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## A Literary Appraisal of the Yoruba Novelists

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**Abstract:** *This paper focuses on Yoruba creative writers. Those who are noted for writing creative writing may be in oral or written literature. The main point of writing this study are the essence of novel writing, how to write novels, different types of novels, selection of key points, characterization narrative technique presentation, description language use, and the future of the narrative technique of the Yoruba creative novelists. It is established in the study, that before a creative novelist can record a success he must have a critical mind, must be upright, and must have foresight. He must be hard working, he must create interest in what he is doing and must be coolheaded. There are some problems which are attached to novel writing, one of which includes funds. Any creative novelist is expecting returns from his writings, after publication. The paper therefore, concluded that the government and publishers need to play vital role in sustaining the bright future of the Yoruba creative novelists, to enhance better productivity.*

**Keywords:** *Novelists creativity literature narrative technique government fund language description presentation and publishers.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity has something to do with the brain. These type of intellectuals property abound all over universe. Talents where spread out various people and categories e.g. wood carving, hair plating, fine art, pottery, architectural design, tailoring, weaving, blacksmith etc. those who are noted for writing are called the literary creative writers. The type of creative writing may be in oral or written literature. The writer literature may be poetry, play or novel, scholars who have discussed different techniques of creative writers either in beat or as a whole.

Bamgbose (1974) is one of the people who have written in related to narrative techniques, Agbaje (1985), Ogunsina (1992 and 1995), Isola (1998), Adesowale (1999). The main thrust of this study is to discuss fully about the narrative technique of the Yoruba creative novelists. The possible point for discussion in the study are the essence of novel writing, how to write novels, different types of novels; selection of key points, characterization, narrative techniques presentation description language use and it future of the narrative technique of Yoruba creative novelists.

### 2. THE ESSENCE OF NOVEL WRITING

The Yoruba creative novelists do not write in vain. Their aim is to let the audience or society know what is going on within the society. For instance, Isola (1974) who wrote *Ó Le Kú* focuses on the life style of student at the University of Ibadan. Faleti (19.....) who wrote *Ọmọ Olókùn Èṣin* makes it manifest in the novel that it is important for one to liberate himself from the oppressors. The attempt of letting the people know the past in Yoruba society and the changes that have happened to Yoruba culture during the advent of the colonial oppression is the man concern of Delano (1966) in *Aiyé Daiyé Òyìnbó*, Awe (1991) says that an attempt to amass wealth illegally or to commercialize religion is his focus in *Ọlórúnlúgọ*. The danger that attached to polygamous life is the cornerstone of Jeboda (1963) in *Olówólaiyé mọ*. Abiodun (1993) makes us realize in *Adiyẹ Bà Lókùn* that there is danger in high post, that there are problems in chieftaincy title processing and the appointment into important posts. Bamiji Ojo (1995) in *Ọba Adilata* has a similar thrust with that of Abiodun (1993), Adebowale (1995) in *O Sẹyí Tán* is to point out different type of societal ills and deviant behaviour among the parents, students, workers and the society to ensure that student obtain their certificate at all cost.

Apart from this, the awareness about the art of creative writing may encourage one to attempt or practice the art of writing. According to Isola (1984) before one can resort to the art of creative novel writing there must be a source of encouragement or influence. This ascertain came into limelight during the third workshop in memory of Late Adeyemi Karunwi at the University of Lagos. The title of the paper presented that day was *Òrìṣà wo ló n gún àwọ n ònḱọwé Yorùbá ní kẹsẹ*

### **Which types of divinity controls the Yoruba writers?**

Isola said emphatically that Orisa (divinity) which controlled the creative Yoruba novelists differs from the Orisa which controls all other Yoruba creative writers. There are some natural insentient which can stimulate or lure the creative novelist into action. Such inducement includes experience environmental influence, competition, love for one's culture language, talent, key points and an attempt to acquire money.

### **3. LITERATURE, CREATIVE NOVELIST AND SOCIETY**

Research reveals that there is a keen relationship between literature creative novelist and the society. For instance, if we are talking about the experience, behaviour of one person to another and the life style of human beings in general one will observe clearly that the whole thing rests on social environment.

Scholars such as Welleck and Warren (1982) and Ogunsina 1988:93 posit that profound interrelationship exist between literature and the society, these scholars not only established that literature mirrors the society but at the same time examines it. They agree that literature cannot exist in isolation in essence, literature cannot exist in vacuum it has other things to fall back upon. This makes it more explanatory that literature is a product of the society. The literary creative writers or novelist often obtain the materials for their writings from the society. The literary artist cannot do without such materials as language.

That is, language is a means of expressing one's mind. All the materials employed by the creative novelist come from the society. Also, we can point to the interrelationship between the creative novelist and the society. The creative novelist are part and parcel of the people of the society he has the knowledge of all things, like economy education politics religion and the social within his environment or the society as a whole. The novelist also has the opportunity to make his feelings know concerning all the occurrences in the society. The creative novelist acquires his knowledge and how to live a decent life within the society. The environment and the society provide the novelist an adequate experience.

The creative novelist's experience cannot go beyond the events in his environment or society. A critical examination of the happenings in the society usually helps the creative novelist to enlighten his audience about the current issues. The creative novelist must endeavour to entertain the readers and to guide them on how to develop a critical mind. Therefore, one can rightly say that Ogunsina (1988:85) is justified when he says *Amárayá akònilógbón afitan koni-níwà àti afipin-ojú àwùjọ han àwùjọ ní onkòwé já sí* (entertainer educator, moralist and the truth preacher is the creative writer).

In a nutshell, the researcher depicts that it is the society that gives rise to initial mind behaviour and all that prompt the creative novelist to write. The foreign confirms that there is a keen inter-relationship between literature creative novelist and the society.

### **4. NOVEL WRITING**

Written of novel is alien to Yoruba culture, it is a borrowed culture written tradition is alien to us. After so many years Yoruba people began to adopt the tradition which is put in place till today. The novel may deal with social events which the creative writer has moderated to a logical conclusion.

There are some laid down rules guiding what should be called standard novel according to western novelists. Below are the universal rules

- That novel must be in written form
- That novel must be in prose all through
- That novel must contain between fifty thousand and seventy thousand words
- That novel must reveal everyday events.
- The characters in the novel must be described vividly.

If we critically examine the foregoing rules, we will observe that they do not go down well with the Yoruba tradition. For instance, what should be regarded as a novel should be in written form is unacceptable in Yoruba culture. Before the advent of Europeans, Yoruba have been telling series of short stories.

These short stories may emanate from folktales, myths proverbs and others. All the society have a way of living a good life.

Therefore, it does not mean that a novel should be in written form before it is being regarded as a standard novel. That a standard novel should be lengthy somehow it is not meaningful to the Yoruba people. All the Yoruba people have their daily jobs. There is no sufficient time for reading a lengthy novel like the Europeans. That a standard novel should not be interpolated with poetry is not in line with Yoruba culture. Poetry is part and parcel of Yoruba life. There is no time that the Yoruba do not make use of poetry either during the time of joy or sorrow.

That a novel should mirror day to day events in the society is unacceptable. For instance, the Yoruba people have strong belief in traditional medicine, divinities and unseen powers. Therefore, if the foregoing are included in the Yoruba novels, it is very okay. The Yoruba believe that is not culturally acceptable in the society for a youth to see face-to-face with the elderly person. In this wise, the Yoruba do not like to describe any character in their novel vividly from that of Europeans. Therefore, the Yoruba people have a way of describing characters which differ from that of the Europeans. Therefore, the Yoruba may wish to describe any character by using proverbs, idioms, praise poetry and metaphor. For instance, a creative writer may say, *Fìrì nídìí òkẹ́* which point to a thief, and *kukute* which depicts a short man. Therefore, if a Yoruba creative novelist does not follow their European creative novelists counterparts way of describing characters does not render the Yoruba novels useless and others. All the people in the society have a way of living a good life.

## 5. DIFFERENT TYPES OF NOVELS

Ogunsua (1992) says that there are novels of folktales and those that deal with social occurrences. The content of the novel of the folktales tradition deals with both human being and non-human beings. The character in such novels may be divinities, animals, trees, snakes hills etc. All these characters are personified and they are made to behave like real human beings. Ogunsina (1992:77) and Bamgbose (1974) point to folktales as sources for such novels. The scene of such stones in the novels may be market place, inside the river, inside iroko tree, inside the bush etc.

Ogunsina (1992) reveals that Fagunwa is the originator of such novels. Few of the Fgunwa's novels are *Igbó Olódùmarè*, *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* and *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ́*. Fagunwa limitators are Ogundele, Odunjo, Omoyajowo, Fatanmi and Owolabi. Some of their novels are *Ejigbode Lónà Ísálú Ọrun*, *Ibú Olókun*, *Kúyẹ* and *Ìtàn Odeñiya*.

According to Ogunsina (1992:110), there are three types of modern novels, thus historical novels, social novels and detective novels. Historical novels are not the creative work of the novelists. The stories there are collected from the elderly people but are moderated to make it acceptable as genuine novel. Such historical novels include *Ọmọ Olókùn Eşin* written by Faleti, *Lójó Ojún* and *Aiyé Daiyé Ọyìnbo* written by Delano.

The contents of social novels deals with lore, religion, economy, politics etc such novels include, *Ó Le Kú* written by Isola, *Jé N Lògbà Tèmi* written by Ladele, *Ọlórúnlúgo* written by Awe, *Ọtẹ Níbo* written by Owolabi, *Şàngbá Fọ* written by Akinlade, *Ojó Burúkú* and *Àgékù Ejò* by Adesigbin. Example of detective's novels are *Owó Èjẹ* and *Ta lo Pọmọ Ọba* written by Akinlade, *Àjà Ló Lẹrù* and *Àgbàlagbà Akàn* written by Okedeji.

Another type is known as short stories (novelettes). These are special novels written for children. The content of such novelettes are meant to teach the children morals. The language there is very simply and straight forward. The point of view is very clear. There is no room for digression, such novelettes includes; *Yétúndé Kò Kéré* written by Femi Odetola, *Tolani Fakoyo* written by Olu Owolabi and *Ọmọ Ọdọ* written by Tunji Opatotun.

## 6. SELECTING THE POINT OF VIEW IN THE NOVEL

The type of message which the creative novelist wishes to send across usually indicates the choice of the point of view. The title of the novel must be appropriate and catchy. For example *Ojó Burúkú*, *Ọtẹ Níbo*, *Şàngbá Fọ*, *Àyànmọ*, *Èni Da Eérú*, *Èsan Á Ké* etc.

Experience is very vital for writing novels. For instance, in the interview conducted for Isola and Okedeji (1982), both of them were the opinion that no work of literary art could be thoroughly done without adequate experience,

we were told through research that story in a *Ó Le Kú* reveals part of Isola's school on campus life at the University of Ibadan. Isoka attended University of Ibadan, he read French, his first car was beetle model, he used to take alcohol which is stout. Also, he put his experience together in his novel called *Àbòdè Kópà*. The same thing happened to Adesigbin, in *Ojó Burúku* and *Àgékù Ejò*.

Events in the society may aid the creative novelist choice in his work of art. Such events may be civil war economy, religion crime and armed robbery. Some of the novels that deal with the events in the society are, *Ìjà ò ré, ọba Adékita, Olówólayémò* and *Olórunlúgò*. The content of *Ọmọ Olókùn Ẹṣin* written by Faleti reveals that he collected the story from the old people. The knowledge of Fagunwa as a wider reader shows in his novels. That he even practices in his novels portrays him as a Christian. The same thing is applicable to Odunjo.

## 7. CHARACTERIZATION

Bamgbose (1974:75-82), Isola (1978:111-153) and Adebowale (1999) have discussed fully on the characterization in Yoruba Novels. The choice of the appropriate character in the Yoruba novels rests on creative writer himself. Therefore, the creative novelists must be very careful in his selection. Fagunwa often loves to describe characters who are not human beings in his novels. For instance, *Egbin* and *Eru* in *Ògbójú Ọ de*, e does not worry about characters who are human beings. One's status in the society may be shown in characterization. For example, *Olúmoko* in *Ọmọ Olókùn Ẹṣin*. The choice of profession can be seen in characters. For instance, *Babalawo* in *Kékeré Ẹkùn* (p 24). We can also point to government workers *Gbòbaniyí* (p. 102) in *Àyànmọ* to novelist describes Jókè very well because of the husband she wishes to marry.

Ní ti ẹwà àkàndá ni Jókè Olódùmarè fún un ní irun orí tí àwọn ẹlẹgbé rẹ ní jowú (P. 95-96)

In beauty, Joke has no rival God gave her a good hair do that her friends do jealous (P. 95-96).

## 8. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Bamgbose (1974:101-107), Agbaje (1985), Isola (1998) and Ogunsina (1988) have discussed at length about different types of narrative techniques employed by the Yoruba creative novelists. Such narrative techniques include; third person narrative, folktale narrative technique and dream technique. The most popular ones are first person and third person narrative technique. For instance, Delano makes use of first person narrative technique in his novels *Lójó Ojọ Un* and *Aiyé Daiyé Ọyìnbó*. So also, Faleti applies this technique in *Ọmọ Olókùn Ẹṣin* and Isola in *Ogún Ọmọdé* respectively.

Also, some of the creative novelists often apply third person narrative technique in their works because it allows them to comment freely without any obstacle. Among them is Abiodun (1993) in *Adiyé Bà Lókùn*.

## 9. LANGUAGE USE IN THE NOVEL

The choice of language is very vital for the creative novelists in their literary art work. According to Bamgbose (1974:108-130), Adebowale (1995:45-53), Agbaje (1985) and Isola (1998), the choice of language by each creative novelist differs. For instance, Isola is found of use of humour in *Ó Le Kú* and *Ogún Ọmọdé*. The use of different pattern of proverbs is accorded Okediji in *Àgbàlagbà Akàn* and *Àjà Ló Lẹrù*. Fagunwa is noted for the use of metaphor and simile, while Faleti is accorded with the use of idioms and philosophical expressions. Research reveals that some creative novelists are too much in haste and this has adverse effect in their use of language. Among them is *Ayé é é* and *Ìwọ Ni* and *Jeboda* in *Olówólayémò*. Delano language is obscure because he makes use of Egba dialect in *Lójó Ojọ Un*. The language use in Akinlade novels such as *Gbobaniyi*, *Ta Ló Pa Ọmọọba* and *Owó Ẹjẹ* are very simple and straight forward.

## 10. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

There are time major steps in the structure of the novel. These are the beginning, the middle and the end. For instance, Faleti make use of imagery in *Ọmọ Olókùn Ẹṣin* to open the story.

Oòrùn mú haihai. Gbogbo eniyan ní yán hòdò fún òùngbẹ ... (P. 1).

The sun was shining terribly. All people were crying for tasty (P. 1)

Similar example can be pointed out in *Àgbàlagbà Akàn* written by Okediji

Ó pé tí Lápàdé ti jí. Ó ti rorín ó sì ti wẹ́ ó wá jókòó. Ó n jobi, ó n mu sìgá rẹ́ láiyajú  
(P. 1)

Lapade has woken up long time. He has taken his teeth brush, he sat down. He was eating kolanut, he was smoking cigarette with his eyes closed (P.1)

If a reader reads through the beginning of the above two novels, surely he will like to know where the writers are heading towards. The middle of the novel is the place where the whole story is told. This area is where the point of view of the novel and the moral education will be discussed.

The third step which is the end of the novel is the area where the reader is expected to locate or point out what the novel is all about. For instance, Faleti end *Ọmọ Olókùn Èşin* with singing and music.

Arinlade (2ce)

Pèlèpèlè mà tówó rẹ́ (2ce)

Ijó tó o jó lánàá

Tóo fi lọ fẹ̀nì kan,

Arinlade

Pèlèpèlè mà tówó rẹ́

Arinlade (2ce)

Be careful, yourself (2ce)

Your yesterday's dance

That ends you in unexpected marriage

Arinlade

Be careful, yourself (2ce)

(P. 164)

This is how Okediji ends *Àgbàlagbà Akàn*:

Lápàdé tàkaakà, ó ronú lọ gbári. Ó dijú Èrín pa á... Lápàdé yajú. Ó tún dijú. Ó tún yajú. Ó tún dijú (P. 192)

Lapade sat carelessly, he was carried away in a deep thought. He closed his eyes. He laughed... Lapade opened his eyes. He closed his eye again (P. 192).

## 11. CONCLUSION

It is established in this study that before a creative novelist can record a success he must have a critical mind, he must be upright and he must have foresight. He must be hardworking. He must create interest in what is doing and be coolheaded. It is further established that for a man to be a renowned novelist, he must create sufficient time for the act, because it is not easy to collect and collate materials. For instance, all the materials needed to put a novel in place are not easy to come by.

There are some problems which are attached to novel writing. Such problems include fund because a hungry man is an angry man. Any creative novelist is expecting returns from his writings after publication. This he expects to cater for his family welfare. A talented novelist needs to be encouraged so that his noble thoughts may not be perished. In order to keep the flag of the arts of writing flying in Yoruba society, the wealthy people should come to the aid of the creative novelists. Occasional competition among the creative novelists should be encouraged, so as to fish out the prospective future writers. Also, this competition will enable us to know the best novelists out of so many. For

instance, this type of competition organizes by the CMS in 1963 brought Fagunwa into limelight. As a result of some old novelists continued to initiate Fagunwa's style of writing.

Government should also encourage the creative novelists by awarding the best out of them scholarship to pursue their education to any level. Above it all, the government should stay out clear of any step capable of discouraging the talented creative novelists. The publishers should not be left out of this, for they also have vital role to play. If the foregoing suggestions are religiously adhered to, surely, the future of the creative novelists will be bright.

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