
FOCALISATION AND EMPLOTMENT IN BEN OKRI'S *THE
FAMISHED ROAD* AND HELON HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*:
A FORMALIST ANALYSIS

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DECLARATION

I, Rabi'u Haruna Ahmad, do hereby declare that, this dissertation is the product of my own research efforts undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Umma Abubakar, and that it has never been produced and presented and will never be presented elsewhere for the award of any other degree or certificate. All the sources used in this dissertation have been appropriately acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that the research for this dissertation, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English (Literature) by Rabi'u Haruna Ahmad (SPS/17/MEN/00050) was carried out under my supervision.

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APPROVAL PAGE

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ABSTRACT

This research employs formalist analysis and examines focalisation and emplotment in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* to identify and evaluate the elements of the artistic framework upon which the narrative of these two selected novels are based. The study gives express priority to the artfulness from which the two novels draw their autonomy as self-sufficient objects of study and unique art forms. The analysis was carried out to find out whether the technique and the various aspects of form contribute to arrive at the worthwhile meaning of the text from the main internal textual aspects rather than other external issues of the texts. The research relies on formalism and the narrative theory as tools of analysis within the framework of Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique'. This study is qualitative research in which form and technique are used to analyse data through textual analysis which is based on similar assumptions of Close Reading, derived from I. A. Richards's Practical Criticism. The analysis discovered that the deliberation on the technique of art is a rescue operation into literature that salvages it from the common interpretation of the text. The analysis discovered that the artistic function of the important textual aspects is seen as the ground for the argument that literary language is distinct from the other kinds of language. It has also discovered Okri and Habila's intention to hide behind the important textual aspects of the two novels in tackling issues affecting Africa and Africans.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises the general introduction, background to the study, statement of the research problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and delimitation about how the study is conducted.

1.1 Background to the Study

The study of narrative technique has long been done at various levels which range from the smallest level of the sign to a wider aspect of the structure. Some even look at Grammar that underwrites and generates narrative, (Greimas, and Courtes, 1982: 38). In literature, a writer uses words to create a text and the methods a writer uses for creative purposes is what constitutes the narrative technique. “Narrative technique is the methods and devices writers use to tell their stories” (Cascio, 2007: 55). It is the means writers employ in producing literary texts and is the means of producing a specific effect of a novel. With the employment of the technique, the writers would be able to develop and convey their themes efficiently to the readers. Palmer (1986:5) acknowledges:

Technique is the means by which the writer shapes and explores his experience, which is his subject matter. It is the means by which he develops his themes and finally evaluates the world he has presented. And the more appropriate the techniques are to the themes, the more expertly he will be able to explore them. Technique cannot therefore be neglected in the evaluation of a work quality.

Invariably, formalist critics emphasise much on form and technique. They believe that “the technique of art is to make objects unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, and to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). Following Shklovsky’s ideas in the

way he demonstrates the technique of art, this study adopts the idea of technique in the analysis of the two selected African novels to investigate how these techniques have helped in the exposition of the authors' thematic concerns and development of plots. When analysing a text through formalistic lenses, a critic involves in the examination of a work's constituent parts, as Dobie (2012: 40), points out 'the critic who wants to write about literature from a formalist perspective must first be a close and careful reader who examines all the elements of a text individually and questions how they come together to create a work of art'. The critic is also required to examine the linguistic and structural aspects. The holistic composition of the constituent parts, linguistic and structural aspects is what constitutes form and techniques in a literary text.

Formalist critics do not ignore the question of technique in the analysis of literary work and the territory of technique is thus not external to literature but internal to the text. Therefore, this study examines the narrative technique of the two selected African novels from Nigeria; Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, (1991) and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, (2002) which are contemporary African prose fiction. Okri in *The Famished Road* registers his revolution against human poverty and famine in a given society. The novel uses the imagery of the road to characterise the dreadful situation people face in their society regarding Nigerians while Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* registers his revolution against human rights abuses and poverty in a given society. The novel uses the imagery of prison to characterise the poor situation of life and brutality about the Nigerian situation.

Ben Okri is a Nigerian novelist born in 1959, at Minna Niger State, a city in Northern Nigeria. He was educated in Nigeria and London; Okri spent most of his life in England, attended the University of Essex where he studied Comparative Literature. Ben Okri, short story writer,

novelist, and poet is a master storyteller. He has nine novels to his credit *Flowers and Shadows* (1980), which was published during his three years at Essex. His second novel, *The Landscapes Within* (1982) was described by Hilary Bailey as a strange and brilliant book. Between 1984 and 1985, Ben Okri worked as a broadcaster for the BBC World Service on a program called 'Network Africa' and was poetry editor of West Africa Magazine for seven years until 1987. Ben Okri's third novel, *The Famished Road* was published in March (1991) and won The Booker Prize for Fiction in October that year. Other novels are *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), *Astonishing the Gods* (1995), *Dangerous Love* (1996), *Infinite Riches* (1998) and *In Arcadia* (2002), *Starbook* (2007), (Saranya, and Selvalakshmi, 2018: 351).

Okri's international fame was established with the publication of his third novel, *The Famished Road* in (1991), his principal works also include two collections of poems, *An African Elegy* (1992) and *Mental Flight* (1999), two collections of short stories *Incidents at the Shrine* (1986) and *Stars of the New Curfew* (1988) and collection of essays, the pamphlet *Birds of Heaven* (1995) and book-length *A Way of Being Free* (1997), In all of Okri's writings, he focuses on predominant African themes that depict the problems which beset the African land, particularly poverty, famine, corruption, political corruption, especially in Nigeria. His writings, combine western literary techniques with the elements of the glory of the traditional way of African life, Okri was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa for *Incidents at the Shrine* and the Paris Review Aga Khan Prize for fiction, (Moss, and Valestuk, 2000: 151-152). Ben Okri as an African novelist of English expression from Nigeria becomes popular and his fiction occupies a high position in African literature, he is considered as one of the foremost African authors of contemporary African prose fictions whose magic with the written words marks the advent of his major talent and poetic use of language, (Saranya and Selvalakshmi 2018: 352).

On the other hand, Helon Habila, a Nigerian novelist born in 1967 at Kaltingo, Gombe State, studied English language and literature at the University of Jos, Nigeria, taught for three years at the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi before he went to Lagos to write for *Hint* magazine and moving to Vanguard Newspaper as literary editor and later went to abroad for educational purposes. Though he has written novels, short stories, poetry, and some astringent political criticism, he is best known as an exceptionally contemporary novelist. Habila has published three major novels that have taken the Nigerian literary scene by storm. *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) reflects the social realities of the military usurpation of political power in Nigeria, *Measuring Time* (2006) attempts a re-creation of history and the evolution of the Nigerian nation and Habila's most recent novel *Oil on Water* (2010), examines vividly the effects of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Habila spent most of his life in Nigeria; Habila as an African novelist of English expression from Nigeria became popular as early as 2000, he is the most promising and worthy contemporary African writer whose *Waiting for an Angel* published in 2002 received the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 2003 for the best novel by an African writer. Habila becomes the first Nigerian to win the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2001, according to McCain (2007: 116) the introduction of his interview with Helon Habila "Everything Follows".

This study explores the richness in using the focalisation and emplotment in the two selected African novels and how these help in the exposition of the author's themes and development of the plot. Thus, this study is essential in the way it recognises the distinct aspects that characterise literary genres. Since this research is concerned with the formalist analysis of focalisation and emplotment in the two selected novels, its success comes from analysing various aspects of form and technique. Invariably, the analysis of focalisation and emplotment as part of narrative

technique is a significant study in the way it helps in showing how the writers develop their themes and how they finally evaluate the world they have presented or how a conflict builds up and how it is finally resolved. Therefore, over the years there has been a lot of experimentation with the narrative technique with regards to literary works. Of the many, one theorist stands out and this is Gérard Genette. In his *Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method* (1980: 22-23), he proposes a narratological term that recognises that it is not enough to simply identify the narrative structure of a plot but also to identify the narrative techniques used to achieve that very plot.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study interrogates the authors' use of materiality of the texts in bringing to the fore various contemporary issues affecting Africa and Africans. The two novels in this study encompass numerous techniques which are important aspects of defamiliarisation that have helped in the exposition of the authors' themes and development of the plot. The question of how the literariness of the different elements contributes to make the novel an interesting piece of literary work comes to the forefront in examining the work's quality. Literature is fundamentally different from other discourses since its strength is grounded in its literariness and aesthetics brought about by the writers' use of literary technique and there is the evident presence of peculiar parts of narrative techniques used by the two novelists in their works, both novelists, thought different techniques such as focalisation and emplotment to depict certain realities in a way that is alien to readers, and thus readers cannot overlook the phenomenon. Most of the previous analyses of the two selected novels under scrutiny have focused mainly on contextual issues such as socio-political constraint, history and economic themes for the interpretations of these texts. For instance, Coker (2012), using Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and interrogates the

quest for justice as a post-independence engagement paradigm, Tenshak, (2017), using Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and traces the historical aspects of Nigerian Fiction in "Bearing Witness to an Era: Contemporary Nigerian Fiction and the Return to the Recent Past", Saranya, and Selvalakshmi, (2018), using Okri's *The Famished Road* and trace Yoruba culture, traditions and theory in the style of magical realism, Mahmutovic (2010), using Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, and traces the history of Nigeria in his article "the history as the road of existential struggle. All such writers among others use socio-political, cultural identity crises; economic instability and other several issues to interpret these texts from external issues rather than main internal textual aspects of the text. So, it appears that formalist analysis of focalisation and emplotment of the two selected texts is not given much critical attention. Hence, this study addresses the problem, and this problem is the gap that this study intends to fill. Therefore, the deliberation on the technique of art is a rescue operation into literature that salvages it from the common interpretation of meaning.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Aim:

The aim of this research is to analyse focalization and emplotment in the two selected novels written by Habila and Okri. These novels are *The Famished Road*, (1991) and *Waiting for an Angel*, (2002).

1.3.2 Objectives:

In order to achieve the main aim of this research; the research is guided by the following objectives to:

- i. Investigate and evaluate the narrative techniques employed in *The Famished Road* and *Waiting for an Angel*

- ii. Identify and evaluate the effectiveness of the various aspects of form and how they contribute to the exposition of the authors' themes and aid in arriving at textual interpretation from the main internal textual aspects of the texts.
- iii. Show how focalisation and other literary elements influence Okri and Habila's development of plot structure.

1.4 Research Questions

Corresponding to the objectives of the research; the research seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the narrative techniques employed in *The Famished Road* and *Waiting for an Angel*?
- ii. How do the various aspects of form contribute to the exposition of the authors' themes and aid in arriving at textual interpretation from the main internal textual aspects of the texts?
- iii. How do the focalisation and other literary elements influence Okri and Habila's development of plot structure?

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study gives contribution to the existing literature on English and African prose fiction, since the study of narrative technique has long been done at various level in African literary discourse. This study examines focalisation and emplotment of the two contemporary African novels from Nigeria; to unfold the literariness of the works and to highlight the peculiar parts of the narrative techniques in the two selected novels. Factors have been proposed by the analysts to determine narrative techniques which range from plot structure, form and other literary elements. For instance, Siluonde, (2015) has studied 'A Comparative Analysis of Narrative Technique and Plot

Structure in two Zambian Novels: John Luangala's *The Chosen Bud* and Malama Katulwende's *Bitterness*''', Linguya, (2016) has examined 'form in Contemporary Writing on Youth in Kenya: *A Reading of Three Selected Novellas*', Dean, (2010) has examined 'A Stylistic Analysis of Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* ''' and Makau, (2000) has examined 'Narrative Techniques in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*. Thus, this study is based on the hypothesis that narrative technique can be the main agent for the evaluation of work quality.

In the area of research, it is hoped that the results of this research may provide additional information about African prose fiction. Further, it is hoped that it will stimulate more research into narrative techniques in African prose fiction. Not only that but it is also foreseen that the results may help in designing approaches directed at promoting African novels. As for the general public such as readers and others, it is anticipated that the findings of this research may bring about an appreciation of the African novels as well as an awareness of the existence of such novels and their technique.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

This research delimits its scope to the investigation and evaluation of focalisation and emplotment which are parts of narrative techniques of the two novelists with *The Famished Road* and *Waiting for an Angel* as the data for the analysis. The investigation seeks to approach focalisation and emplotment as the discovering and ultimately evaluating principles. It is guided by the formalist assumption as put by Shklovsky in his classic, *Art as Technique*, that "literature is the sum of all the stylistic devices employed in it" (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). The focus of this study narrows down to a discussion of the artistic positions of these two authors within the constituent parts that comprise plot structure, focalisation, characterisation, as well as other

technicalities of the story-telling that include technique such as Imagery, Dialogue, Proverbs and Flashback.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on researches on formalist analysis. The chapter reviews various works on narrative techniques, as well as various works on African prose fiction to review the related studies of formalist analysis of narrative technique. All the literature reviewed have relevance to this research, the research also reviews other studies about narrative techniques on African prose fiction presented and discussed by other researchers, such as Makau, K. (2000), Diana, A. A. (2017), Emeka, I. (2016) and Marijani, F. C. (2014), among others.

2.1 The Concept of Narrative Technique

The narrative Technique encompasses the devices and procedures that writers employ to tell their stories. Baldick, (2001: 166) argues “narrative technique is the method of telling stories”. This research owes its strength to narrative technique and various works on African prose fiction. In his article “Narrative Techniques in Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*” (2000), Makau, Kitata asserts that technique is the vehicle that brings one closest to the true meaning of the text. To authenticate his argument he quotes Mark Schorer who argues that “it is technique alone which ‘objectifies the materials of art as symbolism in fiction and is the true source of theme’” (Schorer, 1968: 68). To support Makau’s argument the technique serves as the writers’ ways and means of organising and manipulating what they want to share with their readers. The writers use techniques because they have a certain purpose they want to achieve. The purpose may be emotional where the writer produces emotions in the readers’ mind; the writer does this by emphasising character, event and the general truth.

The narrative technique is an inseparable part of the novel. Henry James' remark exemplifies this view: "novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will be found, that in each of the parts there is something of each other parts" (James 2001: 862). He further argues that "the story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread" (866). This idea emphasises the coherence of each part of the novel and signifies that narrative technique is not secondary but a primary tool of the novel. Accordingly, there are various methods and devices employed by the novelists to explain, explore and objectify their themes or ideology. The method and devices which are commonly employed by almost all novelists, such as modern, postmodern, colonial and postcolonial writers are plot, point of view, narration time, characterisation, setting, style and other elements, (Forster, 1927: 48-56). Forster's opinion echoes that the narrative technique leaves an impact on the readers and inspires them to consider it in the analysis of the literary text. Thus, the narrative technique is the base for writers, without which they can write anything interesting. Since focalization and emplotment are parts of the narrative technique which is related narrative theory a brief review of the narrative is provided here.

2.1.1 The Term Narrative

Narrative is basically concerned with telling the story. The word story may be used as synonymous with narrative. Stories are told not only in literature but also in other practices personal as well as cultural. Stories are told while making confessions while sharing biographical details and even while singing songs. It means that narrative is everywhere, in all kinds of activities and all walks of life. This idea collaborates Prince, Gerald's view that Narrative, "indeed universal and infinitely varied, may be defined as the representation of real or fictive

events and situations in a time sequence” (Prince, 1982: 1). He further argues “a narrative recounts a certain number of situations and events occurring in a certain world”, (61). This idea corroborates with Baldick’s view (2001: 165), that narrative is “a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee”, he believes “Narratives are to be distinguished from descriptions of qualities, states, or situations, and also from dramatic enactment of events (although a dramatic work may also include narrative speeches)”. He also claims “A narrative will consist of a set of events (the story) recounted in a process of narration (or discourse), in which the events are selected and arranged in a particular order (the plot)”. On his part Barbara Hardy (1977: 31) observes that narrative is a “primary act of mind” and he observes that “we dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative”. Thus, narrative encompasses most of the activities of human beings and its simple meaning is anything that tells a story.

To many, the term ‘narrative’ will immediately suggest the kind of stories found in novels, but at the same time the aim of the narrative of early structuralist theorists such as the Russian formalists was to identify what might be called ‘literariness’. However, narrative is not restricted to the novel but it can be found in numerous aspects of life: not only in other forms of art (drama and poetry) but in, how we construct notions of history, politics, race, religion, identity and time, (Malpas and Wake, 2006: 14). Therefore, all of these things, regardless of their respective truth claims might be understood as stories that both explain and construct how the world is experienced. As Barthes famously said, “narrative is international, trans-historical, trans-cultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes 1977: 78). It is this all-permeating, and in some senses constituting, aspect of narrative that makes its study central to so much of

contemporary critical theory, (Malpas and Wake, 2006: 14). The theory, discourse or critique of narrative is referred to as Narratology. So, Narratology is a term used since 1969 to denote the branch of literary study devoted to the analysis of narratives, and more specifically of forms of narration and varieties of the narrator, (Baldick, 2001: 166).

Gérard Genette, one of the precursors of Narratology argues that narrative is “the statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events”, (Genette, 1980: 25). So, narrative represents a hierarchy of instances and to understand it, one must recognise the construction of narrative at the level of individual functions (defined by Vladimir Propp (1968) and by Claude Bremond), the level of actions (by Algirdas Julien Greimas) and the level of narration (the level of discourse by Tzvetan Todorov (1977). Barthes recognises the existence of narrative communication, claiming that “there is no narrative without a narrator and a listener or reader” (Barthes, 1977: 84-96, Quoted in Tomascikoval, 2009: 51).

2.1.2 Focalisation

Focalisation is the term used in modern Narratology for point of view'; that is, for the kind of perspective from which the events of a story are witnessed, (Baldick, 2001:98). Focalisation as (discussed on pages 189-94 of *Narrative Discourse*) is a:

Viewpoint' or 'perspective', which is to say the point-of-view from which the story is told, There are many possibilities: for example, in 'external' focalisation the viewpoint is outside the character depicted, so that we are told only things which are external or observable - that is, what the characters *say* and *do*, these being things you would hear and see for yourself if you were present at the scene depicted. In the opposite, 'internal focalisation, the focus is on what the characters *think* and *feel*, these being things which would be inaccessible to you even if you had been present, (Barry, 2002: 152).

Barry, however, provides examples in sentences to clarify the different types of focalisation, in the sentence, *Thelma stood up and called out to Mario* as an externally focalised representation of this moment, for you would see and hear these things if you were present when they

happened. By contrast, in the sentence, *Thelma suddenly felt anxious that Mario was not going to see her and would walk by oblivious on the other side of Charing Cross Road*. This is an internally focalised representation of her; it reveals her unspoken thoughts and feelings, which you could be completely unaware of even if you were standing next to her, (152).

Thus, the point of view which stand as narrative perspective simply means the narration and of course, the author is the one impliedly making the narration who tells the story but not in his or her voice or persona. This idea corroborates Malpas, and Wake who argue; “perspective should be the same as the person ‘speaking’ (narrating) which might be inferred from the term ‘point of view’. However, the apparent neutrality implied by this terminology masks, to a certain extent at least, the notion that focalisation *is* supplied from a certain perspective,” (Malpas, and Wake, 2006: 19). On his part Prince, in his *Narratology: The Form and Functions of Narrative* (1982: 50), claims that “whenever we narrate, we adopt a certain (perceptual and psychological) point of view in our presentation of the narrated”.

The above clarification shows that every text has a narrator, however subtly they might be presented. As Mieke Bal, says, ‘As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject’ (Bal 1985: 121–2). This means that in any work of art there must be a specific point of view that simply refers to the Narrative voice or perspective through which a story is narrated.

2.1.3 The Concept of Form

The study of the way a writer uses words for creative purposes is what constitutes form in literature. This assertion is corroborated by Charles E. Bressler, in his definition of form in *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* as “an analysis of a work’s constituent parts, its linguistic and structural features or its form” (Bressler 2007: 51). Henry

James observes that: “Form is substance to the degree that there is absolutely no substance without it” (James, 2001: 853). Another scholar Rene Wellek, views that form refers “to elements of a verbal composition,” including “rhythm, meter, structure, diction, imagery,” it distinguishes ordinary utterances from the figurative utterance and thereby defines the literary per se, (Wellek, 1963: 55). However, Peter Steiner, (1984: 17) argues:

The word “form” has many meanings which, as always, cause a lot of confusion. It should be clear that we use this word in a particular sense—not as some correlative to the notion of ‘content’ but as something essential for the artistic phenomenon, as its organising principle. We do not care about the word “form” but only about its one particular nuance.

This idea is emphasised by Baldick, that form is “a critical term with a confusing variety of meanings. It can refer to a genre or an established pattern of poetic devices or, more abstractly, to the structure or unifying principle of design in a given work” (Baldick, 2001: 100). He also views that “when speaking of a work's formal properties, critics usually refer to its structural design and patterning, or sometimes to its style and manner in a wider sense, as distinct from its content, (100-101). Linguya, Baithili Joseph in his article (2016: 14), quotes Joseph, Muleka who in his article, “Paradoxes of Form and Style”, asserts that form is simply, “a product of creative interpretation”. To authenticate his argument Muleka quotes Tzvetan Todorov who argues that, “form lives through its alterations called creations and recreations”. In this case, Muleka agrees with Todorov on the dynamism of form which hinges on the resourcefulness and the creativity of both writers and readers in the discourse of creation and interpretation. Muleka’s views are important in the way they complement this research since their main emphasis hinges on the creative interpretation which is a vital aspect of formalism.

On his part Mario Klarer, (2004: 81) observes “in traditional philosophical and aesthetic discourse, *form* denotes the relationship between different elements within a specific system”. He argues that “According to this traditional point of view, things in the world only exist

because shapeless matter receives structure through a superimposed form. Form thus functions as a container in which content is presented,” (Klarer, 1999, 2004: 81-82). Klarer, argues formalists and structuralists emphasise the level of form (the “how?” of a text), and they, however, privilege phonetic structures, rhythm, rhyme, meter, and sound as independent meaningful elements of literary discourse,” (82). An idea which Mieke Bal, on the argument on language under the system of narrative in her book *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, (2004: 85) views:

Language can be defined by the concurrence of two fundamental processes: articulation, or segmentation, which produces units (this being what Benveniste *calls form*), and integration, which gathers these units into units of a higher rank (this being *meaning*). This dual process can be found in the language of narrative which also has an articulation and integration, a form and a meaning.

Therefore, Bal’s view in the narrative system demonstrates that meaning and form are closely related and inseparable in the analysis of the language of narrative. Bal’s argument is emphasised by Peck, and Coyle, (2012: 141), in their view about form and content that;

Strictly speaking, form and content are inseparable: there is no paraphrasable content in a text which we can separate from the way in which it is presented. We can, however, summarise the subject matter or theme of a text. In fact, producing a short summary is a useful starting-point in criticism, for we then have a base from which to consider the two sorts of formal choices a writer makes when developing his or her subject matter.

Nevertheless, E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) is very significant in the way it gives us a profound understanding of various aspects of form such as the stylistic devices used in the story, narrative dynamics, characterisation, point of view as well as plot development. For instance, his description of the distinction between a story and a plot is pivotal to this study. Forster defines a story as the arrangement of events in their time sequence, whereas a plot is the narrative of events which recognises time- sequence as well, but whose, “... sense of causality overshadows it” (61). The in-depth understanding of such aspects is primary to this study of

focalisation and emplotment in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, which are the essential aspects upon which the research dissertation relies.

In the study of narrative technique, researchers engage in an in-depth analysis of structural as well as stylistic and linguistic aspects in a literary text. This claim follows after Emmanuel Ngara's observation in *Stylistic Criticism of the African Novel* (1982: 12) that in the analysis of a text, one must concern oneself with the details of grammar, lexis, phonology, meaning, as well as wider issues of deviation from the norm, character and the relationship between the author and the audience. This shows that a critic or a researcher who analyses the narrative technique of a literary work should conduct an in-depth analysis of structural and stylistic features to show how they help in the exposition of the major thematic concerns.

2.1.4 Story and Plot

At the heart of narrative theory lies the assumption of a dualism within every text: that there is, on the one hand, story and, on the other, plot. Accordingly, the familiar literary terms 'story' and 'plot' might variously be designated, with subtle variation in meaning, *fabula* and *sjuzet* (Russian formalism) or *histoire* and *récit* (French Narratology), this division has been understood in a variety of ways, and the terms have been applied to a wide range of literary works, (Malpas, and Wake, 2006: 15-16). "The story is the full sequence of events as we assume them to have occurred in their likely order, duration, and frequency, while the plot is a particular selection and re-ordering of these", (Baldick, 2001: 244). Therefore, plot is the arrangement of events that make up a story, thus, many plots turn on a conflict, or struggle between opposing forces, that is usually resolved by the end of the story. The conflict is "the tension in a situation between characters, or the accrual opposition of characters. Conflict may also occur between a character and society or environment", (Cuddon, 1998: 175). On their part, Carl E. Bain *et al*, view that

plot, “... usually involves conflict, a struggle between opposing forces...”, In this case the conflict might be external (that takes place between a character and another person, or between a character and something nonhuman (nature). and/or internal (that takes place within a character’s mind), (Linguya 2016: 26).

Usually, Plot is the way events are systematically ordered in a series of causes and effects, it owes its authenticity in the way it shows why things happen the way they do as opposed to the story which merely outlines how things happen. This observation is collaborated with Forster’s view on plot as “a narrative of events the emphasis falling on causality”, and story as “a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence”, (Foster, 1927:61). Novelists use plot to arrange their sequence of events, in most stories these events arise out of conflict experienced by the main character. This idea is emphasised by Abrams and Geofferey, (2009) “plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects”, (265). On their part, Malpas, and Wake, (2006: 15-16) argues that:

One clear way of distinguishing between story and plot is the distinction that narrative grammatologists, working at the level of the sentence, make between ‘deep’ and ‘surface’ structures, Deep structures correspond to stories, whilst surface structures the literal arrangements of the words that make up a sentence are comparable to plots.

Therefore, Malpas, and Wake, (2006: 15-16) provide comprehensible information in sentences to justify their claim of distinguishing between story and plot, they view that in the sentence ‘Walking dogs should be encouraged’ has a single surface structure (plot) and two deep structures (stories). They argue that, this single sentence can be read as an invocation to encourage dog owners to exercise their pets (story 1) or as a suggestion that perambulating dogs should be cheered on and applauded (story 2). Equally, they state that the sentences: ‘The dog ate

my homework' and 'My homework was eaten by the dog' have different surface structures (plots), i.e. they differ in their word order, but have the same deep structure (story). They argue that the meaning of both sentences is the same, despite the variation in its presentation. So, at the same time as the distinction between story and plot is both persuasive and well established, it does demand close attention, (15). There is clearly a need to maintain an awareness that both story and plot are derived from the text, something that is accomplished by narrative, Genette's idea of '*récit*' (narrative), the 'oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events' which makes clear the necessary relation between plot and text, (Genette 1980: 25),.

2.1.5 Character and Characterisation

In literature, character and characterisation is the most important aspect that contributes in the development of plot and the exposition of the thematic concern of literary text. Most of the events and actions of the plot interest us primarily because we care about what happens to people and what they do. Childs, and Fowler, (2006: 23) define character as "the fictional representation of a person, which is likely to change, both as a presence in literature and as an object of critical attention, much as it changes in society". Baldick, (2001: 37) defines Characterisation as "the representation of persons in narrative and dramatic works. This may include direct methods like the attribution of qualities in description or commentary, and indirect (or 'dramatic') methods inviting readers to infer qualities from characters' actions, speech, or appearance". O' Neill, (1994: 49) claims that the multifarious ways in which characters emerge from the words on the page, in which story-world actors acquire a personality, is one of the most fascinating and least systematically explored aspects of narrative theory and narrative practice. Thus, character and characterisation is said to be a creative process that gives novelists and

dramatists a high level of autonomy in the process of creating their characters and characterisation. This creative process depends on the writers' own aims and objectives as well as their imaginative skills. This idea corroborates E.M. Forster's definition of characterisation in his *Aspects of the Novel*, (1927: 33-34) that:

The novelist, unlike many of his colleagues, makes up a number of word-masses roughly describing himself, gives them names and sex, assigns them plausible gestures and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas, and perhaps to behave consistently. These word masses are his characters. They do not come thus coldly to his mind, they may be created in delirious excitement, still, their nature is conditioned by what he guesses about other people, and about himself, and is further modified by other aspects of his work.

Forster's view of characterisation implies the autonomy of creative process of humans and non-human entities and their actions by the novelists within their narratives, and this attests their literary creativity. This idea is emphasised by Abrams and Geoffrey, (2012: 47) who argue, 'the author simply presents the characters and intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters'. Therefore, formalist critics approach the study of literature "traditionally by focusing on plot and narrative structure, but the ways in which characters emerge from the words on the page is one of the aspects of narrative theory and narrative practice. O' Neill, (1994) observes that "what a character says, how he or she says it, and in what context he or she speaks can be a particularly effective and economical way of characterising not only the speaking characters, but also those spoken to, and those spoken about, (55). So, characters and characterisation influence the development of the plot in the novel since characterisation solely depends on the author's vision, objectives and imaginative skills, and it contributes in the mounting uneasiness and final terror experienced by the reader. Accordingly, based on the perspective of narrative theory "What is primarily important is the narrative point being made, not the process of characterisation, as Rimmon-

Kenan Shlomith, (1983: 67) remarks that, ‘is a purely textual link, independent of story-causality’’, (O’ Neill, 1994: 52).

2.1.6 Literary Devices

Literary devices refer to any specific aspect of literature, or a particular work, which we can recognise, identify, interpret and/or analyse (Wambua, *et al.*, 2012: 680). Most sources accept that both literary elements and literary techniques can rightly be called literary devices (Mulokozi 1996; Newell, 2006). Thus, Literary devices are very essential elements of a literary work and the collective use of such devices signifies authors’ skill in the level of poetic use of language in their literary work. Nevertheless, acquainting with these devices is prerequisite for the creation, examination as well as understanding of fiction. Depending upon the ideology, theme, period and writer, the employment of the literary technique or device varies. In fact the literariness of the novel unfolds through the appropriate and effective use of literary devices and the devices also enrich readers’ interpretation and enjoyment of the thematic concerns of the story in a literary text.

Generally, most of the novels are rich with much literary devices, thus, various devices are employed in the two texts selected for the study such as symbolic imagery, flashback, dialogue and proverbs among others. “Imagery” (that is, “images” taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles (the secondary references) of its similes and metaphors’’, (Abrams, and Geoffrey, 2009: 169). They further explain that, “Imagery” includes not only visual sense qualities, but also qualities that are auditory, tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (sensations of movement), (169). Robert and Jacobs, (1992: 600) define imagery as:

...words that trigger your imagination to recall and recombine images-memories or mental pictures of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions. The process is active, and even vigorous, for when particular words or descriptions produce images, you are applying your own experiences with life and language to your understanding.

‘Flashback’ is a device where the narrative begins in which what is chronologically at the end of the story comes at the beginning of the story; hence the earlier incidents of the story are unfolded later in the story. Invariably, flashback is an element of narration that helps in revealing the past events and how they actually happened. It is important as Barry asserts, it is used in filling us in on things that happened earlier (Barry, 2002:145). From the above observation, it is clear that flashback is an important stylistic device that helps in the authentication of the past experiences in the lives of the characters and so it is very essential in the development of thematic concerns.

‘Dialogue’ as a literary device is a distinctive feature of narrative mood that Gérard Genette, in his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, (1980; 163) discusses in Chapter four, as ‘Mimesis’ “The scene in direct dialogue that becomes a narrative mediated by the narrator, where the "replies" of the characters are dissolved and condensed into indirect discourse. This idea corroborates Barry’s views that ‘Mimesis’ is ‘slow telling’, in which what is done and said is ‘staged’ for the reader, creating the illusion that we are ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ things for ourselves, (Barry, 2002: 151). This idea corroborates Henry Indiangasi’s definition of dialogue in his book, *Stylistics* (1988: 117), as:

A strategy where characters talk in fiction and the author makes conversation resemble real communication in life... you will encounter features such as false starts, hesitation, held syllables, all manner of intonation and of course oddities such as hyperbole, (Linguya 2016: 54).

‘Proverb’ is a literary device that many writers have made use of them. It is a short pithy saying which embodies a general truth which is related in form and content to the maxim and the aphorism common to most nations and peoples. It is generally a form of expression of great

antiquity, (Cuddon, 1998: 706). Dean, (2010: 56) quoted Ruth Finnegan (1970: 393) to define proverb as “a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it”. Therefore, it is through the above parameters of such devices that the researcher identifies and evaluates the level of poetic use of language in the two selected novels and how these elements influence the development of plot in the two novels.

2.1.7 Defamiliarisation

Defamiliarisation is the poetic technique with the function of forcing the readers to make new perceptions out of the familiar in everyday concepts. Russian Formalist literary critic Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984) first coined the term to show how art can change “our mode of perception from the automatic and practical to the artistic” (Selden and Widdowson 1993:31). Shklovsky understood literariness in terms of defamiliarisation, a series of deviations from the ordinary language in order to force the reader to perceive the subject in a different way. The effect of this technique is to raise the willing suspension of disbelief and cause the readers to see the world afresh by questioning their conventional perceptions, (Pourjafari, 2012: 976).

Therefore, defamiliarisation is a device which makes strange the habitual perception in ordinary language. Shklovsky argues that “art exists in order to recover for us the sensation of life which is diminished in the automatised routine of everyday experience”. He views that when every object of the world becomes familiar to us we become habituated to that object. Our everyday life then becomes a life of “prose perceptions,” which means, things become known but not perceived. The process of perceiving this world becomes so automatic that the objects no longer register upon our senses. “Habitualisation devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war.” Against this prose perception there is the world of art which Shklovsky believes,

“exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony”. He argues that “the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”, (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001: 49-52).

Shklovsky does not consider any literary text as an end in itself, to be read for its own sake and on its own terms; rather he thinks that a literary text is sought as a model for justifying or verifying the exemplification and development of the concept of literariness. The idea behind this dissertation is to enquire on the literariness of the work of Okri’s *The Famished Road* and Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*, and to highlight the peculiar parts of their narrative techniques.

2.2 African Novels in English

Generally, telling stories and singing songs are amongst the oldest forms of literary activity in Africa and have existed in human societies since most primitive times. This is true of not only Africa but of centres of human development in other parts of the world as well. Most of the written literary activity began with the arrival of the Europeans, although some African languages did have a tradition of written literature even before their coming into contact with Europeans. Therefore, with the coming of Europeans and their system of education, everything in African societies including the literature, socio-economic life, educations as well as cultural aspects of their lives were completely disrupted, (Joseph, 2005: 20-22). However, the writing of African novels using English reveals the commitment of African writers in portraying issues in African contexts and many things related to African society for the international view. So, literature in English particularly novels is an increasing international concern, even global phenomenon as writers all over the world, from the Pacific, Asia, Africa, and the West Indies as well as from the traditional centers in Britain and the United States of America use English as a medium for fiction and other literary genres, (Dasenbrock, 1987 Quoted in Marijani, 2014).

African novel in English is very important part of English literature and it reflects different layers of society as an amalgamation of individual and social struggle in the form of issues of identity and culture. Therefore, an analysis of novels in English focuses on novels which are written in English by novelists; perhaps most of them are those who were born or have spent a significant part of their lives in English speaking countries. Eventually, those African writers who have chosen to write in English or French are not considered as unpatriotic with an eye on the main chance outside their own countries. They are by-products of the same process that made the new nation-states of Africa, (Achebe, 1965: 342-349).

African writers use English in their novels as one of their legacies of colonialism to advantage and express African realities. So, Africa has produced a group of writers who use English to present thematic preoccupations that have dwelt much on many of the topical issues that have come to define African realities. Writers like Okri, Habila, and many others write about these realities of African state in a way that is alienated to the readers. Therefore, scholars like Niyi Osundare, Chinue Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have shown certain concern about African writers, Osundare, in 2007, published one of his seminal papers entitled, *The Writer as Righter* where he provides an incisive exposition on what the focus of African writers should be if they are to become the change agents that would cause positive and radical changes in their society. Osundare (2007: 30) presents us with the view that the African writer does not only write for pleasure and entertainment but to also change the world. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993:75) in his essay *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom*, lends authority to this when he affirms that "... the African writer can and will help in not only explaining the world but in changing it..." on the other hand Achebe in one of his essay, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*

asserts that “most African writers write out of an experience and out of commitment to an African destiny” (Achebe, 1976: 9).

Okri and Habila are contemporary African writers that use English language to demonstrate the concern for poetic use of language to generally reflect the African realities of inherent contradictions of political and economic instability, corruption, poverty, famine, rape and nepotism. This study examines how the two novelists use English language and employed various narrative techniques to capture and reflect African realities. The two novelists use the poetic language and defamiliarise the realities of African state with reference to Nigeria, as shklovesky says defamiliarisation is found almost in every form of art, (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). So, the analysis of the African novels in English depends largely on the application of various perspectives, this study essentially relies on formalist perspective to demonstrate the authors’ skills in the level of poetic use of language and unfolding the peculiar parts of the narrative technique in the two selected novels.

2.2.1 Reviews of the Texts Selected for the Study

Most of the earlier novels in African society depended on the twin stereotypes of the savage African and the civilised European, but the creative writers of the new age are experimenting with new genres and techniques to fictionalise the new global situation. These writers encapsulate the general concerns and apprehensions about not only their countries but also the general African society and depict how untruthful leaders disappoint the citizens, leaving them in a state of abject poverty, famine, dread and hopelessness, such writers and their writings attract the attention of many critics in the literary discourse. Okri and Habila are among the new generation writers of Nigeria promising and daring in their vision of the African continent.

In fact, numbers of critics have written much on Okri's novel *The Famished Road* (1991) and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) for what they see as their preoccupation with existentialist themes that show their sense of commitment to their people. These authors employed certain narrative techniques to register their revulsions against human poverty and famine dominated by a mood of total disillusionment of the leaders, Okris's novel uses imagery of road to characterise African situation vis-a-vis Habila's novel uses imagery of prison to characterise African situation. In his article Quayson, views "the road metaphor and the Abíkú motif are the most important systems of thoughts employed by Okri to present his narrative about the future occurrences of a stillborn country (Quayson, 1997; qtd. in Irene,. 2015: 78). Obumselu, in his article, "Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*: A re-evaluation" (2011: 4), gives a critical assessment on the important contributions which Ato Quayson and Douglas McCabe have made to the understanding of Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*. But he questions whether placing the novel firmly in the context of Yoruba orality, as Quayson does, or in the tradition of New Age spirituality, as McCabe does, does not diminish the work unduly.

Obumselu, points out that Ben Okri did not take his Yoruba material directly from traditional folklore but from secondary sources in which the myths and legends of the Yoruba have been modified and re-interpreted. He claims that in *The Famished Road* the original folk narratives are further transfigured by close linkage with the myths and legends of other lands. In addition, Obumselu, highlights the importance of Ato Quayson's sixth chapter in his *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing* (1997) as the most authoritative study of Ben Okri's prize-winning novel, *The Famished Road* (1991). This review is important in giving the social historical background to this study. This kind of background is very relevant to this study since *The Famished Road* dealt with in the review is a product of Okri's prize-winning novel dealt

with in this research work. All the information accruing from this review is important for giving vital insights and complimentary purposes of this study.

Thus, *The Famished Road* is a novel whose message is universal, several critics have noted that, Wright, (1995: 24) views “Azaro is too passive and powerless a character to be considered heroic: he functions as a presence rather than an agent”. On his part Vanessa Guignery provides a critical review of Okri’s *The Famished Road* in his book, “*The Famished Road Imaginary Homelands*” Published 2013, this book offers important insights into the thematic concern tackled in the novel, the book demonstrates the major characters that take part in the novel. Guignery also provides the important contributions of critics surrounding the publication of Okri’s literary works in Nigeria. These reviews portray how Okri uses technique which is an integral concept of narrative process to make his work aesthetically interested and to attract researchers’ attention on the work.

Obumsele and Guignery the critics of Okri’s *The Famished Road* do not give consideration to focalisation and emplotment and how these elements help in the exposition of the major thematic concerns and influence the development of plot structure in literary works. In recognition of their contributions, they have investigated a little into the issue of characters and characterisation in the novel. The main argument in this study is that the in-depth analysis of focalisation and emplotment as well as other various aspects of form contribute in the exposition of the major thematic concerned of the novel and influence the development of the plot structure.

Following the footstep of Ben Okri, the most promising writer Helon Habila whose *Waiting for an Angel* published in 2002 received the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize in 2003, has not attracted adequate critics compare to Okri who probably attracted much critics being the early new age African novelist. Most of the critics of Habila’s works come from the angle of third generation

writers. For instance, Adesanmi, and Chris, co-editors of the 2005 special issue of *English in Africa* that focus on third generation Nigerian writings, argue that the writers grouped in third generation are writers who were born after colonialism and the independence and those writers do not have the revisionist or traditionalist sensibility of their predecessors, (Adesanmi, and Chris 2005: 32). Ouma, states in his article that contemporary writers do not engage with colonialism to the same degree as the generations of writers before them did, they engage with its consequences. This is evident by the concerns these writers wrestle with: most of their experiences as a generation that grew up after independence, are being witnessed in their writings and depict the epoch of military rule and dictatorship, and therefore, removed from a personal life history of colonialism (Ouma, 2011: 4). In his discussion, Diana, (2017; 94) argues “Habila’s style of writing is unusual and is considered conspicuous because it catches the attention of the reader and the pattern in which he has presented his works captures certain deviations from the norm”. The Nigerian literary critic Charles Nnolim, (1989: 48), discussing the socio-political responsibilities of the writer, argues that contemporary Nigerian writing has no specific thematic focus. Making references to the works of Adichie and Habila amongst others, Nnolim claims “Contemporary Nigerian literature hardly has a national concern or a central focus”. Nnolim argues that the present generation of Nigerian writers lack thematic focus in their works. He posits that national concerns are neglected in the narration of their stories, which he says is primarily concerned with enjoyment”.

In opposite, Stephanie Newell, in a recent review of West African writing, hails third generation writers for breaking free from the discursive shackles (in the guise of formulating an authentic African aesthetic) that compelled African writers to write within pre-given stipulations that sanctioned their works as “African” or not. In other words, these writers are trading a highly

politicised cultural nationalist project for stylistic and thematic experimentation, trans-cultural/transnational consciousness, and celebration of inter-subjectivity, hybridity, and the dissolution of fixed identity so that they can create an “unbounded imaginative space” (Newell 2006: 187, qtd in Egoro 2008: 26). Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* shows the importance of hope and action in the face of despair and potentially illustrates how works of the imagination, even if they are seemingly as harmless as love poems, can undermine and change the brutality and dreadful life in African society with reference to the characters in the novel.

Ouma, Diana, and Egoro, the critics of Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* however do not give consideration to focalisation and emplotment and how these elements help in the exposition of the major thematic concerns and influence the development of plot in the novel. But in recognition of their contributions, they have investigated a little into the peculiar part of Habila’s writing style in the novel. This research argues that the focalisation and emplotment as narrative techniques are the components that help analysts to identify and evaluate the major thematic concerns of the novels and evaluate the world writers have presented in the literary works. Following what many critics written or said on the two selected novels, this research makes an in-depth analysis of focalisation and emplotment in the two selected novels by Nigerian authors to identify and evaluate how these elements and other various aspects of form contribute in the exposition of the major thematic concerns, development of plot and aid in arriving at worthwhile meaning of the two selected texts.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

To articulate the set objectives of this study; the study relies on formalism and narrative theory as tools of analysis. Since narrative technique is part of narrative theory, the study is governed by Formalist theory. Formalism is an approach to literary analysis that was developed by Roman

Jacobson, Victor Shklovsky, Vladimir Propp, Boris Tomashevsky, and other Russian critics early in the 20th century; it is a text-based critical method that involves detailed inquiry into plot structure, narrative perspective, symbolic imagery, and other literary techniques. Formalism refers to a set of ideas first advanced by the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded in 1915 by scholars such as Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukarovsky, Peter Bogatyrev, and G.O Vinokur and also the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in Petersburg (Petrograd) in 1916 by Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum and Victor Vinogradov, (Steiner, 1984: 15).

These theorists are concerned with the method employed in the process of textual analysis in the exposition of textual meaning. Charles E. Bressler, (1994: 171) views that formalism:

is a term used to designate those critics who rely upon a work's form or structure to determine its meaning. The term is often applied to the New Critics who insist that the interpretation of a work of art must evolve from the work's structure, not extrinsic elements such as the author's life or historical context.

Generally, formalism provides for a reader, a way to understand and enjoy a literary work for its own inherent value as a piece of literary art; a literary work from the view point of formalist critics is a piece on its own which is capable of its own meaning and significance in isolation of the society and several social issues that may have given birth to the work of art. It is an approach to literary analysis that involves the judgment and evaluation of literary works in a way that makes literary works interesting as it removes several external and socio-political constraints that may have come in the process of interpretation of a literary work. It reduces the burden on a critic and the critic as a reader is equipped with only a literary text and he is dependent on nothing external to the text to arrive at worthwhile meaning, (Asika, 2005: 96-106). Abrams, and Geoffrey, (2009: 126) argue that “formalism views literature primarily as a specialised use of language, and proposes a fundamental opposition between the literary (or poetical) use of language and the ordinary, “practical” use of language”.

Formalist literary criticism provides an analytical approach of *close reading* to literary texts along with a highly developed vocabulary used by nearly all readers and writers who want to discuss, interpret, appreciate, and evaluate literature or the literary qualities of any discourse. In the twentieth century, formalism dominated the literary scene, and it continues to exert great influence in academic quarters. Formalism, as its name suggests (also known as Practical Criticism in England and New Criticism in America), focuses on the formal features found in literature, features that readers must notice and name if they are to describe the form and function of how stories work, (Wake, 2013: 32).

Nevertheless, formalism as a critical approach exclusively focuses on the form of a literary work to the exclusion of biographical, historical, psychological, logical, social, political or ideological contexts in the determination of the textual meaning. One of the central tenets of formalist theory is the emphasis on the autonomy of literature as discussed by Abram, and Geoffrey, (2012: 127):

The linguistics of literature differs from the linguistics of practical discourse, because its laws are oriented toward producing the distinctive features that formalists call literariness. As Roman Jakobson wrote in 1921: “The object of study in literary science is not literature but literariness,” that is, what makes a given work a literary work.

This is where formalists emphasised the study of literature using a scientific approach to literary interpretation. Formalists are of the opinion that autonomy in literature is determined by the application of definite methods of analysis that seek to relate form and content in order to come up with a definite meaning. This idea is emphasised in Steiner’s observation that the formalist view is quite different. For them literature was an autonomous reality governed by its own regularity and more or less independent of contiguous spheres of culture, (Steiner, 1984: 245). This idea is also emphasised in Peck, and Coyle’s observation that Russian scholars started as an activity closely linked to linguistics with an interest in the scientific examination of style, (Peck and Coyle, 1993: 189). Anne Dobie also argues that the critic who wants to write about literature

from a formalist perspective must first be a close and careful reader who examines all the elements of a text individually and questions how they come together to create a work of art. Such a reader, who respects the autonomy of a work, achieves an understanding of it by looking inside it not outside it or beyond it, (Dobie, 2012: 40).

For formalism, literary language was seen as a special kind of language and it was suggested that, rather than presenting a picture of the world, art defamiliarises or ‘makes strange’ (an idea coined by Victor Shklovsky): literary writing disrupts ordinary language, looking at the world in a ‘strange’ way. What the reader notices is not the picture of reality but the peculiarity of the writing itself, (Peck, and Coyle, 1993: 189). Notwithstanding, formalist critics are primarily concerned with questions of the materiality of texts, including analysis of language, style, and the formal structure of literary works. Based on their perspective “Literature is thus seen as a self-conscious medium. Shklovsky, for example, referred to Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* as the world’s most typical novel, as if the whole business of art is to foreground its own nature as art, drawing attention to itself as an indirect way of drawing attention to reality”, (189). Consequently, on the basis of this argument this research interrogates the two novels as autonomous entities irrespective of biographical, political, psychological or socio- historical consideration.

This study also uses the Narrative theory as a tool of analysis; “Narrative theory plays an important part in a great many areas of contemporary cultural and critical theory”, (Malpas and Wake, 2006: 26). Narrative theory is concerned not with the content of individual stories but with what stories have in common. So, the study of ‘Narrative’ is called ‘Narratology’, the term was used by Tzvetan Todorov in 1969 to designate “a systematic study of Narrative firmly anchored in the tradition of the Russian and Czech formalism of the early twentieth century and

French Structuralism and semiotics of the sixties” (O’Neill 1994: 12). Gerald Prince (1982:4) defines Narratology as “the study of form and functioning of narrative, it refers specifically to the theories of narrative structure”. Narratology is used in a broad sense for all theoretical persuasions of narrative theory. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2002), defines Narratology as the study of how narratives make meaning, and what the basic mechanisms and procedures are, which are common to all acts of story-telling, (145). Barry’s definition owes its strength on the idea that the strength of Narratology lies in the way it describes the nature of story as a concept and as a way of cultural practice, (145). ‘the term may be new but not the discipline and in the western tradition it goes back at least to Plato and Aristotle” (224). Barry’s views are important to this research in the way they help us to understand how stories in the two selected novels are structurally and stylistically ordered. Barry’s ideas are emphasised by Irene De Jong’s in Grethlein and Antonios, (2009) (ed). *Narratology and Interpretation: The content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature* observation that in characteristic style, Narratology allows us to analyse literary texts in clear and unequivocal terms, (87). De Jong’s observation is important to this study in the way it demonstrates the point of concurrence between formalism and Narratology since the two critical approaches are concerned with, as De Jong asserts, clarity, precision and an analysis that avoids the mess of affective, ideological, subjective interpretation (87).

On his part, Gerard Genette provides an important insight into how various aspects of Narratology such as: the narrative modes, the narrative perspective, types of narrators, plot as well as how the stories are presented in a literary text. In doing so, Genette does not focus on specific narratives but on how they are narrated, (Barry, 152). Narratology enabled the researcher to identify the types of narrative perspectives in the two selected novels. It also gives insight into

the structural ordering of the stories and how they are told in the two novels. This study analyses the two novels by focusing on formalistic aspects such as the mechanics of plot, characterisation, as well as the narrative technique to highlight some aspects of the form of the novel with the aim to arrive at textual meaning from issues internal rather than external to the text, and to unfold the literariness of the works and to highlight the peculiar parts of the narrative technique in the two novels.

CHAPTER THREE

FOCALISATION AND EMPLOTMENT IN THE EXPOSITION OF MAJOR THEMATIC CONCERNS IN OKRI'S *THE FAMISHED ROAD*

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine focalisation and emplotment in Okri's *The Famished Road*, (1991) in the exposition of the major thematic concerns. Okri deals mainly with the predominant African themes in the novel. Eventually, the issues tackled in the novel include contemporary African issues such as poverty, famine, corruption, unemployment, poor political leaders, human rights abuses and other destructive activities in African societies that thwart the peace and happiness of African people. In this chapter, the researcher critically analyses the novel using parameters of formalism that characterise prose fiction to be autonomous, this chapter aims to approach the interpretation of *The Famished Road* through the aspects of form and technique as Charles E. Bressler (1994: 171) views that formalism: “insists that the interpretation of a work of art must evolve from the work's structure and form, not extrinsic elements such as the author's life or historical context.

Formalist critics are not interested in anything external or the realities of the experiences of the author, even the socio-political and cultural background of the novel are not needed, they focus on the *form* of the novel itself and regards literary work as a “very specific unit of human knowledge that has to be examined on its own terms and for its own sake ”(Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). Thus, this chapter examines focalisation and emplotment as well as other various aspects of form employed in the text which are the key aspects of formalism, and consequently, the chapter examines how Okri uses these important textual aspects in the exposition of the major thematic concerns in *The Famished Road*.

3.1 Plot Summary of *The Famished Road*

Okri's novel, *The Famished Road* tells the adventures of Azaro who is an Abiku or spirit-child. This Abiku is a form of Yoruba myth where a child born dies before the age of twelve or before the attainment of puberty; the spirit of that child returns to the same mother many times to be born again. The novel traces the life of Azaro, a famished boy who lives somewhere between the spirit world and the living world, Azaro decides to stay among the living world, to face the hard life and rejoice with his loved ones. As the narrative progresses the spirit companions of Azaro call him back to join the spiritual world and enjoy life by staying in the spirit world, Azaro was not willing to return and he stubbornly refuses to leave this mortal life owing to his love for his father and mother, his parents represent the working poor in Africa about Nigeria who struggles to make ends meet. The Entire families live a miserable life and exist in the most terrible poverty. Azaro witnesses many happenings in the mortal land, his father works as a labourer while his mother sells items as a hawker, Azaro is asked by Madame Koto, the owner of a local bar, to visit her establishment. She is very much sure that he will bring good fortune and customers to her. In the meantime, his father convinces himself and his family that he has the talent to be a warrior and then he prepares to be a boxer.

The story in the novel progresses in the world of dreams of those waiting to be free from certain exploitations. Therefore, Okri extends the narrative action of this novel to a great extent to include passionate dreams, mythical journeys, and other African rituals or rites of course. So, reality and fantasy are amalgamated with one another throughout the novel which the writer achieved by extensive use of the literariness which makes a given work a literary work and self-autonomy.

3.2 The Plot Structure of *The Famished Road*

The plot structure of *The Famished Road*, (1991) is arranged in chronological order which is selected from the beginning to the end and despite its episodic and jointed narrative structure the story is about the life of Azaro a famished boy who lives somewhere somehow between the spirit world and living world but he decides to stay among the living world, to face the hard life and rejoice with the loved ones, although there are other important characters but all the characters are connected to the story of Azaro and his father 'Dad'. In this novel events are systematically ordered in a series of causes and effects. Accordingly, it is through the plot that the major conflicts are unfolded.

In *The Famished Road*, there is a conflict between Azaro's father Dad, and his creditors who contradict him about the money he owes them and a conflict that takes place within Azaro's mind, the main protagonist. In this case, the forces operating in the novel are both internal (that takes place within a character's mind) and external conflicts (that takes place between a character and another person, or nonhuman. Internal conflicts in the sense that the forces are psychological which contradicts the protagonist's psyche, unknown to other characters that Azaro is surrounded by spirit companions. Azaro is psychologically confused about living between the spirit world and the real world, as encounters, when Azaro states that "it is terrible to forever, remain in-between", (4). In doing so, he accepts the irreconcilable duality of being both a child and a spirit, as he explains in the opening pages of the novel: "we are the strange ones, with half of our beings always in the spirit world" (4). On the other hand, the forces operating in the novel are external which are embodied by other characters such as Dad's creditors and landlord who contradict him and become stumbling blocks to his peace and happiness. To solve the conflict,

the protagonist has to fight both the internal and external forces in his search for peace and happiness.

The story in the novel starts by grounding itself in terms of environmental conceptualisation. It starts by describing the first setting, which is Azaro's spirits companion's environment, more so it introduces us to the main characters in the novel who are members of Azaro's immediate family and other members of their compound. As the story unfolds Dad and Mum spend many days without finding their son, Azaro who lost his way as a result of a demonstration in their area. To Azaro's parents losing him is viewed as a very disturbing issue that would eventually prevent their peace and happiness. The main characters and their interactions are introduced, and it is through the social interactions of Dad and Mum with other members of their compound that the main conflict emerges.

Consequently, when Azaro, is found, Dad and Mum organise a party to celebrate his return, an event that leads them to become bankrupt, when Dad collects more drinks on credit as encounters in the novel Azaro says, "Dad sent off for more drinks on credits to help celebrate my homecoming" (46). Thus, Azaro realises that his parents struggle to free themselves from certain forces of poverty, famine and unemployment that prevent them from peace and happiness. This situation creates suspense in the readers' minds about whether the parents would succeed in overpowering the problems or not, that is the question the novel endeavours to tackle as the plot unfolds.

Azaro's thought is a depiction of the psychic pain he is undergoing; for he is at the centre of crisis he has to solve to regain his peace and sense of belonging which are at the core of his pride and self-value as a human being. In a deeper sense, Azaro's quest for peace and a sense of belonging are the reflections of the problems that bother many people in African society as a

result of poverty, unemployment, poor political leaders and human rights abuses. Accordingly, Okri attempts to highlight the effects of poverty, famine, poor political leaders, unemployment, and human rights abuse in the society that he views as a ticking time bomb waiting to explode if not ameliorated on time. Plot development is one of the important aspects of the novel since it chronologically outlines the development of the event in the texts and at the same time explains the reason as to why things happen the way they do. In Okri's, *The Famished Road* the plot is important in narrating the thematic concerns of poverty, unemployment and human rights abuses since it explains the protagonists' anticipation and intentions to free themselves from the major problems in their life. These are some of the factors that enhance the development of thematic concerns in the novel.

The observation on how the pattern of events and situations in this novel are chronologically selected to emphasise relationships of causes and effects between incidents and elicit a particular kind of interest in the readers' mind or suspense signifies the fact that the plot structure in Okri's *The Famished Road* serves to demonstrate the major internal and external conflict which leads to the development of the plot in the novel. This idea corroborates Klarer's point who views that Plot is the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative'' (Klarer, 1999: 15). So, Okri has developed the plot of his novel through the handling of the various aspects of form to make the readers perceive some contemporary issues affecting the African state about Nigeria.

3.3 Focalisation in *The Famished Road*

Focalization is the term used in modern Narratology for 'point of view' that is, for the kind of perspective from which the events of a story are witnessed, (Baldick, 2001:166). Abram and Geoffrey, (2005: 271) claim "Point of view signifies the way a story gets told the mode (or

modes) established by an author through which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction”. Baldick (2001: 166), also points out “in the study of fiction, it is usual to divide novels and shorter stories into First-person Narratives and Third-person Narratives, following the above observations, it is clear that writers create narrators as mouth piece through which they narrate their stories.

In Okri’s *The Famished Road*, (1991) the story is narrated through the viewpoint of the first-person narrative which Abrams and Geoffrey, (2009: 272) refer to, “the narrator speaks as “I,” and is to a greater or lesser degree a participant in the story, or else is the *protagonist* of the story. This idea is emphasised by Klarer,(1999: 2004; 21) that the first-person narrative is a “narration by the protagonist or by minor character”. It is the narration “through a person involved in the action”. In Okri’s *The Famished Road*,(1991) the narrator is encountered as a participant in the story. In the opening chapter of the novel, the narrator as a character says:

We knew no boundaries. There were much feasting, playing and sorrowing.
We feasted much because of the beautiful terrors of eternity. We play much
because we were free. And we sorrowed much because there were always
those amongst us who had just returned from the world of the living, (3).

In another instance, the narrator mentions that: “How many times had I come and gone through the dreaded gateway? How many times had I been born and died young? And how often to the same parents, I had no idea (5).

The above account of the narrator shows that every text has a narrator, however. As Mieke Bal, says, “As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject’ (Bal, 1997: 121-122). The story in *The Famished Road* is narrated through the viewpoint that Genette refers to as Internal Focalization where “the focus is on what the characters *think* and *feel*, these being

things which would be inaccessible to you even if you had been present”(Barry, 2002: 152). Accordingly, the story of *The Famished Road* is understood from the first-person narrative perspective, since the story is unfolded through the narrator’s knowledge of the story in which the events in the story are internally observed and recounted. Okri uses the first-person narration to convey series of events that make the reader sympathises with the characters and the storyline as if he or she were among them, the narrator in the novel, *The Famished Road*, is the central figure of the whole story. Okri uses this technique for the development of the plot in the novel and leading the readers to create the textual meaning from issues internal rather than several external issues to the text such as author’s life or historical context, as Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2002: 145), views that the focus of the narrative theory is concerned with how narratives make meaning.

3.4 Literary Devices in *The Famished Road*

Generally, to tell a story, a novelist has to apply a set of creative tools referred to as literary devices. In the presentation of the story in *The Famished Road*, (1991) Ben Okri makes use of literary devices which unfold the literariness of the work and highlight the particular parts of his narrative technique. The devices also enrich readers’ interpretation and enjoyment of the thematic concerns of the story. The novel is rich with many literary devices such as Symbolic imagery of ‘road’ as on page (1); “IN THE BEGINNING there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry”; Dialogue as on page (66-67) what is done and said between Azaro and the spirit child are staged for the reader, the narrator reveals, ‘You look like me’ I said ‘It is you who looks like me...’; Description as on page (148), one of the characters in the novel is described ‘He looked completely different. His hair was white and his face was mask-like with engrained

cement'; Proverbs, as on page (498) "people who use only their eyes do not SEE, People who use only their ears do not HEAR,"; Suspense, as on page (90 -91) the conflict between Dad and his creditors produces anticipation in the mind of the reader, "You all have to be patient.' 'How can we be patient'? Tone, as on page (123), 'They want votes' 'they want our money' 'they have come to tax us' 'they only remember us when they want our votes'. The novel as well includes linguistic and structural aspects which include the syntax, semantics, and morphological features and many other aesthetic elements that constitute the narrative of literary work.

Invariably, a story is a creative process that involves the application of various devices and these devices shed light on the thematic concerns of the writers. This idea is emphasised by Victor Shklovsky in his classic, *Art as Technique*; that "literature is the sum of all the stylistic devices employed in it, with the function of 'defamiliarisation to make 'perception more difficult'" (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). This view shows that a literary work is composed of certain literary devices which might be called formal properties that help in the artistic structure and interpretation of literary work which Baldick, (2001: 100-101) argues "when speaking of a work's formal properties, critics usually refer to its structural design and patterning. However, Todorov on the dynamism of form maintains that form hinges on the resourcefulness and the creativity of both writers and readers in the discourse of creation and interpretation, (Linguya, 2016: 11). Therefore, the story in *The Famished Road*, (1991) depicts a society beset by certain problems where the poor and the weak are at the mercy of the rich and powerful, a society struggling under the grimness of poverty, famine, corruption, unemployment and human right abuses, a society that places a little premium on human life. Okri has used the rich method and devices to describe all these situations that affect African people through the characters of the novel.

Okri's *The Famished Road* is an interesting story whose masterfully woven style attests to the author's artistic creativity. In this novel the researcher analyses three important elements of style about the development of plot structure in the novel that includes: imagery, dialogue, and proverbs which are the most essential devices Okri has used to tell his story. The researcher demonstrates how these important literary aspects have been used by Okri in the exposition of the thematic concerns of poverty, unemployment, corruption, poor political leaders and human rights abuses that affect Africa and African people.

3.4.1 Imagery

Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or by secondary references of its similes and metaphors, imagery includes not only visual sense qualities, but also qualities that are auditory, tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (sensations of movement) (Abrams, and Geoffrey, 2009: 169). In *The Famished Road*, (1991) Okri's use of imagery encompasses not only things that are visible, but also qualities that are smelled, tasted, or heard, as he uses the adjective "Famished Road" which leads the readers to a diverse perception in their mind, as the narrator in the novel reveals what Dad says;

‘I fell into mud,’ said Dad. ‘I was coming down’ the road, drinking, singing, and then the road said to me: ‘Watch yourself.’ So I abused the road. Then it turned into a river, and I swam. It changed into fire and I sweated. It transformed into a tiger and I killed it with one blow. And then it shrunk into a big rat and I shouted at it and it ran, like the creditors. And then it dissolved into mud, and I lost my shoe. If I had money I would be a great man, (94).

Following the above expression in *The Famished Road*, it is pointed out Okri through the chief character uses a rich symbolic imagery of the ‘Road’ to signify the specific descriptions of visible objects, with the aim to make the objects unfamiliar and to increase the difficulty and

length of perception, as Shklovsky, pointed out. Indeed, imagery covers those uses of language in a literary work that evoke sense impressions by literal or figurative reference which create a fundamental opposition between the literary (or poetical) use of language and the ordinary, “practical” use of language” as proposed by formalist critics.

From the above observation, imagery is important in the way it stimulates the readers' imagination in order to visualise the text for better understanding. One of the best literary weapons in the literary work is the ability to use words to create mental pictures in the minds of the readers; and the readers to use their own experiences with life and language for their interpretation. Ikechukwu Asika, views “A critic using formalist approach must be interested in the language of a literary work, the critic will look at words closely, questioning all of their denotations and connotations” (Asika, 2011: 20). Okri has extensively used imagery to bring to the fore the predominant African themes of poverty, unemployment, corruption and human right abuses that affect African people's peace and happiness. Okri's use of symbolic imagery and other devices make his work aesthetically interesting. Such images are important in the way they demonstrate the author's skill for the poetic use of language and serves as ornamental designs to language. Such images also captivate the imagination of the readers to visualise the textual interpretation.

The Famished Road begins with the imagery of the road in which road is compared to a river to characterise certain situation: “IN THE BEGINNING there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry” (*The Famished Road*: 3). Okri uses this literary language just to trigger the readers' imagination to recall and recombine mental pictures of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions, as Robert, and Jacobs's point out in their *Literature: An*

Introduction to Reading and Writing, (1992: 600). So, Okri uses the imagery of the ‘famished road’ to symbolise a society that suffers from poverty, unemployment, corruption, poor political leaders and human right abuses. He uses the symbolic imagery of famished road to refer to African society that faces critical conditions of life and many dictators who are never satisfied with their level of exploitation to people, with reference to Nigeria.

In *The Famished Road* the narrator of the story, Azaro states that: “the road woke up” (9) and darkness was “filled with its attendants” (11). These short sentences are symbolic imagery Okri uses to represent African people who face miserable life due to poor political leaders as vividly depicted in the novel; in essence, Okri compares human situations with darkness. In another instance the spirit tells Azaro that; “you look like me” (67), Okri uses this imagery to recognise African people as people like all other people in the world that need humanistic treatment with reference to Azaro as spirit tells him. This style is perceived by the researcher as a representation of an idea, that African people like all other people in the world needed their way of life to be improved and their problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption and human right abuses to be tackled.

However, Okri uses the imagery to further describe African situations through his narrator, Azaro who describes Madame Koto as he says that “Madam Koto’s face was smudged like a washed-out monster, a cross between a misbegotten animal and a wood carving” (91). This imagery is perceived as an idea used to describe African people who were always in critical conditions and agony of life. Generally, Okri uses imagery extensively to create a mental picture in the mind of the readers to feel and sense or even heard about African problems of poverty, unemployment, poor leadership and human right abuses and also uses the imagery to visualise how people struggle strictly to free themselves from certain exploitation from their leaders, as

encountered in the novel Dad engages himself in tedious work in his community just to relieve the difficulties they face in their life as Azaro says;

I saw Dad amongst the load-carriers. He looked completely different. His hair was white and his face was mask-like with engrained cement he was almost naked except for a very disgusting pair of tattered shorts which I have never seen before. They loaded two bags of salt on his head and he cried ‘GOD SAVE ME!’ and wobbled and the bags on top fell back into the lorry...and Dad kept blinking as the sweat and salt poured into his eyes....Dad was still staggering like a boxer under the onslaught of too many blows, .. The bags were very huge and compact, like boulders of rock, (148).

This imagery shows that Dad faces difficulties of life like all other people in African societies that face the same difficulties of life. Okri uses this imagery to highlight how Dad is surrounded with horrible life that affects the peace and happiness of his family like all other African people. This fact does not escape the narrator's mind to metaphorically label Dad and other characters’ situations through their snapped pictures brought by photographer as Azaro says:

Dad looked as if he had a patch over one eye, Mum was blurred in both eyes, the children were like squirrels, and I resembled a rabbit. We all look like celebrated refugees. We were cramped and hungry and our smiles were fixed, the room appeared to be constructed out garbage and together we seem a people who had never known happiness. Those of us who smiled had our faces contorted into grimaces like people who had been defeated, (*The Famished Road*, 91).

The use of this symbolic imagery in the novel demonstrates the poetic use of language in the exposition of predominant African realities. Okri portrays the terrible situations of African countries with reference to his characters in the novel. Thus, Okris’ development of the plot is dominated by Dad’s persistent suffering and the horrible type of life his family led, this idea is represented in the novel, the narrator states the fact by comparison of human being’s suffering with animal’s suffering, when the spirit companion says to Azaro that; “ I will take you round the world, On foot, I make all my journey on foot. Like a camel” (110). This is a very difficult

anticipation for a human being to round the world on foot but Okri uses the imagery to symbolise the kind of suffering that African people encounter in their society.

Invariably, Okri uses the literary device of imagery to make the readers feel the contemporary issues affecting Africa and African societies. He makes the readers feel and sense the people suffering from poverty, unemployment, and insufficient infrastructure particularly electricity supply. This situation is vividly depicted in the novel in which most of the actions take place in the night time using candle to provide light. Okri uses the image of darkness to represent lack of electricity supply in African society. The narrator, states how his Mum hurt herself because of the darkness and the way he finds himself suffering in the dark room that;

I tried to move but the darkness had become the resistant force. I lowered myself to the floor and scrawled around on my hands and knees. Something crawled up my arm. I made to get up, frightened and hit my head against the sharp edge of the centre table and I stayed like that till the darkness stop dancing, (79).

This imagery visualises the realistic situation in the current African society that the narrator uses the image of darkness to expose how people suffered from lack of electricity supply which leads to critical conditions of life. In another instance Okri uses imagery to depict how poor people suffer from famine in African society with reference to his characters, this is realised as the narrator says that: “the inhabitant of the street crowded round the van hunger on their faces. Their children were in tattered clothes, had big stomachs and were bare footed” (122-123).

In *The Famished Road*, the mad scramble between young men and women are encountered when politicians provide expired milk, because of their abject poverty as one of the people providing the milk says that;

DON'T RUSH WE HAVE ENOUGH FREE MILK FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY...., His pleading only made things worse; people surge round with basins.... Soon the whole street in a frightening tide up buckets and basins of changing pots and rancorous voices rocked the van. (124)

Eventually, after providing the milk the whole people who have collected the milk become sick as the narrator, Azaro says that:

Men and women queued up outside the toilet. And everyone complained of stomach trouble. The women doubled-up and sat miserably on stools outside their room. A man heaved and threw-up beside the well. Women screamed that they had been poisoned and said they had crabs clawing around in their intestines. (130)

Okri uses this imagery to create a strong feeling in the mind of the readers to test how poor people suffer and portray as entirely different from the rich people, as Dad says that: “the whole world is sick except my family”, (131). This statement is symbolic of the current African states that Okri metaphorically exposes to the readers to visualise the kind of differences that exist between poor and rich in African society with reference to the characters of the novel.

Generally, Dad in the novel is portrayed as a modern character who thinks of many ways to solve his problems of living in spite of the serious challenges. His life story symbolises the struggle of many Africans who make all their effort to improve their livelihood. Emeka, Ikechi in his “Stylistic Devices in Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*” views that “Dad fights injustice, poverty, corruption and deprivation. He takes his anger to the boxing ring and fights with Yellow Jaguar, Green Leopard and The Man in White suit and beats them all”, (Emeka, 2016: 245-253). This view shows that Okri uses Dad as a strong character who struggles against the political and economic system in their society. Dad forms a party for the poor and ghetto-dwellers and urges the beggars and his neighbours to keep the streets clean. Dad stands as an agent of social change; he suggests that social change must be collective effort.

More so, the commitment of Azaro’s mother Mum for engaging herself in to small business is an image of her critical condition as the narrator reveals that: “she brought out her little table of provisions to the house-front. She sat on a stool, with me beside her and dispiritedly croon-out her wares. The dust blew into our eyes the sun was merciless on our flesh. We did not sell a

single item’’ (51). So, Mum like many other African women, struggles and fights the recurrent situation that affects their way of life and prevent them from happiness. This is an evidence from the way Azaro expresses Mum’s condition that; “‘as the evening wore on, when the winds changed and a chill insinuated itself into the passing of the sun, Mum began to quiver on her stool, her teeth chattering. She went on stubbornly trying to sell her provisions, quivering under the bad wind, her face taut’’ (51). Mum makes all her effort despite the difficulties she faces. Mum’s love for better life symbolises a recurrent situations for young women in African society that quest for better life in their society. So, Mum represents the suffering woman in African society. Okri decorates the novel with rich imagery which goes a long way to confer deeper understanding and high aesthetic value of the novel.

The method and devices employed in the novel show how the writer uses literary devices to give his narrative excitement for the text based critical method and to serve as a means of creating mental images to the readers in discovering the issues that affect men and women in African society with reference to the characters of the novel. This idea corroborates J. A. Cuddon’s idea who defines imagery as a general term covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience, (Cuddon, 1998: 413).

3.4.2 Dialogue

In *The Famished Road* Okri has extensively used dialogue as a literary device in the development of his plot. Dialogue is a way of interaction that involves characters conversing with each other in a work of art that is entirely different from everyday conversation. Since dialogue involves a conversation between characters in a work of art, it helps in the revelation of characters’ personalities, their attitude towards each other and their internal and external

conflicts and the way these issues contribute to the thematic concerns tackled in the text. Okri's characters converse with each other in the novel, they advance the actions in the narrative. Hence the importance of dialogue in plot development and exposition of the authors' themes in a literary work is extremely essential and can never be over emphasised. This idea collaborates with Chris Baldick, (2001: 65), in his definition of dialogue; that dialogue is:

Spoken exchanges between or among characters in a dramatic or narrative work; or a literary form in prose or verse based on a debate or discussion, usually between two speakers. Dialogue is clearly a major aspect of drama, and is usually a significant component of prose fictions and of some narrative poetry.

It is through the above parameters that we realise that the dialogue has aided in the plot development and the exposition of predominant themes in the literary works. Okri uses extensive dialogue in the exposition of the major themes such as poverty, unemployment, corruption poor leadership and human right abuses which are the contemporary issues that affect Africa and African people with reference to Nigerian society.

Therefore the major themes that run throughout the story are what the researcher investigates in *The Famished Road*. Most of the themes in the novel are introduced through dialogue which contributes in the exposition of Okri's thematic concerns. Dad is depicted into unemployment crisis when he unexpectedly joined the load-carriers people secretly before his son Azaro realises the kind of suffering his father is facing, as he says that;

'They lifted a bag on his head. He made inscrutable noises and flapped his hand.

'More! More!'' he said.

'They lifted a second bag on his head and his neck virtually disappeared and his mighty feet sank into the muddy street.

'He is mad! Said one of the load-carriers behind him'

'He is drunk' said another'

'He turned toward them, his mouth twisted, his face contorted.

'Your father is mad! Your mother is drunk!

‘Then he turned to the two men at the back of the truck and gesticulated again.
--- ‘He is not mad’, said the carrier behind him. ‘He is poor, that is all’ (145).

This dialogue depicts how Dad suffers seriously just to get something to feed his family. Even Though, Dad still looks forward to the best day to begin a better job that would overcome all the horrible life he faces in the family, Dad begins to think of joining army force and/or becoming a renown boxer as he says to Azaro

“‘Your father is going to become a world champion.’

“‘Of what?’

‘I am going to be a boxer’

He shouted very pleasant on something. He went on hitting out grappling with air, in-fighting, blocking. The rain had become gentle, (315).

Okri uses this dialogue to represent the curiosity of African people to have better life in their society with reference to Dad in the novel; Dad is depicted as young man planning to go for modern business using his body power all just to get better life for his family. This shows that many people like Dad in African society struggle to free themselves from certain forces of unemployment, and free themselves from poor situation of life. Okri uses this dialogue to galvanise African people to change their terrible condition of life into better condition of life by positive thinking and initiatives and agitation to their government to provide job opportunity.

Okri represents that, it is this theme of unemployment that leads Dad to abject poverty and extreme suffering, Dad’s family are portrayed as dreadfully poor; it is the poverty that also guides the readers into the major conflicts in the novel. Okri uses dialogue between Dad and Azaro over his sick mother to explore the situation of the poor family as Dad says that: “‘I have been everywhere in the world, looking for a job to feed us and you are asleep? Wicked woman that you are! but Azaro replies to Dad that; “‘Mum is not well” (52). Okri uses the dialogue to represent some crises that occur in poor family just because of poverty and this is a similar situation that many African families like Dad’s family face in their society. Thus, many people

suffer severely before they just get something to feed their family, as Mum in the novel claims that “the only power the poor have is their hunger”, (70). In another instance Dad also says, “I carry loads my head is breaking, my brain is shrinking, all just so that I can feed you eh? (119). However, Okri uses dialogue between Mum and Creditors to show how Dad finds it very difficult to settle a loan he owes people in their compound just because of the poverty they face in the family, as Mum said to the creditors that;

‘You all have to be patient.’
‘How can we be patient? Said one of the creditors,
‘The others nodded vigorously.
‘Patience will kill us. We have to eat and trade’
‘True’
‘But we have paid most of the money’ Mum said.
‘But not all’ someone said (90).

In the course of Mum and Creditors conversation, it is realised that Dad’s family are indebted because of the abject poverty. So, this is the same situation that many African people like Dad’s family are indebted because of the poverty. So, Okri as an African writer does not only write for pleasure and entertainment but he also write to also bring change in the African society as Osundare (2007: 30) views that the African writer does not only write for pleasure and entertainment but to also change the world.

Okri’s *The Famished Road* might be a message not just for the readers but for the African leaders and government in general to be aware of the kind of critical situations people face in African society, for them to think and provide proper solutions to the problems for the better life of the people in African society, People in Africa with reference to Nigeria find it very difficult to settle their indebtedness just because of their critical conditions as vividly depicted through the characters of the novel.

Okri also uses dialogue to introduce the kind of government and political leaders that African people have in their society with reference to the characters of the novel. The narrator, Azaro recounts the dialogue between political-party leaders and the inhabitant in the rally ground that:

‘What is it? Someone asked.
‘Politicians’
‘They want votes’
‘They want our money’
‘They have come to tax us’
They only remember us when they want our votes’
‘The man in the van spoke for himself’
VOTE FOR US WE ARE THE PARTY OF THE RICH, FRIEND OF THE
POOR.....
‘The poor have no friends’, someone in the crowd said.
‘Only rats’
‘IF YOU VOTE FOR US.....’
‘..... ‘We are finished’ someone added.
WE WILL FEED YOUR CHILDREN....’
‘Lies’ (123)

Okri uses the above dialogue to depict the kind of leadership in African state through his characters’ conversation. The characters through their conversation introduce the political leaders and their attitude, the dialogue create a mental picture on how the political leaders treat people in African society and bring a clear picture of lack of infrastructure, the dialogue portrays that there is no electricity supply, no good roads, no food, no schools and no hospitals. The narrator proves this assertion in a gathering as the political leaders says;

“‘WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS, WE WILL BRING YOU ELECTRICITY
AND BAD ROADS NOT GOOD MILK, I MEAN GOOD ROADS NOT
BAD MILK....” “TRUST US, TRUST OUR LEADERS, TRUST OUR
GARRI, OUR PARTY BELIEVES IN SHARING THE NATIONAL GARRI
AND.....’
‘LIES!’ someone cried from the crowd.
‘THIEVES’ said another.
‘POISONOUS’
‘MURDERERS’ (153)

Okri uses the dialogue to represent the kind of African leaders and their disillusionment about all the promises they make in their society and fail to accomplish. The dialogue portrays the kind of suffering that African people encounter as a result of poor leadership in African society with reference to the characters of the novel.

However, in the course of characters' conversation we sense and test the human right abuses in *The Famished Road*, the dialogue between Dad and Mum portrays how political leaders threatening people to vote for them under duress. As Dad says that;

“.....I won't vote for that useless party.’

‘I know but don't tell them.’

‘Why not? Am I a coward?’

‘No.’

‘Then I must say what I believe.’

‘But you heard what the landlord said’

‘Let the landlord drop dead!’

‘Lower your voice’

‘Why’

‘Spies’

‘Let the spies drop dead too’

‘I am afraid for us’

.... ‘We may be poor but not slave.’

.....We heard stories of people who were sacked from their job because they were on wrong side of politics, (203-204)

Okri uses this dialogue to depict how human rights of voting and to be voted are violated in African society regarding the characters of the novel. Nevertheless, Okri goes further in describing how some people are even killed by politicians just because they deny supporting them, this situation is vividly reflected in the dialogue between Dad and Carpenter in Madame Koto's bar, the Carpenter says to Dad that:

“So which party do you support?’

‘We all look up at him. Dad made his reply.

‘The party of the poor’

‘They are as corrupt as everyone else,’ said the carpenter, banging his hand on the table

‘Still I support them. At least they don’t spit on us.’
‘They are all corrupt. In my home town, they killed a man because he wouldn’t support them. They too are trying to rig the election. They have thugs who beat up people in the markets. They take bribe and they help only themselves.’
‘But still I support them,’ Dad said stubbornly.
‘Why? What have they done for you?’
‘Nothing’... (211)

Okri uses this dialogue not only to depict the kind of human right abuses in African society but also to introduce the theme of corruption. Through the dialogue, the question of corruption and its centrality in political parties is brought to the fore. In the conversation between Dad and Carpenter, we get the shocking revelation that all the political parties of poor and rich are corrupt. This is just as carpenter who is not supporting any of the two parties, claims and tries to convince Dad that both of them are similar in their activities. So, Carpenter’s claim depicts that the political parties are not only violating the human right but also engaging in corruption. So, in spite of what Carpenter reveals about the political parties, still Dad is in favour of political party of poor as better than the party for rich as he says that; they are all corrupt. “‘They are all thieves. With party of the rich everyone knows they are thieves. They don’t pretend,’” (212). So, Carpenter and Dad’s argument triggers the sensation in the mind of the readers to perceive that the level of corruption is worst to the extent that everyone is corrupt based on Carpenter’s claim, but based on Dad’s claim on the other hand the level of corruption is not worst to the extent of what Carpenter points out. Therefore, Okri uses this instance of dialogue to represent the level of corruption and its increase in African society to almost every part of human endeavour, with reference to the characters’ conversation in the novel and to represent how this practice affects peace and happiness of people in African society.

Therefore, through the narrator Okri uses dialogue in the exposition of predominant African themes of corruption and unemployment that is brought to the fore. It is through the conversation

between the characters of the novel the narrator exposes the effect of unemployment and corruption crises in the novel. The reality about the effect is also vividly reflected in the life of the characters of the novel. Okri uses Dad as a modern character to galvanise people to struggle and make all their efforts to fight injustice in their society and bring positive change. Dad's fighting with Green Leopard and his success, (395-402) represent his effort and courage that leads to a wonderful success in his life; this is observed through the dialogue between Dad and Mum as the narrator Azaro says:

‘Dad confined himself to a steady consumption of beer’
‘You used to drink ogogoro,’ Mum said.
‘Life get better.’ replied Dad, opening another bottle.

Accordingly, Okri uses his writing to bring change in African society, this is vividly reflected in the novel as Dad says to his people that; “THINK DIFFERENTLY he shouted, ‘AND YOU WILL CHANGE THE WORLD, (419).’” So, dialogue in literature is important since it helps in revealing a character's personality, their feelings, intentions, frustrations, aspirations and other emotions. The above aspects are revealed as characters participate in the interactive process in a work of literature and this helps in arriving at several textual interpretations from issues internal rather than external to the text. As Shklovsky argues that “works of art in the narrow sense, means works created by special techniques designed to make the works as obviously artistic as possible”, (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52).

3.4.3 Proverbs

In *The Famished Road*, Okri has extensively used proverbs in the exposition of his thematic concerns and develop the plot of the novel; the use of proverbs is another literary device employ by the novelist in their writings as a key to unlocking textual interpretation. Thus, proverbs are wise sayings that communicate people's wisdom which Abrams and Geoffrey (2009: 10) define

as a “short, pithy statement of widely accepted truth about everyday life. They also argue that many proverbs are allegorical, in that the explicit statement is meant to have, by analogy or by extended reference.” For instance, in *The Famished Road*, the narrator introduces such application as Dad says: “An evil wind keeps a man poor” (319), Dad is portrayed as an intelligent character and well determined who makes all his effort to free his family and other people from poverty by fighting those who are corrupt in their society, and also encourages people to think positively by keeping away from those leaders who would not bring them positive change in their society, Okri uses Dad as a modern character in the novel that comes out courageously to fight against injustice in their society, through this proverb Dad hopes to persuade his people to fight against certain exploitation from their leaders in their society. The mixed nature of people’s suffering in *The Famished Road* and poor living situation is a shocking reality that they must agitate for change. Dad's people have to accept this reality and move on supporting him in the fight against the injustice in their society. Okri uses Dad to inspire many people, who face similar situations in African society to struggle and agitate for positive change. As a caution in another instance, Dad says that: “whatever we sit on will one day make us fall” (324). This proverb demonstrates how the narrator realises the fact that people must stand on their own feet to get a better life, the narrator tries to represent the maxim that no condition is permanent in life. Dad is keen on his family and his people’s independence and upward mobility in their life; he encourages people to work hard and become independent despite their weaknesses. Dad Points out the reality in the distribution of bad milk to his people as political leaders’ disillusionment, he advises his people to believe that life is full of challenges and depending on others is dangerous. Dad’s proverb is a wake-up call for perseverance and persistence in life; he provides important principles that may help his people to achieve life's

goals. He shows the fact that he is not a hopeless person in his society as he engages himself in tedious work and becomes a boxer with an effort to get a better life and be self-dependent.

In another instance, Dad says that “people who use only their eyes do not SEE, People who use only their ears do not HEAR,” (498). This proverb depicts that Dad calls his people’s attention to join their hands together for their success in life, Dad as an intelligent character joins his hand with other people and struggles against the poor political and economic system in their society, he forms a party for the poor and urges the beggars and his neighbours to keep the streets clean. Dad’s action is an inspiration to his people to join their hands together to become an agent of social change in their society; he suggests that social change must be a collective effort. Okri uses this proverb as an inspiration to African people to join their hands together for their success in life regarding Dad in the novel.

However, Azaro, the narrator also speaks in proverbs, “those who seem to hold sway and try to prevent the turning of justice only bring it quicker” (494). The wisdom loaded in this proverb is of great importance to people in *The Famished Road* and many other young people in African society, as it is a call to systematic working hard for life’s goals and smartness for no delay in fighting injustice. In another instance, Azaro says that: “time and truth always come around” (494). This proverb is employed in *The Famished Road* as an inspiration to the African people to keep on the struggle in their society for their better life regarding the characters of the novel. Therefore, Okri’s use of proverbs in *The Famished Road* reveals people’s attitude towards a better life. Nevertheless, in another instance we encounter such proverbs in the novel that encourage people to free themselves from certain exploitation in their society as the narrator says; “when people keep running, something keeps pursuing them” (362). However, Dad says “we must become spies on behalf of justice” (498). These proverbs depict that people must

strive to challenge all sorts of injustice in their society to end up their suffering and report any issue that might be harmful to their society. In another instance, a spirit child also tells Azaro that: “You need to lose all your blood before you arrive” (335), this proverb represents the fact that one must strive before achieving any goal in life. Okri uses this proverb to motivate African people to keep on struggling and fighting the recurrent situation that affects their way of life and prevents them from happiness despite all the difficulties that might be faced in the battle. Nevertheless, Dad says: “to be a man is not a small thing” (353) this proverb gives light to what a spirit tells Azaro in the novel as a wake-up call for perseverance and persistence in life. In another instance Dad says that after all, “man can wander the whole planet and not move an inch” (436), meaning that Dad’s proverbs are the source of folk wisdom that brings his people together. They also show the importance of working together since these are the bedrock upon which society is built. In essence Dad’s proverbs are characteristic of the literary use of language employed in *The Famished Road*, as Anne Dobie, (2012; 35), in his *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*: views that Literary language is different, it deviates from the expected, using all the devices an author has the power to manipulate to make what is familiar seem strange and unfamiliar.

Following the above idea, it can be observed that Okri’s use of proverbs is aimed, on one hand at revealing the negative issues such as peoples’ suffering and famine among others. On the other hand, his use of proverbs is geared towards the exposition of the predominant African realities of poverty, unemployment, and human rights abuses among others as represented by the shocking events and actions of the political leaders in the novel, as Baldick (2001: 208), argues that proverb is a short popular saying of unknown authorship, expressing some general truth or superstition. Invariably most of the writers use proverbs for the expression of the general truth in

their society. Okri uses proverbs for the expression of the general truth in African society. Thus, the extensive use of proverbs in *The Famished Road* demonstrates the author's skill and unfolds the literariness of his work and also highlights the peculiar parts of his narrative technique which make his literary work autonomous. Accordingly, Cuddon, (1998: 706) argues “proverb is related in form and content to the maxim and the aphorism. Common to most nations and peoples, it is a form of expression of great antiquity. Many writers have made use of them”. Therefore, Okri is among those writers that embellish their literary works with a lot of proverbs in the exposition of their thematic concerns and development of the plot in their novels, Okri decorates *The Famished Road* with rich proverbs which goes a long way to confer deeper understanding and high aesthetic value of the novel, that Shklovsky, (1917; 2001:49-52).views as a “very specific unit of human knowledge that has to be examined on its own terms and for its own sake”.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOCALISATION AND EMPLOTMENT IN NARRATING THE QUEST FOR CHANGE IN HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*

4.0 Introduction

This chapter undertakes an analysis of Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, (2002) to examine focalisation and emplotment in narrating the quest for change. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (1993:75) believes that 'the African writer can and will help in not only explaining the world but in changing it'. *Waiting for an Angel* captures the difficulties in an African society regarding the Nigerian community, these difficulties are caused by various forces which are essentially the major thematic concerns Habila tackles in the novel. Habila deals mainly with issues such as imprisonment, incarceration of journalists, poverty, corruption, students' protest and the violent revolt across the nation. Thus, the researcher uses the parameter of form and technique to critically analyse the technicalities of story-telling Habila uses in narrating the quest for change in *Waiting for an Angel*. The researcher engages to a close reading of Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* to evaluate the narrative process and the main internal textual aspects of the novel to interpret the novel from issues internal rather than external to the text which is the main focus of formalist critics who 'asserted that the understanding of work comes from looking at it as a self-sufficient object with formal elements, laws of its own that could be studied. To know *how* work creates meaning became the quest' (Dobie, 2012: 35).

Therefore, this chapter examines the important textual aspects of *Waiting for an Angel*, such as focalisation, plot development, characterisation as well as the stylistic tools or literary devices which include: flashback, imagery, dialogue, among others used by Habila in the development of

the plot. The chapter also investigates how Habila hides behind these important textual aspects of the novel in narrating the quest for change in African society.

4.1 Plot Summary of *Waiting for an Angel*

Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* portrays the advent of the military in Nigerian politics, it shows dictatorship and bad governance which are manifested in reckless killing, illegal arrest, detention, reckless destruction, oppression, poverty, violence, fear, lack of infrastructural development, impoverishment, gagging the press, injustice, bribery and corruption and fuel scarcity as depicted in the novel. The story is about Lomba, although there are other important characters in the novel, through Lomba, a young journalist living in Lagos state Nigeria during the military rule, each of the characters is affected by the criminal activities of the military rule depicted in the novel.

The novel is a reminiscence of prison notes written in a diary form and the entries which mostly are headed with the names of the days of the week. The main narrator has to keep himself busy in writing to forget his sorrows in prison and to express his feelings, the novel traces the life of Lomba from the north of Nigeria, who comes to Lagos to go to university, Lomba experiences all kinds of difficulties and he drops out of the University, everywhere Lomba looks seems like a prison; the University he has withdrawn from, his tenement house, and the entire community he lives, even before his imprisonment, his entire life looks like that of a prisoner. The novel captures Africans in the grip of authoritarian, corrupt and oppressive rulers and the trauma and frustration of a generation daring to speak out for change in the novel. The novel fits into the collections of many other contemporary African novels that depict the major talent of the literary scene.

4.2 Plot Development and Characterisation in *Waiting for an Angel*

Plot is one of the most central elements of form in prose fiction, Abrams, and Geoffrey, (2009: 265) view that “plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects”. Novelists use plot to arrange the sequence of events and actions, in most stories these events and actions arise out of conflict experienced by the main characters. Plot is a very essential element of study for critics using the formalist approach,

Therefore, the plot structure in *Waiting for an Angel* is chronologically selected from the end to the beginning. To understand the plot structure of *Waiting for an Angel* very well, one shall go alongside with the point of view of the novel as points out by Asika, (2011: 20). Even a casual reading of the novel enlightens that Habila breaks away from the conventional chapterisation that is common with most novelists. Instead of a chapter by chapter presentation, the novel is unfolded with the names of characters in different locations reporting the different experiences. Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* is of seven chapters in the following order: Lomba; Angel; Bola; Alice; Lomba; Kela; James. The names of these characters represent the title of each of the chapters and were narrated from different versions of one story which the writers set out to tell in the novel.

Habila, in *Waiting for an Angel* uses the internal textual elements of the novel in the development of the plot which are encountered from one story to another, The novel traces the life of Lomba from the north of Nigeria, who comes to Lagos to go to university, in the university Lomba meets Bola, a colleague and friend whom he shared the same room with in their short-lived University education days; Lomba also meets Alice, an undergraduate student whose father is a military officer, Lomba sets up a love relationship with her during their stay in

the university. Therefore, by the time students started the riot, Lomba accompanies Bola to his family, Bola becomes disoriented because he lost his parents and two beloved sisters in an accident, he begins preaching like a pastor within a section of their neighbourhood against military dictatorship but he gets a raw deal in the hands of plain clothes security men who beat him ruthlessly and send him to a psychiatric centre. By the time Lomba comes back from Bola's family two days after, soldiers had already ransacked their hostels destroying everything in sight including his written works as he says:

As I neared my block... my room was open, the door was broken, hanging askew from the top hinge, half - blocking the entrance. And there were papers scattered all over the veranda and the steps... The room looked as if a battle had been fought in it, (*Waiting for an Angel*, 71).

Lomba experiences all kinds of difficulties, as a student, his university like other universities went through one closure after another, Lomba remains in Lagos, for two years, he is locked up in his tenement house trying to write a novel and for his living, he is paid for teaching English and literature an hour daily, as he says: “for my bread I taught English and literature an hour daily, minus Sundays, on a school certificate preparatory class run by a woman who always looked at me suspiciously, as if wondering what I did for a living” (106). Lomba makes his mind to contact James who promises him a job after graduation, even though he left school before graduation but James, the redoubtable and nationalist-minded journalist asks Lomba to write articles about politicians, when Lomba fulfils the demand he becomes a young journalist living in Lagos. After some years Lomba meets Kela a student who is sent to Lagos by his father to stay with his Auntie Rachael, the owner of Good-will Food Centre for rewriting his final school examination, Rachael's Food Centre becomes a place where people go for discussions of their problems of non-existing infrastructure, inhumane treatment by police and army, and other

destructive activities in their areas, planning to find out ways to change their dreadful situations that bedevil their environment.

As the plot unfolds Nancy, a wonderful assistant to Rachael in the restaurants whose parents consider her irresponsible and send her out of their house because she is impregnated by her boyfriend is encountered in the novel accommodated by Rachael to serve people in the restaurant and Kela a student who failed his secondary school result is introduced to Joshua, a teacher to train him for his re-sit examination. Joshua, a teacher turns to revolutionary articulates the condition of the people and mobilises them to change the decadent status quo. So, Joshua a teacher, Muhammad who is called Brother, and Ajokuto who is called a Mou and his collaborators meet several times and finally agreed to come out for the demonstration, the mobilisation about the demonstration becomes successful as they move to the Local Government Secretariat aimed at pointing government's attention to the plight of the people; Hagar, a student whose parent fail to sponsor her education because of poverty turned prostitute and dies in the wake of the people's demonstration having been knocked down by a vehicle as she is running away from the rampaging goons who have come to attack and disperse the demonstrators. Consequently, the government through its coercive agents maims and kills some of the protesters declaring the ring leaders wanted, Lomba had gone to cover the demonstration as a journalist and the violence that followed landed him in prison. It was in that prison that we met him at the beginning of the novel and the frustration, trauma and madness of the prison wall forced him to start keeping a diary of his day to day encounters and experiences in the prison daringly quest for change.

However, Habila, in his *Waiting for an Angel*, (2002) presents his characters and their characterisations, the description of the prison warders and inmates in the novel is one of the

elements of characters presentation and characterisation which is clearly presented in the novel, as the narrator says that:

My anger lasted a whole year. I remember the exact day it left me. It was a Saturday the day after a failed escape attempt by two convicted murderers. The warders were more than usually brutal that day; the inmates were on tenterhook not knowing from where the next blow would come. We were link up in rows in our cell waiting for hours to be addressed by the superintendent, (10).

This description serves to be an accurate account possibly to mirror the real people and their commitment to the relationship of power among themselves. Consequently, Habila in the above description makes the readers deduce for themselves the kind of characters and characterisation that reflect a highly meaningful structure of his narrative technique and the most significant use of form in the novel. Through these characters and the characterisation in the novel, people are observed in action making decisions and struggling to maintain their humanity in an often inhumane situation and making the readers infer the variety of values and human characteristics that might be embraced, discarded, enjoyed or detested.

In this novel, the major actions and events revolve around the character of Lomba, a young journalist living in Lagos state Nigeria who is incarcerated for reasons not mentioned earlier at the beginning of the novel, the chief protagonist, Lomba is a round character who acts in the centre upon which the other characters and their whole actions and events revolve in the novel. E. M. Forster, (1927: 5), observes “flat” character, can be summed up in a single sentence and acts as a function of only a few fixed character traits. “Round” characters are capable of surprise, contradiction, and change; they are representations of human beings in all of their complexity. Forster argues ‘The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is a flat pretending to be round’’, (56). On his part, Klarer, (2004: 8) observes:

Generally speaking, characters in a text can be rendered either as types or as individuals. A typified character in literature is dominated by one specific trait and is referred to as a flat character. The term round character usually denotes a persona with more complex and differentiated features.

Thus, despite the episodic and almost disjointed narrative structure of the novel which starts from the end to the beginning, the whole story is about Lomba, a round character in the novel. Invariably, character, as well as Characterisation, is said to be a creative process that gives novelists and dramatists a high level of autonomy in the process of creating their characters. This creative process depends on the writers' own aims and objectives as well as their imaginative skills. Habila in this novel uses the characters and characterisation in the development of the plot structure and hides behind in narrating the mission for change in African society regarding the Nigerian community in the novel. This process used in the development of the plot structure of the novel demonstrates Habila's skills in the literary use of language.

4.3 Focalisation in *Waiting for an Angel*

The story in *Waiting for an Angel*, (2002) is narrated from the experience of many characters in their different locations. Habila uses a peculiar narrative technique in unfolding the story; he uses a frame narrative through which the story in the novel is narrated. Thus, the novelists use different narrative perspectives through which they narrate their stories as Mieke Bal, says, 'As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject' (Bal. 1997: 21–2).

Unlike many novels written in the omniscient and first-person point of view, Habila encapsulates two techniques in one. First, he creates an omniscient narrator who tells the story, giving accounts of events and characters and making the reader see everything from the character's perspective which Malpas and Wake, (2006: 20) refer to as "an external focaliser operates 'outside' the story and has a complete comprehension of the story, which will necessarily be

written in the third person ('she said'). It is encountered in the novel the unnamed narrator at the beginning of the story reveals:

In the middle of his second year in prison, Lomba got access to pencil and paper and he started a diary. It was not easy. He had to write in secret, mostly in the early morning when the night warders tired of peeping through the door bar, waited impatiently for the morning shift. Most of the entries he simply headed with days of the week, (*Waiting for an Angel*, 9).

Following the above account of the narrator, the story is understood through the narrator's eye in which the events are externally observed and recounted in *Waiting for an Angel*. In the first place the story in the novel is narrated through an omniscient narrator, the viewpoint that is outside the character depicted, so that we are told only things which are external or observable.

Secondly and most importantly this narrative technique allows Habila to put his characters to pass their action with the minimum of explicit comment from him, that Barry refers to as "dramatised narrators". Barry views that the dramatised narrator is;

The other kind of narrator who is identified as a distinct, named character, with a personal history, gender, a social-class position, distinct likes and dislikes, and so on. These narrators have witnessed, or learned about, or even participated in the events they tell. They can be called 'overt' or 'dramatised' or 'intrusive' narrators, examples being such tellers as, Marlow in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, (152).

Following Barry's idea, it is observed that Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* adopts such dramatised narrators in the novel to pass their stories in action with an explicit comment in the novel. To confirm this fact let's examine Lomba's encounter with warders headed by the superintendent officer in the cell as he says:

I repeat. My question is, Who gave you the papers?" He thundered into my face, spraying me with spit. I shook my head. 'I have forgotten.' I did not see it, but he must have nodded to one of the hounds. All I felt was the crushing blow on the back of my neck. I pitched forward, stunned by pain and the expectation of it. My face struck the door bars and I fell before the superintendent's boots, (14).

This dialogue explains the fact that Lomba, the chief character is also a narrator who is not only telling his story but at the same time enacting it. This is why Percy, (1921: 8) believes that; “the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be exhibited, that it will tell itself”. This is what Habila did by using the narrative technique in the second place in the novel that Gennette refers to as Internal Focalisation as opposed to External Focalisation. The Internal, “Focalisation, the focus is on what the characters *think* and *feel*, these being things which would be inaccessible to you even if you had been present, (Barry, 2002: 152). Malpas, and Wake, (2006:20), also argue that Internal focalisation can be ‘fixed’ (derived from a single character), variable (from a succession of characters), or ‘multiple’ (from numerous characters at the same time). As it is observed in another instance in the novel that Lomba the chief character tells what happens to Bola in their room, as he says:

Bola woke up sweating and shivering. His voice croaky and hoarse, wake me up.

“Lomba, Lomba”

It was not yet seven. His bed was tousled, the sheets hung down to the floor the pillow was also on the floor...His eyes were bleary, edged with rheum. I kicked my legs out of the sheet and went to him

‘What?’

‘I couldn’t sleep’

He looks agitated. His lips were parched, (*Waiting for an Angel*, 39).

This dialogue explains the fact that Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* uses multiple methods and points of view in narrating the story. He encapsulates multiple Techniques in one, which is referred to as frame narrative or frame story that Chris Baldick (2001), asserts as “a story in which another story is enclosed or embedded as a ‘tale within the tale’ or which contains several such tales”. “Prominent example of frame narratives enclosing several tales is Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) that employs a narrative structure in which the main action is relayed at second hand through an enclosing frame story” (101). Baldick’s example is similar to

Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* that employs a narrative structure in which several tales are enclosed to form one big story, the narrators give an account of the life of a group of people whose lives are symbolic and left much to be learnt, discovered and appreciated.

However, Gerald Prince, (1982: 40) argues; “the narrator may wish to emphasise that he is merely a recorder of events and not of their relationship; he may want his audience to participate more actively in the (re)constitution of the narrative”. On her part, Mieke Bal, in *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*: (2004: 69) observes that “narrative is a hierarchy of instances. “To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognise its construction in 'storeys'. Thus, the story in *Waiting for an Angel* is understood from the frame narrative perspective, since the story is unfolded through several narrators' knowledge of the stories in which the events and actions in the stories are internally and externally observed and recounted. Habila uses this technique in the development of the plot to stimulate the readers more actively in the (re)constitution of the narrative process and recreate textual interpretation from issues internal rather than external to the text.

4.4 Literary Devices in *Waiting for an Angel*

Waiting for an Angel (2002) is a novel whose masterfully woven style attests to Habila's artistic creativity and his peculiar part of the narrative technique, this style allows Habila to convey his ideas to the readers, as Wales (2014: 397), observes; “style (*stylus*) was an instrument for writing, i.e. a kind of pen, and came to mean ‘manner of writing’ by metonymic change”. He further argues; “style refers to the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking, just as there is a perceived manner of doing things, like playing squash or painting”. Habila uses many stylistic or literary devices which essentially are the aspects of textual interpretation. This idea is emphasised by Dobie (2012: 35), who argues that formalist critics

“agreed that literature could (and should) be studied scientifically, to understand it for its own sake, not as a medium for discussing other subjects. Therefore, in Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* the researcher has analysed three important elements of narrative technique that includes; flashback, imagery, and dialogue among others which are the most essential technique Habila used to tell his story. The researcher also demonstrates how these important techniques have been used by Habila in narrating the quest for change from issues that bedevil the African society which includes poverty, lack of infrastructure, students’ educational problem, human rights abuse and incarceration of journalists.

4.4.1 Flashback

Flashback is a device in the structuring of the plot which introduces events from the past in an otherwise linear narrative. An ideal traditional plot encompasses four sequential levels; namely, exposition, complication, and climax or turning point resolution; the exposition or presentation of the initial situation is disturbed by a complication or conflict which produces suspense and eventually leads to a climax, crisis, or turning point. Thus, in most traditional fiction and drama, this basic plot structure is employed, which is called linear plot since its different elements follow a chronological order, but in many cases even in linear plots, flashback introduces information concerning the past into the narrative, (Klarer, 2004: 15). Flashback is an essential element of narrative that is used in revealing past events and how they happened, it is important as Barry, (2002: 145) asserts that it is, “which fills us in on things that happened earlier. From the above observation, it is clear that flashback is an important literary device that is used in the authentication of the past experiences in the lives of the characters.

Habila uses a flashback device and makes the story in the novel chronologically selected from the end to the beginning. Habila makes a constant digression in the story of the novel and this

reveals and demonstrates his skill in the poetic use of language and most importantly, unfolds his creative style and his ability to fit together the story through the technique of flashback. Therefore, Habila's use of flashbacks influences the development of the plot in the novel and stimulates the readers to actively participate in the interpretation of the novel from issues internal rather than external to the text. It is through the flashback that the genesis of the conflict that besets Lomba's life is introduced. The story opens with events and actions that are not sequentially in order, events and actions that traditionally come at the end, come at the beginning or earlier than expected. The protagonist narrates his life in prison on reasons not mentioned earlier at the beginning of the novel as he says;

I begin a diary to say all the things I want to say to myself because here in prison there is no one to listen. I express myself. It stops me from standing in the center of this narrow cell and screaming at the top of my voice. It stops me from jumping up suddenly and bashing my head repeatedly against the wall.
(1).

Through this revelation, the reader comes to know that Lomba is incarcerated in one of the prisons in the African state on no ground earlier stated at the beginning of the novel. Habila uses this device of flashback at the beginning of the novel to represent issues that need to be changed in African society which includes life in prison, where Lombo and others are incarcerated for life just for no genuine grounds and this action represents injustice and human rights abuse in the novel. Lomba and his collaborators represent many other people in African society who are incarcerated for life just for political reasons, this fact is represented in the novel as encountered the superintendent says to Lomba; "who gave you the papers?... Don't think because you are political Detainees you are untouchable. Wrong. You are all rats. Saboteurs. Anti-government, rats. That is all. Rats." (14), this account metaphorically reveals how Habila uses flashback to represent many other people like Lomba in African society that are detained just for political reasons.

Eventually, Habila uses these actions to portray a picture of human rights abuse in African society regarding Lomba and others in prison through flashback device, as only perceives why Lomba is incarcerated when it gets to the last part of the story as Amusu, says that: “we are going to have a demonstration, a peaceful one, next week, at our local government secretariat and we want you to report on it” (145). As the plot unfolds it is finally deduced in the last page of the story that Lomba was just going to the local government secretariat to cover the demonstration when he escapes from the first attempt arrest at Emeka Davies’ house one of the characters in the novel where artists meet to discuss issues about government’s disillusionment, at last soldiers come to arrest them, Lomba escaped the arrest with one of the character, Mahalia a girl who gives him a lift with her car. Lomba says to Mahalia; “I promised someone I’d come”... to report on the demonstration. When he gets down from the car the demonstration has already gathered before the building, Lomba recognises the young man Joshua on a drum by the gates giving an impassioned speech, (169). This account from the narrator in the last part of the story makes us realise for ourselves the genesis of arresting Lomba and incarcerated in the novel which is not clearly stated at the beginning of the story but in the last part of it. Habila uses the flashback device to demonstrate the poetic technique with the function of forcing the readers to make new perceptions out of the familiar in everyday concepts. So, the flashback device is used in narrating the quest for change in Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*. Barry (2002: 153), asserts that ‘flashback’ is used to relate an event that happened in the past, and such parts of the narrative can be called 'analeptic' (from ‘analepsis’, which literally means a ‘back-take’). He further argues that analepsis is often important in establishing and foregrounding ‘themes’ in a story. However, it is through the flashback device that finally comes to know a clear relationship between Lomba and Bola, as just encountered them as if they are relatives at the beginning of the

story at the university as they depart together from the university to Bola's family, Bola has a nightmare about his family, during the demonstration at the University, the narrator says:

Bola woke up sweating and shivering. His voice croaky and hoarse, wake me up.

"Lomba, Lomba".....

It was not yet seven. His bed via tousled, the sheets hung shown to the floor the pillow was also on the floor...His eyes were bleary, edged with rheum. I kicked my legs out of the sheet and went to him

'What?'

'I couldn't sleep'

He looks agitated. His lips were parched, (*Waiting for an Angel*, 39).

Eventually, Bola senses the tragic death of his parents in a ghastly motor accident. As the plot unfolds the narrator says:

There had been an accident. Bola's family-father, mother, and two sisters-had been in a car crash..... The father and mother, who were in front, had died instantly; Peju, the elder sister, died on the way to the hospital; the other sister, Lola, sustained minor injuries... (45).

Habila uses this devastating news through the flashback device in narrating the quest for change in the people's life particularly poor infrastructure such as lack of good road that courses fatal accident in African society with reference to the characters of the novel. Consequently, through the technique of flashback device, Habila quickly links the readers with how Lomba came to know Bola's family and how close they have been since their first meeting in the university, as Bola says that;

My first day with the family replayed itself in my mind, but in black-and-white and red grainy and distorted in places. I was seated with family nervous pretending to follow Carl Sagan on T.V. covertly assessing their movements and utterances..... (50).

This account of the narrator in the last part of the story about Bola's family makes us realise how Bola and Lomba become very close friends. Therefore, Habila's masterful use of flashback device becomes more evident in the plot structure of *Waiting for an Angel*, this flashback

technique is also realised in the story of Alice, Lomba's girlfriend, as the plot unfolds Alice's story is basically woven together through the use of flashback device. The story of Alice begins from end to beginning, in the opening of the story the narrator says that; "the last time Lomba had seen Alice, she had been walking away from him towards the cancer ward where her mother lay dying. Now she was right here before him smiling happily up at him in a bridal dress", (63). So, Lomba was trying to recollect the last time he met Alice at the beginning of the story before we are introduced about their first meeting in the university, so, what we expect to come at the beginning of Alice's story comes at the last part of the story, as the narrator in the last part of the story says that; "he had seen her first in a lecturer's office, in his second year of school. He was between lectures, and his favourite place for killing time was Dr Kareem's office" (64) This account shows how Habila uses flashbacks to link the readers with the last time Lomba meets Alice in the hospital before the first time Lomba and Alice met in Dr Kareem's office at the University and how suddenly they become friends. This masterful use of flashbacks in *Waiting for an Angel* demonstrates how Habila uses the flashback device to make the readers participate actively in the interpretation of the novel from issues internal rather than external to the text. Therefore, the features of flashback are amalgamated in *Waiting for an Angel*, achieving a defamiliarised use of language, as Shklovsky, (1917; 2001:49-52) asserts; "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known".

4.4.1 Imagery

In *Waiting for an Angel*, Habila uses figurative language such as similes, metaphors and a multitude of other literary techniques to make his work aesthetically attractive, such images are important in the way they captivate the imagination of the readers to visualise the textual idea. Habila's use of imagery in *Waiting for an Angel* demonstrates his skills in using words and

sentences to create mental pictures in the minds of his readers. Habila uses the imagery of prison and Poverty Street in the novel to characterise African situations of human rights abuse and abject poverty, difficulties of life, in *Waiting for an Angel* people are encountered making demonstration many times seeking change in their society about their dreadful situations. Habila's depiction of prison and Poverty Street in the novel does not only mirror military brutalisation and poverty in African society, but brings to the fore of the reader the extreme suffering from lack of infrastructure, and other destructive activities in African society regarding the characters of the novel. Thus, the use of the imagery in *Waiting for an Angel* makes the readers feel and perceive the difficult situation that people face in their society through the characters of the novel. As Childs, and Fowler, (2006: 115) view that; "literature was often regarded as a medium which promoted visual responses in the reader".

Accordingly, Lomba's revelation of his suffering in prison is the genesis of all the conflicts in the novel. This fact does not escape the narrator's mind to metaphorically express the kind of terrible life people face in prison, as he says that, "the anger creeps up on you, like twilight edging out the day. It builds in you silently until one day it explodes in violence, surprising you," (*Waiting for an Angel*, 9 - 10). After this unpleasant expression of Lomba in prison at the beginning of the story, the plot, throughout the novel is dominated by Lomba's persistent suffering as he also reveals the situation he finds himself in the university after students' demonstration as Lomba says when he returns from Bola's family,

As I neared my block... my room was open, the door was broken, hanging askew from the top hinge, half - blocking the entrance. And there were papers scattered all over the veranda and the steps... The room looked as if a battle had been fought in it, (71).

Lomba's persistent suffering in his life becomes the great hindrance to his better life, this situation Lomba faces in *Waiting for an Angel* symbolises the lives of many other young people in

African society that face the same problems of Lomba's boiling emotional feelings. This is true as what Lomba says that "when school began to look like a prison, I had to get out" (107). Eventually, Lomba as a university student, his University like all other universities in African society went through one closure after another which caused a great challenge to the educational betterment of the young people in African society. Habila uses this imagery to make the readers perceive the kind of educational challenges that people face in African society with reference to the characters of the novel.

However, Habila uses symbolic imagery and other literary devices to make the readers visualise certain issues of human right abuses, poverty, life in prison, lack of infrastructure and other difficulties of life that people face in African society. This symbolic imagery makes his work aesthetically interesting, such imageries are important in writing in the way they demonstrate author's skill in the level of poetic use of language and they serves as ornamental designs to the novel. Such imageries also captivate the imagination of the readers in visualising the textual interpretation. Habila introduces the theme of human right abuses through the imagery of prison that the novel vividly reflects through the description of prison warders and the inmates as the narrator says that;

When he came his scowl was hard as rock, his eyes were red and singeing, like fire. He paced up and down before us, systematically flagellating us with his harsh staccato sentences. We listened, our heads bowed and hearts quacking. When he left, an inmate, just back from a week in solitary broke down and began to weep. His hands shook as if with a life of their own....if I go back there I'll die. (10)

This description portrays how the author uses poetic language just to trigger the readers' imagination to recall and recombine mental pictures of human right abuses in African society through the characters of the novel. Habila uses this technique to manipulate the language to be able to represent African issues of military brutalisation and other human right abuses through

the use of literary language. As Shklovsky, in his classic *Art as Technique*, (1917; 2001:49-52) views that “art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”.

Therefore, the narrator’s revelation makes the reader to actively participate in the creative interpretation from issue internal rather than external to the text. Nevertheless, apart from the protagonist’s persistent suffering in his life in prison, Habila also uses the imagery of poverty street to describe the widespread forces of poverty and lack of infrastructure in Morgan Street that turns to be named as ‘Poverty Street’, which encounter when Joshua the leader of the community says during their protest at the Local Government Secretariat that;

We are a poor, neglected people. If we were to choose name for ourselves, we’d choose a plain and simple one. Something that reflects our reality we do not know who Morgan is or was, but we do know what poverty is. We live with it daily..... This is our decision that our Street, presently known as Morgan Street, ceases from this moment to be known as by that name. It shall from this moment, be known as Poverty Street! (132).

This declaration demonstrates a serious protest of the people in a community besieged by the external forces of multitude problems in their society and their effort in the quest for change. Their protest is a symbolic imagery in the contemporary African states that Habila metaphorically exposes to make the readers visualise people’s plight and severe suffering from poverty and other difficulties of life, in their environment. This fact does not escape the mind of the narrator in the novel to metaphorically describe such poor living situation of the people of Morgan Street, as he says;

The houses were old and craggy and lichened. The place had the unfinished, abandoned appearance of an under waterscape. Crouching under the bigger or in their own clusters were hastily built wood and zinc structures that housed incredibly large number of families: the father were mostly out-of-work drivers, labourers, fugitives convalescing between prison terms, (97).

This, description of the poor living situations of people in Morgan Street, indirectly symbolises lack of infrastructure in African society, the description is vividly used in the novel to make the readers visualise issues of abject poverty and lack of infrastructure in African society with reference to the characters of the novel. Habila symbolically uses the Poverty Street and the people living in that area to expose the ugly situation of people's plight in African society. The people in Poverty Street like all other people in African society are portrayed in an abject poverty and severe difficulties of life in their area, the imagery of Poverty Street is used to make the readers feel and sense the people' suffering from poverty and lack of infrastructure. This idea is emphasised by Wales, (2014: 215) who argues "Literary images, whether in prose or poetry, are not simply decorative, but serve, for example, to de-familiarise: to reveal aspects of experience in a new light; or to reinforce theme, setting or characterisation".

In another instance, we perceive the representation of difficult situation of lack of infrastructure in African society. This fact is vividly reflected in the novel as the description of the situation is encountered, when Joshua, one of the leaders of the protestors of Morgan Street says;

We came to tell you, Sir, that our clinic is run-down and abandoned; we came to tell you that we don't have a single borehole on Morgan Street and we have to go to other Streets to fetch water; our schools are overcrowded, and our children have to buy their own seats and tables.... We are dying from lack of hope. And that's why we are here today to protest, (132)

This tough description reveals the evidence of certain problems of lack of infrastructure in Morgan Street which leads the people of the area to come out for demonstration pointing the government's attention to the plight of the people and quest for change from the existing situation in their living environment. Regarding Morgan Street, the narrator exposes how people suffer from a lack of infrastructure in their living area which leads them to critical conditions of life. Habila uses the imagery of protest in the novel to make the readers perceive and test the lack of water supply, hospitals and schools in African society regarding Morgan Street in the novel.

However Habila uses this imagery in *Waiting for an Angel* to expose the highest level of poverty in African society which leads people to be embarrassed, through one of the characters in the novel called Nancy, a wonderful assistant to Rachael in the Good-will Food Centre, the narrator states that Nancy writes clearly on top of the wall of the restaurant “Poor Man’s Paradise”(102), a statement that makes one of the customer to be annoyed as the narrator says that; “the one that seemed to be sticking in brother’s throat read; *Poor Man’s Paradise*’’. (102), the narrator accounts that brother responds by questioning that; “who ...who write this.... ““Poor Man’s Paradise”... “This one is an insult to us” (102). Habila uses this imagery to metaphorically make the readers perceive the contemporary African realities of poverty and suffering in life.

Through this symbolic imagery, Habila characterises people’s suffering from difficulties in life, since a local restaurant is compared and considered as a place for a better life in a given society. Habila uses this imagery to manipulate the language to be able to represent the people suffering from poverty and insufficient infrastructure. Therefore, the method and devices employed in *Waiting for an Angel* show how the author uses literary devices to give his narrative excitement for the text-based critical method and to serve as a means of creating a mental picture in the mind of the readers in discovering the kind of difficult situation people face in African society and people’s effort to call government’s attention to improve their living situation. Habila makes the readers sense and perceives all these situations through the use of imagery that Abrams, and Geoffrey, (2005; 2009: 169) view that; “Imagery” (that is, “images” taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles (the secondary references) of its similes and metaphors’’.

4.4.3 Dialogue

In *Waiting for an Angel* Habila has extensively used dialogue; Dialogue is a way of interaction which involves characters conversing with each other in a work of art. This idea corroborates Katie Wales's definition of dialogue in his book, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (2014: 115) that: In literature, dialogue describes the reproduction of apparently serious conversations. He also views that;

More commonly, dialogue describes all the speech found in narratives in the delineation of character; and the interchanges that dominate drama. In the novel, representation of speech is frequently direct, mimetic of real dialogue; but other modes of representation are used, with differing degrees of directness, 'unlike real-life dialogue, it is designed to be 'overheard' by reader or audience, (115).

Since dialogue involves conversation between characters in a work of art, it contributes in the development of the plot of the novel. Habila's characters converse with each other, they advance the action in the narrative, hence the importance of dialogue in plot development in a literary work is very essential. Habila uses characters' conversations as a means in narrating the story in the novel, and through such conversations he makes the readers to see and hear things for themselves particular human right abuses, poverty, and students' life and protest. Therefore, some conflicts in the novel are introduced through characters' conversations which contribute in the exposition of Habila's thematic concerns. The major theme of human right abuses that runs throughout the novel is introduced through dialogue, Lomba is depicted in prison on reason not mentioned earlier and he struggles for freedom through his writing of diary in the prison, the narrator uses a dialogue between Lomba and superintendent to narrate the brutality, torture and victimisation in prisons, as superintendent, Muftau says to Lomba;

'I read your file again. Also you are journalist. This is your second year. Here Awaiting trial For organising violence. Demonstration against...'
'It is not true'

‘Eh? The surprise on his face was conical. ‘You denied?
 ‘I did not organised a demonstration, I went there as a reporter’
 Well...he shrugged. That is not my business. The truth will come out at your
 Trial.’
 ‘But when will that be? I have been forgotten. I am not allowed a lawyer or
 visitors I have been awaiting trial for two years now’ (*Waiting for an Angel*:
 18).

This dialogue shows the brutal life Lomba faces in prison in which his freedom as a citizen is denied, and this is against the principles and rule of law of human rights in each society that the narrator makes the readers see, hear and realise things for themselves. In another instance it is encountered how Lomba’s writing of poem signifies issues in prison which attracts the attention of Janise, a superintendent’s girl friend to pity Lomba and advocates for Lomba’s freedom as she says to the superintendent;

‘Muftau you must help him!’
 ‘Help. How?’
 ‘You are the prison superintendent. There’s a lot you can do’
 ‘But I can’t help him. He is political detainee. He has not even been tried.’
 And you know that he is never going to be tried. He will be kept here forever,
 forgotten.’ (30)

Habila uses this dialogue to make the reader hear and see the category of society that places little premium on human life. Lomba’s situation in prison is a depiction of many other people in African society who suffer the same brutal life, torture and victimisation in prisons. Through this dialogue Habila has been able to manipulate the language to be able to make the readers to recognise the violation of human right in African society with reference to one of the characters of the novel.

However, Habila uses dialogue to introduce problems that students face in their educational system, this problem is visualised through the demonstration of the students in the university which is vividly reflected in the novel as Bola says that; “The students, who should have been busy taking their baths and getting set for lectures sat idly outsides their rooms by the roadsides

in groups discussing the boycott of the lectures’’ (39-40). Bola and Lomba’s conversation depicts students’ demonstration over certain problems which bedevil their educational system and their life in general, as the narrator points out;

I couldn’t hear a word of what Sankara was saying. Yet I could make out every word he shouted as he jumped and gesticulated...I was reading his lips.
‘...I say we are tired of being tired’
‘Yes! Tell them Sanke!’
‘Great Nigerian Students!’
‘G-R-E-A-T! (40)

As the plot unfolds, the narrator reveals the authority’s decision of closing the university after students’ demonstration, consequently, government through its coercive agents maims and give students the beatings of their lives and send them out of the university and ransack their hostels destroying everything in sight including their books and written works in the hostel and declaring the boycott of the lectures in the university, this event portrays the problems facing the educational system in African society that Habila represents through the characters’ conversations as Lomba asks Bola that;

‘How did it go?’
‘According to Martin Luther king, ‘it is the duty of every citizen to oppose unjust...’
‘Please cut that one. Just tell me what was finally decided’
‘Just tell me what the great body has agreed on’ I said my voice becoming testy
‘Can’t you see what is happening? The military have turned the country in to one huge barracks into prison, (41).

Habila uses this dialogue to make the readers perceive the kind of problems students face in their educational system and how the problems affect their educational background and lead them to drop out of the schools as encountered in the novel such problem happens to Lomba, the narrator points out through dialogue between Lomba and James who promises him a job after graduation, as James says that;

‘Dr. Kareem told me you dropped out of the University.’ he said...
‘Yes’. I replied. He waited but I did not volunteer more information.
‘And what have you been doing since then? ...
I did not tell him about the riot about incessant closure of the schools or about
my room-mate who went mad
‘When school began to look like prison I had to go out.’ I said simply, (107).

In the course of Lomba and James conversation, we realise that Lomba experiences all kinds of difficulties and he drops out of the university for according to him: “when school began to look like prison, I had to get out,” (107). So, as a student, his university like all other universities went through one closure after another. Therefore, Habila uses the above dialogue to make the readers perceive the general disillusionment in the educational system in African society with reference to the characters of the novel. Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* uses dialogue and hides behind it in narrating the quest for change concerning issues of human right abuse, students’ life and protest, abject poverty and lack of infrastructure in African society particularly Nigerian community with reference to the characters of the novel which is brought to the fore through their conversation in the novel.

Invariably, Dialogue in literature is an important element since it helps in revealing a character's feelings, intentions, frustrations, aspirations and other emotions. Such aspects are vividly revealed as characters participate in the interactive process in a work of literature and this helps in arriving at textual interpretation from issues internal rather than external to the text. Therefore, works of art in the narrow sense, means works created by special techniques designed to make the works as obviously artistic as possible, Shklovsky, argues “art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone Stony” (Shklovsky, 1917; 2001:49-52). Habila’s use of dialogue in *Waiting for an Angel* influence the development of the plot of the novel and helps in the narrative process of the issues in African society and how Africans quest for positive change in their society.

However, through the narrative process Habila creates characters such as Lomba, Bola, Kela, James, Alice, Joshua among others, and uses their conversations to characterise the general disillusionment in African society with reference to Nigerian community. Joshua is depicted as a modern character in the novel who struggle with others to bring positive change in their society called Poverty Street. Joshua, a teacher turns revolutionary articulates the condition of the people and mobilises them to change the decadent status quo. Joshua with other characters in the novel, as Brother, who is called Muhammad, Ajokuto who is called a Mou and other collaborators meet several times and finally concluded to come out for demonstration, the mobilisation for the demonstration becomes successful as they move to Local Government Secretariat aspiring at pointing government's attention to the plight of the people, as portrayed through the dialogue between Joshua and the leaders of their Local government in the novel, as he says that;

‘We are here to protest against this neglecting’
‘First from today, we refuse to be known as Morgan Street’’
‘Yes O! Brother shouted in his deep voice.’ (132).

Through their dialogue in the demonstration, we come to realise how people struggle to free themselves from certain exploitation of the general disillusionment in their society as depicted vividly in the novel through the characters' conversation. Thus, dialogue is an essential element in the narrative process as Henry Indiangasi, (1988) argues it is “‘a strategy where characters talk in fiction and the author makes conversation resemble real communication in life’”, (117).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

The study has investigated the internal textual aspects of the two selected novels. These comprise focalization, plot structure and characterisation, as well as the technicalities of story-telling that include literary devices such as symbolic imagery, dialogue, proverbs and flashback. The investigation focused on the evaluation of the narrative technique and the effectiveness of the various aspects of form employed in Okri's *The Famished Road* and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and how these aspects contribute to the exposition of the authors' thematic concern and influence the development of the plot in the two selected novels. But before the analysis, various works on narrative techniques, forms as well as African prose fiction at different levels were discussed to review the related studies of formalist analysis of narrative technique. The research drew on the models of analysis of formalism and the narrative theory within the framework of Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique', (1917; 2001). The research drew mainly on books of literary terms, narrative techniques, formalism and literary criticism; and used Okri's *The Famished Road* and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, as the source of the data for the analysis. Okri's *The Famished Road* and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* were selected to be the texts on which this examination was carried out as their use of language are highly artistic and aesthetic, and their works appear to be unique for the particular parts of their narrative technique. Narrative technique makes differences among writers and distinguishes different writers; it demonstrates the authors' skills in the level of poetic use of language and unfolds the literariness of the works of art. Chapter three of this research has examined focalisation, plot development, and other various aspects of form that includes; imagery, dialogue and proverbs which are the key aspects

of formalism, and consequently, the chapter has examined how Okri uses these important textual aspects in *The Famished Road* in the exposition of the major thematic concern of the novel. Chapter four of this research has examined focalisation, plot development, characterisation as well as stylistic tools or literary devices which include: flashback, imagery, and dialogue. Consequently, the chapter has investigated how Habila hides behind these important textual aspects in *Waiting for an Angel* to narrate the quest for change in African society. The analyses in chapter three and chapter four of this research tried to see whether the technique and various aspects of form contribute to the exposition of the authors' themes, development of plot and aid in arriving at textual interpretation from the materiality of the text rather than several external issues to the text, and also to find out the artistic functions of the analysed important textual aspects, to view the grounds for the argument that literary language is distinct from the other kinds of language.

5.2 Conclusion

The study examined literary works by two Nigerian authors, their contributions to the development and growth of literary discourse in African prose fictions and their concern for poetic use of language and sense of commitment to their people. The works studied include Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*. The study was interested in the analysis of focalisation and emplotment in an endeavour to expose the author's thematic concerns and development of the plot in tackling issues indirectly affecting Africans and African society. To achieve this goal, the study employed Russian formalism and the theory of narratology through the lens of Viktor Shklovsky's essay "Art as Techniques". During the literary analysis, the study recognised the important textual aspects in the two selected novels, highlighted the particular parts of the narrative techniques of the two authors and unfolded the

literariness in the selected novels, the study analysed other techniques and form in the two novels using analytical aspects that characterise prose fiction such as the point of view, development of plot, characterisation, as well as the technicalities of story-telling used in the development of the plot in the two novels. The study analysed these important textual aspects in the two novels, to find out the artistic functions and visualise the issues in contemporary African society that includes poverty, famished, corruption, unemployment, life in prison, protest, lack of infrastructure and human right abuse.

Critical analysis of the literary use of language in the two novels has revealed the authors' skills of artistic peculiarities and vision of the two selected writers. In *The Famished Road*, Okri employs narrative voice, imagery, dialogue, and proverbs among others in the exposition of major thematic concerns of the novel. On his part, Helon Habila has used peculiar narrative perspective, flashback, imagery, and dialogue among others in narrating the quest for change in the novel. The uses of such different literary elements demonstrate and attest to the writers' divergence in terms of artistic skills. The study discovered that Okri and Habila defamiliarise issues Affecting Africans and African society in their novels through the use of poetic language. Okri in *The Famished Road* uses symbolic imagery of the road to characterise the Nigerian situation while Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* uses symbolic imagery of prison to characterise the Nigerian situation. Both the two authors thought different techniques depict African issues in a way that is alien to readers, and thus readers cannot overlook the phenomenon. This research concentrated on specific elements of focalisation and emplotment in the two selected novels and identified how these specific elements and other various aspects of form in the novel contribute to the exposition of the authors' themes, development of plot and aid in arriving at the worthwhile meaning of the texts, the study conclusively made some findings in terms of the

analysis of the two selected novels; the major findings encompass the study discovered the artfulness from which the two novels draw their autonomy as self sufficient object of study and unique art forms and reaffirm the claim that narrative technique is the vehicle that brings one closest to the ideal interpretation of the text, the study discovered the artistic functions of the important textual aspects in the two selected novels and how these aspects aid in arriving at textual meaning from the materiality of the text rather than several external issues, the study found that the peculiar parts of the narrative technique through which the two authors demonstrate their skills are in the level of poetic use of language, the study has also demonstrated Okri and Habila's contributions in tackling issues affecting Africa and Africans. Given this, the study, therefore, recommends more research into narrative technique about focalisation and emplotment in African prose fiction to come up with the artistic functions of the literary aspects, not only that but also designing approaches directed at promoting African prose fiction.

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Definition of the Key Terms

Generally, it is essential to define some of the key terms in relation to how they are used in this study. Below is a list of terms which have been defined in relation to how they are used in this study:

- a) Narrative: A narrative relates a sequence of events. Narrative, indeed universal and infinitely varied, may be defined as the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence, (Prince, 1982:1).
- b) Narration: means the act of telling a story, or giving an account of something, there is at least one narration in any narrative (Prince, 1982:26).
- c) Narrator: the person who tells a story in a novel or gives an account of event. The narrator is a first person, the narratee a second person and the being or object narrated about a third person. (Prince, 1982:7).
- d) Narrative Text: A text in which an agent/ narrator relates (tells) a story in a particular medium (Bal, 1997).
- e) Narrative Technique: the author's choice of how or what methods the narrator will use to tell a story, (Cascio, 2007).
- f) Focalisation is the term used in modern Narratology for point of view'; that is, for the kind of perspective from which the events of a story are witnessed, (Baldick 2001:98). Point of view signifies the way a story gets told, it is the mode established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events which constitute the *narrative* in a work of fiction, (Abrams, and Geoffrey, 2009: 271).

- g) Characters: are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it, (the dialogue) and from what they do (the **action**), (Abrams, and Geoffrey, 2009: 42).
- h) Prose Fiction: writing that does not adhere to any particular formal structures and is based on imaginary characters who resolve the conflicts of imagined events, (Siluonde, 2015).
- i) Story: story is defined as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence, (Forster, 1927: 61).
- j) Plot: plot is defined also as a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality, (Forster, 1927: 61).
- k) Style: Style is the author's careful choice of words and arrangement of words, sentences and paragraphs to produce a specific effect on the reader. "At its simplest, **style** refers to the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking, just as there is a perceived manner of doing things, like playing squash or painting", (Wales, 2014: 397).
- l) Literariness: are elements which make a given work a literary work. "Literariness is closely associated with what is known as defamiliarisation, both concepts emphasise that the defining features of a literary work reside in its form", (Cuddon, 1998: 465).