



ANALYSIS OF LITERARY DEVICES AND POINT OF VIEW IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S WORKS

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1. Introduction

This paper examines two elements of style: literary devices and point of view. The first explores five figurative languages used in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah*, *Notes on Grief*, *Cell One*, *The Thing Around your Neck* and *The Arrangers of Marriage*. The second part deals with the narration aspect of each one of the mentioned books by differentiating first person point of view, second person point of view, third person point of view, dramatic point of view and mixed point of view.

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2. Stylistic Devices

A figure of speech is a word or phrase that possesses a separate meaning from its literal definition. It can be a metaphor or a simile to provide a dramatic effect (Rakes and Marudur (2010: 25). In stylistics, there are many sorts of devices, among which few are:

2.1 Metaphors

Rakes and Marudur (2012), define metaphor as an implied simile which does not, like the simile, state that one thing is like another or acts as another, but takes that for granted and proceeds as if two things were one. It is a figure of speech, which compares two things by identifying one with the other. Metaphor is popular in primitive speech, in music, in the speech of the unlearned and learned, in that of children, in the profession argot of theatre, in short and in everyday life occupations.

"His mannered English bothered her as she got older, because it was a costume." (Americanah, 58)

This quote reminds the reader of the importance of language to the book, especially the choices people make about what language(s) they speak and how they speak them.

2.2 Hyperbole

It is a deliberate exaggeration that adds emphasis, urgency, or excitement to the statement (Grammarly Blog 2023: 12).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the text below uses Hyperbole:

*I reached for my glass and stared at **the juice, watery yellow, like urine**. I poured all of it down my throat, in one gulp. I didn't know what else to do *Purple Hibiscus, 13)**

The protagonist's unhappiness with her father's tyrannical ruling pushed her to exaggerate in everything their father could force them to like. The juice made in his industry seems perfect for him, while for the girl it looks like urine.

2.3 Anaphora

*Instead **I imagined** him raising his voice, calling the policeman a stupid idiot, a spineless coward, a sadist, a bastard, and **I imagined***

*the shock of the policemen, the shock of the chief staring openmouthed, the other cell mates stunned at the audacity of the handsome boy from the university. And **I imagined** the old man himself looking on with surprised pride and quietly refusing to undress (Cell One, 13).*

Anaphora is a sound figure of speech mostly used in poetry and song in which the repetition of same sound in different lines is commonly used.

2.4 Paradox

Is apparently self-contradictory statement, the underlying meaning of which is revealed only by careful scrutiny. The purpose of a paradox is to arrest attention and provoke fresh thought.

In the passage below, the author tries to remove some false thoughts in the mind of Africans:

You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so, too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: **In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house.** But don't buy a gun like those Americans (The Thing Around Your Neck, 62).

When someone travels abroad from Africa, his friends, family and relatives imagine him becoming very rich as soon as he lands abroad. This reality is common in every African country, in the short story; Chimamanda blames this paradox by showing that life is not easy and always successful when someone goes abroad. People pass through tough situations before either deciding to return home or having a better life in their dream country.

2.5 Simile

Is a figure of speech involving a comparison between two unlike entities. In the simile, unlike the metaphor, the resemblance is explicitly indicated by the words “like” or “as.”

“I heard you come in last night.” The voice at the door was American, the words flowed fast, ran into each other. Supri-supri, Auntie Ify

called it, fast-fast. "When you come back to visit, you will be speaking supri-supri like Americans," she had said (The Arrangers of Marriage, 91).

3. Point of View

In late nineteenth century, Henry James began to write critical essays and novel prefaces that discuss the importance of the narrator in storytelling (Alliatia Ann Harris 1975:1). The same period, modern literary critics began to concern with the study of point of view.

Thanks to James' writing, other writers and critics start to devote a great importance on the study of point of view. Among them, Percy Lubbock published in 1921 *The Craft of Fiction*, which is the first book to entirely focus on point of view study. Lubbock defines point of view as "the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story (Percy Lubbock 1921:251).

In literature, point of view is divided into different categories and sub-categories. Among which five need to be discussed in this work:

3.1 First Person Point of View

The story, in the *first-person* point of view, is revealed through a narrator who is also explicitly a character within his or her own story. While using first person point of view, the author relates the story through a narrator who refers to himself or herself with the informal "I".

Among the six fictional works analyzed in this work, three are fully written in first person point of view.

a. Purple Hibiscus

The story is told by the protagonist and hero of the book. The example bellow presents an extract from the book:

I sat at my bedroom window after I changed; the cashew tree was so close I could reach out and pluck a leaf if it were not for the silver-colored crisscross of mosquito netting. The bell-shaped yellow fruits hung lazily, drawing buzzing bees that bumped against my window's netting. I heard Papa walk upstairs to his room for his afternoon

siesta. I closed my eyes, sat still, waiting to hear him call Jaja, to hear Jaja go into his room. But after long, silent minutes, I opened my eyes and pressed my forehead against the window louvers to look outside. Our yard was wide enough to hold a hundred people dancing atilogu, spacious enough for each dancer to do the usual somersaults and land on the next dancer's shoulders. The compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street. It was early rainy season, and the frangipani trees planted next to the walls already filled the yard with the sickly-sweet scent of their flowers (Purple Hibiscus, 9)

b. The Arrangers of Marriages

The opening lines of the Arrangers of Marriages states:

My new husband carried the suitcase out of the taxi and led the way into the brownstone, up a flight of brooding stairs, down an airless hallway with frayed carpeting, and stopped at a door. The number 2B, unevenly fashioned from yellowish metal, was plastered on it. "We're here," he said. He had used the word "house" when he told me about our home. I had imagined a smooth driveway snaking between cucumber-colored lawns, a door leading into a hallway, walls with sedate paintings. A house like those of the white newlyweds in the American films that NTA showed on Saturday nights (The Arrangers of Marriage, 1)

C. Cell One

Chimamanda describes another female characters who tries to revolt against her own silence as a girl in the short story by using a first person point of view as follows:

The second week, I told my parents we were not going to visit Nnamabia. We did not know how long we would have to keep doing this and petrol was too expensive to drive three hours every day and it would not hurt Nnamabia to fend for himself for a day.

My father looked at me, surprised, and asked, "What do you mean?" My mother eyed me up and down and headed for the door and said nobody was begging me to come; I could sit there and do nothing while my innocent brother suffered. She was walking toward the car and I ran after her, and when I got outside I was not sure what to do, so I picked up a stone near the ixora bush and hurled it at the windshield of the Volvo. The windshield cracked. I heard the brittle sound and saw the tiny lines spreading like rays on the glass before I turned and dashed upstairs and locked myself in my room to protect myself from my mother's fury. I heard her shouting. I heard my father's voice.

Finally there was silence, and I did not hear the car start. Nobody went to see Nnamabia that day. It surprised me, this little victory Cell One, 10).

3.2 Second Person Point of View

The *second-person* point of view is a point of view in which the audience is made a character. This is done with the use of the pronouns "you", "your", and "yours." The narrator is trying to address the audience, not necessarily directly, but rather to administer more of a connection.

In English literature, there are no many works written in the second person point of view; chimamanda's short story, *The Thing Around Your Neck* is among the few contemporary fictional works entirely written in second person point of view. The book opens with the following lines:

You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so, too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house. But don't buy a gun like those Americans. They trooped into the room in Lagos where you lived with your father and mother and three siblings, leaning against the unpainted walls because there weren't enough chairs to go round, to say goodbye in loud voices and tell you with lowered voices what they wanted you to

send them. In comparison to the big car and house (and possibly gun), the things they wanted were minor— handbags and shoes and perfumes and clothes. You said okay, no problem (The Thing Around Your Neck, 62).

3.3 Third Person Point of View

The *third-person* narrative is a narration mode in which characters are referred to by the narrator as "he", "she", or "they", "them", "their" but never as "I" or "we" (first-person), or "you" (second-person). This kind of point of view is widely used in fiction to make clear that the narrator is an unspecified entity or uninvolved person who conveys the story and is not a character of any kind within the story, or at least is not referred to as such.

American is the best example of third person point of view:

She began to plan and to dream, to apply for jobs in Lagos. She did not tell Blaine at first, because she wanted to finish her fellowship at Princeton, and then after her fellowship ended, she did not tell him because she wanted to give herself time to be sure. But as the weeks passed, she knew she would never be sure. So she told him that she was moving back home, and she added, "I have to," knowing he would hear in her words the sound of an ending (Americanah, 13).

3.4 Dramatic Point of View

Dramatic point of view is the narration style found in plays (drama). It consists of the dialogue between characters. Most novels and short stories use the dialogue within the text to make the reading easy and the reader comfortable with the text.

In the six works analyzed in this thesis, the use of Dramatic point of view is visible in every book to acknowledge conversation or dialogue between characters. The example bellow is just samples:

Her Ethiopian taxi driver said, "I can't place your accent. Where are you from?"

“Nigeria.”

“Nigeria? You don’t look African at all.”

“Why don’t I look African?”

“Because your blouse is too tight.”

“It is not too tight.”

“I thought you were from Trinidad or one of those places.”(Americanah, 211)

“I have three assignments to do,” Jaja said, turning to leave.

“Mama is pregnant,” I said. Jaja came back and sat down at the edge of my bed. “She told you?”

“Yes. She’s due in October.”

Jaja closed his eyes for a while and then opened them. “We will take care of the baby; we will protect him.”

I knew that Jaja meant from Papa, but I did not say anything about protecting the baby. Instead, I asked, “How do you know it will be a he?”

“I feel it. What do you think?”

“I don’t know.” (Purple Hibiscus, 18)

3.5 Mixed Point of View

A mixed point of view is the use of different point of view without one fictional work. The author chooses to write in one point of view while combining with others. Though Chimamanda’s works use mixed point of view, the best example of this narration system is Toni Morrison’s last novel, *God Bless the Child*, a book in which the author tells the story through the mouth of every character by using all sorts of point of views.

4. Conclusion

Chamamanda's choice of words, figures of speech and narration mode in the selected fictional works is characterized by her central theme and setting of the books. Having entirely written the cause of women and their empowerment struggle, the author's comparison and metaphor are influenced by the hard situations in which her characters were involved in the story. Her choice of first person point of view in *Notes on Grief*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Arrangers of Marriage* is pushed by her desire to make the reader in the center of the story, which is the only way a writer can make every reader to feel the same pain as her story narrator. In the other hand, the writing in third person point of view is also common in her books. In point of view observation, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, is the master piece for having being entirely written in second person point of view, a kind of narration that is not easy for even great writers. Lastly, the books use both dramatic point of view and mixed point of view.

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