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AMOS TUTUOLA'S NARRATIVE EXPLOITS: A CURSORY LOOK AT HIS NOVELS

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Abstract

This paper *examines Amos Tutuola's recreation of Yoruba ontology reflection of African concepts ideas and experiences. At this junction, one would see Tutuola's work on how he demonstrated the authentic cosmology of the traditional Yoruba psyche in narrating on a man's confrontation with his universe. All the four major works:* ***The Palm Wine Drinkard, Bush of Ghosts, Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle*** and ***The Feather Woman*** *of the Jungle were extensively discussed and for the purpose of academic consumption.*

Keywords: Traditional Yoruba, Myths, ritual beliefs, fantasy, African psyche.

Introduction

Amos Tutuola, like D.O. Fagunwa before him, drew in his novels from the authentic cosmology of the traditional Yoruba psyche in narrating, as a major theme a man in confrontation with the universe. His protagonists outwit "curious" entitles (as he calls it) simply because he demonstrates the typical Yoruba sensibility in which he so much believe that these "curious" entitles are part and parcel of the real world in which human - beings also live. This sort of reality in Tutuola's novels is what one would call premeaval realism as opposed to concrete realism found in European novels. What this impression amounts to is the fact that there is every probability for non - African critics to dismiss, with a wave of the hand, if care is not taken what may appear fantastic and therefore romantic to the Eurocentric mind, which on the other hand may be perfectly faithful to the African psyche. This emphasis, to my mind is significant particularly when we look at Tutuola's narrative technique as a "Raw Talent" incapable of imperialist influence, as a result of the traditional oral provenance of his art. Obvious in Tutuola's novels is the consistent use of fantasy, myths and ritual beliefs.

The Yoruba cosmology from which he copiously draws his materials does not draw a dividing line between fact and fiction. This is what explain, the chequered and episodic life patterns of

all the protagonists. No wonder, both local and foreign readers have had and still have the most violent and conflicting reactions. It is a conceivable fact that the central mofit of Tutuola's narrative technique is one of quest. That is why he draws this technique from oral African tradition which he utilizes crudely in his novels.

In this paper, we will discuss some of his novels which tend to put Nigeria on the map of world literature. With the avalanche of criticism leveled on his works, one fact remains that he is a writer that stands giantly between old and new, an active writer in a transitional period from purely oral tradition of village storytelling to a western introduced literary traditions all of which ultimate in his representing the integration of birth traditions.

The Palm - Wine Drinkard

In this novel, the reader confronts an indolent protagonist whose happiness depends on an uninterrupted supply of palm wine. Forgetting all his responsibilities of hair - apparent of his family he places much premium on pleasure seeking. In Yoruba mythology, the protagonist seeks pleasure, called 'alafia' because according to Oladele Taiwo (1976) in life the Yoruba expect to have felicity, a well-being and good future. But the prerequisite to these blessings they believe is peace called "alafia". It is the sum total of all is good that may desire - an undisturbed harmonious life. (Like the protagonist 'Lanke Omu")

In a quest for regular supply of palm wine, he went on expedition for ten years to look for his tapes in Dead Town. Though he met his taper, but he could not come back with him from the world of the spirits. Or ordinary, the journey is a fruitless one, but beyond this is the notion that the journey of the spirit undertaken for the benefit of his race.

In this wise one could see the symbolic significance of the journey based on his sacrifices which now acquire meaning as his misfortunes affects his community. To quote Taiwo's contribution, he says: "The lack of palm wine has not only brought physical inconvenience but is doingdamage, to interpersonal relationships as the community is infact already suffering" The benefits of the perilous journey starts to yield fruit for the drunkard's community. The magic egg he brought from the journey provides foods as it relieves famine, thus returning the *alafia* which has either eluded the community at the point of his departure to the "Dead Town"

To intensify further thus *alafia* the drunkard on his return, has been endowed with a unique wisdom. His executing experience has formed part of his initiation into radical knowledge. He is now endowed with the fundamental knowledge of distinguish the difference between the living and the dead. Also, his winning few important battles during the journey has been largely responsible for the annihilation of the Red Fish which is placated annually with human sacrifice. Again his highly improved racial knowledge has helped him to bring but "cosmic amity between land and heaven" he can now relieve famine and also remove the cause of it, thus bring us lasting benefit to man in every part of the world.

In the light of the fore - going, one could now assert that the novel which starts from a local theme rises to one that thrives on universal interest, as the form itself symbolizes the restlessness of man everywhere. In the words of Taiwo The novel start with a slothful hero and it end up with mentally active enough to do universal good. Here lies Tutuola's great

achievement in Palm Wine Drinkard. This achievement will be summarized by what Robert Armstrong (2000) says:*The Palm Wine Drinkard is one of those marvelous works of human imagination, which, is rich withfency, goes simply and directly to the heart of a perential and profound human concern...it is therefore, although Inevitably and in extricably involved with Tutuola's being Yoruba, equally inevitability and inextricably bound to the fact pure and simple of his being a man... Thus, it is necessarily the case that the impact of much of what he writes is supernatural.* Palm Wine Drinkard has definitely shown Tutuola's at his best, because as it presents his reputation as a creative writer.

Bush of Ghosts

As the second work of Tinuola the novel shares some similarities with *Palm-wine Drinkard.* Both novels journeys made to the Ghost land. Both protagonists start with week position. Like many of Tutuolas novels, the boy hero of the novel returns home at the end of his journey, a wiser man, having benefited from his recent experiences. What might strike a reader does not lie in the similarities but in the differences between the activities of the two protagonists. While the hero of the first novel goes to the ghost land out his free mind, the boy hero was forced to go there. The circumstances in which the boy leave home is highly reminiscent of the circumstance which both Sundiata and Chaka leave home.

In this novel, there appears a morbid obsession with pain, Suffering, torture, humiliation smell dirt, insect's size and deformity. Apart from the experience of physical pain the boy suffers from internal conflict. This usually manifests itself in his inability to decide at crucial point whether to stay in the bush of Ghost or to go home. To arrive at the knowledge of "good" the hero - boy probably needs the type of experience Tutuola makes him to go through. Having undergone a lot of traumatic experience the boy - hero reunites to his parents and so while the Drinkard at the end of his journey comes back with universal good, the boy - hero conies back with personal achievement which is now based on adult maturity to face the challenges of life.

At no stage does this second novel achieve the degree of universality which makes Palm - Drinkard an outstanding success. The major concept any reader could derive from the novel is the notion that there is a difference between primeval realism and concrete realism. The adventurous themes, focusing on primeval realism such as we find in this novel has exposed a new awareness in African literary cosmology.

Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle

This novel, for the first time, moves away from the bush of curious entities to deal with earthy person, though the story - line is Juxtaposed with experience in the bush. For the first time also, there is a considerable improvement on the narrative technique of the author. He uses the third person narrator. The heroine of the novel is simply called Simbi, who is put in the company of Rali, Sala, Baka and Kadira for whom she acts as leader, and reacts with the slave dealer, Dogo, the multi coloured people and the people of sinners' Town.

Every action in this novel seems to lead to up to the epic structure between Simbi and Satyr. Simbi's confrontation with Satyr and her monumental defeat on Satyr, make her an idealized heroine whose, heroic experience has put her in a position to realize that her happiness is

inextricably bound up with that of her community and that her destiny can only be truly fulfilled as an obedient daughter and loyal members of her community.

Like all Tutuuola's Simbi returns home to do good which in her case is not as universal as that of the Drinkard or as personal as that of the hero - boy. It is her immediate community which benefits from her newly acquired wisdom and powers.

The Brave of African Hunters

This novel has many interesting episode which the author keeps together through various organizational devices through the use of superstitions, proverbs and illuminating sign posts to the content of the various chapters. Though this book is not as episodic as the first two books, yet it has a four episodes of differing complexities. These are langhable episodes as there are delightful episodes. The episode of Adebisi's story in Iberube Town is highly striking as Tutuola employs in a skillful manner the history devise which integrates an anecdote in to the framework of the novel.

Apart from the fact that most of these episodes are highly imaginative and appropriately applied it serves the artistic purpose of imparting some urgency to the heroine's mission. The motivation of the quest in this novel is very primitive because the heroines desire to prove herself as the inheritor of her father's hunting prowess is proved. Success for Adebisi is achieved after much pain and forture and this is tactly don by the author to prove the emancipation of African girls.

Feather Woman of the Jungle

This novel thrives on storytelling which turned into full scale entertainment. The author goes on story to narrate several episodes in the narrator's quest to get rich. The hero is portrayed as a man whose actions are realistically motivated. His ambition is to relieve is parents of their poverty. He therefore utilizes youthful exorbitance to go on several adventures to pursue his ambitions. Having encountered a lot of difficulties, he makes his money the hard way. It is abundantly evident that Tutuola handles very well adventure stories and the succeeds in making the beginning of his stories as arresting as possible so that readers may read on with greater interest. In this novel, Tutuola adds attractions which include richness of details an application or economy in the use of words. The hurt where feather woman keeps her images - human being who has turned into mud images reminds one of soumaoro's horror cambers in Sundiata which is full of images. The novel which is written in the spirit of adventure is based on the experience of pain and suffering which is a necessary in order to achieve success.

Perhaps it might suffice it to summaries Tutuola's work with the comment of Taiwo (1976) He says: *Tutuola is an example of a writer who has used inventiveness to establish a link between traditional and modern life. His works are no doubt rooted in Yoruba' tradition, but his achievement as a writer has in the way he has established the traditional fantasy in the Yoruba folk - tales to cover aspects of modern industrial civilization while at the same time reminding people in the contemporary society of the values and conditions of their ancestral past.*

Conclusion

Above all, Tutuola demonstrated these that from the concept of his novel Tutuola's recreation of Yoruba ontology; one would discover that the experience of pain and suffering negate achieving success in life.

All the characters in the four novels demonstrate their impact to the success of the novel's notwithstanding Tutuola's himself curious exhibit that is a man of fiction at any point in time.

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