
REPRESENTATION OF POST INDEPENDENT NIGERIA IN FESTUS IYAYI'S NOVELS

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that the this study was carried out by **Osamuyi Jennifer ASEMOTA** (Miss) in the Department of English And Literature, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision

Dr. Esther Iris JAMGBADI (Mrs)
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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to Almighty God for his Guidance, protection and provision and also to my family for their support.

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My foremost gratitude goes to Almighty God for wisdom, courage, strength and protection. My profound and earnest gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. E.I Jamgadi for going through this research and for her guidance and suggestions. I appreciate the Head of Department; Dr. Adekunle P. Mamudu and all other lecturers in this Great Department.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
CERTIFICATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE	
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Purpose of Study	1
1.2 Scope of Study	1
1.3 Methodology	1
1.4 Theoretical Background	2
1.5 Review of Related Scholarship/ Justification of Study	2
1.6 Thesis Statement	6
CHAPTER TWO: PUBLIC IMAGE	
2.0 INTRODUCTION	7

2.1 Public Image	7
------------------	---

2.2 Greed and Incompetence	8
----------------------------	---

CHAPTER THREE: SOCIO-POLITICAL CRISES

3.0 INTRODUCTION	12
------------------	----

3.1 Socio-Political Crises	12
----------------------------	----

3.2 Corruption	13
----------------	----

3.3 Exploitation and Oppression	16
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE DEVICES

4.0 INTRODUCTION	22
------------------	----

4.1 Narrative Devices	22
-----------------------	----

4.2 Setting	22
-------------	----

4.3 Plot Structure	22
--------------------	----

4.4 Flashback	23
---------------	----

4.5 Point of View	23
-------------------	----

4.6 Story within a story	24
--------------------------	----

4.7 Characterization	24
----------------------	----

4.8 Imagery and Motif	27
-----------------------	----

4.9 Contrast

28

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Conclusion

30

Works Cited

32

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to examine and criticize Post Independent Nigeria. Festus Iyayi's novels; *Violence and The Contract* is a representation of the Nigerian system, these novels mirrors the Nigerian society beginning from the leaders to the common man. This research aims at exposing the critical issues Nigeria faced at her independence and is still facing till this day. He exposes these critical issues so as to make Nigerians aware of these problems and find solutions to them.

1.2 Scope of Study

This research is limited to the analysis of Festus Iyayi's *Violence and The Contract*, focusing mainly on the representation of Post Independent Nigeria. It highlights the sociopolitical crisis in Post Independent Nigeria as portrayed in the novels, exposing the reasons why these crises have become prevalent in the society and also shows the literary devices used by the author. It shows the betrayal of Post Independent Nigeria Government, they have betrayed Nigerian citizens, and the nationalists who fought and died for Nigeria's Independence.

1.3 Methodology

This research uses the qualitative method of research to expose the sociopolitical crisis that strangles contemporary Nigeria. Festus Iyayi's novels; *Violence and The Contract* are critical analyzed to expose these crises. Other sources like reviews, textbooks, internet and personal observation were used for effective research.

1.4 Theoretical background

This research is based on Marxist theory. Marxism is a socio-economic and political philosophy named after Karl Marx. It is a theory of social change; it criticizes a particular society from the perspectives of inequality, exploitation and class struggle. It examines the effects of capitalism (economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit) on labor, productivity and economic development and argues for a worker revolution to overturn capitalism in favor of communism. It is a method of societal analysis that focuses on the class system of a society. This theory criticizes the corruption, exploitation, oppression, and insincerity of the bourgeoisie and ruling classes. Marxism calls for a classless society and for even distribution of nation's wealth.

1.5 Review of related scholarship/ Justification of study

Violence and The Contract written by Festus Iyayi in the year 1979 and 1982 are realistic novels that depict the exact happenings of the Nigerian society as at when they were written and what the country still faces today. In *Violence*, the sharp contrast in the living conditions of the dominant and the dominated, the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor in contemporary Nigeria is vividly portrayed.

Mohammed Yakuba states that;

Through language, parallelism, and foregrounding, Iyayi has expressed themes of violence, suffering, exploitation, oppression, destruction, war, scarcity, greed, chaos, and corruption in his novels. Moreover, through the rhetorical devices of pathos, slogans and humour he appealed to the emotions and intellect of his audience and gained public awareness, public mobilization and persuasion to express his Marxist ideology. The language and writing style reflects the class struggle.

Abdullahi Haruna explains that;

Iyayi's *Violence* examines the contradictions in Nigerian socio-political life. More specifically, the novel deals with addressing corruption and injustice in the distribution of national resources. The novel *Violence* aims to describe how corruption and injustice are perpetrated by Nigerian political and institutional leaders against the common man. By creating characters and situations in *Violence*, Iyayi tells the story of a society where corruption is rewarded, while patriotism appears punitive, self-sacrificing, and calls for social restructuring. To achieve this goal, in Iyayi's novel he compares the families of Obofon and the Queen with the families of Idemudia on the one hand and Adisa on the other, to illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship of corruption and injustice.

Abdullahi Haruna states that;

Literature in different parts of the world is a response to specific historical and socio-political variables of its time. African literature can be seen as protest literature. The protest culture, rooted in protests against slavery and colonialism, contributed to post-independence social ills such as widespread corruption and incompetence among African politicians and officials. Nigerian writers, especially novelists, have played an important role in the growth and development of African literature through a wide range of highly successful novels. In *Violence*, Festus Iyayi is troubled by his society's rapid decline due to corruption and incompetence after independence. Iyayi novels reflects the moral decay in the Nigerian since independence till 1980's when the novels were written but so many later corruption, incompetence, exploitation not only remained in the Nigerian society, but is now the order of the day.

Nimota Dauda-Ajao explains that;

Violence as the title depicts has four major characters: Idemudia, Adisa, Queen and Obofun. Festus Iyayi is a realistic writer that focuses on mostly societal and political issues of the country; he uses the four major characters to portray this very well, in the book. Idemudia, husband to Adisa is a strong, determined and hardworking man, endowed with strength and dignity, while Queen, a ruthless rich woman, who has everything going on for her through the help of her husband who named all his businesses in her name. This gave her hedge over others.

Idemudia and his wife Adisa represents the oppressed, dominated and the lower class while Queen and Obofun represents the oppressors and upper class. She also states that

The societal issue in the novel portrays inhuman treatment by the government melted on the citizens, showcases the level of hardship in the economy, very poor standard of living, lack of job and a very deplorable economy. Another example is the poor pay workers receive for the high risk job given to them, if they do not receive it, they go hungry and there are workers willing to take the job. Also sex is used as a tool for getting what you want in the economy. Queen and Obofun are guilty of this. Queen would sleep with anything just to get herself what she wants while Obofun on the other hand, just want to satisfy himself because he believes he can offer what the other party needs.

The Contract continues the discussion on corruption which is perpetrated through the use of contracts. It focuses mainly on the failure of the Nigerian government and how physical rot and decay which symbolizes corruption is seen in every strata of the Nigerian society.

Abdullahi Haruna states that,

Iyayi's *The Contract* is built against a backdrop of corruption above and below in every strata of the society. In the novel, the officials in charge of government agencies are

portrayed as corrupt. Corruption is rampant at all levels of government, civil servants, military and paramilitary services, and university executive committees. In the novel, a great deal of corruption is portrayed as endemic to the executive committees. This is done by disguising contracts awarded for the ostensible purpose of nation-building. By winning contracts, the heads of government agencies and their henchmen plunder public resources and create economic austerity, exposing ordinary people to the worst of poverty, hunger, disease and insecurity. This novel exposes the grim reality of Nigeria, the Nigerian leaders in the novel mainly focus on their own safety and care less about nation building, and the well-being of ordinary citizens seems unimportant to the leaders, which can be seen in contrast among the suffering of the poor and the luxurious and greed lifestyle that characterize the lives of the ruling class.

This research examines the contradictions of Post-Independent Nigeria in order to criticize the Socio-economic and Political systems of operation in Nigeria. Although other scholars have written about the Post-Independent Crisis in Nigeria, this study focuses on Post-Independence crisis in Nigeria from Festus Iyayi views.

1.6 Thesis statement

This essay exposes Post Independence Nigeria which is characterized by greed and incompetence of the Nigerian Politicians as portrayed by the characters in the novel resulting to the socio-political crises in the country.

CHAPTER TWO

PUBLIC IMAGE

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Public Image

Nigeria is one the richest country, possessing one of Africa's largest economies; it is rich in mineral resources. Nigeria is the sub-Saharan African's largest and the world's thirteenth largest producer and exporter of oil. It was a country on the verge of greatness but was denied by internal unrest which attacks her economic, social, and political growth; some of which include civil war (BIAFRA war), various number of coup, the growing rot in public bureaucracy, sleaze in the oil sector and overdependence on oil revenue, public office lure which attracts more thieves and charlatans to politics, the ceaseless plunder of the national treasury, a lack of public accountability, and lack of commitment by leaders and citizens. When nationalists fought for her Independence, most people believed that Nigeria upon getting her independence will result to the even distribution of nation's wealth/resources therefore improving the standard of living of Nigeria. If has been 62 years since Nigeria gained independence from Britain yet political and economic stability has eluded the country, Nigerians who believed that freedom form colonial masters' equals' better living standards have been were greatly disappointed. For most Africans in the new country, Independence brought no fundamental change. It was independence with the ruler holding a beggar's bowl and the ruled holding a deflated stomach. The joys and enthusiasm that heralded the political independence of Nigeria was soon replaced with a feeling of betrayal and hopelessness. The political leaders that 'fought' the colonialists soon indulge in the vices of the colonialists, in some cases, even worse. Their primary concern is how to enhance their personal comfort instead of the collective welfare of the people. The leadership of the colonial masters was retained after independence, the same exploitation, oppression and social injustices

were preserved for the opportunistic ends of post-colonial leaders. These past colonial leaders are now preoccupied with holding power for the purpose of self-enrichment and not for the advancement of their people. Once post-colonial leaders replaced the colonial masters, they became just like them. Henceforth, it can be said there is no change whatsoever, only white faces were replaced by black ones (Ayintey 1992). It was disappointing that nationalist who fought and died for Nigerian Independence were betrayed.

2.2 Greed and Incompetence

The greed and incompetence of the Nigerian leaders has led to the socio-political crisis that plagues the country today. Political leaders use their powers to gain access to public funds and distribute privileges among their families and followers. The pervasive idea that material wealth counts above morality and conscience is the reason why Nigerian leaders has sold out their conscience and ruled out moral in all areas of the Nigerian system such that people who are law abiding and patriotic are frowned upon but wrong doers are praised and are even awards and titles and are treated with more respect, they retire with full benefit after embezzling substantial government funds.

Government institutions or bodies set aside to checkmate these excesses of post-colonial leaders have either been bought over and are in cohort with these leaders, looting out the nation's wealth or are too afraid to go against these leaders. The belief that money that gives meaning to life, that life is worthless without money is the major cause of greed in the hearts of many Nigerians, this is the reason why Nigerians are now caught in the intense craze for money, everybody wants to be rich and those who already are, wants more. People steal and kill each other, plunder nation's coffers and even use their fellow citizens carelessly and shamelessly; women used for sexual satisfaction, Chief Ekata in Iyayi's *The Contract* uses his female employees as lures to win favors. His qualifications for hiring female were that they were

beautiful and that they could satisfy sexual needs. While the men were used for cheap labor, they do more work and are paid less wages. Idemudia's lamentation at the site is an insight to the plight of labourers;

What kind of life is this? He asked himself a hundred times. A man gets a job and he cannot protest. He cannot ask for higher wages, the period of his leisure is cut down arbitrarily and he must come to work when he is told. This is slavery, this was,...yes, he remembered, it came to him slowly, this was violence. *Violence* p.243

This is a clear picture of how laborers are treated; they earn so little but are worked harder than slaves. This is the result of the greed and Incompetence of Nigerian post-colonial leaders, their intense need for more wealth even at the expense of the citizens, now serves as an example to Nigerian elites, money is now king over everything and everyone. The society places more value on results like money, cars and mansions; not how the individual gets it.

Greed is the major cause of corruption in Nigeria and because of the incompetence of the government; it is unable to sanction its officials. The president, governors, ministers, commissioners, police and other custodians of the law, sworn in by Nigerian citizens to protect their interest and for their improvement and that of the country are now perpetrators of these atrocities; they have encouraged stealing, bribery and other vices. This is now the acceptable way in the society; it is how the society functions. This means that if a person sticks to his morals and refuses to engage in corrupt practices, he will be despised and ridiculed by others, he will be considered an idealist.

Iyayi indicted the government for their inefficiency and their neglect of public infrastructure, for instance; in *Violence*, the hospital which deplorable conditions is very noticeable. Instead of maintaining these hospitals or building new ones, the government tends to build more hostels than hospitals as revenue can be generated from putting those hostels in rent. Their greed is

heavily criticized by the play performed in the hospital, the government representative during the ceremony protested that the mock play must be stopped; he saw the play as an attempt to ridicule the government. This play conveys the author's definition of violence, his definition of violence does not mean the physical use of force but rather the various infliction on a man by his fellow man, which denies the inflicted man the basic essence of life.

...Acts of violence are committed when a man is denied the opportunity of being educated, or getting a job, of feeding himself and his family properly, of getting medical attention heaply, quickly and promptly'. In the same hospital, where a patient can sleep in a large air conditioned room whereas other ordinary patients (the lower class); men, women and children have to sleep in corridors, on mats, on the hard, cold and roughly cemented floors or even share beds.

Idemudia's lamentation at the hospital's hall blames the government for its failure. Also in Iyayi's *The Contract*, the conversation between Ogie Obala and the taxi driver is another illustration of the government incompetence and failure. The government reserved good roads for their personal use while its citizens live in filth and chaos, children are die from malnutrition but what the leaders care about is awarding themselves and defending their theft.

To sum up everything that has been said so far, government needs to check its officials beginning from the highest to the lowest rank, a foreign independent body should be established to check and balance the excesses of these leaders, the government should purge itself from greed and every element of corruption and persecute those found culpable because Nigeria needs a national leadership with the understanding and the ability to set the tone and direction for national growth and development, the lack of these understanding leaders has negated the country's ability to achieve meaningful development, as the incompetence and greed of the leaders are the particular reason for the sociopolitical vices that affects the nation today.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-POLITICAL CRISIS

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Socio-political Crises

The sociopolitical Crises of the post independent Nigeria are the results of Nigeria's incompetent government, when the political and institutional leaders set aside their nation-building responsibilities and succumb to the lure of profit the result is the crisis that plagues Nigeria. The Nigerian civil service and all political office have depreciated and appointments into offices are based on nepotism and as a result, most political positions are occupied by unqualified candidates. Chief Obala's decision in appointing his son as the Principal Secretary in charge of special project is an example of Nepotism, he states that;

Important decisions concerning contracts will have to be taken very soon at the Ogbé City Council; these contracts will be worth hundreds of millions of naira. I need a man of my own there; somebody outside the family will make a mess of things. But if you are there... *The Contract* p.1

The challenge for Nigeria is not only its damaged political leadership but also the docility of the Nigerians, because the leaders do whatever they like without caring about the consequences of their actions, Nigerians have become like them, they now see corruption and other vices as means of escape, a means of survival. Chief Obala's emphasis on corruption as means of survival because it is accepted in the society and going against corruption was unrealistic; ... But then corruption wasn't bad because it was a method by which so many people survived. To protest against it was unrealistic. The best thing was to join in, not to work against it. *The Contract* p.122.

This assertion is the major reason why every strata of the Nigerian system is filled with rot and decay. People believe that since everyone is involved in these corrupt practices why not join them, because just one person cannot go against or fight the entire system, so the best option was to join in. Ogie Obala and his father Chief Ewah Obala are victims of this situation, while Onise Ine stand firm in his beliefs against corruption without wavering; which is why he is regarded as the ideal character. Festus Iyayi uses Ine's character as the perfect example to all Nigerians; Political leaders and the common man because if more than half of Nigerian population believe and practice Ine's views, Nigeria will be free from every crisis that plagues it today and become the great nation it was meant to be.

3.2 Corruption

Corruption is a huge problem that Nigeria has been grappling with since her Independence. It started with government officials but has gradually infiltrated every sector of the economy such as the educational sector, religious sector and even the economic sector. In Nigeria, it is very rare to find a government official who is not corrupt. Nigeria is at the top of the ranking list of most corrupt countries, and as stated by the former British Prime Minister David Cameron, Nigeria is a "fantastically corrupt" country with corrupt leaders. This problem has existed since independence and it is getting worse.

In *Violence and The Contract*, Iyayi has shown that Nigerian elites are corrupt. In *Violence* the novelist used the characters of Obofun and Queen to the elite class, they are introduced to the readers to present the way the elite class manipulate, exploit and oppress the lower. Obofun at a time worked in the Ministry of Works and Transport, where he had been loaned some money by the ministry, with which he built a house and instead of living in it, he let it back to the ministry at an extraordinary high price, the greed he displayed is an example of corruption. Iriso works in the Ministry of Agriculture and because of he is the superintendent in charge of food, he offered

Queen Goods worth five hundred naira for an hour of lovemaking; he uses government property for his sexual satisfaction. Due to the corruptive nature of the post-colonial Nigerian society, the oppressed and marginalized are being treated unjustly by the system while at the same time 'greater crimes lie unpunished' (*Violence* p.179).

The judge, being a member of the elite class, is evidently being partial in the dispensation of justice as he does not allow adequate time for the Defense Counsel for the critical examination of the case at hand. The judge simply says, 'I cannot grant the time' (*Violence* p.180). This is an attempt by the judge to divert the course of justice in the court and a clear evidence of encouraging the perpetuation of social injustice in the society. Iyayi uses the outburst of the Defense Counsel to show that, in a class society, there is justice for the rich but non for the poor. The Defense Counsel stresses that 'the whole society is sick' because 'greater crimes' of the elite and government were not dealt with; the offenders were even retired with full benefits and their crimes left unpunished. Thus, the message presented in the play displays the injustice in the society, there is no justice for the common man.

Also, in *The Contract*, the physical filth found in the streets represents the general decay of the society, because the physical decay is the outward manifestation of inner decay. This is why the people responsible for the eradication of the decay are now the creators of decay. High ranking politicians and military official are busy increasing their salaries and awarding themselves fake contracts in order to acquire more wealth. The characters of Chief Obala, Ekata, Oluru, The State Administrator and Mallam Mallam are used to show the way politicians steal public funds allocated to the development of the nation resulting in dilapidated buildings, roads and bridges just for the sake of enriching themselves. These politicians did their best to ensure maximum profit from the country's finance without thinking about the citizen's benefit. For instance, Mallam mallam is responsible for cashing out cheques signed by government officials

for the provision of goods, he provides nothing but is paid weekly; he explains his business to Ogie Obala:

There is a group of government officials in the service; in forces ... I supply them with various items. Each week I receive a cheque for one hundred thousand naira, I go to the bank and cash it...actually..., I supply them with nothing. The money I cash, we share out again. I get my portion, the others get theirs. (*The Contract p.17*)

Thus, there is an alliance between the military, the politicians and the bourgeoisie, all of whom are engaged in the systematic theft to the detriment of the common man. *The contract* is a realistic evocation of the Nigerian society that has lost its moral values in the pursuit of wealth. Business leaders will do anything to win contracts or succeed in their business enterprises, Mr Oluru did not hesitate to send his wife for sexual gratification to the State Administrator and other high ranking officials in order that they should “swing the contract in his favor” (*The Contract p.119*). Chief Ekata business grows through the technique of using his female employees as lures to win favor, he also poison and kills Mr Oluru who he sees as a treat to him. Mallam Mallam emphasizes the essence of social values when he tells Ogie Obala that; “...you only talk about consciences when dealing with decent people. We are indecent people, the first rule is to rule out morals, there are no morals in this country...” (*The Contract p.18*)

This means that there is moral decay in the society and that is the reason why the society is the way it is. Nigeria needs to restore morals to the Social, Economic, Religious and Political areas of operation. Uncle Saralo also explains to Ogie that the society no longer expect ideas, he tries to make Ogie accept the ruling ideology of materialism as inevitable in a contemporary society. He tells Ogie that;

“You want a telephone installed, you pay the official and then the unofficial charge, and the second is the higher, always. It’s the accepted thing, It is the way that society

functions and there is nothing that can be done about it... The way the society works is quite different from the way you people see it at college. Never make yourself laws... Always go with the wind... Life isn't a lot of New Year Eves. At least not in your country... there is no need to be disgusted because a contractor brings you a carton of whisky or even offers you his wife... And you will be happier if only you will learn to separate your dream from what is real (*The Contract* p. 37-39).

This shows the complete breakdown of moral order in the society and that the only laudable values are material acquisition and exploitation. He explains to Ogie that bribery and corruption is now the order of the day and that it is no one's fault but that it is just how the society functions and that going against what the society accepts is been an idealist.

3.3 Exploitation and Oppression

Exploitation is act of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from his/her work limiting the individual in self-realization. The novel focuses on how the lower class are brutally exploited and degraded. Poverty and unemployment is the major cause of exploitation; the government failure in providing employment opportunities results to the high rate of poverty in Nigeria which gives the elite class the upper hand against the poor in the society. The condition of the workers Iyayi depicts in his novels are forms of exploitation. We are told of the great sufferings the Idemudia and his three friends had to endure while trying to earn little money to support themselves for at least a day, they were provided three big trailers filled with cement to offload, each trailer carrying five hundred bags of cement for five naira each in the rain, since they could not go on an empty stomach, they agreed. Even the rich man who wants to buy blood takes advantage of the men's state of being unemployed and poor, getting several pints of blood for very little pay, also Queen sacked every man who dared asked for a raise and quickly got other

willing men to work for her. These men worked for insatiable sums of money yet could not complain for fear of losing their jobs.

The sharp contrast in the living conditions and working conditions of the lower and upper class of the society shows how the lower class citizens are exploited for selfish reasons, the picture painted about the rich and elite class in the novels is that of corrupt, selfish and heartless class responsible for the socio-economic and political problem in the country. The exploitative manner in which Queen used Idemudia and his friends to offload three trailer loads of cement for twenty naira is demining, they are also shown slaving away with other laborers in her site; the low cost housing contract she won. She is prepared to sacrifice anyone as long as her desires are met.

they fell in silence as they fed the concrete mixer, the men came again and again and each time they the wheelbarrow, head pans and buckets. Their chest glistening with sweat, glistened with sweat, their backs were bathed with sweat. They worked in subdued silence like prisoners, coming and going in the intense heat of the sun. (*Violence* p.244)

Queen capitalizes on the lack of employment opportunities and works her laborers more than slaves and they earned so little. Idemudia and his co-labourers that replaced the dismissed workers are not told of the amount of money they would be paid until Queen informs the Greek; "It's one naira fifty kobo a day". There is no room for negotiation of any kind; the rate is simply imposed on the workers. The reason for the poor wages is the unemployment. The employers capitalize on prevailing conditions like high unemployment and poverty to impoverish the work force. A worker is paid so little and he accepts it because he must survive. If he refuses to accept the little pay offered, he will starve as there are many others who will be waiting to accept. They are forced to endure everything melted out on them because it their only means of survival, they each have families to feed and finding another job could take months and even years. "*Why do*

you say I am not forced to stay on? If I went away where would I eat? How would I pay my rent? How would I survive? I stay because I have no where better to go”

While queen exploits Idemudia and the other laborers, her husband Obufun exploits Adisa and women sexually. Obufun sees Idemudia’s hospitalization and medical bills as a means to satisfy his sexual needs, so he demanded sexual gratification from Adisa before he can offer her assistance. He is described during the act as a “vulture picking the flesh of a dead prey.” The upper class does all within his power to frustrate the lower class from attaining the good things in life while the lower class continues in their endless struggles.

The inability of the government to give priority attention to some areas like education, employment and medical infrastructures is the reason for exploitation; Idemudia falls sick after the tedious work of off-loading bags of cement under heavy rainfall. When he is taken to the University Hospital, he was sent back to Ogbe (public) hospital due to the ‘lack of bed in the male ward’, while there empty rooms are reserved for special people(the rich) in the same hospital, this also shows the class distribution and inequality in the society. Instead of maintaining these hospital, providing adequate medical facilities or building new hospitals, the government concentrates on the building of hotels, hence Iyayi sees the government as the vital responsible for the exploitation of the lower class.

The exploitation of the lower class hampers both national development and the realization of the individual potentials. In the novel, Idemudia’s inability to complete his education is attributed to poverty, poverty caused by corruption, exploitation and oppression. Ideally, he would have had other sources of income to continue his education but due to the contradictions of an oppressive political and socio-economic system, all his efforts are futile, thus, the system makes it impossible for the common man to survive. An example of this is reflected in the dire condition of Idemudia and his wife Adisa. The ruling class has not provided

the enabling environment for the ordinary man to earn income, in a society where the citizens are hungry, helpless and hopeless, without any form of support from their government, the doctor at Ogbe hospital, “couldn’t understand why in the midst of so much disease, the government concentrated on building hotels instead of hospitals.”(*Violence* p.55) This is a clear case of the Nigerian government losing sight of the things that are of utmost importance.

In *The Contract*, women are exploited for sexual gratification Chief Ekata is woefully famous for this; he is one of the most dangerous characters. Chief Ekata uses the blanket of business to manage a sort of veiled luxury prostitution; he exploits his female employees and uses them for his selfish interest. He knows that one of the greatest weaknesses of Nigerian males is women,

A woman, and a beautiful, young but mature one at that, was the shortcut to the Nigerian man’s heart. Send a woman to a Nigerian man with a request that he jumps out of the window of a forty-story building and the man will jump. Send a woman to a man and the first thing he will do is to make a pass at her and inevitably, when satisfied, he will almost always grant her whatever request she has. (*The Contract* p.69-70)

It is clear from this statement that Chief Ekata was aware of the fact that men can do anything for sexual gratification, which is why he builds his organization around this fact. Whenever Ekata wants to hire a private secretary, he demands that she be a lady and she must be beautiful enough to attract men. The second criterion is candidate’s ability to bury her moral values for the sexual gratification of the client, whenever they ask for such favors, her educational background or work experience are of no use to him because work experience, certificates or diplomas are no match to beauty, beauty is the only criterion needed by Chief Ekata. On the false pretense of recruiting Eunice, Chief Ekata draws Eunice into the cesspool of prostitution. Whenever there is a meeting and he needs the decisions to be made in his favor, he

is accompanied by Eunice. After the meeting, he sends her to the person in charge of the contract with the aim of seducing him, like he did with Ogie. Ekata denies his workers their integrity and any opportunity to draw pride from their work.

Mr. Oluru is also an agent of exploitation; he turns his own wife into a prostitute. Each time there is a new contract to be awarded, he sends his wife to have sex with the contract managers so that decisions made will be in his favor. To win the contract Ogie was managing, he was ready to proceed with giving his wife to Ogie, he believes that using his wife is a small sacrifice in comparison to the five million naira the sexual intercourse would yield, he valued his wife in terms of naira.

In conclusion, Iyayi believes that until there is a fundamental restructuring of the socio-economic and political system in Nigeria, the numerous problems of the working people will not be effectively tackled. He states that the production, distribution and consumption patterns in Nigeria are grossly faulty; hence, many people are poor, sick, and hungry while a handful of exploiters are rich.

CHAPTER FOUR

NARRATIVE DEVICES

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Narrative Devices

Literary devices are used to provide deeper meaning for the reader and help the reader to use imagination to visualize situations. Iyayi fiercely portrays Nigeria's extremes of poverty and wealth, bribery and corruption, oppression and exploitation and other sociopolitical crises. His style of contrastive juxtaposition and a-play-within-a-novel are attempts to expose the extent of the growing gulf between those who have and those who are merely surviving, eating from hand to mouth. Some of these devices include;

4.2 Setting

The setting of *Violence* and *The Contract* is Benin City, the present capital of Edo state of Nigeria. Known streets and locations in the city are prominently used in the novel, the depiction of specific places makes the story more realistic to readers who are familiar with Nigeria.

4.3 Plot Structure

Iyayi utilizes the linear plot structure in his novels, *Violence and The Contract*. The use of a linear plot structure makes it easy for the reader of the novel to follow the story from one place to another without undue digressions.

4.4 Flashback

This device shows the necessary information on the characters; it gives information on the events that had happened earlier which the author feels is necessary for the readers to know. In *The Contract*, We are able to follow Ogie Obala's progress from the day he returns from abroad

to his death. The use of a linear plot structure has added benefit of allowing the reader to get a full view of the story while flashbacks connect the past to the present so that the reader is fully aware of the events of the story. The entirety of Chapter two of *The Contract* is a flashback, and this narrative technique gives the reader access to the discussion between the cab driver and Ogie. It is through the flashback that we have access to information about Ogie Obala's view on the corrupt attitudes of the customs men at the airport, the greed of the ruling class and the squalid living conditions of the masses. Also, through the use of flashback, we are able to see why Idemudia in *Violence* is fairly educated and the reason for his hatred towards his father.

4.5 Point-of-View

The second person omniscient point of view is used in *The Contract* to show the socio-political crises in Nigeria, the reasons and the consequences of these crises. The omniscient narrator takes the reader to various locations and through this device we are able to see that Chief Ewah Obala initially wanted to live a life of dignity, a life free from corruption, but just like his son, he lacks the required moral strength for maintaining his integrity, making him compromise his moral ethics and turning to corruption as a means of survival. In *Violence*, the story is narrated from an omniscient point of view. The author tells the story from the different angles of the different characters, showing he knows each of their thoughts.

4.6 Story within a story

Festus Iyayi uses the play in *Violence* as a satire to criticize the Inequality and Failed Governmental system of Nigeria. The play conveys Iyayi's true definition of violence and the message he wants to send to Nigerians.

4.7 Characterization

Iyayi has given us an authentic representation of life in Nigeria, he has created characters with human strengths and weaknesses suitable for exposing the themes of corruption and exploitation in *The Contract*. These characters include;

Ogie Obala:

From the beginning of the story, we appreciate his critical views on the naked display of corruption, bribery and nepotism in the society, the belief that material wealth counts above morality and conscience does not hold true for Ogie Obala, he considered all those social behaviors to be negations of human values; this informs his initial objection to being appointed principal secretary in charge of special projects. But as the story progresses, we begin to witness a gradual diminution in his convictions; the lure of the lucre begins to overwhelm Ogie's sense of moral responsibility as can be seen in his stream of thoughts: A man had to enjoy himself, had to make sure he was doing something, always in the active living process... A man had to consume money, woman, food, people, all the resources at his disposal for the sole aim, for the purpose of active living (p.14).

Chief Eweh Obala:

He is Ogie's father, he somewhat resembles his son because just like his son he is unable to choose between moral integrity and the comfort of corrupt acquisitions. He had wanted to live a decent life free from corruption but he lacked the moral strength to support this belief. Through flashback technique we have earlier seen that Chief Obara's demonstrated a passion for hard work and honesty early in his public service career. But instead of being grateful for his hard work and honesty, he was frustrated by his employers and senior colleagues who thrived amid corruption and mediocrity until he finally succumbed to the corrupt system. He later justified his weakness by saying that "man is essentially a product of one's experience and environment". For

him, education and ethics are of no value in modern society. All that matter is material wealth, which can be obtained by any means. He emphasizes this conviction to his wife; It's not the kind or even the number of degrees that a person has that matters these days, it's the amount of money he has in his pocket, how many houses, what kind of cars he has. And nobody cares how you get these things. It's the result, the end result that matters, not the means (*The Contract* p. 13).

Mr. Oloru and Chief Ekata:

They represent the oppressive class who preys on others to survive. Both can be described as unethical and morally bankrupt entrepreneurs who are hungry for more and more money. They can and will do everything necessary to achieve their aim.

Mallam Mallam:

He is Ogie Obala's friend and also a contractor who offers "nothing" to the government but is paid, every week he collects cheque for one hundred thousand naira, goes to the bank to cash them, withdraws the money and divides it between himself and a group of government officials in the military services. (*The Contract* p.17).

Eunice Agbon and Rose Idabale:

They represent the lower class people that are examples of a sexually abused Nigerians. Eunice is Chief Ekata's newest employee. Her job is to sexually seduce government officials to pave the way to work for her boss. Rose Idabale is very intelligent and understands the problems of her society she understands well the problems of corruption and sexual exploitation in the country.

Onise Ine's:

He is a representation of the conscience of society. His critical views on corruption make corrupt leaders nervous. He was courted by successive governments because they believed he will be a threat to them. He has been harassed and even arrested and then offered huge bribes to

make him change in his condemnation of the political leaders and the society but he has not changed his views, he remained true to his faith in what he calls the coming revolution, perhaps it is because he is a Marxist (*The Contract* p.156).

He is called the ‘revolutionary idealist’, the ‘red danger’. Onise Ine is the hope Iyayi offers the corruption-prone society depicted in *The Contract*, he was even arrested, his character is the ideal example for every Nigerian citizen, whether rich or poor; being able to hold ground against all forms of corrupt practices.

The characters In *Violence* are representing the two classes in the society. Idemudia and his wife Adisa, Omoifo, Osaro, Patrick, Papa and Mama Jimoh, The Labourers represent the lower class in the society. They are the exploited and oppressed people; they are mainly surviving as the upper class has found every means to frustrate their efforts. ‘It is so unfair, one man has enough to eat, in fact so much that he throws some away. Yet here we are, hungry, with nothing to eat.’ (*Violence* p.20)

The characters of Queen, Obofun, and Iriso represent the oppressive, manipulative and exploitive class. They only help people for their selfish benefits; Obofun agrees to help Adisa after she satisfied his sexual need, he tells Adisa that; You do not have to be sad or ashamed about what we have done,...you can regard it as something that was necessary. And once you come to think of it to those terms, next time will always be better than this time *Violence* p.171

By this he shows his disregard for the marital vow as he expects to have more intercourse with her. Another instance is seen when Iriso the superintendent of the Food Production Department in the Ministry of Agriculture provides goods (eggs and milk) worth five hundred naira to Queen for one hour of sex. These elites are only concerned with what they can gain, they have ruled out moral values, money and sexual satisfaction is all they care about; Queen is a manipulator and exploiter, Iriso calls her “a cunning devil” she uses her body to acquire anything

and everything she needs not because her husband can't provide for but because of her greed, She wants to own and be on top of the world.

4.8 Imagery and Motif

The author uses his choice of words to paint vivid and realistic pictures; this is seen in his description of the lifestyle of the people. This device is used to show the living condition of the people; the image the author presents of the lower class is that of poverty squalor, and hopelessness, their struggles for their survival is vividly shown, the extent to which they would go to provide for themselves and their families, they sell their blood at a very cheap rate, work tirelessly and endlessly for cheap labor and indulge in prostitution, 'the things an empty stomach can drive a to, the things hunger can make a man do.' *Violence* p.157. The image portrayed is that of poverty, poverty caused by the incompetence and failure of the government, the lower class result to any means necessary in order to be able to sustain themselves and their families.

The image of the upper class is that of affluence and riches, this is seen in their houses, cars, works and business enterprises. The novelist shows us the desires of the elite class, they don't care about how their actions affect the public, and their only interest is what they stand to gain even at the detriment of the poor. His choice of words portrays vividly the greed, incompetence and failure of the government, the exploitation and oppression melted out on the lower class. Chief Ekata is said to be like a vulture. The image of "vulture" projects exploitation. Vulture is a bird of prey that feeds on the flesh of other creatures. He exploits his female employees, using them for his own benefits.

The recurring images in Festus Iyayi novels are corruption and exploitation. The author deliberately uses the image of corruption and exploitation because these are the major problem that affects the Nigerian society, thus hindering the economic, political and social growth of the

country. These issues are repeated from the beginning of the novels to the end so as they have been identified as the problems, solutions can be generated for the advancement of our country.

4.9 Contrast

This device is used to show the difference in the standard of living of the elite and the lower class. It compares and contrasts the living conditions of the society. The lower class lives in low mud house and filthy environment; All sorts of rubbish was scattered - corn leaves, banana peels, bottles, cans and sewage. Huge heaps of dirt was left by the roadsides... Each dirty house spewed garbage out of its entrance, which then spilled onto the street, (*The Contract*. p.7) while the rich lived in comfortable, clean and conducive environment, the description of Chief Ewah Obala's house is that of luxury and opulence, typical of his class and status in the society. Chief Ewah Obala's house was painted white and it was a storey building.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As a writer, you are tasked with the responsibility of the upliftment and advancement of your society; this is what Festus Iyayi aimed at with his novels. *Violence and The Contract* are novels of social realism that mirrors the Nigerian Society. Festus Iyayi is a voice that calls for change in the Nigerian society, he explains that; “my own escape from that kind of life has not blinded me but has provided me with the opportunity of exposing those appalling conditions in which my roots are still trapped”.

Despite Nigeria’s oil wealth and arable agricultural land, Nigeria still struggles with corruption, inequality and exploitation resulting from the reckless spending of the government and failed utilization of the nation’s resources and wealth which has led to the increases rate of poverty. Festus Iyayi’s novels criticize the Nigerian system of government as he holds them responsible for the problems that plague the country. Iyayi exposes the injustice and sufferings of the masses that appear to be trapped in the endless cycle of distress and pain or what Iyayi regards as Violence which is exploitation, brutalization and dehumanization of the masses by the government.

The Contract portrays the oppressive machinery of the neocolonial system. It shows how the lower class survives in a society that is unjust. The corrupt and the greedy are those who are celebrated, they are the ones who are likely to get national honors; the society now operates a system that gives medals to the corrupt. Corruption which actualizes itself in the crude accumulation of economic means, has become a way through which the politicians acquire political power, there are lots of cruelties and viciousness in Nigeria. A government job is an avenue for stealing public funds and a means for self –enrichment.

This study shows Iyayi as a writer who has been awakened by inequalities and injustices in the society. He reflects on the socio-economic and political crisis that characterizes the post-colonial Nigeria. He equally paints a critical picture of the elite class where he holds them responsible for the inherent exploitation, oppression, deprivation and dehumanization of the poor masses in post-colonial Nigeria, revealing the plight of the less privileged.

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