



Representations of the City in the Early and Recent Nigerian Novel: People of the City and Alpha Song

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Keywords: urban dwellers

Abstract

Many of the studies on the growth of the Nigerian novel have given more attention to theme and characterisation, but little attention has been given to how Nigerian novelists depict the impact of the city on the moulding of the personality of urban dwellers. This article examines the transformation of the image of the city in two Nigerian novels. The novels are People of the City and Alpha Song. The study employs a postmodernist theory which privileges representation over reality. Cyprian Ekwensi and Maik Nwosu are purposively selected for the essay. The approach, eventually, will be to undertake a detailed content analysis of the two works. In the absence of the restraining influence of traditional society, city dwellers are generally culturally adrift, and with the prevalence of corruption and excessive individualism, social disintegration sets in. Early and recent Nigerian novelists portray the city differently in terms of communal, socio-political, economic and ideological orientations. While the early novel portrays the city as a place of entertainment and pleasure, free from the restraints of traditional society, a space where peoples expectations and potential could be realised, there is a more radical shift in the representation of the city in the recent novel. Hence, most characters in Alpha Song are engaged in new forms of communalism which globalise their identity.

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Published
2019-02-04

How to Cite
Akande, L. (2019). Representations of the City in the Early and Recent Nigerian Novel: People of the City and Alpha Song. *Unilag Journal of Humanities*, 3(2), 1-16.
Retrieved from <http://ujh.unilag.edu.ng/article/view/211>

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Issue
[Vol 3 No 2 \(2016\): UNILAG JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES](#)

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