the pre-knowledge of what has taken place or the next thing that will happen while the character concerned and other characters in the play do not. It is this secret communion that informs the continuous sense of character talking and behaving in ignorance of their condition in a play. For example, in *Réré Rún*, Láwúwò, the labour union leader, is fighting for the welfare of the workers, Onímògún and his chiefs, the employers, are not ready to grant the worker's requests. Both parties represent different opinions. Onímògún and his chiefs already have the evil scheme of buying Láwúwò, over to their side against the workers and blackmailing him before the workers he is representing. The author has given the readers the pre-knowledge of their evil scheme through the initial discussion and the planning by the council in scene five, (Pp 44-46) before Láwúwò is invited into their

meeting. Lww is totally ignorant but the readers have the secret of what will happen to Lww and the kind of trap already set for him. Therefore, the reader reads on as Lww walks ignorantly into the plot with full confidence of still being in the course of fighting for the labour union. Also, the reader is already aware of Mornik's death, even as Lww, out of ignorance, tries to interrogate her on some salient issues pertaining to his case with the labour union. The author confides in the reader while the character is ignorant; he is not part of the communion.

## **1.8 Irony and its Allied Tropes**

Knox (1961: 34) notes that 'a trope or turning is when a word is turned from its natural signification'. Trope is a Greek word which has its meaning as 'turn'. Cuddon (1976:725). The trope is a term used to refer to any figure of speech, for instance, irony is a trope, just like metaphor, euphemism, simile, satire, sarcasm, humour. Tropes are used by orators and writers as decorative elements to strengthen and embellish their styles of speech and composition. Irony as a trope is a means of effective persuasion in speech making. But of all of these tropes, those that are closely related to irony, with regard to this study, are metaphor and euphemism.

### **1.8.1 Irony and Metaphor**

*Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (Volume 10)* describes metaphor as the use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two. However, the likeness comes in the form of a shift of nomenclature, which simile does not have. Olatnj (1984) notes that, 'metaphor is when an object, action or situation is described in a terminology proper to another'. It is the comparism of two things that are 'dinstinct' yet similar in some respects but in a stronger term that is difficult to detect. Argbf, (1978). In metaphor, the comparism is drawn as in simile between two dissimilar things but it is comparism that is often subtle, more compressed than simile. Slm, (2003)

It is not surprising to see some degree of semblance between metaphor and irony. The semblance consist in the fact, that just like metaphor is used as a substitute for another thing or an idea, so also irony is used in place of an idea that is different from its original features. We can say that, metaphor and irony fall into the same category of signs that signify another signified. In other words, irony and metaphor



serve as means to an end and , according to Olatúnji (1984), in metaphor the comparism is applied to another without explicitly mentioning the former object and the new application of the word requires behavioural or literary context. This is also the case in irony, where some contextual and cultural knowledge is important in order to get the real meaning. Metaphor and irony cannot be taken in isolation because both can be well interpreted and their meanings become clearer when the interpretation is done within their contextual environment. For example, in *Eḡúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, there is the account of the war of words through incantation between Eḡúnṣetán and Látòòsà, in the ironic incident where (Eḡúnṣetán) who has been the captor is now the captive.

Eḡúnṣetán: Látòòsà iná mọ ọ!

Látòòsà: Eḡúnṣetán iràwé ni ọ, omi lèmi.

Eḡúnṣetán: Mo lè jé iràwé nítoótó, Látòòsà  
Sùgbón isàlẹ omi ni mo wà,  
Kí iná tó jó mi, omi yìò ti gbẹ.

Eḡúnṣetán: Látòòsà, you are in trouble  
Látòòsà, Eḡúnṣetán you are withered leave and I am water

Eḡúnṣetán: I might bewithered leaf indeed, Látòòsà  
But I will stay beneath the water  
Before I am burnt, water would have drained

The above example of incantation shows that the playwright uses different aquarium habitats as metaphor to represent and describe the level of the power and the position of both characters in the play. The metaphor represents Látòòsà and Eḡúnṣetán as master and servant, king and chief, king and slave respectively. Omi (water), meaning strength, power and destroyer, while Iràwé (withered leaf), means light weight, insignificance, and less power. Látòòsà, the king refers to himself as 'omi' (water) in order to show the magnitude of his power as the king and also to show that as water can cause so much havoc, so also he can destroy Eḡúnṣetán who is just an 'iràwé' (a withered leaf). The irony in the two metaphors used above is seen in the interpretation given by Eḡúnṣetán that 'iràwé' (a withered leaf) stays under the water which means that she is safe while the water is open to danger because the water is on the surface. It is not true because a withered leaf is very light therefore cannot stay at the bottom of the river. Irony and metaphor involve semantic transfer. Metaphor and irony make us see one thing as another by making a literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight.

## 1.8.2 Irony and Euphemism

Euphemism is from Greek words ‘euphemism’, meaning the use of an ‘auspicious word’ for an ‘inauspicious one’. Grambs (1984:119) defines euphemism as ‘the use of a milder or less direct word or phrase for one felt to be too starkly, explicit, to avoid offending through bluntness or as a form of evasive double talk ... a tactful or deliberate inexplicit expression. Like Leech (1969), Olatúnjì (1984) gives the definition of euphemism as an alternative roundabout mode of expression used in preference to a blunter, less delicate one . From the Yoruba cultural perspectives , Olatéjú (1989) describes euphemism with reference to its usage ; ... àwọn Yorùbá máa n lo àdàpè fún ọ̀rò tó jẹ̀ mó nńkan àsírí ,’ ... , The Yorùbá use euphemism for words referring to female and male genitals. Fowler (1996:267) avers that euphemism means the use of mild or vague or periphrastic expression substituted for one judged to be too harsh or direct.

All these suggest that euphemism is a substitute which expresses shades of meaning in order to make some things or ideas more presentable and pleasant within a particular cultural setting . It is a polite way to avoid the direct naming of an unpleasant painful or frightening reality . For example , Àwèrò in *Efúnsetán Aníwírà* suspects that something is wrong with Adétutù another female slave . The symptom she is manifesting shows that she might be pregnant and this is a dangerous and death signal in *Ìyálóde Efúnsetán’s* house. Therefore she laments thus:

Àwèrò: Ọ̀lọ̀run má mà jẹ̀ kí á rí àìdàá ò,  
Ohun tí mò nńrò nńpa rẹ̀ kò gbọ̀dò jẹ̀ bẹ!  
Şe kí í şe pé ọ̀mọ náà tí di abara méjì?  
Ara rẹ̀ nń funfun, ó sì nń sńntọ̀, ó sì nń lọ̀ tikọ̀ şáá?  
Kini a tí nń pe irú èyí ọ̀?..  
Ọ̀lọ̀run mà dákun ọ̀.

Àwèrò: God, please forbid bad thing  
How I wish my thoughts about her will not come to pass  
Hope this lady is not pregnant?  
Her skin is getting lighter; she is now sluggish and feeling  
irritated  
How do we explain all these?  
God, please

Àwèrò is afraid to declare that Adétutù is pregnant so she prefers to use ‘abara méjì’ (woman with two bodies ), instead of ‘lọ́yún’ (being pregnant ) because of

theironic situation of Adétùtù's case. In a normal state of circumstances, what makes the symptoms of pregnancy which are cast ineuphemism to be ironic is the fact that pregnancy is a thing of joy. But here, rather than being a symbol of joy and happiness, it symbolises the end, stiff penalty and death for the character or victim and here lies the irony in the expression.

It is assumed that the employment of euphemism brings comfort and rest of mind even in the face of a painful situation. Holder (1995:V11) observes that, 'euphemism is a language of evasion, hypocrisy, of prudery and of deceit', so also is irony. Euphemistic words and expressions allow us to talk about unpleasant things and neutralise the unpleasantness of such things. Wardhaugh (1986:281) Irony and euphemism share some resemblance in the sense that both of them are signs standing for something else, the thing that is deliberately avoided. The interpretation of irony, the ironic and euphemism is anchored to the context and the tropes are most times culture dependent for interpretation. Irony and euphemism are language devices in which there is semantic transfer because something contrary to what is said is to be understood; only that irony and the ironic flourish as devices through situation and events especially in drama.

In sum all these tropes have something in common: all of them involve semantic transfer; their interpretation is culture dependent and is always facilitated by a contextual environment. Making meaning of these tropes depends more on the secondary meaning than the primary meaning. This means that the plane of content is important in order to get the meaning that lies under the plane of expression. All of them are stylistic devices that have, in addition to their literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning. All of them require special insight on the part of the reader, which help them to know that ordinary language in its usual function cannot induce such insight in the reader. All the literary tropes mentioned along with irony, when used in any literary work, show how language can be used for different effects and how dexterous the author/ literary artist is in his/her language use.

### **1.9 Tragedy and the Tragic plays Yorùbá Worldview**

In the Western sense, drama, is basically classified into three, namely: tragedy, comedy and the epic drama. Tragedy is rooted in the Greek dramas of Aeschylus. Aristotle's discussion of tragedy is not far from the Greek origin. Dasylyva, (1997:37) Tragedy, according to Aristotle (1965:38-50), is an "action involving serious incidents

arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish the catharsis of such emotions. . .” Tragedy as defined above is seen as the imitation and the presentation of the realities of life in poetic and especially in dramatic form. From the Western perspectives, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, an English play is an example of a tragic play. Romeo and Juliet meet in a party and they instantly fall in love, but they do not realize that their families are mortal enemies, the Capulets and the Montagues, two prestigious families in Verona, Italy. When they realize each other’s identities, they are devastated, but they cannot help the way they feel for each other. Romeo and Juliet get married secretly. Juliet’s mother, completely unaware of her daughter’s secret marriage to Romeo, informs Juliet that she will marry a man named Paris in a few days. Juliet, in anger, refuses to comply but her parents insists that she must marry Paris. In order to avoid the arranged marriage, Juliet, according to Friar Lawrence’s advice drinks a herbal concoction that will make her appear to be dead for 42 hours. Everybody assumes that she is dead. Friar Lawrence’s letter fails to reach Romeo. So he assumes that his wife is dead. He rushes to Juliet’s tomb and, in deep grief, drinks a bottle of poison. Moments later, Juliet wakes to find Romeo dead and kills herself due to grief. Once the families discover what has happened, they finally end their bitter feud. The tragic deaths of their children bring the families together. *Romeo and Juliet* is a true tragedy in the literary sense because the families gather sufficient self-knowledge to correct their behaviour but not until it is too late to save the situation. This is just an example of the concept of tragedy from the Western point of view. Their concept of tragedy within the Aristotolean concept comes in form of trouble, fatality, destruction, blood and ususally ends with death.

In the African -Yòrùbà sense, whether a drama is near tragedy or complete tragedy, it must involve sadness or death. The sad situation could come in any form within the Yòrùbà context. Therefore, the concept of tragedy is seen as a drama with an unhappy, disastrous or bloody ending. Tragedy is also seen as the reversal of fortune. Sofola (1977) gives a broad definition of tragedy as ‘a purposive, volitional involvement in a serious action which is moral, noble and desirable, but whose consequences are painful, even fatal. It is an experience when man is thrown into critical dilemmas which are difficult or impossible to escape’. In Sofola’s definition of tragedy, some points, not all, are identified as the fundamentals of tragedy except the fact that it is only within the Yorùbá cultural context that we judge the actions that can be considered as noble, moral and desirable. For example, Èfúnṣetán’s action of

several killings cannot be described as noble or desirable. Olábímtán (1981), submits ‘that the definition of tragedy in Yorùbá literature is more moral than critical any action that conflicts with the moral ethics of the Yorùbá is a possible tragic element’ . Therefore, tragedy is a serious action that should be borne out of purpose to achieve a certain goal that may result in the unexpected but it may not necessarily be morally acceptable when the context , culture and belief in the socociety are considered . This is why,we may not consider Basòrun Gáà as a tragic hero .

When we consider the definitions given above and in line with the texts chosen for this study, we can say that the tragic plays chosen for this work fit into the structure of the Aristotle’s definition to some extent. The first part of Aristotle’s definition describes the forms of tragedy in which we have the object, manner and medium of immitation. A tragic play must be a serious action with great suspense in the way that the readers can grasp the truth and feel the gravity of the incidents in the play. The Yorùbá plays chosen for this study present a serious action , with irony and the ironic used as the language that carries the weight of the serious action. The plays also have the characteristic of a complex plot with examples of tragic hero in Yorùbá tragic plays within the Yorùbá philosophical, political, cultural and historical contexts. Therefore, the concept of tragedy, in relation to the tragic plays chosen for this study , is not different except its conformity with the Yorùbá contextual background.

### **1.10 The Synopses of the Plays**

In this section, a synopsis of each of the selected texts is given in order to see the storyline . The texts selected are Akínwùmí Ìsòlá’s *Efúnsetán Aníwúrà* (1970), Adébáyò Fálétí’s *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù* (1972), Oládèjò Òkédìjì’s *Réré Rún* (1973) and Láwuyì Ògúnníran’s *Ààrè- Àgò Aríkúyẹrí* (1977) Three out of the four drama texts are historical with political undertones namely:*Ààrè Àgò Aríkuyẹ ri, Efúnsetán Aníwúrà, Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù* , while the fourth one,*Réré Rún*,is a protest play. The synopsis of each of the play will help us have an overview of the events in them . They also serve as the data through which irony and the ironic are studied in the Yorùbá tragic plays.

#### ***Ààrè-Àgò Aríkúyẹrí(1977)***

In *Ààrè-Àgò Aríkúyẹrí*, Ògúnrìnde Ajé is the *Ààrè-Àgò*, a warlord who also has chiefs under him. Among them is Jagun who comes to pay homage to Ògúnrìnde Ajé for his safe return from À kókó region. From their meeting emerges the elaborate

discussion on the concept of *Ori* among the Yorùbá. Historical facts and excerpts from the Ifá literary corpus are used as reference point to substantiate the fact that *Ori* is greater and more powerful than all the other gods in Yorùbá land. This discussion leads to Ogúnrindé Ajé's announcement of his plan to make sacrifice to his *Ori*. After the propitiation segment, during the time of the merriment, one after the other, each of the three wives of Ogúnrindé Ajé presents different praise names of their husband with *ràrà* chants. This is where it shows that Adépèlé's does not have the ability for *ràrà* chanting like Fátólá, the second and the favourite wife, who is the expert in *ràrà* chanting both in the content and in the tone of delivery (pp 16-17).

Òbọ Lágído's sarcastic comment about Adépèlé's presentation makes her angry; Ògúnrindé Ajé also frowns at Lágído's comment. This causes bitterness among the wives especially Adépèlé, the last and the youngest wife of Ògúnrindé Ajé. The first wife, Asiyانبí, seizes this opportunity of the incident to express her own grievances on Fátólá, the favourite wife, by lying against her as the murderer of Adépèlé's three children who are suspected to have swallowed poison or that somebody give them poison. At this point, Ògúnrindé Ajé loses control and, without further investigation, he accepts Asiyانبí's report, takes his bow and arrow in a rage and shoots Fátólá, his dearest slender wife. Although Fátólá is killed, the death of the three children still remains a riddle. Basòrun Ògúnmọla sends for Ogúnrindé Ajé. There is a clash of power, Ògúnrindé, a war-chief, sees himself as an authority that should not be challenged. Basòrun Ògúnmọla also sees himself as the general-overseer over the entire Ìbàdàn land and its environment and, as such, has full authority to challenge Ògúnrindé Ajé's office even as a war captain. Later, Ògúnrindé Ajé is forcefully taken to Ògúnmọla's palace and the hearing begins.

Many things about the murder case are laid bare and the final decision that brings the tragic situation to an end comes into view. It is discovered that Asiyانبí is the culprit; she is the brain behind the report that leads to Fátólá's death. Ògúnrindé Ajé laments Fátólá's death when he sees the result of his impatience.

Ògúnrindé Ajé is faced with the unexpected that must be accepted, the ironic outcome of an event that is least expected. The messengers of Ògúnrindé Ajé are presented in order to avoid uneasy interrogation and to hasten the speed of the play to safe landing. Thus, Ògúnmọla's judgment marks the climax and the tragic end of the play. However, instead of Ògúnrindé Ajé to do according to the judgment passed on him, he runs-away. It is the run-away attitude of somebody expected to commit

honorary suicide, who even boasted of not fearing death as the warlord that informs the ironic title of the play. Therefore, the play presents a problem in ironic term.

### *Ìdàámù Páàdì Mínkáílù*

In *Ìdàámù Páàdì Mínkáílù* (The Dilemma of Rev. Fr. Michael), the local government council in Èjìgbò is used as the micro-setting that represents the third arm of government. A public outcry on the cases of theft and robbery in the local government council in Èjìgbó Township has reached an unbearable level to the extent that the state government is aware of it and it decides not to allow the local government to single-handedly execute any developmental project again. The play is designed to expose two degrading acts, corruption and fraud.

A Catholic priest, Páàdì Mínkáílù, is nominated by the people and appointed by the governor into the council management board. This is done in order to put sanity into the affairs of the council and also to serve as a check to the incessant fraudulent cases recorded in the past. When invited, Páàdì Mínkáílù reluctantly agrees. He takes the appointment with mixed feeling. Súfíánù, Páàdì Mínkáílù's houseboy, warns him about the sensitivity of the post he has agreed to take without taking counsel from him.

On the other hand, there is a strategic plan on how to steal the special project fund allocated for the construction of the River Ajingò òdò's bridge by the evil men who call themselves the workers and the noble in the town. The perpetrators and the brain behind the robbery cases are the important members of the board, namely: Yúnùsa, the council secretary, who is also among the board members; Ibrahim, a chief who is also a member of the council's board; and Salu, a worker in the local government council. In a desperate desire to steal the money, Sètílù, the council treasurer, is gunned down but they could not steal the money because Sètílù has transferred the money to Páàdì Mínkáílù's house through his wife, Saratu. Sètílù and the money are taken to Ìbàdàn, the headquarters. The robbers are bewildered when they later see the money they have struggled to steal. It is so painful that Yúnùsa has to follow the convoy that brings the money from Ìbàdàn back to Ìbàdàn again. There are so many suspects in the robbery case: Yunusa, Ibrahim, Salu, the son of Jubirilu and Jubirilu, the king himself. Rafilu and her mother suspects Salu. The police inspector suspects Sàlù, Yunusa and Chief Ibrahim. Salu confesses to Páàdì Mínkáílù who,

because of the tenets of his office, could not help the police. It is really a dilemma for the priest.

Different levels of interrogation and investigation methods are put into operation by the detective policemen in order to expose the culprits. With many troubles, the culprits are exposed. The truth prevails at last but with the records of the death of the innocent and the guilty as well.

### ***Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà***

*Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà* is the story of a traditional chief in Ìbàdàn. The text is a reconstruction of the life and times of Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà, the Ìyálóde of Ìbàdàn during the reign of Ààrè Látòsà. She is a terrorist, fearful, wealthy, strong and wicked woman. She is very wicked to both her slaves and her immediate community. She is childless and this is one of the reasons she refers to as responsible for her wickedness.

Efúnṣetan treats the slaves badly. She puts them through hard labour with little to eat. She also makes a law prohibiting any of her female slaves from getting pregnant for any man either among themselves or for anybody outside, however highly placed. She kills her slaves as she pleases. She kills thirteen female slaves and twenty-eight male slaves. She represents the high-handedness, wicked and the power-drunk leaders. When she reacts to Akínkúnlé's visit, she detests his talking about his sick son. This triggers her emotion about her childlessness and she expresses how brutal, wicked and ferocious she has been and will be as far as procreation issue and his slaves are concerned. Notable among her terrorist and bloody conducts is the killing of Ògúnjìnmí, a palm-fruit tapper in the farmland of Chief Olàtínwo that shares boundary with her own farmland. The chiefs deliberate on the issue but they could not reach a conclusion because Efúnṣetán is too powerful and feared by all.

Àwẹrò, a female slave and a friend to Adétútù, notices that Adétútù is pregnant. She makes Ìtáwùyí to be aware of this. Akínkúnlé, Efúnṣetán's younger brother, takes up the responsibility for the pregnancy and solicits for the assistance of Akíngbadé to help appeal to Ìyálóde. Efúnṣetán, aware that Adétútù is pregnant, summons all the slaves and announces that Adétútù will be beheaded the following morning. The elders, led by Akíngbadé, appeal to Efúnṣetán to pardon Adétútù since Akínkúnlé is the one responsible for the pregnancy, but she refuses. In fact, the visit and the mentioning of Akínkúnlé's name make the matter worse. She rejects their plea. A report is brought to the market place by a woman that a pregnant slave has



been beheaded in front of Ẹfúnṣetàn's house. The news of the terrible incident reaches Látòṣà. He sends a message to Ẹfúnṣetán through the town crier, that she should leave the town immediately. Ẹfúnṣetán disregards the message and refuses to leave; she also detains the town crier and adds him to her slaves.

Ìtáwuyì decides to take vengeance with the help of Àwẹrò by putting poison in Ẹfúnṣetán's food. However, when Ẹfúnṣetán detects it, she makes them eat the poisoned food that quickly results to their death. Ẹfúnṣetán takes the law into her own hand and behaves as a small god that owns the entire universe. The entire town, led by King Látòṣà, march to Ẹfúnṣetán's house to arrest her. Though Àjilé her only friend, advises her to escape, she refuses to run away. The townpeople surround her house, singing war songs, and then there is an exchange of verbal metaphysical words and incantation between Látòṣà and Ẹfúnṣetán. Látòṣà overpowers her. The people enter into her residence, loots her house while Ẹfúnṣetán watches them. Ẹfúnṣetán is captured and taken to Látòṣà's house. The remaining slaves are set free on the order of Látòṣà. Ẹfúnṣetán is highly humiliated. She is ashamed of her situation that she takes her own life by eating poison.

### ***Rẹrẹ Rún***

*Rẹrẹ Rún* is a play about the worker's experience and the problem of labour union with leaders. It is a reflection of the modern society in which the efforts and the struggle of the poor to improve their living and working conditions in a capitalistic society comes to nothing. Láwùwò is the labour leader who is ready to fight the course of the labour union to a logical conclusion. The workers demand for better condition of service and remuneration, but the employers and the rulers refuse to listen. Instead, they embark on various ways to frustrate, intimidate and oppress the workers.

Láwùwò, the committed union leader, proves difficult and he is to the employers and the rulers a hindrance in the course of the execution of their cunning plans. Láwùwò organizes and prepares the workers for a confrontation with the employers. The skillful plans of the rulers to buy Láwùwò fails, then the rulers, led by Onímògún, decide to blackmail Láwùwò and also to portray him as a traitor before his loyal and faithful workers. The rulers succeed in disorganizing the union, by creating sectionalism within the worker and finally replace Láwùwò with Ìdòwú, their sponsored candidate. Ìdòwú arranges and commissions money -doubblers to dupe

Morènikè, Lávùwó's wife, of the money contributed by members of the union for his case.

Morènikè realizes her mistake and, knowing fullwell that she has become a thorn in the flesh to her husband for losing the money, commits suicide. The overall effect of this entire problem makes Lávùwò himself to lose his mind and become mad. With his state of mind, he is unable to lead again: so, the struggle fails; the workers have no choice but to continue working and suffering under the leadership of the callous rulers and employers.

All the drama texts narrated above present different political and domestic conflicts in contending forces of order and disorder that culminate in the tragic ending of the plays. Irony and the ironic are deeply established in drama. It is in the light of the above account of each of the plays that we embarked on the stylistic analysis of irony and the ironic to show how the employment of irony and the ironic as devices are used stylistically and as communicative functions in the plays.

## Notes to Chapter One

1. See Hutchens E.N, in *The Identification of Irony* in ELH Vol. 27, No 4, Dec.1960, pg 352-363. The John Hopkins University Press. Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872064>, Accessed 05/01/2012.
2. It is taken from the personal interview with Awo Adéníyì Àpáta on 17/12/2007.
3. It is taken from another personal interview with Awo Adéníyì Àpáta on 09/11/2012
4. It is the continuation and the completion of the Ifá verses from the same Odù Ògúndá Borógbè.
5. According to Yorùbá cultural context , people do not say “ilè gbóná” meaning ‘the ground is hot’, in the real sense of the weather condition but they say “ilè tutù” in order not to invoke the wrath of the ‘Sònpònná’ the deity of smallpox , who is believed to be capable of causing smallpox, especially during the dry season. So when you say, ‘the ground is hot’ it means you are deliberately speaking ill of the deity.
6. See Muecke 1970: 26. *Irony and the Ironic*, Critical Idiom Series, Vol.13. Methuen&Co Ltd. London.
7. See The Ironies of students’ recognition of irony by Milner J.O, Lynch E.B, Carter F. S, Coggins J., Cole K, Elise W.H, Lucy M. *The Clearing House* Volume 72, No 5 (May-June 1999) pp 308-314. Published by Taylor & Francis Ltd. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30189457/>. Accessed: 18/01/2012 09.56
8. See Hutchens E.N, in *The Identification of Irony* ELH Vol. 27, No 4, Dec.1960, pg 352-363. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872064>, 05/01/2012.
9. See Hutchens E.N, in *The Identification of Irony* in ELH Vol. 27, No 4, Dec.1960, pg 352-363. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872064>, 05/01/2012.
10. See Thompson (1948:30)

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

Literature is a word and not a thing (Scholes.1982:17). Literature is an imitation of life. Different research works have been carried out on literature. Also, scholars have worked on the different stylistic devices that are embedded in works of literature. This chapter is devoted to the review of the works of scholars that are relevant to this study on irony. Irony and ironic, as stylistic device has received little or no attention, despite the fact that it is a prominent figure of narrative and dramatic texts, tragic plays especially.

#### 2.2 Review of Relevant Literature

Irony is one of the very important stylistic devices in literature. Illustrating irony with the poems of Adébáyò Fálétí , Ọlátúnjí (1982:93) describes irony as “a literary tool that induces the reader with a notion of ambiguity or multivalence that is aesthetically stimulating”. He is, perhaps, the first Yorùbá scholar to give the concept at least a passing attention from the Yorùbá philosophical and literary points of view. He, Ọlátúnjí (1982:93) defines irony as:

a figure of speech that involves one thing while intending another which is incompatible with an overt meaning.... It is an unpleasant meaning that is couched in apparently innocuous statement. (p. 93).

He gives two examples of irony thus:

- (i) Ọun ni ọò sin ìyá ẹ  
Ọmọ tí ń fọkà remú

He would surely outlive his mother  
The child who cleans his nostrils with a cobra.

- (ii) Mée-wáyé- ejọ fọmọò rẹ fọkọ méfà  
He who says he hates lawsuit trouble offers his daughter in marriage to six men.

Ọlátúnjí gives a working definition of irony , but says nothing on the ironic, which deals with the dramatic action as against irony which is more of a verbal phenomenon.

Olábòdé's (1981) work does not discuss irony specifically, but metaphor, one of the devices we consider as an allied trope to irony. He sees metaphor as a sign that requires interplay of language, individuality and the contextual situation within the culture for its interpretation. His work, though not on irony specifically, serves as a springboard for this study, especially with regard to irony and its allied tropes as important literary devices.

Adéyẹmọ (1986) is on selected tragic plays are based on three out of the four tragic texts that are chosen for this study. His focus is on the concept of tragedy, the reason for their categorisation as tragic plays, the characterisation and the didactic elements in the plays. However, the work does not mention the stylistic devices employed by the playwrights in achieving tragedy. This is very important because irony is synonymous to tragedy. This is the gap the present study is all out to fill, to bring out the tragic incidents in the play through the use of irony and the ironic.

In the consideration of other stylistic devices that share some resemblance in operation and effects with irony, the work of Ògúnràntí (1987) is relevant. He discusses the different developments that have taken place on satire in Yorùbá society. He presents satire in traditional and modern society of the Yorùbá. He discusses satire in written drama, using seven Yorùbá drama texts to substantiate the fact that satire is not limited to only prose and poetry; it is also seen in drama. In his discussion, he makes no reference to the fact that irony and the ironic often generate satirical effects. This is a very important area when looking at satire, especially in drama texts. Although, the work does not give attention to irony in all the seven Yorùbá drama texts, it is still relevant in that irony and the ironic are used for satirical effects in the drama texts selected for the present study.

Adágbádá (1995) presents a critical study of Lávuyì Ògúnníran's plays. She presents the features of his plays to include the use of poetry or verse, loan words, songs, proverbs and slogans as well as adaptation of Yorùbá history. Though, Adágbádá also discusses Lávuyì Ògúnníran's use of language, but irony, which constitutes an aspect of Ògúnníran's language style, is not mentioned. Ògúnníran uses irony with poetic template for rhetorical purpose and for other stylistic effects, like for comical, satirical and humorous effects. However, Adágbádá's work cannot be totally dismissed. Her discussion on characterization and thematic presentation serves as a useful material for the ironic situations and events in this study.

Ìṣòlá (1998:98) writes on the ‘forms of dramatic language in Yorùbá literature’. Although irony as one of the forms of dramatic language is not fully discussed, he sees language as a force and as an instrument for generating actions in drama and this serves as an inducement for our analysis on irony as an extension of the force of language.

Ọlátẹ́jú’s (1999) work on Adébáyò Fálẹ́tí’s ‘*Basòrun Gáà*’ is also useful to this study. He discusses Fálẹ́tí’s use of language in *Basòrun Gáà*, noting that a literary artist has two ambitions, namely: to pass a message and to entertain. For him to be able to do these requires both literary and linguistic skills that will generate aesthetic pleasure. These literary and linguistic skills are employed and deliberately. He explores Fálẹ́tí’s use of language under two sub-headings: the Yorùbá traditional materials and Yorùbá stylistic devices. He looks at the rhythmic pattern, simile, metaphor, euphemism and wordplay. Ọlátẹ́jú does not mention irony among the stylistic devices used in *Basòrun Gáà* as a dominant stylistic device. He is, however, not conscious of the fact that *Basòrun Gáà* is a tragic play that is full of irony and the ironic, wherein there are many incidents of incongruity. He is perhaps, satisfied with his identification of metaphor and euphemism which are great allies of irony. He, therefore, feels at ease to discuss these two devices at length with their stylistic and semantic significance rather than irony. Therefore, the attention must be drawn to the importance of irony in the tragic plays as it is done in this present study.

A stylistic study of humour in Adébáyò Fálẹ́tí’s writings is the pre-occupation of Adésànyà (2002). He discusses the origin and evolution of humour, its concept and types. He gives different categories of humour, such as linguistic humour, black or gallows humour, political humour, situation humour, humour in illogicality and self-depreciating humour. He uses three different theories of humour, discussing Fálẹ́tí’s sources of humour in his writings. He submits that Fálẹ́tí’s use of humour in his writings originates from comparison through the use of stylistic devices like metaphor, simile and wordplay. The use of dialect and scenes of cinematography are also part of Fálẹ́tí’s sources of humour. He claims that Fálẹ́tí creditably uses humour as a weapon of criticism, a descriptive instrument, a way of driving home his philosophical themes and a suitable weapon of laughter. However, his work fails to recognise irony as one of the devices used to generate humour in Fálẹ́tí’s play, especially in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù*, where irony is used for humorous purpose in more than one instance. The work is relevant because irony and humour are related,

especially in drama because irony and the ironic are basic elements in generating humour.

Language of protest forms the focus of the work of Adésànyà (2003). He discusses the language of protest in Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Efúnṣetán Aníwírà* and Ayé Yẹ Wón Tán, Adébáyò Fálétì's *Basòrun Gáà* and Oládèjọ Òkédijí's *Réré Rún*. He presents the various ways the different authors use language in the identification of their characters. He presents and analyse the language of the oppressed and not necessarily the language of the oppressor. Language, as reflected in the work, serves as one of the tools in the construction of a social identity and a sign of demarcation between the oppressor and the oppressed. This is done through the use of different stylistic devices, metaphor, simile, wordplay and traditional materials like songs and proverbs. Although his work is based on Yorùbá tragic plays, he does not include irony and the ironic in his list of the language of the oppressed when it is clear that irony and the ironic situations and events are instrument for the workings of the protest that eventually leads to the tragic end in the plays. It is a means of communication between the oppressed and the oppressor because the oppressor does not understand any other language except the one from the opposite direction. This study is meant to fill the gap and explore how irony and the ironic are used as the basis for the remote and the immediate causes of the protest in the selected plays.

Abíólá (2005) focuses on the plays of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá where language of drama is discussed extensively. He presents a stylistic analysis of how Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá uses language to deliver his message to his readers. He observes that, since language cannot be divorced from society, what makes drama relevant in society is the use of language. He highlights and discusses how Ìṣòlá uses Yorùbá traditional materials and other stylistic devices to reinforce the various themes in his plays. However, the non-recognition of irony as an aspect of language of drama creates the necessity for this present study because irony is an important device in drama as reflected in *Efúnṣetán Aníwírà*.

Shittu (2006) presents a stylistic study of humour in Lávùyí Ògúnnírán's plays . He presents different definitions of humour , types of humour and theories of humour . Shittu discusses Lávùyí Ògúnnírán's sources of humour , which are through the scene of cinematography, dialect, comparison, incongruity and wordplay . He declares that satire is one of the distinguishing features of Lávùyí Ògúnnírán from other Yorù bá playwrights. This work fails to see that humour can be derived through the

employment of irony and the ironic situations and events in Lawuyı Ogunniran’s plays, especially in *Aare Ago Arikuyeri*, in which they are used to produce humorous effect. Therefore, this study is not only looking for irony and the ironic as stylistic devices in *Aare Ago* but to also see irony and the ironic elements as devices used to generate humorous effect in order to achieve the overall message of the play.

Adegun (2006) investigated the language of satire, focusing on its origin and definitions. She also presents the linguistic patterns of satire at the word, phrase and sentence levels. The use of satire as the reflection of social and political issues is discussed within the framework of sociological approach. However, the work does not make an attempt to look at irony and the ironic as the platform for the tragedy in his plays. It does not also see the relation between irony and satire even when it is evident that Lawuyı Ogunniran uses irony and the ironic extensively for satirical effects and comic relief in almost all his literary texts. However, Adegun’s work helps in this study because irony and satire are close neighbours. For instance; irony is used extensively for satirical effect and comic relief in *Aare-Ago Arikuyeri*, which is one of the texts selected for this study. Therefore, this work tries to establish the fact that devices such as metaphor and euphemism cannot be treated in isolation but in conjunction with irony and the ironic as allied tropes.

The concern of Bello (2006) is poetry in Lawuyı Ogunniran’s drama. He discusses the relationship between poetry and drama and the importance of poetry in drama. He points out that poetry and drama are unified entities as reflected in Lawuyı Ogunniran’s drama texts. Although the texts are historical, they are presented in a poetic form. He submits that poetry cannot be counted out of the features of literature because drama makes use of all segments of poetry like chants, songs and dance. He shows in his work how Ogunniran uses poetry and poetic devices, rhyme and rhythm to make his drama an aesthetic piece. However, the irony and the ironic situations that Lawuyı Ogunniran uses poetry to present are ignored in his work, especially in *Aare-Ago Arikuyeri*. According to Bello (2006:28), ‘drama is very close to poetry as far as the use of language is concerned.’ When poetry or poetic features are found in drama, they are for specific stylistic, semantic and communicative purposes. He asserts that, in order to enhance the stylistic quality of his work, Ogunniran, uses traditional materials like *Ee -Ifa*, *Rara*, *Oriki*, *Ofo*,<sup>1</sup> songs, proverbs and riddles extensively. However, he fails to identify the purpose for the usage of Yoruba traditional materials, especially *ee-Ifa* and Yoruba proverbs from which irony of fate



used to establish the Yorùbá philosophical belief on destiny derives . There is also the use of verbal irony as rhetorics delivered in poetic form for defence purpose by Balógun in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyẹ̀rí* . Bello’s work also undermines the fact that irony within the frame of poetic structure by Ògúnníran in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyẹ̀rí* is used to emphasise the strong effects of the tragic outcome of the play. However, Bello’s work serves as a pointer, for it shows that poetry is a good framework from which irony and the ironic can be used to carry the weight of tragic incidents that can easily arouse the sense of pity and fear as noticed *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyẹ̀rí*.

### 2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have reviewed the scholarly works that are related to the present study. It is evident from this review that no specific work has been done on irony and the ironic as literary devices used in Yorùbá literature, especially in tragic plays. It is important to note that those scholars that have worked on drama did not see the invaluable place of irony and the ironic as the window through which all other stylistic devices see the fundamental and the organization of dramatic principles such as conflict, clarification, crisis or complication and denouement in the Yorùbá tragic plays. In addition, and those that have worked on tragic plays also failed to see irony and the ironic as the major stylistic device and an ever-ready instrument for tragic incidents and situations. However, the various stylistic devices that have been studied serve as the motivation for this study.

#### Note to Chapter Two

1. In Ògúnníran’s *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyẹ̀rí*, uses Èṣẹ̀-Ifá to present the importance of the concept of Orí , the primordial head and destiny as the basis for the example of irony of fate . Ràrà, Oríkì and songs are used as the instrument to

express the remote cause that initiate and prompts the actions that resulted in tragic incidents in *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Arikúyẹ́rí*, while *Ọfọ̀*, (incantation) is used as instrument for defence in the last encounter of *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò* and *Ògúnmọ́lá* in order to prevent an embarrassing situation that eventually happened.

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**CHAPTER THREE**  
**THEORETICAL APPROACH: ROLAND BARTHES THEORY OF**  
**SEMIOLOGY**

**3.1 Introduction**

The theoretical approach adopted for this study is Roland Barthes' semiological theory. The theory is considered adequate for this work because it is an interpretive model that embraces the contexts and the different types of irony and the ironic elements in form of situations and actions in the process of interpretation. Besides, the model is able to account for the various possibilities of interpretation of irony and the ironic through the elements of semiology in form of signifier, signified, denotation and connotation for a wider scope in the meaning-making process. Therefore, the intention in this chapter is to discuss Roland Barthes' semiological theory as an interpretive model for irony and the ironic as stylistic devices employed by the Yorùbá playwrights using these texts : *Àarẹ-Àgò (Arikúyẹri)*, *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, *Ìdààmú Páàdì (Mínkáílù)*, and *Rẹrẹ Rún*.

**3.2 Problems of Literary Interpretation**

The essence of literature is an interpretation. For this reason scholars over the years have made attempt to find ways of giving literature or literary texts acceptable and meaningful interpretation. Different techniques or approaches to literary interpretation have evolved. There is, for instance, a historical school of thought or criticism that argues that 'meaning is not found in the words but in a set of values and implication which are matters of history' that surround the texts in question. This school of thought attaches greater importance to the values that are embedded in historical facts, which must be understood before embarking on any meaningful and profitable interpretation of any literary work. However, this theory has its shortcomings because the venture of meaning-making is far more than the excavation of historical facts.

There is another theory that is author-centred, in which the authorial intention governs the interpretation. However, the death of the author must not bring an end to the examination of his work. Scholes (1982:14) argues that: 'author alone does not speak but other voices also speak through him,' for example, the cultural, public or private voices of his environment. Although the author is a major voice that channels the combination of all other voices, be it public or private, the conscious and the

unconscious elements put together, which eventually form the basis for the analysis and interpretation of his texts, these other voices must have a separate attention in the interpretation process. It is these other voices that form the secondary meaning that semiology is taking care of because authors do not live in an ivory tower; they live among the people who are also custodians of culture that give birth to the same language that produces the literature.

There is also another theory that is reader-oriented, that is the semic approach. This theory elevates and privileges the reader's interpretation of the text. It states that the fact that any literary work has many meanings makes the work special and peculiar. Nevertheless, the reader-oriented criticism gives room for disorderliness because one's point of view will be different from another person's perspective. For example, one hundred people may automatically present one hundred interpretations of a single text. Moreover, semiology is systematic and liberal. It lays emphasis on codes which emanate from a given culture; therefore, the interpretation of any literary work is subjected to different contexts from which they spring out.

Another school of criticism emphasizes the text; the submission of the advocates of this theory (the Russian Formalist) is that the text in itself is enough material for any interpretation. The formalist is of the opinion that the text is the only tangible thing the reader can possess and that one can make use of it to get to the meaning of the work. The theory gives room for total concentration on the text, nothing must be taken out of the text and nothing should be brought into the text as far as the interpretation process is concerned. The formalist's approach has its deficiency, in that, it focusses only on the linguistic description of a text based on structural analysis and this is not enough for meaning making. This theory fails because the meaning of any literary work does not depend only on the surface structure or in the plane of expression, but also in the plane of content that may have its root in different contexts, like culture, politics, philosophy and history. The application of this approach could lead to confusion or ambiguity through interpretive error, as a text could be and it is a product of a system, society or contexts that are important and equally serve as the springboard for its interpretation.

The Russian Formalists move from textual analysis for meaning-making to the codes that give birth to the text as advocated by the structuralists who place emphasis on the codes that may be silent but initiates the production of the text. The limitations of these earlier mentioned approaches to the interpretation of literary works make

scholars and critics think of semiology (semiotic theory) as a way out of the problems of literary interpretation. Semiotic theory advocates the interpretation of texts through the conventional and generic codes and stylistic conventions. It is this emphasis on codes and conventions by the structuralists that facilitates the birth and development of semiotics by theorists like Umberto Eco, the development of semiology by Saussure, which is later expanded by the Roland Barthes' theory of semiology. Barthes argues that every narrative is interwoven with multiple codes; therefore not all the variable meanings can be exhausted within the signifier and the signified.

### **3.3 Why Roland Barthes' Semiology?**

Since the objective of this work is to unfold how irony and the ironic are employed by Yorùbá playwrights in the presentation of the tragic issues of life within the Yorùbá political, historical, cultural and philosophical contexts, it is necessary to adopt an interpretive model that will embrace the contexts and the different types of irony and the ironic elements in form of situations and actions in the process of interpretation.

After considering the different approaches and the tools of interpretation, Roland Barthes' semiology theory is adjudged adequate for this work. The model will be able to account for the various possibilities of interpretation. Two out of the four elements of Roland Barthes semiological theory: (i) signifier and the signified (ii) denotation and connotation, afford us the opportunity to have the extension of meaning that is beyond the form of expression in the irony and the ironic template.

Roland Barthes semiology is an improvement on de Saussure's semiological theory. It does not see irony and the ironic only as signifier and signified, but it also explores the manner in which language signifies in the form of denotation and connotation.

Semiology is preferred to other theories because it rejects the authoritarian hermeneutics position which places the author as the total and final authority when it comes to making meaning of texts. It also sees the process of interpretation beyond the syntactic analysis of the literary text at hand as claimed by the formalists. Also, the contemporary social semioticians and the current semiology theorists have criticised the structuralist prioritization of structure over usage and have raised the level of describing and searching for the meaning beyond the internal structural relations of the segments that are within a given text. The focus now is mostly in the

exploration of the use of signs with respect to specific social and cultural contexts in which it is possible to have extension of meanings both within and outside the context.

Roland Barthes semiology is also preferred because it sees the literary text, either written or spoken, as an act that is beyond the spoken word. Roland Barthes semiology also argues that interpretation and meaning-making cannot be left in the hands of the readers as claimed by the advocates of the semic approach, who argue that a literary work can have different meanings from different people at different levels. The adoption of Roland Barthes semiology will make it possible to look at literary interpretations from both the denotative and connotative perspectives. As Culler (1981:32) asserts, semiology has the possibility of ‘making explicit the implicit knowledge, which enables people within a given society to understand one another’s behaviour...this implicit knowledge is a deeply rooted set of cultural norms and conventions.’

In other words, semiotics places premium on the general rules and codes paramount in a given society, which make the hidden meaning of a text to be brought out. For this study, the comparative advantage of semiological theory over the other theories lies in its ability to reveal the culturally and contextually determined nature of behaviour with respect to language use. Lyons (1977:58) notes that:

It is because by common consent, language is the most important and most highly developed semiotic system employed by human beings and this gives the reason why we have to distinguish vocal from non-vocal signs.

Semiotics studies sign system, which includes language. Words and expressions are taken as signs which, in some sense, signify or stand for something. Essentially, it focuses on the discovering of codes, the rules, and the system which underlies all human and social practices that facilitate the use of language. Barthes semiological theory also sees the interpretation of the signs using the elements of denotation and connotation in order to accommodate wide range of interpretation. Since language is described as a system of signs that express ideas, then irony and the ironic are symbols that represent some ideas. The application of Barthes semiology would bring to the fore the authors’ ideas, opinions and messages which have been expressed through the use of irony and the ironic expressions.

### 3.4 Historical Development of Roland Barthes' Semiological Theory

The historical development of the modern-day semiology theory can be traced back to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1971:2) says that:

Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is therefore comparable to writing, to the deaf-mute alphabet, to symbolic rites, to codes of good manners, to military signals etc. It is simply the most important of these systems. A science that studies the life of signs in the society is therefore conceivable: it would be a part of general psychology; we shall call it semiology.

According to him, semiology is a science which studies the life of signs in society. He postulated the existence of a general science of signs, or semiology in which he viewed linguistics as only a part of general science of semiology. Linguistics is viewed as a branch of semiology. His focus is to take and embrace any system of signs irrespective of its substance and limits. The above postulations generated questions and criticisms about its use and how sound the theory will be if put into use with regard to the semiological analysis of literary texts and to see whether this is the royal road to a science of literature and of many other phenomena not necessarily of language only.

The American Philosopher, C.S. Peirce also conceived and developed a general theory of signs which he called *semiotics*. According to him, 'a sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity'. He considers semiotics as the 'formal doctrine of signs' which is closely related to logic. Saussure emphasizes the social function of signs but Peirce emphasizes its logical function. Semiotics, semiosis and semiology stand for signs and the study of signs but from different approaches.

There are two divergent traditions in semiology that evolved respectively from Saussure and Peirce. The works of Louis Hjelmslev, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Julia Kristeva, Christian Metz follow the tradition of Saussure; while those of Charles W Morris, Ivor A Richard, Charles K. Ogden and Thomas Sebeok are in the 'semiotic tradition' of Peirce. The gap between the two traditions is filled with the work of Umberto Eco (1976) who says that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as signs'.

In the late 1960s, semiotics progressed as it became a major approach to cultural studies because of the work of Roland Barthes who followed the semiotic

tradition of Saussure in his work on mythology. He says that, Saussure's semiology 'aims to take in any system of signs whatever their substance and limits' and if this is so, we must realise that there are some signs that are more than mere codes but language in the real sense. He argues that, if Saussure's semiology embraces all the components of signs, given the examples of images, gestures, musical, sounds, objects, ritual, convention or public entertainment, then it must be noted that, even if they are not regarded as language, they are, in most cases, the system of signification. He therefore, submits that Saussure's semiology<sup>1</sup> must see its operation within the scope of language.

From the above, we can see that Barthes theory of semiology is an improvement on semiotics and Saussure's semiology. Barthes presents semiology as a branch of linguistics. He avers that, it is true that images and objects, gestures musical sound can signify, but not in isolation, not without a linguistic interpretation. It is for this reason, that every semiological system is deemed to have its linguistic undertone, as no signifier and signified exist without language. Therefore, semiology as a theoretical concept has the prospect of accommodating many disciplines, including stylistics, in the concept of signification because it has its root in language.

### **3.5 Concepts and Terminologies associated with Roland Barthes' theory of**

#### **Semiology**

Semiotics is a theory of signification that recognises language as a system that is capable of being interpreted. Some of the terms and concepts crucial to Barthes' theory include sign (indexical, iconic, symbolic), signifier and signified.

### **3.6 Sign**

To the semiological theory there are three different types of signs, namely the indexical, iconic and symbolic signs. According to Pierce (1975), each of these signs has its features and functions in the signification process.

- (A) **Index/Indexical Sign:** This is a sign in which there is a direct relationship between it and the object it stands for. The relationship is not arbitrary but it is directly connected in one way or the other to the object. For example, a natural sign like smoke is an indicator for fire or a fire outbreak, just like the thunder is an indicator for rainfall or danger; footprints and echoes are signs for the presence of people or living beings around. Similarly, non-synthetic odours



and flavours are direct signs for cooking or an indicator to detect many things. In medical parlance, the presence of medical symptoms, like pain, rash, high pulse rate, are direct signs to detect the sickness that a patient is suffering from. In this regard, the relation of the indexical sign to the object is a relation of fact which calls attention to their objects. For example, the worker's protest action in *Réré Rún* is an index for industrial crisis, chaos and lack of job satisfaction.

- (B) **Icon/Iconic Sign:** This is based on natural resemblance between a sign and what it represents. In this case, the sign is perceived as resembling or imitating the object in a recognized way, like looking, sounding, and feeling, tasting or smelling like it. This is because the similarities depend on the fact that the object possesses the same qualities as the sign, for example, a portrait, a photograph, a diagram, an imitative gesture. Iconicity is closer to 'direct perception'. For a sign to be truly iconic, it would have to be transparent to someone who has never seen it before. The more a signifier is constrained by the signified, the more motivated the sign is. Iconic signs are highly motivated. A sign is an icon in so far as it is like the object it stands for. For instance, *Láwúwo* is a labour icon in *Réré Rún*, an icon for truth, loyalty and good leadership; *Páàdi Mínkáílù*, in *Ìdààmú Páàdi Mínkáílù*, is a religious icon for honesty, forthrightness; and *Ògúnmólá* in *Àrè-Àgò Aríkúyèrí*, is a leadership icon for truth, justice and equity.
- (C) **Symbol/Symbolic Sign:** Here, the sign does not resemble the object at all; the relationship is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional. It is an example of an unmotivated sign; hence it is seen as arbitrary. This is when a sign is received as a sign because it is used as such, a sign that stands in the place of an object. In Greek, symbol means the celebration of a contract or an agreement. In Aristotle's view, a name is a symbol, a conventional sign. For Pierce, symbols function as such not by virtue of a character that belongs to them and neither by virtue of a real connection with their objects but simply based on the agreement between the speaker and the listener. It is by virtue of a law, which is usually based on an association of general ideas. For example, words, sentences and concepts are mere symbols because the meanings they convey are based on convention and not on any relationship between them as

signs and what they mean. The less motivated the sign, the more the learning of an agreed convention is required. The symbolic sign is interpreted according to 'a rule' or 'a habitual connection'.

A sign can be an icon, a symbol or an index or a combination of any two or all. Consequently, irony and the ironic are regarded as signs in form of symbols standing for something else with an intention of communicating something meaningful. The use of irony and the ironic is meant to show the intensity of the meaning the author wants to pass across. In Barthes' semiology, the different types of signs are referred to as the *typical signs* that can encompass all the other signs, like the verbal sign, the graphic sign, the iconic sign and the gestural sign. As far as this work is concerned, and since language is made up of signs in form of words, irony and the ironic expressions in the selected texts are regarded as typical signs used to communicate or pass information to the readers.

### **3.7 Signifier and Signified**

#### **3.7.1 Signifier**

'Signifier' is the form which the sign takes, the sign which stands for something in some respect or capacity. It is considered as the material (or physical) form of the sign. Barthes refers to the signifier as 'denotation', the plane of expression which includes physical materials of the medium, like photographs, recorded voices, and printed words on paper. This substance of expression could be in the form of expression, through language, formal syntactic structure, technique and style or an action carried out. In this study, irony and the ironic are the signifiers, the substance and the plane of expression. Barthes (1964:47) says 'the nature of signifier is purely a *relatum*, whose definition cannot be separated from that of the signified'. The signifier stands for something and the something is the signified. In semiology, the signified comes with mixed systems where different kinds of matter are involved, like sound and image, objects and writing. Therefore, one can have signifiers in verbal, graphic, iconic, and gestural forms as signifier within the scope of what semiology refers to as typical signs.

#### **3.7.2 Signified**

'Signified' is what the sign or the signifier represents or stands for; it is what the sign refers to. Signified is not a thing but the mental representation of the thing.

The signified has been given difference labels by scholars. For instance, de Saussure calls it concept; it is called ‘an object’ by Pierce; and ‘referent’ by Ogden and Richards. Barthes calls it the plane of content which is the target of the concept in one’s mind, that is the object or the word that the signifier refers to. Its substance or content could be human, textual word, subject matter or genre.

Functionally, the signified is one of the two relations of the sign from which we arrive at the meaning. It is very much applicable with the use of irony and the ironic in the written tragic texts, where words, sentences, situations, actions, in as much as they are significant, refer back to something which can only be expressed through them. For example, in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù*, because of the incessant fraudulent practice of the council workers and the inability of the council board to rightly execute the assigned developmental projects, Mínkáílù the Catholic priest is invited to be among the members of the board as recommended by the people through the state governor. The invitation is brought by the board members and after the secretary has presented the reason for their visit, Mínkáílù is troubled. This is seen in his reply to the invitation. His confused state is signified by the catalogue of different contrary events of surprises and particularly by his misrepresentation of the Yorùbá proverb in the last line of his speech.

Mínkáílù: Ó yẹ k’ara òfà ó ló tii kó tó  
 S’òwò ijàkadi  
 Níjọ tí wọn bá fẹ f’onijàkadi  
 J’olóri ogun  
 ...  
 Nító pé **agódóngbó** a máa dá  
**Mèdókí** l’ápá  
 Bèè ni **sèlèrú** leè gbe ‘ròmì lọ  
 Un ló fi yèkèni tí ó bá gbọn ó fura  
 B’ónínúre bá joyè n’ilé ìkà  
 Ìkà ‘o ni jẹ ó joyè náà pé  
 Èni t’ó p’oun’ó fò ’bajẹ aiye mó

Yio kan’yò ninu idin

Yunusa: Yio kan’din ninu iyò, Páàdì  
 “Yio kan’din ninu iyò” ni nwọn íwí

(*Gbogbo wọn rerin*)

*Ìdààmú Páàdì*(p.4)

Mínkáílù: Òfà’s indigene should be reluctant before  
 Engaging in a wrestling contest  
 On the final day of selection of the chief wrestler  
 For the weight of the Colt can break the Shepherd’s hand

So also the spring can cause flood

The reason the wise man needs to be careful

If a kind-hearted are enthroned in the land of the wicked

The wicked will not allow him to reign for long

**Whosoever determines to purge the world of evil deeds**

**Will definitely find salt inside the maggots (will definitely find**

**Himself in unexpected trouble)**

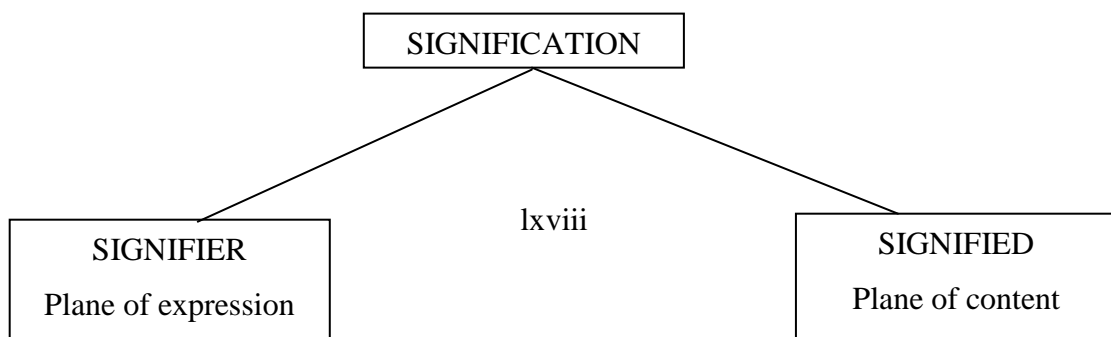
Yunusa: Will finds maggots inside the salt, Pààdi  
They say “Will finds maggots inside the salt”

(They all laugh)

The words in bold print are signifiers which are culturally motivated; ‘agódóńgbó’ is a young horse that should not be too heavy for the shepherd to carry on his arm but the reverse may be the case if the situation runs contrary . According to semiology , both agódóńgbó and şèlèrú also signify the insignificant situations th at can frustrate even the wise. Pààdi Míńkáiluis of the opinion that, no matter how strong and mighty a person is, he should be careful when he is challenged,even with what he has been trained to do. He adds that it may be ironic but it is possible that a young horse can break theshepherd’s hand and a small river can do terrible havoc. The environment determines the success of a leader, and this means his involvement in the council’s affairs should be approached with caution. The underlined expression, a misquoted proverb fromPààdi Míńkáilu, is a signifier, which refers to the signified that is the emotional state of PààdiMíńkáilu at the point in time. It shows his confused state of mind and the troubled situation he could see ahead of him if he accepts the invitation into the council’s board.

### 3.8 Signification

Signification is the relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to Eco (1976), signification can be referred to as ‘codification’. Barthes (1964:48) asserts that, ‘signification can be conceived as a process, the process of sign formation. Thus, he defines it as ‘the act that binds the signifier and the signified, an act whose product is the sign’, which is also referred to as ‘semiosis.’



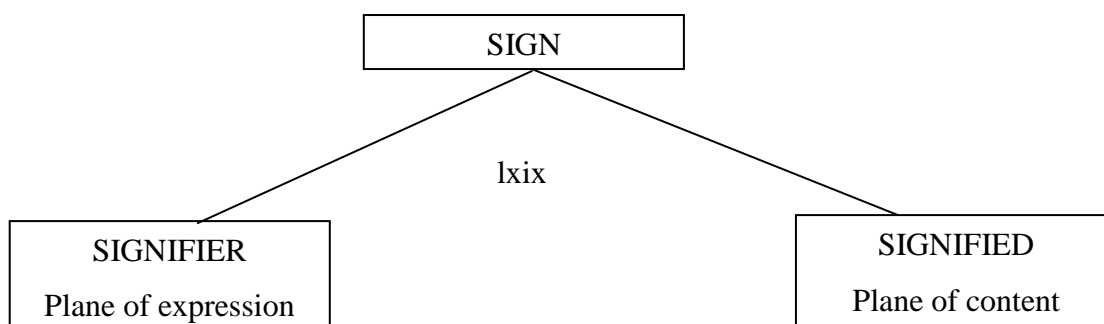
.....relation.....

### Figure 3. 1. The signification process

The acts that bind them together are borne out of the conventional relationship. Irony and the ironic are codes among the Yorùbá speakers used to denote or connote some facts or ideology. When they are used, it is recognised, since the speakers can notice and identify that there has been a deviation from the normal standard of day-to-day use of the language. They recognize and accept the conventional relationship between the signifier (irony and the ironic) and the signified (the connotative meaning) and subject themselves to it. We can refer to the acts as the factors that produce the signifier and the signified out of which the process of meaning-making can be done. Therefore, the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the case of irony and the ironic embraces all the contextual backgrounds that serves as materials for interpreting the plane of expression and the plane of content.

#### 3.9 Denotation and Connotation

The union of signifier and signified does not exhaust the semantic act. The signs derive its total value from its surrounding. The mind of the readers do not get meaning by connecting the signifier with the signified only, but through imagination and carving out of meaning from the relation of the two. This is the reason for Barthes' elements of denotation and connotation in his theory. Denotation and connotation are the two principal methods of describing the meanings of words and sentences through the consideration of factors that are outside the texts but are of paramount importance to the interpretation of the texts. The factors are now given wider coverage and this is very much applicable to the making of meaning from the employment of irony and the ironic in the texts under consideration. The figure below shows the elements of denotation and connotation as additional factors in the semiotic triangle.



.....relation.....

### **Figure 3.2. The elements of denotation and connotation**

#### **3.9.1 Denotation**

Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a word or a sign. It is the dictionary meaning or definition of a concept that distinguishes it from other concepts. It is the strict, explicit and precise or referential meaning of a word. It is also known as the surface meaning. Denotation is when you say what you mean, literally. It is when one designates things directly. For example, the sprinkling of powder on every item in Setilu's office, if taken at the denotative level, is not more than the fact that the powder is used as one of the detective materials to get the murderer in *Ìdààmú Pààdì*. However, it is more than that, this is clear from Adégboyè's explanation to Yesufu; he says, the powder in itself does not contain special chemical to arrest the criminals but it is used to instil fear in their hearts thereby making the arrest easy and possible. One can see that it has more than the denotative meaning. The denotative meaning is powder for beautification, but in this context, it connotes fear. Jindal and Pushpinder (2001:114) describe denotative meaning as 'the literal meaning of a word, indicating the idea or concept to which it refers. The denotative relationship has to do with the correlation between the form of expression and the form of contents.

### 3.9.2 Connotation

Alexander of Hales in Barne (1945) describes connotation as ‘a word which in addition to what an individual entity connotes, notes along with reference, a relation between that entity and some other’. Jindal and Pushpinder (2001:115) view connotative meaning as ‘the additional meaning that a concept carries’, while Leech (1981) defines connotative meaning as the ‘communicative value an expression has, by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content’. All these suggest that connotation is the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word. It refers to the wide array of positive and negative references that most words naturally carry, the association that people make with a word; it is the emotional weight of a word. Connotation is created when you mean something else, something that might be initially hidden from the surface structure. It is the meaning of a word that is usually based on implication, or shared emotional association with a word or the expression in question. In other words, connotation is a step forward from denotation. Connotation only occurs after it has added its own form to that of denotation. With regard to the use of irony and the ironic, connotative meanings are influenced by different interplay of contexts, such as, cultural implication. For example,

Denotative ( a chieftain and warlord)

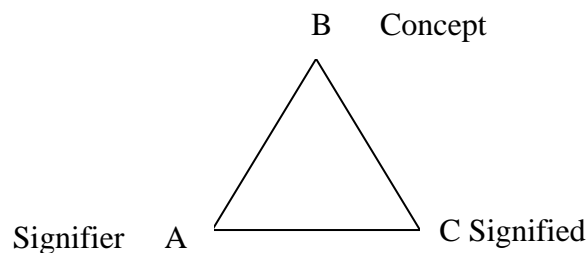
Ààrè-Àgò .....

Connotative (wife murderer, a coward/ run-away chieftain)

Within the Yorùbá -political context, anywhere Ààrè-Àgò is mentioned as a name, it denotes power and authority but, in the text, the playwright has used it to connote the weaker sense of the name in order to bring out the dramatic effect in his work. It means that irony and the ironic have both the denotative (literal meaning) and connotative (suggestive meaning). Denotation and connotation are useful tools in this study because they reveal how the playwrights use irony and the ironic as stylistic devices to further develop or complicate the stages in their various plays towards achieving their tragic goals. Irony and the ironic are instances of a higher order of meaning-making and interpretation because simple explication does not count as an aesthetic activity, especially on literary work. This is what makes denotation and connotation relevant to the aesthetic appreciation in this work.

### 3.10 The Components of the Semiotic Triangle

Saussurean terms of signifier and signified and the Peircean ‘interpretant’ term called ‘concept’ are the most common terms used in semiotics. (Eco 1976:59-60) They form the part of the semiotic ‘triadic angle’, as presented below:



**Figure 3.3. The Semiotic Triangle**

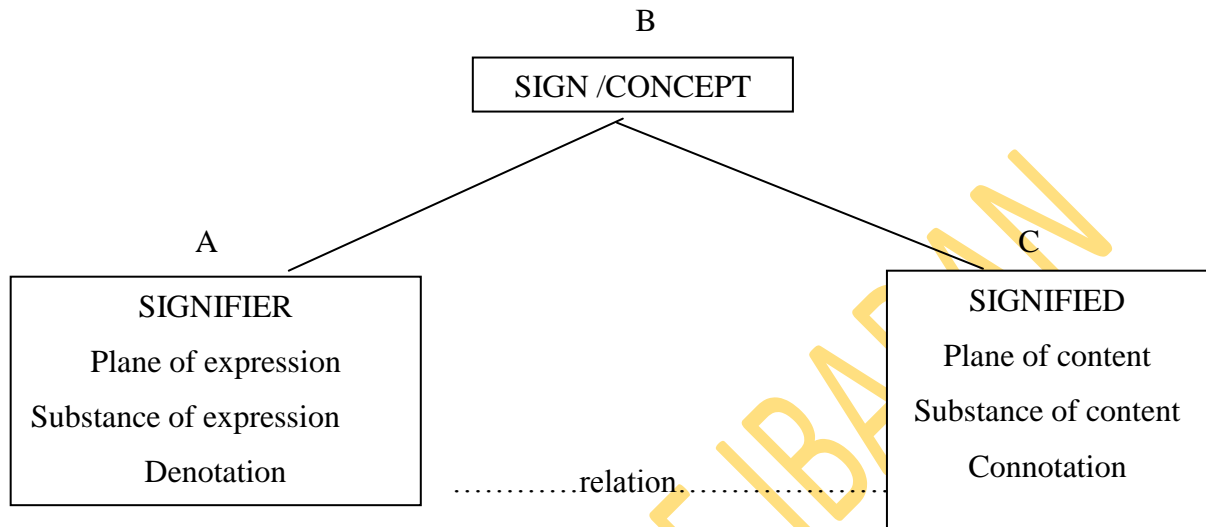
In order to properly understand the analysis and the working of irony and the ironic in this study, it is necessary to give an explanation of the relationship between the three sides of the semiotic angle . Olatéjú (1989:400-403) emphasises the importance of the understanding of the relationship among the three elements that constitute semiotic triangle, ‘...ó yẹ kí á sọ àṣẹpọ tó wà láàrin igun kínní, ìkejì àti ìkẹta nítorí nínú ìbásepọ wọn ni òyè itumọ wà’ (...we need to explain the relationship between the three sides of the triangle because in their relationship lies the meaning).

The interaction among signifier, concept and signified is referred to as semiosis by Peirce. Within the language system, everything depends on relations, because no sign makes sense on its own without its relation to other signs. In the semiotic triangle, there is no one-to-one link between signifier and signified because one signifier may refer to many signifieds. Therefore, a signifier is not to be identified directly with its signified because the signifier is still a concept in the mind waiting for interpretation. The concept in the mind is not a thing but the notion of a thing; it is the signified that eventually gives us the picture of what is in the mind of the speaker.

Signifier do not give proxy to their objects but are seen as vehicles for the conception of the objects. It means that angle ‘A’ does not have a direct relation with angle ‘B’. Angle ‘A’ is just a vehicle, a train of thought, for the mind in Angle ‘B’; it is the Angle ‘C’ that will present the idea and the principle or the picture in Angle ‘B’. According to Barthes, although the signifier and the signified are the components of the sign, the union of the signifier and the signified does not exhaust the semantic act, for the sign derives its value also from its surroundings. Therefore, he refers to the signifier as the plane of expression and denotation, while the signified is seen as the plane of interpretation (content and connotation). With the denotation and



connotation, one will be able to see and explain the link and the relation between the signifier and the signified. Under the plane of expression and the plane of content, there is also the substance of content for the signified and the substance of expression for the signifier. All these are presented below <sup>2</sup>



**Figure 3. 4. The combination of Semiotic Signifier and signified with the Barthes' Elements of semiology**

What constitutes the substance of expression at the literal meaning levels are the whole aspects of linguistics; the phonic, the articulatory and the non-functional substances. The substances of content under connotation include the emotional, ideological, contexts and all the notional aspects of the signified that can help us arrive at the positive meaning. For example, it is the understanding of the Yorùbá cultural context that serves as the link for the interpretation of Lávúwò's proverbs. It is this substance of content that forms the basis for the conventional relationship between the signifier and the signified and it is from these substances that the sign derives its extensional meanings. The conventional relationship between angles 'A' and 'C' can also derive its full value and wider coverage of meaning when it is subjected to the elements of denotation and connotation.

Irony and the ironic as signifiers standing for signifieds in the tragic plays under consideration in this work enjoy a wider coverage of interpretation when subjected to the elements of denotation and connotation. Another set of proverbs from *Réré Rún* illustrate this:

Lávúwò's proverbs in *Réré Rún* (p 92),

(i) a. Èni tó bá fòrí tí i titi de òpin, àfàimó ni kò fi ni i di aláàrú,  
He who endures till the end, may later become a load carrier.

instead of:

b. Èni tó bá fòrí tí i titi de òpin, ni a ó gbà là  
He who endures till the end will be saved

(ii) a. Ọmọ tí yóò jẹ Àsámú, òkèèrè lá tí i wo,  
A would-be smart child is seen from afar.

instead of:

b. Ọmọ tí yóò jẹ sàmú, láti kékeré ní í ti í senu sàmúsámú  
A would-be smart child, must have displayed smartness from  
childhood

(iii) a. Àgbàlagbà kì í ri erin tán, kó máa jó lán gbálán gbá.  
An adult, after seeing the elephant will not be dancing anyhow.

instead of:

b. Àgbàlagbà kì í ri erin tán, kó tún wá di àmùrín  
An adult, after seeing the elephant, will now say it is an insect

(iv) a. Ìwò tá à n wàparò aṣọ rẹ pón koko,  
The quail is seen as a bird with dirty cloth.

instead of:

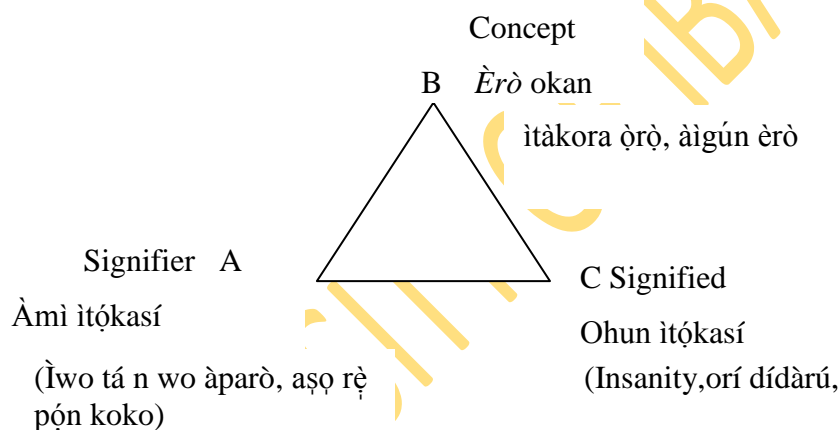
b. Ìwò tá à n wàparò bí i ká fi dá ila  
The quail is seen as a bird that is good to prepare okro soup

The above represent the signifier and denotation which is the plane of expression that is deliberately presented for a particular signified and for certain connotation. The relationship between the proverbs as signifier and the signified is embedded in the culture ; it is the Yorùbá cultural way of saying the proverbs that serves as clues to the production of the meaning the author is trying to impress on the reader's mind. The message is what the signified represents, the connotative meaning which is the plane of content . However, the connotative meaning can only come up when we consider the relationship between the signifier and the signified which is conventional. The Yorùbá people know the correct way to say the proverbs and they can tell that the proverbs are said the other way round and that the presentation calls for observation with regard to the character that is saying the proverbs.

The relationship that can bring out the right interpretation is seen under the substance of content, plane of content and connotation , which is cultural relationship. This is one of the aspects of the texts which point away from the text itself for meaning-making. First, a typical Yorùbá person cannot say the proverbs as in the above. Also in the context of the play , Láwúwò, a character known to be active , and

who has been presented as a character that has the good mastery of the Yorùbá language and culture, should be able to say the proverbs accurately.

Yorùbá proverbs come in two segments , the beginning and the end , but Láwúwò started the proverbs correctly and ends it with the other parts of another proverb or another sentence entirely that do not have any correlation with the first segment. This shows that something must be wrong . Also, the Yorùbá believe that there are two ways to suspect a person in a state of insanity: in speech and dressing. This means that the character talking is not in his right state of mind. Therefore, the presentation of the proverbs is a verbal irony that connotes malady, insanity and unsettled mind. The use of the proverbs in a seemingly wrong way is not a mistake or a slip of the tongue but a deliberate attempt to communicate connotatively an affliction of an unsettled mind of the speaker (Láwúwo). This is illustrated in the semiotic triangle below.



**Figure 3.5. The Semiotic Triangle with examples of irony**

The above semiotic triangle reveals that the character’s presentation of the proverbs in angle ‘A’ shows the non-correlation of words, sentences and thoughts of the character in angle ‘B’ that eventually means insanity in angle ‘C’. Therefore, the signifier (Angle A) and the signified (Angle C) have no independent existence outside their combination within the sign. It is the ‘concept’ in the mind of the speaker that mediates between the signifier and the signified. However, the connection between Angles A and C is highly conventional because the presentation of the proverbs is quite different from the natural or the cultural way of saying it; he says it the other way round. As noted by Olatéjú’s (1989) that we need to understand the relationship between the angles in order to have good interpretation, for positive interpretation of the irony and the ironic in the tragic plays , the understanding of the Yorùbá concept of

tragedy in line with the Yorùbá political, philosophical, historical and cultural contexts are necessary ingredients. We can thus, conclude that, in interpreting irony and the ironic, meaning is not transmitted but created denotatively and connotatively through the signs with interplay of codes and conventions within the society.

### **3.11. Factors Involved in the Interpretation of Irony and the Ironic:**

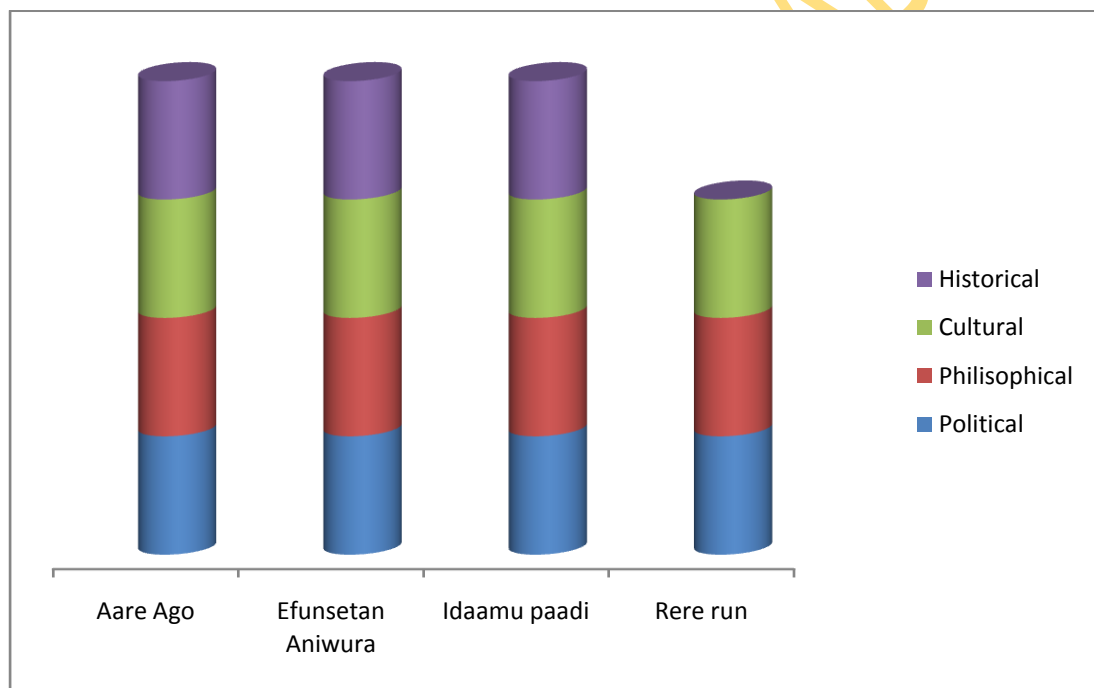
#### **The Yorùbá Contexts**

The world in which we live is a semiological coded atmosphere that must be expressed in various signs in which irony and the ironic are one within a context. The job of the Yorù bá author using irony and ironic to pass across his message is to present before his reader a false point of view in a form that they would really accept. This is an interesting task of the ironist author his focus, but the reader must recognise that the point of view is false and that they are not accepting it but instead attacking it with all the weapons of deconstruction available. After all, the author will be delighted if his point of view is detected. The ironist's attitude is described by Knox (1961:147) thus:

Unlike the criminal, he wants to get caught. If he is not caught the object of his attack escapes unharmed while the ironist remains the sole and sterile to his own cleverness. Thus, he must dissemble the fact that his praise is insincere, but he must not dissemble so well that ultimately he deceives no one.

The main reason for the employment of irony and the ironic is to urge a search after an unknown truth, pertinent in the quest to interpreting irony and the ironic is to be sensitive and determined not to take words, sentences or expressions at face value. It is therefore expedient at the level of interpretation and analysis that references are made to the factors with which the interpretation of irony and the ironic can be well done. When irony and the ironic in the Yorùbá written tragic plays are seen from the perspectives of denotation and connotation, they have a wider scope that is not only of word and opposite, or word and variants, or just a written text, but as devices that can take meanings from the relevant values and contexts. This will ensure us the interpretation of irony and the ironic out of a dynamic relation of both denotation and connotation in which both the said and the unsaid (verbal, situations, events, actions) matter, so as to get to the positive connotative meaning.

Irony and the ironic in the selected plays go beyond mere identification and usage. They attract not only one's linguistic competence of the Yorùbá language but also the cultural and the ideological competence of the same. The Yorùbá contexts are the major factors that are important in the interpretation process of irony and the ironic in the Yorùbá written tragic plays selected for this study. Four types of contexts are identified in all the texts, namely: philosophical, historical, political and cultural context. All the four occur in three texts (*Ààrẹ̀- Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Páàdì* and *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*) while only three (political, philosophical and cultural) occur in *Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún*. These contexts are part of the values upon which irony and the ironic are employed to achieve the tragic motive of the playwrights. The contexts serve as a backdrop for the understanding and the interpretation of irony and the ironic usage in the plays.



**Table 3.1** Table showing the factors involved in the interpretation of the Irony and the ironic as distributed among the texts chosen for the study.

### 3.11.1 Philosophical Context

Philosophy, with reference to this work, covers the Yorùbá way of life, with respect to their religion, beliefs, social life, thoughts and ceremonies. For

example, some irony and the ironic situations energize Yorùbá belief about life, fate, destiny, religion and the supremacy of God. The philosophical contexts cut across all the texts. The Yorùbá believe in showing gratitude for a good deed done or for any kind of gesture in cash or kind. A Yorùbá proverb confirms this: 'Bí èniyàn bá dúpé oore ànà, yóò gba òmíràn' (showing gratitude for a good deed attracts another one) and 'Ọdẹ tó peran tó şètùtù, nítorí èyí kọ nítorí òmíràn ni' (a hunter who makes sacrifice for the game killed today does not offer the sacrifice for the present success but for the next hunting exercise).

There is also Yorùbá worldview which submits that 'Àyànmó ò gbóògùn', (no medicine to appease or revoke man's destiny) Dasylyva (1988) asserts that the Yorùbá worldview on destiny, emphasises 'the irrevocability of man's pre-life choice which may either be favourable (fortune) or unfavourable (misfortune)'. This informs the reason why irony of fate according to Yorùbá worldview is traced to the predestination as it reflects in the condition of Èşù and Ògúnrindé Ajé in *Àrẹ-Àgò Aríkúyeri*; Èfúnşetán in *Efúnşetán Aniwúra*; Láwúwo in *Réré Rún*; and Pààdi Mínkáílù, Jubirilu and Şètílù in *Ìdààmú Pààdi Mínkáílù*.

### 3.11.2 Historical, Political and Cultural Contexts

Historical, political and cultural contexts are other contexts from which all the four texts selected for this study sprang out. The political and the cultural contexts cut across all the texts, while the historical context is seen only in *Àrẹ-Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Pààdi* and *Efúnşetán Aniwúra*. The historical backgrounds of these texts also serve as the backdrop for the proper understanding and interpretation of the irony and the ironic messages employed in them. The cultural context refers to science or body of knowledge that operates in a given society. It is a conventional agreement on how things are done or how things should be done with reference to the Yorùbá culture. In Roland Barthes' semiology, reference is made to the cultural code of denotation and connotation. The understanding of this code as the background knowledge helps in the interpretation or meaning-making process. Irony and the ironic require a cultural backdrop to be understood wherever it is employed as stylistic device because an expression or an action with a secondary meaning that is clear to the Ọyó -Yorùbá may be obscure to the Èkiti -Yorùbá. It is this cultural knowledge that informs Ọbọ Lágído's sarcastic comment after Adépèlé chants *sràrà* in praise of her husband. It

shows that Adépèlé's does not have the ability for *ràrà* chanting not to talk of the tone of delivery because chanting of *ràrà* is common among the Òyó-Yorùbás. Lágídò's statement further establishes that *ràrà* chanting is not among the Yorùbá oral poetic forms of Èkítí and Òndó.

Òbọ Lágído: È ẹ m'eleyii so! Yóó mòB'aré jé-é!...  
 Ta ló bè ara Àkókó ní ràrà sun?  
 Ajá a máa jobì bí? Pa'nu ẹ mọ́ ǹ bè  
*Ààrẹ̀ Àgò (pg 14)*

Òbọ Lágído: Please, caution this one!  
 She will spoil the show!  
 Who asked Akoko woman to chant rara  
 Do dogs eat kolanut? Keep quiet.

*Ààrẹ̀ Àgò Aríkúyẹrí* is a historical play which presents Yorùbá politics alongside Yorùbá cultural practices . The play presents the history of Basòrun Ògúnmólá who was known for true judgment and as an advocate of fundamental human rights and equality before the law at that time . Historically too , Ààrẹ̀ Àgò (Ògúnrindé Ajé ) was a warlord, whose position was so powerful in that society . According to Yorùbá history and tradition, Ààrẹ̀ Àgò was not always at home ; he was always at the battle field in order to expand the Òyó territory . Politically, he used to have his own cabinet that comprised of a number of chiefs , advisers, and soldiers who were under him as chiefs , administrator and political and security officers . In history, his cabinet would include the following chiefs : Jagun, Ìkólàbà, Badà, Oòtà, Ààrẹ̀-Alásà, Ààrẹ̀-Oníḃon and Ayingun. The historical fact is contained in the text(pg 38). Looking at the historical background and the political position of Ò gúnrindé Ajé, we can see the reason for his refusal to respond and report immediately in Basòrun Ògúnmólá's court when he is summoned . This is to prove his military gem . This action is appreciated by Basòrun Ògúnmólá for his war -like character. This is evident in his reply to Chief Òtún , who condemns his refusal to answer them on time. He answers Chief Òtun with stern warning;

Basòrun: Má bá ọ̀rọ̀ lọ níbẹ̀ un, Òtún. Rántí pé jagunjagun ni  
 Ajé; a kì í sì í bá ọ̀kúnrin l'áàbò. Ó ẹ̀ bí ọ̀kúnrin ni.  
*Ààrẹ̀- Àgò, (p 57)*

Basòrun: Don't mention that, Òtún. Remember, Aje is a warrior and a man should always behave like a man. He just behave like a man.

In Yorùbá political setting, a warrior exhibit the qualities of a warrior anytime, in any situation and before anybody.

Through the cultural window, we can see that polygamy is fundamental to the Yorùbá marriage culture and co-wives could not live harmoniously among themselves. So also the choice of Fátólá, the second wife as a favourite wife (Ààyò) among the other wives is not alien to Yorùbá culture. Therefore, it is easy to understand the position and the hostility that a favourite wife faces before her rivals in the home, as in the case of Fátólá, the favourite wife of Ògúnrindé Ajé in *Ààrẹ-Àgò Aríkúyerí*. Asiyanbí (the first wife) identifies with Adépèlé (the last wife) in her predicament for her own ulterior motive that is not known to Adépèlé who is still overwhelmed with sorrow over the death of her three children. This helps the reader to see the template upon which the ironic incident in the play is built. It is also the Yorùbá historical and cultural knowledge of the position of a warlord that prevents the immediate execution of Ògúnrindé Ajé's death sentence and necessitates his being allowed to commit honorific suicide.

Akínwùmí Ìsòlá's *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà* is a play that is based on the history of Ìyálóde, a chief in Ìbàdàn, who stands as an antagonist to the power and to the throne of Ààrẹ Látòòsà, who is the king on the throne. According to Yorùbá culture and history, Ìyálóde is an important position, one of the chiefs in the king's cabinet, a representative and protector of the interest of the entire women in the community. In view of this position and the duties assigned to her in her official capacity, her acts of wickedness both in her immediate environment and in the town as a whole, as revealed in the play, is unexpected of a mother. However, her actions are ironic. Also, the value and the importance placed on childbearing in Yorùbá cultural context makes us understand the irrational behaviour of Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà. The different contexts, like political, historical and philosophical, that are associated with irony and the ironic situations and actions help in the understanding of the subject matter in this texts.

Látòòsà, politically and in Yorùbá culture and history, is the ruler and chief administrator with the power of a king. He is supreme, because the Yorùbá believe that the king is a representative of the gods in the land. He is sacred and his position must be revered by all the chiefs in his cabinet. He presides over the council meetings in all their deliberations. The above gives the reader the contextual base with which to see how insulting Ìyálóde is to have defiled the political and cultural orders by taking



the law into her own hands to the level of establishing her own little kingdom in her house with rules and laws that are against the Yorùbá political system.

*Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù* is a historical play with political undertone. It is a play that is based on the incidents that took place in Èjìgbò , in a local government in the old Oyo State, now in Òsun State, Nigeria. The Christians in the town were mainly of the Catholic denomination. The political context is seen in the way the local government, the third tier of the Nigeria government, operates. The council board comprises the community leaders (the king and one of the chiefs ) and the council workers (the secretary and the treasurer ). There are no banking facilities in the town , so, the money sent for the developmental project (construction of Ajìngòdò bridge) is put in the safe and not in the bank. Thus makes it easy for the thieves to have access to the money . The people's opinion and the government's belief that religion may serve as the catalyst in the political affair informs the inclusion of the priest , Páàdì Mínkáílù, as a board member. The doctrinal stand of the priest prevents him from carrying out his responsibility as a member of the political board. According to the Catholic doctrine, the priest is not supposed to release the confession of sin by his members to anybody for whatever reason. This greatly contributes to the complications that later results into bloody tragedy . The playwright's submission through Páàdì Mínkáílù's statement is a proof that politics and religion are separate entities:

Minkailu: È kòwé padà sí Góminà  
K'ó jé kí n' maa b'èsin tèmì lọ,  
K'o je k'Igbimọ o maa b'òsèlú bọ  
Bi t'aiye Oniléjéré  
K'ólórí ẹsìn ó maa gb'ọkankan wòranòsèlú  
Ayé ò fẹràn ẹni re.

*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 4)*

Minkailu: Send reply to the Governor,  
That he should allow me to continue with my religion  
And let the council board continue with the political matter,  
As it was during the time of Oniléjéré's  
Let the religious leaders remain an observer of the politicians.  
The world does not like a sincere man.

The background knowledge that the Catholic church , as the dominant church at Èjìgbò at that time , will help the reader to see why it is the Rev. Fr. that could be available as the religious leader to be chosen in the community. Also, the knowledge of the Catholic doctrine will definitely help the reader to understand why Páàdì

Mínkáílù cannot help Salu to confess his sin to the inspector of police. The inter-connectivity of historical, political and religion brings the use irony and the ironic elements in form of situations and actions into focus and therefore aids the interpretation of their usage in the texts.

Therefore, it is when irony as in expression and the ironic as in situations, events and in structure are placed in their proper setting of the different contexts from which they springs up that we can have sensible and reasonable interpretation of their usage. It is also good to be an insider that have the same taste and temperament as the ironist/playwright so as to appreciate the aesthetics functions of irony and the ironic in the tragic plays.

As rightly emphasised by Scholes (1982:76), ‘for irony, of all figures, is the one that must always take us out of the text and into codes, contexts and situations.’ With these contextual background, one will be able to grasp both the pretended and the intended meaning. One cannot understand irony and the ironic without having a generous dose of the required contextual knowledge that will make one appreciate fully, their stylistic purpose in the overall message of each of the plays. ‘The ability to recognize irony is one of the surest tests of intelligence and sophistication.’ Holman (1980).

### **3.11.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework was discussed. Roland Barthes’ semiological theory was considered the appropriate analytical tool for the interpretation of irony and the ironic in the selected Yorùbá written tragic plays. Its interpretive model is able to account for the various possibilities of interpretation of irony and the ironic through the elements of semiology. The theory also within the window of denotation and connotation give room for the contextual base so as to have wider scope in the meaning-making process. The factors involved in the interpretation of irony were discussed within the four Yorùbá contexts identified in this study.

### Notes to Chapter Three

1. See the views of F. de Saussure on semiology as it relates to language in the translation of semiology by Pierce C.S (1975) p.1
2. The figure is my own modification of the semiotic triangle so as to capture all the elements necessary for interpretation of irony and the ironic.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## CHAPTER FOUR

### IRONY AND THE IRONIC IN SELECTED YORÙBÁ TRAGIC PLAYS

#### 4.1 Introduction

There is a ‘differentia specifica’ between the languages of literature (LL) be it in poetry, prose or drama, and the standard language (SL), which is the language of ordinary discourse or everyday conversation<sup>1</sup>. In the selected Yorùbá tragic plays, the authors have used irony and the ironic as part of their literary style to achieve certain stylistic and communicative effects. The focus of this chapter is to examine how the authors have deployed these devices to achieve effects in their plays. Five types of irony are found in the texts, namely: verbal irony/rhetorical irony, dramatic/tragic irony, irony of fate, irony of character and comic irony. The employment of these different types of irony and the ironic will be analysed within the four contexts identified in the texts, namely: political, historical, cultural and philosophical.

#### 4.2 Verbal Irony

Verbal irony occurs in all the texts selected for this study. As stated earlier, verbal irony is the use of words to convey something else (an idea, message or information) that is different from the literal meaning of the words spoken or written. It is also called rhetorical irony when it is used in literature either for stylistic effects or as a form of rhetoric for defence mechanism.

In Ògúnníran’s *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Aríkúyẹ̀rì*, for instance, the title of the text itself is an instance of verbal irony. As indicated in the title, the text presents Ògúnrinde Ajé as a coward and a run-away warlord. Considering the Yorùbá political and cultural contexts, a warlord is not supposed to be afraid of death of any type and at any time. We can make reference to the praise poetry of the Oníkòyí lineage as a typical example of the stuff a warlord is made of. According to history, the warriors of the Oníkòyí lineage<sup>2</sup> would not run away from the arrow but, instead face the opposition and receive the arrow with their chests. How can a man be an Ààrẹ̀-Àgò, the battalion commander of the whole Yorùbá race and minister of defence, and run away in the face of storm and trial. He should have chosen to die honourably by committing suicide in order to save his name and title. Instead, he chooses the path of shame by running away and he is thus labelled with the descriptive shameful title of *Aríkúyẹ̀rì* (one who absconds in order to escape death). This is an example of verbal

irony and it is used to achieve satirical effect, 'Arikúyerí' as a sobriquet or nickname for a high chief and prominent war title holder (Ààrè-Àgò), such as Ògúnrindé Ajé, is an irony. The stylistic function or effect of the use of this irony is to satirise the position of a warlord in order to bring him to disrepute, perhaps, to serve as a deterrent to others. It also connotes that the character cannot carry the weight of the title assigned to him.

Another instance of verbal irony in *Ààrè-Àgò* is when Ọbọ Lágídò, a mere personal aid, puts to task the bravery and authority of his master, Ògúnrindé Ajé, when he makes him to realise the foolishness of his rash action, that of killing Fátólá, his favourite wife. After murdering his wife in anger, Basòrun Ògúnmólá sends for him, Ògúnrindé Ajé becomes annoyed and accuses Basòrun of intruding into his family affairs. He declares in anger:

Ààrè-Àgò: Èmi ni mo ni ara mi, Èmi kì í sì í yojú sí ọ̀rò ọ̀lórò  
Láti 'jọ tí mo ti dé'lẹ̀ yíí.

Lágídò: Irọ̀ lẹ̀ f'èyiùn-un pa Baba, gbogbo rẹ̀ ló sojú u wa...  
È bá wọn dá sí ọ̀rò Ajagunnà t'ó pa ègbón rẹ̀ n'jelo tí wọn  
fí ní kí wọn pa oun náà. Nígbà tẹ̀-ẹ̀ sọ̀ pẹ̀-ẹ̀ dá s'ọ̀rò ọ̀lórò rí  
L'ó jẹ̀ kin ng ran yín l'etí.

*Ààrè-Àgò (p 35)*

Ààrè-Àgò: I live my life, and I don't interfere in other  
people's affairs since I came into this town.

Lágídò: Baba, you have told a lie, we were all witnesses....  
...You were there, during the Ajagunna's murder trial  
When he killed his brother sometime ago, and it was decided  
that he should be killed. I remind you because you said you  
don't intrude into other people's matter.

From the cultural perspective, Ọbọ Lágídò's response to Ògúnrindé Ajé's statement- 'Èmi kì í sì í yojú sí ọ̀rò ọ̀lórò láti 'jọ tí mo ti dé'lẹ̀ yíí. (I don't interfere in other people's affairs since I came into this town) is an instance of irony. No matter what, it is wrong and unethical for a younger person to brazenly tell an elderly person that he is a liar. Therefore, for Ọbọ Lágídò to have responded to his master thus:

"*Irọ̀ lẹ̀ f'èyiùn-un pa Baba, gbogbo rẹ̀ ló sojú u wa ... (Baba, you have told a lie ; we were all witnesses... )* is an instance of verbal irony. In other words, Lágídò's challenge to Ààrè-Àgò's submission that he does not interfere in other people's affairs is a case of irony used in order to satirise the person and the position of Ògúnrindé

Ajé. The reaction and the statement of Lágídò to Ògúnrindé Ajé , that he is lying, is against the Yorùbá cultural or ethical norm and brings the verbal irony to the limelight. Apart from its comic effect, the use of this type of irony contributes significantly to the build up to the tragedy that is later to unfold itself in the play. For instance, it creates some kind of awareness in Ògúnrindé Ajé of the likely consequence of his murderous action despite his feigning ignorance since he had at one time or the other participated in effecting justice in a similar murder case , the case of Ajagùnnà who was killed for killing his elder brother . It is now very clear to the readers and Ògúnrindé Ajé himself that the consequence of his action is a death penalty. The next question on the mind of the readers would be how Ògúnrindé Ajé would defend his murderous act, and if he is convicted, how would he take the judgement. Would he resign to fate and take the honourable path or what is he going to do.

Rhetoric, as a branch of philosophy, is the act of using language effectively and persuasively. Rhetorical irony, an aspect of verbal irony, is based on emotions or thoughts with the aim of persuading or influencing other people with a different opinion to change their minds or reach a certain level of compromise. In the selected texts, instances of rhetorical irony abound . For example , Balógun's rhetoric on Ògúnrindé Ajé's case is another example of verbal irony in *Ààrè-Àgò Arikúyèrí*. The irony consists in Balógun's argument in favour of Ògúnrindé Ajé, which is contrary to the position held by the chiefs on the case the previous day . It is a surprise that as a chief who knows the truth and who is expected to uphold the truth in an ironic twist has to switch to Ògúnrindé Ajé's side by reeling out his military exploits and achievements to whip up sentiment in order to have him discharged and acquitted. He concludes like thus;

Balógun: Káábìèsí, olúwa mi Iba,  
 Nígba t 'á- a rántí ojó  
 Orí gbogbo wá wú:  
 T'Ájé jagun nílé-e K'óro;  
 Nítorí Ìbàdàn yí  
 L'ó fi fọmọ bọ'lẹ l'Ékìtì-Èfọn.  
 Gbogbo rẹ la rántí,  
 L'ẹkún fi n gbọn gbogbo wa.  
 Ìdí rẹ-é, olúwa mi,  
 Tí a fi pinnu pé k'á wo àtẹyinwá,  
 ...  
 K'á dáríjin Ajé,  
 K'ó ma baa dà bí ẹni pé,

Ìlú f'ibi sù olóore.  
 Aní k'ó ma baa jiyà mó pòn m̀p̀on m̀o ètè.  
 Ìpinnu wa rè-é o Iba! *Àarẹ̀ Àgọ̀* (pp 83-84)

Balógun: Kabiyesi, homage to my lord  
 When we remember the day  
 All of us were stirred  
 When Aje fought gallantly in the homestead of Kóro  
 Because of this Ibàdàn land  
 he offered a child in sacrifice at Èkìtì Èfòn  
 We remember vividly  
 That's why we are all filled with tears  
 My Lord, that's the reason why  
 We have concluded and agreed to consider the past  
 .....  
 And forgive Ajé  
 So that we will not be painted  
 As ingrates  
 So that we would not add insult to his injury  
 This is our resolution,

It is obvious that the irony in the above excerpt is a rhetorical discourse, a serious attempt by Balógun to rescue Ajé from the impending calamity (death through honourable suicide) awaiting him for the criminal offence of murdering his wife. Balógun's rhetoric is an irony in that, rather than to uphold justice and the rule of law as directed by tradition and their position as custodian of justice, he pleads for leniency and a waving of the laws of the land. The irony of the rhetoric is proved even the more when it is realised that the chiefs on whose behalf the Balógun spoke has collected bribe in order to plead for him whenever his case comes up for hearing before Basòrun Ògúnmolá. Balógun's speech is a rhetorical device, stylistically employed as a defence mechanism for pretence to obtain a pardon for Ògúnrinde Ajé.

In Fálétí's *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù*, there are instances of verbal irony/rhetorical irony as well. Yunusa's rhetorical discourse on the invitation of Mínkáílù to the council's board is an example of verbal irony:

Yunusa: Páàdì Mínkáílù,  
 Àt'ẹgbé ilú, àtògbà ilú,  
 Àti Mèkúnnù àti gbogbo ẹni tó j'olú  
 Gbogbo wọn ló rán wa sí ọ.  
 Ẹnyin náà ẹ wò'lú b'ó ti wà tí ọ f'ara ọ  
 T'omọdẹ t'agbà l'ó d'onísé àparọ

Èlomii ti baba re o d'egbaa ni lówó  
 A sì gbójiji d'eni òwò  
 A máa fa pòùn pòùn kiri lówó yẹbẹ yẹbẹ:  
 L'eni tí kò sise kan kó làágùn rí  
 L'eni tí kò jẹ jáde n'ílẹ lakoko irí,  
 L'eni tí à 'o gb'órúkọ rè n'íbìkan tì rí,  
 Nibo ni wón ti r'owo tí nwon fì d'eni aiye mbo?  
 Awon Akowe Igbimọ kékéké nşerú abélẹ nwon mbà'lú jé  
 Bèè, b'a sì fẹ gbẹsan l'ara wón, Ijoba 'ò jé!

*Ìdààmú Páàdì* (p 2)

Yunusa: Páàdì Mínkáílù  
 All and sundry  
 Both the rich and the poor in the community  
 Have sent us to you  
 You too should also consider the state of things in the town  
 The young and the old becomes a sudden workers  
 Those whose father cannot boast of having two thousand  
 Suddenly become revered persons in society  
 And start carrying cash all about the town  
 Somebody that has never worked before  
 Somebody who never leaves the house at any time  
 Somebody whose name has not been heard anywhere  
 Where did he get the money to become the heroes of the  
 people?  
 The junior civil servants are corrupt and perpetrate evils in the  
 community  
 And if we want to punish them, the government will no permit  
 us.

Yunusa's address in the above excerpt meets the four strategies required for achieving the goals of persuasion. The four strategies, according to Herrick (1997:13) are argument, appeal, arrangement, and aesthetics. Verbal irony employed as defence mechanism is indeed a planned discourse. Yunusa's speech can be seen in the light of this. The author has deployed the use of verbal irony as a defence mechanism for defence. Yunusa's speech, as a planned discourse/speech, is carefully crafted for advocacy, persuasion for his premeditated plan to deceive Páàdì and other people as if his desire to rid their community of corruption is genuine. The irony of the case is that he is not a saint but a rogue, the treasury looters, one of the master-minds of the robbery attack on the community's money and the death of some innocent persons that he is talking about, whose activities the committee to be set up is intended to investigate and expose. With this irony, it is clear that Yunusa, though the secretary of



the committee is going to frustrate the efforts of the committee. What is not clear to the readers is how or by what means.

Another instance of verbal irony as defence mechanism and for rhetorical purpose is found in Oládèjọ̀ Òkédìjì's *Réré Rún*. Láwúwo tries to justify himself on the reason for rejecting the service of a lawyer in the labour union's case with their employer. It is Láwúwo's over-confidence and belief in the Yorùbá philosophy that ; 'Òtító ni yóò lékè' (only the truth shall prevail) that makes him reject the services of a lawyer in the pursuit of the labour union's case. He believes that since they are pursuing the right and the true cause, God will surely fight for them, without considering the present dispensation of influence and whom you know in the high place. He gives his argument for the rejection of the money thus:

Láwúwo: A kó nii rojò kí wọn tóó dá a ni? Ohun tí mo bá fi ẹ̀ wọn,  
sé wọn ó sọ. Wọn kò si ní fowó bo èmi nàà lènu...  
Emí mò pé orí òdodo ni mo dúró lé, ọwọ̀ mí sì mó.  
Omi tí a bá dà sí eyin lára kì í mó eyin lára.  
*Réré Rún.*(p39)

Are we not supposed to state our case before the judgment?  
And they will declare my offence. And I too will be allowed  
to talk...  
I know I am standing for the truth, and my hands are clean.  
No evil will happen to me.

It is an example of verbal irony for defence. The irony in his resolution is that, even though he had clearly planned his defence strategy he never had the opportunity to plead his case as he had determined before the unexpected malady takes over him.

In *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, there is an instance of verbal irony. For example, Akínkúnlé, a cousin to Íyálóde, thinks that he should inform her about his journey to the village to visit his sick child. Therefore, he goes to Íyálóde's house very early in the morning to do this but she accuses him of disturbing her so early in the morning. Later, she declares thus:

Íyálóde: Kíni ó kàn mí pèlú ọmọ ọlọmọ,  
Mélòó ni emi na bí- Amúnironú,  
Èmi kò mọ ohun tí mo fi ẹ̀ Elédùwà  
Sùgbọ̀n kò burú, ohun tí à á ẹ̀ kù.  
Kí ọ̀n mú òkè Rẹ̀ lówó lóhun,  
Kí emi na mú ilẹ̀ lówó níhin,  
Ohun tí n' máa fojú ẹ̀rú rí,  
A dá gbogbo ayé ní agara,  
Gbogbo ẹ̀rú tí mo bá fowó mi rà,

Ó dájú, wọn kò kúkú gbọdò bímọ.  
 Èyí tí ó bá lóyún nínú àwọn omidan,  
 Orun alákeji ni yíó ti bí i.  
 Èrúkúnrin mi tì ó bá sì fẹ̀ yàwó  
 Ànàbẹ̀rí ni bí ajá Ògún, ọ̀gán! Bẹ̀ ni.  
 Sẹ̀ mo ti òkó wọn lógbón ti pé diẹ̀,

*Èfúnṣetán Aníwùrà*(pp 9-10).

Ìyálóde:           What concerns me about other people's children?  
 How many do I have- just to make me  
 feel depressed.  
 I don't know my offence to God  
 To have rendered me childless...  
 It's not yet bad; there is still a way out,  
 Let God be in heaven over there  
 I will also be on earth here  
 I will make sure that my slaves smell pepper  
 Everybody will feel the heat  
 Every slave bought with my money  
 Surely must not have children  
 Whosoever gets pregnant among the female slaves?  
 Will have to deliver the baby in heaven  
 And a male slave that gets married  
 Will equally have his head cut off from his neck!  
 I have been dealing with them for some time

Akínkúnlé's request warrants the above response of Ìyálóde , who wondered why she should be informed and why he had to come so early just because of a sick child . Therefore, Ìyálóde uses the opportunity to justifies herself for her perceived callousness at different levels through virtuperations . It is a verbal irony for self defence which also covers the way she disregards the elders's plea on behalf of Akínkúnlé, who claims the responsibility for Adétutù's pregnancy and the way she has been killing her slaves at will.

### 4.3 Tragic irony

Tragic irony is the contradiction in the words and action of a character. In such discrepancies and contradictions there is a display of ignorance and naïvety of character and these are what lead to a sorrowful and the bloody oucomet of the character's actions or inaction. It occurs also when things are done the way they are supposedto be done and yet the result is tragedy orwhen things are not done the way we expected.

There are instances of tragic irony in Ògúnníran's *Ààrè-Àgò Arikúyèrí*. For example, the death of Ògúnríndé' Ajé's three children is a tragic incident. Two things make this incident a tragic one. First, the death of anyone in the family is not expected, not to talk of three children at a time. Even if a person has ten children, losing three of them in one fell swoop the same day is calamitous; a great tragedy for that family. Second, the tragedy of losing three children is compounded by yet another tragedy, the death or murder of Fátólá by Ògúnríndé Ajé himself, all happening within the same family. The irony in all these tragic incidents is the fact that the tragedies occur after Ògúnríndé Ajé had offered sacrifices to appease his head (*Ori*). Among the Yorùbá, it is believed that propitiation of one's head brings great fortunes to that person. However, in the case of Ògúnríndé Ajé, it is death and calamity that he got in return.

Ògúnríndé' Ajé has good reason to react. His utterance shows that he does not have many children and probably does not have them on time; also the three children are males. After the death of the twins he declares:

Ààrè-Àgò: ...  
 Àà! b'ómọ ti pọn mí l'ójú to!  
 Ènikan tún n f'òbẹ èyin jẹ mi n'íṣu  
 Gbogbo ara ilé yìi dáràn.

Ààrè-Àgò: ...  
 Oh! How I suffered to have children  
 Somebody is still cheating on me  
 All the occupants of this house are in trouble.

This is a great tragedy, a deep and sorrowful incident. Ààrè-Àgò has been destabilised both physically and emotionally, he over-reacts, and the warrior in him overrides his intellect. He forgets that two wrongs can never make a right; Fátólá is named as the killer. Ààrè-Àgò, for lack of patience, could not investigate the matter further. This is a great mistake on his part and this paved way for another tragedy, Fátólá is killed. The action is sudden, spontaneous and dramatic. The dramatic in the Fátólá's tragic death is that Ààrè-Àgò acts in ignorance of the true situation of things. He does not know that he is working on a false template prepared for him by Asiyanbí because of her selfish and devilish motives that are borne out of jealousy. It is later detected during the judgement proceeding that Asiyanbí lied against her.

Ààrẹ-Àgò's shameful arrest is another tragic irony, after his few attempts of refusal to answer the call of Ògúnmólá. His last attempt to refuse the call is met with great opposition and attack from Ògúnmólá's soldiers. The irony here is in the shameful arrest of Ààrẹ-Àgò; a warlord is now subjected to humiliation of arrest to the extent that he is bound hands and feet and carried to Ògúnmólá's court for trial. The tragedy recorded here is so dramatic in the sense that the manner of arrest contradicts the position and the power (both physical and supernatural) of Ààrẹ-Àgò as a warlord.

Another instance of tragic irony in *Ààrẹ-Àgò Aríkúyerí* is the judgement pronounced by Basòrùn Ògúnmólá on the people that delivered the money for bribe to Basòrùn Ògúnmólá and the chiefs. They are sold out to other tribes very far from their domain, namely; the Fulani, Dahomey and Kutuwenji. The money realised from this is to be put in the town's treasury as declared by Basòrùn Ògúnmólá. The irony in this judgement is that those people would have thought they were doing a noble job as well as doing Ààrẹ-Àgò a favour, not knowing that by agreeing to go and deliver the bribe, they were digging their own graves. Their expectations are cut short. The playwright uses this aspect of the judgement to show the ironic landscape upon which the ironic behaviour of the chiefs is built. The action that is tailored towards thwarting the judgment of Ògúnrinde Ajé's case is designed for their tragic end. Ààrẹ-Àgò miscalculates, forgetting that nobody is above the law.

Ògúnmólá's judgement on Asiyanbí is another example of tragic irony, Ògúnmólá pronounces that Asiyanbí be killed at the market square as a deterrent to other women with the same habit of bitter jealousy. The irony in Ògúnmólá's judgement on Asiyanbí is that Asiyanbí would never think that she is going to die the same way as Fatólá whose death she facilitated through acrimony and lies. The judgement takes her by surprise, and now she also has to die.

Ààrẹ-Àgò's cowardly escape from committing honorific suicide is another tragic irony. The irony in his fleeing away instead of committing the honorific suicide is seen as he falls from his high and lofty position as a warrior, a noble man, to the status of a refugee in a foreign land.

In Fálétí's *Ìdààmú Páàdì*, the first example of the tragic irony is recorded in the way the plan to steal the project money fails. The drama behind the tragedy is seen in the strategy about the delivery of the money. It is planned that the delivery of the money be delayed so that it will not get to Sètílù, the treasurer, until towards the closing time

and that the money be brought in cash and not in cheque . Setilu is not aware of their scheme, although he complains about the mode of payment because he has envisaged that there may be problem in keeping such a huge amount of money in the office since there are no banking facilities in the town. The irony is seen in the conflict of interest in the two officials: the treasurer is interested in the safety of the project money, while the secretary is interested in how to make it easy for them to steal the same project money. The tragic irony here is used for suspense, as the reader is waiting to know whose plan will succeed among the two. What is dramatic in the impending tragedy is seen in how Setilu is worried about the safety of the money and how he comes out with a scheme , to send the money home through his wife or to Mínkáílù's house , for safety. The tragic irony here produces ironic suspense because one will be eager to know the next move.

The author also uses tragic irony as a secret communion to heighten the suspense because not all the characters in the play know where the project money is kept. It is shared only between three characters : Setilu, Saratu and Mínkáílù , and the readers. The thieves do not know. Therefore, it is not just a surprise for them, but it is also a tragedy. The council-workers-turned-armed-robbers are taken aback with the absence of the money in the safe. This is tragedy for them; their strategic plan has failed but this result in entertainment for the readers who are already aware of the ironic outcome of the drama. The irony is that the thieves do not in any way expect disappointment about the location of the money; they could never think that somebody can be smarter than they. Therefore they are confused about the quick and sudden disappearance of the money kept in the safe at least in the presence of one of them. It is so painful that they argue among themselves:

Ibrahimu: Akòwé, Yunusa, şeb'ó o sọ pé nwọn gb'ówó  
òhun wá'lẹ̀ yì loni ni?

Yunusa: Emi fun'ra mi ni mo mú àwọn tí nńwọn gb'ówó  
òhun wá wá sihin:  
S'ojú mi bayi ló sì fi kó o sínú aríyàràdògiri---  
Egbèrún lónà ogún pọn-un.

Salu: Èé tí wá jé ?  
Yunusa: Kàyéfi gbàà ni. Níbo l'ó gbé e si?...  
*Ìdààmú Páàdi*(pp24).

Ibrahimu: Yunusa, the secretary, did you not say the money was brought to this town today?

Yunusa: I personally took those who brought the money to this office and he put the money in the safe in my presence.....  
Twenty thousand pounds.

Salu: How come?

Yunusa: It's a surprise indeed. Where did he keep it?

Seṭilu is wounded but the money is not found . Another instance of tragic irony is that the thieves think that Seṭilu is dead . Mínkáílù is coming in anger to challenge Seṭilu on why his house should be the best place to keep such huge amount of money . Saratu and Mínkáílù meet with another unexpected tragic situation ; the supposed dead body of Seṭilu is on the floor . Mínkáílù could not ask any question again but to attend to Seṭilu immediately.

Also, in the same Fálétí's *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù* there is also an instance of tragic irony. The police mentioned the detective powder as if it is a special or a scientific powder, clinically designed to expose the offenders as a device to arrive at the dramatic and the tragic irony. However, the irony is that nobody suspects that it is just the normal powder designed in order to bring about the ironic platform on which the system of the investigation will be built. Inspector Adégboyè's announcement of the use of the detective powder cannot be trivialised in any form. He declares:

Adégboyè: E seun, Yesufu ó lọ s'Ibadan, yìò lọ mú àtíkè kan wá lḡhun.  
Àtíkè ònmò

Adégboyè: Thank you, Yesufu will go to Ibadan, to bring a certain powder,  
Detective powder.

*Ìdààmú Páàdì*(p 66)

The secret of thiso-called detective powder is not revealed until when Adégboyè explains the secret behind its usage to Yesufu who is also in the dark with regard to the function of the powder;

Yesufu: E gbọ ná, Ọgá. Nígbàt'ẹ ti'ẹ ti fi àtíkè ònmò s'ara  
gbogbo kini wònyí, kil'a tún wa dúró sihin fún?  
K'a máa lọ l'ò kù!

Adégboyè: Wá nihin, kò ye ọ ni. Sé o rí àtíkè t'ò n wo yi, àtíkè iró  
nu-un, sé o mò pé bí àwọn aṣebi bá gbó pé òògùn kan wa t'ó  
lè fi íṣẹ ibi wọn hàn, gbogbo ọna ni nwọn ó wa láti ba òògùn

náà jẹ. Nitori náà, máa múra ijà sílé dáadáa.  
*Ìdààmú Pààdì*(p 83)

Yesufu: Listen, sir. Since you have sprinkled the detective powder on all these materials, then what are we waiting here for ?  
We ought to be going!

Adégboyè: Come here, you don't understand. This powder is a fake one, You know that, if criminals hear that something can be used to expose their evil deeds, they will definitely look for ways to destroy it. So, be prepared very well for battle.

Suspense is a formidable strategy in drama for entertainment purpose. The playwright's ability to do this puts the drama in its proper perspective for suspense and entertainment purposes. It is an instance of irony for the thieves because what they think that if they do will prevent them from being trapped, caught and exposed eventually turns out to be the trap for them to be trapped, caught and exposed finally. They never realise that the powder is used as bait for them to be caught just as bait is used to catch fish. The example of irony here corroborates a Yorùbá proverb that says 'Ogbón ju agbára lọ' (wisdom is greater than power). Their hope is shattered and their expectation is cut short. They are caught right where they are trying to shake off the powder from the items in Sètílu's office.

From *Ìdààmú Pààdì Minkálù* again, Yunusa and Ibrahim conspire against King Jubrilu and he is detained by the police, even though he does not know anything about the case. Rafilu, a younger sister to Salu, tries to play her role by counselling her brother against his suspicious behaviour and the cultist group in which he is involved in recent times. All her efforts to see that Salu quit the armed robbery gang fails. The irony is that Rafilu is killed by one of the armed robbers in order to prevent her from exposing them to the general public as she has threatened them. Irony at this point leads to great tragedy for King Jubirilu who becomes childless at his old age. He laments his tragedy:

Jubirilu: Pààdí Minkalu!  
È tún sọ pe Rafilu kú!  
È'ò si tun mọ 'bi ti Salu wọ lọ!  
Kil'ẹ wa fẹ ki n'maa gbé 'le aiye ẹ?

Ojọ ikú mi kù dèdè  
Ojọ ikú mi ò pé mò...  
Pààdì Minkalu... *Ìdààmú Pààdì* (p 78)

Jubirilu: Paadi Minkailu!  
 You also said Rafilu is dead!  
 And that you don't know where Salu has gone to!  
 What then should I be living for?  
 Death is no longer far from me  
 For me, the day of death is not far...  
 Paadi Minkailu! ...

In the Yorùbá culture, it is a tragedy for a child to die while the parents are still alive. It is even more painful and worrisome for a child to be lost or missing. In fact, these kinds of situation are what everybody prays against. It is tragic irony that this particular incident happens to King Jubirilu and his wife who lost two children at a go, even at their old age. One is dead and one is missing as he himself declares that death is the ultimate end of an experience like this:

Jubirilu: Ọmọ mi kú, ọmọ mi nù,  
 Mo si tun nf'agba ara ja lámba:  
 B'okùn ẹmi yi bi ipèti,  
 Nigbawo náà ni 'ò ni já,  
 Nigba ibanujẹ ba ti r'ibi  
 P'àgọ si l'ọkan ẹni

*Ìdààmú Páàdì (pp 78-79)*

Jubiril: My child died, my child is missing,  
 And I am running helter skelter in my old age:  
 Even if the cord of life is so enduring  
 When will it not cut?  
 When sorrow has found a place to reside in one's heart

As Mínkáílù consoles Jubirilu over the death of his daughter , so he also encourages Saratu over the health of her husband that is still in the hospital (pp 78-79). It is a dramatic irony in the sense that we do not even see Mínkáílù officiating as the Catholic priest in the church but only as the crisis manager throughout in the play.

Sètílú is discharged from the hospital and he is brought to Mínkáílù's house to stay in his guest room for a while till the end of the investigation that will end very soon. The police arrest Salu later, Salu is killed by an unknown person. When Sètílú is presented as the last witness against the robbery gang , Yunusa kills Sètílú and himself at the same time. Páàdì Mínkáílù loses two members of his church consecutively. The irony is that both the innocent and the criminals die. Those that remain have their own share of sorrow in abundance. The unstable situation and confusion that emanate from the armed robbery and the murder cases cause great frustration for Mínkáílù .



Hence, the tragic irony in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Minkáílù* can be likened to the Yorùbá proverbs; *'Egbìnrin òtẹ̀, bá a tí ñ pa òkan ni òkan tún ñ rú'*. (A complex issues, as you settle one, so another one emerges). The playwright, through the political and cultural contexts, presents the tragic irony and ironic situation prevalent among the government workers to achieve entertainment and stylistic purposes.

In *Réré Rún*, the tragic irony is presented on two platforms as explained earlier in this section. For example, the meeting between Lávúwo and the Onímògún-in-council presents a dramatic scene for tragic irony. Onímògún and his chiefs have set traps for the labour leader. Lávúwo is invited to a meeting. It is a meeting that is organised for two purposes. The first is to settle Lávúwo by giving him a bribe so that they can destroy his credibility as union leader in order for them to have their way. The second is to execute the alternative arrangement so that if Lávúwo refuses to take the bribe, the chiefs will set the workers against him and choose Ìdòwú in his place as the new labour union leader. They so much believe in their plans and are happy when Lávúwo gives a nod, acknowledging the gift of a house and car from the Onímògún's cabinet. For example, when he is told to check the residential house offered him as gift, after checking, he says:

Lávúwo: Ó tẹ̀ mí lórùn, ó dùn mọ̀ mí nínú. Ẹ̀ ẹ̀ seun.

*Réré Rún, (p 50)*

Lávúwo: Thank you. I am happy and satisfied.

When he is asked to go and check the car of his choice in the market, and also told that the maintenance of the car, the service of a driver and the fuelling of the car are free, he replies:

Lávúwo: Irú oore tí ẹ̀ se mí yìí sọ̀wọ̀n, ó jọ̀ mí lójú ju bí mo ti lẹ̀ máa wí lọ.

*Réré Rún, (p 50)*

Lávúwo: This is a rare privilege, I really appreciate it beyond expression.

Lávúwo's positive response in words and action to the council's generosity sounds satisfactory to them as it signifies consent and success of their mischievous plans. However, the irony in the drama begins to unfold when Lávúwo introduces another dimension to the issue. He wants the largesse to be extended to all the workers as well, not to him alone. He says;

Lávúwo: Gbígà tí mo gbà owó nàà lówọ̀ yin, kí ẹ̀ lẹ̀ ráyè yanjúu ti

àwọn ọmọlẹyìn mi ni. Bí ẹ bá fún àwọn nàà ni gbogbo ǹnkan tí ẹ fún mi, dandan ni kí èmi nàà gba t̀emi: taỳotaỳo ni ǹ bá sì fi l̀oọ jíṣẹ́ fún ẁon...

Mo kọ àb̀èt̀èl̀è yin. Mo sì ǹ bè̀èr̀è fún iyípadà rere fún àwọn Ọ̀ṣiṣẹ́.E t̀èt̀è mójútó o wéréwéré. Àìjẹ̀ bè̀è... Àìdà ẁon l̀óhùn lásikò... a ṣ̀èṣ̀è bè̀r̀è ni, diẹ̀ ni ẹ̀ t̀i rí.

*Réré Rún, (p 54)*

Láwúwo: I accepted the money, so that you will be able to settle the workers also. If you settle them the same way you have settled me, of course I would definitely deliver your message to them...

I reject your bribe. And I want a good change for the workers which must be done in earnest. If not... failure to do so..

..... we have just started, you've not seen anything.

The irony also consists in Láwúwo's ignorance about the presence of a photographer in a corner of the venue of the meeting who has been taking his pictures at every stage of his supposed consent. These pictures are later used against him before the worker's union. Láwúwo's naivety leads to another crisis in the labour union, as Bódúndé and Adéníyì accuses him of taking bribe from the council ; they present the pictures of Láwúwo while at the council's meeting as evidence.

*(Bódúndé kó f̀otò jáde.)*

Adéníyì: Àwòráan ta niyí, ọ̀gá Láwúwo? Ta ní ǹ mutí nínúèyí?  
È tún wo èyí, ta ni ǹ d̀òbálè? Ta ni ẁon ǹ nawọ̀ ilé sí nínú èketa yí?  
Owó ni ẁon ǹ kó lée yín l̀owọ̀ yí, àbí àgbàdo? È ṣ̀e lè máa puró  
ojúkojú bá yí?

*Réré Rún (p 85).*

Adéníyì: Whose picture is this, Láwúwo? Who is drinking alcohol in this? Also look at this one, who is prostrating? To whom are they pointing the house in this third picture? You are being given money here, or is it grains of corn? You can't continue to tell lies after all the evidences.

Láwúwo is surprised. He is told that all the workers already have the pictures and that the workers must have felt betrayed and dissappointed . The tricks and the tactics deployed on Láwúwo by the council chiefs cause conflict and confusion with in the labour force and an ironical twist in the cordial relationship and confidence between Láwúwo and the workers . This irony is a strong build -up to the tragedy that is to befall not only Láwúwo as the union leader, but also the entire union.

Another example of tragic irony is the case of Morèniké and the money-doublers. Morèniké is duped by the supposed money-doublers, another tragic irony that is put in place to usher in Morèniké's tragic death. She wants to do this to help her husband to raise money to settle the lawyer's fee on the case that is in court. The irony is in the fact that her good intention turns into a catastrophe for her husband and herself as well. She commits suicide by taking overdose of the pain-relieving tablets. The tragic irony is also seen in Lávúwo's ignorance about Morèniké's condition. He assumes that his wife is sleeping because of the sedative effect of the pain-relieving drugs she has taken, but the author uses the sleep as signifier for death and Lávúwo as an ironic victim that keeps on acting in ignorance of the situation on ground. The suspense created through Lávúwo's speech and reaction about Morèniké's sleeping condition brings the tragic irony to the limelight. Lávúwo warns his guest like this:

Lávúwo: È máa rọra, Morèniké n sùn...  
 Oògùn tó lò un, yòò kún lorun diẹ, àmọ́ bó bá tají wàì  
 lorun ó daa lójú rẹ. *Rẹrẹ Rún, (p 83)*

Lávúwo: Please be careful, Morèniké is sleeping...  
 The drug she took make her sleep, when she  
 wakes up she may not sleep again.

Tragic irony is a good device to achieve suspense. The author creates the suspense so as to increase the tragic tension in the play. It stirs up actions in drama and causes the reader to concentrate. This helps the reader to participate in the drama by projecting and predicting what could be the next action in relation to the already created suspense. It is indeed a tragic irony because Lávúwo's struggle for the betterment of the workers is jeopardized. Morèniké's death is also another tragedy and his hope of having children is shattered. Everything turns tragic. Lávúwo's tragic condition automatically disqualifies him from being a hero leader. His condition marks the climax of the catastrophe and the hopes of the workers are shattered. It is a tragic irony because the result and outcome of their struggle do not match the zeal with which they start out at the beginning of the play. They are back to zero level with the working condition worse than before.

The tragic irony takes another shape in *Efúnṣétan Aníwúrà*. The killing of Ògúnjìnmí, a palm-fruit tapper in the farmland of Chief Ọlátínwọ that share s

boundary with that of Ìyálóde , is so tragic . Based on Yorùbá living , a palm-fruit tapper is not a thief but a hired labourer . So in the case of Ògúnjìnmí , he is hired by Látińwọ to work for him in his farm. Ìyálóde does not investigate the matter before taking the law into her own hands and ordering that Ògúnjìnmí be beaten mercilessly and later be brought to her. Ògúnjìnmí is beaten to the point that he faints and dies. The tragic irony is that as pathetic as the case is and though the chiefs deliberate on it, they could not reach a conclusion, therefore, nothing is done to Ìyálóde to challenge her for her impunity . Ìyálóde is too powerful and feared by all. The gravity of the tragedy is described by Ògúnńiyi ;

Ògúnńiyi: ..... Ọrọ̀ ibàńújẹ̀ nì ọ̀rọ̀ nà jákẹ̀jádò ilú yí. Àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ Ògúnjìnmí aláńńibaba; iyàwó rẹ̀ dì opó. Ó dì pé kí àwọ̀n ọ̀mọ̀ rẹ̀ máá yojú sí ilé onílẹ̀ láti jeun. Ó dì pé kí a máá gbá wọ̀n lówọ̀ sẹ̀hìn nídì. àwọ̀n ọ̀nẹ̀ olóńjẹ̀. Sùgbón eni tí a kò le mú, Ọlórún ọ̀ba nì à á fí í fún.

*Efúnşetan Aníwúra (p 34)*

Ògúnńiyi: It is sorrowful news throughout the town that Ògúnjìnmí's children become fatherless and his wife is now a widow. Now, his children will be begging for food in the neighbourhood, others will now hold back their hands from the plates. But whom we cannot subdue we hand over to God.

The case of Adétutù who was murdered for being pregnant is different . It is tragic irony because Adétutù commits no criminal offence that could warrant death as the penalty but Ìyálóde , who has her own judicial immunity in her house , declares death as the punishment. The intervention of the elders in the case of Adétutù is a clear instance of irony. The irony consists in the fact that rather than bring respite, succour and pardon to the slave girl, it aggravates and provokes Ìyálóde Efunşetan the more to the extent that she orders immediate execution of the death sentence . She decides to kill Adétutù right in front of her house instead of the backyard previously chosen.

Another instance of tragic irony is found in the vengeance plan against Efunşetan by Itáwuyì. One would expect that Itáwuyì's plot will work on Efunşetan and that Àwẹ̀ró is going to succeed in carrying out the operation. One would also think that Itáwuyì will be able to kill Efunşetan as planned, but the irony consists in the fact that Efunşetan, through her supernatural power, detects the poison in the food, Àwẹ̀ró confesses their plans; the table turns against Àwẹ̀ró and she eventually eats the poison she has put inside Efunşetan's food. The death of the two slaves, Àwẹ̀ró and Itáwuyì, is

tragic and must have sent cold shivers down the spines of the other slaves in Ìyálóde's courtyard. The irony generated by the failure of the assassination plan for Ìyálóde and the failure of the charm is responsible for the tragedy and hopelessness of the slaves and anybody interested in the safety of the slaves. This is an example of tragic irony for tragic purpose, to show that the extent of the power of anyone is unpredictable because sometimes power may surpass power. The confidence in the efficacy of the failed charm is explained by Ìtáwuyì:

Ìtáwuyì: Oògùn tí à ñwí yí, gbàkan-gbọ̀n ni  
 Àgbá-ra-gbá èèdi ni.  
 Alágbára ni baba mi kí ó tó kú,  
 Ó ní agbádá iná kan tí ó ba ni lẹ̀rù  
 Agbádá yi máa ńgbe lọ sí sánmà keje,  
 Níbi tí ó ti máa ńgba agbára tirẹ̀.  
 Oògùn tí ó bá mú ti ibẹ̀ bọ̀,  
 Apá àjẹ kan kò lè ka a.  
 Òkan nínú àwọn oògùn na tí ó já mó mi lówó nìyí.  
 Bí mo bá fì májèlẹ̀ sí ońje. tán.  
 Ng ó wá di ìyá yi tí yìò fì jẹ́ ẹ̀ sá ni.  
 Kò sí iyèméjì nìbẹ̀, Kì í ẹ̀ òní ni mo ti ńlò ó.

*Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán Aníwúrà* (p 61)

Ìtáwuyì: This particular medicine is undoubtable...  
 My father was a powerful herbalist before his death  
 He had one firebrand agbádá that is awesome  
 This agbádá takes him to the seventh heaven,  
 Where he went to receive his own power no power of any witches  
 could match or suppress, the power of the medicine that he brought  
 from the place. This is one of the medicines that I inherited from  
 my father. After putting the poison in the food  
 then I will use another charm on Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán to make her eat the food.  
 No doubt about it, this is not my first time of using it.

The last days of Ìyálóde Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán are not only an irony of fate , but also tragically ironic . The Ìyálóde is presented by the author in a degrading state :  
*Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán ró àkísà , ó ńgbálẹ̀, àwọn ènìyàn ń kojá . Látòòsà dúró ní kọ̀rọ̀ kan , ó ńyọ̀ Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán wò .* (Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán is sweeping with tattered wrapper tied to her waist and people are passing by . Látòòsà stands in a corner, watching her). This ironic situation that brings her final tragedy is best described by Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán in her own words thus:

Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán: Afi ígba tí wọ̀n sọ mí da báyí;  
 Mo wá di ẹ̀dun-arinlẹ̀.  
 Ìyálóde ilú Ìbàdàn,  
 Èmi naa ló de ni ń fowó kómí ẹ̀ran!  
 Ibi tí Látòòsà bá mi dé rẹ̀ é o!

*Ẹ̀fúnṣẹ́tán Aníwúrà*, (p76)

Èfúnṣetán: At last they succeeded in destroying me,  
 I became nothing,  
 I, the Ìyálóde of Ibàdàn,  
 Now, I park goat faeces with my bare hands!  
 This is the situation Látòòsà has brought me to!

The Ìyálóde of Ibàdàn has now fallen from grace to grass and this is the tragic end of the life and times of Èfúnṣetán Aníwùrà, the hitherto powerful chief, slave owner and a woman leader. It is a tragic end for her but freedom for her slaves. The message of the author to his readers and society at large is very clear, as one Yorùbá proverb says: *‘Ìgbà ò tó lọ bí òréré, ayé ò tó lọ bí òpá ìbọn. Sàà làá ní, ènì kan ò layé. Ki onikálukú ó rọra máa se.’* (The season is not as straight as the road; life is not as straight as a gun; Nobody owns a lifetime, you can only have a season. So, let everyone be careful). Èfúnṣetán cannot be in charge forever. She was in charge for a season, the season that passed out in tragedy; and the irony is a tragic one because it is a change from glory to shame. The tragic end of Ìyálóde Èfúnṣetán connotes that power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The verbal irony, ironic elements in situations and actions, ironic suspense and ironic surprise identified in these texts are devices used to contrive tragic irony projects towards the tragic end that has been destined for the plays. Frye (1957:285) notes that “As tragedy moves over towards irony, the sense of inevitable events begins to fade out, and the sources of catastrophe come into view”. The above statement is a clear description of the tragic ironic upon which the foundation in the texts are built. In *Ìdààmú Páàdì Minkáìlù*, as the interrogation continues with Yunusa and Ibrahim and as the use of detective powder is mentioned, the culprits are sure that there is no way of escape for them and tragedy is unavoidable. In *Ààrẹ-Àgò Aríkúyẹrí*, after the first hearing of Ogunrinde Aje, after his effort to give bribe has failed, and he has heard Ogunmola’s judgement on others, he is sure that tragedy is unavoidable. He takes to his heel and runs for his life. In *Èfúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, Ìyálóde’s slaves were released in her presence, she was captured and bound, humiliated to the level of a slave in Látòòsà’s palace. She is sure that there is no way of escape for her and tragedy is unavoidable. In *Rẹrẹ Rún*, since the workers have seen that Morèniké (Láwúwo’s wife) is dead and the pathetic condition of Láwúwo, the workers already know their fate. They are sure that there is no way of escape for them and tragedy is

unavoidable, so they go back to work sorrowfully as commanded by Ìdòwú , the newly appointed labour union leader. In other words, when all the possible avenues have been explored for possible change and the change does not come into view the remaining option is to face the ironies of life.

#### 4.4 Irony of Fate

Irony of fate is when life situations and circumstances present contrasts that arise naturally which are unquestionable because they go beyond the scrutiny of human reasoning. Different types of irony and the ironic are employed by the authors of the selected texts. Of particular attention is the irony of fate which finds its relevance in Yorùbá worldview. The Yorùbá strongly believe that to occupy a leadership position is good and prestigious. They also believe that there are challenges attached to every leadership position, as privilege entails responsibility. For instance, in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù*, Mínkáílù finds himself in a horrible situation , after Salu's confession of being a member of the occultic group as well as his involvement in the killing of Sètìlù, the council treasurer. This connotes that uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. Leadership position is honourable but it comes with greater responsibility and trouble of different kinds . The irony in Mínkáílù's appointment into the council's board, based on his spiritual placement in the town , which should bring honour and prestige, now brings frustration and dilemma for Mínkáílù . Páàdì Mínkáílù's involvement in the council is good, he is chosen as somebody that will definitely help to sanitise and purge the council from its corrupt practices but the case of the Èjìgbò community fails to establish this . Mínkáílù tries to prevent the stealing of the project money by his prompt action (out of anger ) and also struggles to save Sètìlù's life but Sètìlù eventually dies. Yes, frustration is expected. He had anticipated it, hence his reluctance in accepting the post. But the irony in it is that much as he tries, he fails in the assignment.

Also, in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù*, we have another instance of an irony of fate. The death of the children while the parents are still alive is bad not to even talk of children dying at the parent's old age . It is an irreparable loss and a bad omen in the Yorùbá worldview and cultural contexts . This, as we have seen from King Jubirilu's experiences, can be traced to irony of fate. According to him, the few children he has die while he is still alive:

Jubirilu Àyípo àyípo n'ile aiye!

Nibi tẹ'lẹkun gbe nfi gbogbo ẹnu sunkun  
 Nibe l'alawada gbe nd'erin paḷe nibikan  
 Oko ọlọko kú, oko ọlọko tún jí  
 Tal'òòògùn ti yio ba mi jí  
 Rafilu ọmọ temi?  
 Ogbó dé, ọmọ ti mo bi kò to nkan  
 Gbogbo wọn ti lọ...  
 Ìpàdé d'òdò Èdùmare  
 Hùn-ùn...

*Ìdààmú Páàdì* (p 82)

Jubirilu: Life is not static, always turning round and round  
 Where the sorrowful are crying with mouths wide open  
 There also gathered together are the joyous who laugh heartily  
 Someone's husband dies and rises again,  
 Who is the doctor that will re/vive Rafilu, my own daughter?  
 Now I am old, my children are few and all have died  
 Till we meet before the Almighty God...  
 Hun-un...

The tragedy that befalls King Jubrili is not something that any human being can explain and nobody can find the right word to console him ; it is a serious situation. He concludes that he can only know the reason behind the tragedy that befalls him at his old age when he meets with Olódùmarè , his creator. His conclusion confirms irony of fate as the origin of his tragedy . Oládiípò's assertion (2005:4-5) corroborates this:

Human life is an unusual undertaking because it is not fully comprehensible and it is uncertain...The Yorùbá believe that human beings are fully in control of their destinies even though they believe that an individual has a crucial role to play in directing her own affairs. After all, there are serious situations over which they do not seem to have control- hopeless situation, so to say<sup>3</sup>

The connotative meaning of this tragic incident is that destiny forms the bedrock for all the tragic occurrences in *Ìdààmú Páàdì Minkáìlù*.

As said earlier, that irony of fate , according to Yorùbá worldview can be traced to the Yorùbá belief in predestination . Abimbólá (1976:113) gives a clear explanation on predestination based on Yorùbá worldview. He says;

Predestination among the Yorùbá is known by different names. Sometimes it is known as *àyànmó*(choice) or *ìpín* (predestined share) or *kádàrá* (divine share for man) or *ìpòrí* (inner head ). Whatever the name by which



predestination is known . It is always associated with Orí (the inner head ). It is believed that the Symbol of free choice is Orí (inner head) which everyone received in heaven. A man's destiny, that is to say his success or failure in life, depends to a large extent on the type of head he chose in heaven.

Therefore, after a lot of criticisms and arguments over a case, one will have to resort to fate and submit to the workings of his Orí (the inner head), the choice of Orí in the house of Àjàlá- the maker of heads.<sup>4</sup>

Instances of of irony of fate also abound in Ògúnníran's *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò Aríkúyerí*. Irony of fate in *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* also reflects the Yorùbá belief and thought that, to be hardworking is good and it is well appreciated but destiny (*Orí*) has the final say in one's success and blessing . The submission of Chief Jagùn in the beginning of the play about Èṣù's poverty -stricken condition after so much toil and hard work is an instance of irony of fate based on his choice of Orí (the inner head), it is the foreknowledge and the anchor to which the other instances of irony of fate in the play stand. Jagun comments that:

Jagun: Hun-ùn-ùn! Eṣù Èṣù kọ-ọ!  
Hun---un—un! Eṣù Èṣù kọ-ọ  
Kì i kúkú s'ejó Èṣù rárá  
Àyànmọ́ l'ó n ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀ ojàrẹ̀  
Sẹ̀ ẹ̀ni t'ó gbón,  
Orí rẹ̀ ló pé kó gbón;  
Èyàn tí kò gbón  
Orí 'ẹ̀ l'ó ní ó gò ju 'su lọ  
B'aa m'ewúré nílá s'onigbòwọ́ ifá,  
Ifá ní n gbewúré  
Kádàrá kò gba nkànkán.  
B'aa mágùntàn bọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ s'onigbòwọ́ ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀,  
Ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ là n s'apónlé fún,  
Kádàrá kò gba nkànkán.  
À bá kúkú bọ 'rí  
Ká má wulẹ̀ bọ 'òògùn;  
Nítorí oògùn ló l'ojọ̀ kan ipónjú,  
Orí a gbé w'áyé ló l'ojọ̀ gbogbo  
Ẹ̀ni tí 'ó s'ẹ̀bọ k'ó máa s'ẹ̀bọ  
Ẹ̀ni tí 'o s'òògùn, k'o máa s'òògùn  
Ìṣẹ̀bọ, ìṣòògùn  
B'aa ti w'aye wá rí l'áá rí  
Àìgbón Èṣù kó  
Eṣù kádàrá 'ẹ̀ ni.

*Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* (p 4)

Jagun: Not Esu's fault

Not Esu's fault at all  
 But the workings of destiny  
 For the wise ones  
 It is to the praise of their destiny  
 For the foolish ones  
 The destiny caused their foolishness to be greater than  
 Yam  
 When we take a big goat to appease Ifá  
 Ifá will willingly accept it,  
 When we take a big sheep to appease òpèlè,  
 It is òpèlè we appreciate,  
 Destiny will not make any requests  
 We should just make sacrifice to Orí  
 And also neglect medicine  
 Medicine is only useful on a rare trouble situation  
 But Orí is in charge all the time  
 Those who like sacrifice should continue to make sacrifice.  
 Those who prefer medicine should continue to do medicine.  
 Whether sacrifice or medicine  
 It is what we are destined to be on earth that we live to become

The above is an example of a life full of irony of fate with a philosophical undertone. It is an example of irony of fate in which the experience of man in life does not mean that man is indolent, but it is his destiny that works in contradiction to his expected reward of hard work. Jagun's submission shows that Èṣù's choice of Orí (the inner head), that is responsible for his abject poverty even with evidence of hardwork. He adds that there is no solution to any issue pertaining to destiny, which is in line with man's choice of Orí (inner head); only the gods can accept sacrifice; Orí (inner head) *orkádàrà* (divine share for man) does not need any appeasement. Therefore, Èṣù's predicament, though unknown to him is as a result of his choice.

The ironic outcome of Èṣù's condition will now be applicable to Ògúnrindé's situation. When things work out well for man, they make sacrifice to thank their Orí (the inner head), so as to record more success. It is this Yorùbá worldview of showing gratitude that prompts Ògúnrindé Ajé to make propitiation to his own Orí (the inner head), after recording so many successes of conquest from battles. The playwright builds Ògúnrindé Ajé's misfortune on the Yorùbá worldview about *àyànmó* (choice) or *ipín* (predestined share). Dasylyva (1988) refer to *àyànmó* as 'that which is chosen and sticks', Ironically, the steps taken by Ògúnrindé Ajé does not work, showing that, no matter how much one tries, the destiny in line with one's choice of Orí (the inner head) will still prevail. Ògúnrindé Ajé's situation is an other instance of irony of fate

because it is after he has made sacrifice to his Orí (the inner head), that he records the death of his three children in one day. Based on the above philosophical stand, one can conclude that it all happened to Ògúnrindé Ajé according to the destiny he has chosen from heaven even before he was born; when coming down to earth. Therefore, irony of fate is a sharp contrast between human intention and the actual result since the choice is already made by man.

In Ìṣòlá's play *Eḡúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, the Ìyálóde Eḡúnṣetán's barrenness and the consequence of childlessness is a clear example of irony of fate. This is because only God grants or gives the blessing of 'child' to a person. She accuses the Almighty God for being cruel in his dealing with her, when one can actually say that her childlessness can be traced to her choice of Orí (the inner head). However, she laments as if God only should be held responsible:

Eḡúnṣetán: ...Ṣùgbón ríró ni tí ènìyàn  
 Ṣíṣe m̀be lówó Ọlórún Ọba  
 Èmi kò mọ ohun tí mo fi ṣe Elédùwà  
 Tí ó fi fọmọ lá mi lójú bayi...

*Eḡúnṣetán Aníwúrà* (p 9)

Eḡúnṣetán: ...But man proposes  
 God disposes  
 I don't know my offence to God  
 To have rendered me childless....

Eḡúnṣetán's expression of her condition connotes many things. It connotes that God is wicked and he punishes without a cause. In Yorùbá culture, it is a stigma to be barren. The people place a high value on having children and, if there is none, it connotes that there will be nobody to continue her generation after her. Also, with the Yorùbá worldview, it connotes that she sees no reason for her childlessness. Despite Eḡúnṣetán's social status as Ìyálóde, her wealth and affluence, the irony of fate in her life is that she is childless. The author uses this irony to explain the reasons for her callousness, wickedness and her penchant for killing her slaves who dare to become pregnant.

An instance of irony of fate based on the Yorùbá worldview about destiny is also found in Ọládèjọ Òkédijí's *Rẹ́rẹ́ Rún*. The Yorùbá believe that nothing happens to a person without a reason and everything that happens to one in life can still be traced to one's fate or destiny. For example, Láwúwo recounts the tragic events in his genealogy and ties his present misfortune to his family background. He believes that hard work and selfless attitude, for him, is a good heritage from his parents. He

equally believes that toiling without gain is not a new thing because it has been so right from the time of his fathers. Therefore, his view towards his own personal matter is not borne out of a non-chalant and careless attitude as his wife (Morèniké) and his auntie (Wúràṣà) have taken it to be at the denotative level of meaning but as destiny has designed it for him, the selfless leadership traits has been in his family history. Hence, Láwúwò, the chief character, in the text talks about his pedigree as a hard-working family with yet very little or nothing to show for the industry at the end of the day:

Láwúwò: Ìsinmi! Ìsinmi! Mo sinmi irúu rẹ rí lójúú rẹ láti ojó ti o ti mo mi?  
 Mọlémọlé ni mi, mọlémọlé ni baba to bi mi.  
 Àjogúnbá ilée wa ni. Nínú ilé tí òmòlẹ e mọ,  
 méléó ni ti òun fúnraa rẹ níbẹ?  
 O gbàgbé pé ilé onílẹ ni babaa mi n mọ ní òkè ojà tí ogiri fi wó pa á? ... Ìyaa mi àbẹjẹ òkín, ó sìsẹ, sìsẹ bí eni máa kú, kí á ba lẹ máa rounje je! Sẹbí èyí ló dà á lóri rú, to fi bẹrẹ sí sínwín... Ìṣẹdálẹ ilé e wa ni, ká máa sìsẹ, láiro wáhálà tó wà níbẹ, láiro nípa èrè gúnmó kan fún ara wa.

*Réré Rùn* (pp 41-42)

Láwúwò: ... Rest! Rest! Have I observed that kind of rest since you've known me? I am a builder, my father is a builder. It's our family work. Out of all the houses the builder builds, how many belongs to him. Have you forgotten that it was the collapsed building that killed my father beside the market? ... My mother, offspring of peacock, she worked tirelessly so that we the children can eat! She became insane owing to the burden of the hard work. ... It is common in our own lineage, to work without taking thought of the trouble involved, without expecting any gain or dividend for ourselves.

Láwúwò's explanation (rhetoric) to his wife about his own biodata and family history is full of ironies. For instance, he is a workaholic, he never rests, yet he has nothing to show for it in terms of property and good living standard. Like his father, he is a builder, who builds houses for others, yet, none is built for himself and neither did his father own a house. Furthermore as a builder, his father died under a collapsed building beside the market while building. His mother worked tirelessly so that the children can eat, yet they found it difficult to eat. More pathetic, and a case of irony of fate, is the fact that as hard working as Láwúwò's lineage is, they work tirelessly and they all died of the hazard of the job. In Yorùbá worldview, it is believed that what you know best to do may be the source of your death. This is well applicable

to Laww's lineage according to his account . Yorb has this saying that : 'Or s laago n k s' (clock dies at work). Therefore, what they know best to do happen to be the cause their destruction, as these Yorb proverbs confirms it that:

'Ik ogun n pakkanj  
Ik od n pmw  
Ik w n pkn  
Ik ara rre n pod  
w d b m n pd  
T'k n ya k lnu

Warriors die in the battle field  
Swimmers die in the river  
Beauty causes the death of peacock  
Fastidiousness causes the death of parrot.  
The trade a cutlass knows kills the cutlass.  
That of the hoe destroys its edge

With such an account as these, full of ironies, the author has prepared the readers well ahead that the workers' struggle for better working conditions and life more abound led by Laww, a union leader with family history of trials and failures and long list of unfavourable irony of fate is going to end in a deadlock, with no gains but many losses.

All the above examples stem out of irony of fate which connotes that the choice of Or (the inner head), by a person influences and determines what his lot will be here on earth. Even though, man would have forgotten the type of destiny chosen at the point of entrance, Yorb worldview is that everything will still work out in line with one's choice of destiny. Therefore, irony of fate reveals that there may be conflict between man's choice of Or (the inner head), and his desires later, while on earth. The irony and the ironic situations of life serves as a pointer to see predestination as responsible for the inexplicable experiences of man as they are presented in the tragic plays chosen for this study within the Yorb worldview.

#### **4.5 Irony of Character**

In this type of irony, a character acts or behaves in a way that is contradictory to expectation or exhibits the traits that are contrary to what is expected of him or her by the readers. Such traits include pretence, deceit, hypocrisy, greediness, bribery, conspiracy, treachery, anger, verbal expression, surprises and inappropriate behaviour. Examples are when a character pretends instead of being forthright or

straightforward, when a character is deceitful instead of being honest, hypocrite instead of being open, and greedy instead of being self satisfied. Any character showing any of these traits or characteristics can be said to be exhibiting an irony of character? Traits such as these are usually imposed on characters for entertainment and other stylistic effects because a drama should be dramatic enough in words and actions.

Instances of irony of character abound in Ògúnníran's *Ààrẹ̀-Àgò Arikúyerí*. For example, the way of life of Ààrẹ̀ -àgó is presented as a character that lacks the rudiments of home leadership even though he is an experienced warlord. He is displayed as somebody that lacks self-control. His tragic flaw is seen in the way he, with hot temper and anger, handles the crisis within his family setting. His lack of patience and wrong judgment lead him to committing murder. The judgement strips Ògúnrìndé Ajé naked from his honourable position and brings him down from his glorious height as a warlord. He sows the seed of discord among his wives during the time of sacrifice ceremony of his primordial head. He stands up to dance only when it gets to Fátólá's turn to chant *ràrà*. Fátólá outshines the other two wives because her *ràrà* chant is the best. Ògúnrìndé Ajé is so joyous and happy that he praises Fátólá and thanks his destiny for giving him such a beautiful, slim wife. The content of the *ràrà* chant by Ògúnrìndé Ajé shows his love and affection for her, as he appreciates Fátólá's body structure and her beauty:

Ajé: Obìnrin tèéré yẹ ọkọ rẹ n'íjọ ijó  
 Ọkọ-ọ Fátólá  
 Iwíndàmólá  
 Òsùmàrè yẹ'run dandan-an dan

Ori ni kúkú se ni  
 Taa l'áya tó pa'wó, ọkọ-ọ Fátólá  
 Olówó orí Àmòpé  
 Orí náà ló se ó pàdè-è-mi  
*Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* (p 19)

Ajé: Slim woman fits her husband on the dancing floor  
 Fátólá's husband  
 Iwíndàmólá  
 The rainbow fits the sky very well  
 It is one's (primordial) head that causes one  
 To have a beautiful wife, Fatola's husband  
 The husband of Àmòpé.

The one who pays Àmòpé's bride price  
It is this same (primordial) head that causes us to meet

Just after the incident, Asiyabí, filled with envy and jealousy, decides to kill Adépèlé's three children with poison and later declares that Fátólá is the culprit that has done it. The irony in Ògúnrindé Ajé's action is that he did not take time to investigate the matter even when the name of his beautiful and favourite wife is mentioned as the killer of the three children. It is clear in the course of the interrogation at Basòrun Ògúnmólá's palace that there are remote causes for Asiyabí's ulterior motive and action which, through patience, would have been brought to the fore before the case gets to the tragic level. Therefore, Asiyabí's confession is really a clue and another exposure of Ògúnrindé Ajé's character as a weakling. She describes her husband's character thus:

Asiyabí: A kúkú fẹ̀ràn ara wa dáadáa tẹ̀lé.  
bàbá wa nàà ló ba gbogbo rẹ̀ jẹ́...  
Bàbá wa ni ò kúkú gbọ̀n.  
òun lo pogun tó rógun,  
òun ló pòràn tó rọ̀ràn *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* (p 73)

Asiyabí: We have been good friends before  
Our husband spoilt the relationship  
Our husband lacks wisdom. He looks for trouble and  
has it in abundance.

Asiyabí's confession sheds light on the real situation and Ògúnrindé Ajé realises his mistake that could have been avoided. He sees the result of his impatience and his wrong response. He therefore confesses and laments Fátólá's death that he had killed for his lack of patience;

**Ajé:** Kí l'ẹ̀bi mi n nù ọ̀rọ̀ yí  
Olúwa mi? sùúrù mi nikan ni kò tó! Aa! Àşé-e  
Èni a gbójú okùn lé kò tilẹ̀ jò ẹ̀ni agba!  
Àşé, Fátólá kò sí nínú à n pète ibi!  
Àmòpé kò si nibi, à n gbimò ikà!  
Àmòpé kò sí nínú à n ş'èké!  
Àşé, ikú olórogún ló mú Fátólá lọ!  
*(Ààrẹ̀ Àgò (p 76))*

**Ajé:** What is my fault in this matter?  
Only I did not exercise enough patience! My lord,  
Oh, it's a pity; the condemned is not even the offender!  
Fátólá was not among the evil doers,

Àmòpé was not among the evil plotters  
Àmòpé was not a traitor!  
Oh, Fatola's death was caused by co-wives rivalry!

One begins to wonder what kind of love he has for his favourite wife, the love that cannot afford to wait and investigate in order to get to the root of the case. He is unable to manage the crisis in which he finds himself and he could not control his emotion. His lack of patience exposes the irony in his character. When looked at from the Yorùbá cultural context of polygyny, the husband of many wives should be discreet, full of self-control, have a large heart and patient enough to handle sensitive family issues. One Yorùbá proverb says ' *Àgbà tó r orò kii kó èyàn jọ*' (An elderly man with hot temper will not have many people around him). His lack of all the above attributes imposes an ironic characterization on him, thus making him look stupid, foolish and an object of ridicule. The stylistic effect of the use of this irony of character is to satirise the position of the warlord as a person whose character cannot carry the weight of its responsibilities. The situation connotes that, if we are patient enough, what we think is a riddle will be unfolded with time; hasty decisions always result to regrets. Emotional stability is a great virtue for good leadership.

Another instance of irony of character in *Ààrẹ-Àgò Aríkúyẹrí*, is that of Lágídò, who has been portrayed as a faithful aid to his master Ààrẹ-Àgò through counselling at the beginning of the play is now presented as a betrayal. After the last batch of Basòrun Ògúnmólá's police has been beaten by Ààrẹ-Àgò, he realizes the great trouble ahead of him. He, therefore, calls on Lágídò to start watching at the town gate so that he can give danger alert on time. But Lágídò, who knows the danger involved, requests for adequate preparation like a warrior. Ààrẹ-Àgò agrees, but in spite of this, Lágídò is still afraid because he knows that he is not up to the task. He cannot risk his life for the offence he did not commit. His love for his master does not reach the level of dying for him or of dying with him as the traditional *Abóbakú*<sup>5</sup> (the one who dies with the king). Lágídò's characterisation in the play is typical of an irony of character. His name ÒbọLágídò (an extremely stupid person) portrays him as having a low intelligent quotient, stupid, foolish but his behaviour as an aid and errand boy to Ààrẹ-Àgò contradicts what his name portends or suggests about him. He is smart, intelligent and quick witted. He says in derision of his master:

Lágídò: Oníyẹyẹ èniyàn bíi wèrè tí wọn n pè ní



Ajé yìi kò sí  
 Š'èmi ni ó wá lọ d'ojú kọ iná?  
 Èni bá p'ogun ní í r'ógún;  
 Èni bá p'òtè ní í r'ótè;  
 Èni bímọ ọ̀ràn ní í pọ̀n ọ̀n.  
 Ng kò pà 'niyàn  
 Ng kò t'iná bọ'lé,  
 Ó ní kí n gbàradì lójú iloro  
 Kò burú, kò bàjé  
 Òní ni yòò mò pé:  
 'Èni a tì s'óde kò ní kú,  
 Èni a sé mò'le l'ẹ̀bọra ó pa'.  
*Ààrẹ-Àgò (p 49)*

Lágídò: No one is as foolish as this mad man called Ajé  
 Am I the one that will now face the fire?  
 He who asks for war faces the war;  
 He who asks for conspiracy faces conspiracy;  
 He who harbours trouble manages it.  
 I am not a murderer  
 I did not set any house on fire  
 Yet, he asked me to put on the armoury and  
 watch at the town gate  
 It's not bad; it's just okay  
 But today, he will realise that,  
 The person sent outside will not die;  
 But the one well protected inside the spirit will devour.

The irony is in the way Lágídò describes his master. The above statement presents the true character of Lágídò as wise and not stupid. The way he welcomes the Ògúnmólá's aides that have come to effect Aje's arrest buttresses this:

Lágídò: È máa rọra o! pèlèpèlè. È máa rọra o...

Akódà kinní: Kí ni'wo n se níbè?

Lágídò: Èmi kò bá t'ija wá'hin. Ọmọ abé yín ni mo jé.

Mo sọ f'Ájé pé kò tó bẹẹ, etí rẹ l'ó di. Èmi kọ...

*Ààrẹ-Àgò (p 49)*

Lágídò: Welcome! gently, take care!

First

Messenger: What are you doing there?

Lágídò: I am not here to fight with you. I am your Servant.

I told Ajé that he is not up to the task, but he is deaf.

It is not me.....

He changes his style of approach, when the messenger arrives again, Lágídò's approach is another instance of irony, his action and words does not match his appearance, with all the armour on him as a soldier, he plays it softly with the guards and apologises for his past misconducts when challenged by one of them.

Akòdà Keji: Dáké ẹnu 'ẹ! Ẹ bí iwọ yí l'ò gbá mi l'etí l'ẹẹkan. Àbí?

Lágídò: Bí ng kò bá ẹ bẹ̀, yoo pa mí. Wèrè gidi mà ni Ajé! Ìdí niyí tí mo fi wá bẹ̀ yín l'óde. Ohun t'ẹ-ẹ bá sa fẹ́ kí ng ẹ fún yín ni kí ẹ sọ. Èmi kò jà.

*Ààrẹ-Àgò* (p 49)

Akòdà Keji: Keep quiet! Are you not the one who slapped me the other time. Yes?

Lágídò: He will kill me if I fail to do that. Ajé is indeed a mad person!

This is why I have come here to beg you. Just tell me what you want me to do for you. I am not here to fight.

This time, Lágídò's character is different from what we have known and seen earlier in the play, as the only friend of his master. He changes completely and has become a traitor by giving the situation report of Ògúnrinde Ajé's preparation and by showing the enemy the other entrance, the back door of the house. It is a surprise that Lágídò, who knows the peculiarity and the sensitivity of his office, who is expected to protect his master at all cost, in an ironic twist, switches to the side of Başòrun Ògúnmólá's messenger. This action shows him not as fake, pretender, traitor, selfish and unfaithful aide, but a clever aide. The stylistic function of the irony of character here is to achieve comic effect (laughter) and to prove Yorùbá age-long adage about the monkey, who is erroneously being looked upon as a stupid animal, that '*Ta a ló sọ pé Ọ̀bọ̀ ò gbọ̀n, ọ̀bọ̀ gbọ̀n, tinú ọ̀bọ̀ l' ọ̀bọ̀ n ẹ̀*' (Who says the monkey is not wise, the monkey is wise, it is only doing what is in its mind).

In *Ààrẹ Àgò Arikúyeri*, the chiefs are not, in any way, different, as they act contrary to the tenets of the office they occupy by accepting the bribe offered them by Ògúnrinde Ajé and quickly share the money. Their true character is revealed, the greed in them is exposed, and their hypocritical attitude is displayed through a disgraceful defence of Ògúnrinde Ajé in his murder case. Their initial unanimous decision and the zeal with which they frown at Ògúnrinde Ajé's action, the resolution that justice must prevail, as echoed by Ìyalóde at the first hearing of the case, confer

on them the characterisation of honest, bold and honourable characters committed to justice and equity. Ìyálóde comments thus:

Ìyálóde: Yòò f'orí fà á ni. Tirè'ò gbòdò yàtò  
*Àárè Àgò* (p 61)

Ìyálóde: He must face the consequences.  
His case cannot be treated differently

However, in an ironically twist, and in a way contradictory to their earlier stand, they take bribe and perverts justice. This makes their conduct an irony of character.

Hence, Baṣòrun Ògúnmólá describe the irony in their character as this:

Baṣòrun: Èyin torí owó ẹ́ n yí òtítító po  
Ètorí obì, ẹ́ di dìnrin àgbà, ! Ẹ́ di òpònú, ẹ́ di sùgómù.  
Ẹ́ di akíndanidání! Ẹ́ di onísòkúsò!  
Èyin 'ò mò pé gbogbo b'a-a ti n ẹ́ se, l'ayé n wò wa?

*Àárè Àgò* (p 95)

Baṣòrun: You, because of money turned down the truth!  
Because of bribe you become stupid elders! You become senseless  
You become an imbecile! You become irrational!  
You've forgotten that the entire world is watching us the way  
we behave.

The stylistic effect of the irony of their character is to satirise the chiefs as those whose characters are mostly unpredictable with high tendency of perversion of justice.

Another instance of irony of character in *Àárè Àgò Aríkúyerí* is the Ògúnrindé Ajé's refusal to commit honorific suicide as the custom for the warlord in Yorùbá land demands. At the end of the final hearing, Baṣòrun Ògúnmólá sentences Ògúnrindé Ajé to death through honorific suicide . He agrees to do just that and declares boldly as a warrior that he does not fear death and to commit suicide is not a problem;

Ajé: Kì í ba ni ká yerí n'íkú jé`  
Ẹ́ dáké ẹ́jò, ẹ́ dáké ariwo.  
Ẹ́ni tí kò kú ló ni'gbó òkè yíí  
Aláwùrà l'ó m'eni tí yòò l'ọ̀la  
Ẹ́ni tí yóó jòba, ẹ́ni kan kò mò  
Ko s'eni tí kò ní kú l'áyé  
Ikú n s'awá l'ẹ́gbé ni  
*Àárè Àgò* (p 109)

Ajé: Death is inevitable  
Stop talking, stop the noise  
There is hope for the living  
Only God knows those who will live till

tomorrow  
Nobody knows the next king  
No one can escape death  
Death is just taking us in turn

The irony in the above excerpt is that his statement does not correspond to his action that later forms the title of the play because he finally runs away; the news of his escape is unexpected. His action is disgraceful. His position as warlord does not permit such a disgraceful act. A warrior is not supposed to run away from death. This escapism ridicules his person and his position as a warrior. The ironic character of Ògúnrindé Ajé's brings the dramatic forces in the play into view. His action heightens the overall ironic force in the play. Basòrun Ògúnmólá and the chiefs are expecting the news of Ògúnrindé Ajé's death but they receive contrary news instead.

It is Ògúnrindé Ajé's character that gives him a new name ' **Aríkúyerí**', (The one who dodged death). Hence, Basòrun Ògúnmólá refers to his ironic behaviour as being a coward, the opposite of the brave man that he has claimed to be:

Basòrun Ògúnmólá: Ikú wólé dé tán  
Ó sálò bí ọmọ ojo!  
E má p'léyíí l'èèyàn mó gbogbo jànmáà;  
Eléyíí kì í s'èèyàn rárá,  
**Aríkúyerí** ni! *Àrẹ̀ Àgò* (p. 111)

Basòrun Ògúnmólá: When death finally came  
Like a coward, he fled  
My people, don't call him a human being any more  
He is not a human being  
He is a run- away-from-death.

The stylistic effect of irony of the character displayed by Ajé can be interpreted from different connotative angles. It shows that the killer would not want to die, the inner man is totally different from outside appearance, and it is difficult to willingly take one's life. The author uses the irony to bring home the Yorùbá proverb that says; *Kò sèni tí yòò gbọ ojọ ikú rẹ tí èrùkò ní í b ́ à á*. (No one hears about his/her death and would not be scared stiff). Politically, it causes an amendment to the immunity given to the political post holders in relation to the method of punishment for murder case. Irony of character is used in this text as a weapon to counter dogmatism and to destabilise the stable situation that has existed for a long time. The immunity is

removed and since then, there is no chance for honorific suicide for any political office holder. Henceforth, all citizens will receive equal treatment as far as punishment of offenders is concerned.

The characters in Fáléti's *Ìdààmú Pààdì Mínkáílù* are all examples of irony of character as revealed through their characters and behaviours in various situations and actions which engender surprise, frustration, inappropriate behaviour, dilemma and religious extremism. For example, while setting strategies on how to steal the project money, one can see Chief Ibrahim's real character as a violent man as against his position and character as a community leader. He even suggests the elimination of the treasurer in charge of the safe. The chief's reply to Yunusa's description of the tight security that will accompany the delivery of the money exposes his true character; he declares his stand like this:

Ibrahim: Hain-in, ká lọ dáwọn ọlópàá lónà.  
*Ìdààmú Pààdì (p10)*

Ibrahim: Yes, then, let's go and attack the police.

Also, when Yunusa declares that Setilu may stand as another hindrance, chief Ibrahim quickly replies that;

Ibrahim: Bó bá fẹ salátakò fún wa, b'a bá yejú rẹ ò buru  
*Ìdààmú Pààdì (p11)*

Ibrahim: If he poses an antagonist, it serves him right if we eliminate him.

The irony in Ibrahim's character is that such plans and statements should not proceed from the mouth of Chief Ibrahim. But for the readers to know his true character, the author, from the above description, prepares the readers well ahead for more surprises from the Chief who is a community leader. With the above comment, one begins to wonder if Chief Ibrahim is truly a Chief or a professional thug or an armed robber. Inappropriate behaviour reveals character. It reveals his person with respect to the role assigned to him in the play.

Another instance of irony of character is also seen in *Ìdààmú Pààdì Mínkáílù*, when the inspector of police congratulates Yunusa, the council secretary, on the recovery of the project money supposed to have been stolen:

Adégboyè: Àti Akòwé pàápàá ẹnyin l'ẹ kú orí ire jù, nítorí pé  
òrò nàà ibá kó'yonu bá yin diẹ bí wón bá fí r'ówó nàà gbé lọ.

*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 33)*

Adégboyè: And even you, the secretary, is the most lucky because  
You would have had a lot of trouble if they were able to steal  
the money.

The irony here is that Yunusa is already in trouble, an unofficial trouble that he has put himself into but behaves as if he is innocent and happy. He answers frankly as if he really deserves the congratulatory comment:

Yunusa: A dúpẹ. Òótọ inú ló yọ mí.  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì : (p 33)*

Yunusa: I thank God. The truth sets me free.

The irony in Yunusa's character is also seen in his reply because he knows that there is no truth in his character that can set him free. The police inspector does not know the real character of the person he congratulates but the character knows himself as a thief and a traitor. He may deceive the police, but it is just for a while because later the police inspector suspects Yunusa, referring to his words and his actions that are contrary to what is expected of a council secretary in the case at hand;

Adégboyè: Òrọ ẹnu rẹ ati ihùwásí rẹ, kò jọ bí ẹni p'ówọ rẹ mọ  
Bákannáà ni Olóyè Ibrahimu t'ó nlo fúnra'rẹ sọ ilé-iṣẹ igbìmò.  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 52)*

Adégboyè: His words and action make him a suspect, so also is  
Chief Ibrahim, that turned himself to council's office guard.

Yunusa's and Ibrahim's actions are a reflection of irony of character . Yunusa could not believe that Sẹtílù's wife and Mínkáílù can be involved in the money issue . His ironic character puts him in ironic situation. They cannot believe that the money is kept somewhere and it is safe. This must surely call for reaction. He, therefore, exclaims:

Yunusa: Owo! Ẹ gbe e wa'lẹ yi ni?  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 32)*

Yunusa: Money! Did you bring it back here?

Another instance of irony of character is when Yunusa and Ibrahim, who claim to be what they are not, but what they really are cannot be declared in the public. Now that they have the opportunity to steal the money when it is placed before them without extra effort, they could not because it is difficult for them to really proof

their hidden character. The stylistic effect is that opportunity once lost may never be regained even when it is so close again.

So shameful, pathetic, humiliation and ironic it is for Yunusa, the secretary, when he is told that, as secretary, he will have to take the project money to Ìbàdàn and officially return it to the treasury. In order to avoid the embarrassing situation, he suggests sending a letter with the money instead of his physical presence but the police officer rejects the option, insisting that he will have to go with them. His duty as a secretary is to do just that but the connotative meaning of the action is more than that. It is a silence and painful experience. One could imagine the sense and the level of agony and pain that will be going on within the heart of Ibrahim and Yunusa. The situation is so ironic that Yunusa is not given the opportunity to go and eat as requested because they will have to return the money before the closing hour. They are so surprised that they have to touch the money to be sure that it is still the same money and not something else. The level of surprise and imagination is described below:

Ibrahim: (*Ó bu owó náà wò, Jubirilu náà bù ú ati Yunusa bákannáà*)  
Owó náà rè é!  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 34)*

Ibrahim: (*He held the money, Jubirilu and Yunusa did likewise*)  
This is the money!

It is a big surprise; an ironic surprise that brings about chains of reaction, that further confirms the incongruous actions as well as the description of the ironic behaviour of the council staff and the noble chief even with painful effect. It is an ironic mockery for Yunusa when he has to follow the money he had struggled to steal down to Ìbàdàn again.

In Oládèjọ̀ Òkédijí's *Réré Rún*, there are instances of irony of character. The worker's condition in *Réré Rún* already affects their performance and commitment to work, which should be a joint decision but one of the workers, Ìdòwú, has a different attitude because of his hidden allegiance to the Onímògún and his council. He disagrees with the workers and detests the ways they are wasting the building materials, an action contrary to what they all agree to do. The workers decide to waste all the cements allocated for the day even though they know that they may not be able to finish it. This is part of the strategies for the worker's protest but Ìdòwú frowns at

the worker's decision to waste the cement. The irony in his character is seen in his reaction to Kàrímù and Adénìyì who ask for the remaining cement to be brought:

Ìdòwú: Èni tí wọ̀n bá biire nínú yín kò tún fọ̀wọ̀  
kan èyí un kí n rí i. Àpà alápa gbogbo.  
A ti lo tilẹ̀ tán ni, àbí ọ̀mọ̀ Ajé a máa bá  
owó jẹ.

*Réré Rún (p 44)*

Ìdòwú: Whosoever is bold enough should touch  
the cement. You are wasters. Have we  
exhausted the already opened bags? You  
should be prudent enough to know that.

One can quickly detect that, once a worker deviates from the joint opinions of others, there must be something wrong with the character's attitude. It is not surprising to see that Ìdòwú turns out to be a traitor, a hindrance to the union's struggle. He is finally chosen by the Onímògún as the new labour leader to replace Láwúwo.

Another instance of irony of character in *Réré Rún* is chief Balógun. Although Onímògún leads the other chiefs and the council as opposed to the agitation of the workers, yet Chief Balógun does not see the workers as their common enemy. He stands out in his own opinion; he is always against the policies of the council about the worker's welfare. He is an advocate of fair judgement for all. His advice to the council to attend to the workers' needs is meant to stop the chaotic situation that the handbill distributed earlier by the workers might have caused. He rejects the copy of the handbill handed over to him by Olúgbọ̀n, so as to let him know that the issue is no longer news to him. Balógun declares:

Balógun: È nńkan tí wọ̀n tí n gbé lówọ̀ yẹbẹyẹbẹ kiri ilú  
latana! È jẹ̀ jẹ̀ kí á tété tu àwọ̀n ọ̀sísẹ̀ wọ̀nyí nínú!  
Wọ̀n lẹ̀ da ogun sílẹ̀ o.

*Réré Rún (p 44)*

Balógun: Yes, what everybody has been carrying about since  
yesterday! Let us answer them on time, for they can  
cause serious problems in the town.

The above statement reveals Balógun's character as a good person when compared with the anti-workers' attitude of the other chiefs. His anonymous contribution towards the hiring of a lawyer for Láwúwo and his rejection of Ìdòwú as the worker's union leader by chief Balógun also reveals his hidden affection for the workers. His character is on the positive side and the author projects him as different from the



greedy and the exploiters who calls themselves employers. In this context, his character is ironic. The irony is that nobody would have thought that Balogun will be unwilling to toe the line of the council of which he is a member. His attitude is deviant, uncompromising and antagonistic to the general plans of the members of the council. The irony of character here is used to destabilise the unnecessary stable condition in cases like this . The ironic character of Chief Balógun connotes that human being are unpredictable and that, no matter how bad a situation is, there is always a ray of hope somewhere.

In *Eḡúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, the law inÌyálóde's house that no slave must be in love, marry or get pregnant at all is contrary to the law of multiplication set for man by God and also to the Yorùbá cultural order . Eḡúnṣetán is an example of irony of character. Her character is supposed to be that of a mother, a kind, loving, caring and understanding one but her character totally deviates from all these. She is always in bitter opposition to anybody with plans to get married or give birth.

#### 4.6 Comic Irony

Comic irony is a type of irony pertaining to a character, an event, or an utterance that is capable of inducing laughter or amusement. It is usually deliberately designed for sarcastic and satirical effects in drama. Situations and actions like pretence, wrestling, exchange of roles, seats, names, and costumes may constitute comic irony to generate comic, satiric and sarcastic effects.

In *Ààṙe-Àgò Aríkúyẹ́rì*, at a time when Ò bọ Lágídò should still be mourning with his master Ààṙe Àgò over the loss of his three children and his favourite wife, and be worried about the ruinous consequences of the murder case hanging on his neck, he is thinking about how he is going to get a wife. He wonders why his master decided to kill his wife when he knew that his aide is without a wife. The comic irony in Lágídò's thought is the thinking that if the master knew he did not want a wife any more or he was tired of the wife, he could have passed the wife to him (Òbọ Lágídò) who has the need of a wife. He is not afraid to declare his ironic feeling even in the face of a serious and tragic situation:

Lágídò: Baba ñjẹ ẹ mọ pé inú t'ẹmi ò dùn bẹ-ẹ ẹ pa Fátólá un?..

Ààṙe Àgò: Lágídò! Ki lo wi nla!  
 Ẹni t'ó pa mi l'ómọ jẹ!

Àsé ọtá...?

Lágídò: Kí í ẹ b'ẹ-ẹ ti rò ún ló rí Baba.  
Ó ní 'hun tí ń dun kálukú. Àrùn tí ń ẹ Lémábájé  
kò sọmọ 'ẹ. Lémábájé ń sunkún owó, ọmọ rẹ ń  
sunkún ọkọ. Nígba tí ẹ mọ p'ẹmi ò l'áya kankan n'ile tẹ-ẹ wá  
pa ọkan s'ode. Kí l'ọ ẹ t'eyin ò le fà á fún mi nígba t'ẹ-ẹ mọ  
pé kò wù yín mọ? A kí í paró, ọmọ yin t'ó kú kò dùn mí bíi  
Fátólá t'ẹ-ẹ le fà fún mi.

Ààrẹ Àgò: Kí lo wí Lágídò?

Lágídò: Kí lẹ gbọ Baba? Àní ài-lóbìnrin kò ẹ-é dáké. Gbogbo ayé ní í  
bá 'ni i gbọ ọ.

Ààrẹ Àgò: Ìwọ 'ò ẹ dúró níbẹ nígba ti mo ń pa á. Ng bá kàn pa ọ mọ ọn.

Lágídò: ..... 'puu' ni.

Ààrẹ Àgò: Bá kátikàti 'ẹ sọhun ọjàrẹ Jẹ ng gbọràn.  
Ààrẹ Àgò (p 34)

Lágídò: Baba, do you know that I am not happy as you have killed  
Fátólá

Ààrẹ Àgò: Lágídò! What did you say?  
The person that killed my children!  
So you are my enemy...?

Lágídò: Not the way you think Baba. The heartcries of people are  
different.  
Lémábájé's problem is different from that of her daughter's.  
Lémábájé is in need of money while her daughter is in need of a  
husband.  
You know that I do not have a single wife, and you killed one  
outside.  
Why didn't you give her to me when you knew that you did not  
need her again?  
I will not lie , I don't care so much about the death of your  
children as I care that you did not give Fátólá to me as a wife .

Ààrẹ Àgò: What did you say, Lágídò.?

Lágídò: What did you hear, Baba? I say, being a bachelor for too long is  
not a secret thing; it is a problem that must get to the hearing of  
all and sundry.

Ààrẹ Àgò: Where were you when I was killing her? I would have killed  
you together...

Lágídò: ... like this 'pùú'

Ààrẹ̀ Àgò: Just go away from here. Don't disturb me.

From the above conversation, the irony is much clearer, especially when viewed from the Yorùbá socio-cultural perspective. In an ideal situation, Lágídò's expression of his feeling and request at this time is very wrong. Ordinarily, Lágídò would not have accepted Fátólá if at all she was offered to him as a wife. Apart from the comic effect of the irony, to douse the pang and ethos of the tragedy that has befallen the Ajé's family, it is also used to confirm the age-long Yorùbá worldview that two people may not think alike or think differently over a particular issue. The Yorùbá expression 'Íyá n ronú, omọ rẹ n rokà' (the mother is busy pondering on an issue while the child is busy preparing àmàlà'). and Lágídò's expression may be seen in the light of a Yorùbá proverb which says, 'Bí iná bá jó ni, tó jó omọ eni, ti ara eni là á kọ gbọ̀n,' (in a fire incident that involves parents and the child, the parent take care of themselves first) capture the essence of a comic irony like this. The stylistic function of the comic irony in this context is to counter the dogma and destabilise the unnecessarily stable situation attached to this kind of tragic incident in real-life situations. It is a comic relief slotted in as a pain-reliever and for suspense as Ààrẹ̀ Àgò and Lágídò await Ògúnmólá's further reaction about the murder case.

Comic irony is seen in the same text in (pp 41-42). Ọbọ Lágídò delivers the message of Ààrẹ̀ Àgò's chiefs to him. They have divided opinions; four out of the seven chiefs are in support of Ààrẹ̀ Àgò's decision on his refusal to answer Ògúnmólá's call and that he should maintain his stand as a warlord while the remaining three advise him to answer Baṣọrun Ògúnmólá's call as the overall head. He is now in a dilemma. He needs advice. So he asks Ọbọ Lágídò this question;

Ààrẹ̀ Àgò: Jé ká p 'àwàdà tí l'ootọ. O rò p'ọ̀ràn l'èyí tí mo dá yìí jẹ?  
Ààrẹ̀ Àgò (p 39)

Ààrẹ̀ Àgò: Jokes apart. Do you think I have committed an offence in this matter?

To this question, Ọbọ Lágídò replies and makes him realise the gravity of his offence and that it is a must for him to appear before Baṣọrun Ògúnmólá anyhow:

Ọbọ Lágídò: ...kí ẹ mọ 'hun t'ẹ bá mú sà l'òògùn kí oníṣẹ  
Ògúnmólá tó dé. Àbẹ ẹ rò p'ọ̀rọ̀ nàà ti tán síbè ni ?  
Bí ẹ bá n rò pé ọ̀rọ̀ kò ní gbé yin dé'wájú  
Ògúnmólá, irọ̀ lẹ̀ n pa . Bó s'òkú yin ,  
b'ó s'ààyè yin , ó dá mi l'ójú pé ọ̀kan yòò dé'wájú

Ògúnmólá. (*Ìrèwèsì bá ọkàn Ààrẹ-Àgò nítorí ọrọ tí Lágídò sọ náà. Ó doríkodò. Lágídò bèrẹ̀ tí í.*)

*Ààrẹ- Àgò* (pp 39-40)

Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò: ... You'd better decide on what to do before the arrival of Ògúnmólá's messenger. Do you think that is the end of the case? It is a lie, if you think you will not appear before Baṣọrun Ògúnmólá. Whether your corpse or your living body, one must appear. (*Ààrẹ Àgò is depressed because of Lágídò's reply. He bows his head. Lágídò bend down with him.*)

In his depressed situation, Ààrẹ Àgò agrees to Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò's suggestion to honour Ògúnmólá's summons and even request for his counselling. The irony in this comic setting is seen in the light of the Yorùbá cultural context. A slave is not wiser than his master who has bought him with his own money. In fact, a Yorùbá proverb says 'Bó tí wù kí irungbòn alágbàṣe ó gùn tó, ẹnì tó gbóko fún un l'ogá ẹ' no matter how long the beard of a hired-worker on the farm is the person that hires him is his master. The slave should not talk where the free born are talking, not to even talk about his master and his owner. Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò's assumption of the position of an adviser or a counsellor is ironic and strange. The author wants the reader to notice the irony by placing two opposite personalities together. Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò connotes stupidity; therefore, how can a stupid fellow teach his master the wisdom to apply in a murder case on ground? How can a slave teach his master? However, if the author has allowed that, then we must know that it must be comic irony for comic relief. The ironic action is a smooth progression from the state of anxiety and depression to a state of short relief for both characters in the play.

The ironic saga in Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò's conversational drama with his master on how to help him (the master) debacle becomes profound when Lágídò suggests a practical demonstration of how the hearing or trial would go when the case eventually gets to Ògúnmólá's court. Lágídò says:

Lágídò: ... K'ọrọ náà lè ba à ye yin dáadáa, ẹ jé kí ng joko s'áayè yin. Ẹ bó ẹwù yin fún mi kí n wọ ọ. Bí ng bá joko s'áayè yin tán, kí ẹ máa bèrèrè iru ibeere t'ẹ -ẹ ba mọ pe Ògúnmólá lè beere l'owọ yin l'owọ t'èmi. Ìdáhùn tí mo bá sì fún yin ni ẹ ẹ máa fí dá a l'òhùn.

*Ààrẹ- Àgò* (p 41)

Lágídò: So as to understand very well , let me sit on your seat. Remove your cloth and give me to wear . After sitting on your seat , you can then begin to ask me the question that you think Ògúnmólá will ask from you. And my reply to your questions will be the reply you will give him.

We can see the ironic action in display as seen in this scenic description:

(Ààrẹ̀ Àgó dìdẹ̀ l'óri ijókó rẹ̀ , òun àti Lágídò pààrò èwù fún ara wọn . Lágídò jókó sí àyè nàà. Lágídò dúró dojúkọ ọ ) (Ààrẹ̀ Àgó stood up from his own seat; both of them exchanged their cloths, Lágídò sat on his seat. Ààrẹ̀ Àgó stood directly opposite him).

Lágídò: Baba! È ẹ̀ ní pé mí ní Lágídò bá yíi o. Ààrẹ̀ Àgò ẹ̀ ẹ̀ máa pè mí, ènyìn nàà ó sì jẹ̀ Baṣòrun Ògúnmólá . Ó yá . È máa ṣe bí Ògúnmólá.

Ààrẹ̀- Àgò (p 41)

Lágídò: Baba! You won't call me Lágídò now. You will be calling me Ààrẹ̀ Àgò, and you will be referred to as Baṣòrun Ògúnmólá. So, begin to act as Ògúnmólá.

The semantic implication of this comic irony finds interpretation in this Yorùbá proverb: 'Bí ọlógbón bá fi etí aṣọ jóná , òmùgò á bèèrè pé báwo ló ṣe fi aṣọ jóná'. (If a person burns the hem of a cloth , the foolish person will ask him how he did it) The readers now know who is the wise man now , Ààrẹ̀ Àgò , the master or Lágídò, the servant.

Another instance of comic irony is seen in *Ààrẹ̀ Àgó Ari kúyerí* through the wrestling acts that occur between Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò (Ògúnrindé Ajé's slave) and Ìbídùn (Ògúnrindé Ajé's daughter). What brought about wrestling between a male and a female in the play is when Ọ̀bọ̀ Lágídò, who should remain loyal to Ògúnrindé Ajé and who also has it as a duty to protect his master , especially during his trying period , goes to meet Ògúnmólá's messenger behind the palace to plead his own case and to exonerate himself from the danger ahead of his master (Ògúnrindé Ajé). Ìbídùn saw him, Ààrẹ̀-Àgó is told. He later accuses Lágídò of disloyalty to him . But instead of Lágídò to explain, he starts raining abuses and curses on whosoever reported him to Ààrẹ̀-Àgó. Ìbídùn hears him and decides to deal with him for his treacherous act.

Ìbídùn: Baba nílá'ẹ̀ ní wọn yóò mú so. Ìwọ̀ buruku (Ìbídùn pa kuru mó Lágídò, ó gbá a létí! Ìjàkadì beṣẹ̀!)

Lágídò: (Lagido n ké!) Baba! S'ẹ̀ n ri i o! S ẹ̀-n rítú t'ómọ̀ yín n pa àb'ẹ̀-ẹ̀ rí i!

(Ààṛ-Àgó kò sòrò. Ìbídùn dá Lágídò mólè nígbà àkókó!)

Baba! S'ẹ-ẹ rí i b'ó ti n kó mi lèsè lójiji ! (Ààṛ kò sòrò síbè . Lágídò sáré wọ. Kàà lo. Ó mú onḍè kan jáde, ó n so ó mọ idi). Ó yá. Ìwọ tún sún mọ mi bí ó bá tó . Ng ó là á yé ọ (Ìbídùn tún pa kuru mọ Lágídò . Lágídò bilà sẹ'hìn. Ó túnsáré wọ kàà lọ, ó tún jáde, ó n fi òrùka ẹlẹlọ b'owọ.) B'ésù bá n ẹ ọ , sún mọ mi. Suńmọ mi níhin b'o-o bá tó.

(Ìbídùn fi ibínú gbà Lágídò létí . Ìjàkadì tún béré. Ìbídùn n la Lágídò mólè lákóláko. Ara Lágídò ko iyà, ó já ara rẹ gbà l'owọ Ìbídùn, o n sá lọ, o si n hó bọ b́ àgùtàn. Ìbídùn n le e lọ. Ó bá a, ó já onḍè idi rẹ, ó kó bọ ó. Wọn wọ ìjàkadì, Ìbídùn dá Lágídò mólè l'ógèdèngbé. Lágídò dákú! Ààṛ-Àgó sáré dide.)

Ààṛ-Àgó: Ìbídùn! O pá a! O pa a!

(Ààṛ-Àgó di Lágídò mọ àyà, ó n pè é . Ó n pofọ le lóri . Ó wọlé, ó n bu àgbo fún un mu. Nigba tí ó ẹ, Lágídò jí. Ó n fẹ atégùn sára. Íránşé yojú láti inú ilé.)

Ààṛ- Àgó (pp 47-48)

Ìbídùn: It is your great grandfather that will be tied down. You this ugly thing (Ìbídùn ran closer to Lágídò and gave him a dirty slap! And the wrestling begins)

Lágídò: (Lágídò is shouting) Baba can you see her! Can you see what your daughter is doing or not !

(Ààṛ-Àgó didn't say anything. Ìbídùn threw Lágídò down for the first time).

Baba! Did you see how she suddenly holds my leg in a lock! (Ààṛ-Àgó still didn't say anything. Lágídò quickly ran inside the courtyard and brought one waistband, he tied it to his waist). Now come. You come closer to me if you are bold enough. I will teach you a lesson. (Ìbídùn ran closer to Lágídò again. Lágídò moved back. He quickly ran back into the courtyard, he came out, he put one spring ring into his finger.) If the devil pushes you, just come close to me here if you think you are bold enough.

(Ibidun, in anger slapped Lágídò, the wrestling started again, Ibidun throws Lágídò on the ground many times. Lágídò could not withstand the rigorous beating anymore; he releases himself from her and starts running, shouting like a sheep. Ibidun runs after him, she meets him and removes his waistband; she uses it to beat him very well. She throws him on the ground many times. Lágídò faints! Ààṛ-Àgó suddenly rises up)

Ààṛ-Àgó: Ìbídùn! You want to kill him! You want to kill him!

*(Àrẹ-Àgó holds Lágídò to his chest, calling his name, chants incantation on his head. He brings concoction and gives him to drink. After a while, he wakes up. He gasps for fresh air. A messenger calls from the inside).*

The wrestling is comic irony because one would have expected Lágídò, a man, to have been able to defeat Ibídùn, in a wrestling bout, but the reverse is the case. The irony in Lágídò's character is that a woman can beat up a man when in most cases it is man that beats a woman, except in few cases, as we have the example of Oya, the wife of Sàngó who is more troublesome than her husband. Also, we have few cases of a wife beating up her husband but in this context, it is comic irony used for a particular effect in the play. The effect of this irony is comic relief to douse the serious tension already created in the play. It is also to satirise and counter the general belief and dogma that a man should subdue a woman in all ways and at anytime.

Another instance of comic irony is found in *Ìdààmú Páàdì*. The King and the council official pay a special visit to Páàdì Mínkáílù in order to invite him to be a member of the board. It is a crucial and sensitive issue. Although Páàdì Mínkáílù has given his consent, he still wants to share his opinion or his recent decision to his only companion in the house after the guests have gone. He calls on his houseboy and he begins on a serious note to let Sufianu know the decision he has just taken in order to hear his opinion about the issue. Páàdì Mínkáílù will never know that Sufianu may have a contrary opinion about his decision to join the council board, as a native of Èjìgbò. He expects him to appreciate the new development of helping the town to progress, but on the contrary, he exclaims and asks Páàdì Mínkáílù why he should involve himself in the board.

Páàdì Mínkáílù is surprised about Sufianu's question. He does not expect an ironic pose from his houseboy. He explains that he was invited and it was based on people's demand. Even with his explanation, Sufianu does not see why he should support him. Based on his knowledge about his people, he can foresee the danger ahead of Páàdì Mínkáílù. Sufianu tenders his own submission about the situation and, therefore, confirms Mínkáílù's impending dilemma and doom. Before Páàdì Mínkáílù declares his acceptance of the position, Sufianu already gives a stern warning to his master to quickly return the governor's letter.

Contrary to what Páàdì Mínkáílù expects, Sufianu replies bluntly to smear Páàdì Mínkáílù's decision. He thinks that the kind gesture and the good intention of Páàdì Mínkáílù should be thoroughly scrutinised even before his acceptance. He is of the opinion that his decision will be opposed by various contexts, such as political, culture and philosophical. The comical and the sarcastic aspects of the expression is in the way Sufianu replies him when he declares that he has accepted the letter and that he has given his consent;

Sufianu: È ti gbà! Nígbà tí ẹ ti gbà, kí'ẹ wá f'òrò lọ mí sí?..  
 È ti tẹwó gbàá?  
 Njé, ẹ máa rù ú o. Ọrùn nyín kò ní yín o!  
*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 8)*

Sufianu: You have agreed! When you have agreed, why did you seek for my advice?  
 It's okay, carry your burden, I pray that your neck will not break!

The manner with which Sufianu replies his master is so casual . He is so bold , frank and blunt in his reply with no regards for his master on the issue . The comic joke has a serious semantic complication. Here, the comic irony is employed to prove right the Yorùbá adage that says: '*Ogbón ològbón kì í jẹ kí á pe àgbà ní wèrè*' (The elders' gets wiser by adopting the sensible views of others). It is an ironic relationship in which the master and the servant operate at the same level with the aim of satirising the person and the position of the masters.

Another instance of comic irony in *Ìdààmú PáàdìMínkáílù* is found in the way Sufianu, interrogates his master on the sacred song dedicated to the praise and prayer for Pope , the Catholic leader . Mínkáílù wants to rest for a while before the first general meeting of those concerned with the robbery issue in his house. It is a has also chosen this time to sing and make noise all over the house. The song disturbs Minkailu's sleep and, more importantly, he is disturbed and concerned about the way Sufianu profanes the sacred song by putting his own name and using the song to pray for himself instead of Pope's name. He regard this action as foolishness. It is a comic irony for satirical effect. Sufianu opposes the idea behind the Catholic prayer, and he considers it as hypocritical prayer, a prayer that is not from the heart. He, therefore, presents his reasons for opposing the principle that is borne out of hypocrisy like this:



Sufianu: Abajọ! Aṣẹ wèrè èsìn l̩jọ Àgùdà náà l'ó ran t' l̩jọ Gèèsi ,  
 t'áwọ̀n náà fi í máa gbádúrà láàrìn isìn f'ọ̀ba wọ̀n . Un-hùn!  
 (O rẹ̀rin ) Sufianu, o kare ojare , ng'ò ni jẹ k'ẹnikan ó fi  
 sẹ́kẹ́sẹ́kẹ́ èsìn kan de mi n'ídẹ̀kude ni tẹ̀mi o . Èmi 'ò ní  
 gbádúrà f'ọ̀ba Kankan pẹ̀ẹ́ ki n'to gbádúrà fún 'ra mi ! Àb'ẹ́  
 'ò mò ni , Páàdì Minkailu , pe ọ̀ba t'a ba nṣádúrà fún , t'a  
 nwípé:  
 "Oorun ọ̀dúndún o,  
 Ìsùn-un tètè o",  
 A nrì nkan jẹ lódò rẹ ni . Ọ̀ba kan ì báà sùn nínú ègún  
 ọ̀sùùṣu, ibáà sì sun k'o f'ọ̀run yín , nigbati Sufianu 'ò ba jẹ  
 nínú owó rẹ , àgun-lá, àgun-tètè àg'ewekó-kò ja fùrùpòmù!

*Ìdààmú Páàdì (p 51)*

Sufianu: No wonder! So it is the foolishness in the Catholic doctrine  
 that spread to the Anglican that makes them pray for their king  
 even in the midst of the service. Oh-hoo (he laughs). Good of  
 you Sufianu, I will not allow anybody to put me in religious  
 bondage. I will not pray for any king at all before I pray for myself!  
 You don't know, Páàdì Mínkáílù, that the king we pray for and say  
 the following prayers:

May your sleep be peaceful like Ọ̀dúndún leaves,  
 May you sleep calmly as the green vegetables,  
 It is because we are getting something from him. Any king may sleep  
 in the midst of thorns, or he may have twisted neck after sleeping, as  
 long as Sufianu does not eat from his riches I am less concerned!

The denotative meaning of the above example is for comical effect and  
 Mínkáílù's submission is the truth at the surface level. The connotative meaning is  
 just to satirise the dogma of the Catholic Church and to also destabilise the  
 unnecessary stability of the Catholic doctrine and that of the Anglican Communion  
 with regard to their prayer for the Queen of England. He observes that the same  
 doctrine has crept into the African worship culture which makes them pray for the  
 king who has not contributed in any way to their well-being. He is being realistic. It is  
 true that you pray for your immediate visible provider and not the imaginary  
 sustainer.

The example of comic irony here is to elicit laughter and to create fun even in  
 the midst of a tense situation. Sufianu's song is used by the author as a comic relief of  
 tension for Mínkáílù who may be worried about the crucial meeting that is coming up  
 very soon in his house. Also, the above examples of comic irony show that irony  
 flatters our sense of superiority as we can see that no one has the monopoly of  
 knowledge, especially with reference to Ọ̀gúnrindé Ajé and Ọ̀bọ Lágídò's case in

*Ààrẹ̀- Àgò*, Mínkáílù and Sufianu's case in *Ìdààmú Páàdì*. The two masters have to take counsel from their servants in their critical and trying periods. Comic irony comes as episodes of dialogue and is action packed. It is a comedy slotted in with the effect of a sudden contrast in the feelings and the condition of the character in question, not to hurt their feelings but just to gratify them. It is for the purpose of alleviating tension and for adding variety to the play as interlude, especially tragic plays. It is a comic relief. No matter the tension in the air, there will still be a ray of hope somewhere. One Yorùbá adage says, '*Òrò burúkú toun tẹ̀rín*'. (Sorrowful situations also have a way of eliciting laughter). Comic irony has a way of lowering emotional temperature and consequently bringing out the satirical, humorous and sarcastic effects into focus.

Therefore, it is clear, with the stylistic function of the comic irony that no matter how serious a tragic play may present the issues of life the place of entertainment is still paramount. The focus of any literary writer, according to Olatejú (1999: 277), is to achieve two things: 'message and entertainment'. The message of the playwrights is their purpose of writing the texts, while the aesthetic use of the different types of irony and the ironic elements produces the pleasure and entertainment effect on the reader.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the way the Yorùbá playwrights employed the various forms of irony for different stylistic and communicative effects. For example, verbal, dramatic/tragic and irony of fate are used in all the texts, irony of character is used in *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Páàdì* and *Rẹ̀rẹ̀ Rún* and comic irony is used in *Ààrẹ̀ Àgò* and *Ìdààmú Páàdì*. Irony in verbal expression (like words, exclamation, title presentation, rhetoric); and non-verbal (ironic elements) in situations, like (dilemma, conflicts, extremism, death, frustration, deception); and actions like (wrestling, pretence, wickedness, treachery, hypocrisy, vengeance, greed, bribery, strike, conspiracy, malady, exchange of role, costumes, seats, names and secret communion) are devices used to derive irony and the ironic in the plays. All these are geared towards the achievement of their tragic motives and for entertainment purposes.

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#### Notes to Chapter Four

1. See Olátéjú 2004, pp 9
2. See Babalola. A.1967, *Oriki Orilè* Pp 59-72, for further reading on the Oníkòyí's lineage Poetry
3. See Oládipò(2005, pp 4-5) on Yoruba philosophy. Keynote address at the YSAN Conference at Adéyemí College of Education. Oñdó.
4. See Abimbóla. W., Sixteen great poems of Ifá(UNESCO, 1975:178), Àwọn Ojú Odù Mèrindínlógún (Ibadan: O.U.P ., 1977: xiii)
5. Abóbakú in the Yorùbá historical concept are the generation of the male slaves (not applicable to all Yorùbá towns ) set aside as a man who must die or kill himself immediately a king dies. It is believed that the king should not be lonely on his journey to heaven.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of this study. It also highlights the major findings in the employment of irony and the ironic in the selected Yorùbá written tragic plays. The main objective of the study was to undertake a critical study of irony and the ironic in some selected Yorùbá tragic plays with a view to establishing their stylistic significance and communicative functions. Recommendations were also made for further study.

#### 5.2 Summary

In this study, we focussed attention on irony and the ironic, which form a prominent feature of Yorùbá tragic plays. They served as stylo-situational elements used to draw attention to the gap between the speaking position, the posited truth and actions in the tragic plays. The types of irony and the ironic, and their contexts of usage were critically examined. Irony and its allied tropes such as metaphor and euphemism were also given attention. However, they were merely given attention to highlight their close relationship with irony and the ironic as devices to achieve certain stylistic and communicative effects in the plays. They are left for the future when other scholars so interested in them can pick them for analytical or stylistic study.

As for the theoretical framework employed for this study, we adopted the Roland Barthes' semiological theory. The model was noted for its ability to account for the various possibilities of interpretation through the elements of denotation and connotation. This afforded us the opportunity of extending meaning beyond the form of expression in the irony and the ironic templates. Factors such as the contexts in relation to Yorùbá culture, politics, philosophy and history were employed to complement the Barthes theory, the main theoretical thrust of the study. This helped in bringing to the fore the plane of content from the plane of expression for the purpose of semantic interpretation.

Although irony and the ironic have not received much scholarly attention in Yorùbá studies in spite of its being the basic dramatic principle and strategy to achieve tragedy in the Yorùbá written tragic plays examined, few scholarly works

found to be related to this study were critically reviewed. They were found to be a motivation for the work.

Data for the study were obtained from four literary texts. These include Ògúnníran's *Ààrè-Àgò Aríkúyẹrí*, Ìsòlá's *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, Fálẹ̀ti's *Ìdààmú Pààdì Mínkáílù* and Òkédìjì's *Rẹ́rẹ́ Rún*. Irony and the ironic elements were thereafter subjected to semantic and semiotic analysis and interpretation.

### 5.3 Findings

In this study, five types of irony were discovered, namely, verbal irony, dramatic/tragic irony, irony of fate, irony of character and comic irony. The ironic covers situations and actions. The situations include dilemma, bareness, extremism, frustration, deception and death, while the actions cover wrestling, wickedness, vengeance, greed, treachery, hypocrisy, bribery, conspiracy, malady and role change which are characteristic features of tragedy.

Verbal irony, dramatic/tragic irony, irony of fate and the ironic were identified in all the texts. Irony of character was found only in *Ààrè-Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Pààdì* and *Rẹ́rẹ́ Rún* while comic irony was found only in *Ààrè-Àgò* and *Ìdààmú Pààdì*.

The study also revealed four types of contexts in relation to the usage of irony and the ironic. The contexts may be political, historical, philosophical and cultural. Political context was used as platform for dramatic irony to depict vengeance, escapism, malady and death; verbal irony was employed to reflect conspiracy and deception, while irony of character was employed to reflect treachery, bribery, extremism and escapism. Historical context was used as platform for irony of character to reflect conspiracy and escapism, while irony of fate was used to reflect frustration, dilemma and death. In case of philosophical context, it was used as platform for irony of fate to reflect dilemma, bareness, malady and death while irony of character was employed to reflect frustration and vengeance. For cultural context, it was used as platform for verbal irony to reflect pretence while comic irony was used to reflect wrestling and role change. All the four contexts occurred in three texts (*Ààrè-Àgò*, *Ìdààmú Pààdì* and *Efúnṣetán Aní wúrà*) while only three contexts (political, philosophical and cultural) occurred in *Rẹ́rẹ́ Rún*.

Irony and the ironic elements in situations and actions as highlighted above achieved four stylistic functions. They were used for defence mechanism, pre-destination cues, counter dogmatism and protest mechanism. At varying degrees in

*Ààrè-Àgò* and *Ìdààmú Páàdi*, ironic twists with comical effects climaxing at the point of incongruity occurred in the political, cultural and historical contexts.

It was also found that irony and the ironic were veritable sources of information in the Yorùbá written tragic plays as they reflected the Yorùbá concept of tragedy within the political, historical, philosophical and cultural contexts. As reflected in the text under study, the concept of tragedy among the Yorùbá was found to be slightly different from that of Aristotle which features death as the cannon for the western tragic literary texts. Whereas, in the Yorùbá context death is not the only yardstick or sign for tragedy. In the Yorùbá context, there are shameful situations and conditions that are more tragic than death. One Yorùbá adage says, 'Ikú yá ju èsín lọ' meaning death is better than shame. Looking at it from the Yorùbá philosophical context, the malady condition of Láwúwo in *Réré Rún* and escapism in the case of Ògúnrindé Aje in *Ààrè-Àgò* are typical examples of tragedy triggered by shame.

Finally, three broad tragic themes were discovered in the selected texts for this study, namely; death (in all the texts), escapism (*Ààrè-Àgò*) and malady (*Réré Rún*), which contributed to their stylistic function in the plays.

From the foregoing, we can safely conclude that irony and the ironic elements constituted the main stylistic devices used in achieving tragic effects in the selected plays.

#### **5.4 Contribution to knowledge**

Unlike other stylistic devices in Yorùbá studies which have been sufficiently studied, irony and the ironic have not attracted such overwhelming attention. This study therefore, to the best of my knowledge is the first attempt by any scholar to give irony and the ironic the scholarly attention they deserve. Here in this study, the definition, the features, the types, functions, their contexts of usage and factors involved in the interpretation of irony and the ironic are brought to the fore or highlighted.

One of the qualities of literature is complexity leading to multi-dimensional semantic interpretation. Literature is no longer an artistic work when the appeal is simple, straight and most immediate. Therefore, this study has made it clear that irony and the ironic, because of their nature also contribute to the complexity of literature.

The study has made it clear that irony and the ironic constitute the most veritable stylistic tool (used by authors) for the Yorùbá written tragic play to achieve

the tragic themes of death, escapism and malady. No other stylistic devices are known to achieve this effect more than irony and the ironic.

Irony and the ironic elements , with differing manifestations , occurred in historical, philosophical, political and cultural contexts , and perform theme and effect-based stylistic functions in Yorùbá tragic plays . These elements, thus, enhanced the readers' understanding of the Yorùbá concept of tragedy as evident in the plays .

Though irony and the ironic are veritable stylistic devices. However, they must be used minimally and with caution in order not to impair communication. This is because irony and the ironic may be semantically misleading if care is not taken in its usage. This implies that irony and the ironic should be minimally used for the text to be semantically accessible.

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