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*Hybridity and the Quest for Cultural Identity in Post Colonial  
Drama*

*Case study: Ama Ata Aidoo's **The Dilemma of a Ghost** (1964)*

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*To my Mother, whose love is the pillar of my success.*

*Thank you*

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## Abstract

The present dissertation revolves around the issue of hybridity and the quest for cultural identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964). This work explores how the stage is used as a theatrical technique to deliver a message which raises post colonial issues in African societies. Moreover, we focus on the quest for cultural identity. To support our research, we rely on Stuart Hall's approach to Cultural identity and Diaspora as depicted in his book *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990); likewise we rely on Homi Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space as portrayed in his Book *The Location of Culture* (1994). Thus, our research has shown that the play covers different forms of cultural identity; likewise, we have noticed the rise of hybridity and third space in cultural identities in the post-independent era.

## I. General Introduction

The purpose of this piece of research is to study the issues of hybridity and the quest for cultural identity in post-independence African society, mainly the Ghanaian society through Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964). Our focus is on the representation of hybridity in the Ghanaian theatre, as well as the quest for cultural identity as an image that characterises the post-independence period in Africa.

The term 'Post-colonial' is attributed to the period after colonialism as the prefix '*Post*' indicates<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, this term was restricted to the period that marks the liberation of the colonized countries and the end of imperialist rule. Further, Bill Ashcroft, in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), says: "*We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.*"<sup>2</sup> That is, the 'post-colonial' covers the continuous effects of colonialism on the former colonized cultures. According to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, in their *Post-Colonial Drama, Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), post colonialism is an intellectual direction to examine the effects of colonization and the imperialistic authority in the post-colonial era.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Post colonial literary outputs are engaged as cultural expressions to dismantle the restrictions of colonialism in post-independent era.

Post colonialism is not only interested in history, literature and politics, but also in cultural identities. Colonialist powers destroyed the traditions and customs which form the identity of indigenous people. Furthermore, they continuously spread their cultural aspects, education as well as lifestyle. In this respect, Frantz Fanon says:

Colonization is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, this distortion leads to cultural clash when these countries face the challenge to build and re-build a new cultural identity and self-confidence.

Indeed, in order to define what cultural identity is, we need to define each term alone. Saeeda Shah defines 'Culture' as the "*shared features which encapsulate people together in a community.*"<sup>5</sup>, that is, culture constitutes all the elements that reunite people to create a community. Different groups of people may belong to different cultures. On the other hand, Identity is defined as any character or difference that marks off any individual or thing from the rest of the same kind and makes it recognizable. In this respect Weinreich argues: "*Identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal*".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we can identify 'Cultural Identity' as the feeling of belonging, as individual, to any social group that has its own culture including ethnicity, religion, customs, folklore and every material that designates one's cultural belonging. Yet, many studies define 'Cultural Identity' as something historical which is subject to many changes, evolution and transformation.<sup>7</sup>

Arts, such as music, oral literature and theatre, are cultural manifestations that were and are still considered as the most influencing tools to express one's belonging. Therefore, in former colonized countries, post-colonial prose, poetry, cinema and theatre are seen as forms of cultural expressions against the colonial practices and distortion of cultural identities.<sup>8</sup> Yet, as a performed as well as a written art, Theatre is regarded as a powerful tool for criticizing situations and influencing attitudes likewise, affecting every individual in the society as intellectual or illiterate, in this respect, Henrik Sjogren argues:

Drama is the most direct of all artistic forms. It confronts living beings with other living beings and in this immediate correspondence between its practitioners and its recipients lies the theatre's superiority over all art form.<sup>9</sup>

Our discussion studies an African Drama that covers the transitional period of a former colonized country, which is marked by cultural clash and the quest for the lost identity. Therefore, among many intellectuals who have covered and are still covering the traumatic situation of post independent era, Ama Ata Aidoo, from Ghana, is one of those who tried to exhibit this shattering through her literary production. However, our focus is on her first produced play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964).

### **Review of the Literature**

The work of Ama Ata Aidoo, mainly her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, has been subject to criticism from various perspectives. Eliane Utudjane Saint-André, in *Le théâtre anglophone du Nigeria, du Ghana et de la Sierra Leone* (2007), which is more than a biographical piece of criticism, says about Aidoo:

Auditrice attentive des contes et des chansons que lui transmet sa mère et curieuse des formes de théâtre populaire ghanéen sur lesquelles elle enquêta au début de sa carrière, en même temps que femme de son époque, Ama Ata a voulu contribuer par ses pièces fortement expérimentales, à la création d'un théâtre à la fois moderne et ghanéen.<sup>10</sup>

This testimonial says that Ama Ata Aidoo's drama is characterised by diversity as being influenced by the transmitted African oral literature and the Ghanaian popular theatre as well as being interested in the modern issues that characterize the new forms of theatre, which allows her to create a traditional and modern theatre in the same time.

Other studies showed interest in the traditional aspects presented by Aidoo in her plays *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*, such as the importance of marriage and procreation in the traditional society. In their study on Ama Ata Aidoo, Gbolo Sanko, Felicia Annin and Cecilia Addei, in their article *Ama Ata Aidoo and the Akan Culture* (2013), argue that “One

of the aspects discussed in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa* is the importance of children in traditional Akan marriage."<sup>11</sup>

Some critics put emphasis on the traditional life discussed in the play, others went to analyse speech and language in Aidoo's play. Dapo Adelugba, in his *Language and Drama*, says: "Speech in Aidoo's play is an index of social class, age and background."<sup>12</sup> Adelugba focuses on how Aidoo uses different levels of language to reflect and identify the difference and the gap between her characters.

On the other hand, some critics argue that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) highlights the plight of women in the African society. In this respect, Ciarinji Chesaina, in her PhD Thesis, says that "The major critical views expressed in Aidoo's play indicate this playwright's sensitivity to the plight of women in the traditional context."<sup>13</sup>

Coming back to Utudjan Saint-André, in her Study *Le théâtre anglophone du Nigeria, du Ghana et de la Sierra Leone* (2007), she focuses on how Aidoo provides us with the variety of issues and conflicts that characterized the post-independence era. She states:

*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, première pièce d'Ama Ata Aidoo[. . .] illustre le conflit des générations, des races et des sexes qui divisa les Ghanéens dans la décennie qui suivit l'indépendance.  
14

That is, the author classifies speaks about the conflicts between races, generations and even sexes; likewise she argues that these conflicts are the main reasons of the division of the Ghanaian society

Despite the different perspectives from which Ama Ata Aidoo's work has been approached, and despite the variety of criticism her play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, has stimulated; we can notice that the majority of critics went to analyse the status of women in traditional Africa and generally the traditional thinking and lifestyle that Aidoo illustrates in

her play, but no study interested and focused on the quest for cultural identity or the hybridity of cultural identities in the era that followed independence. Moreover, one cannot deny that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* depicts the traditional aspects of the Ghanaian society; likewise, it raises the quest for identity and the rise of hybridity in cultural identities.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From our review of some of the literature written on Aidoo's work, we notice that most of these studies give us glimpses on the quest for identity without really exploring it. As far as we know, no previous study has ventured to study Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) from the perspective of the struggle of the characters to find a common cultural identity. We suppose that the playwright has shaped her play to fit both traditional and modern theatre. In fact, her choice of characters who are coming from different cultures and backgrounds, and the various employment of language indicate the consequences of African Diaspora and the Hybridity of Cultural Identities in Post-Colonial African Societies. Indeed, her strategic use of dramatic devices that varies between traditional aspects of African oral literature and the modern dramatic devices, reveals Aidoo's interests on both traditional and modern African theatre. We also suppose that Aidoo's cultural background testifies to this struggle between the traditional and modern identities.

To achieve our purpose, we will rely on Stuart Hall's **Cultural Identity and Diaspora** approach in which he defines and explains the process 'Cultural Identity'. Likewise, we find it of great advantage to resort to Homi K. Bhabha's approach of **Hybridity, Mimicry** and **Third Space** in which he elucidates the main reasons that lead to the clash of cultures and the changing process of identity.

The study is divided into four sections. The Method and Materials is the first section, through which we will try to introduce Hall's study on Identity and Diaspora and Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space. Likewise, we will try to refer to the historical background and the main events that characterize the era in which the play was written. Actually the events of the play and the characters reflect the atmosphere of the Ghanaian society in the post-independence decade. Further, we will introduce the biographical background of the playwright Ama Ata Aidoo, and the summary of her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964).

The Results' section will show our findings, which will be discussed in the Discussion' section. The latter is divided into three chapters. The first one will uncover and discuss the dramatic structure and theatrical techniques used by the playwright to deal with issues. The focus will be on the variety in Aidoo's theatre and the hybridity in postcolonial drama and literature. Then, the second chapter will analyse the extent to which the concepts of Diaspora, Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space are shown in the play through themes and characterization. The focus will be on how the themes discussed represent an image of the society while each character reflects another paradigm of identity and cultural background. In the third chapter we will explore and analyse language, not only as a means of communication, but also as an image of the actual atmosphere of the society which struggles between traditions versus modernity and education versus illiteracy. Finally, the Conclusion section will summarize the main issues tackled in our study.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London, Routledge, 2002), 1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>3</sup> Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London, Routledge, 1996), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth: On National Culture* (New York, Grove Press, 1963)? 210.

<sup>5</sup> Saeeda Shah, "The Research/Interviewer in Intercultural Context: A Social Intruder," British Educational Research Journal 30, no. 4 (2004): 550.

<sup>6</sup> Weinreich Peter, "The Operationalisation of Identity Theory in Racial and Ethnic Relations," in *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, ed. John Rex and David Mason (Cambridge University Press: Online Version, 2011), accessed February 10, 2015

<sup>7</sup> Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 223.

<sup>8</sup> Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama*, 2

<sup>9</sup> Henrik Sjogren, *Stage and Society in Sweden*, (Uddevalla, The Swedish Institute, 1979), accessed January 15, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Eliane Utudjan Saint-André, *Le Théâtre Anglophone du Nigeria, du Ghana et de la Sierra Leone: Evolution des Formes et des Origines à la Fin du XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Karthala, 2007), 330.

<sup>11</sup> Gbolo Sanko et al. "Ama Ata Aidoo and the Akan Culture," International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research 2 no .9 (2013)

<sup>12</sup> Dapo Adelugba, "Language and Drama: Ama Ata Aidoo" African Literature Today, ed. Edward D. Jones (Heinemann, 1976),

<sup>13</sup> Chesaina Ciarunji, "Women in African Drama: Presentation and Role" (PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 1987), 249.

<sup>14</sup> Utudjan Saint-André, "Le Theatre Anglophone," 331.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1- Methods

#### a- Stuart Hall: On *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*

In order to deal with the issue of the quest for cultural identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), we shall explain the term 'Cultural Identity' in post-colonial societies as discussed by Stuart Hall in his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (1990).

To begin with, Stuart McPhail Hall (1932- 2014), is a Jamaican cultural theorist and sociologist. He lived most of his life in the United Kingdom, where he studied and worked. He is best known for his studies on Cultural Identities. In his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Hall uses the Caribbean identities in order to define and explain the term 'Cultural Identity' and its impact and importance in the Caribbean or the Black Identity. He argues that there can be two positions in defining cultural identity<sup>1</sup>. In the first one, he defines this concept as:

A one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial, or artificially imposed selves which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.<sup>2</sup>

That is, cultural identity is the common cultural manifestationns and the shared history that reunites a group of people to form a community. He adds: "*This oneness, underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence of 'Caribbeanness', of black experience.*"<sup>3</sup> Hall acknowledges that cultural identity is the 'Oneness' or something that unifies not only the Caribbean, but every group of people, and that this cultural identity is more important and true. Yet, Hall did not neglect the fictive nature of these identities as he says: "*We should not, for a moment, underestimate or neglect the importance of the act of imaginative rediscovery which this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails.*"<sup>4</sup>

Hall, then, goes further in identifying this concept. In the second position, he says that this identity is not something fixed; in fact he questions “*what people really are and what they have become with the intervention of history.*”<sup>5</sup> He adds:

We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about 'one experience, one identity,' without acknowledging its other side - the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean uniqueness.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, he suggests that we should think of identity as a discontinuous point of identification, or a ‘production’ in process which is never complete, but always in a crucial transformation and subject of the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.<sup>7</sup> Actually, from this second definition we can understand the traumatic effects of the colonial powers and how black people and black experiences were subjected in the dominant regimes.<sup>8</sup>

After his definition concerning ‘Cultural Identity’, Stuart Hall went to explain and retrace the beginning of ‘Diaspora’. He says:

America, *Terra Incognita*, is therefore itself the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference, what makes Afro-Caribbean people already people of a diaspora [. . .] The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.<sup>9</sup>

That is, Hall retraces the beginning of Diaspora to the ‘*Présence Américaine*’, and then he elucidates that ‘Diaspora Identities’ are produced and still in a crucial reproduction by a dynamic process of transformation.

## **b- Homi K. Bhabha: On Mimicry / Hybridity and Third Space**

Homi K. Bhabha is an Indian theorist and one of the famous figures in post-colonial studies. Actually, he is a Professor of English and American Literature and Language and the director of the Humanities Centre at Harvard University. Through his career, Bhabha coined new terms in the field of literary and cultural theory such as ‘Ambivalence’, ‘Mimicry’ and ‘Hybridity’. Yet, we will discuss only the concepts that are relevant to our research.

### **Mimicry**

Mimicry, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, is “*The art of mimicking somebody or something.*”<sup>10</sup> Thus, to mimic is to copy or imitate somebody’s gesture, voice or style. Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of Mimicry is a sign of double articulation and a complex strategy of reform [...] <sup>11</sup> He defines it in terms of ambivalence as ‘Similarity’ and ‘Difference’. Similarity defines the colonized subjects to be like masters, whereas Difference is “*almost the same, but not quite*”<sup>12</sup>, which means that this discourse is ambivalent<sup>13</sup> and contradictory.

However, by referring to India, Bhabha relies on Thomas Macaulay’s statement, in which he says: “*A class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect*”<sup>14</sup>. That is, mimicry is a resemblance or the imitation in lifestyle and education, they are genetically Indians, but they do not act, live and even speak like Indians, they rather imitate their English masters. Therefore, in Bhabha’s terms, mimicry is the colonial strategy to create peoples to be “*Anglicized is emphatically not to be English*”<sup>5</sup>, or make people as English, but not English (almost the same but not quite). In the end, Bhabha asserts:

[. . .] Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'<sup>16</sup>.

that is, the discourse of mimicry is menacing to identities because it ignores the originality of identities and their roots.

### **Hybridity**

'Hybridity' from the word 'hybrid', from Latin 'Hybrida' a variant of 'Ibrida' means mixture.<sup>17</sup> It is first used in Biology to refer to the combination of two genetic streams to get a new one<sup>18</sup>. Yet, from the nineteenth century onwards, the term 'Hybridity' was employed in racial theory and linguistics. The latter was developed by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin who used Polyphony<sup>19</sup>, as an element of Hybridity which is applied to hybrid discourses presented in folklore and anthropology to "*suggest the disruptive and the transfiguring power of multi-vocal language situations, and by extension, for multi-vocal narratives*"<sup>20</sup>. Yet, what interests us is the emergence of this concept in post colonial studies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Diaspora. Professor Paul Gilroy examines the flows of cultures and ideas that appear in Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean resulting from the slave trade<sup>21</sup>. However, this term has been widely associated with the theorist Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994). For Bhabha, Hybridity explores the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, in which he argues that it is the paradigm of the influence of the Western or the colonial ideology and culture on the subaltern subjects<sup>22</sup>. That is, hybridity is the new cultural form that forms from cultural exchange or mixture. For him, hybridity opens up a space of negotiation between cultures<sup>23</sup>. However, Bhabha warns that "*Hybridity is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures [. . .]*"<sup>24</sup>, because it may create conflicts between them and eliminate the basis of the mother culture. He further suggests that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in

what he calls 'Third Space' which is a space, where cultural statements are set in a state of negotiation and transition between the culture of the colonized and that of the colonizer.<sup>25</sup> He adds:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory [. . .] may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of cultures hybridity.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, according to Bhabha, the recognition of this ambivalence helps to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity, in which lies the importance of Hybridity

## **2- Materials**

### **a) Historical Background of Ghana**

At long last the battle has ended. And thus Ghana, your beloved country is free forever [. . .] We must realize that from now on we are no more a colonial but a free and independent people.<sup>27</sup>

The Golden Coast got independence as one of the first sub-Saharan countries. This event marked a transitional period in the history of the country, which emerged from colonial to post-colonial era. This period has known the end of the old order of colonization, but the new order of independence was not yet established, which put the country under uncertainty.

Nkrumah, who emerged as the national leader of the liberation movement, sought to develop the country under the name of Ghana, referring to one of the great empires in West Africa. He gave great importance to the political and economic organizations and looked up to increase stability and prosperity in the country through farming, cooperatives and other organizations. Due to the dissatisfaction of citizens, the country adopted a new constitution from July 1, 1960 when Ghana changed from a Parliamentary system with a Prime Minister to a

Republican state ruled by a president.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the political evolution continued until 1964, when a Constitutional referendum changed the country into a one-party state.

Two years later, Nkrumah's regime was overthrown by the Ghanaian Army and then the future was uncertain. In fact, Nkrumah's rule was characterised by oppression, corruption and brutal dictatorial practices which marked the beginning of economic decline. In this point, Neil Lazarus argues:

Independence seems to have brought neither peace nor prosperity to Africa. Instead, it has paradoxically borne witness to stagnation, elitism, and class domination, and to intensifying structural dependence – economic, political, cultural and ideological - of Africa upon the imperial Western powers.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, independence failed to bring up a new beginning, it rather marked disillusionment and people became aware that nothing had changed, yet the power just transferred from the former colonization to a new ruling class that emerged after independence. This process was described by Fanon as:

The national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement [. . .] its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists prosaically of being the transmission line between the nation and capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism.<sup>30</sup>

Like all the African countries that got independence, the disillusionment of this decade reached the social life in Ghana. The war, that instead of separating the society, reunited different parts and ethnic groups in the Ghanaian society. Whereas, the independence that is supposed to reunite people, created a great tension in the society. Like the political disturbance, the social life in Ghana was marked by the rise of new conflicts between different ethnic, religious and social classes. During the rule of Nkrumah, the companies were owned by the state, thus, these companies provide people only with their basic needs. Due to the lack of management and the corrupted government, these state-owned companies failed to

achieve their objectives. Therefore, Nkrumah relied on the trade of cocoa to bail out the public companies<sup>31</sup>. As a result, he reduced the price of farmers, while they expected an increase. Consequently, the economic decline led to a social tension and protests of farmers and workers in the country.

Like every section in the country, the educational one has known many lacks and disturbance. After independence, Nkrumah established a free primary education and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. But Ghana has noticed lack of trained teachers and quality of the curriculum.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, by the fall of Nkrumah, the educational infrastructure noticed its failure and decline.

All these facts that marked post-independence era led the population to travel abroad, to choose other destinations, to look for new sources of money, education and a better future. However, diasporas took another dimension in the life of the Ghanaian, and generally all the African immigrants. In fact, this contributed to the creation of new subjects abroad and new cultural conflicts in their homelands. Therefore, this disillusionment, Diasporas and other cultural conflicts were echoed in the writings of many African intellectuals such as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo and many others.

#### **b) Biographical Background of Ama Ata Aidoo**

Born to a wealthy and royal family, Christina Ama Ata Aidoo (1940) is a Ghanaian author, poet, playwright and academic. She had the opportunity to study when her father opened the first school in their village. Later on, she enrolled the University of Ghana where she received her Bachelor of Arts in English. During this period, Aidoo involved in the Ghana Drama Studio and participated in writers' workshops and, in 1965, she published her first major dramatic work *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. Aidoo worked as a lecturer in many

universities in Africa, the USA and England. As well as being a playwright, novelist and academic, Aidoo was appointed Minister of Education in 1992, but by the following year, she abandoned the country as self-imposed exile in Zimbabwe.

Aidoo is considered as the first published African woman dramatist and the most successful playwright in Africa after the 1960's. Her intellectual combat mostly deals with the traumatic situation of her society, the political issues and the disillusionment of post-independent era. Likewise, her voice reached gender issues, in which she discussed the role of women and their plight in the African conservative society by presenting strong female characters in most of her works. Throughout her career, Aidoo won different prizes including the Commonwealth Writers Prize for best African novel *Changes: a Love Story* in 1992 and The Nelson Mandela Prize for her collection of poems *Someone Talking to Sometime* in 1987.

Though the diversity in Ama Ata Aidoo's works, her drama focuses on the African traditional ways and forms and their importance for the construction of social criticism, in this point, she once argued:

In order for African drama to be valid, it has to derive lots of its impetus, its strength, from traditions of African dramatic forms; however one conceives these forms, because they exist. What we must do is to find out what they are, and how we can use them.<sup>33</sup>

### c) Synopsis of the play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

*The Dilemma of a Ghost* is a drama written by the Ghanaian playwright Ama Ata Aidoo. It was first performed by the Student's Theatre, on 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 1964, at the Open Air-Theatre, Commonwealth Hall, University of Ghana, Legon.<sup>34</sup>

*The Dilemma of a Ghost* is a five act play that sets the tone in the house of the Odumna clan, in a Ghanaian village; it centres on the life of a young Ghanaian graduate, Ato Yawson, who, after studying in the USA, came back to Ghana with an Afro-American wife, Eulalie. The play begins with a short prelude, in which the couple is optimistic and planning to live a happy life with love and understanding. Further, the first act opens up with Esi Kom, Ato's mother, who is preparing marriage for her coming son. But she is surprised by knowing that her son is already married, to an Afro-American wife.

Over a year, the family cannot accept Eulalie and consider her as an alien. In fact, Eulalie, too, cannot accustom herself to the African tradition and lifestyle. From the beginning, the family is expecting procreation from the couple, while they are not eager to bear children. On the other hand, Eulalie is living an American lifestyle in an African village, with an African family, which leads to the rise of tension between her and her family in law. Thus Ato's life faces a dilemma between his life as an African and his obedience to his family and his love and promises for his 'sweetest and loveliest thing in Africa and America rolled together'<sup>35</sup>

The tension and the misunderstanding, finally, start to fade away by the last events of the play. Esi Kom tries to understand the reasons behind Eulalie's decisions and lifestyle and tries to help her. Thus the play ends with glimpses of optimism, when Esi Kom decides to support Eulalie and help her to overcome her struggle.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 223.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 223
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 223
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 223
- <sup>5</sup> Hall, 'Cultural Identity', 224
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 225
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 225
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 225
- <sup>9</sup> Hall, 'Cultural Identity', 237
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com> accessed February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- <sup>11</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture: Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (London, Routledge, 2000), 86.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 86
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., 86
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 87
- <sup>15</sup> Bhabha, 'The Location', 87
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 90
- <sup>17</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com> accessed February 20, 2015.
- <sup>18</sup> Brian Stross, "The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 112, No. 445 (1999)
- <sup>19</sup> Beborah Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong, "Theorizing the Hybrid", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 112, N<sup>o</sup>. 445 (1999) url [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) accessed February 20, 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London, Routledge: 1998), 118
- <sup>21</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

- <sup>22</sup> Ashcroft et al. “*Key Concepts*”, 118
- <sup>23</sup> Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: Culture’s In-Between* (London, Sage Publications, 1996),
- <sup>24</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, 113
- <sup>25</sup> Ashcroft et al. “*Key Concepts*”, 118
- <sup>26</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, 38
- <sup>27</sup> Kwame Nkrumah Independence Speech, March 6, 1957, Accra, Ghana,. url: <https://panafricanquotes.wordpress.com/speeches> accessed March 13, 2015
- <sup>28</sup> Paluela Adewale, Ghana: 50 years After Independence url: <http://www.socialistworld.net> , accessed, February 10, 2015.
- <sup>29</sup> Neil Lazarus, Qtd in Megan Behrent, *Postimperial and postcolonial Literature in English* (Brown University, 1997) accessed February 15, 2015.
- <sup>30</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth: The Pitfalls of National Consciousness*, Translated by Constance Farrington (New York, Grove Press, 1963), 152.
- <sup>31</sup> Peluola Adewale, *Ghana*, <http://www.socialistworld.net> , accessed February 10, 2015
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, Interviewed by Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking* (London, Heinmann, 1972) accessed January 20, 2015
- <sup>34</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*, (London, Longman African Writers, 1995), 3
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 10

### **III. Results and Discussion**

#### **Results**

In this part of our dissertation, we will show our findings after our investigation of the issue of hybridity and the quest for cultural identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964). We have relied on Stuart Hall's study on cultural identity and diaspora; likewise we have borrowed the concepts of hybridity, mimicry and third space, discussed in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994).

In the first chapter, we have studied and analysed the structure of the play that is characterised by the use of traditional theatrical and literary devices such as The Prelude and the Prologue, as well as the use of modern techniques that appears in the realistic theatre and the use of Interior Monologue as a way to explore the inner side of the characters. Thus, we deduce that Ama Ata Aidoo, as a Ghanaian and African playwright, oscillates between both traditional African narrative techniques and modern dramatic devices. Therefore, she creates an experimental theatre that is, in the same time, traditional and modern.

In the second chapter, and after a thematic concern and characters' analysis, we have realized that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* covers different forms of cultural identity. That is, the themes cover the traditional social life and practices in the Ghanaian society such as 'Marriage' and 'Procreation' as seen by both the traditional community and the western society, and how it represents the difference between the African societies and the West. Likewise, this play focuses on the theme of modern education and lifestyle. Further, through the study of characterization, we have noticed that each character, in the play, reflects a certain identity. From one side, the Odumna clan represents the old and traditional thinking and lifestyle. It appears in some practices such as the concoction, the traditional marriage and the importance of childbearing. On the other Eulalie and her husband, Ato, represent the new and modern thinking and culture that is remarkable through language and the way of life.

However, we have noticed that, unlike Eulalie, Ato, from time to time, displays a hybrid identity; that is; he does not adopt a western identity likewise he could not maintain his African heritage. Moreover, this hybridity leads him to struggle between his belonging as an African and his western education and lifestyle. Therefore, Ato fails to act as a bridge between cultures; likewise, he failed to avoid the clash between his family who represents African traditions and his wife who is the image of modern culture.

Esi kom, the mother of Ato, is another character in the play who reflects the traditional African customs. Yet, Esi kom who refuses Eulalie as a daughter-in-law, in the end, she accepts her and tries to tolerate her way of living. Therefore, from here we have come to a first conclusion, that Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) discusses hybridity the quest for identity.

In the Third chapter of our discussion, we have tried to explore language in the play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. We have found out that Aidoo's use of language and speech differs from one character to another. She uses the language of the clan and proverbs. We have noticed the use of some Akan words as well and the appropriation of other English words. Moreover, she uses American English, which is spoken by Eulalie, while Ato speaks Standard English. Thus, from our analysis, we can say that Aidoo uses different levels of language as a strategy in order to refer to the influence of the western education on post-independence generations and the rise of hybridity in cultural identities.

As a result, from our study we deduce that the themes, characterization and language show that cultural identity can appear in different forms which is caused by the diaspora or, as Hall suggests, '*The présence Américaine*', which, according to Bhabha, leads to mimicry and the rise of hybridity in cultural identities.

## Discussion

In this section of our research work we shall discuss the issues of hybridity and the quest for cultural identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. We will investigate both the dramatic structure and thematic concern in Aidoo's play in order to show the extent to which her theatre is a fusion between tradition and modernity.

In the method section, we have defined the term 'Cultural Identity' through Stuart Hall's perspective; likewise, we have used his arguments to explain its changing process. Therefore, in this analysis, we shall highlight the forms and ambivalence of identity after the intervention of different elements such as Diaspora. In the first chapter, we will discuss the structure of the play, the dramatic devices and the diversity of Aidoo's style and theatre. We will focus on both traditional aspects of African oral literature and drama, and the use of modern techniques; and how Aidoo brings balance between these different aspects to fit both traditional and modern audiences. In the second chapter, we intend to examine the themes of 'Marriage and Procreation' in both cultures, and then we will discuss the struggle of the 'Old versus the Modern' and 'Culture In-between' through characterization. Moreover, in the third chapter, we will deal with 'language as an image of cultural hybridity'. To support our discussion, we will rely on Homi Bhabha's theory of 'Mimicry' and 'Hybridity' developed in *The Location of Culture* (1994) in order to argue that Aidoo shaped her play to tackle the issue of hybridity the quest for cultural identity.

## Chapter One: The Dramatic Structure: Traditional and Modern theatre

This chapter intends to analyse and discuss the dramatic structure of Ama Ata Aidoo's first play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964). In fact, we intend to highlight some theatrical devices which allow us to discuss the playwright's attitude, style and theatrical diversity.

### a- Traditional African Narrative Techniques: Ghanaian Folklore as an experimental Device

*The Dilemma of a Ghost* is a five act play that opens up with a prelude; three acts, one, two and four, begin with prologue for each one, whereas act three is preceded by an old Ghanaian song, while act five is not concerned by any introduction.

The play opens up with a prelude, a sort of ancient song that Aidoo uses in order to present the situation, characters and the life of the Odumna clan:

I am the Bird of the Wayside the sudden scampering in the undergrowth, or the trunkless head of the shadow in the corner. I am an asthmatic old hag eternally breaking the nuts whose soup, alas, nourished a bundle of whitened bones- or pair of women, your neighbours, chattering their life away. I can furnish you with reasons why this and that and other things happened. But stranger, what would you have me say about the Odumna Clan? [. . .]<sup>1</sup>

The prelude, then, serves as an introduction to the play. But, the fact of using a song, Aidoo alludes to the importance of traditional music and songs in the African communities. Furthermore, for the purpose of the presentation of situations and themes discussed in each act, we notice the use of prologues. In act one; the stage is occupied by two neighbours: "Evening. The two village women are returning from the river with their water pots on their heads."<sup>2</sup>; they are discussing the arrival of Esikom's son from America. Similar to the latter, act two opens with the same women: "A fortnight later. Afternoon. The two village women

*are returning from the woods where they have gathered some faggots.*"<sup>3</sup> Here, they are discussing the issues of childbearing and bareness. While in act four: "... *The two women are on their way from the market where they have bought fish, pig's feet, seasoned beef, etc...*"<sup>4</sup>. The subject here is the unpleasant situation of Esi Kom who cannot pay her debts or ameliorate her life. Then, act three shows "... *Two village children run in,*"<sup>5</sup> and singing an old song of a ghost who does not know whether to go to Elmina or to Cape Coast

One early morning, when the moon was up shining as the sun, I went to Elmina junction and there, I saw a wretched ghost going up and down singing to himself ' Shall I go to Cape Coast or to Elmina, I don't know, I can't tell. I don't know, I can't tell. '<sup>6</sup>

Actually, the dilemma of this ghost constitutes the title of the play. Yet, this song that serves as a prologue refers also to the situation of the protagonist of the play, Ato, who hesitates between his roots and his education. Further, the employment of Cape Coast and Elmina is symbolic as they were the departure points of the Atlantic slave trade. Moreover, the use of the junction is, also, of great interest since it is considered as a luminal place for Afro-American, who experienced slavery.

Thus, we can understand that Aidoo uses some devices which characterize traditional theatre. First, in the use of the songs in the prelude and in the prologue of act three, she marks the importance of the Ghanaian folklore such as music and songs. Moreover, she involves two women in three prologues. As we know, the prelude and the prologue serve as the chorus in ancient Greek tragedies, while they do the function of an introduction in the African oral literature especially with the use of songs, proverbs and mims<sup>7</sup>. Aidoo, sometimes, uses proverbs and allegorical speech, such as the speech of the neighbours: "*Roll your tobacco and stuff your pipe [ . . . ] the roofs leaks more than ever before.*"<sup>8</sup>, in other times she refers to rituals as the concoction:

Therefore, we are asking you to tell us what is wrong with you and your wife so that first we will wash her stomach with this, then pour libation to ask the dead to come and remove the spirit of the evil around you and pray them bring you child.<sup>9</sup>

Or the Sprinkling of the Stools: *“On this day we try to drive away all evil spirits, ill luck and unkind feelings which might have invaded our house during the past year.”*<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, we understand that Aidoo constructs her play in a traditional structure based on the element of the African oral literature to demonstrate the traditional life in her society, she once argued: *“In order for African drama to be valid, it has to derive lots of its impetus, its strength, from tradition African dramatic forms.”*<sup>11</sup>

#### **b- Modern Theatrical Devices: Interior Monologue as a means to reveal the inner side**

Despite the structure of the play, we cannot condemn the play as a pure traditional work. Through the analysis of the characters, we notice that Aidoo uses some modern aspects in her play which appear, on the one hand, in the presentation of Eulalie, she says: Eulalie *“sits on the terrace facing the audience [ . . . ] the voice of her mind comes across the courtyard. Later, her mother’s voice is also heard.”*<sup>12</sup> This presentation means that the playwright is exploring the character’s inner side. She refers to her mind which signifies her psychological state. Thus, we can say that the playwright is exploring the psychological situation of Eulalie through inner voice or interior monologue. The Interior Monologue is a narrative technique that expresses the thoughts and feelings that pass throughout the mind of a character and generally the protagonist<sup>13</sup>. This term was first coined by Edward Dujardin in 1887, but later on it became a characteristic or a device of the modernist literary works. Thus, we can say that

Aidoo's play is constructed upon a modern technique to explore and reveal the hidden side of Eulalie.

On the other hand, Aidoo adopts another modern technique to present her work which is Realism. This technique is a theatrical movement, developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it aims to bring real and vivid performances by creating believable characters, using ordinary setting and speech, and the use of daily life tools and props<sup>14</sup>. *In The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), this method can be seen through stage direction in which Aidoo describes the setting of the play on stage, she says:

The action takes place in the courtyard of the newest wing of the Odumna Clan house. It is enclosed on the right by a wall of the old building and both at the centre and on the left by the walls of the new wing. At the right-hand corner a door links the courtyard with a passage that leads into the much bigger courtyard of the old house. In the middle of the left wall there is a door leading into the new rooms. A terrace runs round the two sides of the new sector. In the foreground is the path which links the roads leading to the river, the farm and the market.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, Aidoo uses different useful tools such as 'stools', 'pots', 'faggots', 'cigarettes'...etc. Moreover, in the stage direction, we can notice the playwright plays with light according to the situation. Lights on the characters who speak, evening and night, light is vanishing: "*It is quite dark now.*"<sup>16</sup>, "... *walks ever slowly into the night.*"<sup>17</sup> In fact, light is also used to separate between acts and situations such as in act three: "*They repeat, but halfway through the lights go out. When the lights come up a few seconds later, the children have vanished.*"<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, realism does not only appear in the stage direction, but even in the ordinary speech of characters, who use vernacular language, as the Ghanaian characters speak, and the use of the American slang, especially in the case of Eulalie who, sometimes abbreviate

sentences saying: “*You canna do nothing about it.*”<sup>19</sup>, or “*That jus whar yar beautiful wife as com teh, soaking on God’s holy day. My lord, whar a morning*”<sup>20</sup>

The adoption of modern techniques and devices to construct the play permits us to say that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is a modern dramatic work and Ama Ata Aidoo is influenced by the Western theatre. Yet, we cannot deny the traditional standing point of this Ghanaian playwright, who explores and reveals the old side of her society. In this concern we can come back to Eliane Utudjane Saint-André, in her *Le theatre anglophone du Nigeria, du Ghana et de la Sierra Leone* (2007), she asserts that Aidoo is:

Curieuse des formes de théâtre populaire ghanéen sur lesquelles elle enquêta au début de sa carrière, en même temps que femme de son époque, Ama Ata a voulu contribuer par ses pièces fortement expérimentales, a la création d’un théâtre a la fois moderne et ghanéen.<sup>21</sup>

That is, Aidoo interests on the traditional Ghanaian theatre, thus she creates an experimental theatre traditional and modern, in the same time.

Thus, we can say that Aidoo builds up her drama in order to fit both traditional and modern audiences. On the one hand, she constructs her play by using African oral narratives. On the other hand, she interprets modern issues by the use of modern theatrical techniques, as interior monologue and adopting a realistic performance. Thus, we can identify the concept of hybridity in African drama, through Aidoo’s move from tradition to modern theatre.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa* (Longman African Writers, London: 1995), 7

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>4</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 37

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/african-drama-iid-2519>

<sup>8</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 37

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 44

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 44

<sup>11</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, Interviewed by Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking* (London, Heinmann, 1972) accessed January 20, 2015

<sup>12</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 23

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/290310/interior-monologue>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/naturalistic-realistic-drama-iid-2495>

<sup>15</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 5

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 29

<sup>19</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 24

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 46

<sup>21</sup> Eliane Utudjan Saint-André, *Le théâtre anglophone du Nigeria, du Ghana et de la Sierra Leone: évolution des formes et des origines à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Karthala, 2007), 330

## Chapter Two: Tradition versus Modernity

As mentioned before, this chapter intends to discuss the themes of the old or the traditional cultural identity versus modernity as well as the issue of the in-betweenness or a third space, as suggested by Bhabha, as a form of identity through different characters in the play. As a result, we understand that Aidoo, in her play, echoes the issue of the quest for cultural identity.

### a- Marriage and Procreation as Manifestations of Cultural Identity

As we have seen in the review of Gbolo Sanco, Felicia Annin and Cecilia Addei, one of the most important themes tackled in Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is marriage and procreation as seen by both the Ghanaian and the western society. In the beginning of the play, Aidoo introduces Ato Yawson and his wife Eulalie. They are married and expect that they will live a life full of happiness and understanding. However, once in Ghana, things start to take another direction. In fact, the act of marriage itself is considered as the beginning of the tension. Indeed, marriage is one of the images of the African culture in the play. It is also known in the African cultures that marriage is the most important thing in life that unites two individuals with the presence of the whole community:

The Ghanaian marriage ceremony is a traditional ceremony where the groom accompanied by his family formally asks for the bride's hand in marriage in the presence of family, friends and well wishers. The traditional ceremony is a necessary common rite of marriage for all Ghanaian couples.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, this explains the shocking reaction of the family members when Ato marries alone in a foreign country with an African-American woman, as it appears in the dialog below:

**Esi:** It is nothing. I was just telling your aunt that I have sold your sheep to pay the bride price for when you make your mind to marry

**Ato:** (*Casually*) But I am already married, Maami.

**All:** You are married? Married! Married! <sup>2</sup>

Another aspect of traditional marriage in Africa is that both families investigate about each other to ensure that they descend from good origins or tribes, and that there is no history of bad habits or diseases in their family. As a result, we can understand the position of Nana when she complains in a satirical way about the origin of Eulalie saying:

She has no tribe? The story you are telling us is too sweet, my grand-child. Since I was born, I have not heard of a human being born out of the womb of a woman who has no tribe. Are there trees which never have any roots? <sup>3</sup>

This also explains the position of the whole family after knowing that the ancestors of Eulalie were slaves, as well as the position of Nana when she starts to call out for her *spirit mother*. In fact, in the African cultures, invoking *the spirit mother* means that someone is a serious trouble, and the marriage of Ato from a slave is a curse and her ancestors will judge her on it, she asserts:

My spirit Mother ought to have come for me earlier. Now what shall I tell them who are gone? The daughter of slaves who come from the white man's land [. . .] I am dreading my arrival where they ask me news of home. Shall I tell them or shall not? Someone should lend me a tongue. Light enough with which to tell my Royal Dead that one of their stock, has gone away and brought to their sacred precincts the wayfarer!<sup>4</sup>

In addition to marriage, Aidoo, in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, depicts the theme of 'procreation' as an image of the traditional society. In all African communities, marriage is meant to bear children and form a family, Aidoo, shows this importance through the women of the village saying:

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** Child bearing is always profitable for were not our fathers wise who looked upon the motion of our lives and said, they ask for the people of the house, and not the money in it.

There is nothing that can compare with being a parent, my sister.<sup>5</sup>

In the play, Ato and Eulalie agree not to bear children and even “*create a paradise with or without children.*”<sup>6</sup> However, the family worries about the couple especially when Ato’s uncle Peto says:

It was a couple of days ago that we met. What come out of the meeting is that we must come and ask you and your wife what is preventing you from giving your grandmother a great-grandchild before she leaves us.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, in African societies, to marry means raising children as stressed by Aidoo through the voice of Peto saying: “*When two people marry, everyone expects them to have children. For man and woman marry because they want children.*”<sup>8</sup> Actually, Aidoo does not only stress on the importance of childbearing, but also on the complications of childlessness and the struggle of a barren in the African society. Voiced by one of the two women, Aidoo argues: “*If it is real barrenness, Then, oh Stranger-girl, whom I do not know, I weep for you. For I know what it is to start a marriage with barrenness.*”<sup>9</sup> Thus, we also understand the decision of the family to prepare a concoction to cleanse Eulalie’s womb during the Sprinkling of the Stools, a day in which “*they try to drive away all the evil spirits, ill luck and unkind feelings.*”<sup>10</sup>

For Hall, Cultural Identity is a “*sort of collective one true self, hiding inside the many others [...] which people with a shared history hold in common.*”<sup>11</sup> Thus, this explains the traditional life, beliefs and practices of the Odumna Clan. However, as Hall suggests in his second definition of cultural identity, the Odumna Clan’s traditions are, too, in transformation and change which can be seen through Ato, who has been in America. Therefore, this transformation is caused by the historical aspects in the life of Ato, which is the result of being in touch with the American culture.

Furthermore, Ato's marriage is an evidence of cultural hybridity caused by the influence and the imitation of the western lifestyle. According to Hall, this influence is caused by '*the présence Américaine*' or African Diaspora which resulted from immigration, in the case of Ato who went to study in America, and slavery, in the case of Eulalie, whose ancestors adopted the American way of life. In fact, we can also feel this concept of Diaspora through the way Eulalie calls him 'native boy', in some situation, when she refers to his belonging as an African who believes in his traditions, contrary to the Africans who are spoiled by the western world such as when Ato tells Eulalie that she should be a good wife, like African women satating:

**Ato:** Yes . . . And if you want to, you shall be buried there also.  
*[Pause]*  
**Eu:** *[Anxiously]* But darling, I really hope it won't matter at all?  
**Ato:** What?  
**Eu:** You know what, Native Boy.<sup>12</sup>

#### **b- The Old and the Modern**

The struggle in the Odumna Clan extends to another theme, that of tradition and modernity. One of the apparent images of the large gap between these two concepts appears in the division of the house of the Odumna Clan. In fact, this aspect was also highlighted by Utudjane Saint-André in her study when she speaks about the setting. The play sat in the house. This latter is divided into two wings: the old building and the new wing, in this Aidoo describes the setting as: "*The action takes place in the courtyard of the newest wing of the Odumna Clan house. It is enclosed on the right by a wall of the old building and both at the centre and on the left by the walls of the new wing.*"<sup>13</sup> Actually, this division represents the contrast between the old or the traditional and the new or the modern. The Old building is inhabited by Nana, the uncles, the aunts, the nephews, Ato's mother, and his sister. Thus, we notice that this side of the house is reserved to the life of the clan. Whereas, the new house,

which represents the new or the modern side, is reserved to Ato, the intellectual, and his African American wife. However, though the theme of the struggle between modernity and tradition appears in the setting of the play, it is more visualized through characterization and events.

On the one hand, Eulalie, the African American wife, is giving us an image of the modern lifestyle and education; she continues in her way of life with an absolute freedom, without caring about the judgements of her family-in-law and expects that Ato and his family will tolerate and respect her choices. In act two “*Eulalie comes in with a packet of cigarettes, a lighter, an ashtray and a bottle of Coca-Cola*”.<sup>14</sup> In the Ghanaian and generally all the African traditional societies, we cannot find any single woman smoking or even drinking Coca-Cola. Indeed, the use and consumption of an American product such as *Coca-Cola*, “*She (Eulalie) begins sipping the Coca-Cola*”<sup>15</sup>, is an expressive image of the influence of the western lifestyle.

Actually, smoking and drinking Coca-Cola are not the only expressions of the background of Eulalie. In the process of the play, we suppose that she does not understand the way of life in the African society. When she hears the drums, “*Eulalie throws away her cigarette, her eyes pop out. She is really scared. She mutters ‘Christ, Christ’, like a caged animal.*”<sup>16</sup> That is, the sound of the drums is something strange or new for her. Besides, she expects that the sound of the drums would be different. Aidoo provides a description of how Eulalie expects the sound saying:

**Eu:** Yes. But you know, I didn’t guess they’ll be sort of like this.

**Ato:** You thought they would sound like jazz?

**Eu:** Sure. Or rather like, you know, sort of Spanish mambo.<sup>17</sup>

This is not just a simple or innocent expectation about the sound of the drums, but it shows the extent to which Eulalie is influenced by the jazz that is symbolical of the slave culture. In addition to this influence, Aidoo refers to the way, or the negative way, in which the westerners perceive the African cultures. Through Eulalie, Aidoo states: *“But I understand there is always witch-hunting out here in Africa.”*<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, in act three and six months later, the conflict between Eulalie and her family-in-law grows up. The action starts when Ato and Eulalie have come to spend a weekend. On this day, Esi comes to the room of the couple, but Eulalie does not appreciate her act and asks her husband saying: *“Ato, would you care to ask your mother what she wants in our room?”*<sup>19</sup> In the western civilization, no one can intrude in the life or business of any couple. Their life is their own, and this explains why Eulalie is not pleased with the behaviour of Esi. The tension reaches its climax when Eulalie does not appreciate the snails, and throws them away. For this American woman, snails are ‘horrid creatures’, she cannot eat them or even see them, she tells Ato:

**Ato:** What’s all this

**Eu:** Those horrid creatures of course!

**Ato:** Where are you taking them?

**Eu:** Throwing them away, of course.

**Ato:** What rubbish.

**Eu:** What do you mean? What rubbish? If you think I am going to sleep with those creatures, then you are kidding yourself.

**Ato:** But how can you throw them away just like that? Haven’t you seen snails before?

**Eu:** My dear, did you see a single snail crawling on the streets of New York all the time you were in the States? And anyway seeing snail and eating them are entirely different things!<sup>20</sup>

Through this act and through food, Aidoo reveals another contradiction between Eulalie’s cultural identity and her family-in-law. All these events and the pressure, that Eulalie has been through, help, in a way or another, to alienate her from the African lifestyle instead of adopting it. When she drinks too much, she tells Ato that his family *“only understands their*

*own savage customs and standards”* <sup>21</sup>Through all these events, Aidoo voices the quest of Eulalie to retrieve her African roots, but, unfortunately, her efforts are not sufficient, it instead enlarges the gap between her and this culture, which lead her to leave the house.

From this short analysis of the character of Eulalie, we understand that she is trying to find herself in the African society. She appears struggling between her modern lifestyle, caused by the American influence, and the African traditions that represent her roots. According to Hall, cultural identities are positioned and repositioned in relation to the *Présence Africaine* which is: “*the site of the repressed. Apparently silenced beyond memory by the power of the experience of slavery, Africa was, in fact, present everywhere.*”<sup>22</sup> This, then, explains Eulalie’s feeling of belonging saying: “*I’ve come to the very source.*”<sup>23</sup> This feeling can be seen in any African in the Diaspora, and as Hall argues, it is present:

in the everyday life and customs of the slave quarters, in the languages and patois of the plantations, in names and words, often disconnected from their taxonomies, in the secret syntactical structures through which other languages were spoken, in the stories and tales told to children, in religious practices and beliefs, in the spiritual life, the arts, crafts, musics and rhythms of slave [. . . ]<sup>24</sup>

Tough, all these cultural manifestations do not appear in Eulalie’s personality and identity, especially her language and lifestyle; yet, her sense of belonging as a black explains how she used to live in the States, how life was in Harlem and how her life will change in Africa. She, then, does not need to dream to be a white because Africa is the home of the blacks, which makes her feel at ease and enjoys life, she addresses her mother and reminds her saying:

Ma, ain’t I telling the whole of the States to go swing! Congress, Jew and white trash, from Manhattan to Harlem. . . ‘Sugar, don’t let them do you in. Ma, I didn’t. ‘Sugar, don’t sort of curse me and your Pa every morning you look your face in the mirror and see yourself black. Kill the sort of dreams silly girls dream that they are going to wake up one morning and find their skins milk white and their hairs soft blonde like them Hollywood tarts. Sugar, the dear God made you just that black and you canna do

nothing about it'. Ma, it was hard to not dream but I tried . . . only I wish you were not dead . . . I wish you were right here, not even in the States, but here in this country where there will be no washing for you no more and where . . . where . . . Oh Ma! But I know you would pat me on the back and say, 'Sugar, you sure done fine.'<sup>25</sup>

However, the sense of belonging is not enough to reconstruct one's African identity, because, the interaction with the culture of the diaspora helps to construct another identity. In Bhabha's terms, this effect is called mimicry, and it is well demonstrated through Eulalie, who is widely influenced by the American lifestyle, which leads to create a barrier between her and both her husband and family-in-law. Here, we can also come back to the statement of Macaulay given by Bhabha concerning Indians who are: "*Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect.*"<sup>26</sup> In this play, Eulalie represents the African version of this example; she is African in blood, in origin and colour, but appears American in tastes, intellect and lifestyle. Finally, we can say that this imitation or mimicry, as suggested by Bhabha, appears as a menace or a threat since it raises the tension and creates an issue of identity so that Eulalie could not retrieve her African roots.

Additionally, the events reveal the gap between both women, Eulalie, the American, and Esi Kom, the African. Aidoo presents Esi as a typical African traditional mother and this appears through her words: "*I have not done anything with it. It had a good market and i thought I would find some more money and add to it to give to Ato's father to pay the bride price for its owner.*"<sup>27</sup> She does everything that any African mother would do for her son. She even thinks to choose a wife for her coming son, but unfortunately he already married:

**Ato:** [*As if just awake from sleep*] Ei, Uncle, are you talking of marriage?

**Esi:** It is nothing. I was only telling your aunts that I have sold your sheep to pay the bride price for you when you make up your mind to marry. . .

**Ato:** [*Casually*] But I am already married, Maami.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, the struggle does not finish and marriage is not the only issue, but rather the beginning of instability in her house. Along the events, Esi does not appreciate Eulalie. She expects that her son will help her family by studying, but her expectations fall into ruin, and she thinks that Eulalie is the cause. While Eulalie was living a luxurious life with all the machines she buys with the money of Ato, Esi cannot even pay her debts, which makes her angry. We can understand this through the dialog of the neighbours saying:

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** [. . .] Esi Kom is not better than she was

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** Why?

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** They never ask 'why'. It is not the young man's wife.

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** What has she done now?

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** Listen, I hear she swallows money as a hen does corn.

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** Oh, Esi Kom!

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** One must sit down if one wants to talk of her affairs. They say that the young man gets no penny to buy himself a shirt. . . But the strangest thing is that she too works.

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** Then how does she spend all the money?

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** By buying cigarettes, drinks, clothes and machines.

**1<sup>st</sup> W:** Machines?

**2<sup>nd</sup> W:** Yes, machines. Her water must be colder than hailstone. I heard it in market place Monka's teeth set on edge for drinking water in her house. And her food never knows woof fire.<sup>29</sup>

Normally, if Eulalie lives in America, she has the right to live with her husband unconditionally and no one can intrude between them, but it is not the case, because once in Africa, marriage is not his own affair, and this makes Esi Kom intervene in the couple's affairs.

In fact, Ato is a been-to, that is, he travelled abroad to study to bring change and help his family and community, but this was not the case, instead of bringing money and help, Ato brought the western culture, which creates trouble and instability

Through this situation, Esi accepts her fate and all the time she remains quite as if she was tortoise<sup>28</sup>, until Eulalie's disrespect when she throws the snails. In fact, Aidoo echoes the sound of a defeated African woman such as Esi, she says: "*This is not the first time I have fallen into disgrace for bringing you things.*"<sup>30</sup> However, this disappointment and anger does not last long. In the end of the play, Esi tries to understand the reasons behind Eulalie's behaviour. Actually, Esi Kom ignores her norms and traditions and decides to understand Eulalie's culture and tolerates her lifestyle.

For both Bhabha and Hall, hybridity opens up a space of negotiation between cultural identities. Yet, if anyone tries to understand and tolerate a different culture means he accepts to let go of his own identity, which may cause cultural hybridity. Esi Kom, tries to understand and support Eulalie but this can lead to another issue in her own identity and even in the future, because the effect of hybridity, as suggested by Bhabha, is "*an ongoing negotiation that authorize cultural hybridities.*"<sup>31</sup> Therefore, this ongoing process and space of negotiation leads to another form of culture, a form that Bhabha calls the 'third space' or 'space in-between'.

### **c- Space In-between**

Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* takes us in a long road to explore the variation of cultural manifestations that characterize the African society. In addition to the themes and characters discussed above, we will explore Ato, another figure who reflects a new paradigm of cultural diversity in the play.

The character of Ato appears so complex and difficult to understand. He is a '*been to*', that is, he comes back from immigration with his African American wife, Eulalie. In the beginning of the play, it is Ato who proposes "*to be free to love each other*"<sup>32</sup>. He tells

Eulalie that she should not worry about traditions in Africa. Once with his family, again, he supports his wife. Concerning their marriage, he defends her, by saying: “*if you only know how sweet Eulalie is.*”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in act two, Ato explains to Eulalie some notions of the traditional life in their village such as the meaning of the reason for drumming saying: “*Those were only funeral drums*”<sup>34</sup> Yet, Ato shows the western influence in his behaviours and habits, especially when he drinks gin and even share it with his wife:

**Ato:** [*Mixing the drink*] Darling, what is it?

**Eu:** What is what?

**Ato:** Well, there was such a look on your face. Were you going to say something?

**Eu:** [Gets up and moves closer to him] Yes.

**Ato:** [Lightly] Box on then.

**Eu:** Ato . . .

**Ato:** [*Interrupting*] By the way, are you interested? [*Indicating the gin and water*]

**Eu:** Yes

**Ato:** Oh, I beg your pardon then. [*He gives her the mixture and forgets about one for himself.*]<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, Ato appears as a typical western man, who spends time and drinks with his wife and both live a typical modern life.

Besides, in act three, Ato acts as a bridge between his mother and Eulalie. He obeys both the orders of his maami and his wife. But when the tension rises between both women, he does not ignore completely his traditions and family. We can feel his belonging when he tries to explain to his wife that she should, at least, not throw the snails and “*give them to his mother to cook for him alone.*”<sup>36</sup> In addition, this act of belonging appears in the behaviour of Ato when he hears his family coming and anxiously asks Eulalie to stop drinking; he says “*Let me put your drink in the room for you.*”<sup>37</sup> and argues: “*I don’t think they’ll approve.*”<sup>38</sup>

Despite his love for his wife, Ato does not ensure his responsibilities and appears more selfish. When Eulalie gets the feeling of bearing children, he says: “*It’s only that I think we*

*better stick to our original plan.*”<sup>39</sup>, but, at least, he could defend her when his family accuses her of barrenness. He could say it is not barrenness, but that they, both, choose not to bear children for a couple of years. However, he tells Eulalie that his people “*simply won’t understand that one should begin having children only when one is prepared for them.*”<sup>40</sup>, and they (his people) would say that “*they are displeasing the spirits of our dead ancestors and the Almighty God for controlling birth.*”<sup>41</sup> Ato, rather, tells his wife “*when in Rome, do as the Romans do*”<sup>42</sup>, which means that Eulalie should act and live according to the Ghanaian lifestyle. This then puts Eulalie in a dilemma, whether to obey the choice of her husband or that of her family-in-law, or even listen to her feelings as any woman who wants children.

However, Ato does not succeed to bring balance between his family and his wife. Instead, he accuses his mother of making him unhappy saying: “*Maami, you make me too unhappy*”<sup>43</sup> as well, he accuses his wife of trouble making: “*Now you have succeeded in making trouble for me. Won’t you congratulate yourself?*”<sup>44</sup> This trouble could have been avoided if only Ato explains to his wife the traditional aspects of his family and helps his family to understand his wife’s attitudes and lifestyle.

In act three, after six months, Ato and Eulalie come to spend a week end. Once there, Ato sees a strange dream, in which two children sing:

One early morning, when the moon was up, shinning as the sun  
I went to Elmina Junction, and there and there,  
I saw a wretched ghost, going up and down singing to himself  
Shall I go to Cape Coast or to Elmina,  
I don’t know, I can’t tell . . . I don’t know, I can’t tell.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, Aidoo presents the struggle of Ato to bring balance to his family and life. The dilemma of going to Elmina or Cape Coast is only an allegory that symbolizes Ato’s dilemma between his traditions and his education, or between his wife and his family. Vincent Odamtten, in his *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* (1994), identifies the ‘been to’ saying:

The been-to is usually characterized as suffering the double estrangement of the *sujet-en soi*: (one who is caught between two conflicting ideological practices.) rejected by or rejecting his or her “African culture” by virtue of higher education [. . .]<sup>46</sup>

For Bhabha, the ‘Third Space’ or ‘In-between’ is:

It is in the emergence of the interstices-the overlap and displacement of domains of difference-that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural values are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the third space is the result of the negotiation that occurs between two cultures, and the exchange of cultural identities and values. Further, he suggests that this negotiation may not occur in harmony, he says:

How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable.<sup>48</sup>

That is, in the case of Ato, who is a ‘been to’, it is clear that he is influenced by the American lifestyle and education, but still believes in his traditions and customs. However, he does not act as it should be. He does not bring balance between his mother culture and the foreign one. He instead, creates trouble. In the time in which he should act as an intermediate between both the African culture and the American one, he creates antagonistic situations and creates conflict between his family, that represents his origins, and his wife, who represents the western education and influence.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> African Marriage: The most important ceremony in African culture, <http://www.africanmarriage.info>, accessed May 23, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa* (Longman African Writers, London: 1995), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 17

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>6</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 10

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 43

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 44

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 39

<sup>10</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 44

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 223.

<sup>12</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 10

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>16</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 25

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>20</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 32

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 47

<sup>22</sup> Hall, *Cultural Identity*, 230.

<sup>23</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Hall, *Cultural Identity*, 230

<sup>25</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 24-25

<sup>26</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, Routledge, 2004), 87

<sup>27</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 15

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 37-38

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 34

<sup>31</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2

<sup>32</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 10

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>36</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 32

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 42

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>40</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 47

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 45

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 48

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 34

<sup>44</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 36

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.; 28

<sup>46</sup> Vincent Odamtten, *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo: Polylectics and Reading Against Neocolonialism* (University of Florida Press, 1994)

<sup>47</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2

### **Chapter Three: Language in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost***

In this third chapter, we intend to discuss language in the play, not only as a means of communication, but also as an image that reflects the situation of the Odumna clan.

In *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), we can find different levels of language.<sup>1</sup> Adelugba identifies the American English of Eulalie, The standard English of Ato, The language of children and the language of the old Nana. In fact, this difference in the use of language is not a coincidence; actually, Aidoo means to show the different social classes in her society through the variety of speech. However, in our discussion, we will focus on three levels of language in the Odumna clan in order to show the influence of western education and the clash between cultures.

In the traditional Ghanaian society or the Akan culture, Fante is the most spoken language. Yet, many Ghanaian authors, such as Aidoo, write in English. It is the language of the colonizer, but it is also the only tool to denounce the practices of the colonizer in colonial and post-colonial era. Therefore, in this play, Aidoo writes in English, but not standard or academic English. Through characters, she shows a variety of language forms, such as The American one, the intellectual English and also the dialectical English that is spoken by the natives.

#### **a- The Dialectical and the Standard English**

For Eulalie, the Afro-American wife, English, or American English is the first language. From the beginning, Aidoo presents this character with a different language from that of the whole family; as a result, the whole family does not understand her, which makes Ato an intermediate between them. In fact, the expression of Eulalie, "*I only speak like I was born to*

*Speak- like an American.*”<sup>2</sup>, reflects the attitude of Aidoo by presenting a typical American character in her play. In addition, Eulalie’s use of abbreviations such as ‘Coke’ and ‘*ain’t, teh say*’ refers to the American expressions and way of speaking. Eulalie, also, says some words different from Ato such as saying ‘*kids*’ instead of ‘*children*’ and ‘*folks*’, a familiar or informal expression of ‘*People*’.

In act five, when Eulalie tells Ato: “*I repeat ‘I ain’t coming’ eh. Or you are too British you canna hear me Yankee-lingo.*”<sup>3</sup> This statement explains that Eulalie speaks different English from that of Ato, and she says that if he is too British, he will not understand her English, but in fact he is not because he studied in America, so he is able to understand her well. Actually, the use of the expression ‘*Yankee-lingo*’ has, also, the same meaning and refers to the northern tongue. Thus, all these expressions, the use of the American slang, the structure of the sentences and generally the language of Eulalie reflect her western identity and American heritage. Aidoo, through the American English, allows us to explore the background of Eulalie. Though Eulalie has African origins, her language does not reflect her Africaness, in fact, it gives us another image, an image of a white American who speaks fluently the American English which is characterized by the use of slang.

On the other hand, the language of Ato is another image of cultural diversity and hybridity. He speaks English language, but not like that one of his wife. His English is more intellectual and reflects the educated African who spent time abroad. In his dialog with his wife, he uses expressions like “*you do get on my nerves*”<sup>4</sup>, additionally, in order to say concoction, Ato says: “*wash my wife’s stomach.*”<sup>5</sup> In another dialog with his wife, he says:

Those were only funeral drums. But I think you must have a siesta. If you don’t, you’ll have a nervous breakdown before you’ve learnt enough to graduate in primitive cultures [...]”<sup>6</sup>

These words, in fact, are scientific words that reflect the intellectual level of Ato, and it is not strange if his family do not understand him. From another angle, we believe that Ato himself, though he is an African, he does not know much about traditions and practices in his community, when his wife asks about the drums he says: *"Sorry, I don't know much about them myself."*<sup>7</sup>

Further, Ato appears more influenced by the western education. He addresses his wife with tenderness and love by using soft words such as 'Sweetie Pie' 'darling' 'Lalie' and many others. Contrary to the African males who appear dominants and authoritative, Ato ignores all these traditions and behaviours; he tells his wife that they *"shall be free to love each other."*<sup>8</sup> Aidoo, then, presents Ato as an intellectual to draw an image of her society in the era that followed independence, when many young men went to study abroad to get a chance for a better life. Ato, actually, studied in America and this intellectual journey affects his way of thinking, his values and even his language. Basically, we may say that this journey affects his entire identity and cultural belonging. Moreover, the situation of Ato is, also, an image of the 'been-to' who struggles to find balance between his mother tongue and the language of the diaspora. Indeed, many of those men who came from the diaspora live in a dilemma between their traditions and the western education and lifestyle. They can neither comeback to their roots, nor adopt the modern life which allows the rise of moments of hybridity, so they lose both of them, and live in another dimension, which Bhabha calls the 'third space'.

In fact, the western world does not appear through the language of Ato and Eulalie, but also through the use of names of persons and places. In many cases, she uses the word 'New York', 'Congress', 'Manhattan' and especially 'Harlem': *"Ma, ain't I telling the whole of the State to go swing! Congress, Jew and white trash, from Manhattan to Harlem."*<sup>9</sup>. In fact, Harlem itself is the image of the diaspora, the famous district in America that reunites all the

black people. However, here, Aidoo refers even to the diversity of the western world by mentioning 'Jew'.

Concerning persons, Eulalie mentions some names such as: "*So at last am I in Africa [. . .] Joseph and Mary! Hope I've done the right thing.*"<sup>10</sup> Aidoo, through the names of Joseph and Mary, refers to the family of Eulalie and her friends in order to show the gap and the cultural difference between Africa and the west.

### **b- Appropriation and Abrogation**

*The Dilemma of a Ghost* is written in English, this is obvious, but we cannot ignore that Aidoo represents the Ghanaian language in many cases through different characters. Adelugba states: "*There is every reason to believe that these speeches are made by characters who speak a Ghanaian language, probably Fante, and Aidoo wants us to believe so.*"<sup>11</sup> Thus, though Aidoo writes in English, Ato's family represents the Ghanaian community that speaks Fante or the Akan language, and this appears obviously in the names of characters such as Esi Kom, Ato, Petu, Monka and the use of the word Nana, to refer to the grandmother. Aidoo, also, uses 'clan' to refer to a tribe which means that life in traditional Africa still lives in a tribal system.

Additionally, in Ato's family and in the whole village, we can notice that characters speak a different language with a different tone from that of Ato and his wife. Nana, his Grandmother, is a typical example of that. Her language refers to some beliefs, on the one hand, when she says:

Do they not know that if the heavens withdraw the light, one must light his own way? But no [. . .] How will he find his way around this dark place should the ghost of one of our forebearers pay us a visit? <sup>12</sup>

That is, the old Nana, who represents the old generation and the African society, believes that the ancestors can visit them especially when they do wrong or mislead the path. On the other hand, Nana speaks about the spirit mother or the origin of creation in her beliefs when she says: "*My Spirit mother ought to have come for me earlier.*"<sup>13</sup> In addition to this, if we come back to the statement of nana and read it until the end, we can find that she even believes that she will meet her ancestors or what she calls 'My Royal dead' and they will judge her on every mistakes that happened in their family, on this, she states:

Someone should advise me on how to tell my story. My children, I am dreading my arrival there, where they will ask me news of home. Shall I tell them or shall I not? Someone should lend me a tongue light enough with which to tell my Royal Dead."<sup>14</sup>

Actually, the language of Nana does not reflect only beliefs, but it also gives glimpses on the ancient way of life and traditions. When she appears angry about the women of the house she says:

When we were young a woman cleared her eating place after the last morsel had hardly touched her tongue. But now, they will allow their nose-making pans to lie around for people to trip over. But it is not their fault. If they had to use earthenware pots which broke more easily than eggs, they would have learnt their lessons long ago.<sup>15</sup>

That is, Nana, here, refers to the way her generation used to work perfectly at home. Further, she mentions the word '*earthenware*' as a reference to the ancient means of cooking which are replaced by metal pans.

Nana is not the only character, in the play, whose speech and language designates a Ghanaian community, but there are many others. Yet in our analysis we will try to rely on the language of the neighbours, who in a way or another, contribute in the building of the events. The language of the two women is characterised by a strong reference to African heritage, traditions and customs. In their speech, both women and in every situation use a proverb or

the sayings of their ancestors. In act two, for example, concerning childbearing and the construction of family, Aba says:

Childbearing is always profitable for were not our fathers wise who looked upon a motion of our lives and said, they ask for the people of the house and not the money in it? <sup>16</sup>

Moreover, both women speak, somehow, in an enigmatic way. The first woman, in order to refer to help between members of the family and the help of Ato's uncles, she asserts: "*the left hand washed the right and the right hand washed the left.*"<sup>17</sup>, then, the second answers: "[...] *But those days are over when it was expedient for two deer to walk together.*"<sup>18</sup> Actually, the allegorical speech of both women is not limited to the second act, but it lasts until act four. In this part, for demonstrating that the situation of Esi does not change even if her son, Ato, works and gets money, Aba argues: "*It has not been good going, the roof leaks more than ever before.*" <sup>19</sup>

Like Nana, in another statement, one of the women refers to some religious beliefs and mentions the 'Mother Spirit' but in other words saying: "*Oh, Eternal Mother Nature. Queen Mother of childbirth.*" <sup>20</sup> However, their speech is not limited to reference to beliefs, but it is characterised by the use of proverbs, ancient wisdom and illustrations from old sayings. In the case of the second woman, in order to refer to the way Eulalie spends money, she states: "*Listen, I hear she swallows money as a hen does corn.*"<sup>21</sup> That is, she compares Eulalie with a hen that eats a lot of corn or wheat. Whereas, the first woman uses a metaphor to say that she is barren or she has never had children by saying: "*My breast have never given suck to a child.*"<sup>22</sup>

In fact, through the speech of old Nana and the two neighbours, Aidoo demonstrates the old beliefs, practices and even lifestyle. The use of some Akan words and the appropriation of

English explain that the traditional community is not in touch with the modern or the white world. It is, rather, still a pure Ghanaian society with all its customs, beliefs and belonging.

However, her use of language extends and varies according to situations and purposes. She, actually, does not write only in English, but she also uses some Ghanaian words such as ‘*tchia*’ which means ‘contempt’, ‘*ampesi*’ which indicates a traditional Ghanaian meal and the word ‘*oto*’ which means yam.

Moreover, the language in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is characterised by the distortion of some English words such as the word ‘*kerosene*’ becomes ‘*Kresin*’, the word ‘*Amerika*’ instead of ‘*America*’ and the most important is the name ‘*Eulalie*’ becomes ‘*Hurere*’. Actually, the use of some Ghanaian words and the distortion of some English words in the play are not a matter of chance, but it is a technique that is called abrogation and appropriation. Abrogation, in postcolonial literature, means the rejection and the denial of the authority of the colonial language and the return to one’s language. In this, the authors of the *Empire Writes Back* say:

Is the refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or correct usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in the words.<sup>23</sup>

Appropriation is: “*the process by which the language is taken and made to bear the burden of one’s own cultural experience.*”<sup>24</sup> That is, the adaptation of a colonial language to a specific cultural context, and it consists of the twist and the distortion of this colonial language.

Thus, we notice that Ama Ata Aidoo proves herself as an African and post-independence writer. Through the manipulation of language and the employment of different levels of speech, she draws an image of the traditional life in the Ghanaian community and demonstrates the situation of the intellectuals and Africans of the diaspora.

The Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, in *his Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Poetics* (1972), notes: "by acquiring the thought-process and values of his adopted tongue [...] he becomes alienated from the values of his mother tongue, or from the language of the masses."<sup>25</sup> Thus, we must say that adopting foreign cultural values alienates any individual even from his language, which means that language is a strong code of culture. This, then, explains the case of Ato, who adopted the western education, which influences his language, so he forgets his values and even his mother tongue.

In his definition of cultural identity, Halls says: "*Our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and cultural codes.*"<sup>26</sup> Thus, we may say that language is one of these codes that reunite the community and make it as 'one people'. Concerning this, Ngugi says:

Language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture [...] it carries the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world [...] Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community or human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relation to the world.<sup>27</sup>

As a result, we understand that language is not only a means of communication, but it is a cultural device, an image of one's identity and the means that reunites people of any community with a shared history. In Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, we notice that language is not just a tool to communicate events. But, it goes further to identify and demonstrate the values, the beliefs and customs. In the Odumna clan, we notice that language mirrors the life in the traditional Ghanaian society; it appears in different situations, especially concerning marriage and childbearing: "*When two people marry, everyone expects them to have children. For men and women, marry because they want children.*"<sup>28</sup> Or the importance of rituals and beliefs, as uncle Petu describes the Sprinkling of the Stools saying:

We were to choose this day because, as you know, on this day we try to drive away all the evil spirits, ill luck and unkind feelings which might invade our house during the past year. You know also, we invoke our sacred dead to bring us blessings.<sup>29</sup>

During the colonial period, language and culture were the main tools of subjugation as Ngugi suggests: “*The bullet was the means of physical subjugation; language was the means of spiritual subjugation.*”<sup>30</sup> In fact, the process of adopting the language of the colonizer, mainly English, creates the anxiety of the natives from the superiority of the westerners. In this respect, M. S. Nagarajan, in his book *English Literary Criticism and Theory*, he says:

[...] this colonialist ideology created colonial subjects who behaved in the way the colonizer had programmed. They willingly accepted the superiority of the British, and their own inferiority.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, this process does not end with the end of colonialism; however, it extends to the period of independence, with the rise of immigration or what is called the ‘Diaspora’. This process and this anxiety, then, create the phenomenon of the imitation of the west, or what Bhabha calls ‘mimicry’.

According to Bhabha, mimicry, in colonial and postcolonial discourse, is defined as the imitation of people of the colonized countries to the culture, attitudes and language of the west<sup>32</sup>, which leads to the belief that the west is more educated and civilized, while Africans and the East are illiterate and uncivilized. This belief, then, affects one’s cultural identity and belonging and puts the individual in a puzzled state or what Bhabha calls ambivalence, by arguing: “*The discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence.*”<sup>33</sup> Further, He warns from the threat of mimicry and its effects on cultural identity saying: “*Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’.*”<sup>34</sup> Thus, we understand the struggle of Ato between his African belonging and his American education by accusing both his mother saying: “*Maami,*

*you make me too unhappy.”*<sup>35</sup> and putting blame on his wife: *“Now you have succeeded in making trouble for me”*<sup>36</sup>

From this short exploration, we may explain how the life of Eulalie in America and the journey of Ato to study change their entire cultural belonging and put them in a confused state, especially for Ato, who does not know how to reconcile between his African roots and his adoption of the American education. Actually, the fact that Ato goes to America to study proves that he wants to be educated and civilized. Besides, this journey also refers to the rejection of his cultural belonging and the desire to adopt the western way of life, education and even language. Thus, Ato's study in America disturbs his cultural identity and puts him in a dilemma between his Africanness and his adopted culture. The play closes up with Ato listening to the song of the ghost who does not know whether to go to Elmina or to Cape Coast. Elmina is the ancient name of Ghana; Cape Coast is the new name that followed the ancient one; so this can be seen as the image of the situation of Ato who is struggling between both ancient and modern Ghanaian identity. This situation is, according to Bhabha, leads to in-betweenness and hybridity in one's cultural identity and belonging.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dapo Adelugba, "Language and Drama: Ama Ata Aidoo" *African Literature Today*, ed. Edward D. Jones (Heinemann, 1976), accessed February 27, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa* (Longman African Writers, London: 1995), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 46

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 8

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 43

<sup>6</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 26

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>10</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 23

<sup>11</sup> Adelugba, *Language and Drama*, accessed April 29, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>16</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 21

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>20</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 23

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 38

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 38

<sup>23</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London, Routledge, 2002), 37

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 38

<sup>25</sup> Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (London, Heinemann, 1972), 16.

<sup>26</sup> Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 223

<sup>27</sup> Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, *Decolonizing The Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London, James Curry, 1986), 13

<sup>28</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 44

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 44

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>31</sup> M. S. Nagarajan, Qtd in Archana Gupta, *The role of Mimicry in Colonial and postcolonial Discourse*, accessed May 2, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture: Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (London, Routledge, 1994), 128

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 125

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 127

<sup>35</sup> Aidoo, *The Dilemma*, 34

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 36

#### IV. General conclusion

Our dissertation has allowed us to explore the issues of hybridity that is introduced through themes and the different levels of language, and the quest for cultural identity in Ghanaian playwright Ama Ata Aidoo. Our dissertation based on the exploration of her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), as an image of the situation of both African drama and society in the post-independent era.

Some work of post colonial drama explores the issues that followed independence, but it also echoes the colonial legacy in former colonized societies. In fact, the effect of colonialism was and is still in an ongoing process of change of the identity of former colonized people. Thus, many African intellectuals take the lead to explore and denounce these practices; and Ama Ata Aidoo, from Ghana, is one of these leading figures who, through her drama and verse, echoes the actual atmosphere of her society that struggles to retrieve identity.

In our study, we have explored hybridity in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* through the way she structures her play in a traditional form and uses modern theatrical devices to portray both characters and situations. Likewise, we have discussed the themes of 'marriage and procreation' and 'tradition versus modernity' that Aidoo uses to refer to cultural manifestations and their change in the course of time. Moreover, Aidoo uses different levels of language, uses Akan words and appropriates English in order to refer to the changing process of cultural identity.

Stuart Hall defines cultural identity as the one shared culture that is in a crucial transformation caused by the '*présence Américaine*' and mimicry, as Bhabha suggests. Thus, we have shown how Aidoo portrays the quest for cultural identity through themes and characters who are struggling between the traditional African cultural identity that is influenced by the American education and lifestyle. We have also proved that this struggle is

caused by Diaspora and mimicry, and lead to the rise of another dimension of cultural identity, which Bhabha calls hybridity.

Moreover, our research does not cover all the issues that are tackled in Aidoo's play ***The Dilemma of a Ghost***. We hope that we helped our readership to a better understanding of the issue of hybridity in cultural identities in both post colonial literature and societies.

Moreover, though many thing have been said about Ama Ata Aidoo, and though her literary output has been subject to different studies; yet, we believe that other studies can explore other issues, and much can be said about the playwright and her literary output.

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