

## BOOK REVIEW

**TITLE: MANDELA**

**AUTHOR: LEWIS NKOSI**

**PUBLISHER: UMUZI, 2006**

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It is an amazing phenomenon that on arriving adolescence and adulthood the want and desire of a young woman become the pre-eminent driving force in a young man, and the winning of one becomes the psychological peak of the expression of his manhood. Belief in this force has been the basis of the cultural socialization of youth everywhere in both religious and profane societies. Incidentally as most communities don't celebrate perpetual bachelorhood and spinsterhood, except as a religious state, singleness is stigmatized. Lewis Nkosi in *MANDELA'S Ego*, has adopted this custom as the turning point in his tracing of the Zulu socialization process of his principal character - Dumasini in Natal province of South Africa, with a transitional cultural society having contradictory sexual value systems. In one sense the book is a thesis on comparative social anthropology of Zululand and the Whiteman's values, the one adoring early sexual prowess and the other down-playing it. But Mandela, a successful transitional man and national hero who brought freedom, combined both attributes, and thus stands as a reference for emulation. Mandela's perpetual evanescence from the police mysticised him as a wizard capable of totemic metamorphosis.

But Nkosi's book is a novel - a literary genre targeted to the display of the mastery of artistic literary expressions which he does in abundance: rich vocabulary, syntactical skills, style, witty, dialogue, varied figures of speech, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, name it all, to ventilate his genius. He obviously possesses the sensitive and searching eye of an ant and the fine sensibilities of a human devil.

Sexuality is the stuff on the altar of this theatre, extremely rich in excitement and entertainment - evidence of successful literature. But sexuality is posited on the biological and socio-psychological plane rather than projected from the monastic moral viewpoint, to avoid a class between cherished Zulu culture and Christian doctrine which modern schools teach. Frankly, Lewis is a visionary for excellence and devilry, with few rivals, on painting passion.

The book's climax is reached when Dumisani, the voluptuous golf-scorer given to debauchery is unexpectedly disarmed by the intelligence and wit of Nozizwe's (the Worldly One) extravagant offer of sexuality, as well as the stubborn resistance to him by Nohbule - the Beautiful One - who both were his coveted sex targets. Here Lewis Nkosi coronates "responsibility" as the highest virtue of leaders in human society and strikingly portrays Dumisani's hit with impotence as retributive justice. Yet this protracted impotency, which co-incidentally began with Mandela's release, highlights the psychological impact and measure of his belief in the Big Man, and typifies the nation's profound passion for Mandela's imprisonment. Thus Nkosi artfully matches fiction with history.

*Mandela's Ego* is good for all public libraries, for AFRICANA archives, and for students of African Literature, Theatre Arts, Cultural Anthropology and Social Psychology.

**Daniel Noni Lantum**  
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