

**PROJECTING A FUTURE ALREADY IN PLACE IN JULIUS OCWINYO'S FATE OF
THE BANISHED AND FOOTPRINTS OF THE OUTSIDER**

BY

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1.1 Introduction

In narrative theory, prolepsis conveys the idea of anticipation or flash-forward; it occurs when the chronological order of events is disturbed and the narrator narrates events out of turn. As such, prolepsis does in a teleological manner project a future which is already in place, lying in wait to be discovered by the reader. There is general consensus among narrative theorists that prolepses are much less common in novels than analepses, this is true at least in the western novelistic tradition. Granting that the African novelistic tradition has modeled itself, at least in terms of structure, along the western novel, we can surmise that prolepsis has received relatively less attention among narrative theorists in general, and much less attention, if at all, among the scholars of the African novel. The paper studies prolepsis out of two novels by Julius Ocwinyo. Much famed for his rare ability to craft analeptic scenes, the Ocwinyoian novel has hardly been studied for prolepses yet in their turning points, examples of narrative anticipation linger. In this paper I will attempt an analysis of the various forms of prolepses and the literary significances of such narrative loops in Ocwinyo's *Fate of the Banished* and *Footprints of the Outsider*. In studying prolepsis, the paper used an interpretivist paradigm with its relativist ontology, subjective epistemology and predominantly qualitative methodology (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The study employed a descriptive case study design because, and like Yin (2003) reiterates, a case study design should be considered when: the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; or when you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study or when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Moreover, adds Yin, that descriptive case study design often uses open-ended questions; data are often words and phrases; textual analysis is often employed; the data are interpreted; themes and patterns are identified; and the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability are used to validate the research, and this is how the paper has been approached.

In terms of theory, the paper deployed the Genettian discursal perspective of narrative theory. Gérard Genette's tripartite schema of "order, duration, and frequency" is a standard rubric for analyzing temporal divergence, and Genette usefully offers an additional set of figural techniques that he calls anachronies – through which discourse-time can vary from story-time: prolepsis, analepsis, anisochrony, analexia, ellipsis, paralipsis, and so on. (Wittenberg, 2018:

124) These techniques suggest the extremes to which chronological story-time might be fruitfully contorted in a given plot. In the Genettian typology, prolepsis divided into external (to the first narrative) and internal (within time locus of the first narrative), though he goes on to theorize about the possibility of mixed prolepsis (should start before and eclipse the first narrative). Internal prolepsis is further divided into heterodiegetic, homodiegetic and iterative. This paper handles prolepsis as such.

1.2 External prolepsis

External prolepsis covers a period beyond the end of the first narrative (Rimmon-Kenan, 51). In the case of prolepsis, we need to observe already that, ‘the limit of the temporal field of the first narrative is clearly marked by the last nonproleptic scene’. (Genette, 68) In *Fate*, the large mass of the narrative leading up to Apire’s withdraw from rebel activities and the subsequent murder of his wife and the priest can thus be treated as part of the first narrative, rendering its epilogue as the major example of external prolepsis. Genette’s teaches us that external prolepses, “function mostly as epilogues, serving to continue one or another line of action on to its logical conclusion, even if the conclusion takes place later than the day on which the hero decides to leave the world and withdraw into his work”. In *Fate* the tableau of the double murder is incomplete without the novel’s epilogue; Dila and Flo shot dead, Apire having handed himself to the police, many questions remain hanging in the reader’s mind. We wait on the epilogue to pursue the story to its logical conclusion. It comes in the report of *The Daily Chronicle*, a local tabloid, where we learn that Francis Apire, 25 - the pivot of the action in this novel hails from Atari village in East Pataka district. I must abide to mention that nowhere in the course of the novel is the broader geographic setting of the novel given; the closer we get to this kind of description is in the mention of specific places like the Catholic mission, the confession box, extra. In the subsequent bulletin of the newspaper the narrator fills us in on the narrative loop over what happened at the scene of murder; for example, before we knew they were shot dead, now we learn that “the two had died as a result of extensive damage to their internal organs as well as hemorrhage.” Before we knew of the Catholic mission as a blanket place now we know it is located two kilometers east of Atari trading center. The chief catechist famed for his unmatched trail of adulteries survives the fate that befalls his superior and when we last meet him, he is among “some people ... in the priest’s bedroom.” (146) It is the same a fitiori in our

reading of *Footprints*, whose epilogue uncovers the narrative loop created by the uneventful scenes that climaxes the final lap of campaigns for the contestants of the Ayer County Member of Parliament seat. We learn that the elections never took place, at least not when they should have. That Imat Geto – Adoli’s mother died after feuding supporters sought vengeance on Olwit’s behalf who, himself is trampled into a coma by a madding crowd.

There are also cases when external prolepsis is depicted in the narrator’s present, conceding that prolepsis is generally propection on retrospection, this present is only in the sense of the text but past in the sense of the story being reported. This kind of anticipation nears what Mark Currie (31) defines as structural prolepsis especially in the sense that prolepses presentify past events; such prolepses are testimonies to the intensity of present memory and to some extent authenticate the past. In the opening paragraphs of *Footprints*, the narrator tells us that: “This is largely the story of Abudu Olwit who might be a member of parliament now or who might not.” In so stating the narrator adumbrates the role of Olwit in the novel and crux of the events in the story. And apropos Apire’s intuitive rant in the comedown of his warring life in *Fate* (113): “Shall I ever, have another chance to set eyes on you, mother, and you Betty, you and your diffident, even shy, husband? Shall I ever see you again, Acaye?” Of course in the course of the story, and after abandoning the guerrilla war, Apire meets Maria, Betty, and Acaye neither but this proleptic thrust is poignant testimony of the Omnitemporality of the remembering conscience. Maria, Betty and Acaye have since moved on with life as we have already seen in the course of the novel, but presently, while remembering the far the family has come, he can only hope that they meet again, this will be during Apire’s prison life, if ever.

1.3 Heterodiegetic Prolepsis

Heterodiegetic prolepsis narrates ahead of time the story of another event or character. Such a character is normally off scene at the time of the heterodiegetic proleptic thrust. Although incidents of heterodiegetic prolepsis are few and far apart, we can single out some in *Fate*: Pulu’s conversation with Apire upon his return from the guerrilla war cannot skip my eye:

I dreamt that Flo and your son were hurtling down a fast-flowing river in a dugout canoe. Only the two of them. Flo was trying to get away from you, taking your son with her. As the canoe sped down the river, entirely at the mercy of the

currents, it tossed violently hither and thither, and all the time Flo was screaming abuse at you, at all of us, screaming at the top of her voice, telling the whole world she didn't care a damn, what happened to her and her son, she was bored sick of you, of us, and all she wanted was to get away before she became insane, either get away or die (*Fate* 133)

In the grand finale of the dream the canoe scrapes over a huge rock and it is ripped into two and Flo, and the son die. Yes, this is a dream Pulu shares with Apire on the morning following his arrival home, but its primary focus is Flo who is off the scene at the moment. Jenkins David (2012: 28) points out that there is a great affinity between dreams and narratives; in many ways dreams are story-like, and stories are dream-like. He especially singles out nightmares, like the one Pullu endures, as having a clear narrative signature besides, they patently explore a problem requiring a resolution. In the case of Pull's dream she rests its interpretation on advising Apire to tend Flo well lest he loses her. Little does Pulu know that the jealous mounting Apire's head will lead him into shooting Flo. The dream adumbrates Flo's death.

Indeed, most of the incidents of heterodiegetic prolepsis in *Ocwinyo* are narrated through dreams. Apire experiences the nightmare of the shooting of a comrade in the war, whose head is blasted by a bullet in Apire's viewing. After the incident Apire is constantly tormented by the gruesome killing, and it forestalls the days Apire will abandon guerilla war after the shooting of Erabu, another comrade of his. We are not surprised therefore when upon the death of Erabu, the narrator concludes that "the war was over for him: he knew he had lost the psychological mettle to fight on" (119). The shock that follows the death of the first comrade prognosticates the tremor Apire will feel at death of Erabu, and for which he will abandon rebellion. Anticipatory turns of this type answer in advance the character's motivation for action. We know before he shoots her, that Flo has mentally moved on. We can also ably tell that Apire, upon losing his two close friends to war, and on both occasions surviving narrowly, has learnt the counterproductive nature of war. The above example vindicate James Livingstone (2019, 31-52) assertion that dreams of encirclement, which he defines as referring to "an experience of being surrounded, entrapped and overrun by the projections of unconsciousness", have great propensity for foreshadowing.

In *Footprints* (46), the evocation, apropos of the scene of the conversation between chief Awal and his son Mike Adoli Awal while the boy was only a teenager, a conversation that rests on the conclusion that: “I want you to study hard when you go to school. The white man may not go today or tomorrow. But when he goes I want you to be one of those people who will take his place.” is an advance notice of the political front liner that Adoli Awal grows into. We learn many years later that, “Mike Adoli-Awal had become a member of parliament a few months before the British placed real power in the hands of Uganda’s blacks.” (*Footprints*, 41) When we last meet Adoli, now pitted against Olwit in the Ayer constituency contest, he is still Member of Parliament, not because he is a very effective legislator, quite the contrary, it is rather because chief Awal read the changing political tempo well ahead of time.

1.4 Homodiegetic prolepsis

The description of narrative temporality tends to hurtle, sadly to untold complexity: principally because of our tendency to pit cosmological time against phenomenological time (Mark Currie, 33). Cosmological time in the words of Paul Ricour (1990,129) is clock time, objective time that is founded on the idea that time is linear, Currie on the other hand depicts phenomenological time as one in which former presents exist as if embedded inside each other as constituent parts of a perpetual present; as such the idea of time as a succession is rendered inoperable by the time of narration, and the presence of the time of reading. This bizarre eternal presence of a narrative is the basis on which we determine prolepsis, especially the homodiegetic one. Let us recall here Genette’s (71) observation about homodiegetic prolepsis that they: “come with the problem narrative interference, of possible duplication between the first narrative and the narrative taken on by the proleptic section.” Homodiegisis is either completive or repetitive in nature, and for our discussion here we will first set aside repeating internal homodiegetic prolepsis.

Completive prolepses fill in ahead of time a later blank (Genette, 71) these kinds of proleptic rendering though sparse are present in both novels: the scene of the incarceration of Olwit in *Footprints* is proceeded, much later in the text, in fact, after Olwit has been freed from prison by Adoli’s rant that is anterior to it in the story, and during which he warns Olwit about the trouble that lay ahead of him. In *Fate*, the evocation, apropos of Erabu’s life as guerilla is narrated ahead of his decision to join rebel ranks. We only come to learn of his resolve to join rebellion one chapter to his death. Dila’s first sexual encounter with Flo, is also narrated out of turn bringing it

earlier than the events that proceed Flo's confession. We only learn later that after her confession she disappeared leaving Dila's heart roasting in the sun; Dila eventually runs out of character and goes up to her home inquiring after her whereabouts. All the examples discussed here so far offset future ellipsis or analepsis since they are narrated ahead of their time. Completive prolepses in *Ocwinyo* are quite subtle as they are, generally speaking, drawn upon retrospective scenes and we will discuss these complexities using the episode below:

The priest lay on the bed spread-eagled on his back. Dark-red blood from his punctured heart had oozed down his narrow chest and over the plateau of his belly. The blood congealed and stuck in his pubic hair as it had flowed down his legs, carefully skirting around his shriveled manhood now flaked gray with a woman's dried wetness. The woman herself, huddled up like a fetus, was lying naked on her side in a gelling pool of her own blood, her face grotesquely pressed into the cold glazed cement, her hands gripped vice-like between her thighs as if even in death she was still trying to shield Eve's shame

Cosmologically speaking the above passage recounts an event that has past and to that extent merits categorization as analepsis, phenomenologically speaking the passage is present, at least in the eyes of the reader, who is supposed to be propelled forward by this starting point of the narrative, yet this passage is anticipatory, at least in the teleological sense, as it jumps ahead within the time locus of the narrated events to a future point which is an outcome. Antonis Tsakmakis (2016, 2-4) asserts the foregoing argument that every narrative moves towards a future till its end moreover, the reader is aware that the main narrative timeline advances ahead and that the reported events develop with it. Thus a narrative deliberately directs the reader's gaze towards what is coming next. This future within a narrative is void except for the addressee's expectations and predictions and wishes. This is because, as Currie puts it, the future of a narrative is future that is already in place. So anticipation in a narrative is always anticipation of retrospection since the future is already present. We for example know from the above excerpt that Dila and Flo will die, but we must propel ourselves forward to discover how this death will come about. We have to plough through a catalogue of events, and in his

deliberate dilatory manner, Ocwinyo will deliver the shooting scene in the last chapter in the last pages of the novel.

Admit an addition here, to the list of prolepses that fill ahead of time later blanks, iterative ones; these deal with frequency. They mention in advance, several portions of later events taken as if they were alike, and for that matter repetitive. For example; “They were a model couple, and were often to be seen strolling hand-in-hand towards Okole swamp or plucking wild flowers and giving them to each other to smell.” Observes the narrator in *Footprints* (133) about Gaudensio Amute and Maria Acio, and vividly describes how they used to celebrate love until Idi wrested state power from Bwete. Then things change and this couple fought “at least once every week, violent, closed-door fights in which plates and furniture got broken and their three kids sometimes got hit.” Genette informs us that such prolepses envisage in advance the whole series of occurrences that the first one inaugurates. The authors normally exploit the first occurrence to describe such milieu and to offer a paradigm to the later repetitive scenes, and this formula is observed in Ocwinyo. It is the same a fitiori when the two Indians: Hippen and Ramchand set up the ginnery in Teboke. They establish a routine among workers that all workers come to expect, they “would scream at them above the deafening noise of the ginnery machines” and Ocwinyo labours to exemplify the screams. It would be useless to keep explaining the same screams that happen on a daily. In effect, the first time we meet an iteratively proleptic passage is always the last but the author cares to signal the iteration. In *Fate*, Flo shares with her lover - Dila how unlike him, her husband goes about sex with her:

He will come back from drinking – he prefers waragi – hops into bed and then just mounts you. Then he will pound away until he gets exhausted and drops off like a leach and goes straightaway to sleep. With his back turned against you. All the time he is sleeping with you, you are aware his mind is somewhere else ...
[*Fate*, 32]

So over and over again, Apire’s drinking fete climax into a wild pounding at the wife, she has grown to expect it, and she positions herself for it. Iterative prolepsis, like anticipation in general is a mark of narrative impatience and show us that after the first time, the sway of repetition and habit follows so that retelling it amounts to pointless duplication.

Repeating prolepsis

Repeating prolepses still ahead of time double, however slightly, a narrative section to come; they refer in advance to an event that will be told in full in its place. This implies that like repeating analepses, prolepses of this type come with the problem of narrative interference between the first narrative and the narrative adopted by the proleptic section. In *Fate*, Dila dreams when he is sleeping with Flo, and in so doing the narrator notifies us in advance of the coming sexual encounter between the couple; this happens about a month later. Flo's love confession foreshadows the Flo-Dila relationship, and weeks later Dila himself confesses of this love. The article by Dila while at University prognosticates the life of double standards he will be caught up in two years later as a serving priest. Erabu dreamt "that thousands of cattle were being driven right through their homestead" (*Fate*, 94), and minutes later he wakes up to learn that his cattle were actually being wrestled away. The night preceding Apire's shooting of Flo, the narrative stretches to Apire's mind: "At the cock crow, his thoughts turned to the possibility that now as he lay half-nude, and cold and alone, somebody could be sleeping with Flo, his Flo". (*Fate*, 131) And one night later he comes face to face with Dila pounding away at his Flo. These advance notices, observes Genette, create in the mind of the reader a picture that is fulfilled at the time of the full blown narrative section.

I note here also a set of advance notices of the repeating type that Ocwinyo adopts in *Footprints*; notices with a short reach some of which span one chapter, and which I think he uses to build curiosity in the reader's mind as opposed to leading them on by suspense alone. Chapters two, nine, ten, and eleven all start with some kind of advance notice before the narrator delves into the story, which story is often resolved within the same chapter. There are also in-chapter subplots like the Apio Jacinta –Olwit relationship which the narrator starts with: "Olwit did not know that Jacinta Apio did not have all her spirit around her until he had lived with her for a week. He was to learn after one week that part of her spirit had been stolen by jogi when she had been abducted by them and kept underground for a number of days." (*Footprints*: 52) We know as this subplot develops that their relationship only lasted about a week and that Olwit withdraws from the relationship because Jacinta is often possessed by the jogi. So in effect here prolepsis helps the writer to explain in advance the future action of a character of interest.

We ought to take caution not to confuse prolepsis with advance mentions, as Rimmon-Kenan (50) calls the latter, “preparations of or hinting at a future”, and “which mere preparation of the subsequent events is on the whole grasped as such in retrospect”. She borrows Chekov’s famous dictum about the necessary connection between the presence of a gun on stage and a future murder or suicide to exemplify advance mentions. Shilomith models her discussion of advance mentions along Genette’s (75-7) who, treats them as simple markers without anticipation, even allusive anticipation and they only acquire significance later on, and they belong to the completely classic art of preparation. He notes that unlike advance notices, an advance mention is in general at its place an insignificant seed, and even imperceptible one whose importance as seed will not be recognised until later. In *Footprints*, there are a couple of advance mentions; the Descriptive introduction given to Bitoroci (11) is filled with such false snares. “When she talked, her throat throbbed like that of a male lizard. (It was said of her that if she had been a tree no-one would have rested in her shade, for her lashing and malicious tongue offered people little comfort).” Such description does not necessarily adumbrate Bitoroci ferocious attack on Katarina – Okullu Ipapalo’s wife nor does it forestall her lambasting of Patrick Amunu their son as we come to see later or worse, Okullu Ipapalo’s rebuttal; it however prepares us for them as it were. Dempferio Arim’s introduction as a catechist that “practiced speaking his mother tongue, Lango, with an Italian accent”, (*Footprints*, 27) is not imbued with any proleptic lining whatsoever, rather the purpose is to prepare us for the days we shall meet him as catechist with his Italian loaded Lango, and for the days he will straighten out his accent after abandoning catechism. More retrospectively significant is the advance mention of the birth circumstances of Abudu Olwit:

Not that Abudu Olwit was a Muslim. What happened was that his mother, Alicinera, having slept with many different men during the month she first missed her period, had decided that she liked one of her lovers, Musa Wangolo, the Mugisu, the most. ... Since Musa Wangolo was a Muslim, Alicinora deemed it fitting for her to award her son a decent Muslim name – Abudu. [*Footprints*, 10]

This obscure fatherhood does not foreshadow the dent on Olwit’s social and political life it eventually causes, it simply prepares us for it. Similar examples are to be found in *Fate* with ever increasing ubiquity, yet none merits the definition of repeating prolepsis: the introductory remarks on Ozoo, the introductory remarks on the chairperson of the district branch of the

National Widows' Association, the narrators advance mention of Maria's unwinding degeneration catapulted by the loss of her husband, and which is intended to prepare us for her uncharacteristic behavior. Not even Apire's confession, "Looking back, I realised that that was the moment I died." (*Fate*, 22) merits into prolepsis; it only readies us for the vicious murderer he becomes. Notwithstanding the ubiquitous presence of advance mentions in the Ocwinyoian narrative, we cannot take for granted the readers ability to decode them, and decode as many as fast. Genette in this respect notes that, the ability to identify them rests on the reader's competence which enables one to decipher more, and more quickly depending on the narrative style of a particular writer. Additionally, it is this reader's competence that the author relies on to offer such false snares, naturally expecting the reader to tell them apart from prolepsis.

1.5 Conclusion

We have thus far highlighted several prolepses by using the criteria of the anachrony's reach, or how far into the future time of the story the proleptic event stretches. This criterion has given us the proleptic categories such as the external and internal prolepses and the subcategories of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic prolepses. Moreover, the homodiegetic subcategory is further divisible into complete, repetitive and iterative prolepses. The question still hanging in the reader's mind is the one of extent or the duration of the story that is covered by a proleptic event and Genette discerns:

If one is willing to grant completeness to anticipations prolonged in the time of the story up to the "denouement" (for internal prolepsis) or up to the narrating moment itself (for external or mixed prolepsis). I find hardly any examples of completeness, and it seems that in fact all prolepses are of a partial type, often interrupted in as abrupt a way as they were begun. [Genette, 1980:77-78]

So in the end prolepses by their nature are partial in terms of extent since their thrusts forward, for internal prolepses are conceived within the course of the story, for the purposes of highlighting ahead of time particular events of the story and are as such, resolved within the story. Nor can external prolepses, many of which, as we observed before take the form of epilogues come across as complete since their primary function is instead to complete a

particular line of the story to its logical conclusion. Our discussion has also eluded mixed prolepsis because of the primal nature of anticipation; that is a thrust forward. Yet mixed prolepsis would then suggest an anticipatory turn that spans a period way before the first narrative, joining it along the way, but generally eclipsing it in length. This kind of anticipatory turn is unlikely in novelistic endeavours, and they are surely absent in the Ocwinyoian novel.

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