

Aissatou Diamanka-Besland

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Patera, novel, Henry Editions, Collection of Northern Writings (Collection des Ecrits du Nord), 216 pages, ISBN 978-2-917698-28-0

Aïssatou Diamanka-Besland delivers her second novel with an emphasis on the parallelism between individual destiny and collective suffering.

Summary of the book

At the time when Europe is closing its borders and the banner of “selected immigration” emerges in France from the peripheries of the African continent young volunteers rush to migrate, embarking on wooden fishing boats to brave the dangerous ocean. Reach Europe at any cost! Get to Europe or die! “Barca” or “Barsax”! (Barcelona or Death!)... At the frontiers of reality, Soukeyna affected by this deadly phenomenon, no longer responds to the heartfelt cries of her former lover. She uses her voice to speak up for the lost and voiceless.

First excerpt from the book

[... The imagery of France has always been a myth to Africans...The whiteman’s country is so prosperous that in supermarkets entire aisles are allotted to pet food. On television, advertisements are displayed for dog and cat foods such as “Wiskas”, “Ronron”, “Felix”, “Cesars” and “Friskies”: names created solely for the happiness of these “little darlings”. Brand names manufactured for the purpose of pleasing the doggies and kitties... French television programs infiltrated Senegalese households where the French culture was portrayed in its most vibrant colours, with its most beautiful places, to the extent of luring immigration candidates towards the “forbidden voyage”. France continuously dictated its rules and regulations to the third world countries. Seeing its big cities, beautiful cars, giant monuments, and infinite skyscrapers incited the desire to travel. Reach Europe! Reach France! This huge country that has always inhabited their dreams...We know the realities of countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, and some remote drought-stricken villages where people never have enough to eat. Furthermore, the prices of rice, oil, and staple foods have skyrocketed! All these clichés about Europe increasingly fuel the already existing dreams of young adventurous minds. Leaving becomes the only viable solution...]

Second excerpt

[... At the threshold of Europe, young Senegalese people were crammed together in fragile wooden fishing boats for days before reaching the Spanish shores. Some dead, some injured, they constituted a quagmire of lifeless humanbeings. They left the shores of their capital cities to join the other side of the life. Get to Europe or die! Get to Europe by all means! Get to Europe to the point of denying one’s people, one’s country, and one’s identity. They would throw their passports into the sea as soon as they got a glimpse of the country of their dreams, the country of their traps! ...]

Text translated from French by Anta Hane Lo/ Rhode Island.

Added on the site “Lire les femmes” by jvolet@cyllene.uwa.edu.au on December 26 2009.

