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ABSTRACT

Cultural practices relates to the physical artifacts and intangible characteristics of a group or civilisation that are passed down through the years, preserved in the present, and endowed for future generations. A nation's cultural heritage and natural history are extremely valuable and distinctive. It is a persona that may be shared with the rest of the world. Culture and heritage promotes our national identity by providing a comprehensive framework for the protection of cultural heritage, which includes cultural sites, old buildings, monuments, shrines, and landmarks with cultural and historical importance. Culture and its heritage reflect and define values, beliefs, and aspirations, defining the national identity of a people. It is critical to preserve our cultural legacy in order to maintain our identity as a people.

KEYWORDS: African Identity, Culture, Heritage, Down Second Avenue, EskiaMphahlele, Post-Colonial Theory, Afrocentricity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apartheid has inspired the literature of several South African Black writers. Mphahlele's autobiography, Down Second Avenue (1959), was published during the apartheid era and recounts incidents that transpired during that time. During apartheid, the majority of Black people worked as domestic workers, with lower wages than Whites. This is due to the power disparity between the races. The progress of Black South African politics, economics, and human rights, on the other hand, has destroyed their opposition to the White regime.

While some Black people were opposing the apartheid regime physically, others, such as Mphahlele and other authors like Nadine Gordimer, poets such as Mongane Wally Serote, SiphoSepamla, and Mbuyiseni Mtshali, saw and recounted the events. The employment of a pen and paper as the main tool for opposing apartheid and advocating for democracy became commonplace. Protest writing is about sharing knowledge and views with the reader in the form of an autobiography, poetry, or drama, and one believes that protesting with a pen and paper is preferable to protesting physically. Mphahlele can be regarded as a writer who archives history and proposes solutions while protesting, based on this synopsis. He was a victim of the apartheid government's injustices. For his part, Mphahlele arise inquisitive minds and conscientisation of the Blacks to be aware of the lethal deeds. Therefore, this study is interested in the aspects of identity as portrayed in Mphahlele ‘s autobiography, Down Second Avenue (1959).
2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Abramovitz (2017), South Africa is still suffering from the effects of a previous authoritarian regime, but it is currently engaged in a transformational movement. This has unavoidable implications for national identity and, by extension, the identity of the citizens represented by this category. This study aims to look into the issue of identity enhancement in Es'kiaMphahlele's autobiographical work *Down Second Avenue* (1959). This means that the autobiography is entirely about the author's life, and other characters who appear in the author's interactions also contribute to a similar method to representing society's ideology on language, culture, and politics. In addition, *Down Second Avenue* (1959) is a text that emphasises the past apartheid regime. As a result, while politicians used political rallies to protest, teachers imparted political education, and music composers created protest lyrics, Es'kiaMphahlele used his pen to fight injustices while also promoting African values and traditions and making people aware of these values in this text.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To frame this study, the researcher has relied on Post-Colonial and Afrocentrism theory. These theories were chosen for their relation to the study's main issue, which is identity.

3.1 Post-Colonial Theory

Post-Colonial Theory focuses on the colonial legacies that still exist in countries that have been colonised previously. This theory seeks to explain the challenges that developed when colonialism ended. According to Bhabha (1994:7), Post-colonial Theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were previously colonies of other countries. The philosophy revolves around the theme of otherness and resistance. The postcolonial theory was developed to dispel imperialist prejudices and myths about colonised peoples.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), Post-colonial Theory evolved from the inadequacy of European ideas to confront the complexities and mixed cultural sources of post-colonial writing. The theory originated as a result of western ideologies failing to comprehend the ways of life and cultures of colonised peoples. Following colonialism, the African collective way of doing things was disregarded.

According to Mogoboya (2011), the theory embraces all civilisations influenced by imperialism from colonial times to the present. Colonialism tainted many Africans' customs, morals, beliefs, and attitudes. The adoption of a western way of life or modernism instilled greed in Africans. As a result, the postcolonial system is a framework or strategy used by postcolonial theorists to refute and deconstruct myths and preconceptions about other continents held by the canter (Europe) (Africa in this case).

3.2 Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is a theoretical approach to identification that examines the issue from the perspective of Africans. It addresses the need for Africans to assert themselves historically, economically, socially, politically, and philosophically without interfering with the identity of other nation-states. According to Asante (1998: 6):
One of the key assumptions of the Afrocentrist is that all relationships are based on centres and margins and the distance from either the centre or the margin. When black people view themselves as centred and central, in their history then they see themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than as marginals on the periphery of political or economic experience. Using this paradigm, human beings have discovered that all phenomena are expressed in the fundamental categories of space and time….relationships develop and knowledge increases to the extent we can appreciate the issues of space and time.

According to the Afrocentrists, the concept that the Greeks invented rational thought is historically incorrect, and that the construction of Western knowing ideas based on the Greek paradigm began with the European Renaissance. “Among the societal challenges that Afrocentricity seeks to address are racism, group marginalisation, discrimination, genocide, and European dominance of black people,” adds Mahasha (2014: 20). The Western dogma that argues Europeans developed reason marginalises non-Europeans and is the primary source of doubt regarding African achievements.

Eurocentric ideals have been able to maintain their privileged assumptions, which exaggerate distinctions between Africa and Europe, due to the prominence of power-based ideologies in the Western world (Smith, 2008: 88). Africans and Chinese people, in the opinion of the West, could not reason. Only the Europeans could construct sensible ideas. As a result, Afrocentrists contend that the Eurocentric viewpoint has evolved into an ethnocentric viewpoint that elevates the European experience while undervaluing all others. Afrocentricity is not the polar opposite of Eurocentrism; rather, it is a distinct analytical perspective that does not strive to occupy all of space and time, as Eurocentrism does.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Griffin (2005: 38) believes that autobiography is a text that demonstrates how individuals are perceived and judged both within a culture and by those with more distance from it. Although an autobiography is about an individual, it can also be about other collective subjects, such as politics, culture and language. Mphahlele’s text *Down Second Avenue* can be classified as autobiography.

Therefore, the study will assume *Down Second Avenue* as a major study for autobiography because Griffin (2005) asserts that, to read autobiography reveals different accounts of the same life and reveals the essential instability of cultural judgments, as well as bringing into sharp relief those certainties of the nineteenth century which modernism made a determined effort to disturb. Moreover, it is seen in Mphahlele’s text that he participates as a literary protest writer. The autobiography has an aspect that it is as well about thinking back, the individual talks about the child-that-was; early ages which are developed by cultural society, supporting with events of people’s interactions and dates of when those events happened as *Down Second Avenue* reveal how Mphahlele grew up as in the rural areas at his early teen years and narrates as he became a literary giant.
4.1 Identity

Critics definitions indicate that autobiography is the way individuals embody their identity, therefore, Wehmeier (2005: 739) suggests that “identity is who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group(s) which make them different from others.” Similarly, Down Second Avenue is about Es’kia Mphahlele’s life, as he is the one who wrote it himself and his text (autobiography) likely identifies him precisely in a detailed form. On the other hand, Scott, cited in Rajchman (1995: 5) asserts that identity is taken as the referential sign of a fixed set of customs, practices and meanings, an enduring heritage, a readily identifiable socio-logical category, a set of shared traits and/or experiences.

According to Mogoboya (2011: 1), identity is a broad concept to outline and, as such, complex to explore because it has many nuances of meaning. There are, therefore, divergent and divergent definitions attached to it. He cited (Bhabha 1990: 1; 4), the loyalty ‘of national culture (identity) is neither unified nor unitary concerning itself, nor must it be seen simply as other concerning what is outside or beyond it ‘. Bhabha considers identity (national, cultural, political) as the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force, in other words, identity is an imaginary ideal whose necessity brings social cohesion within communities and nations ‘(Mogoboya 2011: 1).

The Encarta Dictionary as cited by Mogoboya (2011: 1) elaborates that, identity deals with who people or what things are; especially the name(s) people or things are known by. This could be relevant to Mphahlele’s autobiography Down Second Avenue, he uses names of people in his society as well as names of places that could notify one which ethnic group or geographical area Mphahlele’s text identifies about himself. Furthermore, the study will view identity through the character of which Es’kia Mphahlele is. Well-structured definition by Jappe (2001: 2) asserts that Identity seems a simple concept but every one of s has an individual identity by our beliefs, values, styles, manners, characters and ways of acting, etc.-which is constituted by the ways we define ourselves, i.e. who we are.

Jappe (2001: 2) asserts that people identify with those with whom they share a common history, culture and tradition, and political difference which constitute our collective identity. Therefore, Jappe cited in Hall (2001:394) when they introduce the idea of collective identity by defining it in terms of one, shared culture, and a sort of collective, one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common (Jappe cited in Hall (2001:394). Down Second Avenue demonstrates the notion of a rural and urban communal way of living, to reveal the identity of the native societies. Mphahlele narrates how it is helpful to have a communal setting as he has accumulated sufficient integral lessons of cultural values from what is talked about in the communal settings.

Besides, in this way, our collective identity reflects the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as one people and, with stable, divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history ‘, (Jappe cited in Hall, 2001:394). Ngugi on the other hand supports the idea that culture embodies moral, ethical and aesthetic values through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe, however, this set of values is the basis of a people ‘s identity on which our identity is built ‘(Jappe, 2001). Therefore, Ngugi points that, besides personal factors, our culture and history play an integral part in shaping our identity; in other words, our identity is strongly related to the past politics or history, culture and language ‘(2001: 441).
4.2 Language Identity

Neville (2013: 95) claims that language is the main instrument of communication at the disposal of human beings; consequently, language(s) play a role in the formation of individual and social identity, Down Second Avenue witnesses the discourse of the languages which are over-powered by the English language. However, the study here focuses partly on the language used to produce an autobiographic text in a language that is not mother tongue to the author, but education influenced him to use the English language to express himself. Ashcroft et al (1989: 55) claims that language is a discourse of power, just as Down Second Avenue provides the terms and the structures which Mphahlele offers the reader with his life in precise chronological order, a method by which the real ‘s, names, are determined, notions of universality can, like the language which suggests them, become imperialistic.

Waugh (2006: 521) also supports the idea that language has been a crucial feature of recent debate in the field of the post-colonial theory, notably in the exchanges between the African writers like Chinua Achebe and NgugiwaThiong’o about what language to use when recounting forgotten histories’. Both African writers challenge the language to an extent that they seek identity in their writing in terms of language, the debate mainly on how and why they write in English as a second language as it is not their own to embrace. The language itself implies certain assumptions about the world, a certain history, and a certain way of seeing. If one ‘s language or one ‘s immediate perceptions of the world do not concur then they must be suppressed in favour of that which the language itself reveals to be obvious ‘, (Ashcroft et al 1989: 55). Therefore, the study presents language as a note to focus on in Down Second Avenue as Mphahlele portrays how language affected his life.

Moreover, since this view considers all individual action to be driven by internally motivated states, individual language use is seen as involving a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in both form and message as individuals strive to make personal connections to their surrounding contexts ‘, (Spencer 2006: 30). Norris (2007: 657), cited by Spencer (2006) asserts that identity is constantly interactively constructed on a micro-level, where an individual’s identity is claimed, contested and re-constructed in interaction and relation to the other participants. Spencer (2006: 35) suggests that conceptualisations of a language used in applied linguistics draw from several sources; one of the more significant is Giddens ‘s (1984) Thdrawof Structuration ‘.

4.3 Cultural Identity

Spencer (2006: 45) suggests that culture exists as part of the language or part of us, as language users. Mphahlele from a village outside Polokwane in Limpopo province narrates his story along lines that help one to notice the cultural value he praises in Down Second Avenue. Mahfouz (2003: 14) asserts that culture is a dynamic phenomenon encompassing the totality of attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and world-views; it is an integral part of every human society and all social groups are characterised by it ‘.

4.4 Political Identity

Tansey (2000: 106) says that one important aspect of the way people identify themselves politically is to consider the names of some typical political parties, for example; African National Congress (ANC). Few of the names may be interpreted to refer in a general way to a temperamental approach to politics: ANC (African/National distinguishes the identity of the
political party in South Africa formed during the apartheid era). Mphahlele’s political views were contained within the political framework of parties he was familiar with within the South African context. Parties such as the ANC and the All-African Conversion; were the political institutions with which Mphahlele identifies, his behaviour and political perceptions.

However, Andrian (2004: 103) claims that politics comprises all the activities of cooperation, negotiation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby people go about organizing the use, production or distribution of human, natural and other resources in the cause of the production and reproduction of their biological and social life. Finally, the study is firmly based on postcolonial theory which covers all cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (Ashcroft, 1989: 2). These cultures are gradually faded out during the imperial era until today. Therefore, Down Second Avenue narrates more about the life of Mphahlele during the apartheid period. Mphahlele text deals with the previous oppressed people ‘s quest for identity based on language, culture and politics; as well as history.

Mogoboya (2011: 31) suggests that postcolonialism is a tool, a method used by post-colonial theorists to falsify and debunk the myth and stereotypes people have about the Other continents (Africa in this case) ‘. This may prove the point that black South Africans assert the notion that writers such as Es’kia Mphahlele promote a quest for identity and profound knowledge to the next generation. Ashcroft et al. (1989: 17) said Postcolonial studies reflect the widespread political, economic, and cultural differences between modern African ‘. Different cultural practices in parts African colonised have a different approach to the sets of norms, beliefs and ways of living, so as it is a concern of the study to expose views about the African cultural practices.

Down Second Avenue is a literary text that demonstrates the life of South African Black society as Mphahlele narrates his life from one place to the other in South Africa. The study will view this text as it portrays African perspectives from Mphahlele views of life during the postcolonial era. Therefore, the study will not leave out the notion of society as an integral aspect that shapes an individual ‘s view of life. The name Mphahlele ‘informs the study to partly investigate the type of tribe on which Mphahlele belief is based. In nutshell, the study will employ other critical suggestions and postcolonial theory to reveal the response of Down Second Avenue in terms of language, culture and politics.

The first objective of this study is to show how the author in the autobiography demonstrates identity in terms of language. The study has will depict that Mphahlele grew up in Maupaneng, Limpopo, South Africa where he was exposed to communal living and responsibilities. For example, Mphahlele and other boys had to bring along the wood, collected while attending to grazing animals for the benefit of sitting at the Communal Fire Place so that their elders could tell them stories. This is an Afrocentric perception. The way Mphahlele embraces the traditional and communal way of living depicts how South African Black people lived in the past and many communities still live.

From Mphahlele literary expression, this study concludes that he is dealing with his past, writing in a protest manner to expose the political system of the past. He also proves how he used education and knowledge as a platform to protest against unjust political systems. Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that identity and dignity are less important than racial status. Identity is strictly who people are and it has to be maintained. The text reveals the author learning throughout the text. Therefore, the study recommends that literary texts should be written to show the notion of identity that readers cannot avoid practising. The study has shown identity as an integral field of study. Additional research can be done to
show how identity can be maintained. The study, therefore, will recommend more identity investigations that will focus mainly on Black South African writers and how they correct perceptions about Black South African identities.

5. METHODOLOGY
The purpose of this research is to conduct a critical analysis of EskiaMphahlele's Down Second Avenue (1959) in terms of how the book portrays identity, language, and culture as revealed by political responses to apartheid. The qualitative research method will be used in this investigation. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006: 64) define qualitative research as:

A research study that is concerned with collecting and analysing information in many forms chiefly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve “depth” rather than “breath”.

The study will therefore use the qualitative approach to analyse the selected text to explore in detail how the novel explores identity, culture and language.

Data Analysis
EskiaMphahlele Down Second Avenue is a primary source of data in the study. Content analysis as a technique will be applied to examine data in the novel to answer the research question raised by the study.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Mphahlele's autobiography, Down Second Avenue (1959), is written in English and tells the story of his life. His biography is written meticulously, as if English, an intercultural communication, is his first language. He began learning English at a young age. Mphahlele's early education in his home village of Maupaneng had an impact on his use of the English language. The drills learning method below informs the readers that his native language, his mother tongue, influenced his learning of the English language.

We were chanting away the multiplication tables and word spelling: M-A-T, indicating each letter by clapping of hands. The teacher bellowed out: ‘F-O-X, fokos; B-O-X, bokos; F-I-X, fikis’ which we echoed while we marvelled at the look of the words on the board and the miraculous sound of them’ (Mphahlele 1959: 2).

The italicised pronunciations of English language nouns show how Mphahlele's mother tongue or first language influenced how he and other learners understood the grammar of the English language.

6.1 The communal place
According to Merriam & Webster dictionary, the word communal refers to something that is shared or used in common by members of a group or community. The word 'communal' implies that there were different people who were invited from various parts of the community to the fireplace. Even though women are portrayed as a central feature of the Sepedi speaking people, women used to bring food to their husbands at the Fire-Place; this
is exactly how Pedi cultural norms are on the side of women serving food to their husbands but not being allowed to participate in the Fire-Place discussion. As a result, it is reasonable to say that Mphahlele learned even how communal duty is exercised when he confesses:

“The man whose wife was ill and maybe had no daughter to cook for him had his food with the others at the Fire-Place” (Mphahlele, 1959:5)

Away from women and girls, men and boys were discussing vital issues. One believes it was critical to be there at the Fire-Place to learn. At the Fire-Place, customary or traditional laws were enforced. At the Fire-Place, Mphahlele was thinking about language; the elders at the time of Mphahlele's youth told stories. Story-telling and the importance of communal responsibility were used to pass on cultural ways of life to the next generation. The man in the village who went to other people's kraals in the morning to take cattle and goat milk and who exploited animals for his sexual pleasure, and who was chased out of the village by Old Riba:

Go out of this village to a far-off land that side of Mohlaletse River…You’ve done a thing that would make a heathen vomit’, (Mphahlele, 1959: 9).

Mphahlele also embraces the Fire-community Place's rituals. “We learned a tremendous deal at Fire-Place,” he admits (Mphahlele, 1959: 5). Some thinkers argue that early learning should take place in one's mother tongue and can later be presented in a second or foreign language with understanding. For example, Old Ribald Modish and Old Segoe would relate stories about history. Mphahlele believes that attending the Fire-Place, or bringing wood to the Fire-Place, was beneficial in gaining and enjoying a great deal of instruction from the elders. When the young boys returned from grazing, they had to bring wood as part of their communal responsibilities. Elders were, and continue to be, instructors and role models for the younger generation. Other boys learned a lot in the Fire-Place, just like Mphahlele.

It is conceivable to conclude that self-identity is shaped by society. At the Fire-Place, Mphahlele was exposed to apartheid language and bigotry. Mphahlele (1959: 7) claims to have discovered that Whiteman refused to undertake an unpleasant job and he said “I am not a Kaffir!” In other words, only Black people were allowed to do dirty tasks. One could conclude that language is an important aspect that can be utilised to discriminate against humanity.

6.2 Initiation school

According to Sedibe (2019) initiation school is a form of school that was originally developed as a secret rite and acts like a teenager's transit education or passport to maturity in a metaphorical sense. Teenage boys are taught specific conducts and cultural ideas as part of a secret rite that leads them to adulthood. Initiation school can thus be defined as a concept and method commonly used in South Africa that commemorates the passage of both boys and girls from one stage of life to the next, such as from birth to adulthood. In Africa's religion and culture, initiation has legal, spiritual, and psychological implications.

Mphahlele recounts traditional standards and rituals in his autobiography while discussing the Initiation School in Maupaneng, in Limpopo province, a few kilometres west of Polokwane. The Sepedi speaking people, in an instance, generally start circumcision schools in remote mountain and woodland areas that are considered private. The initiates normally consider winter to be the best time to hold circumcision classes. There are other classes, such as praise
poems’ in the local tongue, which encourages students to use the language for self-expression and to demonstrate their cultural identity.

As a result of modernity, initiation school as a traditional practice is currently being forgotten. Many Christians oppose initiation schools, believing that they promote violence in their communities. Mphahlele discovered that there were Christians on one side of the river at Maupaneng, and tribal kraal populations on the other, whom the Christians referred to as "heathens." The discriminatory language employed reflects the sense of isolation and misunderstanding between the two groups; one group was referred to as "heathens." The reason for this is because traditional behaviour appears to be mythical and incomprehensible to Christians. When speaking of his Christian group buddies, Mphahlele says:

I never told his grandmother that he ate baboon flesh at a kraal one day’. Mphahlele (1959: 4).

This demonstrates a misunderstanding on the side of Christians because initiation schools are not part of their theological structure, which they find unusual and occasionally revolting. Similarly, we still face difficulties where heinous acts are committed at initiation schools; not long ago, the Sowetan witnessed:

An initiation school in Mpumalanga was used as a sex den where 21 girls aged between nine and 17 were repeatedly raped and physically abused’ (Sowetan, Mar 05, 2015).

Mphahlele admits that the traditional farewell to childhood can be awkward at times and that his grandmother does not hear about the baboon flesh because of her religious beliefs. It is obvious that what is done in the initiation schools ends there, implying that it remains a secret even today; it is rare to discover anyone discussing the school unless they both went there.

6.3 The tap water

The atmosphere was very similar to Maupaneng at the water tap on Second Avenue in Marabastard. In small villages, the communal gathering is an important part of life, and the language spoken at the water tap was likely to be the same as that spoken around the fire. This is demonstrated by the following quotation:

Sometimes the people quarrelled, then they laughed, then they eavesdropped and they gossiped’ (Mphahlele, 1959: 19).

The above quote reveals that Mphahlele depicts gossipy language use, even though the characters occasionally quarrelled and then laughed. Women were not permitted to approach the fire unless they were serving food. Women were free to discuss any topic at the water tap, including the shady operations on Second Avenue. It is also clear that those who gossiped were aware that they were occasionally offending others by discussing events they were not sure had occurred. As a result, they do not want to bear the burden of accountability for accusing others of unethical behaviour.

I got it from a goat by the roadside, and you did too if someone asks you (Mphahlele, 1959: 19).

’Pudiyatsela’ is a popular phrase in the Sepedi language. The common fireplace in Maupaneng, on the other hand, uses a different vocabulary than the communal tap on Second Avenue. The outcomes of gossip and the stories told by Old Segone around the fire pit are distinct in the sense that gossip does not educate, whereas story-telling does. Although the elderly gossiped about others at the water tap among young people, it was not a good
education for them, as Mphahlele (1959: 19) admits. There are dangers to gossiping as a form of communication; one example of the dangers of gossiping at the watertap is BoetaLem, as evidenced by Mphahlele's Grandmother calling him a "heathen."

However, Spencer (2006) posits that culture is a component of language or a part of us as language users. This remark implies that language contains culture inside it, or that culture carries language within it. Although Mphahlele's autobiography is written in English, it contains native language influences. Nonetheless, Mphahlele embraces the English language culture, but given that he wrote about his own first language culture, one may conclude that he is primarily interested in embracing his own culture. The English language serves as a bridge between Mphahlele's Sepedi culture and the English that he learned. Another reason he uses English is so that people from other cultures can comprehend his culture, as English is an international language that fosters understanding throughout the globe.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has depicted how the author in the autobiography expresses an identity through language. Mphahlele grew up in Maupaneng, Limpopo, South Africa, where he was exposed to community life and duties, according to the study. Mphahlele and other boys, for example, had to bring wood acquired while caring to graze animals to sit at the Communal Fire-Place and listen to their elders tell them stories. This is a racialised viewpoint. Mphahlele's acceptance of a traditional and communal way of life reflects how South African Black people lived in the past, and how they still live in many areas now.

REFERENCES