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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59401

Title: The Narrative Potential of the Magic Bracelet in Rougbêinga by Norbert Zongo and Les Bouts de bois de Dieu by Ousmane Sembène.

Recommendation: Accept after major revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		YES		
Techn. Quality			YES	
Clarity			YES	
Significance		YES		

Reviewer's ID: JPR-212

Detailed Reviewer's Report

General Assessment

The article examines the narrative role of magical bracelets in Norbert Zongo's Rougbêinga and Ousmane Sembène's Les Bouts de bois de Dieu. The combination of ethnocriticism and structural criticism provides a potentially useful framework for the comparative analysis. The discussion identifies relevant passages in both novels and explains how the bracelets create expectations, introduce possible conflicts and connect different stages of the narrative.

However, the central argument that the bracelets function as decisive helpers sometimes goes beyond what the textual evidence establishes. The authors should present a more balanced interpretation and distinguish between cultural beliefs represented in the novels and the narrative explanations of particular events.

Major Issues Requiring Revision

The interpretation of Les Bouts de bois de Dieu requires particular attention. The manuscript suggests that Bakary the Elder's bracelets help the women overcome obstacles during their march and contribute to the success of the railway workers' strike. Although this interpretation is interesting, the authors should give greater consideration to the women's courage, organisation, solidarity and political commitment. These factors are central to understanding their achievement.

The bracelets may be interpreted as symbols of protection, cultural identity and collective confidence. They may also function as narrative devices that prepare readers for forthcoming conflicts. However, the manuscript should avoid presenting supernatural power as the established cause of the strike's success unless this interpretation is convincingly supported by the novels.

The discussion of cultural practices relies considerably on a recent master's dissertation and broad statements about traditional African worldviews. The authors

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should consult a wider range of reliable ethnographic and literary sources. Cultural claims should be connected to specific communities and historical contexts rather than generalised across African societies.

The term fetish also requires careful consideration because of its colonial history and its association with earlier European interpretations of African religious practices. The authors acknowledge this issue but should explain more clearly why they retain the term and how it is used within the study.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The manuscript introduces ethnocriticism and Roland Barthes's structural analysis of narrative. However, the application of these approaches is not consistently demonstrated throughout the discussion.

The authors should explain more clearly how concepts such as distributional units, indices, actants and narrative levels are applied to specific passages from the two novels. Each theoretical concept should contribute directly to the analysis rather than remain primarily descriptive.

The argument could be strengthened by organising the discussion around the appearance of each bracelet, the conflict associated with it, the subsequent narrative development and its contribution to the overall structure of the novel.

The research hypothesis should also be reconsidered in the conclusion. In particular, the death of Soura despite possessing the ancestral bracelet raises important questions about the limits of its narrative function. This aspect deserves a more explicit explanation.

Accuracy and References

The authors should carefully check the consistency of in text citations and bibliographic details.

The manuscript refers to Barthes as 1966 in several places but cites 1996 in the methodological discussion. The reference list identifies the 1966 publication. The authors should verify the intended source and ensure that the dates are consistent.

Similarly, the discussion refers to Hans Robert Jauss's terminology using a 1990 date, whereas the reference list includes a 1978 publication. The correct edition and publication details should be verified.

The reference list should follow a consistent academic style. Author names, publication years, book titles, journal details, page ranges, access dates and online references should be presented uniformly.

The authors should also check the spelling and formatting of French titles, personal names and specialised cultural terms throughout the manuscript.

Language and Presentation

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The manuscript is generally understandable, but careful language editing is required. Several sentences are lengthy and contain repetitive expressions that could be simplified without losing the intended meaning.

Some theoretical expressions, including the phrase traditional semiotic code, require a more precise explanation. The authors should ensure that specialised terminology is introduced clearly and used consistently.

Headings, spacing, punctuation, quotation marks and the presentation of French expressions should also be standardised.

The abstract provides a reasonable overview of the study, but the main comparative finding could be stated more precisely. The authors should ensure that the claims made in the abstract correspond directly to the evidence presented in the main text.

Strengths of the Manuscript

The article has a clear comparative focus and engages with an important theoretical question concerning the relationship between literary texts and their cultural contexts.

Its discussion of the placement of bracelet descriptions and their relationship to later conflicts provides useful examples of close textual analysis. The study also demonstrates how an apparently minor cultural object can contribute to the development of narrative expectations and the organisation of a literary work.

With a more balanced interpretation of collective agency, stronger cultural evidence and a more systematic application of the theoretical framework, the manuscript could make a useful contribution to comparative African literary studies.

Final Recommendation

I recommend acceptance after major revision.

The manuscript addresses an interesting subject and demonstrates potential for publication. However, substantial revisions are required before it can be considered suitable for publication. The authors should refine the central argument, provide stronger support for cultural interpretations, apply the stated theoretical framework more systematically and correct inconsistencies in references and language.

The revised manuscript should demonstrate more clearly that the bracelets can function simultaneously as cultural symbols, representations of protection and narrative devices. At the same time, the interpretation should recognise the importance of human agency, social organisation and political action in shaping the events described in the novels.