

The Seeds of Limitlessness: Dambudzo Marechera's Utopian Thinking

Authors : Emily S. M. Chow

Abstract : The word 'utopia' was coined by Thomas More in Utopia (1516). Its Greek roots 'ou' means 'not' and 'topos' means 'place.' In other words, it literally refers to 'no-place.' However, the possibility of having an alternative and better future society has always been appealing. In fact, at the core of every utopianism is the search for a future alternative state with the anticipation of a better life. Nonetheless, the practicalities of such ideas have never ceased to be questioned. At times, building a utopia presents itself as a divisive act. In addition to the violence that must be employed to sweep away the old regime in order to make space for the new, all utopias carry within them the potential for bringing catastrophic consequences to human life. After all, every utopia seeks to remodel the individual in a very particular way for the benefit of the masses. In this sense, utopian thinking has the potential both to create and destroy the future. While writing during a traumatic transitional period in Zimbabwe's history, Dambudzo Marechera witnessed an age of upheavals in which different parties battled for power over Zimbabwe. Being aware of the fact that all institutionalized narratives, be they originated from the governance of the UK, Ian Smith's white minority regime or Zimbabwe's revolutionary parties, revealed themselves to be nothing more than fiction, Marechera realized the impossibility of determining reality absolutely. As such, this thesis concerns the writing of the Zimbabwean maverick, Dambudzo Marechera. It argues that Marechera writes a unique vision of utopia. In short, for Marechera utopia is not a static entity but a moment of perpetual change. He rethinks utopia in the sense that he phrases it as an event that ceaselessly contests institutionalized and naturalized narratives of a post-colonial self and its relationship to society. Marechera writes towards a vision of an alternative future of the country. Yet, it is a vision that does not constitute a fully rounded sense of utopia. Being cautious about the world and the operation of power upon the people, rather than imposing his own utopian ideals, Marechera chooses to instead peeling away the narrative constitution of the self in relation to society in order to turn towards a truly radical utopian thinking that empowers the individual.

Keywords : African literature, Marechera, post-colonial literature, utopian studies

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020