

# A review of Times of The Supermen

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Times of the Supermen is arguably the only science fiction novel written by a Nigerian writer. I have read the book and it is just explosive. Besides the knowledge of concepts and scientific theories it brings to the table, it also brings forward many social issues. I have decided to write a review of the Novel.



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TIMES OF THE SUPERMEN

A review of the Novel

*I speak of the times of the supermen, for in here shall we find the courage to proceed.*

Those were the opening words of this new science thriller written by Tope Apoola who himself is a new comer to the writing scene.

The book is spectacular not only in the subject it has explored in its 435 pages and the manner of its writing, but also because it raises several questions which though have plagued many minds for long are seldom publicly raised.

The book is divided into three books, with each story existing independently and also serving as parts of the bigger story. The plot revolves around a discovery by wise men, of some strange formations on the face of Mars which they attribute to deliberate intelligence. This is based on the premise that these formations are so extensive and precise that they couldn't have been made naturally. Some intelligent beings created them while they were on Mars, eons ago. The controversy surrounding this mysterious discovery deepens when another discovery is made of similar formations on a huge rock in England, dated to prehistoric times. Some signs are also discovered secretly at the site that were found out to be genetic codes of some proteins that will make humans attain immortality and acquire uncommon superhuman abilities which might be accompanied also with uncommon instincts. Should these strange signs correlate, then it will mean that these proposed super beings, who were lords of the ancient times, once lived on Mars and actually visited the Earth, a long time ago, when hominids were non-existent.

Book one opens at the tail end of the saga as the narrator introduces us to the subject of the matter. It is the year 2287 in a future technologically advanced Nigeria, and a series of unprecedented events have reached a climax in which the futuristic world leaders have declared war and the nation prepares for battle against the faceless enemies that seek to perpetuate a new world order. The narrator takes us back into the past, to the year 2003 when the story is just unfolding.

*How shall I in the middle of this chaos when the world's sanity and conscience and good judgement is withered.....*

*Mine is a story of many ages, a tale as seen by one man, ending with just one assertion, that there are answers; answers to why we are here.....*

*At the end of it all we shall learn that there is some truth in many orthodox propositions. Our hearts shall be gladdened, for goodness is supreme among the forces that be.*

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From chapter two, the narrator explores the story as seen from a child's point of view. He speaks about his childhood and the Nigerian society in which he grew.

*â A place where many who tried to live tomorrow became stuck....*

*A country where every old man was King and every young man listened....*

*A world of laughter and drama that foreigners would gladly drop their money to watch.â*

He also speaks about his family; the tension between his parents due to the effect of his father's job at the Institute of Special Studies. As the narrator grows up the real aim of the story emerges, as we come across more characters and unprecedented events start unfolding. Rumours and legends abound. Series of hypotheses start to emerge, partly in credit to Chekhov, the Russian naturalist who delivers series of seminars and hypothesized multiple universes and that the Black hole must have been the gateway to our universe, from where ethereal beings must have sneaked in, eons ago. Governments support his researches and the Nigerian President even made policies along his eugenic ideas, declaring in a highly eloquent speech that government should reserve the right to birth control.

The narrator's experience culminates into a multilateral government project to send 24 young African astronauts to space. The narrator is chosen as part of the team. Book one ends with an accident, the Mars crew lost their way and all contacts with the Earth. They braced themselves for a long sojourn on the red planet.

Book two explores another timeline preceding book one. Here, instead of the narrator, the reader sees the story through the eyes of the book's important characters; Olabode, the troubled bachelor who was also the narrator's uncle, Sola Aderomoke; the elegant, adventurous female journalist, Lord; the intellectual pervert who leads a profane organization, Olanusi; the brilliant but senile psychiatrist. Each of them has their own story and yet all their stories are interwoven. Their lives are interwoven in a manner that contributes to the major story line.

Sola is Olabode's girlfriend, Olanusi is the mythical lord's former psychiatrist. When Olabode starts to have schizophrenic problems, he approaches Olanusi who helps unravel the significance of his hallucinations. Olabode would dream of another life in another age. He did not just dream, he sees life as it was, 30,000 years ago. He experiences the war of the primates, a long time ago in prehistoric England, when the modern Homo sapiens triumphed over the primitive, brutish Neanderthals. In this myth and dream he met a La kenu who turned out to be Sola, of his modern world. The plot thickens as lord and his neo-nihilist movement, the human renaissance plan to take over the world and usher a new age of the supermen, where superhuman abilities through genetic alteration will spurn the evolution of a new breed of men. Is there a grand conspiracy by the ancient lords here, those beings who left those genomic signs on the ancient rocks several years before, or is this twist of events just a mere coincidence? The fate of the world nonetheless appears to have been sealed

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At the beginning of Book 3 the narrator returns from Mars with the rest of the crew in the year 2287, meeting a very different world that has advanced scientifically and technologically.

The saga culminates in the ultimate confrontation and defeat of evil, epitomised by the human renaissance organization's plan to create a new world order that will eliminate what it considers ordinary men, as opposed to supermen, which they hope to create.

*A time comes, when the mere man will seem to the superman, an embarrassment*

The book takes on some philosophical issues pertinent to the origin of man, and his continuous search for his identity. Several questions are raised and focus brought on lingering, controversial matters such as evolution, abortion, racism, and religion. It is intricate in its description of events. The style of writing is also good, with frequent flash-backs and rapidly evolving plot. The story timeline actually commences in book two, goes back to book 1 and finally ends in book 3. The language is fascinating; it is similar to the rich, King James English typical of writers like J.R Tolkien and C.S Lewis. The author did a good job of blending together, the various complex characters of the book. Yet the book is not without flaw. Spelling errors occur randomly on its pages. At times, the plot progresses too slowly and in such a complicated way that the reader may lose touch with the characters. The writer makes up for this in the rich dialogues embedded in the plot.

Altogether, I will say this is one of the most interesting Nigerian novels I've read. The theme and the plot have a way of captivating a reader's interest in a way that one doesn't get released until he reads to the end. It is expected that controversy will arise concerning the intricate issues raised by the book and some readers may find themselves averse to the opinions of the narrator. Tope Apoola deserves some commendation for putting forward this brilliant debut.

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