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ABSTRACT

It is to be noted that works of art are made up of literary devices which are used to embellish them, hence, the formalists' emphasis on 'literariness' and not literature. It is so important in formalist criticism to examine the various devices which the author has indeed employed in narrating his story. From history, there has never been a piece of literature so loosely written without a touch of narrative technique. The purpose of this paper then is to explore the various techniques employed by Iyayi in exposing the class conflict between the capitalists and the (proletariat) working class in Nigeria using the formalist literary approach. As a Marxian writer Iyayi's criticism of the exploitative role of the capitalists and comprador class is very pronounced in Nigeria. This paper concludes that the place of narrative techniques in literary criticism can never be over emphasized.

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I. ABSTRACT

It is to be noted that works of art are made up of literary devices which are used to embellish them, hence, the formalists' emphasis on 'literariness' and not literature. It is so important in formalist criticism to examine the various devices which the author has indeed employed in narrating his story. From history, there has never been a piece of literature so loosely written without a touch of narrative technique. The purpose of this paper then is to explore the various techniques employed by Iyayi in exposing the class conflict between the capitalists and the (proletariat) working class in Nigeria using the formalist literary approach. As a Marxian writer Iyayi's criticism of the exploitative role of the capitalists and comprador class is very pronounced in Nigeria. This paper concludes that the place of narrative techniques in literary criticism can never be over emphasized.

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II. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Concept of Narrative Technique in Literature

Writers from different era or periods in history embellish their artistic creations to derive the 'literariness' of their creativity. The concept of narrative technique in literature to the literary minded artist is like the breath we inhale. Its place

in literary discourse can never be over emphasized. Narrative technique brings out the artistry of any piece of work.

Narrative technique refers to any specific, deliberate constructions of language which an author uses to convey meaning. Literary technique is a unique entity which is envisaged in utmost every piece of literary creation as against literary elements. An author's use of literary technique usually occurs with a single word or phrase, or a particular group of word or phrase fragments at one single point in a text. The author gains favour with the narratee by the use of technique. The fable (**fabula**) 'the elemental materials of a story' becomes more captivating and the narratee becomes more enthusiastic consequent on the application of the **syuzhet** – that is 'the concrete representation used to convey the story' Abram (209). To further clarify the point Julie R. & Michael R. put:

at the end of his study, Sklovsky formulates the distinction between plot (*sjuzet*) and story-stuff (*fabula*): The concept of *plot* is too often confused with the depiction of events - with what I tentatively propose terming "story-stuff." The story-stuff actually is only material for filling in the plot. Therefore, the plot of *Evgenij Onegin* is not the hero's romance with Tat'jana but the plot-processing of this story-stuff worked out by introducing intermittent digressions The forms of art are to be explained by their artistic immanence, not by real-life motivation. When an artist holds back the action of a novel, not by employing intruders, for example, but simply by transposing the order of the parts, he makes us aware of the aesthetic laws

underlying both procedures of composition (13).

In another development, Seymour Chatman writing in *Story and Discourse* relates:

‘the fabula [is the] basic story stuff, the sum total of events to be related in the narrative, and conversely, the plot (sjuzet), the story as actually told by linking the events together. To formalist, fable is the set of events tied together which are communicated to us in the course of the work or what has in effect happened, ‘plot is how the reader becomes aware of what happened’ that is basically, the ‘order of the appearance (of the events) in the work self,’ whether normal (abc), flashed-back (abc), or begun *in medias res* (bc)’ (19-20).

The sum total of the argument here is that the sjuzet - that is the way a story is organized incorporates the narrative technique used in a particular narrative.

Narrative technique means methods that writers use to give certain artistic and emotional effects to a story. It refers to the resources of language; the specific aspects of literature in the sense of its universal function as an art form that expresses ideas through language which we can recognize, identify, interpret and analyze. Oladele Taiwo (1986) submits that, ‘narrative technique is used to supply the necessary ingredients that make every literary piece ‘picturesque, grand and serious’ (qtd. in Awumade). This submission also accedes to the fact that narrative or literary techniques are the overall meaningfulness of a work of literature. Narrative techniques then become the life-wire of any piece of literature to be regarded as artistry. This is the *raison d’être* behind the proclamation of the Russian formalist of the **Prague Linguistic Circle**, Roman Jakobson in 1921 that:

The object of study in literary science is not literature but "literariness," that is, what makes a given work a literary work. Meanwhile, the situation has been that historians of literature

act like nothing so much as policemen, who are out to arrest a certain culprit, take into custody (just in case) everything and everyone they find at the scene as well as any passers-by for good measure. The historians of literature have helped themselves to everything - environment, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of a science of literature they have worked up a concoction of homemade disciplines. They seem to have forgotten that those subjects pertain to their own fields of study - to the history of philosophy, the history of culture, psychology, and so on, and that those fields of study certainly may utilize literary monuments as documents of a defective and second-class variety among other materials (qtd. in Julie R. & Michael R. 2004: 7).

Thus, it is obviously paramount in creative writing as well as literary criticism the necessity of the comprehensive knowledge of literary technique.

Iyayi as a writer has consciously deployed various techniques in discussing the rottenness in the Nigeria socio-political and economic system. The perceptive reader would deduce from the passages of his volumes: *The Contract*, *Heroes*, *Violence* and *Court Martial*, narrative techniques.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Formalist Criticism

Formalist criticism emphasizes the form of a literary work to determine its meaning. Emphasis here is basically on the work itself, rather than on the social or historical contexts of a work. Proponents of the formalist approach include influential literary figures such as Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukarovsky. They believe that the central meaning of a piece of work is discovered through a detailed analysis of the formal elements in the work instead of approaching it from the outside to consider issues whether historical, biographical, psychological or ideological (Di Yanni 2000: 2076). Elaborating on the history of formalism Terry Eagleton (1996) says, ‘the Formalists emerged in Russia in the years before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, and flourished throughout

the 1920s. The Formalists started out by seeing the literary work as a more or less arbitrary assemblage of 'devices', and only later came to see these devices as interrelated elements or 'functions' within a total textual system. 'Devices' included sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative techniques, in fact the whole stock of formal literary elements; and what all of these elements had in common was their 'estranging' or 'defamiliarizing' effect' (2-3). Julie R. & Michael R also write:

How literary language worked was of less importance than what a literary work was about. Two movements in early twentieth-century thought helped move literary study away from this orientation. The first movement was the attempt on the part of philosophers of science like Edmund Husserl to isolate objects of knowledge in their unmixed purity. The Russian Formalists, a group of young scholars (Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Boris Tomashevsky, Boris Eichenbaum) who wrote in their teens and twenties, were influenced by this approach. For them, literature would be considered not as a window on the world but as something with specifically literary characteristics that make it literature as opposed to philosophy or sociology or biography. Literature is not a window for looking at sociological themes or philosophical ideas or biographical information; rather, it is a mural or wall painting, something with a palpability of its own which arrests the eye and merits study. The manipulation of representational devices may create a semblance of reality and allow one to have the impression of gazing through glass, but it is the devices alone that produce that impression, and they alone are what makes literature literary. More specifically, the Formalists were interested in analyzing literature into its component parts and in describing its principal devices and modes of operation (3).

From the above, it is noticeable that formalist criticism does not entertain historical or

sociological information for an analysis or explication of a piece of literature. Its main focus is on the techniques which the writer has harnessed together to achieve his creation. What most to the formalist is how the work comes to mean what it does – how its resource of language are deployed by the author to convey meaning. Implicit in the formalist perspective, moreover, is that readers can indeed determine the meaning of a literary work – that literature can be understood and its meaning clarified. According to Worgu formalism is, 'structure-oriented...Based on this, there is this tendency towards wanting to identify the unifying devices as well as analyzing them for the purpose of reconciliation of these devices' (123). Amala points out that with formalist criticism, 'meaning is increasingly said to reside in the work rather than in the writer's mind' (20). This is because the experience so depicted was not so much that which the writer originally had and then communicated through language to the reader but rather was located in the work itself. Buttressing the point further, Amala insists, 'formalism examines the structure, language, symbols, imagery, style and other features which makes a work rich and rewarding to the reader' (21). The Formalists were primarily oriented towards the *form* of literature. Hans Bertens (2007:25). Thus, from the above, it is understood that formalism expresses a vigorous, potent mode of literary discourse and analysis; a mode which calls for critical examination and reexamination of a literary work to arrive at what constitutes the literariness of the work.

2.3 Analysis of Narrative Techniques in Festus Iyayi's *Violence*

Festus Iyayi was a radical Nigerian writer with a particular interest in Marxian revolutionary brand. Although his Marxist approach was not very pronounced like writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o or Sembene Ousmene etc., However, Iyayi calls for a united effort on the side of the proletariat in fighting capitalism and the bourgeoisie, a fight which he continued until his death by motor accident. Iyayi's narrative style and technique in his revolutionary novel, *Violence*

will be examined in this paper. We may not exhaust all the devices he had employed to foreground his themes in *Violence* but to some extent, we will be able to do justice to some. Some of the devices employed by the novelist to expose societal ills of his time include: narrative voice (heterodiegetic narrator), diction, language, explicit narrative technique, analepsis (flashback), prolepsis (foreshadowing), personification, metaphor, story within story, exaggeration etc. We shall critically examine their manifestations in the narrative.

2.4 The Use of Story within Story

The author makes use of the technique of story within story which is a series of playlet to further buttress his message and foreground his themes. From pages 174-189 of *Violence*, the author creates a playlet to explain the pitiable condition faced by the poor masses. A situation smeared with corruption, bribery and embezzlement of public fund. The use of this playlet in the novel assists at a great extent the interpretation of the novel; it also heightens the texture of the story as the issues raised in the story are drawn closure to the people. The dramatization and theatrical performance of the thematic statement of the author is heightened by the playlet in the novel. It is an additional effect to the narrative.

2.5 The Use of Metaphor

The author uses metaphor in order to achieve a direct effect. The language used in the novel is metaphorical. The sole aim is to capture the pathetic condition of the characters who are mainly representatives of the Nigerian poor masses. In the following statement, time is used metaphorically as an enemy of man:

Time fattened the men as cows were fattened and then killed them off in the prime of their lives. Time was the hard labour on the land, the malnutrition, the diseases, the ignorance, the poverty...Time was the cruelty and the bitterness into which these people were born and in which they ultimately died (V. 72).

This is a metaphorical representation of the hard social realities which the masses face in the land. The picture here is very clear and indicting.

2.6 The Use of Personification

Personification is the attribution of animate qualities to inanimate objects. The author makes use of personification by the ascription of human peculiar qualities to inanimate object. The purpose here is to showcase artistic prowess and to grand literariness to the use of language to convey his message. In the dialogue between Idemudia and his mother, she says, 'darkness must not find us here' she told her son. 'We must go. We must leave.' And she cried while her children gathered around her' (V. 9). The technique enhances the holistic presentation of the reality of the predicament which the characters face. 'Darkness' has been given the attributes of animate entity – that of 'finding' which is particularly that of animate object. Darkness has taken on flesh to perform function strictly reserved for living things. This is foregrounding, this is literariness.

2.7 The Use of Prolepsis (foreshadowing)

The use of prolepsis is noticeable in the novel. The author craftily engaged this device to relate to the narratee events that will occur in the future. The technique makes the awareness of impending happenings as clear as dawn to the reader. We see this through the dialogue between Idemudia and his wife Adisa. The dialogue signposts what is to come. In a polemical atmosphere Idemudia and his wife exchange conflicting views on the situation affecting the family. The author exercises his craft here with great artistry. The diatribe between the husband and wife turn antagonist overnight because of their poverty. It goes thus:

Adisa got up from the floor. 'You are not going out.' She cried. Her voice was sharp and filled with hatred. You are not leaving this room. If you go out I am going out too. I am going to find some means to feed myself.' Idemudia

looked at her and suddenly he began to laugh. 'You are going to find some means to feed yourself?' Yes, and why not? Adisa replied defiantly. 'Or perhaps you think you think you are the only man in the world?' Her eyes shone with scorn (V.15).

Later in the novel because she has threatened to indulge in unholy affairs, her threat comes to pass as their pauperized condition makes her to commit adultery with Obofun. This is how prolepsis is shown in this novel as a useful device.

2.8 The Use of Analepsis (flashback)

The author makes use of analepsis as a technique to relate in the present events that have happened in the past. The author uses this device to reveal to the reader what transpired early on in the novel between Idemudia, his father and mother when Idemudia wants a job and his mother goes and consults a native doctor to facilitate the process. The excerpt below demonstrates this:

So he had gone home because there was nothing else he could do. 'They want a goat,' she informed him on her return. 'They want a goat; they also want a cock and a tortoise. I can provide the cock and the tortoise. Your father must provide the goat...' (26).

This incident takes place before the start of the story. Through it we are introduced to the stern, severe relationship between father and son and the acrimony that runs through the family. Through the analepsis technique we are aware that Idemudia is from a polygamous family. This technique enables the reader to move to and fro in time and space.

2.9 Explicit Narrative Technique

Iyayi makes use of explicit narrative technique by which the physique of characters is revealed to the reader. This is a technique through which readers get to know more or get a clearer picture or view and understanding of their characters on the pages of the novel. This is vividly designated in the story. For instance:

for Queen had a pair of neat legs, long and straight. Her back side was a landslide, her breasts heaved like a bunch of ripe oranges on an over weighted branch. Her oval face ended in a small chin, her shifty eyes were half concealed by bushy and jet black eyelashes. Queen had a husky voice, as if she suffered from a sore throat (23).

Through this particular technique, a picturesque representation of Queen is presented. This assists in a grand perception of the page-character both in characterization and critical discourse.

2.9 Narrative Voice (Heterodiegetic Narrator)

This refers to the vantage point from which the story is told. The narrative voice is that of heterodiegetic narrator. According to Gérard Genette (1980) heterodiegetic narrator is a type of narrator in which his presence is not felt in the story he is narrating (50). This is also called the omniscient narrator. The narrator sees all and narrates all that he sees. He sees and tells the story from the beginning to the end with what is known as 'the eye of God.' Also the novel is divided into many phases with many chapters. Since the narrator is outside the story, it becomes very easy for him to relate issues as they are without bias.

2.10 The Use of Exaggeration

Exaggeration is one of the techniques used in *Violence*. The point is that Iyayi endowed his characters with an exaggerated super human moral probity. This is seen in Adisa. At first she resists Obofun's advances with all her physical internal vigour on the ground that an adulterous life is strong sin against the Almighty God, and also against her cherish husband. On the other hand, Idemudia more successfully makes the point when he confronts Queen's naked body. Idemudia says, 'I cannot do what you want me to do, you have a husband and I have a wife...It should be adultery' (V. 298-99). The author also endowed his characters with exaggeration in the relationship between the poor and the rich when

Idemudia says that between the rich and the poor lies a gap that can only be bridged through physical and psychological violence. Idemudia at this juncture reflects on the situational realities and blames his suffering on the societal violence. This is vividly portrayed from this speech that he makes:

What kind of life is this? ... A man gets a job and cannot protest. He cannot ask for higher wages, the period of his leisure is cut down arbitrarily and he must come out to work when he is told. This was slavery; this was...violence (V. 243).

This statement is exaggerated for the purpose of emphasis to make the living condition pitiable and more serious.

2.11 Diction

Diction is traditionally defined as the choice of word use by an author. The diction used in the novel is simple. However, it may be high for an average reader. This is because some of the passages would require one to reflect critically to interact with what is happening in the society to be able to decode what the writer is talking about.

2.12 The Use of Humour

Humour is the quality of being amusing, comical or funny. The author used humour in the novel to create laughter in the face serious social problems. The story of the tax collector and Idemudia's father and uncle escaping into the bush in order to evade tax is quite humorous. The narrator relates:

the tax collectors and policemen are in the village...they are arresting anybody who has not paid his tax... what shall we do? I have no money. I am taking to the bush. Both his father and his uncle had then hastily departed and jumped into the bush behind their house (5).

The above occurrence is quite humorous seeing two elderly men running into the bush. We could imagine how they were running and in that

imagining state laughter becomes the order of the day.

III. CONCLUSION

We have so far examine in this paper the various techniques used by the author in the novel *Violence*. It is clear that the writer consciously employed several devices to foreground his work. Just as it is formulated by the formalists that the beauty of every work of art is the 'literariness' of the work, Iyayi embellished his novel with techniques that in turn add great artistic taste and increase the texture of the work.

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