

**Realism in Poetry: A Study of Selected Poems in Moses
Tsenongu's *sun the Male Born Moon the Female*.**

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Abstract

This Paper examines realism in poetry and repudiates the notion that realism is not applicable in poetry but only in drama and prose. Content analysis is used in exploring the poems and analyzing their contextual meaning. Evaluating the poems from the theoretical perspective of realism, the paper submits that Tsenongu's poems are expressive of realism. It asserts that these poems exhibit realism of subject matter and technique. The poems are therefore ultimately works of realism and need to be understood in this light. In the final analysis, the paper concludes that: realism of subject matter and technique are clearly identified in the poetry of Tsenongu as his poems discuss contemporary social issues like; polygamy, greed, gossip, lack of love, ancestral support, poverty, and jealousy.

Keywords: realism, contemporary society, Nigerian poetry, technique, and subject matter.

Introduction

Realism ordinarily refers to the tendency of art to mirror or get close to reality. It is a term used in philosophy, art and literature. According to the New Age Encyclopedia (15), this concept originated in France in 1850 as a reaction against romanticism and idealism that were common during the century. These theories, however, soon ran out of general acceptance because they were considered to be too subjective. Realism found its way into literature shortly after the French revolution and it is

used in two senses. It refers to a conscious literary/aesthetic movement and a pattern of writing that depicts "real life situation" with the primary goal of "rendering" the objective reality of human life (317). This concept is also viewed by the online encyclopedia as verisimilitude of narrative (whether or not a story is believable) or verisimilitude of characterization (whether or not the characters are believable).

The major focus of these views is the writer's attempt to present the reality of everyday life in a way that readers can feel or "see" with their minds' eyes the picture of what the writer is presenting and believe same in relation to actual experience.

Realism succeeded romanticism and the major traditions of romanticism included character sketches, slave narrative, short stories and poetry. Realism, when referring to the official aesthetic movement however included very little poetry as its major literary forms, consisted of novels and short stories. When applied as a broader term however, realism can include poetry from any era that follows the philosophical tenets of the realist movement.

Early exponents of realism, which is generally said to have reach its zenith during the 18th and 19th centuries include George Eliot, William Dean Howells, Hanore de Balzac, Stephen Crane, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Daniel Defoe, Emile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, Mark Twain. These writers were novelists who believed that literature has to be understood not just by the educated class but also by the common people. They, therefore, championed the course of writing in a simple language that depicts everyday life (David 6). Characters also involved common populace as market men and women, fathers and mothers,

labourers and such lower classes of people as against the emphasis on royal personages or the nobility.

Thus, David also states that novels like Middlemarch by George Eliot, The Rise of Silas Lapham by Dean Howells, were said to have depicted enough details about common place occurrences {7}. The emphasis on believability and commonality of experience was basically informed by the prevailing philosophy of the time. The century is said to have shifted focus from collective experience to the individual as autonomous being. As such, attention was on characterization, presenting characters as close to nature as possible in motive, temperament, needs, feelings and cultural behaviour. Issues such as politics, occupational conflicts, and family affairs were common themes.

Realism has been classified into different types. Asoo, following George Becker, identifies the following: "realism of subject matter, realism of technique, realism of philosophy, Surrealism, magic realism, critical realism and social realism and Neo-realism" (25). Realism of subject matter, the first in the categorization, is explained to refer to "what" can be regarded as "literarily realistic". It concerns the issues raised that can be considered as real. Quoting Becker, Asoo gives the major distinguishing features of this type of realism. The first is visibility. This means that it emphasises contemporary issues that can be seen in our day to day dealing of life. Above all, it deals with themes that are "popular, social and modern" (26). This has to do with issues that are not imaginative but common and attestable to the generation in question.

Another type of realism explained here is realism of technique. This is said to focus on the "how" or the "form". This concerns the style of writing that distinguishes realist writing from

other writings since realism is a reaction against other literary forms. The approach to writing here is the major concern. The basic departure from the older method is identified as technique of observation as against the former method of invention. By this technique, it is meant that a realist writer should detach himself from his work and stand as an observer. This enables the writer to be impartial which the prerequisite for objectivity is. All these qualities are essential in separating a realist work from others.

In this regard, Becker is said to have identified an important dimension to this style of writing which he calls the "cross sectional presentation" (Quoted in Asoo 29). This refers to different samples of similar events. Such a collation gives better understanding of the authenticity of the issue under consideration than a singular case. Asoo also quotes Guy Maupassaut as supporting this view in these words "to give an exact image of life, one must carefully avoid the use of exceptional events" (29). What this means is that the realist work emphasizes the ordinary. On the beginning and ending format of a realistic work, it is argued that it should begin at once and deviate from the practice of denouement by being "less emphatic" (30). The intent of the realist is to make the work believable rather than a commentary. It is worthy of note that by the end of the nineteenth century, realism in the pure sense seemed to have undergone changes to a new form called naturalism. In naturalism the focus is on natural factors in explaining characters' behaviour. In this wise, factors as heredity, history and environment become prominent.

Significantly, these two divisions of realism are in concert with Damian Grant's classification though using different names. According to Grant, two kinds of realism are conscientious and conscious realism. While the former concerns itself with the

subject matter or "what", the writer writes about, the latter is concerned with "how" the writer presents his vision or the style of writing (Qtd in Asoo 24). This is variously called realism of content and realism of presentation respectively. Socialist realism is another form of realism that receives attention in contemporary society. The features and reason for its popularity are already discussed in this work.

Moreover, magic realism is the kind of realism that takes as its subject matter the practice of extra-ordinary powers. In this mode of writing, magical elements are blended with the physical life. The result of this is always a harvest of mysterious events that cannot be explained using normal life parameters.

As a literary theory, realism has its distinguishing features. The first important quality of a realist work is objectivity. This means that a realist work should present issues fully and without prejudice. A realist writer normally does not allow sentiments to becloud his/her vision. S/he presents the work without taking sides and allows readers to pass their judgment on issues raised. According to Bucher and Manning, a good realist work must concern "...people, their problems and their challenges. The characters *should* be believable and their language and actions should be appropriate" (1). Appropriateness here indicates that the language should match the age, sex and social status of characters and the situation. The action should be moderate to befit the cause and situation. Thus, exaggerations are not entertained. As stated earlier though realism was more common in fiction, it was still visible in poetry. In an online article Caitlyn Lowe points out the features of realism in poetry while distinguishing them from romanticism thus:

Both realist and romantic poets concerned themselves with external aesthetic, but poems of the Realist tradition described the world as it actually is. For example, in 'Intimations and Immortality from Recollections of Childhood' William Wordsworth describes the scenery of his youth as looking like it were. 'Appareled in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream'. This presents a standard dreamy romantic view. A traditionally realistic view appears in Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 130' when he explains very honestly 'My mistress eyes are nothing like the sun' (16).

The above argument shows that, right from time, poets were realists too and they used the genre to describe or reflect the world as it actually is. The quotation also makes a distinction between romantic poems and realist poems. While the former led to dwell on sensory experience of the natural world, the latter describes subjects from contemporary, everyday life perspective usually focusing more on the than on sensational events.

In general, realism in poetry rejects lofty ideals and prefers objective, true to statements. Lowe illustrates further that:

Wordsworth makes imaginative, spiritual statements in 'Intimations' such as 'the soul that rises with us,' our life's star, hath had elsewhere its setting/and cometh from afar'. 'Shakespeare's Sonnet 130' however explicitly rejects such imaginative illustrations in the lines 'I love to hear her speak, yet well I know that music hath a far more pleasing sound.' The speaker states that though he loves his mistress's voice, he acknowledges the truth

that her voice does not objectively compares to music (22).

It is clear from this illustration that realism is not only sustained in fiction but also in poetry where it still retains its basic concern with both ugly as everyday events. In this paper, however, the researcher concentrates on realism of subject matter and technique as they apply in Tsenongu's work. This implies that emphasis is on forms and features of realism that are not peculiar to the novel and as they are presented in Tsenongu's selected poetry.

In the post-independence period, Nigerian literary artists have been credited for their commitment to addressing issues that affect their people. This form of literary scholarship, often referred to as art as propaganda as against art for art's sake, has produced volumes of literary works-including poetry-that, revolve round peculiar challenges of the people in their day to day activities. The different phases in the development of Nigerian written poetry show how poetry always take up social issues of the time it is written. From the works of Nigerian pioneer poets like Dennis Osadebay, Emitan Brown, Olumbe Bassir among others, the poetry has been sensitive to prevailing social circumstances. In this work however, I have excluded these poets and started with the group after them to bring my purpose into clearer context.

Thus following Joe Ushie's survey, three generations of Nigerian poets can be identified. The first generation belongs to the pre-independence days and post-independence era. This generation is said to be part of the struggle for independence. Femi Osofisan observes that they "participated side by side with the politicians (Qtd in Ushie 1). Their poetry shows a link with their

cultural tradition. Though in terms of form, it did not show much difference from the European style to which it was heir. The major voices of this period were Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Gabriel Okara and J.P. Clark Bekederemo.

The second generation poets are the pre-civil war and post-civil war poets. Their poetry demonstrated unreserved fury on the state of their society. The handling of socio-political issues that later led to the civil war and the effects of the war all filled the poetry. Nepotism, tribal and religious sentiments, segregation and marginalization became issues of public concern. While the poetry demonstrated revolutionary tone, it showed a clear leaning on the oral tradition. It explored the rich cultural characteristics of Nigeria's divergent multi-ethnic groups conveying the social, economic and political intrigues of the country. Issues such as bad leadership, military high handedness, moral decadence and economic stagnation which culminated in civil war were clearly illustrated (Obafemi 5-7).

The recourse to oral performance sets the tone for the poetry which later generations followed. The second generation is therefore not only a link between the first and third generation but also defines the style that the poetry was later identified. This quest for identity was partly informed by the revolutionary philosophies of Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro and others. Members of this group include Niyi Osundare, Odia Ofeimun, Tanure Ojaide, Onuora Ossie Enekwe, Femi Oyebode, Harry Garuba, Catherine Acholonu, Femi Fatoba, Funso Aiyejina and Femi Osofisan.

The third emergent generation of Nigerian poets, as identified by Olu Obafemi "began to flourish in the late eighties and is justifiably impatient with the exponential rate at which chaos and incoherence manifest in poverty, injustice and squalor,

have overtaken the country" (12). Poetry then reflected the ethos of pervasive corruption, desire for change in leadership, economic pattern, life style and attitudes. The poetry took the form of social reform crusade, while demonstrating in convincing details, its sensitivity to infringement on the natural environment. Members of this group include Tanure Ojaide, Femi Oyebode, Olu Oguibe, Afan Akeh, Ogaga Ifowodo. Remi Raji, Joe Ushie, Isiaba Irobi, Onodkome Okome, Uche Nduka, Chiedu Fzanah, Chin Ce, Ushman Shehu, Kemi Atanda-Ilori, Idzia Ahmad, Sesan Ajayi, Sola Osofisan, Nnimmo Bassey Toyin Adewale- Nduka, Obu Udeozo, Eddie Aderinokun, Kayode Aderinokun, and Maria Ajima among others. Bolajoko Aliyu identifies such environmental conscious poetry (ecopoetics) to include "Ojaide's *Delta Blues and Home Song* (1997), Ifowodo's *The Oil Lamp* (2004), *Ikiriko's Oily Tears of the Niger Delta* (1999), *Bassey's We Thought it was Oil but it Was Blood* and *Kpakiama's Salute to our Mangrove Giants and other Poems* (2008)" (327).

This progressive engagement of literature with prevailing social issues affirms Ruth Finnegan's assertion about African literature that: "it is obvious that any analysis of African literature must take account of the social and historical context. Clearly, a full examination of any one African literature would have to include a detailed discussion of the particularities of that single literature and historical period" (48). Going by this view, it is obvious that Nigerian literature generally and poetry in particular has largely been a response to social and political circumstances affecting the people. What is implied in this assumption is that the "particularities" of the literature have always been engendered by the reality of the different periods and stages of the country's development.

Accordingly, such a literature-one that engages with several socio-political issues-lends itself to varied theoretical interpretations and analyses. One of the theories that can be deployed in its appreciation is realism. Since the poems of Moses Tsenongu focus on the condition of the ordinary people with much bias on the Tiv cultural heritage and the changes that time has imposed on it, the poetry can be subjected to realist analysis.

Exploring realism of theme and technique in Moses Tsenongu's *Sun the Male Born Moon the Female*.

Published in 2006, this poetry anthology is deeply rooted in Tiv culture. This cultural resource, not only shades light on the worldview of the Tiv people, but also provides the ideological framework for understanding and appreciating the realism in poetry.

These poems are conceived from this traditional religious act underscoring a deep symbolic connection between the poet who seeks, like the spiritualist, to cleanse his community. The poet priest takes his immediate Mbakough society (which could be any other society) as the patient with varied ailments. Compared to the seriousness of the abnormality, he takes the patient to "The river of his ink for the redemptive rites" in which the poems serve as "his invocations and incantations at the ford of the river" (x). This points clearly the relationship between literature and the society. It is apparent that just as the poet is inspired by the society so the poet hopes his writing would sear the society into living right.

Thus the poet delves into the maladies of his society in the first poem of the collection titled "Memories of Stepmother" (poem I) which has as its realism of subject matter as: "the plight

of the orphan". As the title of the poem indicates, the poet persona recalls with disappointment the malicious behaviour of his stepmother who would rather have the dog, "Bingo to eat first/Before I had my share/If it was a lucky day (2). So having food to eat was not a normal occurrence for the orphan. This points clearly to the fact that he often starved. The poet wonders at such wickedness which would elevate a dog over a human being by posing the following rhetorical questions:

Did I ever for once win the contest?
Nor were you ever tired of reminding me,
Nor have I ever stopped wondering what really it was
That always made Bingo the dog so much better than
me (2).

Bingo is a popular name given to a dog in Nigeria especially among the urban lower class. These are people who ordinarily have little to eat. They often have little to offer the dog. Consequently, the dog eats leftover food and even faeces. It is, thus, instructive that even Bingo gets preferential treatment over and above the orphan in the poem.

This illustrates the real situation, as it is obtained, in many parts of our society. Many step-mothers enslave their step-children and may even say that they were not responsible for the death of the children's mothers. The realism of technique which is also known as realism of presentation is obviously presented as the poet reports issues through the persona as objective as possible. The poet shows this in "More Memories of Step-mother" (poem 19), where the same question is posed to the orphan: "you told me that it was not you who killed my mother in Mbajir" (50).

In these two poems, the divisiveness inherent in polygamy is dramatised. The root of this maltreatment of the innocent child

which nobody speaks against is polygamy. The orphan, though for no fault of his, is a victim of jealousies unleashed in a polygamous family. In a sane environment, people recognize that man is mortal and would empathise with one who is bereaved. Yet, it seems the contrary in the case of a polygamous situation where the new wife or even the co-wife takes delight in ill-treating an orphan.

In terms of technique, the dog, Bingo and the unnamed orphan are symbols of deprivation. Yet in comparison, the orphan occupies the lower position in the hierarchy. Again, "Bingo" "food" "pillow" can be regarded as images. They are the things considered more valuable by the owner than the orphan who is a fellow human being, despite his "cute" stance and efforts at pleasing. These three things are ironically images of the orphan's insecurity as any careless handling of them by him means disaster. Furthermore, the poem illustrates the irony of human experience. This is expressed in the behaviour of the stepmother who allows the dog to eat before a human being where the reverse ought to be the case. In fact, were the child's mother alive, bingo would not occupy such an elevated position.

In the next poem titled "Why is Boji Gum?" (poem2), the poet hints at the reality of music and dance, these two related phenomena being natural and universal. Beyond this, however, several techniques are deployed to link the poem to Tiv oral lore. Good music is normally accompanied by dance. In Tiv folk saying the snail (shell) referred to here as "ankyoor" is acclaimed as the best dancer. The shell of the snail is cut round at the opening and the remaining part is used as play object. The pointed end is held in-between the fingers and the thumb and skillfully thrown in the smooth dry soil where it spins round in a dancing fashion. In the

poem, the simile "see how they wriggle kpirididi like ankyoor snail" (4) conveys the dexterity and mastery with which the dancers dance while the "kpirididi" is an onomatopoeia.

Earlier in the poem, Boji Gum is said to be in a hurry to reach the arena of the dance having been prompted by the lure of the "song" and abirim. The image of "...a lioness after the cry of her cub in the thicket" dramatizes Boji Gum's deep identification with the group and spiritual link at least musically. This is the reality of theme: "the communal musical spirit" Thus the sense of contentment which music brings is expressed in the Tiv chorus that is normally sung at the climax of an intensive dance session: "when we die some day, dance would die.!" (8). On the other hand, realism of technique is seen in how poet presents the music and dance in a dramatizing style (that is music and dance which is performance).

In yet another poem, the poet raises a fundamental question on human behaviour that places a moral burden on the society. Under the title "If I Die Today" (poem 3), the poet declares:

If I die today, I know who and who
Would mourn for pleasure and pretend that they grieve
For a while and proceed with life as though
It was I who knew not how to live

These enemies in disguise will pretend mourning "with a shake of the head" and shower encomiums on the deceased as though they really loved but lost him. He recalls "what praises they now heap on poor Tako's name" and regrets that the same pretense will be extended to him when he too dies.

Ordinarily, this is what obtains when people die. Some seem to mourn but in their minds, they are happy that their

enemies have fallen. Although the issues raised by Moses Tsenongu seem so mundane that not many Nigerian writers write on them, yet they are philosophical issues that have challenged man over the years. The poem is a denunciation of the Tiv adage that or doon lkyom (a dead being is good). This means that even if one was not good while alive, people accept that he is good when he dies since everything, good or bad ends with death. Beyond this adage, the poet expresses disdain for the fact that the traditional communal love often expressed in the saying that one should be one's brother's keeper has been lost. This is what the poet describes in his preface as "lethal abandonment of true love and maniacal cultivation of greed"... (xi). Instead, people are cruel to others when they are alive. Yet when they die, the same people begin to mourn as though they had cared for such people. It is evident that it is the absence of love that leads to man's inhumanity to man.

Interestingly, the poet deploys humour in treating this serious topic when he says that "But since I love to frustrate folks who are foolers I will neither die nor faint: that is their punishment". It is laughable that this punishment the persona wants to give to his ill-wishers is one he does not have control over. Yet, the pains he feels having known exactly the "souls" that would want to become heroes over the burial arrangement" makes him to say this. Though it is a wish he cannot accomplish, making the statement enables him to express his pent up anger. Finally the poet ties the poem to its cultural setting. As noted by Nyitse and Iorhii, "the poet makes use of the speech pattern of the Tiv which he translates literally by saying "as though we did not wish them death when they prospered"...instead of the normal English rendering of "as though we did not wish them dead" (200).

Hence the verbal features of Tiv give the poem a realistic background.

It is worthy of note that realism of theme in the above poem is: "lack of love" which focuses on issues whether good or bad. It is therefore, instructive that the poet condemns the pretense of human beings even in trying times as death of seeming neighbours.

In the poem "Even Awua Anyila Agbadu" (poem4), the persona expresses disdain on the subject of gossip. It is unfortunate that some people have made gossip and rumour mongering their stock in trade without caring for any detail or true version of the stories they carry about. In this poem, the persona sheds off every iota of civility conveyed in euphemisms in his language and comes out in what many can refer to as vulgar language. Words such as "shit" "anus" "egg-meal farts" are illustrative of this anger-laden language. This style, however, enhances our understanding of the deep pains one feels when falsehood is being spread about one even by those that supposedly pose as friends.

The tongues that lick shit

From anus to anus and toilet to toilet
Seeking to rubbish Tsenongu
Bothered me close to insomnia
The smelly tongues fresh from the thousandth tumbler of
beer,
That lap about with drunken glee
From rottenness to rottenness
Hopeful on diffusing my dynamite
Kindled heartburns in my breast for a breath. (10)

One does not need to read in between the lines to defect the poet's bitterness with the repetition of "the tongues"¹ "The smelly tongues" "The Forked tongues", it also reveals his mood of anger, disgust and condemnatory mood all of which reflect impatience with such persons.

The persona soon realizes the obvious truth thus: "Till I remembered Golozo's colossal quotes Even Awua Anyila Agbadu is subject to gossip". This shows the truth about the society where idleness is not regarded as a serious aberration. In fact, one can decide to do what one wants but one cannot choose what would be said against one by others who may not be better or behave differently in a given situation as the person being criticized.

Furthermore, the use of actual names gives the issues discussed a biographical slant. The reference to Golozo's oral poetry reinforces the realist leaning of the poem. Tarker Golozo is one of the greatest Tiv oral poets renowned for singing about social events in Tiv land. He lived between 1928 and 2002. It is one of his wise admonitions in his songs that makes a consoling impression on the persona when he remembers it that "Even Awua Anyila is subject to gossip." This means that no one, no matter how highly or lowly placed is immuned to gossip. The realism theme in the poem is: "Gossip and Rumour mongering" and the realism of technique is how the poet uses the persona (Tarker Golozo) to reinforces the reality of technique in the poem.

Similar in content to the above poem is the one entitled "Those Who Do Not Wish Me Well" (poem 6). Here, the persona laments the spate of blackmail in our society. Many people instead of demonstrating their goodness through worthy actions, turn to blackmailing others. These ill-wishers "overload their enormous mouths" with heavily condimented tales" about others.

This metaphor "condimented tales" refers to untrue stories which people fabricate and add all manner of lies just as condiments are added to a soup to make it delicious. So is falsehood dressed up to make it to have a taste of truth. Tsenongu became an object that such blackmail has reached a high peak (azenger). However, as the persona ignores the detractors and rums to go in his determination to reach his destination, he hears a "booming bang" marking the fall of these detractors.

The onomatopoeia used above is significant to proof the realism of presentation and contribute to the musical quality of the poem, it also signifies that tables are turned against evil doers. This leads to the theme of retribution. It is a natural law that every evil has its punishment that cannot be avoided. While the issue of retribution is common to all humanity, it is the manner in which it is tackled that shows realism. Tiv worldview holds retribution sacrosanct and is celebrated in terms that are embedded with the people's idioms. For example, there is a saying in Tiv that: " ka kwagh u ulee la u sunda ye" which means that it is what one sows that one reaps The results of such actions may be reaped by the person that committed the crime or the person's offspring.

Furthermore, the poet raises alarm in another poem "They Desire to Scrape my Head" (poem 5). Though the poem does not directly refer to a particular group of people, it can be inferred that it is mischief makers or probably enemies from his home front that are the subject. The poem itself deals with poor judgment and its attendant extreme punishment even when guilt has not been established. The persona voices out his plight thus:

Certain persons desire to scrape my head
With a piece of broken bottle
They desire to scrape my pate with a blunt blade;

But where my guilt has camped, they do not tell (12).

This paints a picture of injustice and persecution. As noted by Nyitse and Iorhii, "In days gone by in Tiv land, only prisoners had clean shaven heads and it is said that this was usually achieved by using crude shards of bottle" (200). The persona's complaint shows that he is being oppressed for an offence that has not been legally and morally established. Consequently, he keeps "...crossing rivers in [his] chest" on a daily basis. This metaphor shows how deeply he involves in thought. His comparison of "the world of yore" with the present is a blatant comparison of the present moral dearth with the past and his preference for the latter, hence his call to his mother's people. In Tiv land, a person is said to have two homes: his father's home and mother's home. Now that the persona senses danger in his part of the world which he describes as "agina smallpox" he calls out for his "great matri clansman" to rescue him.

The reference to "agina - smallpox" here is instructive. It was a disease that plagued Tiv land and probably Africa leading to many deaths as it had no cure. The incident is a known historical occurrence and due to lack of cure, there was resignation and hopelessness. The "agina" which is still discussed by elders who experienced it is adopted by the poet to symbolise coercion, persecution, and many other forms of injustice. The head referred to here is also metaphorical. This could be the persona's channels of progress which the enemies want to block. The persona wants Hambe Ingye to add his voice to that of "ancestral support". This is because in time past, the ancestors were believed to possess the powers to call even witches to order and where a misfortune was because of guilt, the land could be cleansed through the agency of the ancestors or elders. The persona's mood is,

therefore, clearly that of melancholy arising from resignation to his fate. The recognition of the role of ancestors here expresses the African worldview and shows the poet's adherence to reality. This adds a stamp of realism-on the poem. The use of language in line 5, "Every day I keep crossing rivers in my chest" shows transliteration from Tiv language meaning worrying or analysing a tedious situation which is bereft of solution. The reality of subject matter as seen in the poem above is : "the ancestral support" and the realism of technique is seen in the use of language in line 5 .

Again, the value of music and dance is reiterated in another poem, "The skills of the Koroso Dancer" (poem 9). Naturally, dancing is a significant mode of entertainment in traditional and modern societies. This is because of its role as medium of providing relief. Accordingly, the poet hopes to "... simplify life's seeming puzzles/With the rhetoric of rhythmic feet (20)." He believes that the act of dancing, apart from its physical and therefore/ mental value as exercise is both psychological and emotional balm. Hence:

I desire to lure a thoroughly insecure world
Away from the terror of assorted hungers
And cultivate laughter at last
On fronts, hitherto unfertile for its germination. (20)

It is needless emphasizing the fact that dancing warms up an ordinarily cold and unhappy atmosphere and kindles happiness and Joy.

Indeed, the universality of dance is apparent. The "Koroso" is said to be Hausa dance which is being appreciated by a Tiv poet. This is so easy because dance is part of every cultural group and has the same effect irrespective of language barrier. This is why the poet asks rhetorically in line 17 who can lend him the skills of

the Koroso dance to enable him respond to the combined rhythm of the "winding note of the tubular instrument" and hyena hide drum. The poem's diction is apt as it gives credence to its cultural setting that reveals not only dance but also agriculture as shown in the image of "cultivate".

The ability of the poet to bring such relief to a saddened and sterile world reminds readers of the priest. Thus, we can refer to him as the poet priest who takes his case to the door steps of elders and youths alike in the poem "Of Elders Nowadays," (poem 10). The poem is an admonition on the dignified conduct expected of elders as custodians of every society. Elders are expected to avoid gossip and unrestrained talks against people. Rather, they should settle misunderstandings arising from these. When eating with younger people, elders are expected to leave the last bit of food in the dish for the younger ones. With this traditional etiquette in mind, the poet advises everyone calling them "brothers and sisters" that "...when we begin to approach our walking sticks, we should avoid hunting about with our tongues" as much as we should "not still be scrambling with youths for the last mould of food in the bowl. Elders who involve in these acts cannot assert their authority and therefore, fail to uphold and inculcate moral standards in the youths.

This is another universal truth because any society with elders who have no sense of decorum is lost. This poem raises the issue of "greed". Though the realism of "greed" as subject matter is overblown, it is especially significant here because of its link to the elders. Thus "walking stick" in line 13 is a metonymy because walking stick is normally associated with elders. This device gives the ordinary word a fresh outlook.

It is expected that the elders would give assignment to the youth and sit back to supervise and advise them. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case in present day Nigeria as elders are seen struggling for positions with youths in politics and traditional settings. When they get the positions, they seem to be above any form of advice and law. This type of system is bred by greed, which undoubtedly, has eaten deep into the society. Such attitudes cannot enhance progress and need to be checked.

Conclusion

Realism as a style presents or insist on art to project a 'likeness to life', mirror or get close to reality. It is a conscious literary /aesthetic movement and pattern of writing that depicts real life situations with primary goal of rendering the objective reality of human life. Moses Tsenongu in his poetry clearly presents situations that bother on real life issues and shows the nature of relationships that we can readily connect to in our everyday situations. The realist writer normally does not allow sentiments to becloud his/her vision. Detailed descriptions and imagery in Tsenongu's poetry show clear environments and characters in his poetry are as real to life as we can relate to.

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