

## THE INFLUENCE OF STYLE AND CREATIVITY IN IKECHUKWU ASIKA'S TAMARA

**Dr. Ifeoma Ezinne Odinye**

Department of English Language and Literature,

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Email: ie.odinye@unizik.edu.ng

ifeomaodinye@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

A common ground visible in all literary texts is the aspect of style which influences creativity. The exploration and evaluation of the relationship between language (expression) and creativity have led to the emergence of literary stylistics. Under this approach, scholars explicate different stylistic traits and techniques of a given literary piece such as plot, use of language (motifs and irony), setting and narrative technique. This is achieved through a holistic review of the selected fictional work. The paper examines Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* to ascertain the extent different stylistic traits have influenced his creativity. The paper recognizes the epistolary structure as a consistent stylistic trait that illustrates unique perception of influence on other stylistic traits. The conclusion drawn is that the epistolary genre of writing enhances a writer's creativity and his or her intention of writing.

**Keywords:** Style, Creativity, Epistolary Genre

### **Introduction**

Techniques and styles are very important features that flavour a writer's depiction of experiences. Mark Schorer explains that "the achieved content of the work – its art – is accomplished through technique" (qtd in Nnolim, *Approaches...* 215). According to Schorer in *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*, technique is "a writer's means to discovering, exploring, developing and evaluating his subject... of conveying his meaning, and evaluating it" (66).

Nnolim goes further to explain that "technique is the means by which an author organizes his material, the rhythm or form he imposes on his work in order to achieve meaning and in order to convey that meaning to his audience" (*Approaches...* 215). The above explanation on technique also forms the author's style. According to M.H. Abrams,

Style is the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse — it is how a speaker or writer says whatever he says. The characteristic style of a work or a writer may be analyzed in terms of its diction, or characteristic choice of words; its sentence structure and syntax; the density and types of its figurative language; the patterns of its rhythm and of its component sounds; and its rhetoric aims and devices. (165-166)

T. Kennedy-Oti in "Style and African Novel" observes that "style involves the ability to convey an exact picture or emotion that one feels to another person in speaking or writing" (145). Geoffery Leech and Michael Short define style as "the way language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose" (*Style in Fiction...*

10). Leech and Short further observe that style has been applied to “the linguistic habits of a particular writer, at other times it has been applied to the way language is used in a particular genre, period, school of writing, or some combination of these – epistolary, early eighteenth-century style, euphuistic style, the style of Victorian novels...” (*Style in Fiction...* 11).

Style which is conveyed through language is a means of expressing thoughts. In the novel under study, Asika has employed stylistic devices to educate readers on the complexity of the girl-child’s violent experiences. Significantly, he has employed techniques and styles to present some philosophical ideas or messages that formulate judgement and questions in the readers’ psyche. The techniques and stylistic devices adopted by Asika are plot, motif, use of language (motif and irony), setting, and narrative technique. The above devices are employed as special tools to depict the oppressive experiences of his female protagonist and the rough path she walks towards achieving liberation, self-actualization and self-consciousness. This research explores the selected stylistic devices and techniques in Asika’s *Tamara*.

### **Plot**

In Abrams’ view, “the plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 127). According to Afamefuna Ezeaku, “plot refers to the mechanics of story-telling, including the sequence of the characters’ comings and goings; and the specific order of revelations, reversals, quarrels, discoveries, and actions that take place...” (20). Ezeaku further observes that “the plot is the sequence in which the author arranges, narrates or dramatizes the story” (Ibid). Thus plot comprises a series of incidents which are gradually unfolded or revealed in an unexpected manner to “achieve tragic effects, and other effects such as comedy, romance, or satire” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 128).

Plot is the main fictional element of narration used in analyzing Asika’s novel, *Tamara*, the plot of *Tamara* is structured using an epistolary form. The epistolary technique is a literary form that adopts letters, newspapers or written diary to depict or narrate the experiences of characters in a given story. The epistolary genre is a direct source of oral narration – “mediated, written form of discourse between individuals who are unable to engage in direct oral dialogue” (Vinogradov & Skvortsov, 4). Fesenko (2008) categorizes the epistolary genre into different forms based on its context: “everyday epistolary (private correspondence between persons), journalistic epistolary (a letter that can be addressed to one person or an entire community, but is published in this or that form in mass media or other channels of mass communication), and fiction epistolary – the conveyance of the thoughts of an author of a fictional work using all the rules of the epistolary genre” (qtd in Toktagazin and Adilbekovab,5834).

The epistolary genre is adopted as a literary form or technique in a given fictional work to clearly depict the writer’s intention and thematic concentration. According to A. V. kurjanovich, the depictions of events and manner of expression using the epistolary genre are blended to suit the author’s purpose, the plot of the work, and the

characters (183). In literature, the usefulness of the epistolary form is strongly linked to the stylistic features and structure of a given fictional work. This stylistic feature is hinged on the artistic intent of the literary artist and his creative interpretation of the work. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab summarize the above-mentioned views by echoing that,

The epistolary genre exists only because its genre-defining features are consistently observed in this or that interpretation, regardless of their use in a respective functional style of a language – a business letter will have its special constructions, but the structure of the letter – the address, the greeting, the main part, and the conclusion – will be preserved; the same applies to a scientific letter, private letter or a letter of a fictional character to another/other character/characters. (5835-5836)

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Asika's *Tamara* are similar in the adoption of the epistolary form in depicting the emotional story of a young girl who has been consistently abused and psychologically depressed within the familial context. Asika's choice of the epistolary form (a letter writing form) as a variety of framing devices is uniquely weaved into a story of memories, sorrowful nostalgic recollection of bizarre experiences. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab observe that "the letter, implying the use of the epistolary genre in literature, with a high degree of probability will be stylized as a personal, business, scientific or any other correspondence, but it will use many techniques of artistic expression"(5836).

In analyzing any epistolary sub-genre, certain features of epistolary genre are evident: "dialogical structure of correspondence, the content of the letter, the narration in the letter, framing the principle of keeping intimate and dialogical nature of the letters" (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). One important characteristic about the epistolary form in literature is that it makes readers to go through the events and actions in the imaginative reality. This reality is achieved because, "epistolary genre has a dialogue nature" (Denkova 10).

Asika's adoption of the epistolary form adds realism to his narrative and gives readers an intimate view of his character's thoughts and feelings. The dialogical structure of correspondence as an important feature of the epistolary genre is prominent in *Tamara*. In the novel, the author of the letter is a young protagonist called Tamara. Tamara uses the structure of the letter to communicate to her addressee (her father). The letter of the girl protagonist is perceived as a postponed dialogue which is communicated after some physical and emotional challenges. In essence, Tamara's letter guides the readers into her experiences and psychological disposition.

The first thing a reader of *Tamara* discovers from the first and last pages of the novel is the use of the epistolary form in detailing the experiences of the protagonist – her regrets, the sorrow and pain of a loveless childhood under the authoritative watch of her father. The example below depicts the dialogical structure of the correspondence as seen in the beginning of the letter and actions of the story.

Dear Father,

Before you receive this letter, I know you must have made up your mind and have carved out a life, a way of survival without me. You must have considered me dead, dead, buried and forgotten on the sand of time. Who knows if you have erected a grave-like monument as a remembrance of the daughter you once had and was taken away from you by the cold hands of unknown death? I wonder how you remember me? (*Tamara* 7)

In the letter-writing narrative form, Asika alternates between the character's inner thoughts and the depiction of her violent experiences. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab maintain that "the purpose of a letter in an epistolary subgenre of art is to show the personal experiences of the hero-author of the letter of certain plot events of the novel. Sometimes the author can totally change the story of his work or turn the unexpected side of work to the reader using a letter" (5836).

The novel, *Tamara* starts with the opening paragraph of the letter and ends with the concluding paragraph. Hence, the writer creatively employs flashback and foreshadowing to recall how her childhood experiences influenced her decisions and actions as an adult. This recollection is narrated in the middle of the letter. Thus, the reader gets to understand her pains and experiences within the body of her long agonizing and reconciliatory letter. The example below depicts the dialogical structure of the correspondence as seen in the end of the letter as well as the resolution of the conflict between the writer and the receiver.

What a long letter, father! What a day! As I celebrate my life and the life of Tamara Carlos just three days old and the life unknown. I have a feeling that we shall meet again, if not here, surely there! Till then, my father, my daddy...

Adieu,  
If We Ever Meet Again,  
Your daughter,  
Tamara... (*Tamara* 148)

Framing is also important while exploring the epistolary form of writing. The term, 'framing' suggests that a given work irrespective of its subgenre must employ the characteristic features of a letter. It must have the address, the salutation, the beginning, body of the letter and conclusion (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). Indeed, Asika's *Tamara* has all the above-mentioned features. Therefore, it is important to note that the only idea a reader can obtain of a novel's plot is the "one he gains from the words in which the book is written" (Mayhead, 62). Mayhead further explains that "a reader's response to a personage is a response to certain words used by the author, words in which he describes the personage, words spoken by the personage himself, words spoken about him by other characters in the book, and so on" (64). The above view on 'plot' is also true of 'character'. *Tamara*'s plot is very convincing and the characters are well drawn from the society. The story of *Tamara* is narrated using a 'linear plot structure. The story has a beginning, middle and end. The beginning captures the childhood experiences of the protagonist and the reasons for her decisions to escape patriarchal oppression.

Significantly, Asika's novel depicts an elaborate plot narration with different incidents. These incidents thus depict organized actions, thoughts, and interaction of characters into the artful patterns of a plot, which has a beginning and develops through the middle to some sort of denouement at the end of the novels.

The plot of Asika's *Tamara* employs the first person narrative and letter technique to narrate Tamara's experiences. The letter is employed as a principle source of information that details Tamara's perception about life. This epistolary style allows Asika to narrate Tamara's story in a chronological order vividly presenting the story as a whole. The epistolary form also enhances the journey motif because Tamara's growth is traced from oppression to self-assertion. In essence, the events and actions reveal a clear personality change from Tamara as an emotionally abused victim to Tamara as a girl who is determined to explore her newly found freedom.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that the plot pattern of the selected novel explores the oppressive conditions of the girl-child using a point of view which allows readers to trace the protagonist's growth from the state of voicelessness to that of vocality.

### **Use of Language**

Diction is "the choice of words or language used by a writer. It is the manner or style of speaking or expressing one's ideas. It tells us about the individual characters, the setting of the story and the relationship between characters as well as an avenue to identify theme. Diction is not just the language, but how the language is used" (Ezeaku 32). Therefore, a novelist's medium of language, whatever he or she does using language is his or her means of artistic creation. Asika has employed language to depict their girl character's experiences as well as her struggles to assert herself in her patriarchal society. Motifs and Irony are basic language features in *Tamara*.

Asika explores the journey motif as a device towards female self-actualization. Tamara in *Tamara* chooses to map out a new life for herself outside her father's oppressive mansion. It is an emotional journey she embarks on to seek for love and companionship. Tamara's emotional journey entangles her with a relationship with Obed who leaves her pregnant and emotionally shattered. In fact, Tamara's failure in her emotional journey of love exposes her to a physical journey from Nigeria to Italy. She embarks on this physical journey as a trafficked girl in need of help. In this journey, we sympathize with Tamara because she is not aware of her condition as a trafficked girl. It is in this physical journey also that Tamara succumbs to prostitution. Chukwuma observes that "on the physical side, this involves a distancing, a far remove to a new place which makes its own demands and sets its own standards....The journey is appreciated on the symbolic level where it involves a metamorphosis in orientation and goals on the part of the traveller. In moving from the interior to the exterior or the limelight, the heroine sheds her personality" ("Beyond Marriage..." 84). The underlying significance is that Tamara becomes very assertive when she is trapped in the web of patriarchy and pimps who are agents of subjugation. But unfortunately, intra-gender oppression and male jingoistic attitude

overwhelm her whole system of reasoning to the extent that she becomes a social misfit – a prostitute.

Asika's protagonist is violently immersed in interpersonal relationships with other characters in the novel as she embarks on a metaphorical journey of liberation. This journey is a movement away from emotional abuse. Okereke observes that "movement can be liberating for the female gender because it affords her social, mental, emotional and psychological expansion" ("Journey as Trope..." 100). In Asika's novel, Tamara is liberated from her father's abusive behaviour through her escape. In fact, Tamara's escape as captured in the journey motif (physical, emotional and metaphorical) shapes the novelistic form. In the story, Asika traces the physical and psychological journey of Tamara (who is naïve) from her father's house to the streets of Nigeria, to Italy and London as a prostitute. Tamara's assertiveness and quest for liberation are strongly motivated by her father's dictatorial attitude. Tamara seeks for liberation from her father's overbearing attitude, but in the process, she is exposed to more violence as she tries to understand the complexity of human relationships. Tamara's quest for freedom and emotional stability is not successful. This is seen in the concatenation of events that mar her escape. But in the process, she gains an insight into herself and attains maturity through her bizarre experiences. This maturity pushes her to ask her father for forgiveness in her letter.

In *Tamara*, the motif of slavery is captured in the acts of human trafficking and sexual abuse. Trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls for commercial purposes denote an act of slavery. Asika seems to suggest that Tamara is a slave to the pimps that use her body to make money. This slave-like condition starts in her father's house because she is constantly locked in her room as a girl child (*Tamara* 9-10). This slave-like condition in her family house pushes Tamara to escape her family house, but unfortunately she succumbs to another form of slavery by befriending Obed who exploits her sexually, impregnates and leaves her devastated. Due to her circumstances, she is deceived and trafficked to Italy as a sex slave. As a trafficked girl, Tamara does not claim ownership of her body. She is constantly threatened and forced to engage in sexual activities with men. This type of enslavement limits Tamara's rights to freedom of choice on matters relating to sexual experiences. In essence, her basic human rights are denied. Based on this denial of human rights, Asika condemns human trafficking and sex slavery.

To achieve liberation from patriarchal oppression, the female protagonist in Asika's *Tamara* escapes from her first environment to a new environment. In line with the above view, Chukwuma asserts that "most authors present the going-away motif as a necessary step to self actualization" ("The Identity of Self" xii). Asika has employed the journey motif as a strategy for their girl characters to escape from male chauvinism or subjugation towards self-actualization.. Tamara on her own also escapes from the patriarchal web of her father to an entirely new environment where her freedom of movement is denied. One thing is clear; Asika has employed the journey as a vehicle for female liberation and self-actualization in patriarchal environment that has no space for female freedom.

Irony is also an aspect of language used in exploring the selected novels. Irony as a stylistic device denotes the use of words to express something other than their literal intention. According to Eric Partridge, irony denotes “stating the contrary of what is meant, a direct contrast between two things” (*Usage and Abusage...* 230). J.A Cuddon in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literacy* further observes that “irony involved the perception or awareness of a discrepancy and their results or between appearance and reality” (460). David Crystal in *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages* defines irony as a “language which expresses a meaning other than that literally conveyed by words, usually for humorous or dramatic effect” (96).

In the creation of the character of Tamara in *Tamara*, Asika shows himself as an expert in irony. There is indeed a contradiction between circumstances and expectations; that is, the condition contrary to what Tamara expects in her quest or journey for liberation as well as the reader’s expectations about her. Asika uses an ironic mode to capture the derogatory phases of Tamara’s experiences – as a girl whose father is wealthy and influential (no ideal family, no normal childhood), and a character who has violent relationships with men in her quest for emotional or psychological liberation. It is obvious that Tamara abhors prostitution; this is seen in her statement to Senorita: “if you love me I want you to take me right out of this house to a plane for Nigeria...if you don’t, I will run straight to any police station and report all of you” (*Tamara* 115). But as the story reaches the climax, we see Tamara embracing prostitution as a pattern of living.

From the foregoing, Asika suggests that because of Tamara’s naïve nature, she becomes the blunt end of the dramatic ironies presented in the novel. The more Tamara tries to escape from her father’s overbearing attitude, the more she finds herself in situations and relationships that are emotionally and psychologically damaging. In the novel, irony shrouds Tamara’s journey for self-actualization. The deepening irony reaches its peak when the once vulnerable and moral seeking character, Tamara confesses her achievement in a profession she once abhorred:

Father, I know that you will read all these parts with shame but your daughter later became a full time prostitute and was reputed for it. Father, I made money, I really made money quite enough to buy a house here and train quite a number of people. The last time Senorita came to see me, she could hardly recognize me. My profile surprised her. She advised me to be cautious but the advice was useless. I was already there at the centre of it all. There could hardly be a day I did not carry up to eight men. My worst day was the day I had only two and I could not sleep. Father, if you would wish to find me, ask about Tamara, the only Nigerian girl, that’s my honour, my title, my regalia, my armour! (*Tamara* 118)

Finally, it is ironic that Tamara loses her race in prostitution as she becomes critically ill as a result of a badly damaged kidney. It is also ironic that Tamara has a target in life which is never fulfilled – “I still needed my health, at least my target was to hit a jackpot in Italy, and I would travel to Spain, from Spain I would fly to the United Kingdom, finish my school. Leeds University was my target. At Leeds I would put my

whole past behind me and concentrate on my studies””(Tamara 129). It is ironic that after finding true love and happiness in a relationship with Carlos who donates one of his kidneys to save her life, Tamara who is heavily pregnant with Carlos’s baby becomes critically sick with cancer of the liver. Indeed, there is a rhythmic exchange of happiness and pain as the protagonist tries to navigate back to her normal life. Tamara wins Carlos’ heart and marries him on her sickbed to give him legal rights to their child after her death. Not satisfied with her life, she decides to intimate her father about her bizarre experiences and ask for his forgiveness. She seeks for forgiveness because she wants a better life for her daughter. She doesn’t want her daughter to follow her line of action. Tamara pleads to her father in the letter:

I have discussed and pleaded with Carlos and he has accepted my plea. The baby belongs to him but when she grows up, I want her to come to Nigeria and see you. Please do not deny her that favour of seeing you. Save her soul father, she is only a child. Never judge her with the crime and atrocities of her mother. (Tamara 147)

It is ironic that the father Tamara tries to escape is from the same person she wishes her daughter to visit after her death. There is no doubt that her father’s paternalistic plan to control his daughter (Tamara), who hates a life of isolation laced with verbal abuse, becomes psychologically burdensome to her. This tyrannical way of parenting makes it difficult for Tamara to love her father, causing her to revolt with horrible consequences on her emotional and physical well-being. In essence, the quest for an ideal relationship creates conditions that plunge Tamara into violence. This is the fault of Tamara’s superego which strives for satisfaction and perfection. Tamara adopts repression and displacement as defence mechanisms to shield herself from the stress of her conflict. In her act of displacement as a defence mechanism, she satisfies her impulse by blaming her father in the letter for her traumatic experiences. Tamara’s repression is an unconscious defence mechanism whereby her ego pushes her disturbing feelings, ideas or thoughts to find space to seek for her father’s forgiveness. It is indeed ironic that the patriarchal figure Tamara hates in the beginning of the novel is being showered with greetings of love in the concluding part of the letter: “till then, my father, my daddy...! I love you! Hope you still do? Extend my love to Kizito if you ever find him....Oh! Our family, our love, our bond! This is all that remains of us. I am waiting and watching father, hope I will not wait forever? Hope ...” (Tamara 149). No doubt, Asika’s use of simple language to communicate his heroine’s traumatic experiences draws the attention of the readers. Basically, the selected novel has employed motifs and irony to create experiences that are very convincing.

### **Setting**

The “setting of a narrative work is the general locale and historical time in which its action occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place” (Abrams 157). The settings of Asika’s *Tamara* are situated in the Postcolonial/contemporary Nigerian society, precisely the eastern Igbo region and Europe (Italy). The geographical location in Nigeria, that is, the house of Tamara’s father provides an atmosphere for domestic violence. The



mansion of Tamara's father initiates the main backdrop and mood of the story which forces the protagonist to embark on a long elusive quest for self-actualization and emancipation. Significantly, Italy as a geographic location within the narrative provides an atmosphere for girl-child trafficking and sexual molestation. In essence, Nigeria and Italy as physical environments or surroundings in which different events that take place in the story are important in influencing the choices and experiences of the girl protagonist in the novel. The function of the above settings is of great importance because it has immense effect on the plot of the story as well as the girl character. In essence, the settings help to establish the mood or the atmosphere of the scene that causes violence in the story. This results in the development of the plot into a more realistic form, resulting in more plausible characters. In other words, by capturing the mood, setting helps the readers to relate themselves to the condition of the girl character.

Significantly, space and time are the major elements of setting explored in Asika's *Tamara*. The time (historical) setting of *Tamara* is important as trafficking of the girl-child for commercial sexual exploitation is a recent phenomenon. Also the Nigerian setting (Tamara's home etc) is toxic; the Italian setting creates the space and circumstances in which female characters engage in the act of prostitution. Indeed, Asika symbolically projects Italy as a social setting where many migrants, especially trafficked girls embrace prostitution as the only means of survival. In essence, the time (historical period) and spaces (physical environment) in which the story of Tamara is situated is very convincing since they clearly fit into the contemporary societies depicted in the novel.

Significantly, setting as an aspect of style employed by the selected Asika has helped to create an aura of verisimilitude in the story especially in detailing social contexts that create circumstances that violate the rights of the girl-child. These social contexts have helped to properly place the heroine in the positions that cause physical, emotional and psychological damage.

### **Narrative Technique**

Narrative technique as one of the stylistic devices is very important in exploring prose fictional works. This is to say that the value attached to any given fictional work does not only depend "on its impact but on how the story is told" (Onyekwere 124). Therefore, narrative technique becomes a good literary tool that enhances a writer's style of writing. The stream of consciousness technique is extensively employed in the novels of Vera and Farah. This technique uses monologue to capture free expression of inner feelings and thoughts of the individual female protagonists. It also helps the girl characters to comment on their conditions as well as evaluate them.

In Asika's *Tamara*, "framing" is an important narrative technique used in exploring the epistolary form of writing. The use of framing address in a fictional work is strongly connected to correspondence between characters. The correspondence may communicate everyday experiences or take the form of an appeal from one character to another in singular pronouns (I and you). In *Tamara*, the girl protagonist (Tamara)

appeals to her father to forgive all the petty misdeeds of her youth so that she would “die in peace” (*Tamara* 148). In the letter, Tamara uses the pronoun ‘I’ for herself as the writer, and ‘you’ for her father as the addressee. Tamara narrates: “I have to stop here father...it is almost night. I have forgiven you, if you do the same I will die in peace. I strip myself of all the hatred I had for you” (*Tamara* 148).

Another feature of the epistolary genre evident in the novel is the “content of the letter”. In any epistolary form, the content of the letter determines its shape. This is to say that the “language of the letter must correspond to the generally accepted rules of a particular sub-genre” (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). In writing *Tamara*, Asika employs both formal and informal expressions which are stylized as personal feelings and thoughts of the protagonist. This is done by employing some stylistic expressions and technique which are replete with ellipses. “Dad...Daddy...I ...I ...wanted....wanted to show...you my report....” “I ...I...I...I ...was lost. The words refused to come forth, all my rehearsals flew away with the stern look in your eyes and anger in your voice. Thank God mother came to my rescue” (*Tamara* 15). The ellipses capture the protagonist’s state of mind and make it difficult for her to communicate effectively. The ellipses also symbolize her unsteady state of mind, and helpless condition in the face of fear and anxiety. The above quotation is written by the girl protagonist to her father to indicate that they are mutual enemies, “I hated you father, I hated you” (*Tamara* 15).

One thing is clear, Asika employs the stream of consciousness technique to capture his protagonist’s thoughts towards her father. From the above quotation, we will say that Asika’s language is simple and clear. Every description is direct to the point the narrator wants to make. Almost all the words are familiar to an average reader. Asika’s sentence construction is replete with repetition to further communicate the narrator’s emotional instability.

The form or method of narration is very important in exploring the epistolary subgenre. The narration of experiences in the body of the letter is always presented in “the first person singular pronouns” (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). The story of *Tamara* is narrated using the first-person point of view as one of the frequently discussed narrative tactics. *Tamara* is the witness of the experiences she relates. This is evident in the use of the narrative “I”. It is also very remarkable that the protagonist describes her pains and wishes through this narrative technique. Asika uses a single narrative or perspective that allows the reader to know the feelings and thoughts of the narrator. The narrator of this novel is obviously a young girl (*Tamara*) caught in the web of faulty parental background and domestic violence. The quotation below clearly depicts the above submissions:

It was not only the report card scenario that made me hate you but that night I had a toothache you were nowhere to be found. You remember that day I had diarrhea. It was the night of my graduation. Our school had a party, my graduation party, but father, you were too busy to attend. That same night, during the presentation of gifts, I was crowned Miss Corolla High School, a title I was to carry beyond the shores of the school. That night, you were

conspicuously absent. Many more events came and went, many that I never remembered. All of them made me hate you, but unknown to me, I was hating life and myself forever. (*Tamara* 17)

Asika adopts a monologic epistolary style. This means that experiences are detailed in a single letter written by a given character. The character's narration creates a subjective point of view making the novel a precursor of the feminist psychological novel. One strong point about this of writing technique is the protagonist's need to confess or express her thoughts which are susceptible to ridicule. Here, the narrator (*Tamara*) addresses the letter to a specific recipient – her father. In essence, Asika uses this epistolary form as a unique artistic technique to enhance his style.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, an attempt has been made to examine how Asika has successfully explored some stylistic devices like plot, language use (motifs and irony), setting and narrative technique to depict his girl character's struggle and quest for liberation from oppression and subjugation. The quest is geared towards self-emancipation in order to create a better and peaceful future for herself. By explicating the above stylistic devices, the selected novelist for this research has plausibly explored the struggles of the girl character in his novel in a bid to achieving self-actualization and full emancipation. The research has also proved that there is an intimate connection between language and thought itself. In essence, creativity which is expressed through language is a perceptual descriptive tool for self expression and exploration.

### **Works Cited**

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971.

Asika, Ikechukwu . *Tamara*. Ibadan: kraft Books Limited, 2013.

Chukwuma, Helen. "Introduction: The Identity of Self". *Feminism in African Literature: Essays on Criticism*. Ed. Helen Chukwuma. Enugu: New Generation Books, 1994. ix-xxiv.

Cuddon, J.A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*: New York, Double day, 1997.

Crystal, David. *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*. Chicago: Blackwell, 1992.

Denkova, Jovanka. "The Epistolary Genre in the Literature for Youth by Gorjan Petrevski". *HIKMET, International Peer-Reviewed Journal of Scientific Research*. 25 (2015) : 10-29

Ezeaku, Afamefuna. *Fundamentals of Literature*. Awka: Fab Anieh, 2014.

Kennedy-Oti, T. "Style and the African Novel". *Appreciating the Craft of Literature: A Book of Readings*. Eds. A. A Onukaogu & O. Okpara. Aba: Assemblies of God, 2004. 141-150.

Leech, Geoffrey and Michael Short. *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. London: Longman, 1981.

Mayhead, Robin. *Understanding Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Nnolim, Charles. *Approaches to African Novel: Essays in Analysis*. Owerri: Ithem Davis Press Ltd, 1999.

Okereke, Grace Eche. "The Journey as Trope for Female Growth in Zaynab Alkali's *The Virtuous Woman*". *Currents in African Literature and the English Language*. 1.1 (March 1997):91-101.

Patridge, Eric. *Usage and Abusage*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Schorer, Mark. *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Toktagazin, M. B. and Lazzat M Adilbekovab. "Epistolary Literature and Journalism: Theoretical and Practical Aspects". *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*. 11. 3. (2016): 5833-5843.

Vinogradov, V.A. & L.V Skvortsov. "Information Needs and Information Culture". *Theory and Practice of Social and Scientific Information*. 4 (2014): 4-15.