

The problem of identity and Racial Pride in the select work of John Alfred Williams' *The Angry Ones*

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Abstract:

John Alfred Williams' first and semi-autobiographical novel is *The Angry Ones* (1960), also known as "One for the New York" which deals with the powerful story of hidden and unacknowledged racism that faces an educated Blackman in the professional world and painful truth that warp interracial sex. The present paper discusses how Williams portrays the central character Steve Hill's experiences soon rip the facade of hypocrisy and condescension from a liberal and superficially hip society with its own peculiar political and sexual agendas. It also focuses on the author's own experiences, which are a searing look at the hidden conflict and compromises underlying the Black and White relations. It also focuses on the economical exploitation of the Blacks. The central character Steve Hill's job opportunities are limited because of his colour. It also brings on how gay relationships and interracial sexual romances are recurring ideas in the novel. Finally, the paper concludes with the blacks' physical and psychological surrender before social, economical, and political injustice that is obviously focused on through the central character Steve Hill.

Introduction:

John Alfred Williams is also known as John A. Williams, a prolific African American Writer who has articulated more than eleven novels which are "merging of history into fiction to create new dimensions for the writings of Black novelists and fresh images for the black readers to digest" (Cash 437). Williams' first novel, "*The Angry Ones*" is also called '*One for New York*' was completed in 1956 but not published until 1960, after it had undergone five complete versions. When it was brought out in January 1960 as an Ace Books Paperback original, the editor has changed the title with the author's reluctant consent to *The Angry Ones*, a better "selling Title". The editor, after that, declared the title, and Williams does not know that the "Angry" world become a label applied to himself and to his work, and it was "mumbled agreement".

"*The Angry Ones*" is largely autobiographical. It documents the hard times Williams has faced when he settles in New York in the Mid-fifties. When he is working for a vanity publishing house, he knows firsthand discrimination, a black encounter in the advertising and publicity field at that time. Steve Hill, is the central character of the novel after he enters the vanity publishing house where his own experiences are tragic enough, not to fulfill in the place. In most of Williams' fiction, he would never wander far from facts and experiences; he uses his own experiences in the Novel.

Dream Vs Reality:

"The Angry Ones" is not an unusually angry one, a complicated one in terms of plot or vision. Williams tells the story simply in a straightforward, linear manner that carries the action through the summer, fall, and winter of one the years in the mid-1950s, the novel traces the quest of Steve Hill, the Protagonist, for purpose, and stability in his personal and professional life. Hill is the first in a series of characters in Williams' fiction who is hunted by a very hard American Dream. A central character Steve Hill in his thirties who comes to New York from California to seek a job, Hill has wasted several years with the American whites to fulfill his dreams. When he wants to attain his dreams, it is not the easiest way to get it soon, whereas he belongs to middle- class existence, wants to get a modesty successful life. Williams describes Hills Dreams:

I had it all planned, my dreams, the things I'd been working for, were to pay off in another five years. They have not elaborated dreams: I'd have a job I liked, and I'd grow in it, have security in it, and do things when I hard time. It was in essence quite a simple dream. There are in America many people for whom they desire is achieved as a matter of course. They don't have to dream about it. But I had some doubts my dreams would come off. Still, Dreams can be either the best or the worst things in the World to have you're walking around it you don't dream (*The Angry Ones* 29).

Hill is unable to find between the dream and the reality, he wants to fulfill goals in the American White World which he believes is the only place for him to prove his talent. He is a survivor of World War II in the all-black ninety-second divisions, and the first in an American family descended from the Onondage and the Ivory Coast Bauble to hold a college degree. He believes that intelligence; skill, tenacity, and hard work will eventually help to stand in the white society. Throughout the twenty-one episode, he learns that the dream tricks corrupts or consume most of the Americans who possess them.

Protesting Nature

Steve Hill, like Williams, is an educated black who faces discrimination prevails over in the late fifties. Plot-wise, the novel appears to be but other formulae protest novel. The main character Hill encounters racial discrimination, which will be made him, becomes rebellious, and he has no opportunity to protest against it. The close examination of the text reveals that the novel a pure fiction. The white bigoted boss and a well intentional black youth can be found in all the black novels. But, in *The Angry Ones*, the extra dimensions are added. Here, his white boss, Rollie Culver is a homosexual. Besides, he is a smart businessman. He knows well that how Steve is good is not a matter at all, but the white boss offering the employment opportunity to black is limited because of color. Hence, he sees Steve as a cheap labour and refuses him to increase his salary unless Steve is willing to surrender to his physical hunger. The white homosexual taboo is a recurring theme of entire Williams' novels and his uses of the mental and physical suffering of blacks are not touched upon by many black writers during Williams' span. Many black writers have touched upon the psychological sufferings of blacks, not the physical torture by the whites like Rollie Culver's homosexual practice. Williams says, "I think It's terrible" ..." that a man can't get a decent break in this country because he happens to be black. At Rocket,

as you know, Steve, we hire people for their skills; color doesn't mean a damned thing to us" (The Angry Ones 70).

Economical Exploitation of Blacks:

Here, Williams has presented Steve Hill to face the economical exploitation by the whites due to the colour complexion and Steve is the only black who has been working in the vanity publishing company with the whites. Williams describes Steve's feeling as:

I had two reasons for being angry. The first was that Rollie and Sarah had taken advantage of the times. They could pay me less because i wouldn't be able to get a similar job with a reputable firm without a great deal of lock. They weren't really afraid I'd leave-they that for Negroes, white-collar Jobs, especially in my profession, didn't come easily (The Angry Ones 66).

Hill knows well about his job. If he leaves this job, it will not be a loss for the whites in the publishing company. White supremacy prevails over in all the places, however, the blacks are talented enough. Therefore, Steve tries to learn the attitude of the white world. He continues to be angry, due to Rollie and Sarah's cannibalistic attitude toward the white culture. When the black's ideas about the publication of their suffering regarding personal or general which is not given priority for publication by Rollie and Sarah. This cannibalistic attitude of Rollie and Sarah destroys the dream of ordinary people. It made Steve angry with Rollie and Sarah for not letting the blacks' dream would not be reached the readers.

Being a dreamer, Steve wants to attain his dream through the publishing company, but on the other hand, it increases his anger. The result of his anger shows him to be brutal against his boss not to obey his comments. Williams seems tremendous insight on the effect of black violence on some whites, "when Rollie tries to seduce Steve, Steve hits him, then notices that he kind of smiled with his eyes... I wondered if he liked that sort of thing". (The Angry Ones 70). Here, Williams has portrayed black's retaliation against the whites, whereas, the whites were enjoyed with black's retaliation which consoles the blacks, or self-satisfaction by which the blacks can achieve nothing rather than the attitude of social and economical bigotry against blacks were aggravated during the sixties and seventies in New York.

Inter Racial Sexual Romances:

Williams has predominantly used interracial sexual romances in most of his novels, of which *The Angry Ones* is not exceptional. He has conveyed the message through Steve and Lois, and both individuals could be quite the same and honestly in love with each other. On the other hand, Lois is a mixed-up girl who uses Steve as a means of rebellion against her puritanical parents. Williams emphasizes that Steve uses Lois as his fellow to share his daily horror at work or on the street.

Williams has also portrayed the protagonist Steve Hill as a sexual scapegoat. He tries to differentiate sexual manipulation from sexual violence in most of his novels, of which *The Angry Ones* is one among them. The incident of Lint and Steve characters is the best example of sexual violence. Lint and Steve have been schoolmates, however, Lint, being white guaranteed to get success easily in the white world rather than the

blacks. But, Steve couldn't get it easily, because of color. The economical exploitation and employability for the blacks are limited during the sixties and seventies in New York. Being white, Lint has to face his wife Bobbie, who wants to be an actor, due to which her husband Lint would be embarrassed. He has fits of jealousy. In addition, Bobbie turns outside to compensate her marital status added the problem in the top-end between them. Williams expressed Lint feelings as:

Man...Damned If I know what to do. She starts crying when she sees kids she knows on televisions or when she reads the Sunday Times and sees where someone else got a good part. Christ! I spend all my time cheering her up. I don't have any guarantee that I'll be a success as a writer. My future's in worse shape than hers, dam nit! (The Angry Ones 114).

Lint finds a good excuse for dragging Steve into the mire when he sees Lois, who looks like Bobbie, going into Steve's apartment. Lois is a white woman working with Steve Hill in vanity publishing press for a long time. In fact, even before this incident, Lint feels and wondered how much Bobbie and Steve are attached to each other. He has undoubtedly understood that the sexual myth in which a black man desires with every strength in his body to seduce a white woman and She, in turn, can little help a fascination for the brute sexuality he produces. No wonder Lint wants to remove the tests of him. One day, Lint unable to tolerate his anger he comes to Steve's apartment to beat him at the end of the novel. Whereas, he was never ready to accept his wife Bobbie has an extramarital status with Steve Hill. So he tries to kill Steve and never understands he doesn't have a relationship with his wife.

One day, Lint unable to tolerate his anger comes to Steve's apartment to beat him at the end of the novel. At the same time, he was never ready to accept his wife Bobbie has an extramarital status with Steve Hill. So he tries to kill Steve and never understands he doesn't have a relationship with his wife. In addition, Steve Hill's romances continue to go up to the end of the novel. Grace is a black girl from the same town where Steve had been grown. He visits her very first time in the church in a black velvet coat and muff with white trimmings. Her parents are living in a big house up beyond the park. After her father's death, she leaves the place. Steve Hill makes an engagement with Grace during the church picnic. Grace was a little tall. Her color is soft new leather brown, she has upstanding, dancing eyes, and a beautiful mouth never tired of kissing. He learns her body completely; he knows its smell, its curves, and harnesses. He knows well how she would respond and when he knows what each gasp or sign meant. Even Steve understands why Grace maintains silence and when she starts to speak. He never has doubts that they would marry. Grace's mother becomes bedridden and he begins to see legs and less of Grace. She has to go to school and care for her mother. Steve thinks Grace about security, which is born in her. In addition, it grows, it becomes a monster, which consumes the love we have for each other as if it has never existed. During wartime, they seem to have recaptured the things that meant so much to them. However, after the war, he sees her that what she has done is but a wartime measure.

Simultaneously, Steve feels dreams can be important than life itself. Therefore, when a man considers a mate, he wants to share his dreams with someone else in the place of a helpmate. To Grace, he says once, "You wouldn't fight or dream with me" (The Angry Ones 145). As Grace sees it, a black man should accept the

nature of his tendency rather than feel a constant need to fight. Grace wanted to be a social worker or a civil service officer as a symbol of security. She continues to have insights security that should be sustained and stable at home, family, and means to support her in all the important events of her life. Whereas, Steve agrees with her importance, but insists on having a job he wants, which would testify his worth, and dignity. Steve has seen how Grace feels about security as Williams observes: "The fierce desire for security was born in her. And it grow. It became a monster, which consumed the love we had for each other as if it had never existed" (The Angry Ones 37).

The reason why Williams has been continuously attacking security in all his works is the cause of disagreement over security. Williams actually, was a caseworker for Onondage County department of welfare in Syracuse, and he became disappointed for some reasons that are echoed through Steve, "I couldn't be a social worker man, I couldn't stand anyone else's misery, I got enough of my own". (The Angry Ones 105). Williams was not interested in his first wife that he mentioned in The Angry Ones through the central Character Steve Hill, who is in the image of Williams himself.

When Williams disagrees with security in the view of Grace, he wants to recall his past life with his first wife that is prevalent through Steve. Williams' whole life becomes a protest. Though he faces many struggles in his life, he wants to attain the ultimate satisfaction is the American dream that is security, status, and a servant of the American Dream in his works.

Black Pride:

Other cases of Williams novels to be better in the study of race, which may be found in protest novels, can be described in his handling of certain themes. For instance, black pride is an important ingredient for blacks who want to maintain dignity and integrity. In The Angry Ones, Williams demonstrated the limitations of racial pride. Obie Robertson, a journalist friend of Steve, find himself jobless. He determines not to compromise by taking just any job that comes along. He has finished college with honours, but the journalism school couldn't place him because of Negro. He had been working for most of the Negro weekly and was editor of the "world of the Black", a big picture book patterned after Ebony. The only entertainment between Steve and Obie is to talk about the Negro reporters around the country. Besides, their conversation is mainly focused on the continuing problems of the Negroes in Press, "still I am weapon rather than a medium", Obie says. Obie has been seeking employment through agencies where he could find the worst offenders against discrimination. Obie Observes, "It's hard for a Negro to find a place to live if it isn't in Harlem" (The Angry Ones37). Being a Negro, Obie thinks of having two things in his life leads to the happiest moment, whereas the two things should come from hard work. One is money and another one is a decent job. Williams describes Obie's feelings. "I guess we're too afraid of starving and yet, look what's happened to us of things soon we'll be starving anyway. And there's nothing sure about what will be doing" (The Angry Ones 87).

The death of Obie, due to intolerable racial discrimination, would not bring positivity into Steve's life. If Obie's death for good cause to eradicate racism in America, that may be commendable by the blacks. But Obie wanted to fulfil his dream of getting a decent job, where discrimination is one of the ingredients of

society that caused him to face death. Williams doesn't denounce the black pride with the character of Obie, he believes that only the pride alone rarely feeds a hungry mouth or supplies a job or an aim of the job to be attained. Steve's tolerance is conceded for, in order to survive. He accepts, connives and temporary ready to hide his pride only for survival. However, Obie Robertson ideas of freedom from the racial world would be not available everywhere, whereas, "Suicide will not be a stigma to One's honour".

Conclusion:

John Alfred Williams' *The Angry Ones* deals with hidden and unacknowledged racism through the central character Steve Hill and Obie Roberston. It also deals with the economical exploitation of the blacks that is the best example of social and economical injustice prevalent among black societies even today. Moreover, it also deals with vanishing the central character's dreams of being a citizen of the nation to prove his identity as one of the human beings by the creation of God.

In addition, Williams skilfully handling the theme of alienation, sexual abuse, physical and psychological torture, and racial prejudice through black characters proved him to be a sufferer by the white supremacy during his span. The amplifying racial injustice by the death of Obie Robertson and Steve Hill's compromises of discriminatory practices were highlighted by Williams. The paper ends with the central character's expression of racial pride do not resort to violence or do not reconcile with the brutal fact of the oppressed force of suppression.

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