

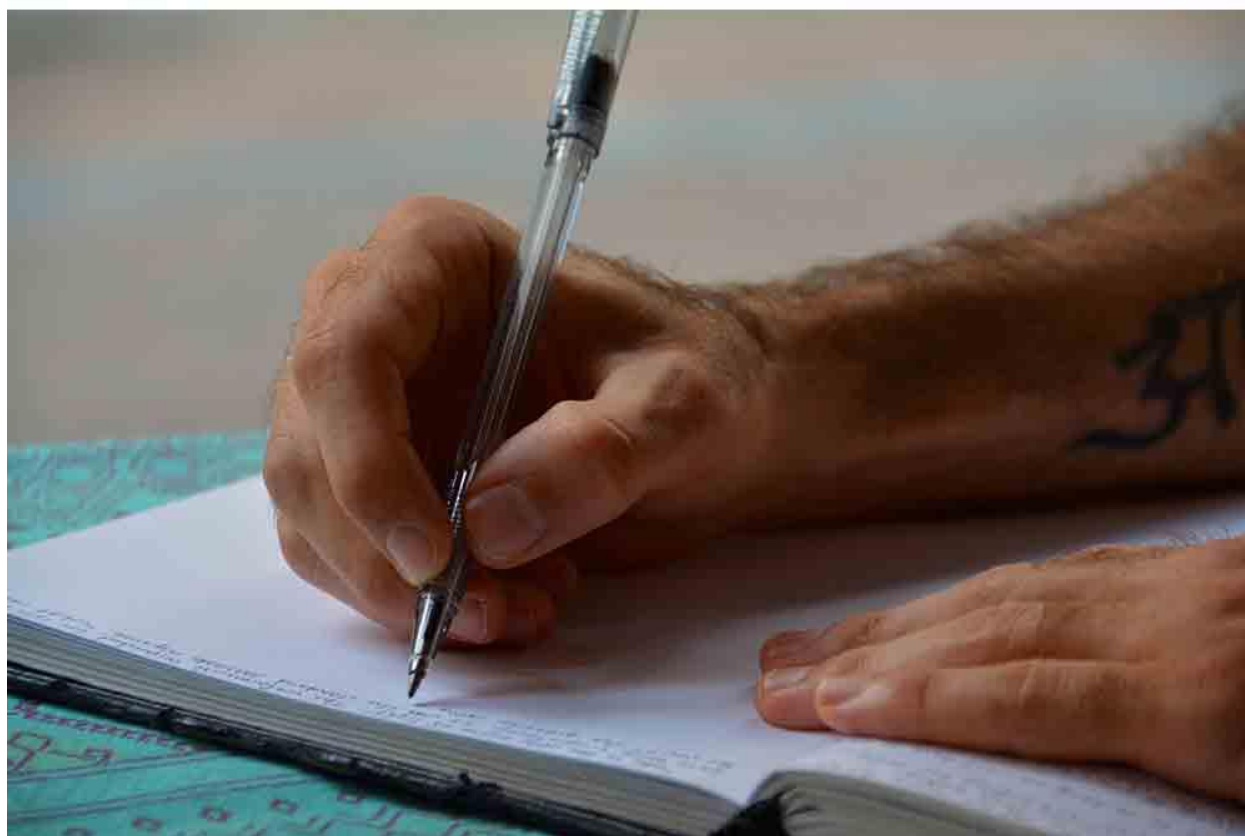
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Idris Bello

Lovely Professional University

Pagwara, Punjab, India

idrisbello756@gmail.com

Overview of the Novel

Abstract

This study was undertaken to make a thematic analysis of Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*. The research has objective of explicating the themes, settings, plot, language, characterization, and the background of Nigerian's Civil war (1967-1970) to make the reader understand the themes very easily and likewise appreciate them. Chapter one, known as the Introduction contains the preambles and aims and objective of the study and the brief biography of the author. Chapter Two is the literature review, and the analysis of the themes, setting, plot language, characterization. Chapter Three is the literary perspective of the Nigerian after the civil War. Chapter Four is the Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation.

Heroes published in 1986, is a persistence of the analyses of corruption in Nigeria. The novel takes a critical look at one of the origin causes of Nigeria's socio-economic and developmental setbacks. It recreates the Nigerian civil war clashed in between 1967 and 1970 to expose their ideology, or lack of it, behind the war. The study in *Heroes* begins when the war is already in its third year, but through the use of flashback narrative techniques, Iyayi is able to link us to the beginning of crises.

The remote and immediate causes of the war are also highlighted through flashback narrative techniques. The craftsmanship of *Heroes* indicates a substantial level of maturity in Iyayi's handling of social realism. On a general note, Iyayi sees the civil war as one of the

manifestation of the Nigerian elite's propensities for greed and avarice, class consciousness, betrayal and intrigues.

The novel also portrays the shortcoming of the Nigerian masses. Due to poverty and paucity of social awareness, the masses become victims of the misuse of power by the ruling class. When unawareness meets with an devastating propaganda machine deliberately launched against their collective psyches, the grouping compels the ordinary Nigerians to believe in what their leaders tell them about the war. While the masses on the federal side of the divide believed that they fighting for the upkeep of their country's oneness, their complement on the Biafran side believed that they were violent for the emancipation of their ethnic group from the faintness of the other Nigerians. Even when they die in their thousands, the masses from both sides still remain nationalistic in their beliefs in their professed ideals.

Trauma Of Greed And Avarice

Iyayi depicts the civil war subsequent from a deliberate plan by the Nigerian political and institutional leaders to plunge the country into an unnecessary waste of human and material resources for the purpose of satisfying their penchants for greed and avarice. This is why he describes the civil war as a fight between two brutal and powerful elephants for more space with the grass around them taking their weights and bellows. In other words, Iyayi sees the war as a faced for fraudulent and diabolical acquisition of more money and power, created and fuelled by the ruling class and their acolytes, using the muddles as tools.

In the novel, we are told that the governing

... class wanted a war so they could steal more money and get more control. But they had to sell the war to the people. And as always, the tribe provided the raw material. Politicians who stole our money, hundreds of millions of naira, businessmen who robbed our country sightless drove the country to war to cover up their crimes. (p.169).

The themes of greed and fraud in heroes become deceptive when we read that as soon as any of the fighting forces capture a city or a town; their first ports of call have always been the bank. “it doesn’t matter that they are the branches of central Bank” (p.148). they use grenades to blow up the vaults and

steal the money therein. The activities of major, later Brigadier and subsequently, General, Olu Otunshi in the novel concretize the belief that the war is created to provide an avenue for fraudulent means of self-enrichment

Olu Otunshi is the leader of the federal forces in the Midwestern war fronts. He sells the federal arms and ammunition to the enemy Biafran camp and pockets the returns. He equally sends out his troops on a suicide task to hazardous war zones on the event of their paydays and get as many thousands of them as he could, killed so as to pocket their salaries. And we learn that Otunshi carries out this inhuman act in collusion with the army paymaster. For those soldiers who manages to escape the bullets of the enemy, Otunshi orders for their summary execution after falsely declaring them war deserters.

Iyayi also tell us in the novel that the distribution of the relief materials donated by the international agencies to the war victims is awarded as contracts to the wives and friends of the generals and officers commanding at the fronts. Through this way, relief materials like blankets and milk never get to the intended beneficiaries. Instead, they end up “.....being sold in the open markets in lagos and kaduna and Kano” (p.148).

Chief Sule Adodoyin in Heroes is awarded the contract for the distribution of drugs donated by the international agencies to the war victims but instead of allocating the drugs, he opens large drug stores all over the country where the donated drugs, are sold. In a nutshell, the ruling class and its collaborators use the war as an avenue for making money for themselves. The accusation by Iyayi of Nigerian elites of using the war to perpetrate graft is a realistic depiction of the crisis. Falola, et al (1991) say that

Those who bought the weapons both for the federal and Biafran' forces did not want the war to end quickly. They wanted to make a lot of money out of the war. So they sometimes deliberately delayed the delivery of war materials. Some Nigerians in both camps became wealth as a result of this (p.129).

Elaigwu, (1986) also validates the realism of Iyayi's story when he observes that

....many people suspected, like in all wars, that some field commanders were making fortunes by the blood of fellow men; collecting salaries and privileges of dead soldier army colleagues and military welfare facilities in collusion with contractors who supplied these (p.122).

Trauma Of Class Consciousness Or Social Stratification

This is also one of the major themes depicted in *Heroes*. The rich ruling class on each side of the divide uses their respective masses as tools of war having brainwashed them into believing that they are caused the war in the first place do not suffer from it. Iyayi says:

The army , the politicians , the religious leaders and the businessmen send their families away from the country to make sure that they do not hurt from the fighting. But the workers and the ranchers and the deprived people remain and harvest up children to the fighting (p.63-64).

Class distinction is also exhibited even among the military men.

Senior military officers sit in their posh offices in Lagos and dish out orders to younger officers in the battle fields. In the novel, we learnt that while the crisis was consuming the lives of ordinary Nigerians in their thousands, the Nigerian head of state was celebrating his wedding with great fanfare.

At the war fronts, while fighting soldiers die as a result of negligence and poor battle plans on the sides of their commanding officers, a cultural display and fanfare is taking place in a stadium for the entertainment of some senior officers. Hundreds of soldiers are made to

guard the stadium while the festivals are going on. The differences in their living quarters also exhibit a sharp class distinction between the officers and the soldiers. While senior officers like Otunshi live with their wives in Reservation areas with well-furnished quarters, the soldiers on the other hand live in makeshift camps with benches, where available, for beds. At Benin city, as we learn in the novel, only ten soldiers guard an airport where federal government war weapons are kept while a hundred soldiers guard the house of the governor. Because of the paucity of soldiers to defend it, the airport was destroyed by the enemy plane. The fortification of the governor's house at the expense of the airport suggests that the security of a single member of the ruling class supersedes that of the society.

Essien, (1987) confirms the validity of Iyayi's portrayal of class consciousness as characterizing the war when he says that children of the common people were conscripted into the army to fight during the war while

The wealthy and the powerful were able to use their position to keep their children away from active military service. They also had easy access to relief foods, and some drank more whiskey and other imported drinks of high societies than they ever did before the war. But the common man was starving, and kwashiorkor had taken a good toll on children (p.151).

The depiction of the Nigerian head of state celebrating his wedding during the period of national crisis in *Heroes* is also based on reality.

Elaigwu, (1986) says that Gowon married his wife Victoria during the war and the wedding was marked by great fanfare. The situation at the airport depicted in *Heroes* also appears to reflect the reality. Amadi, (1973) relates that an airport at Port Harcourt where military hardware was kept was destroyed by the enemy plane due to the paucity of guards. The soldiers who were supposed to guard the airport, according to Amadi, were sent instead to guard the house of the state governor.

2.4 TRAUMA OF ECONOMIC POVERTY AND PAUCITY OF SOCIAL AWARENESS

These are also depicted in *Heroes* as the main factors that had rendered the masses vulnerable to social exploitation. In the novel, we come across several fighting soldiers like Patrick, Olu, and Kokobi, sergeants Kesh, Musa and Audu who admit that they had enlisted into the army during the war either as a result of unemployment and poverty or due to the strength of war propaganda and lies sold to the masses by the ruling class.

Patrick, Olu and Kokobi say that they had enlisted into the army because they were not employed and the war provides them with employment. For sergeants Kesh, Musa and Audu, they enlisted in the army to fight the Biafrans because they were informed by their political leaders that Igbo people wanted to

deny their region access to petroleum and other social amenities. It is also a reflection of reality that economic and intellectual poverty played significant roles in the recruitment of fighting soldiers.

Madiebo, 91980:98) for instance, says that the fighting soldiers on both federal and Biafran sides were made up of mostly illiterates, petty traders and technicians. For the Biafran army especially,

There was no struggle at all in finding workers for the army. Several hundreds of people turned out daily in front of the first Battalion barracks to be recruited. The mainstream of these were immigrants, who very bitter over the behaviour they had conventional from their fellow Nigerians and were anxious to vengeance.

As execution of the war, as portrayed in *Heroes*, is characterized by betrayal, distortion of the truth through propaganda, intrigue and outright falsehood. There are several instances in the novel where civilians and military men are forced to tell lies or distort the truth about the war going on in their localities. Even before the approach of the federal forces into the Midwestern region for instance, we witness the difficulties faces by journalist in carrying out their daily duties. Osime Iyere finds it difficult to write his feature page in the

newspaper because everything had to be on the war and everything printed on the war had to favor the Biafrans. If the Biafrans lost a city and it was clear that was the truth, the newspaper had to report the opposite (p.2).

And when the federal troops take over the region from Biafran occupation, they decide to publish in a newspaper, what appears to be an advice to the Ibos living in the Midwestern region:

To avoid further embarrassment and possible molestation, all Ibos resident in the city were to report to the garrison headquarters at Ikpoba slope by the river and be registered (p.9).

Ostensibly, the aim of getting all the Ibos in the city registered is to avoid mistaking the civilians for Biafran military men. The advert however turns out to be a deceitful method of isolating the Ibos from the rest of the population for elimination. This is how Iyere's landlord, an also civilian, along with other Ibo civilians is short to death.

The military men on both federal and rebel sides tell lies. For instance, while transporting the remains of his landlord back to his village of Oganza, Osime Iyere is instructed by the federal troop in Benin City to tell any Biafran soldiers he might meet on the road that

There are at least two divisions here. You tell them there are trucks and armored cars and carries and machine guns. You tell them we shall be in Asaba Tomorrow Morning (p.70).

But there are not such armored cars, carriers and machine guns available. When Iyere wants to know what to tell the federal troops at Asaba, he is instructed to say that the Benin troops are waiting for reinforcements.

When the anticipated reinforcements do not show up, the federal soldiers camped at Asaba, sixteen in all, are ambushed and hard they had fought but their officer, a captain, had betrayed them by running away before the battle had started. Ironically, "in recognition of his bravery." The same captain, who has betrayed his men to the enemies, is promoted to the

rank of a major the following day, while sergeant Audu and the surviving soldiers are not even commended for their bravery.

In the same vein, we learn that corporal Kolawole had been a sergeant but after a disagreement with a major on matters of tactical procedure, Kolawole has been a sergeant but after a disagreement with a major on matter of tactical procedure, Kolawole has been demoted. Apparently, Kolawole's battle plans appeared to be better than that of the major. But the major felt that his ego had been slighted and Kolawole was punished for daring to argue with a superior officer.

The major had forced his own plans on the soldiers. As a result, sergeant KeshKesh tells Osime Iyere that "we lost three hundred men in that battle and many more were injured on account of following the major's procedures" (p.121). The major was promptly promoted to the rank of a lieutenant colonel. It seems that the ruling class in Iyayi's *Heroes* gives rewards for betrayal and punishment for patriotism.

Madiebo (1980) and Falola et al (1991) for instance, relate that the course of fighting the Nigerian civil war was marked by dirty games of intrigue, falsehood and betrayals and this gives credibility to the realism of Iyayi's portrayal of the event in *Heroes*.

Trauma Of Corruption

Corruption has ranked among the military highest brass. Relief resources provided by the humanitarian agencies were hijacked and allocated to the friends of the armed generals. Medicine, drugs, milk, blankets and alternative relief things meant for the victims of war notice their thanks to the markets.

Brigadier Otunshi, in particular, is a charlatan. He sells arms to the Biafran troops and sends his troops to the battle-field ill-equipped. As such, he's simply sending them early to their graves. General officer and later General Otunshi, dead with two troopers and five

officers for mutiny by deserting the battlefield while he was away attending a party. They did that as a result of they were sent to the field unequipped consequence of the generals' siphoning of funds meant for the prosecution of the war.

The war opened so many atmospheres for illegal activities. Otunshi camouflages within the cowl of the following misperception: when an offensive, he goes to the banks, breaks the safes and steals the money.

Trauma Of Fear

The danger of war is that it creates nice uncertainty. you'll be able to be alive, simply an instant, you're dead. as an example, Ohiali was alive by eleven o'clock, moment later, he was dead. Intense mistrust and suspicion were created among the once sure neighbours, trauma and horrors destroyed the psyche of the people and renders life directionless and meaningless .

In terms of devastation, one month in war is quite a decade in peace. With each killing, as an example, of many men, the casualties transcend the surface price. From either side, thousands of children ar created orphans, ladies widow and property destroyed. costs drastically rise and folks have to travel far-flung to buy commodities. children ar dying of hunger, illness and malnutrition became

prevailing. nevertheless the politicians UN agency want to increase their power refuse to consider the misery of the citizens.

All of this made Osime are aware of it isn't the sixty-millions odd Nigerians UN agency ar being slaughtered either at the battle front or on their beds that matter however individual rulers. "The same greed, a similar hunger for power" (P. 90). On Biafran facet, there ar solely 2 troopers at the airfield whereas there ar more standing guard at the

Governor's house. Nigerians troops were blown off into the Asaba Bridge whereas their commanding officers were in city attending the marriage of the Head of State.

Trauma Of Violence

As witnessed in so many cases, violence and war are closely related. Iyayi's Heroes portrayal of civil war is made real through descriptions feature within the story portraying the sadness of individuals in things like "grass" to point out hunger and soaking, "the stream turning red" to form the knowledge of killing and "sand" and soil at market mixing with "red," "vomit" for disgust, "filthy" for squalor and "blood" for smell and ferocity. The atmosphere is ghastly horrific. Everything conveys a communication of death to that even birds in the road were silent.

On the whole, the themes of Iyayi's Heroes are based on realism in their depiction of events and situations that have close resemblances to the socio historical reality of Nigeria. The civil war actually took place in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970. The events situations and activities of some of the principal characters in the novel have also been substantiated by extra textual sources to have their replicas in real life situation. We shall now examine the narrative technique of the novel to see whether or not Heroes exhibits a more matured handling social reality over violence and the contract.

Settings

The physical setting of the heroes is the defunct mid-western region of the Nigeria while the time is the period between 1967 and 1970. Some recognizable locations in the setting of the story are Benin city, Onitsha, Oganza, Nkesio, River Niger, and Asaba, while reference are made to Nigeria, Lagos and Biafra on almost every page of the novel. Recognizable names of political and military leaders of the time like Gowon and Ojukwu are

referred to severally in the novel. Notable Nigerian commanders at the war fronts like Brigadiers Murtala Muhammad and Olusegun Obasanjo are also mentioned in the novel all of which gives the story the realistic Nigerian perspective.

Plot And Structure

The plot and structure of heroes is not different from iyayi's previous novels treated in this study. The linear plot structure is used in telling the story. Significant flashback narrative techniques are occasionally employed to link the past and the present. The second person omniscient point of view and an occasional stream of consciousness are craftily integrated into the narrative structure to give the novel its social realistic outlook. In order to make the story look real, the author guides us through its course by allowing an unnamed narrator to tell us what is happening and at the same time leading us

through the thick of the events by placing Osime Iyere, a political correspondence with the daily news as our guide as he follows the chain of events relating to the war.

Points Of View

The omniscient narrator tells us about the cause and course of the war and Osime Iyere's thoughts and intermittent authorial voices. In order to differentiate between the narrator's accounts and Iyere's thoughts, Iyayi makes use of the process of foregrounding by italicizing Iyere's thoughts, while the narrator's narrative is left in the normal prints. The use of this narrative technique makes it easy for the reader to know which part of the narrator and which part relates to Iyere's perception and thought.

The use of flashbacks narrative techniques in the novel has proved useful in linking up the past to the present. Without the use of the flashbacks, it would not have been possible for the readers of the novel to know the remote and immediate causes of the war as the story in the novel begins when the war is already in its third year. For instance, it is through

flashbacks, in the form of Iyere's recollections that we learn about the events of three years prior to the war:

The years ago, we had peace. Three years and it almost seems like twenty years since the radio broadcast news without stopping to give more details about the number of people lost or captured. The fighting was unwise but even more unwise were the motives for it, the reasons that led up to war. Why couldn't the public, the leaders, have been more truthful with each other? Why did they have to be lying to cause a conflict? (p.13).

The use of this flashback is significant in that it shades light on the cause of the war which Iyayi attributes to dishonesty on the parts of some Nigerian political leaders of the time.

Through Iyere's recollection, Iyayi draws our attentions to the evils associated with colonialism. The Nigerian civil war is portrayed to have had its roots in the divide and rule control tactics employed by the erstwhile colonial powers. It is depicted in the story that the colonialists had sown the seed of ethnic hatred between the various ethnic nationalities of Nigeria for ease of control. We also learn through Iyere's recollection that the colonialists had also planted their stooges in political power when they were leaving the scene to ensure continuous exploitation of the country.

In another significant flashback, Iyayi makes a sarcastic portrayal of the traditional leaders of the society like the emirs, chiefs and Obas and their roles in the exploitation of their subjects. Iyere, in the company of the state governor had paid a visit to the Obas's palace before the invasion of the state by the Biafrans. The oba had kept his visitors waiting for about an hour. The oba's secretary apologizes and explains that the oba was in the lavatory. Iyayi sarcastically remarks thus:

First of all, his royal highness has to get rid of all those robes and beads, unless perhaps they now make a special hole through the robes. And then considering that his royal

highness reaps where he does not sow, that he has the food of hundreds of millions of others in his stomach, and the blood of hundreds of millions of slaves on his head, he should stool for hours. He he should get stench of his parasitism and treachery firmly in his nose and eyes. He should suffocate in both (p.97-98).

Generally, the use of linear plot structure and the omniscient narrative enables the reader to follow the progress of the events in the story from a narrator that knows all. Thus, we are able to follow Iyere

through the thick of the events and his interaction with the soldiers as he moves from one place to the other. The flashback narrative techniques bring us up to date with the remote and immediate causes of the war.

The artistic uses of stream of consciousness narrative provide additional information about the perceptual growth of Iyere the central character and historical events relating to Nigeria before the war. On a general note the plot structure and point of view provide the answers to the questions bordering on why certain events occur. In short, it provides the causes and effect which enhances the realism of the story.

Characterization

Iyayi's characterization in heroes shows significant maturity in the depiction of social realism over the preceding novels. In this novel, Iyayi has created much more convincing characters and situations that have close resemblances to actual life. Osime Iyere, the central character of heroes, is a political correspondent with the daily news. It is through this character that we witness the unfolding events in the novel.

At the beginning of the story, he appears to be naïve about the issues involved in the war. With growing awareness, however, we begin to witness changes in his perception of the crisis. The cold-blooded murder of Mr. Ohiali, Iyere's landlord and prospective father-in-law

by the federal troops, sharpens his view about the reality of the war. Before then, his view had been that of a war between the evil Ibo rebel forces and the decent loyal federal troops.

Iyere's earlier perception of the war had negatively affected his relationship with Ndidi, his prospective spouse. After accompanying Mr. Ohiali, Ndidi's father, to the military registration center ostensibly to get registered with the federal troops who have liberated the midwestern region, for the purpose of avoiding mistaken identities, he becomes aware that the war is more than what he thought it was. At the registration center, he witnesses the extra-judicial killings of Ibo civilians, including Mr. Ohiali.

Unlike Idemudia in violence who remains complacent in the face of humiliation and Ogie Obala in the contract who is indecisive when confronted with a choice between decency and corruption, the gruesome murders galvanized Osime Iyere in heroes into action get first-hand information about what is involved in the war and publish it to the public. His shattered relationship with Ndidi is equally restored as a result of learning that the war was beyond the simple analysis of bad Ibo rebels versus good federal troops.

As he follows the fighting soldiers to the war fronts and witnessing the tribulations they go through in the hands of the enemy as well as their commanding officers, Iyere assume the role of a teacher, educating the soldiers as to the real reasons why they were pushed into a war, the cause of which they hardly understood. The most telling effect of his crusading education is witnessed in the changes of attitude of the federal soldiers towards their Biafran counterparts.

While briefing the troops under his command in preparation to taking the villages of Oganza and Nkesio, sergeant Kesh warns his soldiers that the villages should be taken "with little or no casualty" as "... the

Biafran soldier are not our enemies really." To emphasize the importance of what he is telling his troop, sergeant Kesh says:

We go to these villages not to kill them but to persuade them. We go there to persuade them to lay down their arms. What happened in the camp after the attack on the bridge must not happen here (p.243).

After the disastrous defeat of the federal troop on the bridge while attempting to take Onitsha, the soldiers are made to ventilate their anger on Biafran prisoners of war, killing one hundred and eighty-seven of them.

Iyayi may have artistically incorporated the enlightenment campaign by Iyere into the story to underpin the role of education in the development of individuals, Mc Lellan, (1970) believes that

... men were by wildlife good and all similarly rational; the reason of human misery was simply unawareness, which resulted partly from unsuccessful material circumstances, and partly from a thoughtful suppression or distortion of truth by those in authority, whether civil or religious, to whose obvious interest it was to continue the dishonesties under which mankind labored. One of the chief means of abolishing this state of materials was an education; another was change in man's situation (p.15).

Iyayi appears to share this belief as implied in heroes.

Olu Otunshi is a typical example of the vicious Nigerian predator class who preys on the underprivileged class. He is an example of the insensitive dictatorial egomaniac with no sense of proportions. He sends out his troop on a suicide mission on the eve of their pay to get as many of them killed so as to pocket their salaries. He also sells Nigerian weapons to the Biafran army. Otunshi's egomania manifests in his propensity for sadism.

He shoots and kills a major for simply looking at his wife. We witness a great deal of the callousness in the war through the activities of this character. What appears to weaken the realism of that strand of the story is the lack of demonstration of the corrupt activities of Olu Otunshi. We learn of his shady deals from what Osime Iyere tells us. That strand of the story

could have been more realistic of Olu Otunshi. We learn of his shady deals from what Osime Iyere tell us. That strand of the story could have been more realistic if Otunshi's process of perpetrating graft is demonstrated to us.

Other minor but significant characters in the novel include sergeant Kesh Kesh whose character may stand for the ordinary soldier who is driven into the war out of sheer patriotism. Before his contact with Iyere, sergeant Kesh Kesh was convinced in the denial-of-oil-theory as being responsible for the war. His understanding of the situational however, sharpens dramatically as a result of his interaction with Iyere.

The other rank and file soldiers include corporal Kolawale, Obilu, Patani, Otun, Emmanuel, Ikeshi and Yemi whose characters stand for the disadvantaged Nigerians who had enlisted into the army as result of poverty. On the whole, the characterization of heroes marks a significant maturity in the handling of social realism due to the author's ability to depict a life-like-body of individuals engaged in realistic activities. We shall now examine the diction of the novel to see if the same thing could be said about it.

Use Of Language

While discussing the varieties of language, Broughton et al, (1980) note that English language relies largely on its structure and semantic properties to convey meaning. According to them,

The way in which we use our language can be alienated first of all into two broad aspects: (i) the issues strong-minded by the situation, and (ii) the features determined by the temper and resolution of the speaker. Every time we speak, we function from a compound of picks, connecting selection of vocabulary... (p.30-31)

As for the corns, the narrator says that the rain could be a welcome development if only it pours gently without wind. The wind is associated with a destructive force that could

...take the corn then and pull it from its roots or break it in its middle, snap it up and afterwards the corn would be lying flat on its back, its backbone broken, paralyzed and helpless (p.4).

Iyere finds it difficult to comprehend why one part of nature should treat another with such cruelty. Watching the aftermath of the rain, Iyere philosophically concludes that “The wind acted as a butcher, slaughtered my corn, my everything” (p.6).

The association of the wind with a cruel butcher comes on the eve of the liberation of the Midwest by the federal troops. What follows their approach is the concrete expression of the destruction of human beings earlier hinted in the images of the wind and pellets of rain.

On a general note, the diction of heroes is reflective of the theme and this enhances the realism of the story. However, the absence of character delineation in the use of language identified while discussing violence and the contract still characterizes heroes. Almost all the characters in the intellectuals. The story in heroes could have been more realistic if Iyayi had given suitable colloquial speech pattern to less educated soldiers to reflect the language of the sawdust that is normally associated with military barracks.

On the whole, heroes exhibit a significant maturity in Iyayi's use of social realism in the novel. The themes of the novel are socially realistic. Its setting is overtly Nigeria. The plot structure and point of view are equally convincing. So also, is the novel's characterization. The character developed of Osime Iyere in heroes is more mature than those of Idemudia in violence and Ogie Obala in the contract. The authorial diction

Symbolism

In heroes, according to him, operates at various levels. The destruction, by wind, of Osime Iyere's corns is a symbol of destruction by nature itself. The destruction of the corns comes as a prelude to the

destruction of human beings by fighting soldiers on both the sides of Nigeria and Biafra. He also mentions the numerous references to “two elephants” and “grass ground them” in *Heroes* as symbols of powerful individuals who are insensitive and indifferent to the sufferings of common man.

Festus Iyayi, the victorious author of *Heroes*, confirms with his more new Gathering of fifteen short stories that his inspired mill is still full of grist. No Thinking and complex Nigerian reader can drop this text without some pang Of shame or guilt; and indeed, no reader can go through *Awaiting court Martial* without wondering and despairing. As America`s Mark Twain once did, About us all as this” damned human race” (p.1).

He is of the view that the book exposes the nature and arrogance of the ruling class. The stories, according to him, expose to us the autocratic high handedness, ruthlessness and selfishness of Nigeria`s ruling class without presenting us the faces of the rulers except by some remotest and infrequent reporting

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