

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

...art has a purpose. I believe in the social status of art...it must be used to advance the cause of humanity... I believe that if art has any sake at all, it is humanity...I am a humanist. The content is as important as the work. A work of art is not a technical jargon...A container without content is empty. As concerned committed artist, the basis of all art is justice (Osundare, 16).

The above extract forms the basis of this work. It emphasizes the relevance of art to humanity and also shows the duty of the artist to the society in which he lives.

Dating back from the colonial era, to the time after independence, the socio-economic situation of Nigeria has continued to waver. The British Empire expanded trade with Nigeria following the Napoleonic wars and in January 1901

Nigeria became a British protectorate. The British were first interested in trade but later delved into governance. By the middle of the 20th century, the great wave for independence was sweeping across the country. The British, were pressured by some Elites (such as Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Anthony Enahoro) to grant Nigeria independence. In March 1953, Enahoro moved the motion for Nigeria's independence. The motion according to Enahoro was 'fired by the dream to build a new and modern nation' (The Guardian, 16).

Nigeria was granted independence in October 1960. It became a Federal Republic in October 1963 with Nnamdi Azikiwe as the country's first president. In 1965 there was a National Election which produced a major realignment of politics and a distrusted result that set the country on the path to civil war. On the 15th of January 1966 the military took over power with General Aguiyi Ironsi as the Head of State. In May 1966 there was another coup which established General Yakubu Gowon as the Head of State. Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu the leader of the Igbo secessionist declared independence of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra in 1967 which resulted into war. General Murtala Mohammed staged a bloodless coup accusing General Yakubu Gowon of delaying the promised return to civilian rule in 1975. General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in February 1976 and Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo became Head of State. In 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected president. Major General Muhammadu Buhari in 1983 overthrew the civilian government. Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985 took over power and promised to return power to civilian in 1990 which was later extended to 1993. In 1993 there was a presidential elections which Babangida Annuled. The elections was won by M.K.O Abiola in August 1993, the interim government of Ernest Shonekan came into power but was forced to resign in November 1993 by Gen. Sani Abacha. General Abdulsalami Abubakar assumed power after the death of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998. Preparations were made for civilian rule and in 1999 Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the president for the next eight years after which there was a transition to another civilian government with Musa Yar'dua as the President. Yar'dua did not complete his term in office, he died and the vice president Goodluck Jonathan became the president.

Looking back after many years of independence, Enahoro puts the blame of the present state of the country on the military's interruption of governance in 1966. He states that:

When in 1966, elements in the Nigerian military struck, seized the government, and assassinated a number of political leaders; it was obvious that a dark day had dawned on our political life (Enahoro, 16).

The military had come in their Khaki using the power of the gun and decrees to disrupt the political process which had begun to gain ground in the country.

All the blame cannot be put on the military as civilian rule has also contributed to the devastation in the Nigeria system. The civilian rule will be a discussion for another day. Consequently, the dream of having a new Nigeria and modern nationhood can be actualized if all its people take up their civil responsibility to unite as a force and speak the same voice of resistance against bad leaders. In the words of Wole Soyinka 'The man dies in him who stands silent in the face of tyranny (Soyinka,40) and according to Amilcar Cabral 'Every Onlooker is either a coward or a traitor (Cabral, 40). It is a clarion call for all to adhere to as Nigeria need of voices to be raised. Tanure Ojaide in an interview with Ezenwa – Ohaeto says:

Nigeria is a mother and a lover. At the same time, it is a special person. Hence for the love of Nigeria, we must support the country (Ojaide, 48.)

1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE

Aesthetics of resistance here means how the two authors under focus namely, Tanure Ojaide and Helon Habila in *The Activist* and *Waiting for an Angel* respectively have been able to portray resistance. Ojaide and Habila are prolific writers who through their works present the notion of resistance against the socio political ills in the society. According to Chinua Achebe:

...an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames (Achebe, 78).

Ojaide and Habila have shown their relevance by portraying the socio and political ills such as the evil of military government, poverty, marginalization abuse of power, lack of press freedom, environmental pollution, imprisonment, martyr and prostitution. They (Ojaide and Habita) also present resistance as a tool that can lead to socio political change.

Resistance is having the capacity to say no to certain ills. Resistance, is standing up for one's norms. It is also opposition to achieve the required change.

Nigeria has had good, dehumanizing and demoralizing rulers protest came from different quarters, including the literary world. Writers have watched the Nigerian society rapidly decline and they seek to warn against more degeneration. These writers do not just criticize the corrupt Nigerian leadership but also call for change. Tanure Ojaide and Helon Habila draw vivid pictures of the state of the Nation and the devastation brought about by tyranny. Tyranny, according to K.B. Kubayanda is an endemic social and political problem in Africa (Kabayanda, 25). The situation is ironic because despite independence, from colonial imperialist, the people are still imprisoned by their own African leaders Kabayanda adds:

...Independence, seems to be a self, serving arrangement between the emerging ruling elites of the African colonies thus appears a pattern that contradicts the dream of independence (Kabayanda, 25).

Because of the present state of affairs, writers have taken up the challenge to stir up resistance to ensure that the nation is in a proper state.

Resistance could take a violent or non-violent method. In this study, the type of resistance is non-violent. This is in line with Mohammed Gandhi's view of resistance which environmentalist, critic, and activist Ken Saro Wiwa followed. Others include: Ibrahim Lincon, the Black American who fought against segregation between the blacks and whites, Nelson Mandela who fought against black apathied in South Africa and at

the time of this research, resistance has continue to spring up in the Middle East. In Egypt, the people had to protest against the President Hussine Mubarak who had ruled Egypt for twenty nine years (29). The people, claim to suffer economic hardship and lack of political reforms. In Uganda.

1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the aesthetics of resistance in Tanure Ojaide's. *The Activist* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*.

This research, shall examine how the two authors have beautifully explored and satirized the society using various characters and events to depict resistance.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION

To the knowledge of the researcher, no work has explored the aesthetics of resistance in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*.

This work will not only show how history affects the writer in his production, but will also emphasis resistance as a tool for socio-political change.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study, shall explore the aesthetics of resistance, paying more attention to characters and events that stand for resistance in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The New Historicism theory is adopted for this research. Various materials related to the research purpose shall be used.

This (New Historicism) theory is adopted because it suits the research purpose as it suggests that literature, can be studied and interpreted within the historical time of the work the history of the author and the critic's perspective.

AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE IN TANURE OJAIDE'S THE ACTIVIST AND HELON HABILA'S WAITING FOR AN ANGEL

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