

**POWER DYNAMICS IN CHIMEKA GARRICKS' *TOMORROW DIED YESTERDAY*  
AND AYÒBÁMI ADÉBÁYÒ'S *A SPELL OF GOOD THINGS***

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**Abstract**

Power is a complex yet significant concept in contemporary life. Its nuanced deployment is imperative to governance and human relations. Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010) and Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things* (2023) are interrogated against the backdrop of power and exclusion. The study investigates the representations of power and exclusion in the selected novels, examines the historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts that explain these portrayals, and explores the relationship between fictional representations and the lived experiences of government failure and systemic marginalisation in Nigeria since independence. The study employs a qualitative textual-analytical approach, grounding its reading in Gayatri Spivak's 'Subaltern theory' and complementing it with Frantz Fanon's postcolonial critique of domination, psychological alienation, and structural violence. The study finds that power and exclusion in both texts are dynamic, interrelated, and mutually reinforcing. The study argues that Garricks uses *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* to spotlight militarised governance, environmental injustice, ethnic marginalisation, and repressed dissent in the Niger Delta, revealing exclusion as an outcome of economic interests and political authority. In *A Spell of Good Things*, Adébáyò projects exclusion as an embodied, everyday experience defined by poverty, political manipulation, institutional failure, gendered hierarchies, and knowledge control within family and social spaces. The study concludes that in both novels, subaltern voices are silenced through repression, systemic neglect, and narrative erasure. Thus, these novels serve as counter-narratives that reassert human dignity, reclaim marginalised agency, and highlight governance failures in post-independence Nigeria.

**Keywords:** power, power dynamics, subaltern, militarised governance, political manipulation

## Introduction

The literature on Nigeria since independence has consistently examined the dilemma of power with respect to its origins, dynamics, and effects on both private and public life. From the aftermath of colonial rule through military dictatorship to contemporary civilian governance, scholars have investigated how authority is exercised, resisted, and normalised. This is why literature, in a sense, serves as both a mirror and an evaluative point: it brings to light the social and political developments of contemporary times while also questioning the assumptions and structures that sustain them. The narrative style, the dynamics of characters, and symbolic patterns are means by which novelists expose the world from

which they write and what they desire readers to notice, question, and take away. The phenomenon of power emerges not simply as a theme of concern but as an organising force that defines fictional worlds in ways parallel to real-life experience.

The paper is designed first to examine how power is portrayed in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* and *A Spell of Good Things*, with a focus on the narrative strategies by which authority is depicted and sustained. Second, it seeks to break down the specific forms of power that are present in both novels, such as political, military, economic, social, and ideological, and to examine how these forms intersect and reinforce one another. Third, the study explores how power shapes individual lives

and collective realities in post-independence Nigeria, determining access to resources, exposure to violence, and the limits of personal agency. To foreground power as an active and organising principle is to move beyond descriptive readings toward an analytical engagement with the texts.

Focusing on the dynamics of power rather than treating exclusion as a separate analytic category, this paper argues that Garricks and Adébáyò represent power as a relational concept, one that is unstable, and sometimes deeply invasive. It is a phenomenon that plays out through institutions and daily human interactions. The texts under study reveal how governance in Nigeria, along with social systems, reproduces domination and inequality even in contexts that appear non-authoritarian.

## Literature Review

Early attempts to conceptualize power within political and social thought often trace back to Lord Acton's famous observation that "among all the causes which degrade and demoralise man, power is the most active" (qtd. in Anifowose and Enemuo 107). This statement already signals an understanding of power as an asymmetrical relationship in which an individual or group exercises control over another's behavior. This idea of power is further developed in the definition of power not as a personal attribute but as "a relationship among men" that produces an "asymmetric relation between the influencer and the influenced" (Anifowose and Enemuo 108). Emphasizing this relationality is important because it situates power within institutional settings and social interactions rather than in isolated individuals.

This understanding of power from a relational dimension is reiterated in the conception of power as the “present means; to obtain some future apparent good”. (Hobbes 45). Herein, power emerges as instrumental, bestowing its holder the ability to shape future outcomes, including the actions and prospects of others. Such conceptualisation already presupposes the possibility of abuse, considering the pursuit of “future apparent good” by one party may necessitate the domination or suppression of another. Power, in this sense, cannot be separated from questions of coercion, interest, and inequality.

Power is segmented into three aspects: force, domination, and manipulation. Force implies direct physical compulsion; domination means explicit commands backed by authority; manipulation comes into play when a bearer of power causes others to act “without making explicit the behavior which he thereby wants them to

perform” (Anifowose and Enemuo 110–11).

This categorization is particularly important for literary analysis, since fiction more often than not questions the movement between manifest coercion and subtle ideological influence. Across a wide range of postcolonial texts, domination rarely appears in its pure form. However, it operates alongside manipulation, as political elites, patriarchs, and institutions ensure compliance through threats, rewards, traditions, and symbolic authority.

Classical theorists such as Max Weber and Hans J. Morgenthau broaden the understanding of power by introducing the concepts of intention and will. Weber conceives of power as “the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons” (53). At the same time, domination is understood as the probability of obedience, regardless of how often compliance occurs. Morgenthau, likewise, thinks of power as control over “the minds

and actions of other men” (33), emphasizing the psychological character of authority. These ideas view power as directive and instrumental, manifesting in hierarchical instructions, coercive measures, and institutional validation.

Michel Foucault posits that power is not a possession but a network of relationships that circulates through discourse, institutions, and ordinary behaviors and practices. In *The History of Sexuality*, he argues that “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). Power is exercised not merely through the state or the law but through social and cultural institutions such as schools, hospitals and families. As a matter of importance, Foucault emphasises that power is not merely repressive but better still productive: that is to say it brings about knowledge, identities, norms, and social truths. This perspective elucidates

how postcolonial institutions within African governments, following independence, perpetuate colonial tendencies to regulate bodies and minds, sustaining control through nuanced processes rather than overt repression.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony elucidates how power sustains itself through consent rather than coercion, complementing Foucault's theories. Gramsci argues that dominant groups retain their dominance by presenting their perspective as natural and inevitable through cultural institutions such as religion, education, and the arts (11). Thus, people give in not only because they are forced but also because social reality is packaged in ways that align with it, come to seem natural, and are desired. This framework is particularly useful for postcolonial literary analysis, as it shows how colonial ideologies persist through local elites whom Fanon termed the ‘national bourgeoisie’. In many

African novels, political authority and economic power depend as much on aspiration and internalized hierarchy as on physical coercion.

Egya Sule's interpretation of power embodies Foucauldian theory, characterizing it as circulating, dynamic, and contested, devoid of a stable locus (8). Power manifests when individuals defy authority, evade its dominion, or endeavor to wield it themselves (Foucault 93). To shed light on the way power goes around beyond formal political authority, Foucault's point that "power is everywhere...because it comes from everywhere" (93) His idea of power/knowledge is specifically valuable in seeing how norms, desires, and disciplinary practices control behaviour and maintain domination even where there's no manifest coercion.

Sule underscores discourse as a potent kind of power, aligning with Sara

Mills in asserting that individuals lacking political or economic advantages can nonetheless exert agency through words. While Sule focuses on protest poetry, this study extends Sule's ideas by applying them to fiction and examining storytelling as a counter-hegemonic instrument.

Pierre Bourdieu offers an important contribution; he situates literature within what he called the "field of power" (37). Florin Oprescu reveals that this field is constituted by relations among agents and institutions competing for dominance through economic and cultural capital (4). Rather than being aesthetically autonomous, literature participates in these struggles as a symbolic good whose production and reception are shaped by power relations (Oprescu 8). In postcolonial settings, this underscores literature's power to expose, resist, and reinterpret domination.

Moreover, postcolonial African scholarship is not silent about the gendered and embodied dimensions of power. Ndi Shang notes that power in the post-colony is often portrayed as phallus-oriented and colonial-sustaining, through the myth of the “founding father” (149–150). Such portrayals concentrate authority while clearing accountability. Onyijen Onyemaeki’s study on power abuse further explains how domination operates across public and private domains, indicating that persecution within the family often parallels authoritarian rule (1). These viewpoints collectively emphasize power as both structural and enacted, influencing institutions, relationships, and narratives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study employs the Postcolonial Theory, an apt theory for examining power as the sustaining and reconfiguration of

colonial order in post-independence states, with Nigeria as case in point. Postcolonialism enables a critical inquiry into how colonial systems of domination are preserved through political, economic, and cultural institutions long after independence. As John Lye notes, postcolonial theory is concerned with literature produced in formerly colonised societies and interrogates how colonial power relations continue to shape knowledge, identity, and governance (1). Of note is that the “post” in postcolonial does not imply a closure of history but rather a continued critical engagement with the legacies of colonialism.

The variant of this framework used herein is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s theory of the subaltern, which is crucial for gaining insight into power not only as domination but also as control over representation and voice. In her seminal text “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” Spivak questions how imperial and postcolonial

power structures silence marginalized groups by absorbing or overwriting their voices within dominant epistemic frameworks. She argues that the subaltern cannot “speak” in any meaningful sense because their speech is either ignored or reinterpreted through hegemonic discourse (25–27). According to Spivak, power functions not only through coercion but also through epistemic violence, meaning the kinds of knowledge systems produced that render certain subjects unintelligible. This idea is important for reading *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* and *A Spell of Good Things*, where characters facing political, economic, and institutional power structures fight to be seen and heard. This article uses this paradigm to examine how power operates not only through physical oppression but also through systemic neglect, misrecognition, and silencing.

Spivak’s intervention is augmented by Frantz Fanon’s critique of domination,

primarily articulated in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon’s ideas on power in postcolonial states are both structural and psychological; he contends that colonial rulers are frequently replaced by the ruling class without dismantling colonial exploitation structures (148–149). This reality pushed Ama Aidoo to write the famous short story ‘For Whom Things Did Not Change.’ Fanon demonstrates how internalizing power leads to alienation, violence, and an elite class cut off from the realities of the working class. Thus, Fanon’s criticism is crucial to both Adébáyò’s portrayal of governmental incompetence and economic brutality and Garrick’s portrayal of militarised governance and elite collusion in the Niger Delta. Fanon helps clarify that power is not a departure from postcolonialism but rather something that persists throughout history.

## Methodology

The paper employs a qualitative and interpretive research design, focusing on Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010) and Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things* (2023). The study employs postcolonial theory, privileging Gayathri Spivak's ideas on subalternity, which provide the necessary foregrounding of the sociopolitical system's silencing of groups at the periphery, and Frantz Fanon's politico-philosophical critique, which brings to light the psychological and systemic aspects of postcolonial domination. The suitability of qualitative textual examination is premised on its potential to interrogate abstract constructs such as power, exclusion, and subalternity, thereby allowing a contextual and unique engagement with the varied dimensions of the text: themes, structure, and ideologies.

## Power and Militarised Authority in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* narrates the coming-of-age story of four friends: Doughboy (leader of a militant group; a victim of circumstance), Amaibi (a lecturer and activist), Kaniyi (a lawyer), and Tubo (a self-centered indigenous worker of Imperial Oil) in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The Niger Delta region is known for the mass production of oil, controlled by foreign elites and a minority of privileged indigenes who exploit the majority in the region and exclude them from diverse opportunities in the region, such as employment, infrastructure, development, etc. This exclusion pushes the youths of the region into crimes such as militancy, oil bunkering, and kidnapping. Doughboy (Doye) recruits mercenaries whose primary aim is to kidnap

foreign oil workers for ransom. The text begins in 2003 when a routine kidnapping of one of the foreign oil workers by Doughboy goes tragically wrong. This unsuccessful kidnapping paves the way for a series of chaotic and angry events that reunite the four friends.

In *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, Chimeka Garricks depicts a society dominated by militarized authority and countervailing responses, in which power is exercised through force, coercion, and the complicity of corporate actors. Physical power manifests through guns, intimidation, and violence, as seen when Kaniye confronts an armed youth: “Dumbstruck, we obeyed. Kaniye raised his hands too, but he walked slowly towards the boy...Cautiously, he offered them to the boy. Kaniye’s voice was calm, ‘You can take my car. And my phone too.’ The boy grabbed the phone from Kaniye’s hand and smashed it to bits on the ground. Gun still pointed at us, he resumed

his gum chomping” (Garricks 146). This scene illustrates kinetic power, the raw force and unpredictable motion of violence, demonstrating how individual survival depends on submission to armed authority. In the same way, police brutality is normalised as a routine form of domination: “You know how enthusiastic they can be about killing an ant with a sledgehammer...For months, I was interrogated and tortured by the police and the state security people, in Abuja, Kaduna and Maiduguri” (Garricks 39). Military force operates with impunity, as gunboats, soldiers, and chaotic firefights enforce state authority, with civilians subjected to both terror and arbitrary killing (Garricks 236).

The military’s role goes beyond coercion to subvert justice and humiliate traditional authority. Garricks shows how systemic impunity preserves elite power: “What do you mean by justice?...the best that can happen is that the military

government will set up a panel of inquiry...Case closed” (239). Traditional leaders are similarly subjugated, as when the Amayanabo is physically degraded: “They caught the Amayanabo hiding in the Royal Mausoleum. They beat him...Then they made him hold his ears, squat, and jump around on his haunches” (Garricks 238). Such instances emphasise the replication of colonial hierarchies: the military enforces obedience through spectacle and fear, consolidating a system where local governance is subordinated to the coercive authority of the state; something highlighted by Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Institutional and bureaucratic power reinforces militarised authority through systemic exclusion and corruption. Garricks portrays bureaucracies as inherently oppressive and inaccessible: “‘It is not awa modus operandi to take a man to ospitul, anyhowly...without approval from soupintendenti. Mba nu, no way’” (104).

Inequality is embedded in everyday administrative practices: “‘Some anemal are more equal dan oda anemals’” (Garricks 106). The officer calls to mind Orwell's classic *Animal Farm*. Kaniye's observation about bribery in correctional institutions further reveals elite complicity: “‘I could have given you more but I had to settle those thieves called prison warders...’” (Garricks 40). These textual instances illustrate how bureaucratic hierarchies reproduce exclusion, echoing Fanon's critique of postcolonial elites who internalise colonial mechanisms of dominance.

Power in Garricks' narrative is inseparable from greed, material accumulation, and patriarchal structures. Chiefs and political elites manipulate access to resources for personal gain: “‘The chiefs were angry because it did not give them any direct monetary benefit’” (Garricks 85). Gendered hierarchies shape the dynamics of power at the familial and societal levels. The

subjugation of women and the sexualised power of the female body, alongside paternal authority, reinforces a broader framework of social control as seen in Spivak's theorisation of the silencing of the subaltern. Father figures like Father Patrick wield domestic power to dictate opportunities and futures, as seen in his manipulation of Sir James' prospects (Garricks 88).

Power within the family is not only structural but generational. Parents, elders, and guardians deploy material, social, and symbolic resources to shape behaviour. Access to education, inheritance, and even attention become tools of inclusion or exclusion. In Asiana, for instance, the allocation of projects and opportunities demonstrates how elites regulate social capital: "Even if Imperial Oil owned that pipeline, I am not sure that paying compensation for the death of some of our boys is the best way to help Asiana...Our

schools have produced some excellent students...But many of these students...cannot afford to go to the university" (Garricks 85). Similarly, the enforcement of educational and career expectations within families functions as a subtle but pervasive mechanism of control, producing compliance while simultaneously limiting agency.

Everyday power also plays out as observed in religious and educational contexts. In Asiana, local elites and elders regulate both opportunities and behaviour: "Father Patrick...turned to Catechist Akassa...He is single-handedly taking care of her, and running her business. And he is just fifteen years old...He will repeat his final year in a good secondary school in Port Harcourt. When he eventually passes his exams, he will study to be a lawyer. My blood has to take over my practice" (Garricks 88). Here, social control is exercised not only through coercion but also

via the promise of future status and selective privilege.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of militarisation and systemic corruption, Garricks does establish as well counter-powers and possibilities of resistance. Moral and ethical resistance emerges through forgiveness, reflection, and the reclamation of personal agency as seen in Amaibi - the hero of the text: “I even lost my faith, and belief in God...Even if I don’t leave this place, I’m a man again” (Garricks 253). Put together, informed resistance is envisioned as a means to challenge structural oppression. Amaibi speaks on behalf of the collective: “The war will be won in lecture halls...corporate boardrooms...legislative chambers...polling stations and courts of law” (Garricks 265). The transformative potential of love and hope as redemptive forces is reiterated in Deola’s assertion: “Only lovers truly understand the eternal nature of hope...” (Garricks 269). Such

instances go in line with Spivak’s concept of the subaltern, where marginalised actors, though silenced within dominant power structures, may exercise agency through strategic engagement and ethical practices.

It goes to say Garricks’ *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* shows that militarised authority in postcolonial Nigeria operates through physical violence, institutionalised exclusion, bureaucratic corruption, and patriarchal hierarchies. Yet, resistance whether moral or collective offers pathways to challenge oppression, echoing theoretical insights from Fanon on postcolonial domination and Spivak on subaltern agency. The novel not only documents the entrenchment of state and corporate power but also highlights the human capacity for resilience and negotiation in the face of systemic violence.

## **Power Dynamics in Ayobámi Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things***

Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things* (2023) tells the story of two families whose lives intersect in contemporary Nigeria. It examines how structural inequity and political corruption affect people's lives. The story follows Èniqlá, a bright student from a poor family who must drop out of school because he cannot afford it, and Wúraqlá, a young doctor from a wealthy family who is trying to balance her profession with family expectations.

As Baba Èniqlá loses his job as a teacher, his wife struggles as a market trader to support the family; however, Èniqlá's family condition rapidly deteriorates into extreme poverty. This condition makes Èniqlá and his family vulnerable to political manipulation, and he becomes a thug involved in election violence. Èniqlá and Wúraqlá's lives, though sharply different, first intersect through her mother, who

sponsors his tailoring. A gesture that prompts his refusal to be part of Wúraqlá's greatest grief, the killing of her father, a political opponent of Èniqlá's employer. This incident accounts for his own sister's death, hence his final silencing.

Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things* presents political and economic power as performative, manipulative, and extractive rather than protective or distributive. The novel illustrates how authority operates through deception, patronage, and coercion, revealing governance as a mechanism for consolidating elite control rather than serving the populace. Early in the narrative, political manipulation is established as an entrenched feature of state power: "Those people would claim to be your kinsmen if it would help them get into power... How many times had the representatives of those politicians promised that electricity would be fixed if only their candidate got into office? Wasn't everyone in the tailoring

association still dependent on generators?” (Adébáyò 1). This observation foregrounds the centrality of performative politics, where promises are tools for gaining compliance rather than delivering meaningful service. In the same vein, the use of threat as an instrument of authority is evident when a political aspirant warns of potential harm: “Ask your husband to warn his friend not to be unfortunate. Yèyè, I am the next governor of this state...If he does not heed that warning? Yèyè, none of us will weep over our child’s dead body o” (Adébáyò 156). The narrative consistently depicts governance as coercion rather than protection, aligning with Mbembe’s postcolonial critiques of the African state as predatory and self-serving (9-41).

The failure of institutional governance creates vacuums in which mob power and informal justice emerge. Frustration with absent state intervention is dramatised when a politician is dragged into

the streets and burnt by a mob: “While most of the cousins were unscathed, a thug managed to slash Bábá Ẹniqlá’s arm as he scaled the fence to safety. The politician was not so lucky. He was caught, dragged into the streets, and burnt alive by the mob” (Adébáyò 34). Such moments reflect the erosion of faith in formal authority and highlight how societal power shifts to those willing to enact immediate, violent retribution, resonating with Fanon’s observation of the postcolonial state as simultaneously coercive and illegitimate.

Poverty operates as both a condition and a tool of systemic exclusion, shaping social hierarchies and reinforcing marginalisation. Adébáyò captures the material and psychological consequences of deprivation: “Especially the vendor’s rage. It was his father who owed this man thousands of naira...his father who had insisted this morning that Ẹniqlá should be the one to go beg the vendor for a copy of the day’s paper

on credit” (Adébáyò 5). The systemic absence of basic services, such as electricity and fuel, compounds exclusion: “There had been no electricity in the hospital for over a month...The real problem was a fuel crisis that had lasted for a week because tanker drivers, rig workers...were on strike” (Adébáyò 13). The psychological dimension of poverty is evident in children like Bùsólá, who internalises the inequity of resource distribution: “I’m the only one who does not have Ugo C. Ugo in my class...Is it fair?” (Adébáyò 23). Pecuniary control extends to social visibility and privilege, with elite access determining participation in events and opportunities: “At these parties, meat is finished only meant you weren’t one of the select few for whom we’d been asked to open the secret vault of meat” (Adébáyò 166), and eligibility for marriage or positions is dictated by wealth and education (Adébáyò 134).

Economic power is inseparable from political influence in Nigeria. Money, material goods, and weapons serve as instruments of control, creating hierarchies that reinforce social stratification. Adébáyò foregrounds how wealth mediates agency and authority: “While he selected the brushes...his hand hovered for so long over the fourth one that the vendor asked if he wanted three instead of four. In the end he’d picked a black one” (Adébáyò 274). The symbolic and physical assertion of power through weapons is also present in adolescent experiences, with knives and guns conferring authority over peers: “Sunglasses on, Òniolá reached into his pocket and touched the hilt of his knife...thrilled by the knowledge that everyone would be looking up to the space he now occupied” (Adébáyò 280), and “Rashidi stepped closer to the woman and pointed the gun between her eyes...He just held the gun in place until she stopped

talking’” (Adébáyò 321). These moments demonstrate that economic and coercive power intersect, establishing hierarchical social orders in both public and private spheres.

The subtle mechanisms of governance failure are as significant as overt coercion. Bureaucracy functions as a means of exclusion, reproducing inequality through procedural manipulation and selective access to resources. Political campaigns focus more on optics than service, as seen when a media strategist critiques the hollow promises of officeholders: “‘Even this skills acquisition thing, you’re sounding like it’s really about getting his photos on posters, not the youth’” (Adébáyò 67). Power is thus exercised through control over perception, access, and opportunity, reinforcing Fanon’s notion of structural abandonment, in which governance institutions fail to protect the populace, leaving citizens vulnerable to exploitation, poverty, and violence.

The overt implication then is that Adébáyò’s novel positions political and economic power as deeply interwoven forces that operate through manipulation, coercion, and structural exclusion. Institutional failure, elite patronage, and material deprivation converge to perpetuate inequality, while mobs, individual resistance, and the subtle use of material and coercive tools reflect the ongoing negotiation of power in postcolonial societies. Through these depictions, *A Spell of Good Things* critiques the performative and extractive nature of political authority, demonstrating the human consequences of governance that prioritises elite enrichment over social welfare, while resonating with broader postcolonial analyses of power, poverty, and exclusion.

Additionally, Family operates as a primary site of power, where parental authority structures aspiration, behaviour, and emotional belonging. Parents dictate

both the material and moral terms of inclusion: “Bàbá Èniṣàlá examined the test script. Good. The subject was integrated science. This child would not make his own mistakes. She would be a doctor or an engineer. At worst, she might be an accountant. He would not allow her to squander her abilities on anything that did not have a clear path to wealth” (Adébáyò 35). Such prescriptive authority enforces obedience under the guise of care, often ignoring the child’s autonomy or interests. However, such parental power is a manifestation of the state’s power; it’s better to be cautious enough not to allow your child to study courses like History and Creative Arts, considered to be irrelevant, rather than face the brunt of unemployment in the future. Favoritism further reinforces domestic hierarchies: “It was not favouritism. No, she just knew her last child better than she knew the others when they were this age” (Adébáyò 142), yet other

children, like Èniṣàlá, experience betrayal: “The betrayal he’d felt when he realised that his parents had chosen Bùsólá over him had only intensified over time” (Adébáyò 264). These uneven emotional economies mirror state structures, where care is conditional and authority unquestionable.

Gender operates as a persistent axis of exclusion, both symbolically and materially. In domestic and community contexts, girls are subject to stricter behavioural norms, sexualised surveillance, and unequal moral judgment. For example, girls are taught to regulate desire to preserve family honor: “Boys were supposed to want sex, and she was to fend them off; that was what good girls did so they would not disgrace their families” (Adébáyò 61). Women’s inclusion in material and cultural resources is also mediated through patriarchal inheritance: “The sisters never discussed how they had become unwelcome visitors in their own home once Festus Jr.

took possession of the house after their father's death" (Adébáyò 153). Even physical traits and genetic potential are read as instruments of future social advantage: "Even in heels, Wúràṣá was shorter than her sister. Good thing Kúnlé was much taller. His genes would at least give their children a fighting chance" (Adébáyò 147). These examples illustrate that gendered power is embedded in domestic, social, and biological expectations, echoing feminist critiques of differential citizenship and structural exclusion (Oyěwùmí, 123-125).

Power is reinforced through observation, expectation, and internalisation, where individuals participate in their own regulation. Self-exclusion and withdrawal become coping mechanisms under sustained authority or social scrutiny. Èniṣá for instance, internalises despair and retreats from social life: "He would withdraw while he waited for the despair to lift, ignoring offers to meet up with friends or attend

ceremonies, unable to find comfort or pleasure in the things he usually turned to for succour during bouts of sadness" (Adébáyò 33). Similarly, school truancy, withdrawal from opportunities, and selective engagement with peers reflect the internalisation of structural and interpersonal pressures: "United's most troublesome boys...claimed the space as their own...no one dared ask them to return to their classes" (Adébáyò 252). These behaviors mirror what Bourdieu terms symbolic violence, wherein exclusion is accepted as normative, producing individuals who self-regulate to fit the limitations imposed on them.

From the ongoing discourse, it can be argued, as portrayed in both narratives, that power produces a culture of silence and compliance. Fear of reprisal, shame, or social disapproval governs action, often more effectively than direct coercion. Individuals navigate domestic and community hierarchies by anticipating

consequences, negotiating access, and limiting self-expression. These demonstrate the pervasive and perhaps internalised influence that the exploitation of power can portend.

## Conclusion

This study shows how power functions in postcolonial Nigerian literature through a variety of interrelated modes that require ongoing critical engagement. Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* exposes the violent aspects of power by focusing on the Niger Delta's intimidating governmental machinery, which includes militarised violence, environmental destruction, and overt political manipulation. The capillary operations of power buried beneath social, economic, and familial structures are unearthed in Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things*, showing how domination operates through everyday systems rather than just overt repression. Despite their different

themes and approaches to storytelling, both narratives reveal power within societal, personal, and household contexts, profoundly shaping opportunities, social visibility, and psychological stability.

Adébáyò reveals how poverty, education, and bureaucratic gatekeeping result in the sidelining of some and in a powerlessness that becomes internalised, as clearly theorised earlier. Hierarchies that operate within families and along gender lines reinforce these dynamics, with favoritism by parents, customary inheritance practices, and other culturally imposed norms regulating behavior, opportunity, and agency. Power in its political and economic dimension is portrayed as extractive and unaccountable, a matter of force, cronyism, and elite complicity overriding public life, calling to mind postcolonial critiques of predatory states in urban and domestic contexts. The paper concludes that in Nigeria, political and economic power is not

grounded in democratic legitimacy or responsibility; rather, it rests on networks of corruption, violence, and elite consolidation that sustain it. These processes are exacerbated by hegemonic interferences that could be gendered, cultural, political, and patrilineal, with power exploited to exclude, limit agency, opportunities, and the behaviour of subalterns in the face of nuanced hegemonic suppression.

The study concludes that narrative erasure, systemic negligence, and repression are employed in both works to suppress subaltern voices. These books therefore act as counter-narratives that expose post-independence Nigeria's government shortcomings, restore marginalised agency, and reestablish human dignity.

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