

Historiographic Metafiction in Okey Ndibe's Arrow of Rain

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Abstract

Postmodernism is concerned with untold, retold, or not told history. History as it never was histories that have been altered, erased, concealed, forgotten, and deemed inconsequential. It has to do with not viewing history as linear. Many critics view African literary works as social chronicles that address the continent's politics and culture. Nigerian novels, especially those written in the realist style, are said to be part of this heritage. The author's responses to modern society's frequently harsh socio-political realities are frequently reflected in the fictional scenarios they explore. Colonial concerns were handled in the 1960s and before independence. More recently, Nigerian literature has addressed the complex issues of corruption, ethnic chauvinism, leadership crises, and dictatorial governance. This paper looks at how Okey Ndibe confronts the ills of the most recent iteration of military power and its civilian allies in 'Arrows of Rain'. This demonstrates a change in focus and concern from the earlier emphasis on the effects of colonization and the historical past to an analysis of the current sociopolitical issues of the ruling elite's abuse of power, as well as pervasive, blatant corruption and social inequality in modern-day Nigeria. It's all about the military tyranny and the years of philistine governance. Ndibe is a serious novelist who revisits the metanarratives of the Nigerian past and zeroes in on the Historical necessity and faithfulness of the concrete situations in Nigeria.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Hetero cosmic, Historiographical Metafiction, Corruption, Military Dictatorship, Post colonialism.

1. Introduction

Contemporary postmodern literary scholars, including Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon, associate postmodern literature with the inherent contradiction of self-referentiality, wherein a text possesses the capacity to reference solely itself. Nevertheless, I contend Okey Ndibe's "Arrows of Rain" is a prominent instance of historiographic metafiction, provides a novel lens through which to comprehend postmodern literature. This narrative elucidates that historiographic metafiction not only complicates the representational and anti-representational paradigms of literature but also presents the text as both heterocosmic and hetero-referential; specifically, it signifies an external reality by alluding to authentic historical occurrences and figures while concurrently interrogating its representational nature and emphasizing self-referentiality—that is, the notion that a text can exclusively reference itself or another text.

Heterocosm may be realized through various means that transcend the inherent limitations of the text by invoking external theories and concepts and engaging with the text's intertextual dynamics. Historiographic metafiction constructs a heterocosm that interrogates both the representational and anti-representational paradigms of art; while the text forges links to external reality, it simultaneously asserts its autonomy through synthesizing historical narratives with self-reflexive fictional elements. "Arrows of Rain" is regarded as a work of historiographic metafiction because it essentially "re-writes" history through a fictional lens by using a fictional narrative to critically examine and reinterpret the history of a fictional African nation (Madia, based on Nigeria). It focuses on the complicated relationship between individuals and the state, exploring themes of violence, corruption, and the power of silence. Okey Ndibe's "Arrows of Rain" is an intriguing piece of

historiographic metafiction that is set in the fictional country of Madia and reflects the social and political reality of Nigeria. The author can examine delicate historical events in this environment without being explicitly associated. [1] The plot gravely centers on Bukuru, a chap who is classified as "mad" and who turns out to be a crucial witness to acts of violence and corruption in the government, showing how personal experiences may mirror larger social problems. The novel actively addresses the question of who controls history and how truth may be twisted by offering an alternative viewpoint that contradicts the government's official narrative. By alternating between periods, the story enables the reader to comprehend how historical events and the smug of politics. The experiences of the main character, Ogugua, in "Arrows of Rain," combine rebellious protest with negotiated history. As a journalist, Ogugua traverses both spheres, providing a nuanced understanding of how history, society, and protest are interwoven. His story reflects both the politics of memory and the ambiguity of post-colonial Nigeria. It explores how memories are narrated and arranged while assessing the military's contribution to the advancement of the country. [2] Ogugua's memories create a network of long-forgotten memories that were purposefully suppressed. He is convinced that telling the truth to his son Femi Adero about his tumultuous past will help him incarnate a new life that's been trampled and suffocated by the autocratic leader of Madia, General Isa Pallat Bello. Okey Ndibe draws attention to and protests against the military's sexual depravity and dehumanization by using the theme of rape. Major Bello continually violates the character Iyese, and she is eventually murdered as a result of her unwillingness to wed him. Furthermore, troops affiliated with the vice task force rape prostitutes, demonstrating their powerlessness and incapacity to protect themselves from their assailants. The manner that Ndibe depicts the dictator of Madia, who is now General Bello, and how Iyese dies as a result of his sexual exploitation highlights how poorly troops are viewed in postcolonial African countries. Operating under military regimes, these troops frequently live above the law and act like predatory sex maniacs, abusing women to satiate

their distorted sexual cravings. This portrayal provides a potent critique of the military's savage and inhumane actions, emphasizing the pervasive misuse of authority and the terrible toll it takes on the vulnerable individuals. General Bello, who commits hideous acts of brutality on his victims due to his unbridled violent tendencies. Foreign press headlines emphasize the savagery of these acts, including "Madian Writer Hanged," "Madian Minister's Death Suspicious," "120 Student Protesters Reported Killed," "Despot Canes Vice-Chancellor In Public," And "Diplomats Say African Dictator Behind Disappearance Of Opponents – Victims may have been fed to lions" (213) According to Akingbe "It's a satirical and allegorical representation of Nigeria in the grip of dictatorship foisted upon it by the military in the last four decades." (159) The sadistic rise of Bello, his psychotic disposition of life, Iyese's fragmented life, Adero's lost identity, and the overweening subjugation of multitude against the despicable vagaries. It chronicles the dark history of General Isa Palat Babangida's and General Sanni Abacha's military authoritarianism. Nguessan argues that Ndibe's 'Arrows of Rain' depicts the early Nigerian independence period till the 1990s, associated with "numberless flaws of political leaders who have instituted a regime of corruption, greed, starvation, and sins" (19). He also asserts that the novel represents Ndibe's quest to depict "a military coup that leads straight to the officialization of military delinquency" (19) in Nigeria. How Ndibe portrays 'Madia' as a state consisting of despotic and corrupt officials causes the book to mirror Fanon's idea of violence and disillusionment in postcolonial governments. he represents most Madians who believed their lives would be better after independence than they were under colonial rule. his exploration of military brutality given blatant corruption demonstrates Nigeria's nebulous structure as a nation. [3] The nation-state in Africa suffers moral decrepitude and misrule. When these countries gained freedom from the colonized the violent resistance to colonial control would not end suddenly. The opponents of the violent resistance against the invaders have used their weapons against their people on multiple occasions. Thus, the bloody conflict

leaves many deep scars on the freedom struggle, seizes power following independence, and tramples on compatriots' freedom with greater savagery than the colonists. Fanon explains how colonial rulers use both overt acts of violence and ideological oppression to keep their hold on power. Although the colonized are kept in line by the military and police using physical violence. But the psychological violence churns their mind. [4] Usually in colonial reign, the local people are subjected to demeaning stereotypes by the colonists, who portray them (colonized) as irrational, sluggish, and inherently malevolent. This egregious representation actively constructs a worldview that native people are blasphemous thereby endangering the moral order of society. The end of formal colonialism has drastically changed the thematic focus of African writers, if the naturalization of African fiction originally concentrated on the fierce power struggle between Africa and Europe, leading to the interpretation of the African novel as a "national allegory" (as Jameson suggested). Frantz Fanon argues in his critical essay 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' "The people who for years on end have seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power, spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generally embodied the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie." (157) For Okey Ndibe, the civil war in Nigeria shaped the trajectory of artistic vision when he was a child. the weight of historical disillusionment and the dissonance between reality and potential staggered his writings. In an interview, he says, "You look at Nigeria today and it's a narrative of disillusionment, disappointment, and massive looting by politicians. And so I came to this country and came to terms with that story. I had to tell a story, and it became the way

of seeking to understand that terror." (1) thus, the delinquency under the military regime, which coexists with dictatorship and gluttony, has caused Nigeria to descend into nameless corruption and political turmoil, as exposed in 'Arrows of Rain'. The first stage presents an odd predicament! Bukuru, the main character, is accused of raping a woman and then drowning her. Bukuru recounts his story, but no one takes him seriously as he is thought to be insane. The case that comes after Mr. X's apprehension, arrest, and court appearance is The State vs. Mr. X, a male adult whose address is unknown. He is charged with obstructing the deceased person's access to life support, physically and sexually abusing her before her death, and drowning a woman at B. Beach to facilitate her death. He says he won't be hiring a lawyer for his case. [5]

Conclusion

Thus, Okey Ndibe has cautiously recounted the stories of military repression. Almost every page of the book is occupied by the social unrest brought on by the military's enslavement of people. In the narrative, repression symbolizes a wave of political apocalypse that swept through Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape between 1994 and 1998, driven mostly by the military's avaricious desire for power. The brutality of the military is further symbolized by the deaths of Bukuru, Iyese, and a reporter in the novel. Ndibe aggravates the military's insensitivity to human and national development by citing its vague political and economic strategies that are unable to advance the country.

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