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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FESTUS LYAYI'S VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The present work deals with the Artistic Representation in Nigeria: A Study of Festus Lyayi's *Violence*. Its purpose is to show how the author paints life aspects in post-independence Nigeria. In fact, in his writing, Festus Lyayi doesn't limit himself only on diagnosing and exposing the socio-political malevolent facts that harass the contemporary society but also on proposing some exit tracks to the suffering masses. This is noticeable through the protagonist's awareness for he denounces the social injustice between leaders and popular masses on one hand, and expresses the need to reach a new order on the other hand. This leads us to think of Festus Lyayi's commitment that we intend to unveil basing on sociological and psychological approaches. As a matter of fact, in depicting facts and events inherent to the Nigerian society and with its people, the author claims the change of existed reality, conditions which he believes pathetic and rough into better conditions where people could live in peace without fear, arbitrariness and violence.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the writer is not to demonstrate in the present contemporary Africa since he cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact the writer should march right in front to lead the common mass while raising inner affliction of this latter. It is agreed that the African post-independent novel displays the grief or affliction of the intellectuals as well as the disappointment of popular masses but that of Nigeria is not excluded with new authorities exhibiting unappropriated attitudes not shared by these masses. These attitudes compelled Nigerian writers to concern themselves with an awakening movement which consists in denouncing the evils made by rulers. In this connection Chinua Achebe recognizes the sensitiveness of the artist when he writes:

If the artist is anything, he is a human being with heightened sensitivities; he must be aware of the faintest nuances of injustice in human relations. The African writer cannot therefore be unaware of or indifferent to, the monumental injustice which his people suffer (1975:79).

Later on, the same doorbell was ringed by Festus Lyayi though he uncovered the accurate contrast in living conditions between the rich and poor, the rulers and the ruled in post-independent Nigeria, mainly in his novel *Violence*. In his second novel, *The Contrast* (1982) Lyayi kept on backing up Achebe's wordings about the role of the writer where he directed his arrows towards corruption and untruthfulness of the ruling class. However, this research work is entitled artistic representation in Nigeria: A study of Festus Lyayi's *Violence*. But knowing that 'representation' would mean the use of signs that stand

in for and take the place of something else, it is through it that people organize the world and reality through the act of naming its elements. Thus, literary speaking this research aims at presenting violence not only in some of its forms but also its parameters through which it is implemented. Concerning the review of the related literature, I must confess that Lyayi's *Violence* has already aroused curiosity of an indefinite number of critics who conducted works of full scale since it approaches real life issues. Among them we have Abubakar Mohammed Sani and Manimangai Mani who led a work entitled 'The Portrayal of Working Class People in African Novels: A Study of *Festus Lyayi's Violence*'. The fundamental point to notice is that the authors highlight how the working people class are presented in the novel as those people who are always in the process of asserting their existence through struggling for survival by selling their labour to the capitalists in order to earn a living. Also, referring to violence by quoting Ouologuem, they (2014:40) confess that 'it is a force used only by exploiters against the exploited. In this bourgeoisie presentation of violence, working people did not come up even with a spontaneous response'. Another study entitled 'Festus Lyayi's Fiction and the Revolutionary Imperative: A Study of *Violence* and *Heroes*' has been conducted by Etta Julius Ndifon. In this study the author acknowledges that Festus belongs to that extraction of African novelists who believe that art must go beyond fulfilling its traditional role and responsibility of exposing the ineptitude and corruption of the establishment, the class divisions and class contradictions that characterise and bedevil contemporary society. Moreover, though based on Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Epounda Mexan Serge and Bokotiabato Mokogna Zéphirin (2018) wrote an article focusing on the evils African masses undergo from the ruling class among which violence.

For them, most of African writers' works devoted to post-colonial period make mention of violence in its diverse forms. It comes out from this review that works on Lyayi's *Violence* have been the preoccupation of many critics. In this respect, in order to create a gap with previous above studies, my main concern in this work is to answer the following fundamental question: How does Festus Lyayi artistically represent the Nigerian post-independent society in *Violence*? The hypothesis backing up this query is that the exploration of this novel reveals that the author has played his role as a writer in denouncing the evils perpetrated by the ruling class and has campaigned for social equality. As far as the methodology is concerned, any method can suit as Arlette Chemain (1981:31) states: 'Generally speaking, many methods can enlighten the story in a convergent way of narration. The sectarianism can be sclerotic'. Thus, literature being a product of and within society, I will allude to the sociological approach for the link existing between both, as well as the psychological approach for a better understanding of the characters' behavior in a literary work. As to the plan, I will first revisit the author's background and with him the novel under consideration. Secondly, I will conceptualize the term violence before at last analyzing the embodiment of violence in Festus Lyayi's *Violence* where his artistic representation is portrayed.

Background to the author and the novel of *Violence*: In postcolonial Africa, literature has been an exceptional institution where African writers through their writings fought to tear themselves free and to build modern democratic societies. This couldn't be done effortlessly and without risks as the processes had been done on the rulers' unwillingness. If the works of some writers had been forbidden on one hand, what could still be understated, some other writers had been jailed, killed or even bound to banish from their own countries among the many, Festus Lyayi. In fact, born on 29th September 1947 in Ugbegwu, Ishan in Edo State Lyayi died on 12th November 2013, Festus was a Nigerian leftist writer, best known for advancing his politics through realist novels depicting the socio-political environment of contemporary Nigeria. He was also a former president of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and was killed in a motor accident on his way to the National Executive Meeting of ASUU. It matters to notice that the dangerous driver, Danladi Baba, who drove recklessly and thereafter snuffed out Lyayi's life in that road traffic crash on the Lokoja- Abuja Highway has been sentenced to seven (7) years imprisonment without an option of fine.

Regarding Lyayi's career, he was Economic correspondent for several newspapers in Bendel; industrial training officer, Bendel State University, Ekpoma. When he died, he was lecturer in business administration, University of Benin, Benin City with Association of Nigerian Authors prize in 1987 and Commonwealth Writers prize in 1988 as awards. As far as his literary production, Lyayi is author of three novels: *Violence* in 1979; *The Contract* in 1982 and *Heroes* in 1986 with a collection of short stories entitled "Awaiting Court Martial" written in 1996. However, a sketchy and critical analysis of *Violence* needs to be done as my study is based on that novel. Thus, set in the city of Benin in Nigeria, *Violence* is a socio-political novel that paints individuals' aspects of life and ruling system that prevails in the society with Nigeria as reference. In other words, *Violence* deals with the effects of Nigerian civil war and aftermaths, especially the political situation that dislodges the organized structures of the previous society. The main themes are corruption and injustice. In this respect, Lyayi is concerned with how people corrupt and are being corrupted and how injustice is perpetrated among people of the same country, mainly in the distribution of natural resources. Therefore, Lyayi dramatizes the social practices that predominated in Nigeria post-independent. Through the characters he has created the author presents two diametrically opposed facets of the society: The first class embodied by Idemudia, a jobless young boy from a poor family who could neither complete his secondary studies due to lack of money nor afford properties for his living with Adisa, his wife. Other members being Omoifo, Osaro, Patrick also known as "the poor" and the second class represented by Obofun, Queen (his wife) as well as the police forces, Iriso and many others known as "the rich". The portrayal of characters shows that social wealth is produced by

workers resulting from the class embodied by Idemudia, the protagonist. With suffering of all order, we can see them gathering at Iyaso Motor Park constantly searching for work to do to survive and fend for their families, selling their labour power to the 'wealthy class' so as to satisfy their needs. It sorts out that the 'poor' toil on daily basis with enough risks for the benefit of the 'rich'. It is important to recall that the evils perpetrated by Nigerian post-independent rulers include corruption, oppression, class struggles, exploitation, etc. According to Lyayi, even the surplus made by labored men had to be shared with other parties. In this connection, the following excerpt on the beginning of the fourth chapter shows how the workers are exploited by the rich as Lyayi (1979:34) states:

For more than four hours, the four men laboured to clear the cement. Osaro and Patrick stayed on top of the trailer from where they handle down the bags of cement to Idemudia and Omoifo who then carried them either on their heads or on their backs to the shed, more than ten metres away. At the beginning they shouted as they worked... But gradually, their shouting died out. They became silent as they worked into the evening and as the hours passed, they became worn out.

Once the task was completed, payment was another problem. This is to show how well the working class is to be exploited and marginalized. The conversation between the waiter of the restaurant and Queen on one side and workers on the other side serves as illustration when they claim their reward. In fact, Idemudia went into the restaurant and immediately, he drew the attention of the customers sitting inside. A waiter instantly approached him:

'What do you want?' He demanded.

'We want madam,' Idemudia replied, eyeing the fat waiter.

'Then wait outside!' the waiter ordered... They had to wait another twenty minutes before the Queen arrived.

'We want our money,' Idemudia told her. The work is done.

'Queen tried to look across and above the men at the shed. Let somebody turn on the outside lights!'

'Madam, we want our money! Osaro said tersely.

'I have said you must come back tomorrow.'

'We want our money now! Idemudia said angrily, and at the same time moved to block the entrance into the motel. (pp. 35-36).

This is one of the many disillusioned practices perpetrated by the rich over the poor. We realize how workers are timelessly maltreated before receiving their reward. From this conversation Lyayi portrays the difficult nature of the rich in general represented here by Queen. Another vivid case could be the looting or embezzlement of public resources. For having worked in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Obofun didn't serve the State as it should be. He has performed a social vice as the narrator (1979: 29) reveals:

It was rumoured that Obofun had been loaned some money by the Ministry with which to build a personal house. According to the rumour Obofun had built the house but instead of living in it, had let it back to the Ministry at an extraordinarily high price. Some put the figure at twenty thousand naira a year. Obofun, who neither confirmed nor condemned the rumours, soon moved over to ministry of Lands and Housing. It is obvious that the tone and feelings of African post-independent writers have been at any rate that of dramatizing social vices perpetrated by rulers. They are not blamed since they are members of a society and as such their creative ingenuity and sensibilities stemmed from the socio-political realities happening around them. This is what Lyayidid in his *Violence* where he denounces and evidences aspects of social realism experienced by Nigerians after independence. Another evil is the need of money. Though in *The Contrast*, Lyayi exposes the need of money that everybody feels. This is noticeable through the driver's wordings when driving Ogie home:

Money is king in this country. Everybody wants money... armed robbers steal to make money. The politicians steal to make money, the police and the cream of the military and the establishment all steal to make money (1982:19).

Moreover, education should be one of the most striking criteria for hiring a position in a contemporary society. Unfortunately, the contrary prevails since opulence and the numbers of properties determine the position of individuals. This aspect of social realism is also approached by Lyayi who believes that education and morality do not count for anything in contemporary society. For him, whatever means of getting it, material opulence comes first. Such is a belief backed up by Chief Eweh Obala when arguing with 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 (1982: 13).

This is to say that *Violence* and *The Contract* raise nearly the same fight for they x-ray social realism experienced by post-independent Nigeria for the rulers defraud public coffers and siphon the money abroad while observing the falling down of basic facilities built prior to this period. Truly, Festus Lyayi's three novels as well as his collection of short stories mentioned above uncover the abject penury and disappointment that are true facts faced by Nigerians. But *Violence* traces the long run or journey of Idemudia who couldn't complete his education, with the burden of hunger, poverty, joblessness, humiliation, all this considered as various facets of violence perpetrated on him.

Conceptualizing of the term violence

The concept of violence can be viewed diversely according to critics and circumstances characters may face. Broadly speaking, violence is considered as behavior or action intended to hurt, to cause destruction, pain or suffering as opposed to peace or nonviolence. However, in the present context the violence stands as counter-violence as it is about exploited men towards exploiters. As a matter of fact, Africans who had victimized oppression from colonialists had no means but turning to violence, the only alternative to free themselves from this tricky and tragic trauma. Accordingly, probing on the issue of violence, Frantz Fanon believes that 'Africans had to use all means, to turn the scale, including of course, that of violence' (1967: 28). For him, violence against violence yields good return to the marginalized party. In this respect, Fanon asserts:

The exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and the use of force first and foremost. . . . Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence (1967: 48). It matters to remind that the violence Lyayi referred to in his *Violence* is that of African rulers who once at the head of states after independences in 1960, kept on making their fellow countrymen suffer as it had been the case with colonialists. Africans' fate was uncertain with loss of dignity and victims of all sort of maltreatments while being ruled by their own brothers. In this connection Fanon's wordings are of significant value when he declares:

A people who are alienated from their land and from the products of their labour, a people who are systematically bestialised and dehumanized have no choice but to resort to violence in order to reclaim its dignity: "A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced" (1964: 53).

In his *Violence*, Lyayi has created a lot of characters to dramatize this situation with working class as embodiment of violence through social evils among which injustice, corruption, to name only a few. This is what characterized most of African post-colonial writers who have preoccupied to raise a combatant general philosophy in which oppressed masses had to revolt against leaders who intentionally inflict severe pains or sufferings on them. Such a violence is remarkable in Lyayi's answer when interviewed by Adedeji Niyi in Benin. Thus, stressing on the multiform elements which impede

masses to freely exercise their rights, which stand as forms of violence, Lyayi said:

Violence is central to what I am saying: that violence is not physical violence alone. In fact, the greatest form of violence is this question of injustice in the relations between people. People who have potentials that cannot be realized because of social conditions, because of conscious choices that the ruling class elements have made, which is making it impossible for people to fulfil themselves. So, that is the greatest form of violence. (2006: 152).

From the above excerpt, we can learn at least two forms of violence: physical violence and mind control violence. Referred to as a harsh form of launching attacks, physical violence intends to harm somebody by several means. While a football player can kick his opponent, a husband may slap his wife. Both are forms of physical violence. In *Violence*, Lyayi resorts to such form of violence where instances are recurrent. The arrest of Idemudia had been the cause for his father's anger over his mother. In fact, in those days policemen were terrors in the villages and nobody knew exactly what their authority was and therefore what part of it could be challenged. They acted on behalf of the government, not on behalf of the people. Thus, on patrol, Idemudia had been arrested as the narrator (1979: 6-7) mentions:

And so, Idemudia had been seized. They took him to Ubiaja where he spent three nights in the cell. After the third day he was released, according to the officer for want of evidence. And so he had returned home. But returning home gave him no peace. He was surprised to find his mother's face swollen, her limbs broken and one of her teeth broken. Shocked, he immediately asked what had happened. 'It's your father,' his mother explained. 'He wanted to kill me because I asked him to go to Ubiaja so they could release you. He hit me on the face! He used my own pestle on me! He

So far, Idemudia's father exercises violence on his mother. Though, termed as matrimonial violence, Idemudia heard the hurly of feet, screams, harsh blows and more feet from his parents' room where he finally found his mother in the mud and his father pounding away at her. Her whole face was muddy and twisted with pain. Therefore, unable to fight back or defend herself, his mother helplessly takes all the brutal punishment that his father was giving her. Bothered by this scenario, Idemudia warn his father not to repeat that awful action as the narrator (p.8) puts: Idemudia's teeth were set. 'Don't touch her again! 'Don't strike her again! You have already nearly killed her and this is the second time on my account. Just don't try it again! In most of African post-colonial writings, physical violence remains one of the writers' preoccupations. Thus, in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ikem, Editor of the 'National Gazette' has been arrested for having criticized and denouncing the practices of the government. The police came and arrested him as we can read from this excerpt: 'Ikem's hand has been inside handcuff' (1987:165). Since Ikem was finally killed, a group of students also were ill-treated and beaten by the police for having expressed the desire to know the truth about Ikem's death. Moreover, Alioum Fantouré in his *Le cercle de tropiques* (1972) dramatizes the practices of the police by political leaders who perpetrated unlawful exactions against peasant masses. The complaint of victims serves as evidence when the narrator writes: 'sans aucune explication précise, nous fumes transférés à la prison par les militaires de la gendarmerie territoriale' (1972 :168).

A closer look on Lyayi's *Violence* reveals that it revolves around two classes diametrically opposed one another: the rich and the poor. However, the author paints the situation exposing conditions faced by the working class which experiences psychological worries. Represented by Idemudia, his wife and co-workers, this class is victim of social injustice of all kinds. One of the striking evidences is the welcoming conditions granted to a patient depending on his class: whether he is an ordinary patient or an extra-ordinary one. This, consequently led the Counsel for the Defence (1979: 186) to declare:

When in one public hospital, in the same society, one patient can sleep in a large air-conditioned room whereas other ordinary patients—men, women and children—have to sleep in corridors, on mats, on the hard, cold and roughly cemented floors or share beds, this is violence ...

This distinction brings about psychological troubles on the patient. And Idemudia had experienced a worse disappointment at The Ogbe Hospital where he couldn't be admitted, the vacant beds being booked for people of the higher class able to afford prescriptions whatever price. Above all, we have considered two forms of violence: physical violence and psychological violence with a view that they are all imbedded in a capitalist violence perpetrated on the peasant masses. This injustice observed by the working class urges them to revolt against the prevailing system, a behavior common to most of post-colonial writings where writers paint the victimization of popular masses. In this connection, Jude Agho's wordings corroborate when he (2011: 96) declares that "this tilting towards a literature of praxis has radicalized the outlook of these novelists because they prescribe revolutionary solutions in the form of organized revolts and syndicalism to the problems of Africa".

Festus Lyayi's Artistic Representation in *Violence*: Broadly speaking, representation is the use of signs that stand in for and take the place of something else. It is through representation that people organize the world and reality through the act of naming its elements where signs are arranged in order to form semantic constructions and express relations. But Festus Lyayi's artistic representation in *Violence* leads to the features Lyayi uses to portray aspects of life in Nigeria, especially, the public affairs management used by the ruling regime. In this way, the present section deals with the practices perpetrated by the class in power in *Violence*. As a reminder, in this novel the author probes the contradictions inherent in people's life, mainly the treatment of injustice and corruption in the distribution of national resources, a distribution that disfavors the common man represented by Idemudia and others. *Violence* in fact tells the story that favours corruption and disfavors the opponents of corruption. In it, Festus Lyayi represents diverse aspects of dictatorial practices undertaken by the ruling class among which oppression, assassination and arrest.

Indeed, in this novel, oppression is perpetrated by the wealthy people, members of the government over poor people or common men. Of course, the latter are victims of injustice, working in inhuman conditions on the profit of rich men. They were forced to work hard without any feeling of anxiety for fear to be sacked from the group. This can be evidenced through Madam Obofun who, conversing with the Greek engineer voiced: 'you heard what madam said, 'No laziness and no agitation. If you work hard, you stay. If not, you go.' (p. 236). Despite their treatment, the working class under the leadership of Idemudia was devoted to equalize chances by organizing themselves and fighting oppressive forces. Since the working class experiences oppression in their everyday life, they couldn't stop struggling as Idemudia (1979: 157) declares: ...*I am not going to give up ... I am going to continue to struggle, to fight. And where I cannot fight because I am held as I am held now, I am going to escape.* So far, oppression is felt through the author's admirations. In fact, to resist the ruling system, Festus Lyayi encourages common people to take arms not to loot individuals but to avenge police forces as Idemudia (1979: 185) asserts:

What I would like to see, however, is not just for a handful of men to take up arms to rob one individual. I fell and think it is necessary that all the oppressed sections of our community ought to take up arms to overthrow the present oppressive system. The system has already proved that it operates through violence ...

One may understand from the above extract that Lyayi's wish is not only to awake people's awareness to stand against governmental forces but also to put an end to all means of violence in all its forms in a society that offers limitless opportunities to its citizens. But for it to meet the goal, all victims should consent and act. As leader of the

oppressed, Idemudia showed his braveness when the police forces and tax collectors made intrusion in the village to arrest anybody who hasn't paid his taxes. As a matter of fact, because of lack of money in order to pay taxes, both his father and his uncle had then hastily departed and jumped into the bush behind their house. But Idemudia decided to stay although he didn't have money.

His parents' social situation was so alarming that they couldn't even pay his school fees. As a result, he was driven out as the narrator (1979: 5) declares when people of the government came: '*when he had been driven away from school because of school fees three years before, he had found his father uncompromising*'. That is why Idemudia refuses once asked by the police forces to take them to his father's farm. Later on at about ten o'clock, the policemen and tax collectors had arrived. There was a so timeless oppression on Idemudia that he remained constant on his decision. His conversation with the police tells more as we can read:

'We want your father,' they demanded.

'He went to the farm a long time ago,' Idemudia replied.

The shortest and most thick-set among them, who was also the police officer, removed his glasses.

'I see,' he sniffed. 'Ran away when he heard we were coming? But we are more than prepared for all of you now. You will take us to his farm!'

Idemudia shrugged his shoulders. 'You can wait here until he returns,' he said. 'But I can't take you to any farm.'

'You can't do what?' the short and thickset policeman demanded.

'I say I can't take you to the farm. I am here and not at school because I was driven away for not paying school fees. If he had any money he would have paid my school fees.' (1979:6).

We can learn from this conversation that Idemudia was treated in a cruel way and forced to tell where his father escaped for fear of police forces and tax collectors but didn't make up his mind. Consequently, he was seized as the narrator puts: '*The short man paced about the room. Finally in a harsh voice he ordered one of his constables to seize Idemudia.*' The climate was such an unsafe one that policemen were terrors in the village and nobody knew exactly their authority was even if they acted on the behalf of the government rather than on the behalf of individual. Festus Lyayi's is not the first and will not be the last writer to raise the issue of terrorism in his literary production. A similar approach has been also tackled by Chinua Achebe in his *Anthills of Savannah* where the ruling class uses acts of terrorism in order to silence whoever opposes them. This is especially seen with His Excellency who behaves violently against any sort of resistance which constitutes an act of terrorism towards collaborator: '*How many times, for God's sake am I expected to repeat it? Why do you find it difficult to swallow my ruling? On anything?*' (1987: 1). Such are Sam's wordings towards Chris Oriko who ultimately surrendered. Another common practice perpetrated by African post-independence rulers is corruption. In fact, corruption stands for a dishonest or wicked behavior and The World Bank Report (2015: 32) conceived it as '*a form of dishonesty or criminal offense undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority to acquire illicit benefit or abuse of power for one's private gain*'. For these rulers, it is a habit though timelessly denounced and criticized by writers in their literary productions. In Festus Lyayi's *Violence* rulers make use of corruption not only to consolidate their power and hold control over the oppressed but also to keep them in the state of poverty with awkward conditions of living as this extract (1979: 56) testifies:

Children cried, women wept, everywhere there was a great urgency and paradoxically little activity: a hopelessness and helplessness that invoked the onlooker to tears. It was simply a wonder why so much the worse for wear, these people still struggled and aspired to keep their lean flames of lives going. There seemed to be no point in seeking recourse from death, the abundant evidence of life about what was distressing and frustrating enough. The protagonist of *Violence*, Idemudia has experienced acts of corruption especially by the Queen from when the latter taxed him of ingratitude.

For what she did for Idemudia, the Queen wanted him to persuade his friends to call off the strike:

‘Just tell me what you want,’ she said placatingly. ‘Remember you are my foreman now. You should work with me.’ Idemudia became more and more nervous. ‘I do not want anything from you, madam,’ he said.

Queen laughed. ‘You are a man,’ she said. You need money. You need many other things I could give to you. Things you have never had before.’

From these wordings, we can be tempted to believe that the Queen wants by all means to bribe Idemudia so as he persuade his co-workers to call off the strike. Later on, Idemudia told her, ‘I need time to think.’ This is because he didn’t want to displease her by an outright refusal. However, the evidence of corruption is unveiled when the Queen immediately seized upon what Idemudia had said, concerning *time* as the Queen (1979: 287) wondered: ‘What will you say then that you cannot say now? I will give you two hundred naira, even three hundred, perhaps more later.’ ‘I’ll give you anything you want, anything that you ask, for now’. Such was the promise the Queen made to Idemudia. The most significant lesson to draw is the Idemudia’s reply towards the Queen. Accordingly, the narrator (1979: 287-288) puts:

He couldn’t accept it because this was sweat money, almost like blood money, that his conscience would never give him peace of mind if he accepted it...he pretended to think this over. Then he said, as a matter of fact, I want nothing for myself. I want nothing from you.

This answer astonished more than one reader who would expect the contrary. Even the Queen, angered by Idemudia’s refusal had never imagined that he could be so stubborn to maintain his position. This is an attitude African people, mainly popular masses should observe if they really expect a new order in leaders’ managerial strategies. The exploration of Festus Lyayi’s *Violence* reveals also many other evils that characterized the African post-independent rulers. Some of them are arrests, assassinations, terrorism, arbitrariness taken as forms of violence perpetrated on masses and other evils like financial embezzlements on the detriment of states. Thus, Festus encourages and excites the masses to stand against all these forms of marginalization, in order not only to claim their rights and sovereignty but also to highlight African identity. In this connection, EPOUNDA Mexan Serge & BOKOTIABATOMOKOGNA Zéphirin’s conception of African identity is significant when they (2019: 164) write:

For an African identity, the African intellectuals should align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national ideal, striving for a form of societal organization that will free the manacled spirit and energy of African sin order to build a new country and sing a new song.

We can learn from this extract that claiming the real image of African people, they would unite themselves and wage war against ruling classes if they dream of an Africa that could match the other continents.

This corroborates the struggle Lyayi leads through his writings. The least we can say with Lyayi’s *Violence* is that he creates characters to highlight the plight of African people who are subjugated by leaders for their behavior is taken as an affront to society. It appears evident that the author artistically denounces the wrongdoings of the African ruling class though he refers to Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this research work, it matters to confess that the title of *Violence* is sufficient to dream of its content. In fact, Lyayi’s *Violence* describes a balanced image of two classes: the working class on one hand and the exploiters on the other hand where the use of violence is abundantly depicted. Therefore, throughout this analysis, I have tried to show that Idemudia, the protagonist with his co-workers have experienced violence of all kinds. However, the trauma undergone by the working class force them to revolutionary thoughts leading to liberation. Thus, as a committed writer, Lyayi does not miss in his novel to outline the vicissitudes faced by African people in general and Nigerians in particular.

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