

SOCIALIST REALISM IN THE  
NOVELS OF FESTUS IYAYI

BY

ONI, NANA BELINDA (MRS.)

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## ABSTRACT

This study identified and discussed the major elements of the aesthetics of socialist realism in Festus Iyayi's novels, namely, *Violence*, *The Contract*, and *Heroes*.

The methodology involved a close reading of all three novels in the light of Marxist ideology and aesthetics. This was then followed by a detailed analysis of each novel in the light of both the ideology and aesthetics. Different aesthetic paradigms of socialist realism were applied in the analysis of the themes, characters and characterization, setting, point of view and style of the novels.

The findings indicated that Iyayi's novels were collectively a socialist narrative of Nigeria's economic, social and political history from the period of the Civil War to the early 1990s when he wrote his third and last novel. It was revealed that, though Iyayi's novels were written from the Marxist perspective, they were also works of art and were rich in aesthetics. Nigeria was portrayed in the novels as a class society in which proceeds from the sale of crude oil were appropriated by the tiny ruling class, while the teeming masses were divided, exploited, oppressed, and fed on palliative illusions. The novelist used lineal plot, fully developed characters, and simple diction. He explored the theme of exploitation of labour in the novels to rid the working class characters of their false consciousness.

The study concluded that the high political context of Iyayi's novels should not prevent critics from appreciating the works as aesthetic objects that could be enjoyed for their fine plots and captivating style.

**Supervisor:** DR. WOLE OGUNDELE

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