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Critical Review of M. Keith Booker's Article about Mario Vargas Llosa's "The Green House"

The following paper will present a critical review of M. Keith Booker's article "Vargas Llosa Among the Postmodernists: Redefining the Modernist Novel in The Green House". The article of Mr. Booker can be considered highly effective and helpful for the understanding of the Llosa's writing technique in his novel "The Green House" as it reveals some of the basic elements of modernism in Llosa's work making the novel's evaluation easier and its components clearer. Booker's article without any doubt presents a comprehensive and important criticism highlighting some of the most significant elements of the novel "The Green House" correlating its artistic importance to the modernist principles and notifying of its importance for the understanding of modernism as a movement in regard to post-modernism, especially in Anglo-American literature considering its vital role for the evolution of Latin-American literature in particular.

Booker pays close attention to problem of the definition of modernism and post-modernism. It is revealed that critical evaluation of both movements is complex due to the fact of their interaction between each other and its contradicting principles. Booker claims that Llosa's work can shed light on the issue of the roots and basic principles of the both movements because of its unique qualities and original features. It is stated in the article that "The Green House" is a modernist novel (Booker, 4). The author uses the novel to discuss and define some of the principles of modernism. Llosa's work incorporates techniques similar to those of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. The author also points out that being a huge admirer of Flaubert Llosa uses some of the methods present in "Madame Bovary", for example, non-linear dialogue narrative.

The author points out that Llosa's shifts through time and space in dialogues make it clear that the roots of "the Green House" go back to modernism.

According to Booker, Llosa's work stands between popular reading and exclusive modernist narratives. Booker claims that from one perspective modernist novels are exclusive in their representation of individual and subjective views on the world. On the other hand and contrasting modernism to post-modernism popular reading reflects on the external experiences applicable to large public in order to make a difference and affect the world (Booker, 9). Booker accurately claims that Llosa wrote his novel during the time when left-wing movements in Latin America were arising. Booker says, evaluating the statement of various critics, that Llosa used technical devices and modernist principles to make his novel work for the benefit of people and affect the world by making order from the reality's chaos.

It is claimed in the article that "The Green House" is also very to William Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!" Among the "classic" modernists, as Booker puts it, Faulkner's influence can be seen very clearly in "The Green House". Booker goes even further saying that "The Green House" can even be considered "Absalom, Absalom!" removed to Peruvian jungle. Booker claims that the technique of interlacing dialogues which contains shifts in time and space is the feature that unites Llosa's novel with its modernist predecessors, including Faulkner's works (Booker, 7). About the objectives of what this particular feature is aimed to describe in "The Green House" the article's author suggests that it may be for the benefit of clearer expression of the collective intentions and needs of society or because of the fact that people cannot control time and are bound by the space. The complexity of the narrative in the novel is correlated to its content and the principles of modernism in general.

Booker's comments, critical evaluation, and discussion of Llosa's novel uncovers deeply incorporated messages which make it possible to understand why Llosa's wrote the work in the first place and how it came to be an important work of fiction exemplary of modernism and representing the importance of Latin-American literature. The article bring to attention

uniqueness of the novel in terms of its dedication to modernism through depiction of exclusively Latin-American themes and subjects.

Booker shows what devices allow to consider Llosa's work modernist. These include the use of multiple narrators who are themselves characters, free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness and other formal techniques. Booker comes to the opinion that modernism is united by its dedication to form and formal techniques as well as subjective individual style (Booker, 21). This particularly important feature of modernism is told to be incorporated in the work of classic modernists and Llosa's novel in order to make literature more effecting in changing the reality even though the reasons why the writers want to change it and their objectives may be subjectively different (Booker, 10). From this perspective Llosa's work can be seen as aimed to reflect political changes in Latin America and the upheaval of social changes positive in their nature. Booker cleverly highlights the fact that "The Green House" ends on a positive note even though through the course of the novel a lot of suffering and cruelty is present.

One of the most important conclusions to which Booker comes in the article is that Llosa in "The Green House" uses formal techniques and stylistic elements of modernism (subjectivity) but at the same does not turn away from reality and the pressing world issues. Among such problems described in the novel and pointed out in the article are oppression of women by patriarchal tradition and the negative effect of Catholic dominance over the people of Peru. Llosa is compared to Virginia Woolf and James Joyce on a basis of his use of subjective formal elements to achieve the objectives of collective value and common importance (Booker, 16). It is also revealed that Llosa deprives his characters of individualism (called in the article subjectivism of bourgeoisie) and neither develops, nor completely reveals the nature of his characters showing them from a collective point of view in order to compensate for the faults and mistakes of confrontations and feuds that happen between people because of subjective individualism.

In "The Green House" Llosa reveals the way his character think and their opinions through actions and statement but not with a depiction of their inner monologues. Different narrator and various characters in "The Green House" seem to interact like a whole because Llosa aims to show a whole and not some certain exclusive parts of it individual in their nature. For Llosa collective benefit is more important than just the expression of subjective individual opinions. Booker compares Llosa's aim for change with Virginia Woolf's desire to challenge masculine dominance, James Joyce's concern with Ireland's political crisis, and T. S. Eliot's appeal to return to traditional Christian values (Booker, 12). In the same way formal techniques incorporated by Llosa's in his novel correspond with modernist texts because of the general resemblance of "The Green House" with the novels such as "Absalom, Absalom!"

It would be fair to consider Booker's article very effective in revealing the meaningfulness and effectiveness of Llosa's novel due to different reasons. Firstly, Booker successfully places "The Green House" in modernist tradition drawing a variety of reasons why Llosa's is a good example of the movement. Then, Booker outstandingly and very effectively proves the importance of "The Green House" for Latin American literature supporting it by the opinions of other critics and highlighting the significance of Llosa's work in terms of it formal success. Bookers explains why and how Llosa's "The Green House" is written in a form it is written and to what extend its success depends on modernist tradition (Booker, 19). All this help to comprehend more clear hidden layers of Llosa's novel, its impact, its roots, and the messages incorporated in it.

Booker's thorough critical analysis succeeds because of the large background that he draws for it and which helps to associate "The Green House" with the works that inspired it. Despite all the qualities of modernist works the article highlight the originality of the novel due to its difference from the works of Anglo-American modernists and the original features is has as a prominent work of Latin-American literature boom of the 1960s (Booker, 22). All these factors united together alongside with everything reviewed earlier and above in a systematized way

evaluate “The Green House” presenting it as a highly valuable example of modernist literature significant for the artistic tradition and its principles as well as for Latin American societies in general, and Peruvian people in particular. The article of Mr. Booker reveals a lot about the novel’s structure explaining the ways in which its narrative is constructed, the purposes of the narrative techniques, importance of the covered subjects, and meaningfulness of the incorporated messages overall evaluating “The Green House” to a point where it stands as a work undoubtedly worth of praise, analysis, and evaluation due to the position its writer occupies at the crossroads between the modernist and postmodernist traditions.

All in all, in the course of the provided here critical reviews the importance of Keith Booker’s article for the understanding of Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel “The Green House” was explained, evaluated, and discussed. It was revealed that the approach of the author towards the novel is undoubtedly valuable and greatly organized. Among the most important elements pointed out by the article’s author in favor of Llosa’s artistic genius are the effectiveness of its modernist components. In regard to modernist classics Llosa’s work was proved to use formal element to achieve collectively beneficial objective valuable for Peruvian society. Subjectivity of modernist approach in Llosa’s work and social determinism present in “The Green House” were explained to cause rejection of subjective individuality in favor of the collective social values. Subjective approach and formal elements used by Llosa’s in the novel were evaluated in terms of their usefulness for the achievement of the goals of social importance.

Works Cited

Booker, K. M. *Notes Towards the Postmodern: Vargas Llosa Among the Postmodernists: Redefining the Modernist Novel in The Green House*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press

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