

## Approxism or Socio-Existential Realism: Investigation on Contemporary Revolutionary Aesthetics in the African Novel: A Critical Reading of Seydou Badian's in "Storm"

AFRO EURASIAN STUDIES -VOLUME: 10 / ISSUE: 2 pp. 37-46

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**Received:** 15.02.2022

**Accepted:** 12.05.2022

**Cite as:** Eteka, A. J., Douglas, J. G., (2022). Approxism or Socio-Existential Realism: Investigation on Contemporary Revolutionary Aesthetics in the African Novel: A Critical Reading of Seydou Badian's in "Storm, 10 (2), 37-46. DOI: 10.33722/afes.1100762

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MUSIAD

Afro Eurasian Studies Journal

## **Yaklaşımçılık veya Sosyo-Varoluşsal Gerçekçilik: Afrika Romanında Çağdaş Devrimci Estetik Üzerine Bir Araştırma: Seydou Badian'ın Fırtına'da Eleştirel Bir Okuması**

### **ÖZ**

Romantik evrende gerçekçilik, seyirciyi beklenmedik hareketlerle dolu bir yaratığa dönüştürerek varlığının dışına iten harika bir tiyatro oyununa benzetilebilir. İnsanın toplumdaki varlığını aynaya yansıtan bu gerçekçilik, sapiens varlıkları, toplumlarını, hatta zaman içinde doğalarına içkin değerleri ve kozmik pratikleri analiz etmeleri, eleştirmeleri ve gerekirse yeniden inşa etmeleri için bilgilendirerek evrensel çağrılar yapmaktan asla vazgeçmez. Bundan böyle bu toplulukta “Yaklaşımçılık” olarak da adlandırılabilir gerçekçilik, eğer isterseniz, hareketin içindeki bir güç halini alır. İnsanı derin uykusunun ortasında uyandıran, ayrılmaz bir parçası olduğu toplumdaki varlığının güzergâhındaki tüm olumsuzluklara karşı tepki vermesi için uyaran bir Aquilon'dur. Bu durumda var olan insan, bulunduğu toplumda üzücü yeniliklerle yüzleşmek zorundadır. Afrika edebiyatında “sosyo-varoluşçu yaklaşım”ı karakterize eden böyle bir konumdur. Bu çalışma, çağdaş Afrika romanının eleştirel ve devrimci bir araştırmasını yapmamızı sağlıyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Gerçekçilik, Yaklaşımçılık, Edebiyat, Varoluşçuluk, Toplum ve İsyan.

## **Approxism or Socio-Existential Realism: Investigation on Contemporary Revolutionary Aesthetics in the African Novel: A Critical Reading of Seydou Badian's in “Storm**

### **ABSTRACT**

Realism, in the romantic universe, can be compared to a drama of marveled theater pushing the spectator outside of his being by transforming him into a creature full of unexpected gestures. This realism which reflects in the mirror the existence of man in society never ceases to launch universal calls by informing sapiens-beings to analyze, criticize and, if necessary, to rebuild their society, even the values and the cosmic practices immanent in their landscape over time and history. Realism, which henceforth, in this company, can also be designated as “Approxism” is “a force that goes”, if you will, a force in movement. It is an aquilon that awakens man in the midst of his deep sleep, warning him to react against all the negations in the itinerary of his existence in the society in which he is an integral part. In this case, the man who exists must face upsetting novelties in the society where he exists. It is such a position that characterizes “socio-existential approxism” in African literature. This work allows us to make a critical and revolutionary investigation in the contemporary African novel.

**Keywords:** Realism, Approxism, Literature, Existentialism, Society, and Revolt.

## Introduction

« ... but you know, I feel more solidarity with the vanquished than with the saints. I have no taste, I believe for heroism and sanctity. What interests me is being a man » (CAMUS, A. La Peste : 209).

After the epistemological horizon of Karl Marx, socio-existential realism. Can be referred to as the conflict or struggle of becoming between individuals and the overwhelming forces of society as reflected in the artistic approximation by a novelist or writer. Through the landscapes of literature, socio-existential realism is the term or statement that describes the usual fashion, in literary epochs and forms, of human life and experience in literature. This is the presentation that **seems accurate** of the human situation in society.

**Realism, (henceforth, approxism)** is the literary and artistic current of the second half of the 19th century, which claims the approximate, non-idealized presentation of social events. In other words, it is a philosophical current that takes off more specifically in France, from the second third of the 19th century. With Daumier, Millet and Above all Courbet taking sides against the plastic conventions of neoclassicism and romanticism. (cf. the great Illustrated Larousse, 2015).

**Socio-Existential:** Relating to the phenomena or problems that confront the existence of human beings who find themselves irretrievably in the subjugated society under the weight of plastic or natural storm.

**Existentialism:** This is a current of modern philosophy that places existence at the heart of its thinking. It rejects the spirit of system and affirms the primacy of freedom. The main representatives are Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heideggere, and Jean Paul Satre. This literary as well as revolutionary movement has its roots in France and in particular cultivates the absurd of Albert Camus. (= This explanation is demanding insofar as the “socio-existential” compound refers us to the philosophy of existentialism). It is this fierce philosophy that supports the thought of Seydou Badian in his committed writing.

Having identified the conceptual definitions present, it therefore requires a panoramic reflection on the two key words of this work. Namely, realism (approxism) and existentialism.

### Objective of work

This work aims to launch an appeal to the young generation to fight against all social evils in our society, in particular contemporary society, by drawing the ideology of realism that we have modulated by the term of Approxism in this work and that of existentialism. The assignment focuses on the novel *Sous l'orage* by Seydou Badian with the aim of affirming whether this novel can be assigned a seat in the field of contemporary revolutionary aesthetics.

“under the storm” is a text of revolutionary aesthetics which touches on the notion of anticolonialism, marital revolt, protest against political vices, generation conflict; just to mention a few.

Although this novel has been written for years, it still serves and is still useful in our current society. One cannot distance the experiences in Bamako society that Seydou Badian paints from what is happening in our real landscape. This is why T. S. Eliot reasons that “elements of the past and visions of the future are all necessary and demanding to build our present home. Badian's romantic philosophy would serve us as

a good tool in our social reconstruction. We must therefore protect the future by the experiences of the past and those of the present.

## **Methodology**

We consider it useful to use the philosophy of existentialism of Jean Paule Satre, to bring out the revolutionary feelings of Seydo Badian in *Sous L'orage*, and also to give substance to the term "socio-existential realism", which we would like to rigorously replace by the statement "socio-existential approxism".

## **THE CONCEPT OF REALISM**

Realism, according to the idea conveyed, is an artistic and literary movement that appeared in France around 1850. Born from the need to react against romantic sentimentalism, it is characterized by the artist's attitude towards reality, which aims to represent the as faithfully as possible to reality, with subjects and characters chosen from the middle or working classes. The novel thus enters the modern age and can now address themes such as paid work, marital relations, or social clashes. This movement will spread throughout Europe and America. ([https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A%lism-\(litt%C3%Agrature\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A%lism-(litt%C3%Agrature))).

## **REALISM OR APPROXISM?**

The realistic novel, however, must embody facts held in society. But we do not say "exact reality" because the phenomena can be transformed, at least partially, during enunciative transports. Literature as much as it is a written corpus cannot, in its entirety, represent a human society. It is rather a socio-existential approximation expressed to the general public by means of an aesthetic architecture of the writer. Any literary work designated as realistic can be, from this point of view, characterized under the name of approxism. This implies that it is a writing that tries to be "very" close to daily events in human society. We therefore insist that the be-named "realism" in the more attentive sense, gives way to the neologism of "Literary Approxism", artistic creation, in all literary genres, which is very close to human unfoldings in its geographical or anthropological environment. . It is only in this sense that the term "likelihood" retains its value in the field of literature. Literature, we further insist, is not a reflection of "reality" in society. Rather, it is a rough reflection of the facts unfolding in the human landscape over time and the passage of history. This is not the society we see in the novels.

On the contrary, it is the painting of humanity in the Voltaire country. "Art does not reproduce... all of reality, it makes a choice, it transforms this reality with its magic wand..." (Hugo: 13).

This is how Sartre J.P underlines: "discourse points to the object, but does not reach it; like the mirror, it is the illusion of the thing, even if it says everything about it. It may seem obvious that this so-called external knowledge cannot succeed where the approach has not worked! (see Philosophical: 312).

Knowing that there is no earthly reality but man, therefore all discursive or Cartesian phenomena, whoever, which surround him are only an approximation.

Of course, the one who presents himself in front of the mirror receives its testimony or, if you like, the report of his image, but not of his own "being." Literature therefore conveys the message of contiguity and not of totality or exactness inasmuch as the latter functions, according to Victor Hugo, as a "mirror of concentration.

## **Existentialism**

Existentialism, as a literary and philosophical current, considers that the human being is the essence of his life and this is manifested by his actions which are not predestined by any philosophical or theological doctrine. Each individual according to this doctrine is master of his actions.

### **THE SOCIO-EXISTENTIAL APPROXIMISM IN SEYDOU BADIAN'S SOUS L'ORAGE.**

To answer the question of socio-existential approximation, we choose in *Storm* by Seydou Badian, noting that existentialism declares that "... I want to be a man". It is the declaration of being that conveys the authenticity of humanity as an individual. In this first novel by Seydou Badian, the younger generation has faced up to what it does not accept by saying that social vices must make way for virtue; innovation and universal justice.

In the spirit of existentialism, Kany and Samou fight against poor social condition by employing the universal approach, as Kany affirms: "Samou, nothing in the world can separate us". (N/A 79).

: According to Camus with regard to such a feeling:

« One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus REVOLT... It is a perpetual behavior of man and of his own darkness... This revolt is only the assurance of a crushing destiny, minus the resignation who should accompany it (From the existentialism of CAMUS, A., Lagarde and Michard, 1993:609).

In this case, this enterprise focuses on the side of female socio-existentialism as put in the simplest approximation in Seydou Badian's in *Storm*.

### **MOLIERE AND BADIAN FOR AFRICAN WOMEN**

Through the novel in *Storm*, Seydou Badian, shaded by the spirit of Molière, stages the conditions of women in Africa by articulating how African women (represented by Kany, Mama Téné etc.) are prevented from even giving a decision to matters that concern them.

« It is not a question of loving... you must obey; you do not belong to yourself and you must not want anything. It is your father who is the master and your duty is to obey. Things have always been like this" (S.O. 72).

African tradition holds that a woman (illiterate or educated) has no value unless she is married with a large trousseau spread over her. Moreover, whether the African woman likes it or not, the husband is imposed on her whomever the family has blindly decided.

But this gesture has sparked a resounding revolt in which young people are seeking to restore the place of women in "contemporary" African society. For them, the woman is more of "something" because she can contribute not only to the development of the family but also to the transformation of the nation in general. This is how priority attention is given to the emancipation of women in all human domains. The 17th century playwright, Molière, is not a distanced voice from this ideology (See the school for the women).

### **PRICE OF LIFE**

« It is revolt that gives life its value and its grandeur, exalts the intelligence and pride of man grappling with a reality that surpasses him, ..." (CAMUS, A), André, Lagarde and Michard , 1993:609).

The gesture of existence led by Kany and his friends against the elders of the village is an affirmation that the woman is no longer a network of the making of descendants. It goes further than that because the

woman plays, today, the sustained role in the development of the family, even in the progress of the nation. Society advances very quickly and it requires us to take steps with it. In the same vein, Seydou Badian (1972) agrees that we must move forward because things must not remain as they were centuries ago. It is in this sense that Birama maintains: "...everything changes and we have to live with our times" (In Storm: 55-56). According to Victor Hugo: "When the body changes, how could the clothes not change?" (Hugo, Victor. 1949: 50).

Kany does not feel like entering a polygamous household. She finds that property is not everything in the marriage because money does not always bring happiness and it is so.

She raises the flag of confrontation against an outmoded tradition by saying that she is not a commodity or a loincloth for sale. Thus broke a storm of conflict between tradition and the younger generation that Kany and his friends represent. She rejects (misalliance) Famagan to accept Samou (compactibility) who is a student and who has no money, but embodies progress.

### **REVOLT AND SELF-EMANCIPATION**

Across the traditional African landscape, women (educated or uneducated) are valueless unless they can attract a bountiful dowry from a stately suitor. So the main objective of educating girls is to bring back property from the suitor who is very rich. The woman should not express her impression on the choice of a husband.

"Don't talk about these things...Shut up! it is your father who decides: with him, we are nothing, neither you nor me" (S.O: 74-75).

She has no other activity than to take care of the housework, and the kitchen, and of procreation in a family condemned to polygamy, especially in the Islamic religion. Certainly, on the contrary, the African woman in contemporary society (in the image of Kany) reacts against this anti-social condition.

Seydou Badian presents to us by means of his literary approximation, the marriage debate where the girl concerned should not be consulted. However, as much as a genuine being, Kany does not agree to marriage without her consent. She demonstrates that she has some generational value. It is because to exist, in its revolutionary opinion, we consider, is to know and to know what one is worth. This is why she keeps saying:

« If so, I will never appease Famagan.

He gets tired for nothing. I love Samou and I will always love him» (S.O : 75).

«I don't like Famagan, I don't like Famagan...

forgive me, but I can't be Famagan's wife.

Do with me what you want, I'd rather die. » (In Storm : 72)

This revolutionary statement serves to show the case where the younger generation has decided to distance themselves from the marital scourge existing in the ancient African society. However, this awareness serves as a jaquemart to contemporary people across the African landscape. Moreover, this craving for the death of distancing signaled by Kany is a phenomenon that characterizes the transcendence or triumph in the best fashion of life in African cosmology.

Kany demonstrated precisely that the woman of our generation is no longer anyone, insisting that the African woman must stand up to challenge the shackles of tradition that aim to discourage the positive horizon of women. It was under this overwhelming storm that she opposed the position of her father (Benfa) by launching a universal question:

" What's the point ? Why live when it was no longer possible to be yourself?» (S.O. : 77).

### **EXISTENTIALISM AGAINST TO MESALLIANCE IN THE WORK**

When Father Benfa and his friends (older generation) try to compare the governable or submissive character of Maman Téné (a simple illiterate villager) to that of revolting Kany. They notice that things are at the mercy of the storm of the younger generation.

We can testify that, as the character of Juliette manifests in *Three pretenders ... a husband*, by Guillaume Oyôno Mbia, Cléante in *L'Avare* by Molière, Kany in the "in Storm" by Seydou Badian, we must no longer lower our eyes to her parents regarding the choice of a husband who is very rich but rather a husband who must love her. This is how Seydou Badian condemns misalliance and early marriage in African society. This is why he makes his character speak in these grave dults:

" No ! My. But I want you to understand that what you envision is impossible. So why do you refuse Samou? Why don't you let me continue my studies? I beg you !» (S.O. : 72).

In the universe in storm, even that of the old African society, the woman does not have the right to go to school because education betrays the sensitivity of the woman. The so-called civilized woman is devoid of all loyalty. She behaves on the same footing as man. That is to say, the educated woman tends to make the decision by herself without consulting the man; which is the opposite of traditional African orchestration. This situation is so regrettable for Father Benfa:

« Young people, because they know how to read and write, want to lead us. I have always had difficulties with my children who are in school. This time, I'll prove to them that I'm still alive. » (S.O. : 159).

The emancipation or revolt of Kany as much as an evolved girl is manifested in the rejection of a decision imposed on her. She must marry in Famagan according to her father's choice and decision. On the contrary, Kany insists that she prefers Samou who owns the fashion of contemporary life, and also a college student. This saw the birth of a dispute embodied in the gently oppressive speech of Maman Téné, and the unexpected and very revolutionary gestures: of Kany, but at the same time sensitive:

«You are no longer a child, know how to see and understand certain things; I suffered in this house, I still suffer there.... I accepted and I am ready to continue... but if you rise up against your father, you will increase my suffering... » (S.O. : 73).

These words of Maman Téné, without doubt, seem to break Kany's heart by arising the miseries suffered by his mother in the polygamous home. Nevertheless, Kany demonstrates a sustained episteme in instructing his mother.

« ... you wouldn't want me to suffer like you suffered, would you? So, don't force me to be a teacher, you will have nothing more to marry Famagan, let me continue my studies and, when I become a teacher, you will have nothing more to fear. I will help you maintain my young brothers Karamoko and Nianson » (S.O. : 74)

Finally, thanks to the exceeding wisdom of Father Djigui (grandfather of Benfa), Kany shouts his "cocorico" and sings his "tralala" by raising his flag of victory over and against the outmoded system. The latter did not marry Famagan.

Your uncle Djigui, in a message, asked Father Benfa to let you continue your studies, to leave you in school until you become what you want to be. That he wants it that way. Father Benfa conveyed the message to Famagan. The latter replied that he was not going to spend his life waiting for a girl when there are thousands of them in the city. (S.O : 150).

It is by this that she has demonstrated that the woman (humanity) in the new generation has the right to undertake a decision and to carry it out without confusion of parents, wise men and elders in the village. The African woman who serves as a microcosm of humanity in Seydou Badian's revolutionary aesthetic has done what it takes to establish her peace and freedom. Because social existentialism equals freedom, audacity, responsibility ...

« ... until you become what you want to be"» (S.O. : 150)

In the work of in Storm, Seydou Badian presents us with three different generations in which we find dispositions and visions that are sometimes radically antagonistic. The generation of parents, symbolized by Father Benfa and his older allies, the latter maintain absolute and unequivocal respect for traditions. Maman Téné, the father Djigui and the Fou represent for their part, amphibologies and reservations on these own outmoded habits.

As for the generation of children, the one symbolized by the young schoolgirl Kany, it is positively in revolt against the anathemas of traditions and the usurpations of the latter on the lives of young people in contemporary Africa.

Maman Téné more specifically personifies the virtues and vulnerabilities of the traditional African woman. Respectful of customs and traditions, even when these prove to be unfair and unfavorable to its existence. It subscribes that the woman is an auxiliary being to the man and subjects herself without any other form of the debates to the protocols which support the interests of the man to the detriment of hers.

In his belief, the woman should neither display nor impose herself in a society dominated by the law of man. The law declared as singularly valid.

In the African society where we meet Mama Téné, the education of the girl emphasizes blind loyalty and allegiance rather than the aggravation of personal vision and self-personality. But thanks to the magic wand of Seydou Badian who has contributed to the positive awareness of the African world in favor of the realization of the possibilities of women.

### **Critical Observation**

« Man is the future of man, man is what he makes himself...

... Man is therefore responsible; He is condemned to be free»

(J. P. Sartre) André, Lagarde et Michard, 1993 : 593-594)



It is an obvious that literature conveys the culture and politics of the people as man travels the landscape of time and history. He therefore demands that the novelistic mirror of the writer must be a real reflection of critical observation drawn up on the facts and experiences of the time in which the novelist lives who functions like the aquilon described by Victor Hugo in his poem "Stella », bearing the duty to awaken those who sleep, warming them to determine their own value as an authentic being.

In this sense, that is to say, following the artistic footprints of the novelists responsible for this awakening, our current generation must learn how to force the doors, make it known that we exist, with an exalted and sustained intelligence, and moreover, that one is a determined partisan of the power of social reconstruction, and above all, that one can be distinguished and promoted. According to Napoleon Bonaparte: "The policy of revolt is the mainspring that decides **«at this moment»** the destiny of men. And whoever wants to move forward must take sides" (Bonaparte, B. Max Gallo, 1997: 201). It is therefore necessary to act like the younger generation in the work of in Strom by Seydou Badian. It is because a generation which does not have the dynamism of agitation against social ills, or which does not cultivate the revolutionary spirit considered sublime and trained to contribute to the positive reconstruction of social ideology, It's more of a barren land.

The phrase "in this moment" implies that our present society as much as the black world in particular, needs revolutionary reorientation with contemporary consciousness to triumph over the cruel irons and rocky edicts by which freedom and the right of the people are all tied up. According to Kard Marx:

the art linked to the life of the people is a powerful factor of social progress. It fulfills its function through the artistic perception of the world, through the satisfaction of the aesthetic needs of man. It reflects reality in artistic images and through it influences people's thoughts and feelings, aspirations, actions and behavior. The best works of art are transmitted from generation to generation and serve both as a means of knowing social life and as a means of ideological, aesthetic and moral education of new generations (Karl Marx (Konstantnov, 1982: 350)).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that "socio-existential approximateism in African literature reveals the plausible facts that take place in human society. Our approxism presents a more approximate reflection of everyday life. And as man is confronted by the elements that are against his destiny, he begins to designate the definition of life, he begins to engage in the definition of the self. This is how man sinks into the fight against the "plague" of society in order to establish his freedom to which he has already condemned. It is this position that appeals to the philosophy of existentialism in the African novel of which in Strom is a part. In the novel in Strom, Seydou Badian awakened existentialists, like himself, to wage psychological and intellectual battle against social ills and outdated ideology. In any case, faced with the immanent condition in our current society, revolt is the only remedy that can make life bearable. It must be chimed to this point that the contemporary revolutionary demand is not intended singularly for women, nor for men, but we consider humanity as the whole unity in the cosmic. We consider that our own existentialist duty does not consist in this little struggle. Of course, it's somewhere else. It is universal. «... Nothing in the world can separate us » (S.O. : 79).

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