

TELLING LIVES: THE PERPETUAL TRAUMA

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ABSTRACT

The quest for identity has always been an urge of any writer. These writings reflect the social milieu where writings are the mirror of any society. The aspirations and these betrayals find their originality and identity in words only. Being applied on African continent this appears to find its demonstration where the modern African writers like Wole Soyinka, Es'kia Mphahlele, Nadine Gordimer expressed their views in post colonial context. No doubt, a milestone came forward in the name of Barack Hussain Obama, the President of America as a beacon light for all Africans.

In the similar way the novel, "The Wanderers" (1971) by Es'kia Mphahlele describes the same originality in the form of quest of identity. This clearly manifests Nelson Mandela's Socialism who takes his keynotes from Marxism. It is the concept of alienation- intellectual, cultural and historical where this socialism emerges out. The idea comes out that the continent is misfired in the name of capitalism; they have been bluffed that capitalism is dictatorship. This concept comes true in Mphahlele's novel that begins with where Mphahlele in his autobiography "Down Second Avenue" (1959) ends his views in the form of the protagonist Timi Taban.

KEYWORDS: Alienation, Exile, Socialism, The Wanderers, Marxism

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary African novelist in his novel "The Wanderers" has depicted the atrocities afflicted by the European countries. The novel, no doubt deals the same arena where the aspirations and betrayals find their individuality. The novelist describes the concept of exile effectively. His primary concern is the nature of exile, specifically the search for a free place. Mphahlele elasticizes this theme through the intertwined lives of Tabane and Cartwright. The rootless wandering of this quest is emphasized by the book's rambling structure and its frequent shifts of time, place, and narrative point of view. In part, Tabane chooses exile because he is afraid of being overwhelmed by hatred, but he discovers that a tremendous burden of guilt accompanies his departure from his native land. Perhaps more important is his realization that "even in one's own country one's an exile of a kind," and that exile is a state of mind as well as a physical dislocation.

In *The Wanderers*, the death of Tabane's son Felang, an African nationalist guerrilla who is captured by white farmers along the South African border and thrown to the crocodiles, functions as a frame, marking the opening and conclusion of the book. After the opening reference to Felang's death, the narrative returns to recount Tabane's last years in South Africa, where he lives in the slums of Tirong with his wife, Karabo, and writes for the magazine *Bongo*. In Tirong, he is introduced to Naledi Kubu, an attractive young black woman who is convinced that her husband, Rampa, has been shanghaied to work as slave farm labor.

Tabane agrees to investigate the situation, and accompanied by Naledi, he travels to the suspected farm region and manages to get a job as a laborer. His observations and conversations with other workers prove that Rampa was indeed shanghaied, badly beaten, dismissed, and subsequently died. Tabane returns to Tirong, and his expose is published. Although some farm laborers are released because of his story, Tabane is discouraged by the slight effect it has on the

repressive system of government. Moreover, because of his story, Tabane's application for a passport is rejected, strengthening his resolve to leave South Africa.

The second part of the novel is narrated by Steven Cartwright, the white editor of *Bongo*, a character who serves as a foil to Tabane. Cartwright's rambling account mixes news of Tabane's escape from South Africa with descriptions of Naledi's carefully proper rejection of Cartwright's romantic advances. She subsequently travels to Goshen to be with her parents when unrest over new passbook regulations breaks out. During the violence, she assists victims and displays confidence in her own ability to act, but she is also attacked and nearly raped by a white policeman. She demonstrates her courage by successfully bringing charges against him, but the policeman is given a suspended sentence and kept on the force.

In the third part of the novel, Mphahlele uses an omniscient narrator to describe events that take place two years later in Iboyoru. Tabane, who has illegally crossed the South African border and has been later joined by Karabo and their two children, accepts a teaching position. When Cartwright, now a fellow exile working out of London, visits the couple in Iboyoru, they learn that Naledi has agreed to marry him. Yet Tabane and the other South African exiles he meets in Iboyoru are dissatisfied with their new prosperity and troubled by the rootlessness of their exile. It is the sense of hollowness where the idea is revealed like: "Autumn here was real, not like in the green fields we had passed. The trees stood naked, and there were several rocks that looked like intruders or usurpers.

It was like this for several miles. I felt exposed as we resumed our journey. The silence around continued to sin in my being." (P. 63) Tabane and Karabo are also concerned by the rebelliousness of their eldest son, Felang, an important character, who is not introduced until this point in the book. Tabane suspects that Felang's stubborn refusal to attend to his schoolwork and his irritating failure to adhere to accepted standards of behavior are symptoms of the family's alienation from its homeland. The final part of the novel, again narrated by Tabane, is set in Lao-Kiku. Tabane continues to be disillusioned by the limitations of teaching, and his family life is further disrupted by Felang's erratic behavior. Felang eventually runs away from home, and Tabane's work permit is not renewed.

At the end, Tabane is considering the necessity of leaving Africa. "The black must enter the white man's house through the back door. The black man does most of the dirty work. When a white man who hasn't gone far in school is given such work he says I'm not a kaffir. Black man cleans the streets but mustn't walk freely on the pavement; Black man must build houses for the white man but cannot live in them; Black man cooks the white man's food but eats what is left over. Don't listen to anyone bluff you and say Black and White are brothers". (p. 16-17) *The Wanderers* is a loosely plotted, autobiographical novel, in which author Ezekiel Mphahlele, through the protagonist Timi Tabane, continues the story of his life from the point at which his autobiography *Down Second Avenue* (1959) ends.

Mphahlele has "emerged naturally from South African conditions, and in fact, we are seeing it emerge all over Africa as a literature of self-definition. It has become a peculiar genre in Africa, a genre that depicts the very social conditions that have given rise to it" (Lindfors 1976, 28) *Down Second Avenue* describes Mphahlele's years in the black townships and urban ghettos of South Africa, but *The Wanderers* concentrates on the period of exile in Nigeria and Kenya that followed his escape from South Africa in 1957.

The novel also expresses Mphahlele's belief in traditional African humanism, "the divine power that is in man." It is a philosophy that teaches that "you are a person because of other people." Thus, Mphahlele's humanism emphasizes man's communal responsibilities as well as underscoring each individual's responsibility to be actively engaged in an attempt to control his own destiny. Unfortunately, such self-realization is thwarted by the oppressive system of apartheid in

South Africa, but Felang's active resistance and Naledi's ability to survive cultural change and personal tragedy suggest faith in the human spirit and the hope that a better future can exist.

CONCLUSIONS

Steven Cartwright is Tabane's white counterpart. Like Tabane, he is acutely aware of his color and the racist repression of South African culture. Yet while Tabane can resort only to escape and exile, Cartwright must actively disengage himself from his own racist heritage. His love for the black woman Naledi is a conscious effort to confront the system; he openly admits that his attraction to her is an attraction to that which is forbidden. Although a white South African, Cartwright, like Tabane, is repelled by the racism of South Africa, chooses to live in exile, and suffers from a sense of homelessness.

The emerging thought of Marxism is the beacon light of emerging Africans where the President of America proved himself as a mighty man. It is the right of giving equal importance to everyone which takes its keynote from the Marxism which focuses on equal liberty.

REFERENCES

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5. This is a query that has been solicited by countless feminists. Is feminism not adequate for every single woman all over the world? Why do women of color keep clamouring that feminism is not the answer for all their requirements, dilemma, and predicament and

