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**Crossing Borders and the Search for an African Selfhood:  
A Postcolonial Study of Aye Kwei Armah's Why Are We So Blest?  
And Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy**

**Memoir submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of 'Magister'  
in African Literature**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

TO MERIEM AND ABDUL-JABBAR, MY DEAR PARENTS

TO IBTISSEM, MY SUPPORTIVE AND LOVING WIFE

TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE KAÏD MOURAD

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This present work deals with the postcolonial search for an African selfhood through the trope of journeying while subverting the (con)text of the western representational discourse. The chosen corpus of this study is Aye Kwei Armah's Why Are We So Blest? And Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy. Both works are read from a postcolonial perspective. The crossing undertaken by African protagonists, works as a debunking to the Eurocentric assumptions constructed by the west. The African protagonist is to question the truthfulness and credibility of western assumptions about the classificatory stratification of the world. He, is therefore, to examine the constructed dichotomies set by the west that of the superiority of the west and the inferiority of Africa. One aspect of that debunking is the dissection of the nature of education they receive in the west. In an Althusserian reading, western education is viewed as a strong state apparatus with which the African educated class would be westernized perpetuating, most tragically, the western imperial project in a neocolonial outfit. Fluctuating between essentialism and non-essentialism, the encounters the protagonists had, reveal the internalizations of some constructed perceptions and images inherent in the western representational discourse. The differences that exist between cultures and races are shown to be historical and not biological in nature. The issue of gender, moreover, is so paramount when dealing with the issue of the African identity. Aspiring to recover a healthy and a genuine African self-hood, the African woman should be (re)inscribed in the historicity of the African experience. The issue of language and genre is another challenge for the African author's endeavor to communicate his concerns. Both authors' use of English seems to stem from pragmatic reasons while they are qualified, in a Bhabhian sense, as mimetic writers. The pastiche-like form through the incorporation of orality into the western conventional novel is an ideological, as well as, an aesthetic undertaking performed by the African writer.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Black Skin..... Black Skin, White Masks

OSK..... Our Sister Killjoy: Or Reflections From A Black-eyed Squint

The Beautiful Ones .....The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born

WAWSB?..... Why Are We So Blest?

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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Africa, and Africans, seemed to be an object of scholarly, as well as, amateurish attention in the modern age. Europeans launched on journeys whereby transcribing their findings in different forms; scholarly texts, novels, short stories, paintings...etc. Negative images and stereotypes, however, were to be propagated and circulated among westerners in their home land, and later to be internalized by the natives. Other races and cultures were portrayed in strongly biased forms giving way to an utterly exoticised picture of everything which is non-European as being not only different but a very 'other'. This othering process, along with its very negative and exotic attributes of different geographies and peoples, say the East, or Africa, did foster a compartmentalization of the world into two diametrically opposed entities. Qualifying anything with the adjective 'European', or 'American', in the very recent decades, or western in general would carry with it terms like superiority, light, civilization...etc. On the other hand, the non-European is to be perceived as the source of inferiority, darkness and primitivity. Professor Edward Said explains the privileged position Europeans had to tell other people's (hi) stories and brilliantly linked it with the complex enterprise of Western imperialism and colonialism. Africa, for instance, was seen as a 'Tabula Rasa' that needed sophisticated inscriptions, accordingly, by the West out of the burdening 'mission civilisatrice'. These internalized stereotypes created a serious fissuring in the African identity.

After a long struggle, African nation-states eventually gained their independence but the ramifications of colonialism were so profound that these nations are still suffering from its effects: geopolitical fractures, cultural confusion, and serious identity crisis. The wind of independence that blew on the African continent brought with it hopes of freedom and promises of stability. Yet, demise would soon prove more tangible than vanishing hopes and fake promises. In the wake of independence, African nation-states found themselves facing all sort of ravaging problems; the most pernicious being the identity crisis. The African was lost to his past, caught up at the confluence of events and subject to a cultural void. It did not take long for African writers to realize the overriding need to have alternative voices heard. Writing in a postcolonial context was all the more urgent, for it was the role of the writer to ponder the consequences of decades of foreign

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hegemony over his people. It was high time the narrative changed locations of production, and that the African started voicing his own concerns.

If the European journey entailed imperialism and erroneous representations about the Africans, now it is the African who would embark on an opposite journey, the 'voyage in' as described by Said; from the rim of the world to the heart of the dome. The choice of the journey is very significant in the postcolonial context. As mentioned earlier the European journey was paramount to the establishment of imperial rule along with distorted representations. This journey was done by a white, male, European who would give way to constructs perceived as 'Universal Transcendental Truths'. The opposite journey the African is going to undertake works as a phase of diagnosis. The journey gets under way a meditation on whether the African is still hostage to binary oppositions of 'us' and 'them'. Seeing things from a distance would enable the African have a thorough picture of the diffuseness of the illness that is devastating Africa and the Africans. The diagnosis is meant to having best strategies of cure. Therefore, the aim of the African journey differs substantially from the European one.

This work is to approach analogically Aye Kwei Armah's Why Are We So Blest? (1972) and Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister killjoy (1977). The motivation behind such a choice is fuelled by many reasons which would inform the rationale of our research. Both novels deal with the theme of crossing borders wherein the protagonists would be given grants to further their studies in renowned European universities, the case of OSK's Sissie, and American universities; the case of Modin in WAWSB?. Being in the West, both characters would undergo a process of examination to the human conditions and would subsequently reflect upon their own. As being privileged to be entitled this opportunity to study and enjoy the glamour of the West, they, nevertheless, came to put under scrutiny the already held 'universal truths' by the west as being the source of knowledge and benevolence. As they are part of the ex-colonized geography and culture, heavily pressured with historical mishaps, and more tragically psychological traumas, which denied them access even to their very selves, their physical as well as psychological crossing in and out can be approached as searching for a genuine African selfhood. Moreover, the choice of a male and a female author is far from being a random

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one. Since we are dealing with the identity field one has to consider the difficulty to sketch out an easy mapping of that concept. Earlier binary categorizations that of white and black, for instance, would prove incomprehensiveness. One, then, has to consider the multi-layered nature of such field. We, therefore, have to consider the complex texture of identity through queuing its components. Different elements would, in the process, surface up such as: race, ethnicity, gender, class ...etc. A reasonable queuing of such elements would help us gather a pretty comprehensive view of who we are. The choice of Armah's work and Aidoo's is very suggestive since it catches both authors' distinctive thematic, as well as, formal peculiarity to a colossal diagnosis to Africa's predicaments. It is worth mentioning that through our analogical study of both works, we will try to dissect the authors' ideological leanings and formal strategies.

It is worth mentioning that both novels treat the theme of sojourning out of Africa to Europe and America, respectively. Both Armah and Aidoo are Ghanaian writers who excelled in their creative writings and their critical articulations, as well, to voice out the preoccupations of postcolonial Africa and tried to give a colossal diagnosis of the continent's miserable conditions. Moreover, both writers came from the same background, Ghana, and more specifically, from an Akan ethnic society. Both journeys, in the process, would entail different encounters; with different geographies, peoples, histories and most importantly an encounter with the self. The voyagers, in the process, are to contemplate through a postcolonial-inflected consciousness.

It has to be noted that the African authors adopted a resistant role in their society elaborating an analogous culture of resistance and decolonization that of militant activism. Their way of writing seems to denounce the Western aesthetic canon that enslaved them with falsified images and stereotypes for a long time. Hence, the searching process of the protagonists can, to a very large extent, reflect their creators' (authors') searching endeavor. The motoring issue to be tackled in this work, therefore, can be reformulated as the following question: As a diagnostic phase, what are the findings of the search for a postcolonial African self-hood through the trope of journeying while subverting and even transcending the (con) text of Western representational discourse?

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The present research question is too complex for which an apparatus of sub-questions will help dissect, systematically, our work.

The first sub-question is: How is the subaltern to voice up his version of the story? What are the intellectual and aesthetic formulations within which he is to communicate his concerns? The second sub-question can be formulated as follows: What is the nature of education the protagonists receive in western universities and what is the impact it had over the would-be African elite? Is it a value-laden means to help reconstruct the devastated postcolonial Africa or is it an apparatus that would produce westernized African elite serving the western imperial interests in Africa? The third sub-question is: what sort of encounters the protagonists are to be through? Are the criteria with which the world had been stratified natural ontological ones or are they human-made constructs? I.e. are the classificatory systems of self-perception and the differences that exist in the world biological or historical in nature? The fourth sub-question is: how can the African writer engage in his writing formalistically while writing in the ex-colonizer's language, and adopting the western genre- the novel?

Previous researches seemed to join both authors in an antagonistic reading. Readings of women writings always tend to position them against the male tradition. The authors' critical positions would be later investigated, though. We saw it very convenient to reckon a long neglected aspect when dealing with identity that of gender, which we will add to the queue along with race and class. Due to the specificity of the African context, gender would take a different trajectory. Ethnicity, too, would constitute another point of interest, since we will tackle the authors' background 'the Akan society' and its relation to the gender issue.

What might be hypothesized at this level is as follows: First, the African selfhood may be safe-constructed if the would-be intellectuals are immune from any western imperial parameters; otherwise the search for an African self-hood through western education would be a trivial undertaking.

Second, at the level of self/other perception and conception, the African crossing to the west might prove immaturity due to the myopic horizon through which the crossing

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is launched. In other words, if the African journey is merely an opposite journey to a long history of western journeys to Africa, one might reckon the huge probability that this crossing is just an angry reactionary one devoid of any sense of genuinity and objectivity.

Third, knowing that representation is the medium with which the African author is to communicate his concerns, and that medium is a western invention, the possibility of writing back by no means can prove efficiency if and only if this medium is to be Africanized.

My reading to both novels, moreover, is not a comparative one wherein a belated author would try to subvert the previous text. Rather, we aim at having a complementary reading for both authors since Armah is not considered to be a radical misogynous writer in his works. Moreover, Aidoo's critical reception to Armah's works is of praising and appreciation. Another reason for our analogical approach is the deep disruption colonialism caused to Africa be it historical, social or psychological which touched deeply every stratum in African societies. Hence, reading both works, male and female authors, would enable us to have a comprehensive view of the society's predicament. In other words, both texts can be contextualized as a diagnostic phase; a healthy diagnosis should include the diverse identity components seeing them as simultaneously urgent to be recovered. This in fact would lead us to consider the heterogeneity of the African continent's experiences. Both novels seem to have a strong link in terms of experiences, characterization, and even aesthetic strategies, though different, yet both attempting to subvert and transcend the Western (con) texts.

Due to the wide scope postcolonialism covers, it draws its theoretical background from different theories and disciplines; we deem it convenient to approach this research eclectically as well. It is to be highlighted that the motoring issue of our research will tackle both the context and the text of the African crossing. This is due to the intrinsic link between content and form which leads, by all means, not to disregard form at the expense of content or vice versa. That said, this dissertation will tackle both aspects, that of content (themes) and form (style and language).

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Structurally speaking, this dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter: "An-Other Way of Telling" works as a theoretical background for our study. It forwards the framework within which Armah and Aidoo launches their works. It presents the ideological and artistic background of postcoloniality. This part will rely, heavily, on the theorizations of both Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. In the second part of this chapter an emphasis would be shed on African literature as an example of "an-other way of telling". We will try to examine both the nature of such literature and its critical reception, as well. Armah and Aidoo will be, therefore, contextualized within the African literary matrix. To do justice to Aidoo's work, as written by an African woman writer, we will examine, too, the ideological and aesthetic peculiarities of women writings as "an-other way of telling"

In the second chapter: "Western Education and the Neocolonial Ramifications", we will try to examine the nature of western education upon the African intellectuals and its impact on post-independent Africa. The first part of this chapter deals with the effects of western education upon the would-be African elite. We will relate that to the Greek myth of the Promethean crossing; wherein a comparison would be established between the protagonists' crossing to the West and Prometheus' crossing to Olympus. We will rely on Louis Althusser's 'ideological state apparatus', and Michel Foucault's formulation of Knowledge/power. The second part of this chapter deals with the situation of post-independent Africa. Discussing the neocolonialism African nation-states were to be through After nominal independence, we will be relying on Fanon's findings in his The Wretched of Earth

In the third chapter: Encounters and (Mis) Understandings, we will deal with the psychological perceptions of self and other. The first part of this chapter is devoted to the encounter of self/other to the protagonists. In the process, the already established beliefs about race and physicality would be questioned by the African protagonist. The second part is an encounter with hi(her)story. We will examine the role of history and history writing in the differences that exist between the west and Africa. The issue of gender is to be examined, as well, wherein we will negotiate the role of the African woman in the construction of the African identity. In this chapter we will rely on Frantz Fanon's

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theorizations mainly in his Black Skin, White Masks and Homi Bhabha's the Location of Culture

The last chapter 'Textual Self-Fashioning' will be a formal analysis. We will discuss the issue of using English as an Ex-colonizer's language. Both Armah and Aidoo wrote their works in English, and both have their justifications for doing so. We will, too, examine the issue of genre highlighting the importance of African orality.

The following are some key terms that would inform a conceptual apparatus to our work:

### **Postcolonialism:**

It is the critical political, intellectual and artistic formulations that are concerned with the impacts of colonialism and its manifestations on the cultures of both colonized peoples, and the changes and reprocessing of colonial relations, representations, and actual practices in the present. (Johnston 613). The prefix 'post' in postcolonialism has caused lot of controversies around the term. While semantically it has chronological indications that of after colonialism, meaning independence, a critical perspective, however, posits the word 'beyond' as a substitute to 'post'. So an emphasis is aimed at dealing with the concept as beyond colonialism and not merely as after colonialism. Ashcroft clarifies the difference between these two views: Ashcroft , for instance, explains the difference between these two meanings as follows: the 'post' in the term refers to 'after colonialism began' rather than 'after colonialism ended'.

### **Hybridity:**

Hybridity means the process of unconscious borrowings or internalizations of certain cultural elements between a dominant culture and a less dominant culture usually in the context of colonizer/colonized nations. The term was positively elaborated by Homi Bhabha while rejecting the old Manichean understanding of the relationship of colonizer/colonized. Bhabha's view was an antithesis to modernist ideas assuming that ethnicities, different languages, different geographies as separate and autonomous identities. In a post-modernist approach, however, he argues that borders were falling apart and the nation-states were getting more and more complex due to the waves of emigration mainly from the ex-colonized to metropolitan western areas.



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### **Gender:**

Gender is the social constructed roles, behaviors, activities, attributes that a specific society considers to be likely appropriate for the man and the woman. It is to be highlighted, though, that there exists a huge difference between sex or sexism and gender. While sex can be viewed as the sum of biological distinctive features of male and female, gender is a social construction that dictates the prospected self-images of what is that to be a man or a woman inside a particular society. The appropriateness of specific roles and attributes for a man and a woman, might, create gender inequalities.

### **Race:**

It is the set of biological and genetic traits of a specific group. Races are presumably categorized regarding to a common genealogy. It can , therefore, be defined as a group of people that defines itself and/or defined by others as a group with immutable biological differences. Race, in the 19 century, for instance, used to be a prime criterion for differentiating between populations and communities in terms of superiority and inferiority; hence a domination of a nation over an other. In the last decades of the twentieth century, however, calls for equality between races were sound to establish racial equality.

### **Ethnicity:**

ethnicity often is confused with race. While the latter is defined solely as a biological parameter, ethnicity, along with the genealogical bond between specific groups, can be viewed as the shared cultural and historical manifestations and experiences of a specific group or community. Ethnic groups tend to define themselves according to genealogical, cultural and historical commonalities. Ethnic differences had long been the cause of ethnic wars. Efforts are being done in order to delimit such brutal misunderstandings. The Akan ethnic group, for instance, is main group in Ghana along with the Ewe, Mole Dagbane , the Guan, and the Ga-Adangbe. The Akan people occupy Southern Ghana and the West of Black Volta.

# CHAPTER ONE:

## AN-OTHER WAY OF TELLING

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and canons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Representation seems to play a significant role in the workings of everyday world. The metaphor of “Dark Africa”, for instance, has long been propagated within the Euro-American representational discourses. Western authors, from a privileged vantage point, have long been positioning the continent in relation to the west in diametrically opposing polarities. The European travel writings, for instance, are rife with images of an exotic Africa; an utterly different experience from the ideal Europe. Africa, thus, would be a quintessential ‘other’ for Europe and the west in general. Non-westerners’ voices, the Africans’, in our case, started, however, to surface up forwarding an-other version of the story. In this chapter, we will try to examine the ideological and literary matrix in which the long-silenced subaltern attempts to communicate this other way telling. We will try to define the scope of postcoloniality in which these counter narratives flourished.

Dealing with Aye Kwei Armah and Ama Ata Aidoo, we will, thus, try to present a framework within which African literature is to be evaluated. We will, in the process, try to contextualize their experience as authors within the African literary tradition so that we will gain useful insights of the atmosphere from which both authors emerged. We will examine the thematic, as well as, aesthetic peculiarities of African literature. Aspiring to have a comprehensive view of the subaltern’s version of the story, and as we have chosen both a male and a female writer, we will also try to examine the African woman’s way of telling.

### 1.1 POSTCOLONIALITY:

The physical Western intervention in overseas territories constructing what is labeled as modern Western empires was ‘redeemed’<sup>1</sup>, to borrow the Conradian usage, by cultural formulations. If it were the building of “the city upon a hill” for the new world, it took a more humanitarian outlook for the Orient and Africa. Redemption was to be achieved through representation, hence using sophisticated tools like art and literature; constructing therefore, a homogeneous discourse labeled by Edward Said as ‘Orientalism’. In his Orientalism(1978), Said argues that the Orient was a Western (re)creation of a counterpart image for Europe or the West, hence an “Other” that is everything but European. Dichotomous distinctions, therefore, were constructed where the non-Western is savage, primitive and backward and the Western is the enlightened, the rational, or beautifully put the ‘civilized’. Through aesthetic representations which tried to foreground the reality of imperialism, it is instilled that to be white is to be civilized and therefore this latter has to bear the burden of civilizing the ‘other’ as Rudyard Kipling puts it: ‘the White Man’s Burden’<sup>2</sup>.

As submitted earlier about the cultural redemption of the colonial enterprise, in what follows are some basic definitions of key terms that would form the theoretical background which this dissertation will embark on. First we try to define the notion of ‘culture’. We shall take the definition of the UNESCO as an exemplar definition which says:

Culture... is ... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. ([www.portal.unesco.org](http://www.portal.unesco.org)).

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of redemption that justifies western intervention in Africa is stated in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. It will be quoted in chapter three.

<sup>2</sup> “The White Man’s Burden : The United States and the Philippine Islands” (1899) is a poem written by Rudyard Kipling. Kipling urged the U.S. to take up the torch of the ‘civilizing mission’ constituting thereby an empire, like some European countries. The poem’s title became a common expression referring to justifications used by the West to intervene physically in other regions.

The UNISCO definition goes on to explain how it is that just through culture we, human beings, are rational creatures who endowed with a sense of commitment and a healthy faculty to proceed in life civically. Raymond Williams, in his Marxism and Literature, however, seems to challenge the very notion parting from the old idealistic view of culture to a one which is monitored by the material history:

What matters here is not only the element of reduction; it is the reproduction in an altered form, of the separation of 'culture' from material social life, which had been the dominant tendency in idealist cultural thought. Thus the full possibilities of the concept of culture as a constitutive social process, creating specific and different ways of life which could have been remarkably deepened by the emphasis on the material social process, were for a long time missed, were often in practice superseded by an abstracting unilinear Universalism(19).

Raymond seems to depart from the early definitions of culture that of the separation between nature and culture. Culture used to be defined as an improvement from a state of nature to a state of cultivation and domestication. Raymond, however, through the quotation mentioned above, unveils, in a Marxist mode, the material impositions of culture upon individuals.

Said, in his turn, seems to add another component which goes along with the Marxist view; that of ownership:

Culture is used to designate not merely something to which one belongs but something that one possesses and, along with the proprietary process, culture also designates a boundary by which the concepts of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to the culture come into forceful play' (The World, The Text, and the Critic 8).

The definition of the UNISCO seems to be challenged by Said, too. The issue of belonging to a specific culture with its underlying aspects seems not to define culture properly. Said, in a Marxist mode, too, would introduce the idea of possession. He, furthermore, qualifies culture as 'hegemonic' when he affirmed that:"*Culture [is a]*

*possessing possession. And that is the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate"(9).*

Having ascribed to culture this hegemonic feature, we dare in no case avoid Raymond Williams' view about hegemony and counter-hegemony or rather resistance which is constantly at work:

A lived hegemony is always a practice. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be single... It does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony (112-13).

In the field of literature, the counter-hegemonic gesture would be the adoption of the ex-colonized of a counter-discourse which aims at dismantling the European codes of representation thereby deconstructing the authorial standpoint of the Western author and text. Through this process of 'writing back', to borrow Salman Rushdie's coinage, the ex-colonized is to address the presumed 'centre' as a deconstructionist<sup>3</sup> thereby challenging the Eurocentric worldviews. The point of view of the ex-colonized, therefore, would be evoked from his own, as an independent subject not as an objectified 'other'. This process would journey under the umbrella of 'Postcolonialism'.

As this work aims at exploring Armah's WAWSB? And Ama Ata Aidoo's OSK from a postcolonial prism, it is difficult to proceed much further without clarifying the terminology used. As a matter of fact the term 'postcolonial' is the subject of huge

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<sup>3</sup> Drawing on Jacque Derrida's linguistic model of deconstruction, in literature, the western canon or the western grand narratives, which for a long time forwarded an ethos of the world, is proven to be cultural constructs and not natural descriptions. The task of the postcolonial African writers, in our case, is to deconstruct such narratives.

debates and controversies. What follows is an attempt to trace pertinent definitions and clarify the controversies around them.

A simple inquiry into the books talking about the subject under examination reveals a topographical difference. There are those who write 'Post-colonial' with a hyphen, and those who use the non hyphenated form, that is to say 'postcolonial'. As explained by C.L. Innes, the term Post-colonial refers to the historical moment when '*a country, state, or people cease to be governed by a colonial power such as Britain or France and take the administrative power into their own hands*'(1). In an Article co-written by kwaku Larbi Korang and Stephan Slemon, entitled 'Post-colonialism and Language', the two scholars write:

'Post-colonialism' provides a name for a complex and heterogeneous set of critical and theoretical debates, all of them centring on the question of how we are to understand European colonialism as a cultural, historical, and political phenomenon, how we might interpret what takes place after colonialism, and in reaction to it, both in those nations and cultures once colonized by Europe and within the metropolitan centres of the Western colonizing nations themselves.'(246).

In their definition, the term 'post-colonial' is no longer confined to a temporal reference; they assign to it a cultural dimension with political, historical, and social ramifications. This broad definitions tallies with that of C. L Innes who views 'Postcolonial' as the range of cultural interaction between the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized, and the relationships of power underlying it. In the same book, Innes remarks that '*within the area of 'postcolonial studies', which tends to embrace literary and cultural-and sometimes anthropological-studies, the term is more often used to refer to the consequences of colonialism from the time the area was first colonized*'(2). Interestingly enough, in spite of the fact that the two definitions provided by Larbi/Slemon and Innes give a more comprehensive view of the term under scrutiny, they differ in that Innes uses the term 'postcolonial' without a hyphen. It seems that there has been a general consensus among scholars to use 'postcolonial' to refer to the range of

disciplines and interactions related to colonialism and its ramifications and use 'post-colonial' to refer to the period after independence.

The clarification bestowed above substantiates our choice of the term 'postcolonial'. The term postcolonial remains nonetheless problematic, and many scholars eschew its delineation. Padmini Mongia explains in her Introduction of Postcolonial Theory that many writers such as Aidoo feel reluctant using 'postcolonial' because they fear that 'post' would exclusively refer to the period after colonialism, whereas their concerns are precisely the time span of colonialism and its consequences. In a conference that took place in New York in 1991, she declared: *'Perhaps the concept was relevant to the USA after its war of independence and to a certain extent to the erstwhile imperial dominions of Canada, Australia... applied to Africa, 'post-colonial' is not only a fiction, but a most pernicious fiction, a cover-up for a dangerous period in our people's lives'* ('That Capricious Topic' 152) Others feel uncomfortable about the sites of its production arguing that postcolonial studies foster the established hierarchies of power. The Indian writer Nayantara Sahgal accuses the term postcolonial of being a means to put in the limelight the Indian British colonial history, silencing thereby a long span of pre-colonial past. Others incriminate the danger of its inclusiveness; that is a term that would confine so many different and divergent literatures under one banner, despite the difference of location and experience. Mongia offers a somewhat comprehensive definition that aims at erasing the controversy around the term and endeavors to tone down the tensions inherent in each perspective:

The term operates in at least two different registers at once: it is a historical marker referring to the period after official decolonization as well as a term signifying changes in intellectual approaches... Secondly, in the last ten years,<sup>4</sup> the term has been deployed to replace what earlier went under the name of 'third World' or 'commonwealth' literature, to describe colonial discourse analysis, to detail the situations of migrant groups within first world states, and to specify oppositional reading practices. (2).

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<sup>4</sup> The book has been published in 1997, so it would be more pertinent to say: 'twenty four years'



Therefore, it is in the name of these very complex and multifaceted epistemological implications that Caliban<sup>5</sup> can eventually speak, tell, oppose and ultimately transcend Prospero. The postcolonial writer is the one who endowed Caliban with a voice. This dissertation is interested in the African postcolonial writing in particular. In order to be consistent with that, we try and explore this 'other' way of telling; what is particular about African postcolonial literature and how this literature is carved in very specific socio-political and ideological contexts so that to ponder upon the search of an African selfhood. The aim is to show how this art goes beyond the reactionary characteristic we generally attribute to it. The African texts, in our case WAWSB? and OSK not only abide to Manichean dichotomies but even transcend them. The African writer 'writes back', but this does not mean that African literature remains confined to plain re-actions or that it is a vaguely audible echo of the Western literary production.

As mentioned earlier, the Western project of manufacturing an 'Other' was enhanced through cultural tools; namely in our case through literature, whether fictionalized autobiographies of western authors or a thoroughly fictitious work of imagination. The European protagonist would embark on a journey to distant exotic lands in the Orient or into the 'heart of darkness', to use the Conradian wording, namely Africa. Edward Said tried to theorize this process about the Orient and this is very likely to be applicable to a great extent to Africa as well. In his Orientalism, Said argues that '*Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient*'(7). He further argues in his introduction to Culture and Imperialism that '*the power to narrate, or block other narrations from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism*' (4). A close look at instances in European literature would disclose a long standing literary tradition relying on distorted and detrimental representations of Africa and the Africans. In his The African Novel in English: an

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<sup>5</sup> From a postcolonial perspective, Aimée Césaire wrote his play Une Tempête (1969) while adaptating William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Caliban is the protagonist of Césaire's play while he is portrayed as the antagonist in The Tempest. Caliban in Césaire's play is a black slave who revolts against his white master, Prospero. Unlike the mullato Ariel, who prefers non-violence, Caliban prefers revolting violently against Prospero's colonizing language. He rejects his name, a name given by Prospero that is suggestive of its anagram 'canibal'. He, instead, preferred to be called X. This might found its echo in the life of Malcom K. Little who changed his name into Malcom X as a rejection to a name reminiscent of slavery and servitude.

Introduction, Professor Booker notes that Africa and Africans have been the subject of renowned European writers such as Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, H. Rider Haggard, Joyce Cary and Conrad.... He deplors that ‘unfortunately, many European novels about Africa show no real knowledge of Africa or Africans, presenting both in only the most ignorant and stereotypical ways’. While surveying western literature, one might find a consistent paradigm of representing the African as an ‘other’. This archetypal representation is inculcated and later internalized into the reader’s, be him/her a Westerner or an African, unconscious as common sense, as explained by Franz Fanon ‘*The collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity , it is the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of a culture*’ ( Black Skin 147).

It is precisely those underlying stereotypical assumptions the postcolonial writer tries to dismantle and debunk. The African writer needed and still needs to wipe out a distorted representation, but in order to appreciate his or her writing as an art and not as a mere re-action against European grand narratives, one should acknowledge the peculiarity of the African (con)text, and African literature as an art standing on its own feet.

In postcolonial studies, the contribution of Homi Bhabha cannot go unnoticed. We might map on the project of both Said and Bhabha, if we examine both their seminal works Orientalism and The Location of Culture (1994), respectively, as being a two-phase-project. Said, in Orientalism, though drawing on Gramsci’s<sup>6</sup> model of Marxism and Foucault’s<sup>7</sup> post-structuralism seems to adopt, however, a structuralist<sup>8</sup> stance. His

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<sup>6</sup> Said, in his introduction to Orientalism, is openly indebted to Gramsci and Foucault. When discussing cultural impositions, he departs from Gramsci’s Marxist vision about hegemony. This would be detailed in the second chapter when dealing with the nature of Western education.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, when dealing with the notion of domination and hegemony, opts for another dichotomy which operates, more or less, the same as Gramsci’s. He, instead, tried to map on the interrelated relationship between power/knowledge. He discusses the type of power that is not exercised by the law, police or the army, etc, but how insidious knowledge is circulated and made hegemonic. However, Said disagrees, subtly, with Foucault, on the issue of the author function and the author. For Foucault, the authors are not authorities but they function as mere vessels of forms of opinions shared in their respective culture(s). Said, in his turn, in the case of Orientalism, the authors are authorities from which knowledge is disseminated and generated

<sup>8</sup> The division of self/other discussed by Said, drew its premises from the linguistic structuralist model. The binarism of knowing our selves negatively as the non-other parallels the relationship between signs. The

Manichean Fanonism seems to flavour his analysis; i.e., dichotomous distinctions that of 'center/periphery' were heavily accentuated. Bhabha, in his turn, seems to adopt a deconstructionist attitude whereby negating the existence of any ontological center. In his The Location of Culture, he seems to praise hybridity and a 'third space' between the 'center' and 'periphery' as being the eligible space for enunciation and resistance. He states that: "... *This 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defying the idea of society itself*'(2). In his analysis, Bhabha tends to acknowledge the historical mishaps, that of imperialism and colonialism, as being facts that have to be lived with in a healthy and a conscious manner, and that this newly created 'in-between' space would usefully be the site for resistance.

In this instance, a division is likely to be drawn between the African writers that we should project on our chosen authors in our work, as well. We are likely to discern two groups of postcolonial writers: normative and interstitial writers. Normative writers are essentialist writers who seek to restore pre-colonial values and call for a genuine 'authentic' and 'pure' pre-colonial culture. They tend to romanticize it as being utterly 'ideal' and even highly mythical; while negating the new historical realities brought by the contact with the European culture. Interstitial writers, however, are writers, in various degrees, are hybrid and liminal writers who seem to acknowledge the workings of the changes brought by that contact. Throughout our analysis, we will try to categorize if ever possible the positions of both writers. But before turning to the textual analysis of WAWSB? and OSK to show how both authors attempt to debunk western assumptions on the one hand, but remains ambivalent as to the oppositional constructed assertions between the West and Africa on the other hand, it would be interesting to try to define African Literature and have an insight into the ideological context in which literary production flourished.

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sign is thought to be meaningless unless with regard to another sign; which differs from it; i.e. knowledge through negativity.

**1.2 ARMAH AND AIDOO AND THE AFRICAN LITERARY MATRIX:**

Trying to define African literature seems to be another challenge because the question ‘what is African literature?’ entails a plethora of other confusing albeit interesting interrogations. One would legitimately ask if it is the literature written about Africa or the literature that was produced in Africa. If we draw on the first assumption then works such as Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Graham Greene’s The Heart of the Matter, whose settings are in Africa, would belong to African literature. Through a careful examining of this kind of novels, we are to assume that their use of the African setting is utilized solely as a geographical or psychological background. This kind of novels would tell less about Africa and more about Europeans who got into contact with the African continent. Moreover, it is precisely texts such as these that promulgated racist stereotypes about the continent.

Language forms another angle of controversy. Should texts written in the ex-colonizer’s language: English, Portuguese, and French be encompassed by the term African literature or should it only refer to texts written in indigenous languages. Moreover, the producer of this literature, is it the African who was born and reared in Africa, or the one who has cultural bonds with Africa. Is race a preliminary criterion for selection? In case it is, then how should we consider white South African writers?

The critical evaluation of such literature, moreover, was monitored by Eurocentric inclinations since this literature has been looked at from western aesthetic standards. This kind of criticisms would only valorize the writings by African authors projecting them upon western works. Adrian Roscoe’s Mother is Gold: A Study in Western African Literature (1971), for instance, is rife with Eurocentric biases while qualifying African literature in an evolutionary mode as being “*quaint*”, “*exotic*” and “*infantile*” (71). Even if he acknowledges the “*enormous amount of prose writing coming out of Anglophone West Africa*”, he denigrates it when he notes that “*even a superficial scrutiny establishes that the bulk of it is poor in quality and merely satisfies an anthropological fad for Africa that the western world is currently enjoying*” (71). Roscoe builds up his arguments prioritizing the western tastes and reception rather than the endeavor of Africans to articulate aesthetically their Africanness. African literature than would be perceived,

merely, as an anthropological artifact void of any artistic genuinity. He accentuates his argument

West Africans by the score are telling a fascinated public (mainly overseas) about their indigenous way of life, and calling their efforts 'novels'. Criticism, unfortunately, allows this term to cover writing which lies at both extremes on the scale of artistic merit, and a masterpiece of Dickens or Jane Austin must shelter beneath the same roof as an offering from ... Nwapa, Obi Egbuna, Elchi Amadi, John Munonye (71/72)

The African literary productions were dismissed according to such Eurocentric criticisms as unworthy of critical attention but they work as substitutes for trips for westerners who did not have the opportunity to enjoy Africa's exoticism. Roscoe goes on with his paternalistic view to the African novel as "*a form in its infancy-weak and faltering, largely uncertain of itself, and lacking (or showing in embryonic form only) most of the skills that make prose fiction artistically arresting*" (72). Judging that the novel as a genre is a western import, he urges the African writers not to embark on such a task. He argues that "*the oral story, then, being Africa's dominant form ... a piece of the length and complexity of a novel could never be related by word of mouth*" (75). He urges the African writers to stick to the Short story writing since it resembles the shortness and simplicity of the short oral tale. He dismisses works such as Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters as being irrelevant to the African Artistic articulation.

Some other critics, who seemingly are sympathetic to the merit of African literature, can not go beyond the boundaries drawn by Eurocentric paternalistic formulations. Charles Larson, for instance, in his The Emergence of African Fiction, attributes to the African novel things like "only begun" and "very young" pronouncements denying it from sophistication. The framework established by Larson while evaluating the African novel is, too, a Eurocentric one. With regard to description, Larson notes that: "*description, as we tend to think of it in the western novel, is frequently missing from the African novelist who writes in English*" (17). He goes on with a misjudgment towards characterization "*from the western pint of view, many African*

*novels are almost totally devoid of characterization –especially character introspection and character development”* (17). Larson’s remarks are to find its echoes in a previous works of his with regard the African novel. In a paper entitled “Whither the African Novel?” presented at the 1968 African studies Association Conference in Los Angeles, Larson notes:

... the African novel in English has tended to be situational; and the African writer...has failed to create believable characters who live outside of the situations in which they are involved...there are few real human beings, genuine characters who stand out in any remarkable way...there are few characters who are in any sense universal: confronting the problems which all of us must confront if we are to be people at all” (148/149).

What is referred to by Larson as ‘universal’, is by no means a synonymous to what is convented to be western as Abeola Irele remarks, in his The African Experience in Literature and Ideology, that “ on the implicit assumption (by westerners) that the terms ‘universal’ and ‘western’ are synonymous” (34). Achebe exposed most nakedly the assumptions of universality propagated by such Eurocentric critics. Achebe ironically comments that

...the work of a western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who would strain to achieve it...As though universality were some distant bend in the road which you (the non-westerners) may take if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between you and your home (09).

Examining African literature through the lenses of western conventions, Larson would ascribe to African writers symptoms of deficiency, therefore, being inferior to western writers. Based on such criteria, Larson did perceive African writers into two categories; stratification based on how far the African writer is to emulate his western predecessors. The first generation, who are discredited to being genuine writers for their closer connection with tradition and orality. Larson’s second generation would constitute the

faction of writers who are likely to be qualified as versed and grounded writers for their highly western-oriented emulation.

Armah, for instance, for Larson, would fall within the second generation since his “*novels fall into the mainstream of current Western tradition, and his protagonists are not very different from a whole line of western literary anti-heroes: Julien Sorel, Huckleberry Finn, Stephan Dedalus, or Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man*” (258). In his analysis, Larson would valorize the writers of the second generation over the first. He notes that the second generation writers are those novelists who “*deserve serious consideration*” and who have “*attained a level of distinction comparable to that of the most talented writers now living in the West*” (277). Following the same thread of logic, Larson would finalize his thesis by predicting that “*some of the early examples of the influence of the oral tradition upon the novel form will decrease in frequency... (and) the African novel will become increasingly experimental in a western instead of an African way*” (281).

Larson and Roscoe, therefore, would found their evaluation to African literature on a western aesthetic conventional ground. If the latter is to dismiss it as being void of any aesthetic value except for anthropological documentation for western readers, the former would account for its existence if and only if it gets rid of tradition. Tradition, or the African way, is viewed to be an obstacle hampering the African author to produce a work of art. Larson urges the African writer to cut off any bond with his Africanness. Both visions, that of Larson and Roscoe, accentuate the hegemonic western worldview of art and of the world management in general.

Most surprisingly though, white critics are not the only ones to dismiss the genuinity of the African novel as a sound way of articulation in the African context, even some African critics do manifest a Eurocentric-inclined vision. Eustace Palmer is one striking example. While assessing the African novel, he does not only apply western standards, but argues that if whatsoever criteria to be adopted other than the European ones, would make the African novelists perform in a mediocre manner with regard to the canonical western heritage. He argues that “*to allow different critical criteria is to provide loophole for mediocrities*” (X). What Palmer seems to be blindly certain of is the

effectiveness of applying western standards, the ones applied for western literature, to African literature. His premise is that the western novel is no different from the African one. Though Palmer does account for the peculiarity of the African experience, he seems to find a hard time in acknowledging these peculiarities in the African novel. The uniqueness of the African experience would help new forms to emerge, but the genre would stay the same. Following that logic, he argues that “*since we still concerned with the same genre, the same criteria should still apply*” (X). His argument is comparatively based on evaluating Russian literature. He notes that “*Dostoevsky’s and Tolstoy’s experiences were markedly different from those of Conrad, George Eliot and other English novelists, but the form of their novels is not entirely alien to English literature*” (48). Palmer seems to ignore the peculiarity of the colonial relationship of Africa and Europe with its underlying ramifications not that of Russia and the rest of Europe.

The Eurocentrism of Palmer is shown when he ascribes to the African novelist the potentiality to reach excellence and perfection if he successfully emulates the western model. One illustration of that is Palmer’s analysis of Achebe’s Things Fall Apart. Palmer, when discussing, Things Fall Apart, argued that “*there are distinct affinities between the work of Achebe and that of Hardy*” (49). He goes on juxtaposing Achebe’s depiction of “*the conventions governing relations between the various generations are as elaborate as any to be found in a Jane Austin novel*” (49). He, further, juxtaposes Okonkwo with George Eliot’s Tulliver in Mill on the Floss (56). He credits Achebe with artistic perfection only when projecting his work against a western background. Palmer, however, seems to lose sight on the Achebe’s distinction as an African novelist not seen as replicating western novelistic techniques but of a writer who, creatively, articulate his Africanness through that genre.

Critics such as Kofi Awoonor and Wole Soyinka, however, would forward an interpretation based on an African-centered consciousness that informs the uniqueness of writers such as Achebe, as articulating their identity, while contributing, most powerfully to the genre. Awoonor declares that:

Achebe is perhaps the first writer... to use significantly African philosophical principle as the chief determinant in



## CHAPTER ONE: AN-OTHER WAY OF TELLING

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the construction of the novel. The theme of a man alone, dogged by jealous fate and baited by unreliable gods, is not a new one. But in *Things Fall Apart*, its derivatives are based in Igbo philosophy. It becomes the concept around which every other image in the novel centers (133)

Informed by that version of criticism, would let us to realize the myopic nature of Eurocentric models of evaluating the African novel in particular, and African literature in general. They overlook the peculiarity of locale and consciousness of such unique articulation. This vision, therefore, is a reductionist one wherein an exaggerated impact of western criteria is posited, and, too, a belittling of any genuine impulses of an African articulation is accentuated.

As a reaction to such reductionist attitude, many attempts to develop a framework which embodies an African-oriented consciousness. Works like Achebe's *Morning Yet On Creation Day* (1975), Kofi Awoonor's *The Breast of the Earth* (1975), and Wole Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976) would usher a new direction to a healthy evaluation.

These are some examples of the controversies around the attempt to define African literature. African fiction can be perceived as a work of fiction done by an African about Africa. Chinua Achebe tried to define the concept of African fiction transcending from the mere geographical material setting. While attempting to define what is the African novel and what peculiar characteristic features does it have, he wrote

...the African novel has to be about Africa. A pretty severe restriction, I am told. But Africa is not only a geographical expression; it is also a metaphysical landscape –it is in fact a view of the world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position ... as for who an African novelist is, it is partly a matter of passports, of individual volition and particularly of seeing from that perspective I have just touched (*Morning Yet on Creation Day* 50)

Achebe seems to opt for, particularly, an African subject telling the story from an African perspective.

Furthermore, at a seminar on African Literature and the universities that took place in Sierra Leone in 1963, scholars agreed to define African Literature as 'any work

in which an African setting is authentically handled... Or to which experiences which originate in Africa are integral'. This definition narrows the scope of the literary field in that it does not take into account the complexities inherent to the African continent as well as its very complex and diverse history and present state. As the subject of this study is chiefly about African Literature in English, and West African Anglophone literature, in particular, we will thus not go into details avoiding to provide imperial definitions. Moreover, the multi-layeredness and heterogeneity of Africa, geographically, historically, and socio-politically, is mirrored in the continent's literatures. Therefore it would be too pretentious to try and label its literatures as being a single and discrete entity.

In avoiding an attempt 'doomed to failure', to borrow Achebe's phrase, we will try and provide a more specific emphasis on West African Anglophone literature because we need to read Armah's and Aidoo's work in the literary matrix of the writers' meditations. One of the early works of West African literature<sup>9</sup> written in English is The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano published in London 1789. Despite the debate about whether or not this book was really written by Equiano, this narrative remains a pioneering one because it had a real political impact. Interestingly enough, Equiano was the first political leader of the black community and through his narrative; he initiated a movement of literary resistance. Thus, Equiano formulated notions and conceptions which, as Patrick Williams puts it, '*a century later became the basis for the Pan African movement which, in turn, provided a focus and forum for many who would eventually lead or help to lead their countries to freedom from colonial rule.*'(32).

Despite colonization, the nineteenth century was abounding with literary production such as works by Edward Wilmot Blyden and James Africanus Horton. Many West African writers of this period proved to be very vocal in opposing the pseudo scientific theories which claimed that race was an immutable category, fostering thereby the discrimination and putting forward the superiority of the White race. In this respect, the spirit of resistance which was voiced through the medium of literature was gaining grounds, and paved the way to what is known as Modern West African Literature. The

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<sup>9</sup> Pre-colonial African literatures did exist; it is difficult to trace them back because they were predominantly oral. 'many pre-colonial African cultures were predominantly oral and the colonizer's racist assumed that since these languages were not written, they did not exist' (Katrak 231).

emergence of this latter can approximately be equated with the period when independence and nationalism spread through the African continent.

Salient names such as Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, and Wole Soyinka- the first black African to win the Nobel Prize in 1986 - have significantly marked the modern West African-and international - literary scene. Achebe's most well-known novel Things Fall Apart was published in 1958, two years before the independence of Nigeria. Achebe adopted a revisionist strategy wherein he stressed the African pre-colonial history, a way for him to have the African culture - in his case the Igbo culture - acknowledged. I have raised this point to show that early postcolonial and post-independence literatures are different. If postcolonial works such as Things Fall Apart were fuelled by the spirit of resistance, the episode of independence would change the mood of the coming literary production. Indeed, independence heralded the end of foreign domination and brought with it an unprecedented wave of expectations and hope. Unfortunately, the hopes of the masses failed to materialize, and the literature of the immediate postcolonial era shows that it did not take long, after independence, for writers to recognize the symptoms of decay.

These writers soon realized that the revolution per se had been derailed. A diagnosis that was reflected in their writings which bear on the disappointment and the vitriol they felt toward the neo-colonial black elite. To take the case of Achebe, in his novel the A Man of the People (1966), the writer gives a very depressing vision of a leaderless Nigeria which is captive of greedy and self-centered political elite. The withering critique of the political elite is over toned with the writer's high disillusionment, confusion and hopelessness in regard to solutions for the future. Let us now turn the focus on Ghana because both Armah and Aidoo are Ghanaian writers and also because the country's choice is significant to understand the literary context of the period. However, if both works can be read semi-autobiographically, one has to consider, too, the choice of Armah's North African setting where the voyagers returned to that of Algeria.

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African colony to gain independence on March 6, 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, the new president, in front of over 100,000 people who gathered in Accra, enthusiastically exclaimed:

At long last the battle has ended! And thus Ghana, your beloved country, is free for ever... We are not waiting; we shall no more go back to sleep ... Today, from now on, there is a new **African** in the world and that new **African** is ready his own battle and show that after all **the black** man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, young as we are that we are prepared to lay our foundation.(Nkrumah 106-7)(emphasis mine).

It is interesting to remark the use of the word 'African' instead of 'Ghanaian'. In a post-independence context, leaders usually put forward notions of national identity which bring together the masses. Nkrumah's first address to his people on the day of independence focuses on continental belonging rather than on a national one. This address asserts Nkrumah's position as a committed pan-Africanist who fathered the concept of 'the African personality'. Ghana's independence had a great echo and went beyond the borders of the 'gold coast'. Nkrumah was the man who epitomized the ideals he fervently defended; Freedom, African unity, and egalitarianism. Unfortunately, promises of unity, prosperity, and economic independence were soon eclipsed by poverty, illiteracy and social unrest. Nkrumah became increasingly authoritarian; he became self-absorbed, always trying to maintain his political image of the 'savior'. He was eventually deposed in a military coup in 1966. After that, Ghana was the theatre of successive military coups in a short span of time, and people had to wait until the coming of the eighties to enjoy a somehow political and economic stability. Interestingly enough, in an address to the second congress of black artists and writers that took place in Rome 1959, Frantz Fanon denounces the very notion of black unity or black culture as being erroneous. He rejects the claim of a pan-African unity and argues that cultural identity is first and foremost national. Both men will have a considerable influence on the writings of Armah and Aidoo.

This disenchanted mood carved the trajectory of African Literature. Writers differed in their reactions to the callous reality of independence, and the postcolonial drama it unfolded. In his novel This Earth, My Brother written in 1977, the Ghanaian writer Kofi Awoonor ponders the reasons of the postcolonial failure, as it were. For him, the revolution fell short because it was bound to fail. Politicians' promises always go beyond the possibility of material realization and that is why- following Awoonor's thinking- there will always be the unlucky, the disappointed outnumbering a few lucky ones, and in between there are the intellectuals caught at the confluence of events and who, unsuccessfully try to go against the stream. For him 'this earth' is not a place for happiness. This bleak and dystopian vision is to be found in the radical writings of Ayi Kwei Armah. Armah is also concerned with the failure of independence but has a different view as to its reasons. Unlike Awoonor who attributes the failure to fatalism, Armah sees it, in a Fanonian way, as the result of the betrayal of the national elite. The failure for him looms from the mere replacement of a colonial white ruling bourgeoisie with a postcolonial black bourgeoisie. It was, as he put it, 'a change of embezzlers' (The Beautiful Ones, 162). Hope has been drained out by the sickening attitude of the black national bourgeoisie. His first three novels constitute a biting critique of the ideological bankruptcy and the corruption of the African leadership. The elite are depicted as vampires, sucking the nation of all its wealth. Writers like Armah were well aware that the black national bourgeoisie which was in power was depriving its own people for the benefit of Western capital.

The West African writers mentioned above -and many others we couldn't deal with for matters of concision- had a tremendous contribution to the development of postcolonial African literature as an art through their narrative strategies and ideological formulations. Through mingling traditional African orature and western literary forms and devices, they succeeded to find a compromise between their African literary and cultural patrimony, and the colonial literary and cultural legacy. Thus the African Literature is a hybrid in the positive sense of the term.

Armah, for instance, was, until recently, perceived to be an African writer who writes with a western sensibility. Through his first three novels, he was subject to a heavy

Eurocentric criticism while he was the spoiled child of western critical circles; as epitomizing the fruits of 'la mission civilisatrice'. Ama Ata Aidoo is one of the earliest who reinterpreted Armah's first work, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. In her article "No Saviours", she unveiled the masked racism embedded in the west's reception of the work. Her article that is dated in 1967 positions her among the first pioneers who helped forge an African –centered consciousness. The Eurocentric criticisms of Armah not only sprung of his stylistic techniques, but rather on his personal experience as a writer who happened to spend his formative years in the West.

Armah's critiques of African societies in his first three novels, the deep sense of alienation that overwhelm his protagonists are the perceptions forwarded by Eurocentric critics , or at its best , he was ascribed to be a radical pessimistic writer. Very surprisingly though , this view is not limited to Eurocentric critics such as Roscoe, Larson and Palmer, but it is even propagated by other sensitive critics. Achebe and Awoonor, for instance, discredited Armah's first novels as devoid from any sense of Africanness and reflecting nothing but western sensibilities. Awoonor, when discussing the contemporary African novel, joined Armah with Oulouguem for both embody the "era of despair" in African literature. He further his remarks by noting that "*in a basic sense, these writers are also external exiles, removed from a basic perception of the African scene more than most of their contemporaries by years of overseas living and education*" (304). Armah's The Beautiful Ones, too, for Achebe is "*a sick book. Sick not with the sickness of Ghana but with the sickness of the human condition*". Armah, for Achebe, is, too, the "*alienated native*", who writes about Ghana not as an African but "*like some white district officer*" (24-26)

On the other hand, Aidoo, as one of the pioneering critics, in her article "No Saviours", admits that there "is something frightening about book,". Nevertheless, she argues that what is frightening in the book as

...the clarity with which he (Armah) has seen the African urban scene, as no visitor can be capable of, and the mercilessness with which he has opened it up – as a foreigner would dare to today (16)

It is to be noted that Aidoo refutes Achebe's view about Armah as an "alienated native", but rather a committed African writer whose commitment is to Africa. Aidoo acknowledges that "this type of purgative exposure, however painful it is, is absolutely necessary" (18). Armah's primary concern, for Aidoo, is the healing of the fissured Africa

What he does proclaim aloud is that he thinks of us: those who are still having their civilized dialogues with the former oppressors of Africa and with them are busily consuming illegally the continent's strength and fertility. (18)

Many critics have ascribed to Armah pessimistic attributes and that he is his novels would constitute a cycle of doom. It seems, as though, that few scholars, like Robert Fraser and Ode Ogede, would examine the project thread of Armah's literary production. They acknowledged that even if the first novels The Beautiful Ones (1968), Fragments (1969), and WAWSB? do provide an apocalyptic gloomy vision about Africa, they, nevertheless, foreground the basis from which Armah launches his project where a line of purpose is articulated in his later novels Two Thousand Seasons(1973), The Healers(1979), and Osiris Rising(1995). Khondlo Mtshali in his PhD thesis, for instance, entitled The Developmental Phases of a Healer in Aye Kwei Armah's Novels, suggested a very consistent paradigm to the reading of Armah's novels. He positioned each novel in a thread of consistent phases in the healing process of Africa.

Khondlo argued that Armah's Two Thousand Seasons forwards 'the ontology of healing' while the other novels would constitute the phases or developmental stations in the evolution of healing. Each chapter of his thesis is devoted to one novel. The Beautiful Ones, for instance, is 'the immediate phase'. The actual environment is posited in this novel where the potential for the healers, the Man and his mentor the Teacher, are so overwhelmed by the status quo. An atmosphere of corruption and filth is extravagantly exhibited in that novel. The second novel Fragments, the healer is in an 'innovative phase'. After coming back from his journey from the west, the healer, Baako, is rendered uncompromising to grasp the living conditions of his own people, conditions reflecting the moral and political chaos of modern Ghana. The story ends with the break down of the healer.

The third phase, which entails our corpus of study WAWSB?, is designated as being a 'reflective phase'. In our work, we have qualified it, along with OSK, as a diagnostic phase. Embarking on a journey, the prospected healers, Solo and Modin, are faced with the dilemma of conformity and non-conformity with the existing societal codes and the community versus individual articulations. The subsequent phase entailed in the Healers, would be a 'preparatory phase' where the community is initiating the social transformation while at the level of individuality Densu is seeking practical training from his mentor Daamfo. The last chapter of Khondlo's thesis would examine the last phase coincides with Armah's last novel Osiris Rising. It is a phase that forwards the completion of the previous phases as it launches its project of 'the re-birth of social movement'. It articulates the application phase. Osiris Rising expounds the role of the individual within the social background.

As our corpus of study includes Aidoo's OSK, along with Armah's WAWSB?, we deem it quite convenient to give a brief overview on west African women writers without going into detailed analysis, my intention being to establish the literary atmosphere in which Aidoo emerged as a writer. Another angle of interest is to forward a background wherein gender construction and representation of woman is handled through both works.

For women who experienced colonialism, the problem was much more disseminated because they were deprived not only on grounds of race or class, as was the case for their male counterpart, another component was added to them, that of gender. In the case of Africa, this gender division was all the more problematic for it was a direct ramification of colonization. In this respect it is worth mentioning that sociological and anthropological analyses of African societies have illuminated the distinctiveness of the social structure in pre-colonial Africa. Many African societies were matrilineal. Women enjoyed an amazing freedom and it was colonial domination which brought about perceptions of male and female roles which were alien to them. Discussing the portrayal of her female characters, Ama Ata Aidoo declares:

People say to me 'your women characters seem to be stronger than we are used to when thinking about African women'. As far as I am concerned these are the African women among



whom I was brought up. In terms of women standing on their feet, within or outside the marriage, mostly from inside the marriage, living life on their own terms.' (Wilson-Tagoe 47).

Boehmer explains that men were subject to feminization under empire, and that is the reason why they developed an aggressive masculinity as a reaction to oppose the foreign domination. She goes on explaining that the nationalist movements encouraged attitudes of leadership of their members who were men in their majority. Women were thus '*marginalized both by nationalist political activity and by the rhetoric of nationalist address*' (224). The literature produced under colonial rule and in the years following independence reflected this marginalization, for men were portrayed as leaders and significant agents of the newly freed nation-state, whereas women were depicted in highly symbolical ways. They were either metaphors of the nation or '*idealized custodians of tradition*' (225). In the same vein, Lloyd W Brawn remarks that Women are highly visible in African literatures but only as a symbol or as a subject in the work of male authors. And even when this latter tries ways of representation other than the idealized concept of womanhood as a symbol, he remains hostage to a patriarchal point of view (493-4). Thus the urge of investigating other perspectives and hearing 'from within' as it were, was paramount to having more accurate and reliable representations. Given the proximity with her own condition, and her closeness to the realities of the status and the condition of women in African societies, the African woman was the best equipped one to launch new discourses. In an interview with Anna Rutherford, Achebe in his own words declares:

We have been ambivalent; we have been deceitful even, about the role of the woman. We have ... said all sort of grandiloquent things about womanhood, but in our practical life, the place of the woman has not been adequate...I am aware of my own limitations. In mapping out in detail what woman's role is going to be, I am aware that radical new thinking is required...We have created all kinds of myths to support the suppression of the woman, and the time has come to put an end to that...the woman herself will be in the forefront in designing what her new role is going to be, the humble co-operation of men (3-4).

Thus, the emergence of African women writers can be seen as an analogous movement to the emergence of African Literatures in general. Indeed, postcolonial African literature stemmed from the need to oppose, debunk and negate distorted and erroneous representations that have been perpetuated by white European literary canons. It is for the same reasons that many African women felt the urge to remedy to idealized stereotypical representations generated by their male colleagues. Those women were writing at the same time as men, but the acknowledgement of these writers as worth reading and studying came much after.

Women used the medium of Literature to seek self definition and thus the sixties saw the emergence of outspoken West African writers such as the Nigerian Flora Nwapa and her novel Efuru published in 1966, Ama Ata Aidoo and her first play The Dilemma of the Ghost published in 1965, and the Ghanaian writer Efua Sutherland, who has been writing even under colonial rule. These writers paved the way to the emergence of many great talents such as Mariama Ba (Senegal), and Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), the list is much longer. They explore various themes ranging from the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism to themes related to their gender: the condition of women, problems of polygamy, marginalization and the component of power in male female relationships.

Another factor contributed to the emergence of women writing: the resurgence of the women's movement in the West, that is Europe and the United States as acknowledged by Aidoo:

The woman's movement has definitely reinforced one's conviction about the need for us to push in whatever way we can for the development of women. But I don't think that one woke up one morning and found that they were talking about the development of women, and one should join the bandwagon-no. What it has done is that has actually confirmed one's belief and one's conviction. Our people say that if you take up a drum to beat and nobody joins then you just became a fool. The women's movement has helped in that it is like other people taking up the drum and beating along with you. (Adeola James, 21).

Despite some common contextual and ideological features, African 'feminism' and western feminism cannot be used interchangeably given different historical, social, and cultural conditions women encounter. Many African black writers found it difficult to associate themselves with 'feminism' as a western concept because they feared a blanket generalization that would concentrate on a shared marginalization based on gender and ignore other important aspects that constitute the peculiarity of the African woman experience. Many writers and critics such as Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, consider the term 'womanist' more appropriate to describe the African -and African American-writers:

(...) where a white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist". That is, she will recognize that, along with her consciousness of sequel issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy... [African and African Americans] as a group, they are distinct from white feminists because of their race, because the experienced past and present subjugation of the black population along with present-day subtle (or not so subtle) control exercised over them by alien, Western culture. (64).

Therefore, Ogunyemi, along with Alice Walker, insists on the layeredness of the black woman's commitment not only to her 'gender' but to the fate of all her community and her people. In this respect Aidoo can be called a womanist.

**CONCLUSION:**

We have discussed in this chapter the theoretical and literary formations of postcoloniality. We have shown that through this movement, the subaltern attempts to engage his counter representational discourse in a way to provide another way of telling. We also noted that the term postcolonial is not confined to the historical phase that is after independence, but rather it engulfs intellectual, ideological and artistic scopes. It posits pre-colonial, colonial and pos-colonial preoccupations not only as mere oppositional subversive practices to the western discourse rendering it as a mere reactionary gesture. Interestingly enough, it would transcend western representational discourses through certain cultural, social and historical peculiarities of the postcolonial writer. We showed how that the term postcolonial is not a homogenous identifiable kind of theory. Because of its wide scope of interest, it enjoys wide scope eclecticism in that it draws from different schools of thoughts such as Marxism, deconstruction, feminism, psychoanalysis...etc. we also drew on the works of Edward Said and Bhabha as constituting a two-phase-project. While the first tried to unveil, in a postcolonial fashion, the workings of western discourse; the latter forwards strategies to write back conveniently in a hybrid gesture.

In the second part of this chapter, we shed light, more specifically, on the African experience since our chosen authors are African authors. We saw the historical, social, cultural and political matrix within which both Armah and Aidoo communicate their ways of telling. We also contextualized the corpus of our study within each author's thread of literary production. Moreover, we contextualized Aidoo's way of telling as an African woman writer within global feminist tradition. Aidoo, as many other African woman writers, are conscious of the double marginalization caused by western colonization; first as a colonized subject and as a gendered subject, as well. She, like many other women writers, preferred to be categorized as a womanist writer instead of a feminist writer. In the following chapter, we will examine both authors' visions of western education and post-independence realities through a postcolonial-inflicted consciousness. The nature of education the protagonists receive in the west is to be dissected; hence determining both authors' stance vis-à-vis the impacts of western

## CHAPTER ONE: AN-OTHER WAY OF TELLING

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education upon the would-be African educated class and the resulting conditions of post-independent Africa.

# **CHAPTER TWO:**

## **WESTERN EDUCATION AND THE NEOCOLONIAL RAMIFICATIONS**

### **CHAPTER'S CONTENTS:**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Both Armah's WAWSB? And Aidoo's OSK have as their trajectorial itineraries the sojourning of the African protagonists from their homeland, Africa, to Western renowned universities. Alarmed by the history of Western imperial subjugation of Africa, and fueled by its underlying discourse, the concept of Western education has forcibly to be qualified. Many scholars have tried to map on the relationship between education, society and culture. Education and educational curricula are highly reflective components to their respective culture(s). That being said, the encounter of different cultures, mainly if one culture is thought to be inflicting hegemonic impulses over another, would lead us to question the objectivity and the prospected outcomes aimed by that education. Since the targeted protagonists are exemplars of a very sensitive class amongst their fellow people, who are to be categorized under the umbrella of Africa's intelligentsia, one has to inquire about the epistemological foundations of Western education and its social, psychological, political and economic implications over the native intelligentsia. This latter are to be considered as the 'been-tos' who would, afterwards, lead and hold sensitive and strategic posts in their respective postcolonial countries as the would-be elite. Solo and Modin, in WAWSB?, And Sissie in OSK, are given the opportunity to travel to American and European universities, respectively, being chosen for their 'distinctive' mental abilities. Through both narratives, we are to examine the nature and the role of education they are provided with. We will thus see if they fit into the Promethean crossing wherein they work as a bridge between the west and Africa. Does the education they receive allow them to help out post-independent Africa? Or is it an apparatus that would produce westernized African intellectuals who would serve the colonial mother in a neocolonial mode?

Tackling the issue of Western education and the neo-colonial ramifications, in this chapter we are to resort to Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony, Michel Foucault's paradigm of knowledge/power, Louis Althusser's 'ideological apparatus' and Fanon's vision of revolution.

**2.1 THE WESTERN EDUCATION AND THE PROMETHEAN CROSSING:**

It is worth mentioning that many social scientists tried to devise theories about the status of education in society. Two visions seem to arise, though. There are those who ascribe to education a hegemonic nature and that it is perceived to be the most important ideological state apparatus. On the other hand, some others would consider it as a value-free means to social progress. Caught between these two visions, we are to see how this is to be negotiated in both works. According to Gramsci, hegemony can be exerted in two ways; one which is exercised by physical power, and the other which is permeated through institutional structures between different classes within one society or between nations. The possibility of the two types of hegemony to co-exist is very likely to occur since both types might well back one another up. One might reckon the status of education as being a part of the second type of hegemony

By hegemony, Gramsci meant the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as an 'organizing principle' that is diffused by the process of socialization into every area of daily life. To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the population it becomes part of what is generally called 'common sense' so that the philosophy, culture and morality of the ruling élite comes to appear as the natural order of things.([www.infed.org/thinkers](http://www.infed.org/thinkers).)

The subtle workings of that sort of hegemony permeated throughout the society's institutions are to be unconsciously inculcated into the individual's psyches being internalized afterwards as unquestionable premises. The interests of a specific class or one nation over another would be legitimized by the ideological apparatuses diffused throughout society. Education, for instance, is seen by Louis Althusser as a significant ideological state apparatus<sup>1</sup>; hence, a very powerful means to the establishment of the status quo. Interestingly enough, the history of peoples and cultures, namely in our case

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<sup>1</sup> For Louis Althusser, the human beings are not self-conscious responsible agents but rather a product of acquired inculcated social practices. Education, for instance, is one amongst many apparatuses that produce individuals who are in the image of society or a specific class at large.



that of the relationship between the West and the rest of the world is accentuated by a history of domination and subjugation. Ngugi in his Moving the Center argued that “any study of cultures which ignores structures of domination and control within nations and between nations and races over the last four hundred years is in danger of giving a distorted picture.”(28). We, therefore, must be aware of the nature of this relationship being highly motivated, and thus being far from innocent and angelic. This domination or hegemony of one camp would inevitably mean the oppression and subjugation of another one.

Academic education can be perceived as a devised curricular knowledge. Knowledge, for Foucault, is inextricably linked to power and it is a form of power to the extent that he linked them in a dichotomous formulation knowledge/power. In his Discipline and Punishment, he argued that:

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the ‘the truth’ but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, ‘there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (27).

Foucault shows how it is that the interchangeability of the two concepts would mean that knowledge is not a value-laden concept. Not only does knowledge authenticate the truthfulness of something, rather it is in itself a form of truth proper.

Armah’s view of Western education seems to be informed by post-structuralist theorizations. Modin, in WAWSB?, was received warmly in the United States, by his sponsors; the Harvard based African Education Committee. The latter is composed of Mr. Oppenhardt and Professor Jefferson. Mr. Oppenhardt, who is a self-centered authoritarian and who is feared by his fellow committee members, is the committee financial sponsor. His status epitomizes the hegemonic relation of the economic strata over the intellectual strata. Professor Jefferson, who represents the loyalty and the subordination of the intelligentsia to the economic class, teaches at Harvard. He is a finicky eager to please

person who lacks confidence. Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Scott and Naita are employees of the committee. Mr. Blanchard's main task is to familiarize the new international students with the new ambiance. Mr. Scott is charged with the committee's development project and Naita is an African American secretary.

The main field of interest of the committee through its projects is the historical inferiority of Africa. Mr. Jefferson's research premises are mainly summarized as the absence of any African history prior to slavery and colonialism. For Jefferson the western intervention in Africa did usher the latter into history and that "*Africa is now an area justifying advanced study*" (119). The inferiority of Africa as assumed by western academia is further maintained through the peculiar treatment of Modin as being exceptionally intelligent. The members of the committee would consider Modin as "*a most unusually intelligent African- the most intelligent as a matter of fact*" (120). This western mindset of members of academia, crystallized through the committee's projects, has as its conspicuous goal the elevation of Africa from its lower state of civilization to reach the Western advanced status. In his "Flood and Famine", Armah qualifies such intellectuals as "*the kind of souls who consider begging an alm beneath themselves and their people, but think they are fine for Africa. These good friends of Africa have two faces. The public face is called solidarity. The private face has a different name: contempt*" (2011).

Western Education is, for Modin and his creator, Armah, as well, a systemized apparatus that legitimates the power state of the West and the inferior position it reserves for Africa and the rest of the wretched countries. For him, it proves nothing good but serviceability to the imperial enterprise. Modin, moreover, came to realize that this education is "*designed to reduce [Africans] to invisibility while magnifying whiteness. My participation in this kind of ritual made me... a person split, fractured because of my participation in alien communal rituals designed to break me and my kind*" (31/32). Modin is to realize, too, the hypocrisy of his university's 'benefactors' like the Oppenhardts' family, (deceptive open-hearts), who treat him as an immature child, a Hegelian attitude that reflects the status of Africa as a child in progress. Their seemingly benevolent deeds to him are nothing but a means to manipulate him. Throughout his stay at Harvard University, he starts to deflate and debunk the self-righteous status of

members of western academia. He, moreover, was denied access to real information, Modin reflected: “[*African people*] *denied information and locked out of participation, being brought in only for rhetoric*” (222).

Through a postcolonial consciousness, and after a process of encounters and experiences, Modin reflects upon the nature of knowledge he is receiving: “*Knowledge of the world we live in is the property of the alien because the alien has conquered us. The thirst for knowledge, therefore, becomes perverted into the desire for getting close to the alien, getting out of the self. Result: loneliness as a way of life.*”(33). Modin through that gesture tries to question the objectivity and the benign nature of Western education as something of a universal status. He comes to the conclusion that the intellectual’s search for a way out to him and Africa’s predicament through the medium of western education is such a trivial undertaking. Moreover, he is to realize, too, that the educated Africans who are meant to provide a cure to the fissured selfhood of Africa, are themselves affected by that ideological apparatus. Western education would lead the targeted Africans either to fall prey to its assimilationist orientation, or else to a total alienation and loneliness, hence, keeping them afar and paralyzed to give anything positive and concrete to Africa. In his “*African Socialism: Utopia or Scientific?*”. Amarah laments on the estrangement of the educated and middle class of Africa from the African context, which is caused by the Westernized education. He sees that the most successful one among that class is

Likely to have gone quite in the ladder of assimilation set up for his benefit by the white man. The system is quite overtly one of the progressive isolation of the subject... the desire to excel in competition with one’s peers in a colonial situation becomes enlisted in an incentive system that offers increasing rewards in proportion as the competing individual draws near the colonialist ideal (16).

The African intellectuals and the educated class start their journey or crossing with an idealistic and optimistic vision. Throughout their crossings, they are to get awareness of the fact that their homeland, Africa, has been peripherized with whatsoever manner by a presumed Western center. One culminating remark by Modin is that “*All the institutions set up by the Europeans are traps to destroy awareness.*”(223). The African

intellectual's endeavor, therefore, is to narrow that gap seeking an idealistic humanism, wherein equality and equity are the arbiters of the relations between the West and the marginalized rest. Modin comments in one of his diary entries on his journey as: "*Life. My life. A search for the center, away from the periphery... Leaving home for school, always in search for knowledge should not be synonymous with increasing alienation and loneliness...It has been planned that way.*"(32). Modin notices that such a process is not a random one but rather has been conspiratorially plotted by the West. This remark seems to find its echo in Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth. Sartre blames the European *elite* for the creation and the manipulation they inflict upon its African counterpart: "*The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with principles of Western culture... After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, white-washed.*" (7). The nature of information is further dissected by Modin who realized that information has also been compartmentalized just to increase the educated African's assimilation to the imperial west and his alienation from his people. He remarks that "high information in the center, low information on the periphery (33).

Aidoo in OSK does not seem to be, thoroughly, categorical about Western education like Armah, though. In an interview conducted by Adeola James, when asked about education, Aidoo stressed that "*education is the key, the key to everything*" (11). It is worth mentioning that her vision about education is consolidated through her commitment to such value reserved for education. She, for instance, has travelled a lot and worked as a teacher and a lecturer in numerous universities in Ghana, west and central Africa, and the USA. Aidoo, most importantly, held the position of Minister of Education under the government of Jerry Rawlings. She resigned after a year in office. She explains that she sought this position because she was aware of the paramount importance of education at the national level. Therefore, she occupied the position of a member of government to have direct access to power and political influence to mark a sound change. She, however, does not turn blind on the ramifications education and the West in general had upon the 'been-tos'.

In the first section of her four-section-fiction subtitled 'Into a Bad Dream', we are shown the ongoing Western hegemony over Post-independent Africa. The narrator

severely blames the “nigger who is ‘moderate’” for being so docile in accepting the so-called universality of bourgeois values transplanted in Africa by the west. These values are eurocentrically devised and had nothing to fit into the newly exhausted and devastated independent African nations. She furthers her complaints and blames on the ‘academic-pseudo-intellectual’ whose education is bestowed from the West with its underlying superiority attributed to the West: being a source to save Africa from its doomed ‘darkness’.

Aidoo’s narrator seems to be well aware of the value-laden conceptualization of Western education that instills and legitimate imperialism in a neocolonial outfit. In her unsent letter to her beloved once onboard on her way back to Ghana, Sissie, sarcastically remarks about the assimilated educated Africans that “*They say that After all, literature, art, culture, all information, is universal. So we must hurry to lose our identity quickly to join the great family of man*” (121). Sissie seems to be aware of the biased universality acclaimed by the West being actually a Eurocentric universalism. The African educated elite who adhere to such version of universality are not to provide any prospected solutions for the continent except through Western-oriented conceptions, which are far from being benign and constructive.

When dealing with the impact of Western education received abroad, one should not ignore the impact of the colonial education set by the Western colonizer in Africa in the first place. Walter Rodney in his How Europe underdeveloped Africa argues that:

The main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole... Colonial education was an education for subordination, exploitation, and the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment. (263)

This would prove nothing but the ideologized stratagem of Western education. It shows how the imperial West is utterly aware of the role and impact education had over the natives’ minds. Aidoo, too, seems to be totally unsatisfied with the status of Education and educational system at home. She pointed out that “*Although we are supposed to be independent the content of education is pretty much what was during colonialism. The content and system of education has not been decolonized*”. (“A New Tail to an Old Tale” 306).

In *WAWSB?*, Modin happens to discuss the issue of America's blessedness with a bunch of bohemians he used to befriend. Mike, the Fascist, as his name might suggest, comes upon an article in *The Sunday Times* whose title "Why Are We So Blest?"; ironically, the title of Armah's novel. The article is a piece of rhetoric praising the blessedness and exceptionalism of America. Mike and Modin start arguing about the article in a Socratic dialoguing wherein Modin intend to lead Mike through argumentations to realize the fallacious history of America. Mike seems to praise the holiness and the utopian basis for the USA. He is so self-centered that he ignores the different histories of the rest of the world. He perceived anything, which is not geographically in the American hemisphere, as belonging to a rotten wretched old world. He ascribes that blessedness to the abundance of geography where he links grace to space. Modin, through postcolonial lenses, then, tries to deconstruct and unearth another version of argumentation where he displayed the history of criminality and inhumanity towards the natives which is eclipsed by an American utopian version. He clearly argues that the U.S.A.'s blessedness can only be achieved because it possesses the "*the genius for destroying everything*" (100).

Modin, in the process of his crossing, gained a postcolonial awareness. His debunking of the so-called angelic image of the U.S seems to include Europe as well. He sees the U.S.A. as an 'outgrowth of Europe.' His gesture of revolt against the paternalism displayed by the Oppenhardts, and his dialogue with Mike, for instance, seems to be translated literally through his decision to stop participating in that kind of 'ritual'. In an auto-biographical reading, this gesture does echo Armah's reaction to western education when he stopped attending his university studies in the U.S.

The Prometheus myth is so significant and so present when dealing with the role of the educated Africans who get their knowledge from the West, and who are intended to provide salvation to Africa. The Socratic dialogue which Modin and Mike have about the blessedness of the U.S. and the status of the African student flavors the discussion with a mythical dimension. As the Greek mythology has it, Prometheus, is believed to be one of the Titans. Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods, felt uneasy towards Prometheus's acts that of teaching humans useful skills, hence rendering them more powerful. After being chosen by the gods to be an arbiter in a dispute, Prometheus fooled and tricked

Zeus to take the worst and the least appetizing parts of the sacrificial bull and give the best parts to humans. As an act of revenge, Zeus decided to deprive humans from fire so that humans would eat their meat raw. As a reaction, Prometheus climbed the Mount Olympus and lit a torch from the Sun. Most secretly, though, he slipped it through to humankind. Avenging that act, Zeus invited Prometheus into accepting a mischievous Pandora with her box. The box is filled with all the horrors of the world. Prometheus, with his foresight as his name indicates, refused the gift. His brother Epimetheus, however, opened it. Zeus, not satisfied that his plan was thwarted that it was not Prometheus who did open it, caught Prometheus and chained him to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains where he was to be tortured. An eagle, everyday, would come to Prometheus and eat his liver till night falls. Growing by night, the liver was to be enduringly eaten each day and such was Prometheus everlasting torture. After a bargain with Zeus, Heracles freed Prometheus.

The crossing made by the protagonists Sissie, in OSK, and Solo/Modin, in WAWSB, is highly reflective to the crossing done by Prometheus. In the case of WAWSB, Joyce Johnson argues that:

Prometheus has a specific reference to ex-colonial Africa because he is a hero who attempted to bridge two worlds. This aspect of the myth, relating to Prometheus' attempt to cross over from a position of privilege to the side of oppressed humanity, is especially relevant to the situation of the Western-educated African who is attempting to re-establish links with his traditional cultural background or to identify with the ordinary people. (204)

Reading Armah's WAWSB, we are to observe that going to the imperial center seeking knowledge, Modin and Solo can be seen as Promethean figures catching fire/knowledge from the Olympus or the west to illuminate Africa, 'the heart of darkness'. But unlike Prometheus deed, the African Prometheus, due to the ideologized nature of his/her education is left, willingly, by the Zeus or the west, to catch the torch. Two characteristic features are to be attributed to fire; light and heat. The educated African is to be allowed, so to speak, to catch only the heat that would burn him and his continent being endlessly tortured like the eaten liver of Prometheus. Modin, recollecting a school tour he had done with his mates when he was home, linked Christiansburg's

castle, 'a slave factory', with his present state situation. He is shown the privileged position the native 'factor' had captivated his fellow people in that castle to be sold, afterwards, to western slave traders.

Modin and solo were not attributed the faculties of Prometheus that of foresightedness, though. Their awareness is a belated one, a feature that reflects Epimetheus's name, instead, that of hind sightedness. He is belatedly to scorn the Western education by equating the scholarships Africans are given with 'factorships'. Moreover, the Western-educated Africans are nothing but a modern version of old factors. Ode Ogede argued that Modin's realization that his diagnosis to Western education led him to realize that he would be a "*part and parcel, not of the solution, but of the forces oppressing his people*" (87). One of the Westernized blacks Modin meets is Dr. Earl Lynch, who, according to Modin, is '*caught in Whitest philosophies*' (163). Modin being shown Lynch's secret library is to see how far Lynch went along the Westernized path. Lynch apparently could not grasp the meaning of Ananse, as being a part of African mythology, while appreciating books of Marxism that, for Armah, are irrelevant to the African context and are but one amongst white philosophies. Armah seems, once again, to adopt an essentialist stance.

Aidoo, in her turn, does not seem to be radically skeptic about Western education. She, nevertheless, acknowledges the shallowness of those Western-educated Africans or, as she calls them through her narrator "*the recipients of leftovers awards*" (87). What she laments the most is the not-coming back of the 'been-tos' who preferred to stay in western metropolises rather than to come back and help the continent; hence, not even trying to act like Prometheus to bring the torch of light, so to speak, from the West/Olympus.

Meeting Sammy, for instance, the young Ghanaian who epitomizes the stereotype of the servile colonial subject (Odamtten122) constitutes the first criticism the narrator proffers on this class. In the course of a dinner organized in her own honor, Sissie meets Sammy, her 'fellow countryman', who seemed to be there only to make her realize '*that she was unbelievably lucky to have been chosen for the trip. And that, somehow going to Europe was altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise*' (9) Instead of being excited by the testimony of Sammy, Sissie feels 'uneasy', more, she is disgusted



by his behavior and his talk; *'more saliva rushed into her mouth every time he spoke' as if she wanted to spit on 'this African'* (8) whose voice *'was wet with longing'* (9). Sissie is not impressed. The attitude of Sammy creates in her ironic skepticism. Even though she is inexperienced, she is not impressed by the ode Sammy makes about Europe. Larbi rightly notes that Sammy stands for *'an African lost to himself, a morbid figure of alienation who provokes in Sissie an overwhelming feeling of sensuous distaste'* (56), Sissie feels disdain toward him. We are told time is to bring Sissie many Sammy's and that they would always affect her in the same way (9).

One of the major thrusts of this fiction is biting criticism on the African 'been – tos'. It is in the third section of the novel that Sissie becomes more aware of the nature of her journey and the way human, economic and political relationships are articulated. Her growing consciousness wipes up her naïve perception of things and allows her a more accurate view of the way she is evolving in the process of this journey.

Sissie meets numerous 'Sammys' in the course of her visit to London, *'her colonial home'* (85). Her vision sharpens and is tainted by a black eyed squint; this is the reason why the narrator gives us more insights into her thoughts. Sissie is puzzled at the sight of so many blacks populating the streets of London. The number is not the object of her criticism, it is rather the way these Africans epitomize, to use Fanon's expression, the 'wretched of the earth'. She is shocked by the way they are dressed like hobos who looked *'ridiculous in a motley of fabrics and colors'* (88) and who wear cheap shoes which were *'cheap plastic versions of the latest middle-class fashions'* (88). This unglamorous portrayal of the Africans living abroad contrasts sharply with the way Sissie imagines them at home in dignified positions. Sissie's commitment to her origins surfaces in this section, instead of appreciating the comforts of the developed countries like England; she is preoccupied by those Africans who left home to live in a 'cold land' where *'poverty shows as nowhere else.'* (89), a fact that earns her the label of a 'killjoy'. She introspects upon the status of the ex-colonized who live in the West. Sissie, and by extension Aidoo, has an uncompromising view about the 'been-tos'; she believes that immigration has nothing to offer but oppression, slavery and exploitation:

The story is as old as empires. Oppressed multitudes from the provinces rush to the imperial seat because that is where they know all salvation comes from. But as other imperial subjects in other times and other places have discovered, for the slave, there is nothing at the centre but worse slavery. (87-8)

The way the imperial location is presented clearly aims at deconstructing the colonial myth of the benevolent centre, or the Olympus, a myth that has been created by the West and partly perpetuated by the 'been-tos' who never spoke, once back home, of the actual situation in those metropolises of the west: *'when they eventually went back home as 'been-tos', the ghosts of the humans they used to be, spoke of wonders of being overseas... they lied/ they lied/ they lied/ the Been-tos lied'* (90).

The wonders of the West are fabricated lies the postcolonial writer tries to debunk in order to negate a long going assumption constructed by the West. In an interview conducted by Helen Scott, Aidoo claims:

Do you think those who return tell them what it was like? Do we tell of the dingy, dirty, crowded urban areas or the poverty and inequality? No! The mystique has been maintained for a century. As if being a janitor in England were a great thing! It is an idiom in our environment, for excellence.(300).

These assertions match with Sissie's as well the narrator's stance in regard to the 'been-tos'. Thus we can speak of the writer's stance via her protagonist and narrator. When asked about the professional migration out of Africa, Aidoo answers:

It often begins with education and training. I am critical of this whole business of we foreigners coming to "the West" to study and work. It is really about lending ourselves; it is like an incipient kind of brain drain. Every country needs the minds of all its people, all they can get. But realistically our institutions are not good enough; often the money isn't there in poorer countries for a good general education system or quality higher education. So we end up with some of our best minds and talents coming here or to Europe to study, and half of the time these people don't return. Then there is a gap between ordinary

Africans who are not able to leave anywhere, and these lucky few who are mobile and talented and are picked off. In Our Sister Killjoy Sissie is saying that having our top students study and then live abroad is not only draining off our most valuable resources, but it exposes our peoples' minds to be picked.' (307).

Once again, Aidoo's assertions in the above passage prove, as far as the question of the African is concerned, that there is no authorial distance between the writer and the narrator/protagonist. The questionings of the maturing Sissie are mirroring the anxieties of the author.

Sissie's extended stay in London, which at first was supposed to last a month, is motivated by a will to understand the reasons that underpin the Africans stay in a foreign land, a space that epitomizes a once western oppression. London offers Sissie a skewer of educated Africans who chose to stay in Europe even when they had completed their academic trainings. The narrator suggests that they are hampering the development of the African continent because there are depriving the land of its most trained professionals, those who can bring about sound change and improvement. The narrator overtly denounces these Africans as agents who maintain Western hegemony over post-colonial Africa: "*For few pennies now and a/ Doctoral degree later,/ Tell us about/ Your people/ Your history/ Your mind./ Your mind./ Your mind./ Tell us/ Boy/how/ We can make you/ Weak/ Weaker than you've already been./ Giving away/ not only themselves, but/ All of us -/the price is high,/ My brother,*"(87). The narrator's indictment, like in Armah's WAWSB?, targets education as a means of indoctrination, leading ultimately to the African's alienation from his origins. This view can be equated with the already discussed theorization of Louis Althusser about education as an ideological state apparatus with its assimilationist effects on the colonized. The progressing maturity of Sissie endows her with a 'black eyed squint through which she perceives things differently. It is exactly this acquired 'black eyed squint' that empowers Sissie to engage in a dialogue with her fellow Africans. She engages in interactions where she challenges the 'been-tos' comfortable perspectives of Western paradigms as being tokens of

universal truths and universal history. She constantly tries to disrupt their unquestioned assumptions.

## **2.2 NEOCOLONIALISM AND THE POST-INDEPENDENCE MIRAGE:**

The choice of the two novels is very revealing that it juxtaposes the workings of western imperialism and colonialism in two different African locations: Algeria in WAWSB? and Ghana in OSK. The process of independence, however, is strikingly different for both countries. Algeria, for instance, underwent an established armed revolution to get independence while Ghana got its independence through political activism. We are to see the extent of efficiency for both models of independence. It is worth mentioning that the use of the North African Arab setting is autobiographically motivated whilst the Sub-Saharan Africa remains a metaphysical reference for Armah. We are to notice, through our analysis that though both models might differ yet they seem to project more or less an identical post-independence picture.

One outstanding figure in the history of the Algerian revolution, and an inspirer for many other thinkers and oppressed multitudes in anti-colonial thinking and postcolonialism is Frantz Fanon. Fanon in his works tries to dissect the workings of colonialism while trying to provide solutions to end it. He is a French Antillean who participated in the Algerian revolution by joining the F.L.N. He was sent as an ambassador to Ghana to represent the Provisional Algerian Government, a factor that would help us juxtapose the workings of post-independent Algeria and Ghana. Fanon argues that “What matters is not to know the world but to change it” (Black Skin, 8). He sees revolution and violence as the only solution to end the colonial enterprise. Fighting for a national culture seems to be the more urgent thing for decolonization. He argued, too, that both the colonizer and the colonized are the mere product of imperialism’s ideological machinery. He, then, urged for a revolt against any institutional and hegemonic structures. In an existentialist mode, he tried to show how it is that identity is never a finite product, but rather is always in an endless process. Consciousness and selfhood, for Fanon, would be substantiated in the process of decolonization, hence, seeing identity as a ‘becoming’ and not as a ‘being’.

Ode Ogede remarks that “WRWSB? advances the battle for decolonization, which Armah initiated in his earlier two novels” (75). Solo, in WRWSB?, would echo Fanon’s articulations when he noticed that “*In my people’s world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa’s destruction*” (231). Modin, however, would constitute an utterly paradoxical case. After his disillusionment in the U.S., being sexually devastated by white women and intellectually deranged by Western academia would come to a reasoning that the revolution is the only means to save Africa and more importantly himself. His decision to join the Congherian Revolution is dramatically questioned as he accompanied his white lover, Aimée Reitsch. She is, too, one of those white frigid women lacking sexual satisfaction and a member of Western academia.

On his arrival in Laccryville, Solo joined the People’s Union of Congheria, an anti-colonial organization which believes in the impossibility of inter-racial co-existence and reconciliation and has Negritude as its national philosophical background. It has, however, a Eurocentric modernist worldview. The movement seems to be rife with various contradictions and paradoxes that of race, class, and gender inequities. These contradictions are well manifested by French Art, political slogans of the French Revolution, and an agenda of work that takes the industrial workers as its main supporters. In one of Solo’s entries, he described the Bureau of the People’s Union of Congheria visited by Modin and Aimée. The very structure of the bureau is very ironical in that it showed how it is hierarchized. The ground floor is a working area which is full with a “pile of newspapers and magazines”. The one who inhabits that floor is a semi-literate dark-skinned African, Esteban Ngulo. The upper floor, however, reflects a conspicuous consumerist mode of life: a floor gorgeously decorated if compared with Esteban Ngulo’s with thick blue carpet, armchairs, Parisian paintings circular table, a bar and refrigerator. This area occupied by the Foreign Minister of the Congherian Government in Exile, a half Portuguese light-skinned African, Jorge Manual. He is a university graduate from Lisbon. He seems to enjoy a mode of life which is à la Française, and is totally busy with interviews with journalists using flamboyant phrases about the revolution. Solo’s indictment is the fact that even if the colonizer has just left, that their still be a division within the ex-colonized Africans.

Modin's desire to join the Bureau was, surprisingly, hampered by Manual who epitomizes the assimilated educated African or in Fanon's terms one of the members of national bourgeoisie. Manual's argument is that a revolutionary fighter should not befriend the white race. The coming of the couple to the bureau aroused suspicions of how came that Modin did quit his education in the U.S. and came to join the movement. The leaders, therefore, did create bureaucratic tactics to decline the couple's membership. This reflects nothing, for Solo, but Manual's faked patriotism and a mixture of airy idealism and hypocrisy. Solo did, in turn, alarm the couple of such plotted bureaucracies, but the couple, mainly Aimeé, distrustfully doubted his warnings. A communication barrier was set between Solo and the pair for Modin "*seemed to have absolutely no desire to go any direction other the one he had hoped to find*" (262). After making sure that their attempt to join the bureau is made impossible, Aimeé convinced Modin to go on a trans-Saharan trip where he was murdered by racist French soldiers and her being raped, in the process.

In his 'Pitfalls of National Consciousness'<sup>2</sup>, Fanon warned against the emergence of a national bourgeoisie, who were to replace the Western bourgeoisie. Fanon shows the historical differences between both counterparts. He ascribes to the European Bourgeoisie a traditional socio- economic role in the history of Europe and the world. He observed that the national bourgeoisie lacked a traditional strength being ascribed an intermediary role to their Western bourgeoisie. The post-independence era would be nothing but a mirage and a perpetuation of imperialism in a neocolonial outfit. This due to the "*unpreparedness of the educated class*"(119), the Promethean indoctrinated elite, which would lead the post-independent countries to sink into economic, political, and cultural dependency to the West. Fanon, most bitterly, indicts the historical legitimacy for the existence of the African Bourgeoisie phase. He, moreover, urged the masses and the few honest intellectuals to bar them from emerging. He, sarcastically, describes that unhealthy simulation being "*not even a replica of Europe but a caricature*" (141).

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<sup>2</sup> "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" is the title of one of the articles in Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth.

The neocolonial ramifications in Africa are overtly displayed in both novels. In OSK, Ghana though got its independence through political activism and its elite are historically, relatively speaking, more rooted than the ones in Algeria, they seem to project what Fanon warned against after independence. Booker Keith argues that:

"Aidoo's text clearly echoes the warnings of Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* that decolonization would not lead to liberation for the African people if this process merely involved the replacement of a ruling colonial white bourgeoisie by a new postcolonial black bourgeoisie with basically the same values" (120).

In one of the verses, the narrator/poet criticizing the national bourgeoisie and the rulers: "*Look at the mess they're made of / Independence given them*" (101). The issue of the loyalty of the African rulers to Western metropolises is accentuated when the narrator/poet laments that:

We have heard too,/ Have we not? Of countries in/ Africa  
where/ Wives of/ Presidents hail from/ Europe./ Bringing their  
brothers or ...who knows?/ To run the economy./ Excellent  
idea.../ How can a/ Nigger rule well/ Unless his/ Balls and  
purse are/ Clutched in/ Expert white hands/ And the Presidents  
and their/ First ladies/ Govern in the North/ Provence, Geneva,  
Milan.../ Coming south to Africa/ Once a year/ For holidays/  
Meanwhile/ Look!/ In the capitals,/ Ex-convicts from European/  
Prisons drive the city buses, and/ Black construction workers/  
Sweat under the tropical sun, making/ Ice-skating rinks for/ The  
beautiful people.../ While other Niggers sit/ With Vacant stares/  
Or / Busy, spitting their lungs out./ **JUST LIKE THE GOOD  
OLD DAYS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE**/ Except -/ The  
present is/ S-o-o-o much/ Better!/ for/ In these glorious times  
when/ Tubercular illiterates/ Dag yams out of the earth with/  
Bleeding hands,/ Champagne sipping/ Ministers and  
commissioners/ Sign away/ Mineral and timber/ Concessions, in  
exchange for/ Yellow wheat which/ The people can't eat/  
[...]We must sing and dance/ Because some Africans made  
it/.(55-7).

The quasi-verses quoted above seem to summarize the whole dynamics of the illusory transition from colonial to independent Africa. It seems, as though, even after the nominal independence African countries had enjoyed, the strategic relationships of West (North)/South or Center/periphery remained utterly the same. Africa remains enduringly a profitable site for the West. The physical Western presence in Africa, however, was no longer a necessity since the ex-colonizing west, successfully, did plant well trained Westernized Africans who were to do the dirty job instead. This class, like the factor in WAWSB?, is the one that form the channels with which the equation would be preserved: the west's superiority through a bloody exploitation of Africa's resources, and Africa's lasting pauperization.

Marija, in one of the discussions she had with Sissie, in OSK, was curious to know the 'dark continent'. Marija, so self-centrally, laughs at the fact that Sissie travels inside Africa might be for touristic purposes. Describing Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, and an ex-French colony, the narrator/poet exclaims the situation of the region being in a state of stillness and motionlessness. The description of the miserable infrastructure of the so-called capital reflects to a very large extent the economic conditions of the country at large. Another lamentation articulated by the narrator/poet is the post-independent miserable state of Nigeria being one of the largest countries in Africa, yet got immersed in a bloody civil war. The Narrator, later, moves his tragic vision to his/her native country Ghana. Nostalgically praising old Ghana and indicting the ramifications of Western intervention and its neocolonial version would be again transcribed in the verses: "*Ghana? / Just a/ Tiny piece of beautiful territory in/ Africa – had/ Greatness thrust upon her/ Once. /But she had eyes that saw not-/ That was a long time ago.../ Now she picks tiny bits of/ Undigested food from the offal of the industrial world.../O Ghana.*"(55).

In WAWSB?, too, Solo was suffocated by the insufferable atmosphere of corruption and as a consequence he got mentally sick that he was admitted to hospital. We are to be exposed to an atmosphere of bleak despair through the meeting of Solo with the 'mutilé de guerre' inside the hospital. Solo meets with a veteran, a crippled one-legged man, who lost his leg in the wars. Solo met him in the hospital library searching



busily for books to find answers to his bothering questions raised by the revolution. The man's basic inquiry is "*l'essence de la revolution*". He asks Solo, "*who gained? Who gained? Who gained?*"(25). Solo's view is that revolutionaries are the "essence" of liberation. In French this word might mean both 'essential' and 'fuel'. Revolutionaries, like the one-legged veteran are the essence, the fuel for the revolution, and without whom independence would not be achieved. They, in the process, are burnt and consumed to allow cosmic justice to fall, as it were. Solo tries to explain his view to the veteran by drawing a truck where he equated the truck with the society, and the militants are the only ones who could push its heavy loads of corrupt and opportunist people. The veteran pronounced a rhetorical question to this dilemma "*mais c'est juste?*"

Solo not only succumbs, blindly, into the routine of everyday life mannerism of the anti-colonial movement, but rather feels heartily guilty towards the poverty that surrounds him. Solo forwards a nightmarish description of Laccryville. The streets of Laccryville are filled with beggars. He, everyday, finds child beggars waiting for him to open his window "*waiting to receive anything (he) may care to give them*" (15). Whenever he has nothing to give, "*the children grow sullen and resentful*" (16). Sometimes angry children throw stones at his doors. He heavily feels guilty "*as if (he) were responsible for their having been reduced to this state, or at least for remaining in this condition*" (17).

After the murder of Modin, Aimeé entrusted both her and Modin's journals through which Solo succeeded to reconstruct the whole of the novel. In one of her diary entries, it is documented that Aimeé had a trip to Kansa, a fictional East African country. Being bored with the life of North America was the prime motif for Aimeé that she decided to sign up for a trip to Africa. Her choice of Kansa is motivated by the fact that there existed an active anti-colonial movement at work; a thing that might break her monotonous routine. Aimeé engaged excessively in sexual intercourses with leaders of the movement. She was able to conduct an interview with one of the anti-colonial fighters, Mzee Nyambura. The latter told Aimeé about the role of the Western trained intellectuals in the anti-colonial movements. Mzee with other eight men were chosen by the kياما, a communal council, to summon these intellectuals to take part in the anti-

colonial organization. Mzee asserted that these intellectuals “*feared white man...But more than the fear of the white race was their distrust of us, their own people*” (41). The interview with Mzee would suggest the dynamics of that stagnated the anti-colonial movement and fed the neocolonial situation. This situation mirrors the rupture between the field fighters and the intellectuals who are supposed to fuel it ideologically.

The unsuccessful endeavor of both Solo and Modin to bring about sound changes through the revolution would reflect the absence of a ready program for postcolonial Africa. Modin’s venture across the arid desert, where he would be tortured and killed, does echo to a great extent the aridity of the revolution’s master minds’ plans after independence. The masses, moreover, are not to be condemned for the absence of a post-independence ideology. Armah seems to question Fanon’s categorical belief in violent revolutions.

**CONCLUSION:**

Through the study of this chapter, we noted that the relationship between the west and Africa is unveiled through the protagonists' introspections about the education they receive from the West. We saw that Armah took an essentialist stance vis-à-vis the western education. Western education, for Armah, would lead Africa's been-tos to lose their sense of genuine African self-hood. They are either to be assimilated to the west seeing this education as an ideological apparatus; or to be totally alienated. This view is consolidated through Modin's decision to disrupt his studies joining the revolution in Africa. Armah's view about a Fanonian revolution, however, seems to be extremely an ambivalent one. The neocolonial ramifications reflected symbolically through Modin's death and a motionless post-independent Africa would echo the futility of the violent revolution. As a diagnostic phase, one would reckon Armah's prospected strategies in his subsequent novels. Aidoo, in her turn, though acknowledging the 'Althusserian' effects of Western education, would not be as essentialist as Armah. She laments most bitterly on the Westernized African been-tos. Her indictment lies most on the selfishness of the educated class to come back and contribute in the building of their devastated post-independent countries. For her, the predicament of Africa lies mostly on the hypocrisy and the lack of commitment of the been-tos. Through the protagonists crossings we are to acquaint other levels of awareness. As both novels provide a diagnosis to Africa's traumas, we are to be acquainted with different encounters the protagonists face. These encounters are going to be mostly psychological and historical in nature.

# CHAPTER THREE:

## ENCOUNTERS AND (MIS) UNDERSTANDINGS

To us, the man who adores the Negro is as “sick” as the man who abominates him.

Conversely, the black man who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites.

Frantz Fanon, Black Skin

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**INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter deals with the different encounters the protagonists had during their crossings. The images and perceptions people have about themselves and about the outside world, during the study of both journeys, seem to reflect the internalizations of some so-called western scientific theorizations about race that were enhanced, too, by a Eurocentric canonical Western representations. In this part of the study, we will examine, in a postcolonial fashion, the workings of physicality in the perception of one's self and whether it is an objective scientific reality through which the world had been compartmentalized with or is it a western construct. Are the classificatory differences that exist between the westerner and the African racial and biological in essence or are these differences historical ones? Through the crossing undertaken by African protagonists, we try to unveil such reactions from the subaltern's perspective. We are to revisit some historical stations not seen by a white westerner, but rather from the subaltern's perspective. We are to see whether the versions we have on history are universal and objective or else Eurocentric and biased? Moreover, gender is another absented factor in identity formation. The African woman has been rendered invisible in the historicity of the African experience. As history was often written by white males, other voices mainly women, emerged to provide another version of history coining it as 'Herstory'. What role, therefore, did/does the African woman play in shaping a genuine African identity? In the process we are to assess the potentiality of reciprocity and mutual understanding between races and cultures. Fluctuating between alienation and self-assertion, and between essentialism and non-essentialism, we are to examine both authors' visions about the West and Africa through their protagonists' postcolonial lenses. We will be relying on the pronouncements of Frantz Fanon mainly in his Black Skin, and The Wretched of the Earth. Bhabha and Said would be resorted to recurrently in this chapter.

**3-1 ENCOUNTER SELF /OTHER:**

Race, as a biological component, seems to have compartmentalized the world across ages. Breaking ground theories were devised by the West leaving the world split between superior and inferior races; hence, determining the workings of the world of who should rule and who should be ruled. Evolutionary theories, for instance, tried to divide organisms into a ranking scale ranging from lower status up to the highest ranks of humans. Sir Francis Galton<sup>1</sup>, Darwin's half-cousin, for instance, did elaborate and create a whole new branch in human biology that of Eugenics in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is a field that is interested in the scientific study of breeding and its improvement. In his book Hereditary Genius published in 1869, he did position the Athenians as the first in the scale of intelligence, then comes the British with their descendents. The stratification would go on till the two last positions reserved to Africans and Australian Aborigines respectively. The European or rather the Caucasian race seems, according to those theories, to be endowed with higher mental abilities that put him in the forefront of the scale. The Africans, Asians, Indo Americans, and Australian Aborigines, therefore, would fit into the lowest ranks of the scale. These theories submit that the Africans, for instance, due to the differences of their hair, body, face, and the shape of the crania are but a somewhat elevated versions of apes. The stratifications submitted by such theories would attribute systematic features and attitudes to each race. The Caucasian, or the European in general, would be perceived as the ultimate category in the ranking, hence, the other lower races would aspire to reach in an evolutionary mechanism.

These conceptualizations about race were, too, projected in Western representational discourse infiltrating, in total subtlety, into people's unconscious. Descriptions of different races and places were highly flavored by western imperial motivations. A zealous belief in a mission to enlighten and civilize the world was the idea behind Western colonization and subjugation of Africa or the East. Joseph Conrad, in an

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Galton is a British polymath: psychologist, explorer, geographer, inventor, geneticist, ... etc. He was a fervent explorer who was described to have "a love affair with Africa" (Allen, 19-20). Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, Galton made an emphasis on studying the differences in human abilities. Through his analyses, he believed that superiority and inferiority in human stratification is a matter of heredity.

ambivalent, yet self-asserting way, acknowledges in his novella Heart of Darkness the Western brutalization of Africa, yet gives it a legitimacy through his blind belief in the 'idea' of the 'civilizing mission'. Marlow, Conrad's alter ego, sees that:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea; an idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; an unselfish belief in the idea-something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer sacrifice too... (10)

Physicality seems to be the prime criterion in the world's perception and management. The white race, according to this worldview, not only feels or believes in its superiority and the inferiority of other races, but feels compelled to bring light and civilization to the lower races. Reading Armah's and Aidoo's works, we are to be shown how such western conceptualizations about race do serve, solely, imperial ends. These conceptualizations seem to have created static and placid stereotypes that are dwelt in both Westerners and non-Westerners unconscious. Fanon refuted Jung's genetic interpretation of the collective unconscious. He submits that "...[it] is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group" (141). These Eurocentric constructs about race would reflect western imperial discourse that would posit the non-westerners as an 'other'. Bhabha remarks that such a process about the manufacturing of an 'other' is dependent on the concept of fixity:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as a sign of cultural/historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and demonic repetition" (94).

According to Frantz Fanon both parts of the equation, westerners and non-westerners, are symptomized by neurotic psychologies. He, brilliantly, attempted to make a thorough diagnosis to these psychopathologies of colonialism aspiring to give positive solutions. Fanon diagnoses the case of the Negro and the white man submitting that: "*The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behaves*

*in accordance with a neurotic orientation*" (42/43). In the white man's unconscious, the *imago* of the black is that "*the black man is the symbol of evil and ugliness*" (139). All the black represents is "*not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values*" (The Wretched of the Earth, 32). This *imago* is inculcated both through diffused Eurocentric pseudo-scientific theories about race, or as an unconscious processing of a rather thick heritage of Western artistic representations about other races, namely in our case Africans. Through these processes, the West did create an 'other' upon which placid stereotypes are projected. The peculiarity of the black's biology, for the west, seems to be the cause for its backwardness and it is but a reflection of its infantile state. It is the task for the west, therefore, to provide the necessary help and guidance to make it grow under its eyes. Fanon ascribes to the colonizing west motherly features and that "*The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its very essence.*" (The Wretched of the Earth 170). These images and perceptions about the black race by the West do, most severely, penetrate into the black man's unconscious creating a severe fissuring into the African self. The black, too, would think of the world in terms of physicality. Skin color would be an obstacle for the black to proceed in life. Fanon puts it most delicately when he came to an understanding of the psychopathological state of both white and black people after journeying from Martinique, a then French colony, to France, the colonial mother: "*the black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level*" (Black Skin, 3). He further accentuates the case of the black man that "*for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.*"(4). The black, then, in a postcolonial fashion is left amidst a schizophrenic atmosphere where he is going to negotiate the question of a genuine selfhood.

In WAWSB?, for instance, Armah tries to debunk the illusions that the west forward as being cosmic existential realities. He relentlessly focused unswerving considerations on such Eurocentric formulations revealing their shallowness and one-sided non-universal fabrications. While diagnosing the physical and spiritual predicament of Africa, Armah tries to seek out the real roots in the western metropolises exposing the west most nakedly for what it is- rapacious, egocentric, predatory and pompous. These are the very qualities of the whites Modin is to encounter in his crossing. The debunking



presented by Armah would threaten the stability of already held western myths that of spreading civilization and the salvation of 'African souls'<sup>2</sup>. The deadly vampire-like intercourse of the west and Africa as a collective historical experience with its underlying ramifications is metaphorically handled by Armah through individual intercourses. Sex, therefore, becomes, the dominant metaphor deployed by Armah in WAWSB? to unmask the vampiric nature of the relationship between Africa and the West. Through a complex texture of symbolism, Armah is showing how White women suck the vitality of Africa through the sexual intercourse with African men along with the conspiratorial gesture of the white men to complete the task through total eradication and castration of the African men.

Through the personal diaries of the three main characters of the novel, we are shown how these relationships are unraveled in a multi-voiced fashion. Modin's entry diaries, for instance, are rife with such encounters. After the disappearance of Naita, the black secretary of the educational board, and with whom Modin spent unforgettable moments of intimacy, Modin, being lonely, developed a sexual relationship with Mrs. Jefferson, Professor Jefferson's wife. As a black man, he was seen as a rare exotic article by the white frigid women. Mrs. Jefferson and her husband had always problems at home and that was consequently reflected on their cold infrequent sexual relationship. To arouse her husband's jealousy and to make up for her unsatisfied sexual desire, she took Modin as a substitute. Throughout their frequent sexual intercourses, Mrs. Jefferson was the one who initiates the sexual activities while Modin remains passive following Mrs. Jefferson's instructions. Modin was not natural in such an affair with Mrs. Jefferson that he described the encounter with her as "*a friendly frenzy*" (130). Both of them meet on a regular basis that they planned their get-togethers around Mr. Jefferson's schedules. One day Mrs. Jefferson pronounced Modin's name in a moment of orgasm while she was with her husband. She, nevertheless, kept seeing Modin despite her husband's knowledge. She

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<sup>2</sup> For Fanon, there exists no such thing as "the African soul". When dealing with the issue of the black man, he argues that "*the Black soul is a white man's artefact*" (Black Skin 6). Drawing a parallel with Said's Orientalism, in which he stresses that the orient is manufactured by the west, the Black, too, is a western creation. With that remark, too, Fanon is criticizing Senghor's version of Negritude. Senghor stresses on the romantic and intuitive aspect of the Black while qualifying the European with rational Cartesian features; this constitutes one striking criticism against Negritude. It is remarked that, as though, Senghor, in accepting that distinction, is perpetuating the constructions set up by the West.

planned a party while her husband was at a conference. Her husband returned unexpectedly earlier to the house tired that he stayed in his room and did not attend the party. In the middle of the party Mrs. Jefferson and Modin start having a sexual intercourse in the moony light garden. As she approaches her orgasm, she started yelling unconsciously that her husband awoke stabbing Modin many times till party attendees intervened. Modin was committed to hospitalization where he was treated by a doctor who, according to Modin's journal, once hated him; yet proud that he is curing him. Modin came to realize about women he met in the United States:

These women I have known have had deep needs to wound their men. I have been an instrument in their hands. The men have reacted to me with a fear difficult to hide and I should have known my annihilation would be a cure for part of their disease (162)

After Modin's release from hospital, and by way of finding alternative ways, Modin intended to finish writing his thesis. To afford a financial resource after refusing the Oppenhardts' help, Modin signed up as "*a subject for experimenting graduate [psychology] students*" (168). One of the subjects, Aimée, who is issued from a well off family, signed up only to alleviate her boredom. She asked the experimenters, who declined, to connect one of the electric-shock wired sensors to her clitoris only to "give [her] far-out orgasm" (172). Aimée showed the highest level of pain bearing amongst all the other subjects. Modin and Aimée, later, developed a kind of bond that started as their shared critique of the American educational system and ended up later with sexual relationship. Modin in that relationship seems to be, relatively, pro-active if compared with his relationship with Mrs. Jefferson. Modin is to realize that Aimée is sexually unresponsive. After discontinuing his studies, Modin went to North Africa intending to join anti-colonial movements. Aimée insisted that she would accompany him; her main reason was again to alleviate boredom.

Aimée's journals entries deal mainly with her sexual life. Aimée is sexually unresponsive. Through reading her journals we are exposed to her racist mindset that overvalues western mode of life while undervaluing the African one. This view is established through a dichotomized thinking of reality as body/spirit, physical/cognitive,

and sexual /economic. The white men are, in the western mindset, to be perceived as sexually sub-optimal. The black man is made the scapegoat as a reaction of such sexual disfunctionality of the white man. As a defense mechanism, therefore, the black man has to be eradicated from the equation. During her sexual intercourse with Modin, it is explained how her fantasy follows the same logic. She would imagine herself married to a colonial army officer. Aimée informs us through her personal journals that she often would fancy quarrelling with her husband who is always mad at her because of his sexual impotence. Her husband would get himself busy with military work instead. In his absence, she coerces a young African servant she has at the household to have sexual intercourse. Aimée would only get her orgasm if and only if she would follow these sorts of fantasies. We are shown that Aimée utilizes the black man as a bait to tease her fantasized husband's jealousy.

The last entry in Aimée's notebook contains the trans-Sahara trip she and Modin underwent. After the unsuccessful attempt for them to join the anti-colonial movement, Aimeé cajoled Modin to go on a trans-Sahara trip. Despite the fact that Afrasia got its independence, the southern parts, however, were still occupied by French soldiers. Aimeé stopped an army car seeking a ride while Modin refused it. After being forced to get in, the couple was coerced and driven into the desert. After an apparent resistance, the soldiers succeed to subdue Modin, getting him naked and used him to arouse Aimée sexually. We are shown that even if they were not in a romantic situation that she wanted Modin's penis in her. After Modin's erection, they cut off his penis leaving him to die while raping Aimée afterwards. This gesture would be consistent with Fanon's findings about the perception of the black man for the whites that "*the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis*" (130). The way by which Modin was tortured and murdered reflects the hate complexes of white man and the mere usage of the white women to him. The act of a cutting off his genitalia is, according to Fanon, a psychopathological reaction of the white men's imago about the black man. This sexual revenge is manifested when "*the negro is castrated. The penis, the symbol of manhood, is annihilated*" (Black Skin 125).

Solo's entries, however, represent a rather hermeneutic reading of both Modin's and Aimée's. He came back from Europe to North Africa taking part with anti-colonial

movements after his unsuccessful love story with a white woman, Sylvia. He used to be an idealistic humanist who aspired to solve the color problem across the world through love and art. His attempts were thwarted by the cultural impositions of Europe. He went through a flat routinely life where the dreams of revolution were only a mirage as it is submitted in the second chapter. Solo's critique of both Modin and Aimée would help him understand, as an experienced man who went through the same circumstances as Modin, and, too, as a detached observer, the real nature of the relationship between the west and Africa. One biting criticism was, ambivalently, a result of either a failed love story or reaching a level of maturity is Modin's companionship with Aimée. In a self-questioning tone, Solo would inquire: "*What is this love we suffer from, impelling us to embrace our own destroyers?*" (150). Modin's excessive sexual encounters with white women can be read in a Fanonian fashion as a desire to reach whiteness being the only plausible way to live with. This desire is translated as:

I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*... who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. Her lovetakes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization... I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. (Black Skin 45) (Emphasis from the text)

Modin apparently did refuse Solo's help that for Solo, Modin "*seemed to have absolutely no desire to get in any direction, other than the one he had hoped to find*" (262). Modin's resistance to Solo did create a distance between the two. Solo's reading of both Modin's and Aimée's journals left Solo to believe in the victimization of Modin by the White women he encountered. Through his journals, Solo identifies with Modin for the latter's realization that he had been used by white women. He was "*an instrument in [these women's] hands. Their [husbands] have reacted to me with a fear difficult to hide, and I should have known my annihilation would be a cure for the part of their disease*" (162). It seems as though a projection of Solo's experience. The difference between the two experiences was while Modin tries to find a solution to the race issue through sexuality; Solo would rather seek to do so through Platonic love. Both were trivial and unworkable undertakings. The color prejudice seems to govern the workings and the dynamics of the West/rest relationship. Fanon submits that "*color prejudice is indeed an imbecility and an inequity that must be eliminated*" (Black Skin 18). He would prescribe a solution to such psychopathological symptoms that "*release from hate complexes will*

*be accomplished only if mankind learns to renounce the scapegoat complex*" (141). While Fanon tried, most idealistically, to prescribe a cure to the color problem, Solo, would rather see no prospected solutions. Ode Ogede remarks that "*Solo reaches the conclusion that separation of races is the best solution to the problem of neocolonialism facing Africa*" (6/7). This conclusion is highly flavored with a counter-discursive tone to the west which led many critics to criticize Armah of racism. In his "The Limits of Metaphor", for instance, James Booth argued that "*WRWSB? is not only an analysis of the effects of racism, it is itself a racist book*" (228). Lobb, in his turn, however, presented an interpretation lessening the racist impulses of the book that "*the fact that White people are agents of destruction throughout the novel is ominous, and Armah has, predictably, been attacked as a racist. Such criticism is beside the point. Armah is not making a racial generalization, but a cultural one*" (247). Both views would exclude Armah from Bhabha's view of a third space of identification. For Bhabha "*this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.*"(5). The boundary line between the (ex)colonizer/ (ex)colonized for Bhabha is blurred to the extent that there would be no separation of the two; both affecting culturally and epistemologically upon one another. A new hybrid identification is created in the process. Solo's conclusion of the separation of races does negate any possibility of mutual understanding between races and cultures creating thereby a concrete wall between 'self' and 'other' in a Manichean fashion. Armah, therefore, adopts an essentialist stance towards the issue of identification.

Reading Aidoo's OSK, we are to be informed with the different encounters Sissie had during her crossing. The first encounter of Sissie with the 'other' is described in the first chapter of the book. The German embassy constitutes a metonymy for the West. The place itself constitutes a *sujet en soi*, a location that Sissie is not accustomed to. Many elements in the dinner party are foreign to Sissie, the food, the furniture, the people, including the westernized Sammy who is ensnared by western ways. Once onboard the flight she has to take in Johannesburg to join Germany, she is asked by the hostess to go to the back of the plane to join other black students so as not to upset the sensibilities of "*the two Europeans she would later learn were south Africans*" (10). Here, Sissie encounters a first discrimination attitude; this incident foreshadows the rejection based on racial difference that she is to encounter throughout her stay in Europe. On board the plane, the narrator continues to describe Sissie's astonishment in witnessing a geographical displacement. She observes the Alps and describes the rocks as being

'grey'. The grey which stands for the absence of color contrasts with the assertions made earlier about Europe being "*this other continent lighted up with the first streaks of glorious summer sunshine*"(11). Therefore, this light imagery functions as a counter discursive statement that renders Europe as being not only different, but cold and colorless. The result is that the prevailing image is that of the contradiction of the European continent, despite its glitters and sparkles, when real light is shed, Sissie makes out a dark land with all what this darkness implies. The metaphor of the contrast of colors operates again when the narrator describes the African cloth of Sissie as being '*gay, gold and leafy brown cloth*' (12) against the polished steel, polished tin' of the station. The whole narrative is replete with images of darkness related to the West 'the black Bavarian soil' (40) the Bavarian women who all were dressed in black, the dark plums, and the brooding pine forest (41).

But perhaps the pivotal encounter in this first section is when Sissie lands in Frankfurt, waiting for the train, overhears a mother confirm her child's observation that she is black '*Ja, das Schwartz Madchen.*'(12) (Emphasis from the text). It is in this very moment that Sissie is made aware of her racial difference. What is important here is the fact that the narrator emphasizes that racial distinction and racial awareness are western constructs. Sissie did not herself realize her racial difference '*she was made to notice differences in the human colouring*' (emphasis added) (13). For her '*she knew it never mattered*' (13). Commenting on this passage, Caminero-Santangelo Byron argues:

Sissie previous lack of awareness of race, despite her numerous interactions with Europeans, suggests that, rather than being a natural means of differentiating among people, it is a construct, and the fact that she is only made conscious of race when she arrives in Europe suggests it is a specifically European construct (116).

The second section entitled 'the plums' is largely based on the relationship between Sissie and Marija, a German housewife. Marija is ignorant of locations other than her own and thus thinks that Sissie is an Indian. When Sissie tells her that she is from Ghana, Marija asks whether it is near Canada (24). Marija stands for the ignorant 'other'. Her self-centeredness contrasts with Sissie's will to discover other cultures and

other places. Marija's heavy accent and her ungrammatical speech further stress her ignorance and contrast with Sissie's perfect mastery of the English language. Commenting on this passage, Hildegard Hoeller argues:

ungrammatical, awkward, reflecting ignorance and insensitivity, Marija's English is rendered absurd...[her] 'primitive' nature lies in the fact that she cannot distinguish Indians from Sissie... it is Marija's own linguistic difficulties that blind her to the differences between Sissie and Indians, Nigeria and India. Her language or lack thereof, is part of her crudely radical vision of the world, a world of light and dark, us and them. (136).

The binary opposition of Marija's perception of the world stems from the centeredness of the West or the 'us'. Marija, who is viewed by Sissie as the exemplar of the West, is denied any possible understanding whatsoever of the 'other' with his complexities, differing histories and different belongings. The narrator launches a series of biting sarcasms about this centeredness, she seems aware of things that Sissie is still unveiling in order to come to *'the dazzling conclusions'* (4).

Equally important, are Marija's expectations from the friendship the two girls have nourished despite the language barrier. Marija is sexually attracted to Sissie but Sissie seems to be unaware of that for 'she was only an African unconscious school girl' (46) but when Marija crosses the line and actually makes a pass at Sissie, she becomes aware of the undercurrents that fuelled Marija's desires. Sissie rejects and resists Marija's sexual encounter 'As one does from a bad dream, impulsively, Sissie shook herself free' (64). This moment is grounded in an imagery of darkness. '*The false dusk had given way to proper night. Darkness had brought her gifts of silence and heaviness, making the most carefree of us wonder, when we are alone, about our place in all this'* (61) as she is going upstairs to Marija's bedroom, '*it seemed to her she was moving, no up, but down into, some primeval cave'* (62). The sexual incident stems from Marija's viewing Sissie as 'an exotic other' that would vibrate her lonely domestic life and satisfy her lust for sex. This encounter tells us more about the pre-established relations of power of the Western claimed superiority and the African primitive unethicity. Like Modin in *WRWSB?*, it echoes the Fanonian stance, as he puts it "*for the majority of the white men the Negro*

*represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions.*" (136). Judging by how Sissie was treated, it seems that this view is not only confined to the male Negro, but rather it extends to the whole race with all its components. Through the 'unexpected' reaction of Sissie, Aidoo downplays this assumption and celebrates her otherness.

Sissie becomes also aware of Marija's loneliness. She ponders on the reasons of such a state. She realizes that Marija's loneliness is the result of the economic system that underlies her 'lower middle class' life (64). Her husband is a factory hand who is always absent because he has to respond to the demands of a consumerist mindset. Aidoo provides an incisive criticism as to the European economic system that dehumanizes the European society and turns its members to lustful individuals whose only prospect is to make profit and be able to consume. Caminero-Santangelo Byron rightly points out that:

Sissie recognizes that Marija's loneliness and need are the result of the forms of subjectivity which capitalism itself spawns and which drive Marija and her husband to consume excessively even though the result is that he must constantly work. The couple's subsequent alienation from each other, and its causes, are embodied in those beauty products in the bedroom on which they have spent money but which remain unneeded (121).

Marija's desperation and its causes are summed up in the narrator's comment on the couple's chamber *'A love-nest in an attic that seems to be only a nest now, with love gone into mortgage and holiday hopes'* (64). They probably acquire the 'power' to consume products which are not needed, such as the expensive *'bolted affairs from beauty business'* (63) which 'looked expensive, yet with a number of them also still in their packaging' but in the meantime they lose the essence of human relationships. Marija's life is gobbled by, to borrow Fredric Jameson's expression, a state of 'desacralising Capitalism'. The way Aidoo superposes the above description of the unneeded products and immediately after the scene where Marija puts her 'cold fingers' (64) on Sissie's breast further stresses the discrepancy between consumerism and human relationships.

Sissie's encounter with the other is also epitomized in her meeting with the material comforts of the European consumerist society. As the title of the this section



suggests, the profusion of food in quality and quantity are things Sissie never came across in her native county ‘*like pears, apricots and other fruits of the Mediterranean and temperate Zones, Sissie had seen plums for the first time in her life only in Frankfurt*’ (39). The attraction of Third World people to Europe is construed through the luring abundance of western markets and more exactly through Sissie’s dangerous fascination by Marija’s plums ‘*[Sissie’s] loves were going to be pears and plums... So she had good reason to feel fascinated by the character of Marija’s plums.*’ Sissie’s observation about the European ‘*real, living plums*’ (38) contrasts with the second rate ‘*Dried, stewed, sugared-up canned plums*’ she used to eat in Ghana. This is more of a political statement where Sissie/the narrator compares the status of the Western world and in particular Germany with that of Ghana, highlighting thereby unequal relations of power:

Ghana?/Just a/Tiny piece of beautiful territory in/Africa-  
had/Greatness thrust/ upon her/Once./But she had eyes that saw  
not-/ That was a long time ago.../Now she picks tiny bits of/  
Undigested food from the/ Offal of the industrial world...O  
Ghana (53)

This parallel shows how capitalism allocates different economic and material positions to First World and Third World countries. Besides, it construes the economic dependency that is engendered by capitalism fostering thereby neocolonial dynamics.

The plums represent Marija’s means of seduction; she uses them to attract Sissie. ‘*So she sat, our sister, her tongue caressing the plump berries with skin color almost like her own, while Marija told her how she had selected them especially for her, off the single tree in the garden*’ (40). Commenting on this passage, C.L. Innes, argues that the scene is reminiscent of the biblical story of Eve being tempted by the snake to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden (152) the temptation of Sissie by the food can be equated with the temptation of Eve by the apple, but here another component can be added; that of the sexual temptation. The narrator who processes a maturity, Sissie is yet to acquire, comments: ‘*what she was also not aware of...was that the plums owed their glory...also to other qualities that herself possessed at that material time: Youthfulness/peace of mind/feeling free:/knowing you are a rare article, /Being loved/*’. This comment is of paramount importance because the narrator implicitly points at the lustful and rapacious

nature of Marija. She also hints at the fact that Sissie, who is willingly consuming the plums, is in her turn in danger of being consumed.

The parallel the narrator draws between the color of the plums and the color skin of Sissie highlights the fact that both can be consumed. So 'Sissie turns to be the plum of Marija' eyes' (Kofi 352), an exotic other that can be utilized as an antidote to Marija's sexual emptiness. Other instances in the novel reflect Marija's rapacious and value-laden behaviour. She is portrayed as being a calculating woman who premeditated all her actions in order to seduce Sissie. She '*planned out the meeting and drafted the introductory remarks*' (20) this scene offers a counter –stereotypical discourse where the traditional image of the African in European Literature is debunked, and presents the western 'other' as being the one overwhelmed by his decadent moral structures. Bavaria's village folks also constitute a revealing encounter that gives a pertinent insight as to the way Sissie is perceived by the natives and the way they made her realize her racial difference. For them, the presence of Sissie was 'phenomenal' (43).

The encounter with Marija contributes to Sissie's process of maturity and fosters the coming out of 'the dazzling conclusions'. She becomes aware of 'how economic, cultural, and other forms of exploitation are all connected...ultimately despite their succulent appeal, the plums of the nutinya's<sup>3</sup> title are about the nature and abuse of power in a world that seems to prevent and over determine the realization of meaningful human relationships' (Odamtten125).Sissie's encounters engender different kinds of understandings and misunderstandings both to her and the others.

The progressing maturity of Sissie endows her with a 'black eyed squint through which she perceives things differently. It is exactly this acquired 'black eyed squint' that empowers Sissie to engage in a dialogue with her fellow Africans. She engages in interactions where she challenges the been-tos' comfortable perspectives of Western paradigms as being tokens of universal truths and universal history. She constantly tries to disrupt their unquestioned assumptions. One illustration of how the notion of universal truth is endorsed by the African elite living in the West is Sissie's encounter with her

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<sup>3</sup>In his book length work devoted to Ama Ata Aidoo, Odamtten calls the book sections nutinya.

lover's relative Kunle. This latter has been in England for seven years and seems to be completely beguiled by European technological advance. Ignoring completely the civil war that is annihilating his county Nigeria, his only concern is the achievement of a certain Dr Christian, a South African who succeeded the first heart transplant of a black donor into a white person. Sissie remains speechless when Kunle says: *'it was a wonderful piece of news to have come his way in a very long time'* (96). When Sissie and her friend eventually manage to ask Kunle the reasons behind his enthusiasm for this heart transplant, this latter replies that this medical advance *'...can/ solve the problem of apartheid/ and rid us, 'African negroes/and all other negroes' of the / Colour problem. The whole of the/ Colour problem.'* Here lies a Universalist vision of this medical act. Indeed, Kunle believes that, being an act that puts in the limelight the common human features of all races, this transplant is the cure to eradicate racism. Sissie departs completely from the Universalist rosy vision of such an act. She instead views it as a horrendous deed which inscribes itself in a continuum of neocolonial exploitation. An act that devalues the blacks and renders black bodies as mere fodders intended to sustain the whites. When Sissie and her friend go on questioning how many Blacks have been the subject of the doctor's experiments, Kunle answers vehemently that any prior experience must have been made on dogs and cats. We are given an insight to Sissie's thoughts:

Sissie had wanted to tell Kunle that our hearts and other parts are more suitable for surgical experiments in aid of the Man's health and longevity. Because although we are further from human beings than dogs or cats, by some dictate of the ever-capricious Mother Nature, our innards are more like the Man's dogs' or cats'...(100).

Once again, we can see the difference between Kunle who believes in the mighty canons of western science and Sissie who analyses the act in socio-political terms, that is to say, an act that is embedded in the paradigm of colonial racism and the ongoing assumption of Western superiority over the third world black citizens. Through her evocation of animals, Sissie hints at the need of Europeans to be constantly evolving in relationships where their prevailing power is flattered, hence their preference for befriending pets

rather human beings *'I have been to a land where they treat animals like human beings and some human beings like animals because they are not*

*Dumb enough.'* (99).

Kunle remains hermetical to discourses other than the one he has adhered to (the Universalist myth of the West) *'and just an attempt on Sissie's part to open her mouth to contradict anything he had to say got him mad'* (101). He remains under the spell of the Christian doctor who conceitedly declares that *'the niggerhearts'* are effortless to get because of all the violence that is raging in Africa (100). Kunle's journey ends as he returns to his mother country because *'like so many of us, wished he had the courage to be a coward enough to stay forever in England'* (107) and dies in a tragic car accident. The circumstances of his death are all the more ironic because he dies as a consequence of his boastful display of his western belonging. He not only buys a car, he also hires a chauffeur and takes an *'insurance company...foreign, British, terribly old and solid'* (108) which refuses to pay off. In trying to sustain his been-to elite prestige, he lost everything.

In many instances, the point of view of Sissie, and the narrator, converge with Aidoo's so much that we can say that there is no authorial distance between Aidoo and her protagonist. Yet this statement mustn't be over generalized to the whole book. As a matter of fact, Sissie's observations, assertions are always followed by the narrator's more sardonic and knowledgeable speech. The encounter with Kunle corroborates what has been said earlier. The narrator suggests that despite Sissie's opposition to Kunle's views, she does not fully express her point of view: *'as for Sissie, she lost speech'* (97) *'declaring to herself'* (98) *'Sissie had wanted to tell Kunle'* (100) but ultimately does not mouth her opinion. These latter are expressed though an imagined letter Sissie fantasies to her brother, or through her interior monologue: *'confused, yet dying to ask Kunle/ Why?/ How?/ Admonishing herself to tread/ Softly-/ we are in the region of/ SCIENCE!/ Little/ Village/Girls/ Who/ Dream/ Do not/ Cannot/Ever/Understand/ These things'* (96). Sissie reactions reveal her maturation, but the narrator commentaries hint at the uncompleted maturation of the protagonist. The fourth section is where Sissie is given

full voice; she is for the first time ‘allowed’ to stand on her own as the narrator retrieves, she encounters herself, but does she eventually reach the ‘*dazzling conclusions*’?

It seems that Sissie does not resemble Armah’s characters. The latter fit intactly into Fanon’s remark on the African who gets into the Western world. He argues that “*when the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place... The black man stops behaving as an actional person*” ( Black Skin 119). And that mirrors to a great extent the passivity of Modin. Aidoo’s Sissie, however, is more positive and actional. In fact, she even praises her ‘otherness’ not in a Negritudist romantic mode, though.

After such handling, we are left to observe both Armah’s and Aidoo’s postcolonial debunking of western formulations about race. Race, through the opposite journey of African protagonists, is shown to be a construct the Europeans created to colonize Africa. Though Armah’s Modin and Solo differ substantially in terms of character and actionality with Aidoo’s Sissie, yet both characters seem to debunk the issue of superiority of the west as an ‘us’ and the constructed inferiority of Africa. Physicality, then, is solely a European construction creating thereby dichotomous distinctions in identity formation. Actual differences are to be anchored on a historical ground. We are to see how History and history writing are so crucial in constructing cultural differences. The African woman’s inscription into the discourse of history is to be treated while we will examine the role and the status of the African woman in the recovery of the fissured selfhood of Africa.

### **3-2 ENCOUNTER WITH HI(HER)STORY:**

Much of the justification for colonizing Africa erupted from the constructed myth of ‘tabula rasa’. The colonizer’s enterprise stemmed from the assumption that Africa had no history, that her people were primitives who did not join the paradigms of evolution as argued by Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel in his introduction to The Philosophy of History. He, and many of his disciples, afterwards, tried most powerfully to devise Eurocentric paradigms about the world in scholarly terms. The issue of what belongs to

Africa or what does not, for instance, is a highly biased issue. Africa was to be inextricably a racialized continent. North Africa, for instance, is hardly to be classified as belonging to Africa. These areas mainly, Egypt, would be, according to Hegel, excised and attached to Europe. What is left, or what is called Sub-Saharan Africa is, for Hegel, “*Africa proper*” as he called it. Hegel’s Africa is the “*undeveloped, unhistorical*” other to Europe. It is “the land of childhood” and that the Negro, as he qualifies its inhabitants, “*exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state*” (Hegel, 91/93). The excision of North Africa and its attachment to Europe seems to display Hegel’s biased division.

On the other hand, many other scholars would consider North Africa as an annexation to Middle East studies. Language and religion would form the rationale of their division. Islam and Arabic, therefore, seem to, culturally, separate the area from the rest of the continent. John Hunwick remarks that

The compartmentalization of Africa into zones that are treated as 'Middle East' and 'Africa' is a legacy of Orientalism and colonialism. North Africa, including Egypt, is usually seen as forming part of the Middle East, though Middle East experts are not generally keen to venture farther west than the confines of Egypt. Northwestern Africa—the Maghreb—is generally regarded as peripheral to Middle Eastern Studies and extraneous to African studies. Even the Sahara has been generally viewed as something of a no-go area (especially among Anglophone scholars), while the Sudan and Mauritania (which are impossible to label as either 'sub-Saharan' or 'Middle Eastern') remain in limbo. Northwestern Africa (from Morocco to Libya), despite the area's close and enduring relationship with West Africa, has been excluded from the concerns of most Africanists. (P. xiii)

Both stratifications, either the one of Hegel attaching North Africa to Europe or the other which attaches it to the Middle East seem to prove the hard time scholars find to ascribe any civilizational impulses to the continent. The idea was that the Western worldview was constructed, categorically, through the creation of cultural and geographical ‘other’. It was until recently that people, like V.Y. Mudimbe, Cheikh Ana Diop...etc, did unveil

astonishing findings about Africa's contribution to the Graeco-Roman frames of the world. Diop's most provocative book: The African Origin of Civilization: Myth Or Reality (1974) helped change a whole range of both Eurocentric and Afrocentric views. Diop's ideas were further elaborated by the African American scholar, Martin Bernal, with the publication of his ground breaking tome Black Athena (1987, 1991). The book's main focus was the fact of the blackness of Ancient Egypt Civilization and its superb contributions to the West.

Hegel's theorization on History posits two diametrically opposed poles of the world; the ahistoricity and the timelessness of Africa and the glorification of the Greek history as the starting point of the Western history. His argument about the philosophy of history, according to Joseph Harris, is "ignominious pronouncements "on Africa that are "a great contribution to the stereotypic image of Black people" (19). Through Modin's crossing in WAWSB?, for instance, the romanticized and glorified history of America as the 'blest', is debunked wherein another version is presented by Modin, the African. It is to be highlighted, though, that Armah's WAWSB? does not take as its major theme the presentation of the African culture and history from an African perspective, in the way it is handled in his other historical novels or the way Achebe deals with that in his Things Fall Apart. The crossing made by Modin, for instance, with the resulting introspections and retrospections, does show the buried undesirable version of the Western, namely American history and culture. During his flight to the West, Modin wrote in his journal

it is the past that fills my mind... It always happens when I travel ... As my body is taken forward, my mind becomes hungry for the places and things behind me ... Everything comes together rapidly. Every journey in this way becomes a return, another visit to myself (75).

Along with the physical journey, Modin is undertaking a psychological journey with historical recollections of crimes of slavery committed by the west. Gazing through the plane's window, Modin is to see three ships crossing the Atlantic. We are but to link that with the three ships during the Columbian adventure into the New World. This adventure can be seen as a seminal gesture to the Middle Passage. These bits of recollections would let Modin to immerse deeper in other, yet related recollection; a vivid

memory of “the excursion to Chistianborg Castle (Accra, Ghana)”, a place during the slave trade, slaves were reserved till they would be deported to the New World (75-79). The “castle” was then the home of the colonial governor before it became, most ironically, the home of the newly-independent nation. During the descriptions given by the teacher to Modin and his mates in that trip, Modin is unconsciously to relive the slaves’ experience. He is to feel as though really the chains on his body the slaves were cuffed up with. Modin writes that “*there are no visible chains*”, yet he felt the strong hold they have upon him. The middle passage, thereafter, becomes the space of imagination wherein we are to reconstruct the happenings of the long deadly journeys the Africans were forced to undertake. Reading Equiano’s Intersesting Narrative, for instance, we are to examine the inhumanity the Africans were treated with during their coerced displacement to the New World. The very idea of slaving others by virtue of their physical differences would prove, in that context, the illusion of the ‘Civilizing mission’ and the propagated Christian precepts that of compassion and mercy.

Through the late efforts of African and African American thinkers like Cheikh Anta Diop and Henry Louis Gates, for instance, it is submitted that the racial classificatory system is but a western imperial construction. After the colossal study of the Egyptian civilization, for instance, with the far reaching findings about the blackness of the Egyptians, the differences across culture and civilizations are but socio-historical ones. Race seemed to have been utilized as a ‘transcendental signifier’, a view that was, later, refuted by non-Eurocentric inclined scholars. The objectivity and neutrality of history and history writing therefore become of a crucial significance.

Aidoo as a writer is aware of that, and she uses art to speak about her concerns such as history, colonialism, and neocolonialism and brings about a counter discursive discourse that dismantles the hegemonic charge that fuelled western history and represented Africans and African history as a footnote in the long and glorious European one. Right from the beginning, Aidoo’s dedication for the ancestors underpins her awareness of the African past ‘*For you/ Nanabanyin Tandoh,/ who knows how to build;/ people structures/ lives.../*’. It is interesting to notice that Aidoo’s libation is also addressed to Roger Genoud and his son Marcel, the author of Nationalism and Economic



Development in Ghana, whose work was dedicated to explaining the Ghanaian society and its state of affairs. I have raised this point because it shows that Aidoo's stance is not a radical one. She is an African who is aware of the complexities of History by acknowledging right from the start the accomplishment of Africans and Europeans. She acknowledges the achievements of Europeans and in the same time, remains very critical concerning the colonial enterprise. Aidoo strongly believes in the paramount necessity of rescuing the African memory. And in order to do so she oscillates between stating the fact; Africa did exist and Africa does exist and by criticizing the western humanitarian myth and by highlighting the inglorious European past. But as we shall see later, Aidoo's strategy is by no means to be equated by a return to a romanticized pre-colonial African past.

When Sissie is made to realize her racial difference, a fact that she would later regret, the narrative is clipped into verse and the narrator who possesses knowledge and awareness that Sissie is yet to acquire, construes this racial difference in a whole skim of historical and political precedents. The narrator explains that race is a construct that served as a justification to colonialism and to delineate relations of power.

A way to get more land, land, more land./ Valleys where green  
corn would sway in the wind/ A gazing ground for highland  
cattle./ A stream to guggle the bonnie bairns to sleep./ Gold and  
silver mines,/ Oil/ Uranium/ Plutonium./ Any number of ums  
Clothes to cover the skins,/ Jewels to adorn,/ Houses for shelter,  
to lie down and sleep./ A harsher edge to the voice./ A sharper  
ring to commands./ Power, child, power./ for this is all anything  
is about./ Power to decide/ Who is to live,/ Who is to die./(13).

*'Race, as Aidoo insistently points out in her novel, has always mattered as a marker of difference and a pretext to deform human relationships'* (Larbi 57) and the most disruptive way to deform human relationships is the imposition of one's power over the others.

Section two opens with the description of the castle in which Sissie is going to spend her stay in Germany. The place entails the recollection of a feudal past empowered by exploitation and violence. The narrator points out at the politics of place. The critique

is directed towards monuments which propagate notions of national unity and historical glory while concealing social injustices and historical unrest. The overflowing markers of exploitation of the German landscape give also hints as to the gender politics and the patriarchal abuse of women in those times. Aidoo clearly denounces a fake history and by doing so, she aims at dismantling historical master narratives of the West. Marija's Husband is named Big Adolph and her son little Adolph. We are given no information about their personality. Big Adolph is always absent; he is a flat character whose function is to work as a historical remainder of Nazi Germany and the '*its silent screams in dungeons*' (78). At the end of the section, when Marija advises Sissie to visit Munich, the narrative is clipped in the economy of verse wherein the narrator declares: '*Munchen/ Marija/ Munich?/ No Marija./ ... There is nowhere in the/ Western world is a/ Must/ No city is sacred/ No spot is holy./Not Rome,/ Not Paris,/Not London-/ Nor Munich, Marija/and the whys and wherefores/ should be obvious./*' (79-80). The narrative voice clearly points at the Nazi history of Germany. An overt critique is made toward what was once the heartland of Aryan supremacy. Munich 'the original Adolph of the pub-brawls/ and mobsters who were looking for a Fuhrer-/' is reminiscent of the atrocities and the barbarian tragedies that were orchestrated by the Germans during the Second World War.

The encounter of Sissie with a Scottish girl represents another instance where western assumptions about history are debunked, this time by Sissie, not the narrator. When the Scottish woman tries to establish historical links, by comparing the Scottish experience with the African one saying '*we have a lot in common!*' (91), Sissie replies by pointing out the involvement of Scottish in the process of African colonization. She reminds the woman of '*Livingstone the saint/ Opening/ Africa up for/ Rape / Scottish missions everywhere/ in Tumu-Tumu and Mampong-*' (92). Commenting on this passage, caminero Santangelo Byron, remarks that despite the ostensible maturation of Sissie, the narrator points to her incomplete education. '*In introducing the dialogue with the Scottish woman, the narrator suggests her assertion of kinship could be read as accurate. This claim attunes the reader the limitations of Sissie's own perspective and to what she herself could learn from the dialogue.*' (126). Again Sissie's view is counterbalanced by that of the narrator.

If Aidoo criticizes the European past and depicts it as inglorious and deceitful, she does not describe the African pre-colonial past as being idyllic. She remains critical of the African past. In an instance in the book, '*the third Reich*' (36) reminds the narrator of 'the Abome kings of Dahomey'. This comparison enables the narrator to allude to the horrors of the social stratification that characterized that African kingdom. In this regards, Cooper's criticism of Aidoo being racist and calling for a national radicalism falls into nonsense. Cooper comes to such conclusions because she equates the text perspectives with Sissie's'. Moreover, the only instance where there is a reference to an ideal pre-colonial past is to be found in the last section of the book 'A Love Letter'. Answering her unnamed boyfriend, who assumes that it is thanks to the present state of things that they can meet and talk, Sissie counters:

Besides in the old days, who knows, we could have been born in the same part of the land. Or we could have met when they brought me as a novice to understudy one of the famous priestesses in your area or when they sent you to be apprenticed to one of our goldsmiths.(115).

This fantasy is immediately foreclosed when Sissie realizes that 'it's all nostalgia and sentimental nonsense' (116). Brenda Cooper assesses Aidoo's work as being an instance of reverse racism. She explains that Aidoo is reviving a kind of ethnic negritude. For her, Aidoo remains ensnared in old formulations of racism. However, the very distance that Aidoo maintains between the protagonist and the narrator, the blurring of the narrative voices and the inconclusive end of her fiction show that Aidoo's work goes beyond old Manichean formulations. The examples given above where Sissie evaluates European History and her past clearly show that the protagonist's radical positions are always counter balanced by the narrator's comments. And even when both voices seem to articulate the same ideas, the fragmentations and fissures of the narrative and the very inconclusive aspect of the novel in regard to the issues it tackles, testify to Aidoo's refutation of clear cut formulations and her will to transcend binary logics.

History, then, becomes a controversial site due to the non-neutrality of history writing that was often written by a white male westerner in a way that would alter the realities to suiting western imperialistic justifications. Altering historical events through

glorifying anything western while denying any historical and civilizational impulses of Africa have been creating a serious fissuring in the African identity. While trying to achieve a healthy identity construction, another component has to be added to the equation. Women, namely in our case the African woman, has long been rendered invisible in almost a whole range of discourses. The world seemed to have been monitored through phallogocentric European inclinations. Through both Armah's and Aidoo's work we are to examine the status of the African woman in her African society, thereby, seeing what is the role the African woman is prospected to perform.

If we aspire to fully diagnose the African identity issue, we have to be alarmingly conscious of the gendered nature of Western colonialism of Africa in the first place and the social disruption it caused to African societies. Non-belonging to the west, the African woman has been doubly marginalized from the discourse of universal history. She is treated both as a colonized subject and as a gendered subject as well. The postcolonial era, paradoxically, did inherent the same inequities caused by the colonial discourse. This latter, for instance, does juxtapose the colonized land to the figure of woman being utterly passive ready to penetration. Through this Eurocentric orientalist gesture, the colonizer is always equated with masculinity and maleness while the colonized with femininity and femaleness. This imported patriarchal view was mirrored in the disruption of the status of the African woman after colonization. If we take the example of Ghana, the Akan society, more specifically, Aidoo's and Armah's social background, we are to notice that the European colonization did bring dramatic changes at the level of social stratification and order. The intrusion of the western social imports that of patriarchy did shake the stability the Akan society was living in. Western discourses of representation do, systematically, construct a picture of non-western woman as being sensual and lusty depriving her from any emotional or cognitive faculties. These representations do not authentically mirror the realities of the Akan woman. It should be notified that many African societies are matrilineal in structure where women are endowed with serious social and political tasks enabling them to shape most powerfully the sense of individuality and communal African identity. Writers such as Aidoo, for instance, would forward a version of an African 'herstory' without glorifying or mystifying pre-colonial Africa, but rather trying to recover the disrupted social and

cultural codes after colonialism. Gay Wilentz argued that “*the aims of these writers is to somehow find a usable past in which to inform the present, a present, as we see with the most recent works, which has become increasingly more complicated in demarcating women's political domain*” (2).

Sissie's sound and strong character does reflect the case of such women. Sissie does not resemble the Fanonian theorization about the black woman or the woman of color as he puts it. Though Fanon admitted his ignorance of the case of the black woman, he, nevertheless, did forward a case study to Mayotte Cepécia, a woman from the Martinique who travelled to France. She is possessed by the admittance into the white world. Unlike Sissie's perception of herself, for Mayotte “*one is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent*” (36). Fanon argues that “*it is because the Nigress feels inferior that she aspires to admittance into the white world*” (42). Sissie's case was quite the opposite for she unveiled the realities of the West. She is sound enough to, succeedingly, deconstruct the myths of the white world. She was not the ideal ‘other’ created by the west, and who undergoes a process of ‘lactification’, but rather a genuine African woman self; a self-conscious woman apt enough to propose solutions to the fissured African identity. Her strong sense of allegiance to Africa is a striking illustration of her understanding to the relations of the West and Africa.

As Armah's setting was in North America and Muslim North Africa, the issue of the Arab Muslim woman comes into forceful play. The Algerian women have long been misrepresented in an orientalist manner by many European artists. Edward Said, for instance, did comment on paintings such as the one of the French Eugène Delacroix. The Algerian women were presented as submissive harem dwelling in an Orient constructed by the West. They, too, were seen as oppressed by the colonial discourse by Islam. Islam was perceived as barbaric and uncivilized by the French since it allows polygamy. This is one of the major motives for the French ‘mission civilisatrice’ as though to free the Arab woman. Whosoever did practice polygamy, for instance, was discouraged from obtaining a French citizenship seeing this attitude as incompatible with French mode of life. Patricia Lorcin argues that “though a lot of indignation was expressed by the French officials over the condition of women and polygamy, in particular, no action was ever

taken to prevent such practices”. This “*indignation was used as a moral stick to beat Islam and the Arabs*” (66). Ironically, though, the status of woman in France was not that ideal. If we examine the Napoleonic code, the then French civil law code, we would find that women were “*destined to be men’s property, to obey them, and to procreate on their behalf*” (Bell and Offen 37). Women had no right to obtain property for her own “*a wife cannot give, convey, mortgage, or acquire property... without her husband joining in the instrument or giving his written consent*” (“The Napoleonic Code” 39). The endeavor to free and liberate the Algerian women was used as a pretext to colonize Algeria.

Armah’s vision about the African woman does reflect the antagonism between feminism and womanism. His portrayal of white women ascribing to them racist, predatory and carnivorous attitudes towards the African man does parallel Aidoo’s portrayal of white women towards the African woman. Another striking analogy of the issue of the African woman is the confessional unsent letters written both by Modin to Naita in WAWSB? and Sissie’s confessional unsent letters to her lover in OSK. Both gestures illustrate the workings of gender relations in a non- Euro-phallo-centric mode. Naita’s warnings to Modin against the Oppenhardts’ scheme to mess up with his mind, and the unique intimacy Modin felt with her unlike his encounters with white women; reflect the nature of the relationship between the African man and woman. Sissie’s refusal to succumb into Marija’s lesbian temptation and her will to meet with her African lover, instead, do reflect Sissie’s sensibility towards her fellow African men. Her disgust and anger at the ‘Sammys’ she encountered, however, does not stem from a feminist stance but rather because of their Westernized mindset. We are shown how it is that the ill-treatment and the invisibility of women is but a western import. The African woman is conscious of the double oppression caused by the patriarchal colonial enterprise. Sissie’s showed her disgust with the westernized kunle while he is most blindly appreciating the Christian Doctor’s heart transplant from a dead black body into a white man. Not only was the experimentation on a black man but “He meant that first/ Announced/ donor-poor ghostly female whose/ Identity has/Faded, / Already, So completely” (OSK 97). Even after independence, African countries seem to inherit such patriarchal mindset. The discussion between Modin, the manager and Aimeé after supper about the role of women in postcolonial Algeria reflects to a great extent the inequities inherited from colonialism.

The manager affirms that “Yes, we have had a revolution. Our women helped us a lot. They continue to help, as you see. Revolutions are not for turning women into men.” (WAWSB? 243). Ogede Ode commented on such behavior that “*by relegating women to the kitchen, the élite are trying to prevent women from sharing the fruits of independence*” (88). The African woman, therefore, needs to be urgently (re)inscribed into the discourse of history if we aspire to construct an intact and healthy African selfhood. The empowerment of the African woman comes into a forceful interplay in a postcolonial Africa.

**CONCLUSION:**

In this chapter, we have displayed the psychological and historical encounters made by the protagonists of both works. It is shown how one's perception about him/herself is shaped by the internalizations of so-called Eurocentric theorization about race and images that are propagated in the representational discourse. As the relationship of the west and Africa is historically a relationship of colonialism and imperialism, the west has long been diffusing stereotypes about Africa and Africans in their travel narratives. Through the opposite journey, we are shown that the body of misrepresentations produced by westerners is deconstructed in a postcolonial gesture by African protagonists. Drawing on Fanon's psychoanalytical findings about the contact of the African with the west, it is to be noted that African, in a Manichean process, is being objectified biologically as an inferior and a very "other" to the westerner who is thought to be an ultimate model for human progress. The racial classificatory system of the world, through the study of self/other encounters, seems to be a western construct, wherein the west tried, most deceitfully, by whichever manner to project undesirable qualities upon a constructed African 'other'. Armah's protagonists seem, too, to internalize such theorizations about race. When in the west, they stop being actional subjects being utilized and devastated sexually and mentally by westerners. We are to note the essentialist stance of Armah aborting any room for a Bhabhian third space of enunciation. Sissie, in Aidoo's work, however, seems to praise her "otherness" to the point that she perceives herself as a genuine African subject. Through the debunking of the western superiority myth, we are led to dismiss the validity of physicality as a reliable criterion with which the world is to be monitored. Differences, therefore, are to be located in history and history writing and that if ever there are differences between peoples, they are solely historical in nature. The revisiting of some stations in the European history seems to unveil another version of European history. Deconstructing history would threaten the stability of already held beliefs about the shiny picture of the west's past while forwarding a history rife with criminality, unethicity and inhumanity. Dealing with history, we saw how the African woman has long been rendered invisible in the historicity of the African experience and has been ignored for what it can bring the recovery of the fissured African identity. The specificity of the African sociological



### CHAPTER THREE: ENCOUNTERS AND (MIS) UNDERSTANDINGS

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structure does impel us to valorize the status of the African woman in the reconstruction of a healthy and genuine African identity. There arises an urgent need to re-inscribe women in the postcolonial African societies. As our intention in this work to discuss both thematic as well as formal aspects of the corpus of study, we will, thus, try to deal with the issue of identity and self-realization from linguistic and aesthetic perspectives. We will examine the ways in which the African writer, in our case Aidoo and Armah, approach the issue of form and language.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Hybridized Textual Self-Fashioning

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization

Fanon, Frantz, Black Skin

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**INTRODUCTION :**

The postcolonial African writer is faced with a very complicated issue that of language and genre. The issue of using the ex-colonizer's language, for instance, is a highly questionable one. How it is that the postcolonial African writer tries to resist a thick heritage of misrepresentations that affected severely his perception of self-hood while using the very language that enslaved him with falsified stereotypes and images.

Representation as a self-fashioning process seems to be far from being a simple undertaking. How do postcolonial thinkers and authors engage the language dilemma? Are they, most trivially, perpetuating the colonialist mindset of the linguistic and cultural superiority of the west? Or are they conscious of double-edged effects of using that language? How do both Armah and Aidoo justify their use of English, for instance? Is the English used by such writers the same one used by western writers or is it contextually Africanized to suiting the African realities?

The issue of genre is another challenge for the African writer. Since the emergence of the novel did coincide historically with the emergence of the western bourgeois class, a class that introduced a huge interest in exploring and acquiring overseas territories, the novel was the major genre that reflected and fuelled the western imperial zeal. Jameson, for instance, attributes to the genre social, political and intellectual impacts upon any given society. Far from being a mere formal aspect, Jameson sees genre as “*essentially a socio-symbolic message*” (qtd. An Introduction to African Literature: A Reader 18). The novel, as a genre, therefore, can be seen as a quintessentially bourgeois creation. It is worth mentioning that the African cultural and literary context, however, differs substantially in nature and essence from its western counterpart. The oral tradition seems to be the medium with which Africans communicate their culture. In a postcolonial fashion, then, one has to examine the ways in which the African writer is to articulate aesthetically his self-hood. How does the African writer, engage with art as a self –fashioning gesture while incorporating African orality into the western conventional novel? What are the effects of such hybridity in producing a peculiar literature which is aimed at healing the fissured African identity?

**4-1 LANGUAGE DEBATE:**

Language is one of the most tremendous legacies of colonialism, and it is subject to huge controversies and dispute among those who were left with such a burden for language is always reminiscent of the ex-colonizer's power. The implementation of the colonizer's language was a means to alienate people from their own culture. The way we speak underscores the way we perceive the world. Therefore, by foregrounding his language, the colonizer instilled a medium that was to distort the native's perception of the world as well as the way he perceived himself in a whole network of interwoven cultural, social and political realities. In his initiative of writing, the postcolonial African writer endeavors to analyze the cultural, economic and social ramifications of the Western physical intervention in Africa. He/she also attempts to investigate what takes place after colonialism and the different reactions emanating from the different strata of society both at the centre and in the periphery. Inescapably, the question of using English as a medium of writing back came to forceful play. Indeed one could legitimately question the fact of asserting one's political and cultural independence though using the tool that confined him to misleading representations. Here is an attempt to show in the first place how the adoption of the colonizer's language can be so controversial. How is the writer coping with the problems encountered when using English and how is he going to convey a sense of independence and writing back if he keeps ensnared by foreign languages. I attempt to show the controversy of the use of English from a linguistic and a historical perspective, then I will turn to the different emerging perspectives that assuage the Manichean tensions between English and the search for an African identity - by initiating alternative postcolonial viewpoints such as appropriation.

The African writers came to realize the utmost importance to write and to bring about new discourses to the historical blurring that has been cast by the Western imperial enterprise. The notion of art for art's sake is all the more irrelevant for the African writer is endowed with a mission; not only restoring an image long distorted by western representations but rather try to devise artistically and intellectually a genuine African selfhood. Although one cannot speak of one historical or cultural unity of the African continent, it remains clear that the majority experienced foreign domination. This

experience constitutes a solid bound, hence, talking of a common African experience, or common cause of liberation is by no means a statement that narrows or devalues the African continent in its vast diversity and historical heterogeneity.

The choice of the ex-colonizer's language, in our case English, as the medium of writing has been severely criticized by many postcolonial writers. For them writing in English was another way of perpetuating cultural hegemony and reasserting the western culture as the locus of 'universal value'. It is precisely via language that the West scorned indigenous tongues and cultures. And since language is inextricably intertwined with culture, using English would mean that these 'missionaries' are endorsing the ex-colonizer's culture, thus widening the gap between even his/her fissured self. This language choice would ultimately render the writing back as a trivial and a failed attempt. This viewpoint is further backed by some poststructuralists such as Derrida and Foucault who claim that language upholds relations of power. They argue that the individual is framed by the language he inherits. Being so, the way he thinks and perceives things is determined by the language he acquired. Thus the English-skeptics cannot envision the *raison d'être* of African literatures written in European languages.

The controversy over the use of English as the medium of African literature has probably arisen since 1962, when African writers met in Kampala to discuss the question of what might comprise and delineate African writing in English. A certain group of writers such as Ngugi, Wali and others rejected the use of the 'oppressor's' tongue and asked for an African literature written in indigenous languages. Wali argued that a true African literature required the use of African languages. He insisted that speaking about African realities in the languages of the colonizer underscored the writers limited freedom; a limitation imposed by their colonialist past. In his essay "The Dead End of African Literature", he wrote '*the uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing is misdirected and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture*' (14). He insisted that such a literary practice can only engender 'sterility, uncreativity, and frustration'.

This view of the impossibility of using English is also shared by the Kenyan writer and critic Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. In his vigorous book, Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics

of *Language in African Literature*, Ngugi provides additional grounds to back his argument. Ngugi argues that European languages were not only a tool of implementing imperial hegemony but also the token of the violence enacted upon the continent. For him, European languages scorned and ousted indigenous tongues which were the marker for Africa's linguistic diversity and affluence. European languages acted upon the African elite so that this latter became a pale ersatz of his European 'fellow' speaker, and this has produced a long-term state of alienation among the Europhone /Anglophone African elite. And since this African elite encompasses the ones supposed to act as "missionaries" in their postcolonial writing back, African nations remain still enslaved to European ways and canons. Thus, Ngugi denounces all forms of African literary production in the English language as being 'Afro-European' (26) literature(s), and moves along his conviction by stating in the book's introduction '*this book is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any writings. From now it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way*' although he had become one of the most celebrated African writers for his dextral mastery of the English language.

Despite the solid arguments given by many African thinkers and critics about the necessity of dumping English and adopting in its stead indigenous languages which are more likely to articulate African realities, the historical complexity and the confluence of many parameters testify to the multifaceted state of the post-independence era of African nations. This polyphony clearly shows that the adoption of solely indigenous languages would not reflect socio-political, cultural, and historical realities of post-colonial Africa. English permeated all the aspects of the African life thus cannot be imputed without the risk of silencing a pertinent part of Africa's history. Colonialism is a mishap, yet a historical fact so is English. Rejecting English would mean repressing the impact of History.

Anthony Appiah, an African philosopher and critic rejects the philosophical stance that describes Africa simply in terms of what it used to be before colonialism. He denounces such attitude-the one of Ngugi for instance- as being 'nativist'<sup>1</sup>. He also rejects '*the claim that the African independence requires a literature of its own*' (56). For him, a

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<sup>1</sup> Nativist position which creates cultural binarism, such as oppositions between 'universalism' and 'particularism', 'inside' and 'outside', 'us' and 'them' (Appiah 56)

nativist stance underpins the claim of a homogenous and ahistorical African culture and thus reduces knowledge to what the native language has created. Consequently, this position confines language and literature to constructs which should stand for notions such as pure culture, pure nation, and pure tradition, that is, notions which are historically erroneous.

In the same vein, Salman Rushdie, in his vocal article entitled “commonwealth literature does not exist”, expressed his opinion about the use of English language ‘*English literature has its Indian branch. By this I mean the literature of the English language. This literature is also Indian Literature. There is no incompatibility here. If **history creates complexities**, let us not try to simplify them.*’(Emphasis mine) (65). What Rushdie argues about the dialectics that animates the relationship between English as a language and Indian Literature -in English- is true of all post-colonial literatures written in English hence applicable to African literature. Rushdie, like Appiah, seems to give full weight to the historical interactions in the post-colonial arena. He refutes the notion of authenticity and calls it ‘*the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, symbols all derive from a supposedly homogenous tradition*’ (67). Interestingly enough, Rushdie’s rejection of the notion of authenticity and pure tradition seems to echo Appiah’s criticism of the notion of uncontaminated cultural autonomy. Although Appiah acknowledges that the European linguistic legacy works like ‘double agents’ and hence should remain ‘*perpetually under control*’ (56) his critique of ‘pure’ culture and ‘pure language and literature’ gives way to an alternative postcolonial gesture where he considers the use of the colonial language as a means to go beyond the binary oppositions it created. His criticism offers a postcolonial ‘space’ for appropriation. This space of appropriation can arguably be linked with Bhabha’s ‘third space of enunciation’ (37).

Bhabha argues that cultural systems and statements are constructed in what he calls ‘the third space of enunciation’. Cultural identity surfaces in this ambivalent space and so, makes claims to inherent purity of cultures ‘untenable’. Bhabha believes in the interdependency of the colonizer and the colonized. This third space of enunciation gives room for linguistic appropriation. Therefore, the choice of the post-colonial writer to write in English mustn’t be regarded as a failed attempt to get rid of colonial bond. Instead, it is a

will to appropriate the language and give a sound impetus to that 'third space' where hybridity<sup>2</sup>, and in our case linguistic hybridity is no longer seen as a defect but rather as a positive formulation. It allows the masses and more particularly the writer not to fall into schizophrenic allegiances. Bhabha calls such writers as mimic writers. Mimicry seems to be a site of ambivalence in postcolonial theory. Mimicry seems to be an appealing project for the colonizer; being perceived at first as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (The Location of Culture 122). This project would maintain that the natives mimic the colonial masters for purpose of domination. Bhabha reckons a significant secondary effect of that gesture. He argues that

The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces knowledge of its norms.... The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. (123)

The master sees in front of himself in a mimic slave, yet ambivalently, that slave is not quite him. In that space of difference a disturbance of 'double vision' occurs between the colonizer and colonized relations. The colonizer is no longer a site of one-way authority; he is no longer a wholly Subject but rather an Object. The simple binary self/other is, therefore, demolished. For Bhabha using the colonizer's language, as it was implanted by the colonizer for mimetic purposes, would allow the native not only to harmonize with the colonizer but to ironically to deconstruct the master's so-called subjectivity.

In the light of these notions one can examine post-colonial viewpoints of eminent African writers who decided to write in English without blindly aping the white man's tongue through appropriating the language. Chinua Achebe, probably one of the most well-known African writers, declares in his essay entitled "the African Writer and the English Language" that the English language is part and parcel of his African cultural heritage 'I

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<sup>2</sup>Bhabha by redefining the notion of hybridity has empowered it with positive connotations. This new definition departs from the old notion of hybridity as used by Ngugi" What we have created is another hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature; that is, literature written by Africans in European languages"(1990 page 73)



*have been given the English language and I intend to use it* (102). Now the whole strategy lies in the *use* of this medium, for Achebe sees the urge to create a 'new English', an English that would suit the African experience, an English that would not carry the might of Eurocentric worldviews *'I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings'* (103).

Achebe's vision seems to echo the definition forwarded by Bill Ashcroft *et al* in The Empire Writes Back that view appropriation as *"the reconstruction of the language of the center, the process of capturing and remolding the language to new usages [it] marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege"* (38). Those who share this vision forward the initiative of adapting the English as the medium of expression and as the medium of the textual writing back but with the view to adapt it to the socio-historical and ideological context of postcolonial African nation states. Practically in the case of Achebe, the appropriation consists in, as explained by Innes in an article entitled 'Forging the Conscience of Their Race', the use of African idioms, similes, proverbs and imagery. Achebe also uses African concepts via the inclusion of indigenous terminology, concepts that are alien to the standard Western English speaking community and hence cannot be encompassed by the English language (134-5).

Aidoo's in her turn also takes the appropriation stance; her extensive use of African proverbs, similes and oral tradition in her writing testifies to her hybrid composition somewhere between the acquired English language and the African indigenous languages, coming crossroads in Bhabha's third space. Her linguistic appropriation is also shown in the use of neologisms such as 'flabberwhelmed' in her novel Changes: A Love Story. She violates the standards of the English language to formulate a hybrid discourse.

Despite his essentialist stance vis-à-vis anything western, Armah, however, seems to be a mimic writer. Though Armah seems to reject anything Western such as Education or the western culture in general, he nevertheless, uses the ex-colonizer's language. Surprisingly though, Armah does not side with the nativist's view in that matter. One plausible explanation of his adoption of English is, typically, pragmatic in essence. In a lecture delivered at the University of Nairobi, Armah remarks that the use of English, as a

medium of literary production, is out of necessity. In a lecture delivered at the University of Nairobi, he declared that *“If an African language is adopted, it will be a good solution. Africa is vast and it requires a vast language to put through all our ideals, and that language is not yet born”*. (21)

In OSK, in the epistolary section, Sissie complains to her unnamed lover about the linguistic bond *‘... What positive is there to be, when, I cannot give voice to my soul and still have her heard? Since so far, I have only been able to use a language that enslaved me, and therefore, the messengers of my mind always come shackled?’* (112) she further adds *‘... we have to have our secret language. It is high time we did. We are too old a people not to. We can. We must. So that we shall make love with words and not fear of being overheard’* (116).

There is evident discrepancy between the will to come up with a unifying language and the need to articulate the ontological questions hovering over the postcolonial state of things. As professor Keith Booker puts it, *‘Aidoo herself clearly has a sense of working in an alien medium when she writes in English, though it is certainly the case that she manipulates that medium in very effective ways’* (127) As to Sissie, the very fact of being able to voice the ambivalence and the tensions inherent to using a language not her own is in itself a statement that serves postcolonial issues. Voicing the problems making them audible and accessible to an audience exorcises the problem. Even though OSK is written in English, it is nonetheless not the canonical English, it is an Africanized English, and dare I say Ghanaian female English because Aidoo empowers it with her ideological intentions.

Armah’s and Aidoo’s usage of English is fueled with a sense of purpose. It bears their discourse, a discourse meant to reverse and to deconstruct Western grand narratives and assumptions embedded in those canons about the ‘dark continent and its folks’ and goes a step further by launching a struggle for the postcolonial. In other words, English is a neutral element; it is the intention of the writer that gives the language full meaning. The dialogic between ‘word’ and ‘intention’ is best summarized in the words of the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin:

Language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the  
borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language

is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own **intention**, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive **intention**. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other peoples' mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's **intentions**: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. (293-4) (Emphasis mine).

Now, having broadly spoken about the issue of language as debated by postcolonial writers and thinkers with the aim to clear up the controversies and the contradictions around the adoption of the ex-colonizer's language and to examine the different stances and strategies used by postcolonial writers to cope with the controversies and to show that the choice of language is always a choice of political and ideological resistance. The choice of language entails another issue; that of the audience, who reads the postcolonial writer. To whom is he addressing his discourse?

If we take for instance the position of Ngugi, his decision to write exclusively in Gikuyu and Kiswahili clearly stems from the will to address the masses. His sole interest in addressing the peasantry pertains to his profound Marxist beliefs. He argues that a sound change is to emanate from the masses and not from the elite, this is why his writings were no longer addressed to the African elite who speak and master the English language but rather to the peasantry whom he views are the true force of the African nation. The fact of excluding an international and -primarily 'western' and 'westernized'- audience is not only due to the fact that Ngugi has reoriented his writing towards an exclusively African native speaking audience. It constitutes in itself a postcolonial gesture whereby the writer delimitates the ground on which African matters should be discussed and by whom they shall be discussed. Ngugi aims at crypting postcolonial African realities to a foreign audience thus preventing this latter from interfering in the ongoing events. The argument of Wali concerning the choice of the language vis a vis the audience echoes that of Ngugi; he argues that literary production in English is meant for a minute westernized elite. He has

been harshly critical on the staging of a play by Soyinka declaring that it was accessible to less than one per cent of the Nigerian people.

Seeing his role as that of a teacher, Achebe departs from the ones mentioned above and explains his choice of the colonial linguistic medium as a way to target a wide continental audience '*there are not many countries in Africa where you could abolish the language of the erstwhile colonial master and still retain the facility for mutual communication*' (1975. 57). English for him is 'necessary evil' to address the largest audience possible inside the continent and outside it. Achebe as many other African writers, is aware of his 'duty' to state that '*African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans... the worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity...the writer's duty is to help them regain it*' (8) . To achieve that, the writer needs to testify to the existence of culture and history before colonialism. Here the message is twofold; first addressing a local audience with the aim to rehabilitate self esteem and dignity. This message is in adequacy with his didactical views. Second address a Western audience in order to offer alternative versions to the ones that long shaped and instilled the prejudices about the Dark Continent.

Aidoo in her turn seems to follow the same path; in OSK, the narrative voice addresses her brother (s), that is to say the Africans. The title itself produces an insular effect; the pronoun 'our' confines up the addressee to Africans. In her sarcastic, scolding narrative written in English<sup>3</sup>, Aidoo seems to address not all the Africans, but those 'westernized 'brothers' the 'academic-pseudo-intellectuals' (6) who prefer to live in Europe knowing that the sound change must be done at home, in their native lands. Those people are part of an educated elite which remains trapped in an alienated state. In addressing this social category, Aidoo gives the impression that if change is to come, then it will be brought by an educated stratum. This is further corroborated by Aidoo's choice of the protagonist. This, too, does coincide with Armah's choice of characters. Indeed the journey and the criticism are not performed by an average person but by an educated men and woman who, unlike some others who are in the Diaspora, choose to come back home.

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<sup>3</sup>In Ghana there are more than 46 languages, in addition to English , the language of the majority is Akan  
The peasantry and the workers were after their daily issues and problems

Aidoo's novel addresses primarily an African educated audience both at home and in the Diaspora. But not only, for the aesthetics and the strategies of the novel are also meant to rumble a western readership. She is aware of her double audience. In this case, the work of art pertains to a larger project which endeavours to retort to an ignorance that prevailed hitherto in the West and counter the assumptions that fuelled the western thought. Aidoo achieves this through a number of strategies such as changing the location of the matrix: now Sissie is the self and the western subject is the other. Aidoo reverses the combination of otherness and places the European as '*the other for [Sissie's] her firmly centered self*' (Ranu 140).

The choice of writing in English stems from more practical reasons. The primary aim of writing a text is to have it published. In an interview conducted by Maria Frias, Aidoo deplores the fact that Ghanaians do not have access to books. She openly blames the Ghanaian publishers for that. She explains that having a Ghanaian publication for one of her novels was such a challenge. She declares that the unavailability of the Ghanaian market is '*one of the most frustrating issues in this country*' (21). The marketability of books is also a factor worth paying attention to. Publishers choose to select writers who would sell more and thus make more profit. In this way, the writer has not much of a choice. He is obliged to take into account the constraints of the publishing houses and target an international audience rather than a local one. Another factor that marginalizes women writers in the publication and distribution is the very fact of being a woman. Ama Ata Aidoo, in her own words, expresses the urgency of the situation '*The question of woman writer's voice being muted has to do with the position of women in society generally. Women writers are just receiving the writer's vision of the general neglect and disregard those women in the larger society receive*' (Adola James 11

**4-2 AESTHETIC HYBRIDITY IN OSK:**

When asked about the nature of her writing, Aidoo preferred to call it fiction rather than novel. The birth of the novel as a genre coincides with the rise of Capitalism in Europe, a system that resulted in the historical mishap of African colonization. Given these reasons, one could easily understand Aidoo's stance for not identifying with the novel as a European genre. And her will to challenge it, subvert it, and adapt it to her own needs. Aidoo's multi-generic style creates, in the Bhabhian terminology, a space of enunciation where identity is articulated through performance. Through mixing genres, Aidoo in an experimental post-colonial/modern<sup>4</sup> gesture would defy the established western canonical literary tradition. Her inclusion of the storytelling conversational techniques into a western mode of aesthetics would create gaps and fissures that would be based on a performative experience of a newly formed African self-hood.

Aidoo adopts a strategy for adopting a narratorial voice able to establish connections between separate situations and events, for instance, relating a colonial past with neocolonial actual circumstances; the west's enormous affluence and the extravagance of Africa's pauperization, as discussed, thematically, in the first chapter of this dissertation. This strategy, technically speaking, would be vehiculed through the adoption of the role of the African griot. In his African Oral Literature, Isadore Okpewho defines the griot as a traditional singer/poet from the Mandinka-speaking people of Western Sudan who was "attached to the royal family" (26). Contemporary griots are to be found as "free-lance" performers and musicians who are to be found in ceremonies and special occasions (28). Though griots receive an ethnic-based training, they, nevertheless, reflect more or less the same skills: "*the sensitive use of words and images, the delicate balance between music and words, the art of holding the attention or interest of the audience, and so on*" (29). What is untraditional, though, is that Aidoo's griot provides tales of both Africans and Europeans in Europe creating multiple bridges.

The speaking voice in OSK is a "*self-conscious, protean raconteur*" (Odamtten 11). This special voice should not be confused with the conventional European realistic third

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<sup>4</sup> My use of the postcolonial and the postmodern, in our case, is motivated by the shared technique between the two. While the prose-verse style is adopted by the African writer from a postcolonial perspective; it can be viewed as a pastiche-like technique which is a postmodern technique, par excellence.

person, omniscient narrator. This latter is characterized by a temporal-spatial distance between author/ narrator and reader. The traditional storyteller-as-narrator would, however, narrow that conventional literary distance. Through the use of narrator-as-griot, many bridges are to be constructed making convenient connections for us as readers. This contemporary narrator-as-griot is able to read ‘contrapuntally’ both histories of Africa and Europe giving us a comprehensive and healthy picture. Edward Said defines this contrapuntal reading as:

[...] a reading that consciously tracks back and forth across the ‘activated imperial divide’. Where there is domination, it seeks also the expressions of resistance; it discovers by crossing the divide, both the presence of the imperial referent in the denying metropolitan text and the historical processes that text has excluded (qtd. Lhoussein Simour 457).

This balanced reading is aesthetically enhanced through the hybrid form Aidoo adopts. Her interest in reviving the African oral and folk tradition would render her to become the tribal story teller, par excellence, who acts both as a ‘*transmitter of an oral tradition and the creator of a new literature designed to engage*’ (222) her literate and illiterate audience, as well. Her awareness of the role of storytelling in a pre-literate society which was introduced to western printed media of transmittance would echo her belief in the epistemological fragmentation caused by the Western ways.

The storyteller of pre-colonial Africa was a significant figure in the life of the community. One of the many functions of this griot is to remember the stories, the legends, knowledge and the history of the people and pass them on to later generations in linking of oral and cultural continuity. (Hill-Lubin, Mildred 221-25). Aidoo, in her turn, seems to be “especially concerned with the continuation of this tradition through the integration of folk heritage with Western literary conventions”. Her view about orature is heavily accentuated when she negates the already held premise that oral cultural manifestations in a given society are but a prior step in the development of human experience. In an interview with Elder Arlene, Aidoo notes that:

I totally disagree with people who feel that oral literature is one stage in the development of the man’s artistic genius. To me it’s

an end in itself... we can not tell our stories maybe with the same expertise as our forefathers. But to me, all art of the speaking voice could be brought back so easily. We are not that from our traditions. (Elder 109).

Aidoo's use of a postmodern technique, the pastiche, can be viewed by Okechukwu Mezu as one aspect of oral storytelling in which "*children gather to listen to stories, yarns, and fairy-tales from their grandparents, (where) they listen to pieces interspersed with rhymes, lyrics, and choruses... one of the most interesting aspects of traditional African is the unity of art form*" (Elder 111).

The prose verse style remains indisputably the most striking illustration of Aidoo's creative art. Many critics saluted her use of verse for it echoes African oral tradition. Poetry is a paramount component of African orature. Reading the book, one feels involved in an African storytelling where the audience is part and parcel of the narrative. One is tempted to associate Aidoo's work with European modernist and postmodernist's narratives, yet it would obliterate the peculiar African characteristics of her creative writing. Moreover it would render her work as a mere copy of Western works which is completely absurd. There is no doubt whatsoever as to the influence of Aidoo by canonical western works, but her artistic creativity lies in her ability to use different materials to produce an atypical piece of literature defying all conventional modes of writing.

Aidoo's text is split in four unbalanced parts, the first one consists of sixteen pages, the second of thirty two pages, the third of thirteen pages and the fourth one is an epistolary consisting of thirteen pages. When reading OSK, one can but feel puzzled at the sight of its aesthetic difference. The book opens with a dedication to the ancestors written in verse. Most strikingly, Aidoo in her dedication includes Europeans as well who did good to Ghana. She seems to be once again to adopt a Bhabhian non-essentialist stance. Then comes the title of the first part: 'Into a Bad Dream' (1). The next page is completely blank and not paginated. Odamtten appropriately observes 'we are tricked quite literally, into the 'blank of whiteness', or perhaps we are invited to take a journey opposite to Marlow's trip into the *Heart of Darkness*.'(120). Many critics have highlighted on Conrad's presence in OSK, though.



Page 3 contains a single sentence ‘things are working out’, like eloquent story tellers , Aidoo “ *whets her reader’s curiosity to discover what has been happening to (the) speaker, what it is that might be in doubt of ‘working out’*. *Second, by beginning in the middle of the action, she established a bond of acquaintanceship with her reader*”. (Elder 110). And so does page 4 ‘towards their dazzling conclusions...’the rest of the page is empty. The sentences despite their succinct formulations are charged with meaning and the author leaves room for contemplation and meditation. The paucity of words is all the more important because it empowers the present words with strength and value. Page five contains five lines of poetry, the rest is blank. It is only in the sixth page that the narrator speaks in prose which occupies more than half of the page. The narrator sets the tone with sardonic criticism on the moderate nigger, ‘the academic-pseudo-intellectual version’, and a reference to the atrocities of slavery. All the three being elements of colonial and neocolonial paradigms. The rest of the page is left blank giving the reader once again the time to ponder on the continuum of the colonial and the neocolonial status of African nation states that is filtering via the porous line of a fake independence which fathered ‘a cruel past, a funny present’ (8).

Page seven starts with an empty space and in the bottom of the page, the narrator resumes in verse, creating a kind of dialogue with the reader who had been thinking over what has been said in the previous page:

Yes my brother,  
The worst of them  
These days supply local  
Statistics for those population studies, and  
Toy with  
Genocidal formulations.  
That’s where the latest crumbs  
Are being thrown!

the narrator refers to the reader as ‘my brother’ , the reader is “ *transformed from a stranger, a distant reader of the novel on a cold, printed page, interested privately in a*

*good story, to a member of the (protagonist's ) community involved in the very situation confronting the main character"* (Elder 110). Through the smooth implementation of the reader, Aidoo deconstructs the concept of passive readers. She successfully refashioned the novel form into a performative genre where the reader is rendered as a spectator.

Commenting on the blank spaces of the novel, Kofi Owusu argues: '*Blank space, silence and inaudibility speak volumes in Aidoo's text*' (354). He points out that OSK is also a text about silences, and absence. Therefore, it can be argued the blank space constitutes a mode of expression, a way to make it for words, when they fail to convey fracture, absence, incongruity, and discontinuity.

The narrator then shifts to Sissie's trip to Europe in prose this time in a narrative that is replete with irony until page 12 when Sissie is made aware of her racial difference the narrative breaks into verse where the narrator explores the use of racial difference as constructs enabling the establishment of relations based on power and domination:

Power, child, Power.  
 For this is all anything is about.  
 Power to decide  
 Who is to live,  
 Who is to die,

The rest of the page is left empty. The next pages contain respectively one word: 'Where,', 'when,', and 'how.' This aesthetic disposition of words is aimed at calling attention to the importance of notions such as power and domination which are scattered through the entire narrative. This could be read as another element strengthening the idea of narrator-as-griot: They could be read as "*now I will tell you where Sissie went, when she returned, and how her time in Europe progressed*" (Elder 112). Moreover, the 'when, where and how' stress the importance of location, temporality and the means deployed in order to achieve domination and assert one's power over others. This first episode offers an insight into the unconventionality of Aidoo's fiction; her use of space, and its epistemological implications, the constant shift between prose and poetry, the way the text echoes the voices of both the narrator and the protagonist so much that one cannot distinguish between the two.

The second, and the third episodes, function in much the same way. There is a continuous interplay between poetry and prose. The prose-poetry is fuelled with pointers of unconventionality. There is a plethora of registers accumulated in the text. The aim of what follows is not a detailed analysis of the linguistic elements of the text, it is rather a brief statement that illustrates the diversity of registers that permeate the narrative. In the first section, the narrator uses African American English ‘*Ma-a-ma, ain’t no one can laugh at hisself like us.*’ (10), to ironically point out the complications Sissie encounters in her own continent. Odamtten remarks that this idiomatic African American phrasing is like a Blues lyrics that establishes a link between the racism Sissie faces in her our continent and the discrimination practices in the USA. Aidoo transcribes Marija’s speech quasi phonetically creating a kind of German-English ‘*Zo vas is zis name, “Sissie” ’?*’ (28), ‘*ah zo. Ah zo. Ah zo. You are meeting a boyfriend. It is weri important, ja? And you must leave here weri quickly, ja?*’ (75). Kofi Owusu remarks that the Germanic English stated above ‘is forced into an uneasy alliance with East Putney Cockneyism ‘*Deeah, Jayn’s been awai all dai,*’ (42) an Africanized English ‘*Oga, ‘this big Africa man go sit down te-e-ey, look at this Onyibo man wey e talk, wey e mout-go ya,ya,ya,*’ (94). While Owusu calls this last quoted passage Africanized English, Odamtten considers it to be a Nigerian Pidgin. The aim behind using a diversity of registers is creating a highly experimental textual form that mirrors the complexity of understanding elements that are the result of interwoven cultures, different historical events and different locations such as the neocolonial realities the author tries to investigate. The author introduces many German words in her narrative such as ‘*Hausfrau*’ (23), ‘*Naturalich*’ (25), French words such as ‘*d’accord*’ (29), ‘*monami*’ (?). This strategy is symptomatic of postmodernism where there is room for diversity and interaction.

One of the most disturbing elements in the narrative is probably the blurring of the telling voices. The question that surely crosses the reader’s mind a hundred times is: who is speaking here? Sissie is addressed in the three first sections as ‘she’. In some instances, the reader cannot clearly know whether it is Sissie who is talking in free indirect speech, if it is an interior monologue, or if it is the narrator who is describing Sissie’s thoughts. Despite the pastiche of voices, it can be argued that there is a narrative schism between the narrative voice and the protagonist. A major difference between them is a temporal one; Sissie’s

reactions are immediate, spontaneous, hasty, and often inconsiderate, while the narrators' assessments are thoughtful, lyrical, and over determined by knowledge of the past, the present as well as the future. This is stylistically conveyed through the prose verse style. Sissie's comments are generally in prose while those of the narrator are given in verse which makes them more difficult to grasp. The narrator's comments are more historically and temporally hyperbolic whereas Sissie's comments and reactions are always tied up with a proximity with the present. The schism between the two voices is very important to understanding the trajectory of the novel. If we consider that the voice pastiche moves along the same stream then we fail to question Sissie's views, comments and analysis; a fact that is reiterated by the narrator. Despite her 'firmly grounded self', Sissie's views are reassessed and criticized making it difficult to rely on her point of view. The blurring of voices creates ambiguity. This ambiguity is further sustained by the narrator's displacements of Sissie's authority. This latter is not completely denied, a fact that makes the narrative all the more ambivalent.

Written from a vantage point in the future, the insidious phrase 'from knowledge gained since' contributes to the blurring of the temporal scheme. As pointed by Byron, at the end of the novel, the reader needs to look back at the narrative voice, her commentaries in order to understand Sissie's temporal narrative and try to answer the important questions raised in the last sections of the book. (131). 'A love letter' enables Sissie to speak and voice her plea to all the Africans to return home. This section represents also Sissie's encounter with herself, her comments and the conclusions she draws from her journey to distant lands. At one point Sissie declares 'time itself means nothing, no matter how fast it moves. Unless we give it something to carry for us; something we value.' (113). But actually the novel ends up without unveiling the 'something'. More over the use of the 'we', 'us' in also not identified, does it refer to the educated Africans, to the Ghanaians, to all Africans regardless their class or nationality. Once again it remains ambiguous.

If stylistically, 'A love letter' is written exclusively in prose, it is nevertheless a section in which- contrary to what one would expect- Sissie raises a number of questions, she even questions her own assertions. Moreover, the temporal scheme of the three first sections in subtly in constant interplay with the fourth, so much that one is invited to re-

examine the narrative, re-read it to try and grasp the 'dazzling conclusions' Sissie came to realize—or not .the lack of closure suggests Sissie' s unfinished process of maturity. She returns to Ghana loaded with her 'black eyed squint to continue her maturation which is a continuous process rather than a frozen state. Aidoo's determination for not giving clear cut conclusions and assertions of absolute truth is also brilliantly conveyed through Sissie's intermediary state, hovering over Africa. This in-between posture acts as a metaphor which captures the pulse of the book. Sissie returns to her country 'struggling towards the postcolonial' (Byron).

**CONCLUSION:**

In this chapter, we tried to approach the issue of identity from a linguistic and formalistic perspective. The adoption of the ex-colonizer's language, in our case English, seems to be a so controversial issue among postcolonial thinkers and writers. Armah and Aidoo do seem to be qualified as mimetic writers in a Bhabhian terminology. Their use of English is even questioned by English-skeptics; people such as Ngugi, for instance. Ngugi argues that the attempt of the postcolonial African writer to write in the ex-colonizer's language is a trivial undertaking and most dangerously can be analogous to perpetuating the west's linguistic and cultural superiority over Africa and African authors. Armah and Aidoo do not follow such nativist attitude towards the issue of using English as a medium of articulation. Their use, however, seems to echo Achebe's and Rushdie's position, for instance towards the issue of English. Achebe's claim is that the English used by the African writer is a "New English". Rushdie, on the other hand, considers English as one of the complex historical mishaps of the contact of the west and the rest of the world. Aidoo and Armah do not reject the use of indigenous languages, but rather their use of it is a practical and pragmatic one. The issue of the audience and the publishing houses comes into a forceful play.

In the second part of this chapter, we noted that through our textual analysis of Aidoo's OSK, we are shown how Aidoo experiments with identity. Her interplay between prose and verse and the insertion of a sense of oralness in her fiction seems not only to subvert or merely react against western narratives; but rather it works as a hybrid refashioning of postcolonial African identity.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSION

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From our preceding analysis to both works, we examined the ramifications of the African crossing to the west in the perception of identity. Changing the location and the perspective of the western representational discourse, the subaltern ventures to communicate his version of the narrative, not as an objectified 'other', but rather as a genuine subject. We, thus, tried to forward ideological, social, cultural and historical framework of postcoloniality. Drawing on definitions of some specialists in the field, we, therefore, departed from the mere historicity of the prefix 'post' to extend the whole phenomenon to pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experience. Not only does the term 'postcolonial' engage as a mere oppositional reactionary discourse, but rather establishes itself as a complex intellectual and artistic methodology within which the African writer articulates his work. We tried too to forward views and critical receptions about African literature. Unless, we develop an African-consciousness while evaluating African literature, we, therefore would succumb to Eurocentric paradigms which have nothing to do with the peculiarity of African aesthetics. We, then, contextualized both Armah and Aidoo within postcolonial African literary scene. As postcolonial writers, they both are concerned with the recovering of the fissured African identity. As a pioneering critic, Aidoo, was one amongst the first critics who did position Armah's works as elaborate and constructive. This view did consolidate our analogical rationale when approaching both authors' works. Through their crossing to the west, the protagonists started debunking the self-righteous images of the west. As they were sent to the west to study abroad and then come back as been-tos, the nature of the education they receive has been dissected by them through postcolonial lenses. Armah, for instance, takes an essentialist stance towards anything European or western. He is utterly skeptical about any positive contribution of western education to save Africa. In an Althusserian reading, western education is a dangerous state apparatus that would produce westernized educated Africans. This sensitive class would lead their post-independent state-nations to sink into dependency to the west. The independence the African countries enjoyed is a mere nominal independence where the physical colonialism is replaced by neocolonialism. Aidoo, in her turn, does not seem to be categorical about western education. What she laments the most is the not coming back of Africans to save their post-independent devastated countries. Their refusal to come back is



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a conspicuous symptom for their desire to enjoy the glamour of the west even if they are treated as second class citizens.

Another ramification of the crossing is psychologically and historically in essence. The stratifications of the cultures and races, through the crossing undertaken, are shown to be as a western construct. Self perceptions seem to reflect the internalizations of both Westerners and Africans of images and stereotypes the western representational discourse is rife with. Physicality, as a biological feature, would constitute the rationale of the world management. Armah and Aidoo tried to deconstruct such Eurocentric formulations about race. Through our analysis, we noted how the differences that exist between peoples are not racial in essence, but are historical in nature. Both authors did launch counter-discursive strategies wherein they unveiled the mere constructions of racial classificatory system propagated by the West. When judging such western views as European constructs, the African writer, through the crossing made by the protagonists to the west, is through to deconstruct such constructs. Through that gesture, it is shown how the western grand narratives did not forward natural descriptions and ontological descriptions of other races and cultures but, rather, were highly motivated by an imperial zeal.

Armah took an essentialist stance towards this issue when Solo, Armah's, alter ego, came to the conclusion that the only solution for this conflict is the separation of races. Aidoo, more or less, experiments with identity while allowing enough room for a third space of enunciation. We also discussed the issue of gender in postcolonial Africa. The African woman is doubly marginalized; first as a colonized subject and as a gendered subject. Western colonialism, through reading both works, did disrupt the sociological structure of African societies. Patriarchy, for instance, seems to be a western import that affected the status of the African woman, in our case the Akan society, Armah's and Aidoo's background. The matrilineal social structure of some African ethnic groups was disrupted by western patriarchy. The case of the Muslim Arab woman is also treated. We have shown how French colonialism did view the peculiarity of the Algerian woman's conditions as one aspect of backwardness in regard to the French ways. It is, however, used as a pretext to colonize Algeria. Most drastically, the African woman was deprived from the fruits of post-independence. It is shown how postcolonial African ruling class did inherent such anomalies that did not fit into the social organization of the African society.

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The invisibility of the African woman is one major reason for the impossibility to (re)construct a healthy and genuine African identity since she is part and parcel of society.

Since the differences inherent in the western discourse were shown to be Eurocentric constructs, we are left, through both journeys, to question the objectivity and truthfulness of history and history writing. History is shown to be so biased and Eurocentrically devised. The history of any society is so crucial to the self-image of that society. The version we have about the history of the world is monitored through a Hegelian interpretation. History for Hegel is the mark of any civilization. Qualifying Africa and Africans as ahistorical, while ascribing that feature solely to the west, Africa is to be seen as a *Tabula Rasa* that needed western civilizational inscriptions. Due to the nature of the journey, which is from Africa to the West, we are led to revisit some historical stations in the western history through postcolonial lenses. Far from being bright and angelic, a dark and buried version of western history is revealed through the African protagonists. The inhumanity and criminality of the American history, for instance, is brought forth, rejecting the mythic and benevolent version propagated by the west. The racist history of Munich, too, is unveiled by Sissie in OSK. While Marija the German is glorifying Munich as a cradle of civilization, both Sissie and the narrator, however, do unmask the racist impulses of that geography as a historical mark.

As our research treats the issue of identity both thematically and formally, the question of language and genre comes to a forceful play. Both authors seem to accept using the ex-colonizer's language, in our case English. The African writer has, therefore, to be through another challenge. If the African writer is to provide a sort of remedy to the fissured self-hood of Africa, how he can do so while writing in the very language that kept enslaving him with false images and stereotypes. Unlike some nativist writers and thinkers, such as Ngugi, for instance, both authors seem to use English as a medium of representation. Their use of it is a pragmatic one. According to Bhabha such writers are mimetic writers whose use of English does not parrot the language of western representational discourse; it is rather a 'New English' or an Africanized English. The issue of using English, moreover, stems from the unavailability of a shared African lingua franca.

Another challenge facing the African writer is the issue of genre. The western novel, did coincide with the western imperial ventures. Far from being produced as an art

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for art's sake, Said's, seminal work in postcolonialty, Orientalism provided a theoretical framework or re-reading western works. The novel, for instance, is shown to be a bourgeois genre. The African writer's mission and art, therefore, are to be questioned. While dealing with genre we saw how Aidoo, for instance, did express her identity through a pastiche-like style. The incorporation of African orality into the western conventional way of writing does produce a hybrid text that would inform the hybrid postcolonial self-hood.

Both works can be read as counter narratives to the western imperial discourse. One is left to question the nature of such narratives. If western travel writings are rife with racist formula that positioned the world into two diametrically opposed polarities, are the opposite African travel writings not duplicating in a reactionary way a racist worldview? If the west did create Eurocentric formulations about the world, in Saidian way discourses such as Orientalism and, by extension, Africanism, are the African writers not constructing a one-sided discourse that of Occidentalism? If the African writer is aspiring to construct a healthy African identity, will it be sound enough for him to do so while falling in the same trap that of one-sided particularism. As we categorized both works as a diagnostic phase within both authors body of literary and critical productions, how do they, then, envision in their thread of projects the strategies with which proposed solutions would be introduced?

Since the question of identity is so multi-faceted, and that Africa is not a simple homogenous collectivity, we ought to be consciously alarmed by the complexities and differences among African societies. Aspiring to have a comprehensive view of the multidimensional identity issue in Africa, we would better examine other authors' suggestions, authors from different parts of Africa other than Ghana. Knowing that we are living in a globalized world, we ought to position this kind of literature within a globalized frame of work.

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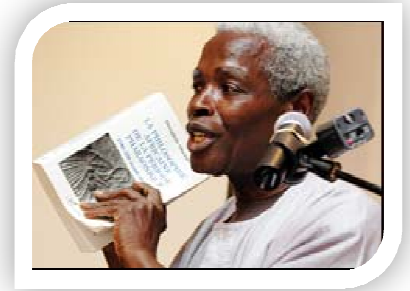


# **Appendices**

## Appendix N ° 1

### Aye Kwei Armah's Biography :

Armah was born in Takoradi, Ghana, in 1939. After attending the Achimota School in Ghana, he went to the United States of America being enrolled in Groton School in Massachusetts for “a preparatory program”. Between 1959 and 1963 he wrote many essays on his mother country and on the international relations that were to be published in his university's magazine, The Grotonian. In the Fall of 1960, he enrolled at Harvard University to major in literature. However, the crisis that occurred in the Congo which included the assassination of the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, led Armah to be utterly immersed spiritually and physically into the ‘trouble with Africa’. He felt so uneasy about the paradoxical situation he was in; that of his privileged position enjoying the glamour of the New World, while leaving his continent stuck in backwardness and inferiority. He felt that his Western education did not provide him real answers to the social, economic and philosophical issues of colonialism and anti-colonial fight. He, therefore, switched to interdisciplinary program. Still unsatisfied with his education and his situation in general, Armah discontinued his education in 1963 in an attempt to take part in anti-colonial Southern African movements.



His next destination was Algeria, which transformed, after its independence from France in 1962, into a mecca for other revolutionaries across the globe. There, he worked as a translator for the magazine Révolution Africaine. Unfortunately, this endeavor was unsuccessful. He had to be admitted to the hospital back to the States after his health had been deteriorated. After that, Armah returned to Ghana in mid-1964. He fluctuated between different jobs he held; as an English teacher at Nervongo School, and a script writer for Ghana Television. His artistic production seemingly did not satisfy the inclinations of media market, so that he resigned. He travelled to France seeking a way out to his financial problems. He worked as an editor for Jeune Afrique (1967-1968).

His experience with anti-colonial movements and his frustration with the newly independent African nation/states would lead him to believe that the “way to a really

creative existence was closed” to him. His frustrations with his jobs coupled with his dilemma about his role in society were personally compromised to finally be a writer. His choice of being a writer, was “not indeed as the most creative option, but as the least parasitic option” available to him” (One Writer’s Education 1753). Preparing for this endeavor, Armah finished his Bachelor of Arts degree at Harvard University, later a Master of Fine Arts degree at Columbia University, and an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts. Intending to ground his experience, contextually, and to be allowed to be amidst the African setting, Armah decided to make a tour across Africa. He went to Tanzania where he learned Swahili and taught African Literature and Creative Writing at the College of National Education at Changombe. He travelled then to the National University of Lesotho in 1976. After three years, he was assigned for a, Assistant Professorship at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His final stay, since 1982, was in Senegal where he is living currently.

Armah started his career as an essayist. He published “La Mort Passe Sous les Blancs” in L’Afrique Littéraire et Artistique. Other essays included, for instance, “African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?”, “Letter From Ghana”...etc. he has since, too, produced numerous articles, short stories, poems and six novels to date. Many critics have ascribed to Armah pessimistic attributes and that he is his novels would constitute a cycle of doom. It seems, as though, that few scholars, like Robert Fraser and Ode Ogede, would examine the project thread of Armah’s literary production. They acknowledged that even if the first novels The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born (1968), Fragments (1969), and Why Are We So Blest? (1972) do provide an apocalyptic gloomy vision about Africa, they , nevertheless, foreground the basis from which Armah launches his project where a line of purpose is articulated in his later novels Two Thousand Seasons (1973), the Healers (1979), and Osiris Rising (1995).

## Appendix N ° 2

### Ama Ata Aidoo's Biography:

Born in the central region of Ghana, or what was named the gold coast on 23 March, 1940, Ama Ata grew up in an Akan matrilineal society. She was reared in a complex cultural environment wherein indigenous traditions mixed with western cultural practices imposed by the colonizer. Her family encouraged her, especially her mother who was understanding of the writing and her art. Looking back to her parents and her grandfather who was jailed, tortured, and killed by the British, Ama Ata Aidoo sees herself as 'coming from a long line of fighters' (James 13). Aidoo followed her secondary education at Wesley Girls' High school; she afterward studied in the University of Ghana (Legon) from where she graduated with a BA in 1964. The same year, Aidoo completed her first play; The Dilemma of the Ghost. This latter was performed by the students' theatre of Legon. This play marked the beginning of a flourishing literary career.



Aidoo has travelled a lot and worked as teacher and lecturer in numerous universities in Ghana, west and central Africa, and the USA. Aidoo also had the position of Minister of Education under the government of Jerry Rawlings. She resigned after a year in office. She explains that she sought this position because she was aware of the paramount importance of education at the national level. Therefore, she occupied the position of a member of government to have direct access to power and political influence to mark a sound change. Her major work includes the play cited above, another play entitled Anowa (1970), a collection of short stories No Sweetness Here (1970) her two novels entitled Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black squint (1977) and Changes: a Love Story (1991) which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best book. A volume of poetry entitled Someone Talking to Sometime (1985). Aidoo's works are concerned with issues such as colonialism, neo colonialism, and the material and psychological imprint these historical mishaps have left on societies and individuals.

## Appendix N ° 3

### A Summary of Why Are We So Blest?

Armah's WRWSB? turns around the life of its protagonist and narrator Solo Nkonan. Solo is an African young man who travels to Portugal to further his education. While there, he developed a sexual and love relation with a Portuguese girl, Sylvia. This relation did not last after Solo's rejected marriage proposal to Sylvia. After such a shock, he decided to go to the fictional country of Afrasia (very likely to refer to Algeria) intending to take part with anti-colonial movements. He, however, regresses to a mere routine life with a great deception. This mode of life was disrupted by the appearance of Modin Dofu and Aimeé Reitsch whose aim was to join the People's Union of Congheria (UPC), an anti-colonial organization whose primary goal was to overthrow the Portuguese colonial regime over the fictional country of Congheria. Modin is a young African man who goes to the U.S. being granted a scholarship in Sociology. He, while there, developed a sexual relation with Aimeé, an American white girl. After what he had been through, Modin decided to discontinue his western education and voyaged with Aimeé to Afrasia to join the anti-colonial organization, (UPC).

Solo examined the couple's journey observing how they were stagnated by bureaucratic treatments of the anti-colonial movement. He was unable to unveil to Modin the contradictions within the bureau's ideological purposes and the material manifestation it displays. Amidst their venture, Modin and Aimeé were obliged to stay in Solo's place for the couple ran out of financial resources. After being sure that their endeavor to joining the organization was a failure, Aimeé cajoled Modin to go on a trans-Saharan trip whose aftermath was the murder of Modin and her being raped by French soldiers. Solo, after the death of Modin, was entrusted Aimeé's and Modin's autobiographical notes by Aimeé. Modin's death got Solo into gloomy despair.

## **Appendix N ° 4:**

### **A Summary of Our Sister Killjoy**

Our Sister Killjoy was copyrighted in 1966; a fact that establishes Aidoo as the first English language woman novelist in South Africa. The narrative is composed of four sections, each one having a different location. The first section untitled 'Into a bad dream' relates the preparation of Sissie, a young Ghanaian student who has been given a grant to study in Germany. This short first part, which consists of 16 pages, is set in Ghana and then in Germany. 'The Plums' is set in Bavaria, a German river town. This section is devoted to Sissie's discovery of the European sphere. She meets Marija, a lonely Bavarian housewife with whom she will develop an ambiguous relationship. In 'From Our Sister Killjoy', Sissie steps over to London 'her colonial home' (85), where she meets educated Africans, including her beloved, who want to remain a member of the African Diaspora. In this section, Sissie recalls the tale of the imperial occupation of her country. Sissie is struck by the marginalization of the African immigrants. In the last section 'A love letter' Sissie writes a farewell letter to her lover while onboard the plane that is bringing her home. After finishing the letter, Sissie feels much better and realizes that 'she had taken some of the pain away, and she was glad. There was no need to mail it... she was going to let things lie where they had fallen' (133).

Aidoo expresses her main concerns through the troubled consciousness of her protagonist, and through the distance she maintains between the protagonist and the narrative voice. She uses the medium of the journey to express her concerns about political, economic and socio-historical conditions that result from dichotomies of power. Sissie undergoes a physical and psychological journey. She matures while exploring her ontological questionings as an African woman in the 'heart of whiteness'.

## ملخص

عبر الحدود والبحث عن الذات الأفريقية: دراسة ما بعد استعمارية لرواية لماذا نحن جد مباركون؟ للكاتب ( آي كوي آرما ) و اختنا كيلجوي للكاتبة ( أما آتا آيدو )

يتناول هذا العمل موضوع البحث عن الذات الأفريقية في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار في شكل سفر ينقلب معه نص وسياق الخطاب التمثيلي الغربي . تتمثل المدونة المختارة لهذه الدراسة في عمليين أحدهما للكاتب ( آي كوي آرما ) لماذا نحن جد مباركون؟ والثاني اختنا كيلجوي لكاتبته ( أما آتا آيدو ) . يقرأ كلا العمليين من منظور فكر مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار. تنقض الشخصيات الرئيسية للقصة بعبورها (بسررها) للغرب المعتقدات الأوروبية التوجه المركبة من طرف الغرب . تشكك الشخصية الرئيسية الأفريقية في مصداقية المعتقدات الغربية حول التقسيم الطبقي للعالم . فهي بذلك تعيد النظر في الثنائيات التي وضعها الغرب حول تفوق الغرب وتحلف أفريقيا . أحد أشكال هذا النقد هو تشريح لطبيعة النظام التعليمي الذي يتلقاه الأفارقة في الغرب. التعليم الغربي من وجهة نظر آلتوسير هو منظومة موجّهة لتغريب الطبقة المتعلمة من إفريقيا ، مبقيين بذلك وبشكل فظيع على المشروع الامبريالي الغربي في ثوب استعماري جديد . متأرجحة بين أصولية في الفكر وعدمها تعكس اللقاءات التي تجربها الشخصيات الرئيسية تقمّص بعض التصوّرات المركبة والصور المتجزرة في الخطاب التمثيلي الغربي . الاختلافات الموجودة بين الثقافات والأجناس يتم إظهارها على أنها تاريخية وليست بيولوجية في طبيعتها . يعتبر موضوع التفرقة الجنسية ذا أهمية كبيرة إذا ما تعلق الأمر بقضية الهوية الأفريقية. تطلّع إلى إحياء ذات إفريقية سليمة وأصيلة ، لامناص من (إعادة) دمج المرأة في تاريخية التجربة الأفريقية . يعدّ موضوع اللغة واللون الأدبي تحدياً آخر في وجه محاولة الكاتب الأفريقي للتعبير عن اهتماماته. كلا الكاتبين يكتبان باللغة الانجليزية لأسباب ودوافع براغماتية في حين ينظر إليهما ، من وجهة نظر (بهابها) ، على أنهما كاتبان محاكيان . إنّ الشكل الأشبه بالمزيج المعتمد على إدخال الأدب الشفهي الاستعمار في شكل سفر الأفريقي إلى الرواية النموذجية الغربية هو موقف إيديولوجي وجمالي يقوم به الكاتب الأفريقي.