

General Introduction

The reputation of Ayi Kwei Armah as an African novelist of English expression was established as early as 1968, when he published his first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Since then, he has published six other novels: *Fragments* in 1969, *Why Are We So Blest?* in 1970, *Two Thousand Seasons* in 1971, *The Healers* in 1975, *Osiris Rising* in 1995, and *KMT in the House of Life* in 2005. Besides these novels, Armah published short stories, such as *Contact* (1965), *An African Fable* (1968) and *The Offal Kind* (1969), and essays, among which figure “African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?” (1967) and “A Mystification: African Independence Revalued” (1969), and finally his memoirs *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (2008). Yet, it is as a novelist that Armah is best known among the literary establishment.

As a novelist belonging to what is considered as the second generation of African writers, Armah remains a controversial figure among critics of African literature. Indeed, controversy seems to stand as the main consensus reached by critics on his novels, no matter whether the novels in question belong to his early, middle or late period. Hence, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is dismissed by some critics and praised by others. Sometimes, as regards the form and content of the novel, the same critic may express attitudes of both admiration and disavowal. This is the case of Achebe who acknowledges Armah’s “high order” command of the language while declaring his work as a “sick book. Sick, not with the sickness of Ghana but with the sickness of human condition syndrome” (25). Another case in point is Derek Wright who dismisses the novel’s ontology as entirely negative and pessimistic while, at the same time, praising its eschatology as an “exuberant” imagery which functions as a “levelling metaphor” (30).

If controversy is the dominant mark of the criticism of Armah’s novels, it is because of the purposeful ambiguity that he had always managed to instil in them. This ambiguity has made his work always liable to many interpretations. In itself, ambiguity cannot be laid as a charge against the novelist, since, as William Empson writes so well in

his *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, one feature of literature is ambiguity. It is this ambiguity which makes that Armah's novels invite recurrent criticism. Hence, our renewed interest in Armah's novels (*The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*) may be vindicated through the fact that all these fictions remain controversial and problematic for the critics.

Our interest in Armah's novels is also sustained by the recent orientation in cultural studies towards the issue of hybridity; an issue that opens new and original perspectives to the study of his corpus of novels. This quality of discourse has been overlooked by the critics who studied Armah's novels, written in the 1960s and 1970s, i.e. long before the translation of Mikhail Bakhtin's works on the discourse of the novel and the publication of Homi Bhabha's ground-breaking study *The Location of Culture* (1994)*. Subjected to literary and ideological categories which borrowed mostly from the existential ideology of Jean Paul Sartre and the realist tradition, these novels were rejected on the basis that they lacked authenticity and commitment. In other words, *The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*, *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* were misread because they were not timely; timely in the sense that they demanded critical categories that were not

* It should be noted here that, during 1980s, the hybridity of the African novel was a matter of controversy. For instance, writing as early as the 1970s, Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike, the so-called *bolekaja* critics, asserted that African literature is "an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures. It has its own traditions, models and norms. Its constituency is separate and radically different from that of the European or other literatures." (2). The critics' separatist attitude was refuted by Ashcroft *et al.* who, in their groundbreaking study *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), drew attention to the phenomena of "hybridization of culture" induced by the "historical fact of colonialism" (2002: 128). By hybridity, Ashcroft *et al.* refer to the creation of "**transcultural** forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (2004: 118 bold in the original). In their view, this hybrid creation of transcultural forms takes different forms (such as linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc forms). Overall, these forms of "cross-cultural exchange" are differently appreciated by postcolonial thinkers. The latter's assessments of the concept range from those who regard it as a mere replication of former colonialist assimilation cultural policies, to those who see in it a notion which stresses the mutuality of (western and non-western) cultures (ibid. 119), and thus the downplay of all cultural hierarchies.

yet fully fledged at their time of publication. Today, with the recent publications on hybridity, Armah's novels can be said to have become, in Nietzsche's term, timely.

Most critics of Armah's fictions have not paid enough attention to the fact that the novel, to use Bakhtin's word, is a hybrid genre. For example, operating with definitions of the novel borrowed from nineteenth century bourgeois novel, as it was developed by Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy, Chinua Achebe laid the blame on Armah on the basis that they lack authenticity, proclaiming that Armah writes like a "white District officer" (26). Similarly, Ama Ata Aidoo took him to task for the scatological dimension of his first novel. Even if some critics praised Armah for the very scatological aspects that Achebe and Aidoo criticised him, they did not relate this dimension of his novel to the hybrid nature of the genre. The novel, as Bakhtin writes, is a hybrid construction. Therefore, demanding *purity* from a genre that is essentially hybrid is paradoxical.

It is our intention in this dissertation to investigate into the hybrid discourse of Armah's novels. An aspect of this hybridity has already been tackled obliquely by some critics, like Keith Booker (1998) and Bouteldja Riche (1998). These two critics have used Bakhtin's critical categories of double-voiced discourse and dialogism without referring explicitly to hybridity from whose source they draw their energy. Indeed, at no moment in their analyses have they shown how Armah's early novels exploited the hybrid nature of the novel as a genre. Besides, the two critics seem to overlook the development of popular literature in Ghana; an unawareness that pushed them to overlook the proverbial functions fulfilled by his intertextual borrowings.

The definition of hybridity that we intend to apply to Armah's novels is taken from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel. This theory stipulates that the novel is "a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review. Such, indeed, is the only possibility open to a genre that structures itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality" (1992: 39). In other words, unlike the epic, the novel is an ever-evolving genre, always challenging the conventions established by previous novels. It

is, thus, an infinitely flexible genre, dynamically adaptable to its contemporaneity, and inherently anti-authoritarian. Besides, one of its most important characteristics is its generic multiplicity and ability to parody and absorb other genres (such as letters, diaries, confessions, sermons etc), squeeze out other genres and incorporate others into its own structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them (ibid.5). Hence, for Bakhtin, the novel “has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time, because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making” (ibid. 7).

Bakhtin’s concept of the novel as “a genre in the making” and the “most fluid of all genres” draws its inspiration from the concept of polyphony that he attributes to the discourse of the novel. Bakhtin uses the concept of polyphony to account for the author’s process of assimilating other peoples’ “words” or discourses, and extends it further in order to describe the hybrid nature of the novelistic discourse in general. The process of assimilating other peoples’ words produces a double-voiced narration which asserts the dialogic nature of the discourse of the novel. In its philological sense, double-voicedness, or multi-voicedness, within the boundary of a single utterance, informs the hybridity of the novelistic discourse. Hence, hybridity is nothing more than the expression of the inherent double-voicedness at the core of language: “[it is] a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (ibid. 358).

Bakhtin defines the hybrid construction, or hybridity, which is best realized in the genre of the novel, as follows:

A hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical [syntactic] and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages’, two semantic and axiological belief systems. We repeat, there is no formal – compositional and syntactic- boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and

languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a single sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong to simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction – and consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents (ibid. 304-5).

Bakhtin recognizes two basic kinds of hybridity: organic or "unintentional, unconscious" hybrids, and deliberate "intentional" hybrids. The former are those in which the mixture of languages is fused into a new system which elicits the historical evolution of all languages, whereas the latter are "internally dialogic" forms in which languages and ideologies are consciously set against one another*. Bakhtin sees the first kind of hybrid structure as characteristic of any living, evolving language, while he assimilates the second with the immanently dialogised nature of language in the novel. Thus, there are always "two consciousnesses, two language-intentions, two *voices* and consequently two accents participating in an intentional and conscious artistic hybrid" (ibid. 360 italics in the original). In other words, the novelistic hybrid, i.e. the intentional hybrid, is "*an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language*" (ibid. 361 the author's italics).

* Translated into the creative thrusts that straddle the poetic imagination of the modern African writer, with regards to the literary tradition of the West, Bakhtin's typology of hybrid discourses corresponds to what Ashcroft *et al.* call the processes of appropriation and abrogation (2002: 37). Abrogation, on the one hand, is a disjunctive process which involves the rejection of the West's languages and cultures, because it perceives them as remnants of the colonial past. Appropriation, on the other hand, looks for accommodation rather than rejection. It involves two languages, two cultures in a negotiation process that attempts to create local meaning, a particular worldview, with foreign words. Postcolonial literature, therefore, grows out of a tension, an *agon*, in the poetic imagination of the writer, torn as he is by these two creative impulses, these two ideological postures.

The agonistic process inherent in the hybridisation of discourse is at the core of the cultural politics of hybridity as developed in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994). For Bhabha, when hybridity enters the discourse of colonial authority, it "reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority" (1994). In other words, hybrid discourse is a double voiced discourse that opens a creative space for the language of the other and enables the writer to disarm the authority embedded in the colonial text. For more details, see chapter "Signs taken for Wonder" of his *The Location of Culture*.

Organic hybrid discourse involves mixing and fusion. It is part and parcel of a natural process in language and cultural contact. Bakhtin explains that linguistic hybrids are always mute and opaque. Nevertheless, they remain historically “productive [... with] potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world” (ibid. 360). However, even though Bakhtin recognizes this type of hybridity, it is with the intentional hybrid that he was most interested in his books on Rabelais and Dostoevsky. Contrary to the unconscious hybrid, the intentional hybrid comes as a result of an artistic intention to dialogize hybridity; artistic intention that produces disjunction rather than fusion. The aim of this disjunctive type of hybridity is separation, because it is essentially a contestatory site of more than one discourse, with one of them trying to unsettle, disarticulate the other discourses representing authority. For Bakhtin, therefore, hybridization, best concretized in the novel, is closely linked to subversion of authority.

Armah’s critics have often pointed out the similarities existing between his novels and other African and Western novels, but they have looked at these similarities only in the context of intertextuality. In other words, they have always analyzed these similarities as cases of influence. Functioning within the context of post-colonial studies, these critics are prone to see in these analogies a corrective impulse on the part of Armah, who has always encouraged the critics to see the hybridization process of his novels as essentially contestatory vis-à-vis Western writers. Thus, in his response to Charles Larson’s *The Emergence of African Fiction* (1972), he took him to task by calling his criticism “larsony”*, because he has drawn many parallels between his first two novels and many novels belonging to European writers, mainly the fictions of James Joyce.

* In the annals of comparative literature studies, Armah’s reaction to Larson’s study finds precedence in a polemic, which happened at the end of the nineteenth century in England, over an analogous cross-cultural issue. This polemic burst out of the publication of *The English in the West Indies: The Bow of Ulysses* (1888) by James Anthony Froude. In this study, the author showed paternalistic contempt towards the people of the Caribbean, and held them incapable of self-governing themselves. As a reaction, a Trinidadian

What most critics of Ayi Kwei Armah have overlooked in their analyses of his novels is that they appeal to the two types of hybridity, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin. Yet, contrary to the Russian critic who accords too much importance to intentional hybridity, Armah accords as much importance to organic hybridity as a way of fusing his intertextual borrowings into the narrative matrices and discourses of his texts. Therefore, one of the assumptions of the study that we shall undertake is that Armah is also the heir of an African popular literary tradition wherein organic hybridity is elevated onto a par with proverbs. This organic hybridity is a hallmark of the popular market literature written in English since the 1930s in West Africa. According to Stephanie Newell (2000), linguistic hybridity, even if she does not use the Bakhtinian terms, was born among African popular writers as a result of a generational conflict between the elderly and the young. At the level of linguistic performance, including literature, the young popular writers resorted to exaggerated quotations from European and American writers studied at school in order to affirm their social status vis-à-vis the elderly who manipulated the traditional proverbs. In the traditional society, proverbs were, to paraphrase one of Achebe's famous proverbs, the palm wine with which words are eaten. But in the acculturated context of the colonized society, the quotation replaced the proverb in its function of putting across and articulating arguments related to social issues such as money, corruption, gender relations, etc.

One of the merits of Newell's study is that it investigates the formal processes through which local writers borrowed international narrative templates, and kept

writer called Jacob J. Thomas responded by publishing *Froudacity: West Indian Fables Explained* (1889), wherein he read Froud's work as a self-centred study, meant to authenticate the author's own subjective and racial visions. The onomastic pun contained within Thomas's distortion of Froud's name into 'froudacity' suggests FRAUD, just like Armah's distortion of the name of the American critic into "Larsony" suggests LARCENY. By coining this house-hold word, Armah recommends that Larson's critical practice should be christened *larsony*, which is, in his view, "the judicious distortion of African truths to fit western prejudices" (1978: 14).

transforming them into hybrid genres and discourses that bear little resemblance with the original forms from which they sprang. Besides, the comparative cross-cultural perspective of the study enables the author to fill an important gap in postcolonial studies in general, and Ghana's literary history, in particular, by providing an original theory of hybridity which can be matched to Bakhtin's linguistic concept of organic hybrid, and yet distinguished from the cultural theories developed by well-known postcolonial thinkers, such as Homi Bhabha (1994), Ulf Hannerz (especially his centre-periphery model developed in the 1990's) and Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1991).

Newell's study draws on the hypothesis that local popular publications in Ghana are "complex, hybrid discourses" (9), which borrowed extensively from foreign master texts, and offered young male authors "an alternative platform for the public display of 'proverbial' quotations" (ibid. 12). The epigrammatic word-formation of the proverb and its didactic propensity (a proverb is always intended to teach, guide, and direct behaviour) are the analogies that buttress the theoretical paradigm of Newell's hypothesis. For her, proverbs "are 'quotations' that are recognisable and relatively fixed but contain within themselves the potential to be expanded by audiences into clusters of different meanings" (ibid.). Hence, local Ghanaian fictions' extensive borrowing from foreign master-texts operates like proverbs in the traditional culture; proverbs that contain within themselves "a history of common insights, warnings and judgements" (ibid.).

Just like in traditional African culture the use of proverbs confers legitimacy to one's discourse -a legitimacy restricted to the elders, and of which, most of the time, the youths are excluded- the use of quotations and other means of discourse 'mimicry' served the young writers to demonstrate their proficiency in the art of quoting others (ibid. 14). However, the practice of quoting English prose styles should not be read as simple replications of foreign literary templates, revelling on mere imitation, and devoid of all originality. Instead, most of these young writers were drawing authority from "a shared pool of literary languages, crossing different genres and language registers and, in the

process, creating narrative whirlpools that are self-consciously textual” (ibid. 18). The textuality / intertextuality of these texts have long been considered as a pretext to sideline their authenticity and evacuate them from postcolonial African literary *canons*. Yet, read from the proverbial perspective highlighted by Newell, these texts, and the overall Ghanaian ‘market’ literature, hide deeper literary practice and merit, since “each quotation from another narrative is in fact a *reapplication* of it, a *refraction* rather than a reproduction of an established framework” (ibid. 20 my italics).

Even though in her study Newell does not establish connections between Ghana’s popular narratives and the writings of its ‘elite’ novelists, such as Kofi Awonoor, or Ayi Kwei Armah, other critics before her have established this link. The first of these critics is no other than the Nigerian critic Emmanuel Obiechina, who is among the first scholars to display keen interest in African popular market literature. In his study *African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets* (1973), he claims that even though the popular authors write for semi-literate masses and publish their works locally, their literary impulses remain the same as those of Africa’s international novelists, who target a sophisticated audience and publish mostly in Great Britain (9). Furthermore, Obiechina considers that there is at least an “oblique influence” of the local publications on the fictions of the educated writers, since, in his view, “the existence of literature for the masses acted as a spur to intellectually sophisticated Nigerians to produce more sophisticated forms of literature for more sophisticated readers” (ibid.).

The conclusion reached by Obiechina regarding Onitsha market pamphlets extends to Ghana’s popular writings as well. This connection is established by Richard Priebe (1978) in his investigation of popular writings in Ghana: “Ghana did experience a literary renaissance [i.e. as far as popular publications are concerned] similar to the one in Nigeria roughly a decade earlier. Kofi Awoonor, Joe de Graft, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Joseph Abruquah published their most important works to date in this period” (1997: 85). The common concern over the issues of private and public morality, the health of the

state and social well-being are the ground in which, according to Priebe, the elite and popular African literatures meet each other. This concern was more pronounced during the period of literary renaissance, i.e. the 1960's, when the national context was one of social unrest and economic and political turmoil. At that time, the main theme of popular novellas, such as E. K. Mickson's *Woman Is Poison*, was that, in order to have a good, well-ordered life, one must lead a morally clean life (ibid. 87). Such a moral concern is shared by two major elite novels published at the same period, namely Armah's *The Beautiful Ones* and Awoonor's *This Earth my Brother*. The only difference between the two kinds of narratives lies, according to Priebe, in the sophistication the elite writer brings to his/her artistic medium and the mythic dimension of his novels (ibid.). In other words, popular and elite writings in Ghana seem to the critic to share the same themes, but to diverge at the levels of generic form and mode of writing. However, this insight is quite short-sighted, since it is impervious to the elaborate formal writing strategies and processes utilized by the two groups of writers. Indeed, as the review of Newell's study above has shown, these writing processes quoted extensively from foreign generic and discursive forms and reworked their quotations in the light of the proverbial dimension of traditional native culture. In the process, they produced hybrid genres and discourses that served as advice giving spaces, and fulfilled didactic and moral purposes*.

Karin Barber's *Readings in African Popular Culture* (1997) is the other study that permits us to sustain further the hybridity paradigm upon which we intend to embed Armah's texts. In her "Introduction", Barber takes stock of the conclusions reached by cultural historian Roger Chartier, whose survey of sixteenth and seventeenth century French texts led him to believe that it is impossible to find "strict correspondences between cultural cleavages and social hierarchies," and that what may rather be found is

* In praise of the African market literature, it is enough to quote the words of Kwame Anthony Appiah, who considers that the vigorous development and growth in the continent's popular productivities is the best "antidote to the dark vision of the post-colonial novelist" (cited in Barber 1).

“fluid circulation, practices shared by various groups, and blurred distinctions”. “Lower echelons of society,” Chartier writes “made use of motifs and genres that were never considered specific to them; and elites only slowly distanced themselves from common culture” (Chartier quoted in Barber *ibid.* 3). Hence, Barber deduces that the simple opposition between popular versus *savant* culture is of a limited use in the African modern context, where

the ‘high’, if it exists at all, is not the prerogative of an ancient ruling class but of a fragmented, precarious, conflictual new elite, defined by its proximity to an outside power, but nonetheless bound up with local populations by innumerable ties of kinship, language, community membership and patronage. The ‘people’ are neither the rural, idyllically remembered ‘folk’ nor the industrial proletariat (...). Rather, they are unstable congeries of differentially defined groups, linguistic, ethnic, occupational, and religious, only thinkable as a category in that they are excluded from the privileges of the political, business and military elites (*ibid.* 3-4).

In the quote above, Barber utilizes the blurred boundaries between Africa’s ‘elite’ and ‘popular’ cultures to demonstrate two theses: one, the centrality of African popular culture as a field within which “pressing concerns, experiences and struggles” are articulated, and in which forms of consciousness and self-understanding are developed; two, the dismissal of the traditional ‘binary paradigm’ which keeps categorizing African literature into two separate compartments, and which, in her opinion, is incapable of grasping the actual “cultural activities, procedures, and products of the majority of people in present-day Africa.” In dismissing the western-based dichotomy between erudite and popular culture in Africa, Barber shows that the genres of popular culture “are not repositories of some archaic ‘authenticity’: on the contrary, they make use of all available contemporary materials to speak of contemporary struggles. But they are not mere products of ‘culture contact’ either, speaking about –or to- the West that has corrupted them. They are the work of local producers speaking to local audiences about pressing concerns, experiences and struggles that they share” (*ibid.*2).

Barber's disruption of the boundaries between elite and popular literature in Africa serves well our purpose in the present dissertation, for it sustains our hypothesis as to the hybrid aspect of the modern African literature even when the (elite) African writer claims the contrary. This hypothesis is supported by numerous other articles included in *Reading in African Popular Culture*, such as Bogumil Jewsiewicki's, Mamadou Diawara's and Ulf Hannertz's. All these articles plead for a hybrid reading of the contemporary literary experience in Africa, by arguing that, due to the colonial historical momentum, this artistic experience is not a homogeneous one. It is rather a multi-faceted experience, wherein African creativity absorbed and digested the colonial cultural shock. To borrow the words of Bogumil Jewsiewicki, the division of African culture "into two poles –modernity and tradition, separated by the colonial conquest- sidesteps the problems of appropriation –of Africa's cultural and intellectual cannibalization of the West" (103). By cannibalization, Jewsiewicki refers to the early works of native cultural intermediaries, such as religious and artistic creators, who explored an idea of the West right from the first contact with the colonial powers, and integrated it into their world vision without losing their identity (ibid.). In the post-colonial context, the development of an African nationalist and international literature behaved in the same way as these cultural intermediaries by widely appropriating and abrogating from the literatures of the West.

By placing the intertextuality of Armah's novels within the context of the Newell's hybridity paradigm of popular proverbial quoting, we intend to break a new ground for the revision of the previous criticism on modern African literature, in general, and Armah's fiction, in particular. One of these theses is Richard Priebe's study *Myth, Realism and the West-African Writer* (1988) which argues that Armah's fictions, and the fictions of most second generation African writers like Wole Soyinka, fall within the gambit of mythic consciousness, whereas realism and the proverb (standing for the continent's oral poetics)

is peculiar to first-generation writers like Chinua Achebe*. Unlike Priebe, we think that the proverb is part and parcel of the discourse of the second generation of African writers like Armah, even when this popular maxim is not inspired by oral culture. For the first generation of writers, the proverbial lore comes directly from the oral tradition, and proverbs are there to serve as structural props or anecdotes giving local colour to the narrative. But in the case of the second generation writers, the quotable/proverbial material is not restricted to the local oral tradition; it extends to western texts, discursive models and narrative templates which it extensively quotes and inflects to assert the authors' rights to use proverbs like their elders. The gap between the first and the second generation of African writers explains the tendency of the latter for a proverbial imagination, wherein intertexts replace proverbs as aesthetically structuring devices.

Because hybrid discourse, both in its organic and intentional varieties, involves the mixing of different voices, including oral and scriptible texts, and because proverbs writ large in African culture, we think that it is appropriate and judicious to round off our investigation of the proverbial, hybrid space of Armah's novels with a poetics of orality and a poetics of proverbs. The former will serve to account for the interplay of the verbal and written discourses in his narratives, whereas the latter will highlight the creative process through which Armah refashions his textual borrowings into proverbs and makes them fulfil functions similar to the proverb in traditional culture. To begin with, Paul Zumthor's *La lettre et la voix* (1987) is a study of European, medieval, oral texts, which is likely to help us highlight the interplay of speakerly and writerly texts in Armah's discourse. It is an investigation which attempts to recover the vocal understanding of oral tradition by

* Richard Priebe's study (1988) is premised on the idea that the development in modern Western African novel results from two rhetorical modes of writing: the ethical and the mythical. Central to both rhetorics is the idea of identification with /alienation from society. Thus, the first mode belongs to the first generation of African writers, and Achebe is its best exponent. It is realistic and popular. It can also be extended to characterize popular writers' texts, whose artistic idiom is as ethical as Achebe's. The second mode belongs to Africa's second generation of writers, such as Armah, Soyinka, Awoonor ... etc. It is metaphorical and paradoxical. It involves an attitude of reclusion from society similar to that of the Western modernist writer.

evoking the voice of the performance and moving through linguistic and paralinguistic forms. Assuming that the task of medievalists is “de se convaincre des valeurs incomparables de la voix (... which) existent qu’à chaud, indépendamment des concepts dans lesquels force est bien de les emprisonner pour les décrire” (ibid. 20), Zumthor also claims that his study found inspiration and dynamics in “la consideration de cette beauté intérieure de la voix humaine, ‘prise au plus près de sa source” (ibid. 20-1). The virtues of the oral performance are thus found in the ‘beauty of the voice,’ borne, as it is, by the “vocal style”:

Au moment qu’elle l’énonce, la voix transmute en “icône” le signe symbolique transmis par le langage: elle tend à le dépouiller, ce signe, de ce qu’il comporte d’arbitraire; elle le motive de la présence de ce corps dont elle émane; ou bien, par un effet contraire mais analogue, avec duplicité elle détourne du corps réel l’attention, dissimule sa propre organicité sous la fiction du masque, sous la mimique de l’acteur, à qui pour une heure elle prête vie. A l’étalement prosodique, à la temporalité du langage la voix impose ainsi, jusqu’à les gommer, son épaisseur et la verticalité de son espace (ibid. 21).

Zumthor’s passion to exalt the utterance and re-evaluate oral arts is conducted in spite of his belief that the retrieval of the beauty of the voice from the silence of the written document is an impossible task. What rather gives substance to his critical endeavour is his belief that this beauty remains socially and historically conceivable, because “elle unit les êtres et, par l’usage qu’on fait d’elle, elle module la culture commune” (ibid.). Thus, after long centuries of scriptural culture, the medieval texts exist as ‘objects of sensorial perception’, deeply enshrined in that “sorte de mémoire, toujours en retrait, mais prête à intervenir pour faire résonner la langue, et presque à l’insu du sujet qui l’aurait comme apprise *par coeur*” (ibid.).

Zumthor’s *manifesto* for the virtues of vocality is matched with an interesting exposé on the birth and development of the European ‘scriptural’ literature, and more precisely the genre of the novel. The latter seems to stand for a (written) genre, which works to ‘strangle’ the voice and disclaim the oral tradition. Yet, Zumthor contends that the novel appeared between 1160-1170, at the junction of orality and scripture (ibid. 300), at a time-period tightly linked to the oral tradition, which is one of its sources of

inspiration (ibid. 301). As for the vernacular writer of that end of the twelfth century, he was always moving between “la voix et l’écriture, entre un dehors et un dedans: il entre, s’installe, mais conserve le souvenir mythifié d’une parole originelle, originale, issue d’une poitrine vivante, dans le soufflé d’une gorge singulière” (ibid. 308). This predicament describes well the predicament of the African novelists, whose novelistic stance offers an instance of a hybrid discourse, that conspicuously and purposefully blends the poetics of the traditional African orature with the scriptural genres and discourses of the West.

The orality of African culture often involves the use of proverbs. According to Ruth Finnegan’s *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), proverbs occur almost everywhere in Africa (389). They are part of a widespread feeling for language, imagery and the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology. A common feature of all these popular maxims is their figurative mode of speech which abounds in metaphor. However, compressed, figurative phraseology, or terseness and picturesque form of speech, is not the only form taken by proverbs since, still according to Finnegan, the concept of the proverb is often conflated in many regions, including the Ashanti of Ghana, with story and techniques of expression (ibid.391). The polysemy and the versatility at the core of the social and cultural concept of the proverb and its use enable it to fulfil important functions in the African culture, ranging from socio-utilitarian functions, such as settling disputes and driving crucial points to a discussion, to mere aesthetic functions linked to the speaker’s desire to embellish his discourse. In the light of these utilitarian and aesthetic functions of proverbs in Africa, our study of the proverbial aesthetics in Armah’s work will always attempt to put his quotable materials into their context within his narrative in order to infer the functions they assume in it.

Our intention to investigate the subject of hybridity in Armah’s first novels requires also from us to refine the definition of this concept. This task is not an easy one, especially as the concept of hybridity in recent scholarship has become a *porte-manteau* term that encompasses a lot of definitions ranging from cultural, literary, linguistic, and

anthropological studies. For this sake, we deem it appropriate to take stock of definitions that broaden the scope of this theoretical paradigm. One such definition is provided by Nederveen Pieterse who writes that hybridity follows older themes of syncretism in anthropology and creolization in linguistics. Pieterse also adds that, in cultural studies, hybridity denotes “a wide register of multiple identity, cross-over, pick-‘n’-mix, boundary crossing experiences and styles, matching a world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive international communication, everyday multiculturalism and erosion of boundaries” (221). This definition espouses the pro-hybrid ideology of the author. Nevertheless, it underlines the main theme of every hybrid construction, which is no less than the meeting of ‘opposites’, even when it amounts to clashes and disruptions.

Robert Young is another scholar who has hit upon one important aspect of hybridity, when he declares that it “involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining” (22). Hence, in its discursive form, hybridity is a category of discourse that denotes the juxtaposition of opposites which keep defining each other. This feature characterises also cultural hybridity which consists, still in Young’s words, “of a bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulations” (ibid. 26-7). Accordingly, we can say that an utterance, or a discourse, offers an instance of hybrid construction each time it involves two opposites within its limits; opposites that qualify one another and keep denoting the simultaneous meaning of conflicting hostility and creative integration.

The present investigation of the subject of linguistic and cultural hybridity in Armah’s novels will attempt to go over the different manifestations of the subject in the narratives of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, and *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. To this end the dissertation will be divided into three parts, comprising three chapters each. The first part will have as its

main object Armah's first fiction. It will purport that this novel merges two kinds of discourse: the organic, or the linguistic, and the intentional hybrids, and foregrounds a proverbial space that is deeply steeped in the Market writers' popular mode of expression. In the first chapter, we shall be concerned with the proverbial space in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. By proverbial space, we mean Armah's intertextual practice through which he turns his borrowings from Western master-texts, such as Wordsworth "Intimation of Immortality", Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, and Yeats's "The Second Coming", into proverbs and metaphors that fulfil didactic functions within his narrative. The second chapter will involve *The Beautiful Ones* with Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. It is intended as a further illustration of the linguistic hybridity of Armah's text and an extended commentary on the proverbial nature of his narrative.

In the third chapter of the first part, we shall demonstrate that, even though *The Beautiful Ones* seems, to borrow Achebe's words, "full of foreign metaphors", it remains deeply informed by an anti-colonial sentiment through which it attempts to dismantle the discourse of Imperialism. This point of view will be sustained through a comparative study between *The Beautiful Ones* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The comparison of *The Beautiful Ones* with *Heart of Darkness* will illustrate how Armah's mobilization of traditional oral performances work as satiric interfaces which intentionally hybridize his discourse and contest by means of parody the racialist assertions implicit in Conrad's imperialist discourse.

The second part of this dissertation will study *Fragments* in order to establish the hybridity of its genre and discourse. The main assumption which will be sustained in the first chapter of this part is that Armah's second novel reads as a Menippean satire, whose discourse is built thanks to Armah's hetreglottic representation of his social environment and the dialogisation of the discourse of some of his fellow African writers, namely Efua Sutherland. The comparison of *Fragments* with Sutherland's short story, "New Life at Kyerefaso", will be followed by two chapter-length comparisons. In the first of these

comparative studies, we shall demonstrate how Armah, in the fashion of most Ghana's popular writers, appropriated one of Shakespeare's plays, namely *Hamlet*, fused its story with his novel's plot, and employed the character type of Hamlet in order to develop a sustained discourse on the liminality of the postcolonial artist and to draw the transient, corrupt atmosphere of post-Independence Ghana. Next to this chapter, we shall examine how Armah found inspiration in the modernist narrative techniques deployed in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in order to write a fiction which projects the contradictions in African socio-cultural reality, accounts for the crisis in modern African culture and explores writing possibilities that answer the African writer's search for originality of expression. However, the anchoring of *Fragments* within modernist aesthetics will not be fulfilled at the expense of his individual talent and the (oral) literary tradition to which he belongs. Instead, the theme of the trickster will be given prominence in the analysis in order to show how it structures Baako's search for a postcolonial sense of togetherness and to illustrate one manifestation of the concept of cultural hybridity in the narrative.

The third and last part of the study will be devoted to three of Armah's middle novels. These are *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. All these novels are controversial fictions that have won the applause of African nationalist critics and the blame of Western reviewers. Our objective in subjecting the three novels to the discursive categories of hybridity is to demonstrate that, whatever Armah's radical responses to the cultural interchanges brought about by the colonial momentum are, his radical fictions are nonetheless deeply intertextual, since they interact positively and organically with many western narratives.

Why Are We So Blest? illustrates perfectly Armah's tendency to quote extensively from Western texts and generic models in order to foreground a proverbial space and produce a hybrid discourse similar to the popular fictions of local Ghanaian writers. In the literary scholarship about Armah, it has already been demonstrated that this fiction

sustains comparisons with many Western novels, such as Sartre's *La Nausée*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, etc. The first chapter of the third part will submit it to two other comparisons: one, to Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, in order to show how Armah borrows and inflects the genre of the diary novel; two, to Carson McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, in order to investigate how and why Armah employs chunks of its discourse about love in his fiction.

As Armah's fourth novel marks a move in his literary ideology towards the philosophy of history and its ideology, so the second chapter of the third part will attempt to go over the epistemic creation through which he revised Western versions of African past and construed a new ideology of African history. In our opinion, it is the framework of Puritan Salvation history which has enabled him to chart an original, epic version of African past. *Two Thousands Seasons* substantiates this borrowed framework by deploying a dense intertextual narrative designed, either to contest by parody some narratives of Western Imperialism, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, or to appropriate by stylization other narratives, native or foreign, such as Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* or William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

The ultimate chapter of this thesis will involve a comparison between *The Healers* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* over the issue of mimicry. A narrative of adventure and identity, Armah's fifth novel appropriates the same genre as Kipling's fiction to the extent that its hero's quest for identity seems to be a mere re-application of Kipling's main character's adventure. However, the organic hybrid language deployed in this novel is rapidly overtaken by an intentional hybrid discourse which dismantles Kipling's strategies of colonial desire and attempts to assert an authentic African identity, untouched by the cultural manipulations of the English colonizer. This attempt to construe an authentic cultural identity is sustained by the narrative's move towards myth-making and the imagining of a native community of healers animated by a strong belief in the pan-African ideal.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Aidoo, Ama Ata. "Introduction". *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. New York: Collier Books, 1969.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. "Larsony, or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction". *Asemka*, 4, September, 1976.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. 1981. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.
- Barber, Karin. "Introduction". *Reading in African Popular Culture*. Ed. Karin Barber. London: the International African Institute, 1997.
- Booker, Keith. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998.
- Jewsiewicki, Bogumil. "Painting in Zaire: From the Invention of the West to the Representation of Social Self". *Reading in African Popular Culture*. Op. cit.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fictions: Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life & other tales*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. *An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets*. Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition". *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 18. London: Thousand Oaks, 2001.
- Priebe, Richard. "Popular Writing in Ghana: A Sociology & Rhetoric". *Reading in African Popular Culture*. Ed. Karin Barber. London: the International African Institute, 1997.
- Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. Unpublished Doctorat d'Etat. University of Algiers, 1998.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Zumthor, Paul. *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale*. Paris : Seuil, 1987.

Part One:

The Proverbial Space, Intentional and Organic Hybrid Discourses in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

Introduction:

*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born** (1968) is probably Armah's novel that best illustrates the hybrid aesthetics of his discourse. However, even though it is the most studied of all his fictions, and probably also his most controversial novel, critics have failed to recognize this aspect of its text. The review of the criticism about this novel shows that Armah's critics have never gone farther than pinpointing cases of intertextuality between this novel and Western fictions, and then condemning/praising Armah for his different borrowings; condemnation/praise that depend most of the time on the ideological orientation of the critic. Actually, in front of the dystopian world described in the narrative, the critical reception of the novel did not seem to have worked in sophistication: critics either expressed their disagreement with Armah's artistic choices and orientation, or praised the courage and the fierceness with which he tackled the post-colonial 'African condition'. The two groups of critics deployed extensively the theories of criticism and literature that were available during their time in order to sustain their points of view about the novel. These critical and theoretical paradigms borrowed from different schools of thought, ranging from the mytho/psycho-poetic, Marxist-formalist, and structural theories of criticism, to the Afro-centric approach to Africa's traditional verbal arts. However, as we have already explained in the General Introduction, even though the bulk of this criticism touched upon important aspects of Armah's narrative, it

* Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. 1968. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988. Further references will be included between brackets within the body of our text.

did not succeed to single out his creative inspiration and identify the writing process through which he merged and blended different discourses and literary traditions within his text.

The reviewers who decried *The Beautiful Ones* were mostly Africans, whereas those who extolled it were primarily Western. All in all, the assessment of the African criticism of *The Beautiful Ones* shows that it was moved by *meta-literary* considerations, and that its critical impulse sprang from the reviewers' nationalist belief in African cultural and political revival, a revival that had, in Achebe's words, no "good reason for going into a phase of despair. The worst that we can afford at present is disappointment" (24).

Unlike their African colleagues, Western reviewers went on praising *The Beautiful Ones* and hailed it as a work of candid sensibility, whose candour can be found only in great Existentialist authors, such as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre*. These critics did not also fail to underline the thematic as well as stylistic parallels that this narrative shares with the Western modernist novel. Definitely, for Western reviewers, *The Beautiful Ones* is a subjective introverted novel that evokes the modernist visions of alienation, degeneration, and nightmare. For them, Armah is the African novelist who has succeeded in 'aligning' the development of African fiction on the same line of development as that of the Western novel (quoted in Riche 1998). Decoded, this assertion amounts to recognizing implicitly the superiority of Western *Welt literature* over African arts, and ensure the

* In his "Africa and her Writers" (1975), Achebe went opposite his Western colleagues by decrying the underlying existential philosophy of the novel, and arguing that it is far from being an African novel, because it is steeped in the alien philosophy of the Absurd. The same premise was endorsed by Danièle Stewart (1988), who developed further the argument about the existentialism of Armah's novel. But unlike Achebe, she did not discuss the authenticity of Armah's philosophy, and devoted the bulk of her study to the illustration of how the African writer has broken ground in African literature in nearly the same condition as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. The criticisms of Stewart and Achebe are thus good illustrations of how two critics may endorse the same premise and reach different, not to say opposing, conclusions.

perennial reliance of African letters on Europe, i.e. the colonized always in need of the colonizer.

Ama Ata Aidoo, Armah's fellow Ghanaian woman novelist, was at the head of the African critics who vilified *The Beautiful Ones*. In her Collier-MacMillan introduction to the novel (1969), she expressed her disavowal with Armah's scatology and declared that it was not necessary for him to hammer in every page Ghana's smells and excrement (1969: xi). Aidoo went further, and blamed Armah for mental short-sightedness: "what is clear, then, is that whatever is beautiful and genuinely pleasing in Ghana or about Ghanaians seems to have gone unmentioned in *The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born*" (ibid. xii). Today, Aidoo's genuine objection to the novel's scatological imagery continues to be the major reproach against Armah's first novel. In addition, the issue of the narrative's borrowing from different traditions and its amalgamation of texts continue to stand for the major source of controversy in the appraisal of its artistic value.

More exhaustive and more controversial than Aidoo's insights is Charles Nnolim's study (1979) of the cosmic vision carried in *The Beautiful Ones*, in relation to the modernist and symbolist apocalyptic worldviews. In his "Dialectic as Form: Pejorism in the Novels of Armah", Nnolim maintains that Armah is "both a cosmic pessimist [who views the world as inevitably and intrinsically bad and life in it essentially gloomy and futile], and a retrogressive pessimist or *pejorist* [one who views the world as undergoing an inevitable corruption and degeneration]" (207). Armah's supposed 'cosmic' generalisations over the inevitability of corruption and decay buttress the main arguments of Nnolim, who rounds off his insight with parallels between Armah's novel and Dante's *The Inferno*. For the critic, Armah is a "cosmic pessimist", whose creative vision "reveals a delight with scenes of defeat, frustration, disappointment, loss" (ibid.), comparable to the *fin-de-siècle* decadent writings, such as those of the Goncourts, Verlaine, Pater and Conrad.

By emphasizing the parallels between Armah and decadent poets, Nnolim adopted a comparative perspective that tends to swamp a lot of Armah's art, and obliterate most, if not all, its African originality. Indeed, however striking the analogies between *The Beautiful Ones* and the other works mentioned by Nnolim, they can never do justice to the complex blending of traditions achieved in the novel and the wholesomeness of Armah's vision. For numerous are the examples from the narrative that suggest possible sources of hope. Fraser (1980) examined some of them and suggested that the novel ought to be read as nothing more than a "determination to see things straight" (15). He also extended the scope of his criticism in order to read the narrative, not just against the context of post-Independence disillusionment in which it was published, but against "a backdrop of centuries of oppression, a recurring cycle of despair" (ibid. 26). Fraser concluded his book-length study of Armah's work by reminding that one of the fundamental premises of the novel's ontology is contained in Teacher's belief that "out of the decay and the dung there is always a new flowering" (p.85).

Besides Fraser, many other critics have gone beyond the excremental scatology of *The Beautiful Ones* and have attempted a positive assessment of the ontological vision carried in it. For instance, Neil Lazarus likened Armah to the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and observed that both are interested in change. This analogy has led the critic to argue that the novel "is formulated upon the premise that it is only by knowing one's world, by seeing it for what it is, that one can ever genuinely aspire to bring about its revolutionary transformation" (Lazarus 48).

However, the most systematic investigations of the structure of imagery of *The Beautiful Ones* are those carried by Keith Booker (1998) and Bouteldja Riche (1998). The two critics have countered a lot of the charges levelled against the excremental imagery of *The Beautiful Ones* by relying on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque. Thus, for Booker, Armah's treatment of the grotesque body is similar to Rabelais's interest in the 'material bodily lower stratum,' since it suggests a "dynamic interaction with the world"

that “thrusts the subject directly into the contemporaneous flow of history” (111). In addition, Booker explains that, just like Rabelais’s use of the body as a transgressive challenge to the hierarchical society, Armah, too, appeals to scatological imagery in order “to subvert [Africa’s corrupt] official hierarchies” (ibid.).

Riche’s *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah’s Fiction* (1998) is a study that has detailed further the issue of grotesque in *The Beautiful Ones* and subjected it to ample scrutiny. In the view of the author, seen from Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque, the grotesque imagery of Armah’s novel transcends nihilism and mere satirical purposes, and provides the optimistic vision of the author. His positive assessment of the narrative’s scatological imagery relies on Bakhtin’s ideas of the carnivalesque and the positive grotesque images of the world and the body involved in the carnival. As a subversive mode of literary transgression, Bakhtin’s philosophy of the carnival reads like a set of image-borne strategies meant solely to destabilise the official worldview held by the circles in power. These iconoclastic strategies are played within a merry time, which implies no nihilism, and presents an optimistic philosophy implicit in the popular conception of the world. The optimism peculiar to carnivalesque merriment stems from the fact that carnival time is a medium of renewal which describes the historical world and the popular body in a constant process of becoming and change.

However documented are Riche’s and Booker’s investigations into the dialogism of *The Beautiful Ones*, we think that they have not pushed enough Bakhtin’s episteme of the carnival in order to account for the hybrid nature of Armah’s discourse. By hybridity, here, we mean both the organic and the intentional hybrids sorted out by the Russian scholar in his study of the novelistic discourse. It is true that, in reading Armah’s first fiction as a dialogical novel, Riche has succeeded to highlight the polyphonic aspect of Armah’s discourse. However, to discuss Armah’s borrowing of ‘foreign metaphors’ (Achebe 26) solely from the ‘intentional hybrid’ discourse is to disregard the whole development in popular genres in Ghana’s market literature since the 1930s, and during all the

Renaissance period of the 1960s. Such oversight of the popular dimension of Armah's individual talent necessarily leads to an unbalanced assessment of his fiction, which justifies Achebe's negative reaction towards his first novel, when he considered him as an "alienated native [writing like a] white District Officer" (26). Therefore, one of our tasks in this part is to restore what was trimmed off from Armah's art, by fitting him within the popular tradition of Ghana's market literature. This task will be conducted with reference to Bakhtin's categories of organic and intentional hybrids, and Newell's exploration of the proverbial writing mode of the African popular fictions. It will first lead us in the first chapter to highlight the proverbial space in Armah's fiction (i.e. his quoting mode of writing), and then to the comparison of his novel to two Western master-texts, namely Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Our aim in enlisting the two fictions and engaging the two comparisons in two different chapters is to illustrate Armah's merging of organic and intentional hybrid discourses in his first narrative. Indeed, it is our contention that the first novel by Armah involves a poetics that is both organically and intentionally hybrid. In other words, intentional and organic hybrid discourses interweave and overlap in *The Beautiful Ones* and create a narrative whirlpool that is self-consciously textual.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Aidoo, Ama Ata. "Introduction". *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. New York: Collier Books, 1969.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. 1981. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.
- Booker, Keith. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998.
- Fraser, Robert. *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah. A Study in Polemical Fiction*. London: Heinemann, 1980.
- Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fictions: Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life & other tales*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Nnolim, Charles. "Dialectic as Form: Pejorism in the Novels of Armah". *African Literature Today*. 14, 4 (1983).
- Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. Unpublished Doctorat d'Etat. University of Algiers, 1998.

Chapter 1:

***The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born,* Proverbial Hybrid Discourse, Carnival and Ghanaian Popular Fictions**

As stated in the above Introduction to this Part, Achebe's response to *The Beautiful Ones* in his "Africa and her Writers" is one of the fiercest assaults on Armah. To synthesize his arguments, we can say that, for him, the novel lacks realism in narrative style, characters and setting. Thus, the Man, "pale and passive and nameless [is ...] a creation in the best manner of existentialist writing" (25); "Ghana is unrecognisable" (ibid); and Armah "imposes so much foreign metaphors on the sickness of Ghana that it ceases to be true" (ibid. 26). Ultimately, there is "enormous distance between Armah and Ghana" that, one day, he would probably end up writing "like a white District Officer" (ibid.).

Achebe's complaint about Armah's narrative style and themes reminds us of a similar criticism marshalled by another African critic, namely Ime Ikiddeh, against the fiction of a well-known Ghanaian popular novelist, Benibengor Blay. In his commentary on the latter's *Emelia's Promise and Fulfilment* (first published in 1944, and then republished in 1967), Ikiddeh wrote that Blay

shows a lack of realism in setting, character and attitude that must shock present-day Ghanaian audiences ... If Canadians and New Zealanders have been stunned by what they now recognise as the colonial slavishness of some of their early writers then Blay perhaps deserves more than pity (quoted in Newell 15).

To a great extent, Achebe's criticism of *The Beautiful Ones* shows a similar embarrassment at Armah's imagery; for him, his fiction is replete with "foreign metaphors" that reflect the author's "universalistic pretensions" (25). Achebe's point of

view seems also to spring from the same nationalist sentiment as Ikiddeh's, for he could well have charged Armah of "colonial slavishness", as Ikiddeh had done for Blay. However the 'father of African letters' is ignoring the fact that, to paraphrase Newell, Armah did not mean his narrative to be original or realistic, as he himself meant his narratives to be. True, Armah uses abundantly foreign metaphors; but his imagery does not merely replicate his borrowings. Instead, the quoting dynamics of his discourse reinserts his quotations in a proverbial space that most of the time connotes local meanings, consistent with his artistic designs. In this way, he always invites his readers to extrapolate his (marked and unmarked) quotations, and to project their meanings on their own life.

It is very likely that the literary conflict between Achebe and Armah over the issue of representation of Africa is at the heart of Priebe's argument that the two writers' novels depute from different rhetorics, respectively the ethical and the mythical. Actually, even though the critic's penultimate chapter details the ethical orientation of Ghana's, urban-based literature, he does not seem aware that Armah's poetic imagination is traversed by the same creative and ethical impulse as the one behind local writers' creativity. It is true that most of the comparative criticism accumulated to date about *The Beautiful Ones* has focused mainly on the Western (decadent, modernist and/or existential) inspiration of Armah's first novel and has seen it as a case of literary influence that resists comparison to mainstream African literature. However, unlike this criticism, we surmise that Armah's first novel is also a proverbial narrative in line with the popular African aesthetics of proverbial quoting. It quotes extensively from foreign texts and re-functions its borrowings within an organically hybrid discourse that sometimes leads to the opening up of advice giving spaces, which enable Armah to fulfil a similar function related to the use of proverbs in traditional African culture.

The presence of proverbs in Armah's novel is not a farce that we want to force upon the text of his first novel. In his "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel" (1993), Emmanuel Obiechina has already established how proverbs, as cultural manifestations of

orality, maintain their presence within the text of some African novelists, including Armah's. According to the scholar, one aspect of the interplay of the oral and literary traditions in the African novel is "the phenomenon of the story-within-the-story or the narrative proverb" (124). The narrative proverb refers to oral stories such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, anecdotes, ballads, song-tales etc. It intervenes in the narrative matrices of prose narrative fictions and performs organic and structural functions (ibid.). It demonstrates that the African novel is not the sole product of its writer's individual consciousness: "the story when used as a proverb is drawing upon group habits of speech and narration as a means of giving shape to experience, drawing upon what could be called the populist impulse in art and life" (ibid. 125).

Though Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is the novel that best exemplifies the tendency of the African novelist to deliberately fuse oral narrative proverbs, Obiechina succeeds also to illustrate his thesis in *The Beautiful Ones*. Among the self-contained stories embedded in this narrative are, for example, the story of the chichidodo bird, through which the main character's wife mocks at his integrity, and the narrative of the old manchild, which provides a parody of Ghana's rapid decline. These two examples elicit the strength of the oral impulse in Armah's first novel. They also bring irrefutable evidence that using proverbs as devices which explore life in terms of its functional and ethical values looms large in his aesthetics. Therefore, Armah's art's orientation towards a proverbial aesthetics invites an in-depth investigation of the way he re-fashions his borrowing from Western texts to create a proverbial space wherein chunks of intertextual discourse, metaphors, images and symbols function like proverbs in traditional culture.

Contrary to Obiechina's study, our present chapter will not record the traditional narrative proverbs embedded in *The Beautiful Ones*. Instead, we are interested in the writing process through which Armah inserts in his narrative chunks of discourse, borrowed from Western texts, and reutilizes them to generate new meanings consistent

with his thematic and artistic designs. In our view, this writing practice deutes from a popular impulse, which constituted Armah's 'scene of instruction'. It is true that proverbial quoting from Western master-texts does not send its roots in the oral tradition in Africa and is limited to the writings of the urban, semi-educated elites of the Continent. However, this is not a reason to sideline its authenticity, or to disclaim its originality. In fact, the tendency towards proverbial techniques in popular pamphlets and fictions pertains to the same sense for language and verbal expression inherent in the folk oral culture; it demonstrates that, within the realm of proverb use, the grounds of African oral tradition and its popular literature touch upon each other. This is the reason why, in the following investigation, our analysis will put the stress not so much on the origins of Armah's quoted materials as on the way he incorporates the imported textual resources and the didactic functions he assigns to his intertexts.

The readers who are familiar with Armah's *The Beautiful Ones* can miss neither his extensive quotations from some Western master texts, nor the allegorical quality of his plot. Right at the opening chapter of the narrative, Armah enlists a quotation from the Bible and reinstates it in the context of his narrative in order to create a new meaning: "*And so words and phrases so often thrown away as jokes reveal their true meaning. And Jesus wept. Aha, Jesus wept*" (p. 4 italics in the original). This quotation comments on the sense of guilt which overtakes the corrupt bus driver, when his eyes meet the Man's "wide-open, staring eyes" (p. 3). It achieves intertextuality with the Bible, which it uses as a master-text. At the same time, it also asserts the proverbial dimension of Armah's borrowings, since it situates the narrative in a didactic space, rather than a realist one. In this perspective, it is easy to inscribe the whole novel in the genre of *Ananesesem*, or Ghana's traditional moral fables, which are no less than 'advice-giving spaces', dynamically spilling in the realm of local African proverbs.

However, Armah's borrowing from the arch-text of the Bible is not always used in the context of his narrative as authoritative discourse. In another context of the novel, the

narrator proceeds to the description of “the shitman” (p. 104), i.e. the latrine man who is in charge of cleaning the railway block’s lavatories, and follows his description with an italicised quotation from the Bible: “*The last shall be the first. Indeed, it is even so*” (p. 104). Taken in its context within the novel, this Biblical quotation reads like a sardonic commentary that deflates the authority of its master-discourse and, in Keith Booker’s words, “both challenges the official seriousness of the Bible and also uses the biblical passage to suggest a possible inversion of the existing power structure” (111).

In our opinion, Armah’s use of the two biblical statements above is paradigmatic of his complex quoting mode from other Western texts. In the fashion of most Ghanaian market writers, his, too, is a hybrid discourse, which draws authority from a multiple set of genres and language registers. However, unlike these popular writers who engage narrative resources chiefly for demonstrating their proficiency in the art of quoting others, Armah inserts quotations as forms of both a creative organic fusion that merges different styles, and a dialogised subversion that destabilises and contests certain modes of representation and master-discourses. In this way, Armah’s novel seems to espouse Bakhtin’s concepts of intentional and organic hybrids, without ever favouring one of them at the expense of the other.

The Beautiful Ones is replete with other quotations from foreign master-texts and narratives. Teacher and the Man are the characters through whom the author displays his proficiency at quoting from other sources in order to secure a proverbial space of his own. Teacher is described as an alienated individual deeply immersed in foreign cultures and arts. During his conversations with the Man, he usually tells him about other cultures and philosophies. For instance, one day, he describes his loneliness through Plato’s story of the cave. Teacher identifies himself with Plato’s philosopher who ventured outside the cave, and encountered the world of colours and light. His identification with the figure of the myth confers to him the status of an advice-giver, who may orient his audience towards

certain decisions. Obviously, Armah's designs in drawing the portrait of Teacher* as similar to Plato's philosopher are didactic. They are meant to meet the same ethics as the moral standards, which guide the behaviour of the main character, the Man. The latter, too, belongs to the moral type of characters, and his position in the novel as the morally virtuous requires from him, and through him Armah himself, to display skills in proverbial quoting, which are likely to confer to his behaviour public acceptance, and ensure artistic authority to Armah.

Many other examples illustrate Armah's use of quotations, even though they are not always marked as quotations *per se*. For instance, in one of the Man's frequent meditations on his surrounding environment, he recalls the story of a friend of his named Rama Krishna because of his desperate attempt to escape the final decline and disintegration of the body. The remembering of the tragic story of this Ghanaian reincarnation of the Indian deity triggers in the mind of the main character some lines from Gibran's *The Prophet*, which read as follows

Would that you could live on the fragrance of the earth,
And like an air plant be sustained by the light.
But you must kill to eat,
And rob the newly born of its mother's milk to quench your thirst,
Let it then be an act of worship (p. 48).

What Armah's evocation of Rama Krishna and his quotation from *The Prophet* aim at is the fulfilment of a proverbial function, through which he claims legitimacy as a writer, and enforces the moral designs inherent in his fiction. For *The Beautiful Ones* is a novel that is deeply permeated by a moral sensibility, and strongly committed to the denunciation of the social evils, which plagued African governments and societies after Independence. Armah's quoting from Gibran's poem enables him to draw on a mode of discourse which is easily recognisable and culturally familiar to his African readers.

* In our view, Teacher is a didactic figure more at home within the traditional image of the African advice-giver than with the modernist alienated artist, with whom most of Armah's critics tend to assimilate him.

The marked quotation of Gibran's poem and the invocation of Rama Krishna are only two illustrations of Armah's tendency to write like most of his young Ghanaian contemporary popular writers. Even though they hold no pivotal position in the novel's structure of imagery, these quotes show that Armah was eager to incorporate and fuse deliberately a wide variety of marked and unmarked quotations within the body of his text, creating dynamic meanings with local connotations.

To appreciate further the hybridised discourse of *The Beautiful Ones*, we suggest scrutinizing Armah's use of the metaphor of the gleam. The latter is a metaphor that structures most of his narrative's imagery, and which has its origin in a Western master-text, namely William Wordsworth's poem *Intimations of Immortality from the Recollection of Early Childhood* (1806). The Gleam image is also the source of a stock of expressions which significantly contribute to the enforcement of the moral and ideological designs of the novel. Among this stock of expressions, we can mention the following sententious utterances which function at a metaphorical level and allude to the skills that enable Koomson and his likes to rise in social and political hierarchy: "hero of the gleam", "hardness that the gleam required", "power of the gleam". To this stock of phrases, we can also add the following statements which function as larger commentaries on the new social ethics in independent Ghana and are marked by a certain poetic quality in style and sense similar to proverbs: "the gleam, in moments of honesty, had a power to produce a disturbing ambiguity within" (p. 10), "time to sail with a beautiful smoothness in the sweet direction of the gleam" (p. 46), "there would always be only one way for the young to reach the gleam. Cutting corners, eating the fruits of fraud" (p. 95). Inscribed in all these expressions is a sense of irony and sarcasm, which is one of the foremost functions fulfilled by traditional proverbs. Ruth Finnegan writes: "irony and sarcasm as a way of getting at someone is, of course, widespread in many forms, but the proverb is a particularly a good way of conveying this" (411). Armah's overall borrowings from Wordsworth's poem further illustrate this idea.

Armah's critics have been prompt to acknowledge the importance of the gleam metaphor to the imagery of the novel and register the thematic potential carried through it. For instance, Margaret Folarin (1971) has connected the gleam to the pivotal image of the cave, and thus to a wider web of light and shadow images, demonstrating that the gleam is no less than "the light of a Hades" (118). Unlike Folarin, John Lutz (2003) has gone in a deeper analysis, and linked this image to the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism, arguing that the allure of the gleam results into cultural and psychological impoverishment of the natives. Beside Folarin and Lutz, many other critics have been interested in the symbolic potential of this metaphor and explained it in terms of the widespread materialism, corruption and economic dependency decried in Armah's novel. What all these critics fail to register is the textual provenance of the metaphor and the way Armah reprocessed it in a local fashion in order to create new meanings and open up a proverbial space, consistent with the didactic orientation of his fiction.

The metaphor of the gleam is not the only conscious echo Armah sends to Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*. In the opening lines of Chapter Six, Teacher's reminiscences involve an idea which holds intertextual relationship with the poem

Why do we waste so much time with sorrow and pity for ourselves? It is true now that we are men, but not so long ago we were helpless messes of soft flesh and unformed bone squeezing through bursting motherholes, trailing dung and exhausted blood. We could not ask then why it was necessary for us also to grow. So why now should we be shaking our head and wondering bitterly why there are children together with the old, why time does not stop when we ourselves have come to stations where we would like to rest? It is so like a child, to wish all movement to cease (p. 62).

The quote above contains overt allusions to the following lines from *Immortality*

Ode

Our birth is but a sleep and forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
(...)
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day (247).

The themes of birth, of growing up, and of mourning that bind the two passages are far from being accidental; they are wilful cases of a quoting process which yields structural and thematic similarities. That Armah's text is associated with the *recollections* of Teacher, *the man of the cave*, strengthens further their intertextual bond, since Wordsworth, too, appealed to Plato's myth of the cave in order to explain his own estrangement from nature. The question, now, is to know how Armah strategically selected his borrowing from Wordsworth's poem and activated it in a proverbial fashion that contains within itself insights, judgement and/or warnings, just like proverbs do. To understand some insight of this aspect of Teacher's reminiscences, a survey of the poem's meaning is needed.

Intimations of Immortality can be read as an ode which celebrates the child's communion with nature and mourns the loss of innocence that accompanies his growth. In the opening line of the poem, Wordsworth writes: "(t)here was a time when meadow, grove, and stream / The earth, and every common sight, / to me did seem / Apparelled in celestial light." The celestial light stands for a sense of illumination and wonder, which resulted in a deep sense of the unity of the beings, and created a strong intimate bond between the child, i.e. the author, and nature. However, growing up erased the poet's childhood memories and broke his sense of harmony with the world of nature. At the end of Stanza IV, i.e. the elegiac part of the ode, the poem breaks into a pathetic tone, wherein Wordsworth pathetically wonders: "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" What remains of the poem is an attempt by the poet at answering these two questions. His answer leads him to develop a theory of birth, growth

and death inspired by Plato's myth of the Cave and his philosophy of the transmigration of the soul. This theory stipulates that life on earth is a dim shadow of an earlier, purer existence, dimly recalled in childhood, and then forgotten in the process of growing up. From this belief, Wordsworth invokes the joy and blessing of memory, which stands for no less than the remnant "ember" of youth's "visionary gleam". Its spark of inspiration is the light by which man can overcome his exile from the primordial world of perfection, and finds consolation in the "years that bring the philosophic mind" of adult life.

Read through Wordsworth's youthful revolutionary aspirations, *Intimations of Immortality* can be considered as an 'escapist' response to his growing disillusionment with the French Revolution. During his youth, he travelled to France, married a French woman, and both witnessed and supported the popular storming at La Bastille that led to the fall of the French monarchy and the establishment of the first French Republic. Like most of his contemporary intellectuals, such as Coleridge and Southey, he believed in the ideals of liberty, brotherhood and equality proclaimed by the French masses. And when the French King was dethroned, he composed a poem entitled "The French Revolution" (1805), and celebrated the event as a new dawn for mankind, wherein humanity would be redeemed from political tyranny

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very heaven! Oh times!
In which the meagre, stale forbidding ways
Of custom, law and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance (131).

However, the bloody turn of events taken by the French revolutionary change and the rise of Robespierre to power, and all the cruelties that followed the political extremism of the Jacobins, profoundly shook Wordsworth's beliefs and led him to take his distance from all kinds of political commitment. And when he composed his *Intimations of Immortality*, he had already become a political and moral sceptic, whose philosophy was deeply confined within escapist and domestic themes of nature and childhood. His deep

scepticism and utter disillusionment offer striking parallels to Teacher's reminiscences in *The Beautiful Ones*.

The textual connections between Teacher's remembrances and Wordsworth's autobiographical experience in "Intimations of Immortality" are the outcome of Armah's active reading of Wordsworth during his studies at Harvard. In his *African Textualities* (1997), Lindfors has shown the extent to which the Ghanaian writer engaged the English Romantic poetry during his university years. In his study of Wordsworth, Lindfors writes, Armah was struck by the poet's inability to remain faithful to his youthful revolutionary aspirations. For him, the English poet's cardinal quality, during his counter-revolutionary period, was "the desire not to create or be involved in any disturbance: the desire for peace and quiet" (cited in Lindfors 1997, 72). This judgement seems to speak of the same propensity for reclusion and dejection as the ones which describe Teacher's thoughts and sentiments in *The Beautiful Ones*.

Both Teacher's and Wordsworth's memories are overshadowed by a deep sense of estrangement from nature / society, and the isolation that ensue it. Moreover, both are deeply disappointed with their present condition; a disappointment that is the result of an enthusiastic commitment to a (political) ideal, deceived and betrayed. However, these surface parallels between Wordsworth life-experience and the figure of Teacher hide deeper meaning, since Armah's conflates the poet's experience and his poem's philosophy into a structural allegory* of Ghana's modern history. At the same time, he also deflates his "splendid vision" of harmony and unity, by erasing every kind of joy and happiness and debunking both the 'visionary' potential of the gleam, and the soothing power of memory.

Armah's allegory of Ghana's modern history associates the country's independence with the birth of a child. However, this birth is described in scatological terms, which borrow from a grotesque mode of writing: "not so long ago we were helpless messes of soft

* One should not miss, here, the fact that allegories are didactic narratives that can easily be equated with the same propensity contained within proverbs.

flesh and unformed bone squeezing through bursting motherholes, trailing dung and exhausted blood”. The grotesque bodily images of ‘blood’, ‘flesh’ and ‘motherholes’ play down the child’s celestial birth in *Intimations of Immortality* and comments obliquely on Ghana’s newly acquired independence*. Initially, this event was a source of hope and joy for the people, who were happy to get rid of a colonial domination that lasted for many decades and drained a lot of its natural resources. But the enthusiasm generated by Independence rapidly faded, and the Ghanaian masses started to decry Kwame Nkrumah, the charismatic leader who led them through the path of freedom. Teacher illustrates well this popular disillusionment. His former passionate support for Nkrumah has turned into a scornful dismissal of the whole country’s political elite, and his belief in the nation’s regeneration through freedom has resulted into an anomic condition that intimates weakness, despair and disenchantment with life in general. Thus, his reminiscences, recorded in Chapter Six of the novel, voice his lost faith in modern Ghana, and express his melancholic sense of lost meaning.

In his reminiscences, Teacher does not dwell too much on the un-kept promises of Independence, because he sees it as an aborted birth. Instead, he lays the stress on the unnatural historical cycles of growth which hasten decomposition and decay: “[n]ow, whenever I am able to look past the beauty of the first days, the days of birth, I can see growth [...] How horribly rapid everything has been [...] There is something of an irresistible horror in such quick decay” (p.62). Here, the insight is that Independence is just a transient event, not worth too much praise. What matters is rather the “quick decay”. Teacher illustrates well this idea when he stresses the unnatural length of the life-cycle that cripples the modern history of Ghana: “let us say just that the cycle from birth to decay has been short. Short, brief. But otherwise not at all unusual” (p.63).

* The oblique reference to Ghana can be perceived through Armah’s consistent use of the “we” pronoun instead of “I”, all through the opening paragraphs of Teacher’s reminiscences.

Teacher intends his words as a commentary on the rapid decline of the Ghanaian society after Independence. This decline is given a metaphoric image through the grotesque story of the manchild, which completed all the natural cycles of birth, growth, and death in seven years and died a natural death. The weird story of this freak is an overt allusion to Nkrumah's regime, whose rule lasted seven years, before a military coup ousted him from power. In the narrative, the manchild reflects the career of the socialist minister Joe Koomson, who started his life as a miserable man working in the docks. Taking profit from the political muddle of Independence, Koomson joins the Party and becomes rapidly a man of power and influence within the government. Yet not long after his political and material success, Koomson is overtaken by the military coup and compelled to escape from the country, leaving all his material possessions behind him.

In describing the natural processes of birth and growing-up as grotesque and scatological processes, Armah re-employs his borrowing from Wordsworth's poem within an ironic, sarcastic register and creates new themes that both fit his post-colonial allegory of disillusionment and serve his claims of legitimacy as a young writer. His tendency to turn the unmarked quotations from *Intimations of Immortality* into morals and proverbs that ironically comment on the country's history is endorsed again with the metaphor of the gleam. In Wordsworth's poem, this metaphor stands for the celestial light that accompanies the child's growing-up, and which disappears with the advent of adult life. If Wordsworth associates it with the period of infancy, it is because, like most romantics, he believed that childhood is a lost paradise, an age of innocence and benevolence. Wordsworth's childhood in the rural area of Lake District might thus have appeared to him idyllic enough to be associated with an ideal primordial world of light, analogous to Plato's philosophy of pre-existence. But this is certainly not the case of Teacher, and through him Armah himself, whose mind "is disturbed by memories from the past";

memories that convince him that “so much time has gone by, and still there is no sweetness here” (p. 67).

Teacher’s dissatisfaction with his past memories is due to the fact that his is a past of both colonial violence and political struggle ending in betrayal and deception. The colonial trauma, together with the disillusionment with Independence, fostered bleak images in the mind of Teacher and his friend the Man. The two characters seem to have grown cynical enough to cast every kind of hope aside. But this is not the case of their fellow countrymen, who seem to have found their salvation in the gleam. For the majority of Ghanaians, the gleam is a symbol of hope; just like in *Intimations of Immortality* it symbolizes the continuous positive interaction with the natural world. However, for Teacher and the Man, the gleam stands for debased material promises that perpetuate the people’s dependence on Western imported products, and the corrupt means of ‘cutting corners and eating the fruits of fraud’.

Armah’s appropriation of the image of the gleam from Wordsworth’s poem and his refraction of this image in his narrative endow it with an ambivalent meaning that speaks of both the dream of independence and its betrayal. In other words, Armah refracts the metaphor of the gleam in order to draw a thematic line of continuity between the colonial past and the post-colonial present. The continuity between these two periods shows in the African fetishistic interaction with the goods of the West, since the first days of colonial encounter. In the distant past, it was the ancient chiefs who had sold their people “for the trinkets of Europe” (p. 149). But in the post-colonial present, it is the pursuers of the gleam who are selling their country’s Independence for the same commodities. Hence, as symbols of dependence and decadence, Mercedes cars, perfumes, first-class hotels, etc are all avatars of the Western ‘trinkets’ that once enthralled pre-colonial tribal chiefs and kept them under the sway of European technology.

* This sentence of the novel freely quotes the title of Ama Ata Aidoo’s *No Sweetness Here*, and is further evidence of Armah’s quoting mode of writing.

To synthesize Armah's re-application of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality", we can say that his borrowings from this poem fulfil two functions in *The Beautiful Ones*: one, a structural function through which Armah re-employs the poet's conception of the child's celestial birth in order to ironically comment on the history of independent Ghana; two, an intertextual function whereby he quotes from the poem's text chunks of discourse and keeps transforming them to generate and signify new meanings. The sense of irony that the African writer attaches to his re-inscriptions of the romantic poet's discourse shows that he positions himself outside the poem's romantic language. By thus positioning himself, he disallows the poem's optimistic tone and problematizes the ideological point of view which dresses African Independence with a eulogistic rhetoric and presents it as the dawn of a new era in the Continent. For him, the rise of dictatorship in the post-independence period perpetuates Africa's servility to the West and confines it within the same cycle of decadence as the one which had already caused it to fall to European powers.

The disappointment and exhausted vision carried within Teacher's experience call another comparison, this time between *The Beautiful Ones* and T. S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*. This autobiographical poem of repentance and penitence, published after Eliot's conversion to Anglicanism, is a statement of spiritual hopelessness and loss. What characterizes it is the poet's withdrawal into himself and to his past in order to take radical decisions away from the world he had once so much cherished. Much of the poem is, therefore, a stream of meditative thoughts, similar to Chapter Six of Armah's novel, drawn in an archetypal, religious language register. It involves metaphors of memory and desire that much recall Teacher's experience and resolutions in *The Beautiful Ones*.

Helen Gardner writes that *Ash Wednesday* deals "with the mortification of the natural man, the effort to conform the will. [...] There is anguish both at the exhaustion of feeling and its recrudescence, at loss and at feeling loss, at not desiring and at still

desiring” (230). Eliot’s mortifications and the movements of his heart and mind to end all desire are conveyed by the first two stanzas of his poem

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know
The infirm glory of the positive hour
Because I do not think
Because I know I shall not know
The one veritable transitory power
Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again

In this opening passage, the poet conveys the intensity of his resolution to renounce the pleasures of his previous life and never to stray from the new way he has embraced by converting into Anglicanism. The image which imparts the sense of his resolution not to be enticed again by desire is the abstract image of hope: “Because I do not hope to turn again/ Because I do not hope”. Hope, here, assumes an ambivalent meaning, which speaks of both desire and despair. As a manifestation of despair and disappointment, it relates to the narrator’s desire to end all desire, to repudiate the old optimistic self, and never succumb to the longings for joys and inspiration from the world of experience, the outer world of men. But as a form of desire, it signals the convert’s resolution to break with the past, his wish to turn his thoughts inward, and his search for the kinds of change the soul must undergo in order to achieve true penitence. By thus repudiating hope, Eliot narrows the scope of his vision and withdraws into a personal, subjective realm of existence. This form of existence creates in him a kind of emotional detachment that sharpens his sense of himself and makes his past assume clarity which was not accessible to him before.

Frustrated hope, break with the past and the desire not to be enticed by family and the wider outside world are also the plights that predicate Teacher's condition in *The Beautiful Ones*. Like Eliot's narrator, Teacher invests his plight in the same hope image. In a conversation with his friend, the Man, he tells him that he no more believes in hope: "No. not any more. Not hope, anyhow. I don't feel any hope in me any more. I can see things, but I don't feel much. When you can see the end of things even in their beginnings, there is no more hope, unless you want to pretend, or forget, or get drunk or something" (p. 61).

In this passage, too, the image of hope stands as the objective correlative which connects and binds the ideas of desire, retirement, forgetting and despair. Teacher says that, while his loss of hope has sharpened his understanding of the external world, it has also killed all his senses' perceptive powers. He also adds that the absence of desire has made him a living dead who walks without any faith in himself and in the future: "No. I also am one of the dead people, the walking dead. A ghost. I died long ago. So long ago that not even the old libations of living blood will make me live again" (p. 61). In confining himself in a cave and in repudiating family and relatives, Teacher becomes as lonely as Eliot's speaker: "As I am forgotten/ And would be forgotten, so I would forget/ Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose". Stuck in their private places, both characters consider that their salvation resides in the purgative power of forgetfulness, loneliness and mortification. In this sense, what Northrop Frye writes about the experience and despair of Eliot's narrator applies equally well to Teacher: "the narrator is not content however with the chagrin of ordinary experience: he wants to kill the ego, reduce it to scattered bones in a desert, pulverize it on Ash Wednesday into the dust from which it came. He descends from despair founded on disillusionment to despair founded on reality, the despair of finding anything in the past worth clinging to" (233).

The image of descent from one kind of experience to another entailed in the above quote refers to the image of stairs mentioned in the third stanza of *Ash Wednesday*. It is

worth quoting the passage at full length, because it contains many images, metaphors and symbols which are also fed into the text of *The Beautiful Ones*, where they fulfill important thematic and structural functions

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below
The same shape twisted on the banister
Under the vapour in the fetid air
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair
I left them twisting, turning below;
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair,
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
[...]
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair.

The image of stairs above alludes to stages in the poet's memory's struggle to renounce all hopes. A spatial, allegorical image which stands for the purgatory, it is written in a grotesque language and a dreary tone. Described as a place of darkness and terror, it involves archetypal motifs of sterility, shadow, and death. Eliot presses this nightmarish vision through different spatial, colour, visual and abstract images, such as the 'shape twisted on the banister', the 'dark' stair, 'an old man's mouth', 'fetid air', etc. Overall, these images combine to convey the shrinking in the poet's world and the visions of torments that face his ascent in the Purgatory. It is very significant that Armah summons the same structure of imagery in his novel, associates it with different characters and re-functions it into extended metaphors that comment on different themes.

The images of 'stairs', 'banister' and 'shadow', pinpointed above, are presented at the end of the third chapter of *The Beautiful Ones*, when the protagonist leaves his work place at the railway station and proceeds to his home: "the man began to descend the *stairs*. In his tiredness it did not matter that his thumb and the balls of his fingertips were

being clammily caressed by the caked accretions of the *banister*. As he went down a *shadow* rose up the bottom wall to meet him, and it was his own” (p.34 my emphasis). It is very enlightening that such a small portion of Armah’s text employs three key images, all of which flesh out Eliot’s archetypal image of the Purgatory. It is true that the literary context of the two passages seem to differ significantly, since Eliot uses his imagery in a symbolic way, whereas Armah intends it in a realist fashion. However, this is so only if we obliterate the symbolic dimension of Armah’s protagonist’s action.

If the Cave is Teacher’s private Inferno, it is all Ghana which stands for the Man’s purgatory. In this sense, his working place, home, and even the bus and Teacher’s place, are all stations in the purgative process he undergoes, and which culminates at his symbolic ritual cleansing when he emerges out of the sea at the end of the novel. Regarded as such, his actions acquire a symbolism in which correspondences between the motifs of his spiritual journey and Eliot’s narrator’s quest for penitence are never trivial or fortuitous. Take for example the image of stairs. It is not a mere spatial image; it is the symbol of descent and/or ascent through which the protagonists transit from one purgative stage to another. As for the banister, it is the area wherein important struggles take place: between hope and despair, in *Ash Wednesday*; between wood and rot in *The Beautiful Ones*. Armah phrases the terms of this strife in another, lengthy passage, which we quote here only partially

It would be impossible to calculate how much polish on how many rags the wood on the stair banister had seen, but there was certainly enough Ronuk and Mansion splashed there to give the place its now indelible reek of putrid turpentine. What had been going on there and was going on now and would go on and on through all the years ahead was a species of a war carried on in the silence of long ages, a struggle in which only the keen, uncanny eyes and ears of lunatic seers could detect the deceiving, easy breathing of the strugglers (p.12).

In this portion, Armah invests the metaphorical war between wood and rot with a paradigmatic function that comments on the struggle between the forces of justice and corruption in Ghana. The ethical meaning involved in the metaphor informs the wider, cosmic generalization into which Armah uses his borrowing and creates new meanings.

Definitely, if Eliot battles against hope and despair in his chosen purgatory to free himself from all earthly temptations, Ghana fights against corruption and decadence, the daily bread of her citizens after Independence, which freeze her within a marginal, dependent position and prevent her from achieving the desired freedom.

The same thing can be noticed about the other images of 'old man's mouth' and 'fetid air' in *Ash Wednesday*. Both are representations of death. They enforce a dreary and grotesque atmosphere and intimate the other ideas of darkness, degeneration and putrefaction that so pervade the Purgatory. Armah re-employs them to comment on Koomson's state when he is persecuted by army soldiers. At this moment, at the Man's house, the fugitive minister is described as a bodily and social waste ready to be ejected by the latrines. His dissolution and collapse are mainly suggested by his mouth's foul smell which fills the air of the room with a stinking stench. Armah writes: "his [Koomson's] mouth had the rich stench of menstrual blood. The man held his breath until the new smell had gone down in the mixture with the liquid atmosphere of the Party man's farts filling the room" (p. 163). It is the Man's ordeal in this statement to face Koomson's fart, just as it is Eliot's narrator's plight in *Ash Wednesday*, to confront the grotesque and frightening landscape of the Purgatory. The analogy in the metaphorical language in the two texts evinces the African writer's writing practice which consists of cobbling together the grotesque images of Eliot's poem in order to represent the decadent aspects of modern Ghana and the tribulations of his main characters. Armah pursues further this writing practice by summoning and organically re-inserting other modernist poems' imageries, namely Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1925) and W. B. Yeats's *The Second Coming* (1919). The presence of the former poem's metaphors within the narrative of *The Beautiful Ones* has already attracted the attention of some critics, who assessed its meaning in relation to Eliot's picture of the lifeless and chaotic despair of modern living. As for the latter poem, rare are the critics who seem to have noticed Armah's investment of its text and his refashioning of its discourse into chunks of proverbial quotations.

The analysis of the text of *The Beautiful Ones* through the concept of organic hybrid discourse of Onistcha writers enables the extension of the study of Armah's borrowings from Western master-texts to his refraction of Yeats's *The Second Coming* (1919). The poem is a sardonic expression of the tortured and sinister condition of post-World War One Europe. It emphasizes images of disintegration and degeneration, and mirrors an apocalyptic vision, which intimates the idea of the impending destruction of civilization. Its orientation towards the images of bleakness, alienation, and dislocation sets it among modernist experimental works that best express Western modernist authors' discomfort with their culture, and the spiritual void of modern times.

Armah reprocesses Yeats's poem to project two meanings in the forms of metaphors. The first of these metaphors is that of the old bus, which opens the narrative. Armah describes it as an old decrepit bus, "held together by too much rust ever to fall completely apart" (p.1). The reference to Yeats's "[t]hings fall apart; the centre cannot hold" cannot be missed here. The image / trope of disintegration contained within the two passages works as a commentary on post-independent Ghana. Armah refracts it to suggest that colonization has eroded the country's energies, as World War One had already destroyed twenty centuries of Christian faith. What remains, therefore, is just an old, crippled society, misguided by its own failure to fulfil the dream of Independence.

Yeats comments on the spiritual abyss in which Europe was thrown after the War by foreseeing the coming of the Antichrist, the embodiment of evil and destruction. This vision of the apocalypse is echoed by the following line from the poem: "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?". Implicit in this line is also the second coming of the Christ himself, clearly suggested by the title of the poem itself. Taken together, the two images develop two apocalyptic Christian beliefs: the announced destruction of the world caused by the Antichrist, and the redeemed world healed by Christ, respectively.

At the end of his novel, Armah reworks Yeats's prophecies by borrowing the image of (re)birth and commenting on the popular expectations of the Ghanaians. His borrowing is recast in the form of a popular motto carefully written behind a new bus that the Man watches on his way back home, at the closing chapter of the novel. The motto, written in green and lettered in the form of an oval shape, simply declares that "THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN" (p.183). This popular motto is a clear example of proverbial quotation that can be extended into a cluster of interpretations. Its association with the new bus, which itself invites an easy parallel with the first old bus, deepens the insight of the reprocessed maxim and suggests other thematic concerns, more at home within Armah's actuality. Indeed, in drawing the respective images of the old and the new buses at the opening and closing chapters of the novel, Armah evokes a cyclical view of history, similar to the Irish poet's philosophy. However, in refracting the birth image of "The Second Coming" and its master-trope of disintegration / redemption, he distances his literary ideology from Nkrumah's regime, whose leadership sought legitimacy in the Christian myth of the Saviour, *Osagyefo* in Akan.

Because of the massive presence within Armah's discourse of what we have identified above as Biblical, romantic and modernist, in one word Western, imagery, the readers of *The Beautiful Ones* are scarcely aware of the Akan oral popular performances, whose imagery feeds and structures its plot and pulls the whole of his refracted quotations into its discourse. For the readers who are more cognisant with western literature than African oral tradition, the poetic voice of the traditional performance in this narrative seems to be the least obvious, the least vocal, as if, to paraphrase Paul Zumthor, its presence "eût répugné à se laisser capturer dans (Armah's) métaphores, inspirées par une hantise du discours prononcé, linéaire et homophone" (22). In this way, all of Armah's 'foreign' metaphors seem to generate in his text what Zumthor calls "une écriture aliénante" (ibid. 308), i.e. a writing that tends to estrange its author from his community, as opposed to the traditional story-teller whose art is always attuned to the community to

which he performs. However, seen from the perspective of the interplay of orality/vocality and writing, *The Beautiful Ones* transcends most of the alienating effects of its western-based imagery, since the kind of popular material summoned by Armah inscribes the whole narrative in a “modèle performanciel” (ibid.), i.e. a dramatic model which manifests the prominence of the verbal performance and displays a plurality of tones, themes and discourses. The inscription of the written text (of any novel) within the perspective of (oral) performance being one of the three procedures that enable a writer to proclaim the immanence of the voice (Zumthor, ibid. 309), we can say that Armah confers unity, cohesion and stability to his narrative by invoking the poetic voice peculiar in the traditional Ashanti Apo festival and the purgation rite involved in it. Armah’s mobilisation of the Apo celebrations and the carrier ritual functions in the novel as a kind of “une mémoire, toujours en retrait, mais prête à intervenir pour faire résonner la langue, et presque à l’insu du sujet qui l’aurait comme apprise *par coeur*” (Dragonetti, quoted by Zumthor, ibid. 21 the author’s italics). In this respect, Armah, who has been qualified as one of Africa’s foremost modernist alienated novelists, appears also to be an interpreter / performer of Akan oral culture.

The association of the Apo festival with oral popular performances is asserted by Eva Meyerowitz, whose collection of the different variations of the festival shows that it has to do with “the death and resurrection of the fertility goddess, who is remembered at the seasons of sowing and harvesting”. During all the week that the festival lasts, from ‘Destructive’ to ‘Exalted Friday’, songs are also sung in order to remind the royals of their vulnerability to social criticism. William Pierson reports the following satiric song which ridicules the authority of the royals:

All is well to-day
 We know that a Brong man eats rats
 But we never knew that one of the royal blood eats rats.
 But to-day we have seen our master, Ansah, eating rats,
 To-day all is well and we may say so, say so, say so.
 At other times we may not say so, say so, say so (1999: 351).

The lampooning liberty that characterizes the above song and the whole Apo satiric celebrations were also stressed by an old Ashanti priest to Captain Sutherland Rattray: "(... our forebears) ordained a time, once every year, when every man and woman, free man and slave, should have freedom to speak out just what was in their head, to tell their neighbours just what they thought of them and their actions, and not only their neighbours, but also the king or chief" (154). This testimony shows that the Apo has a satirical, lampooning, and comic quality. Besides, during the festive ceremonies of the ritual, the political power of the official authorities is suspended, in favour of carnival and popular liberties. Hence, the celebrants are allowed to sing freely the faults of their superiors and voice their resentments without the fear of punishment, especially as one characteristic of the festival involves the Queenmother and the King themselves, who receive a volley of insults from the celebrants who reproach them for all the mischief they are thought to have committed during the year. This subversive quality peculiar in the Apo custom is also underlined by Robert Pelton, who described it as "the great Ashanti feast of (foolery,) reversal and cleansing".

The Apo celebrations are accompanied by a purgation rite whose aim is to symbolically clean the community from its dirt. This purgation ritual involves the image of an apocalyptic figure who undertakes the ritual task of cleansing his society from its spiritual dirt, and removing its waste in order to allow the rejuvenation of the whole community. Thus, the ritual carrier is always associated with a scapegoat role, a kind of African untouchable. During all the time that he performs the task of ritual purification, he observes ritual passivity, which makes him look like a ritual effigy. At the same time, he is insulted, beaten, thrashed, and imputed the sins and mischief of the others. He is also considered a taboo object, and people avoid contact with him, patiently waiting from him to fulfil his ritual performance.

Armah uses the ritual of the carrier to highlight his protagonist's action. In the narrative, he alludes to the carrier prototype through the figure of the latrine man, described in the following passage:

There is not much light, but not much light is needed to tell one that the man with the shitpan heavy on his head has an unaccustomed look of deep, angry menace on his face, and his eyes are full of drunken fury. Perhaps the smell of akpeteshie would be bathing him if he were not carrying this much stronger stench with him. Surely that is the only way for a man to survive, carrying other people's excrement; the only way must be to kill the self while the unavoidable is being done, and who will wish to wake again? It is not such a usual thing to see the shitman coming at this hour of the morning. The shitman is a man of the night and the very morning, a man hidden completely from the sight of all but curious children and men with something heavy on their minds in the darkness of the night. And it is not such a usual thing to see a latrine man up close.

The last shall be first. Indeed, it is even so. (pp. 103-4 italics retained)

That Armah draws on a cyclical view of history and sets his narrative on the eve of Nkrumah's regime's fall are other indications of his figurative exploration of the carrier's ritual process. Tracking the Man's behaviour to the sources of this ritual, Derek Wright presses the view that Armah "has chosen to see the last weeks of the accelerated but now torpid cycle of the Nkrumah regime in terms of the traditional year-end, when the old year's lethal burden of pollutive sins and resulting misfortunes is ritually borne away by a carrier" (1992: 125). Wright also adds that the Man is the novel's true but unacknowledged carrier (ibid. 126) who, unlike the latrine man or the night sweeper, is in charge of delivering the "unconquerable filth" of society at large.

Armah's mobilisation of traditional Ashanti Apo carnival and the carrier ritual attendant to it involves the merging of different styles and voices within the boundaries of his discourse. At the same time, it also implies complex writing strategies, through which he reprocesses his borrowings, generates new meanings from his source-texts, and ascribes to his discourse political functions of subversion. The syncretic plurality of tones and voices and the subversion of official hierarchies are characteristic features of the carnival. In this context, Bakhtin writes:

[the carnival] is a syncretic form of traditional character, that puts itself on display ... Carnival turns the world upside-down. The laws, prohibitions, and limits that determine the habitual order of life are not in force for the duration of the carnival. This applies above all to the hierarchical order and all forms of fear, reverence, piety, and etiquette that emerge from it.... Carnival unites, mixes, and marries the sacred with the profane, the high with the low, the great with the small, the wise with the foolish.

This means that the carnival is the heterogeneous combination of different modes of discourse (such as the grotesque and the hybrid, satire and parody, polyphony and ambiguity), the representation of un-canonical imagery (such as the imagery of the lower stratum of the body and its instincts), together with the expression of eccentric, abnormal and indecent forms of behaviour that violate good manners and social rules. In other words, for Bakhtin, the carnival is a festive time when traditional hierarchies of political authority (such as the Royals and the Priests) are played down, not to say simply suspended, and in which all forms of powers are vested on the folk institution of the carnival. This feature applies well to the Apo ritual, where Victor Turner has identified a dramatization of secular, political and legal social relationships, involving “a reversal of secular social status, (wherein...) social inferiors are privileged to upbraid and lampoon their “betters” (1979: 470).

Armah's reference to the Apo ritual time is contained within the context of the celebrations of “Passion Week”, introduced on the first page of his novel. The carnival time of Armah's Passion Week hides references to two festivals which take place almost simultaneously in Ghana: the Christian Easter Holy Week and the Akan Apo festival. However, Armah's dramatization of the Christian festival is not meant to render the official Easter ritual that celebrates the resurrection of the Christ. Instead, by juxtaposing it with the Apo commemorations, Armah's Passion Week offers a travesty of the Christian annual festival of Easter into the Gospel story of the mock crowning, uncrowning, and scourging of the ‘king of the Jews’. For, while the Christian rite celebrates the resurrection of the Christ, the African festival is meant to mock at the authority of the King and give sacrifices to the fertility god during the celebrations of Resurrection Day. Hence, Armah's

ritual time in *The Beautiful Ones* is a hybrid time, which, to borrow Robert Young's words, "consists of a bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulation" (26-7). In other words, Armah's hybrid carnival is an example of doubleness that brings both fusion and separation, and involves both coalescence and antagonism: seriousness and laughter, celebration and mockery, death and renewal.

Armah's juxtaposition of the local Apo festival with the Christian Holy Week brings into poetic contextuality two kinds of discourse within his narrative: a 'native' oral and grotesque discourse and a western canonical one. The simultaneous presence of these two discourses results in counter-discursive strategies of desacrilisation through the use of the grotesque scatology, and informs the parodic aspect of his discourse. Parody is a form of intertextuality that develops, according to Bakhtin, on the boundary between cultures and languages, i.e. situations of hybridity. According to Bakhtin, parody is part and parcel of the carnivalesque strand in ancient Greek and Roman writings, and belongs to 'parodic-travesty literature' which constituted "a special extra-generic or inter-generic world," unified by the common purpose of providing "the corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward genres, languages, styles, voices; (forcing) men to experience beneath these categories a different and contradictory reality that is otherwise not captured in them" (Bakhtin 1992: 59).

The juxtaposition of the Easter religious celebrations with the satiric commemorations of the Apo festival and the dramatization the carrier ritual are, thus, some of the major features which assert the hybridity of the discourse of *The Beautiful Ones*. In what follows, we intend to flesh out further our claim as to Armah's quoting mode of writing by fitting his novel's discourse within Ghana's popular writings. Our task will involve a comparative study between *The Beautiful Ones* and Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The comparison is intended to substantiate further the hybridity of his

discourse and its proverbial space. It looks to demonstrate that his intertextual references are dynamic intertexts that offer diverse interpretations, all at home within the social functions fulfilled by proverbs in traditional culture.

References:

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988; New York: Collier Macmillan, 1969.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Booker, Keith. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998.
- Eliot, T. S. *Ash Wednesday*. <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/ash-wednesday/>
- Folarin, Margaret. 'An Additional Comment on Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*'. *African Literature Today*, 5 (1971) : 116-128.
- Frye, Northrop. "Ash Wednesday". *T. S. Eliot's 'Prufrock', 'Gerontion', 'Ash Wednesday' and Shorter Poems*. Ed. Southam, B. C. Palgrave Macmillan, 1978.
- Gardner, Helen. "Ash Wednesday". *T. S. Eliot's 'Prufrock', 'Gerontion', 'Ash Wednesday' and Shorter Poems*. Op. Cit.
- Lindfors, Bernth. *African Textualities: Texts, Pretexts, and Contexts of African Literature*. Asmara: Africa World Press, 1997.
- Lutz, John. 'Pessimism, Autonomy, and Commodity Fetishism in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*'. *Research in African Literature*, 34 (2003): 94-111.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fictions: Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life & other tales*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel". *Research in African Literatures*. 24 (1993): 123-140.
- Piersen, William D. "A Resistance too Civilized to Notice". *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin(g), & Slum Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Ed. Gena Dagel Caponi. University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

- Rattray, Sutherland. *Ashante*. Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. Unpublished Doctorat d'Etat. University of Algiers, 1998.
- Turner, Victor. "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 6, 4 (1979).
- Wordsworth, William. 'French Revolution'. *Selected Poems*. 1805. London: Penguin. 1996.
- '. 'Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. *Selected Poems*. 1806. Op. Cit.
- Wright, Derek. "Motivation and Motif: The Carrier Rite in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continent Press, 1992.
- Yeats, William Butler. "The Second Coming". *From Sidney to Sillitoe: An Introduction to English Literature*. Ed. F. Grellet and M-H Valentin. Paris: Hachette, 1984.
- Zumthor, Paul. *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale*. Paris : Seuil, 1987.

Chapter 2:

Proverbial, Hybrid Discourse, Ostentation and Success in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *The Great Gatsby*

This chapter pursues the same objectives as the previous one; it intends to further expound the proverbial space at the core of the narrative discourse in *The Beautiful Ones*. To achieve this aim, we shall position Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby** as the hypotext of Armah's novel and investigate the intertextual relationship that binds them together. By engaging the textual similarities between the two fictions, we will show how Armah borrowed Fitzgerald's narrative template and his discourse about wealth and success and, in the fashion of Ghana's local novelists, reprocessed his borrowings into an organic hybrid, proverbial discourse and an allegorical form. In other words, the present chapter further fleshes out the proverbial space in *The Beautiful Ones* by illustrating how Armah appropriated images and character types from *The Great Gatsby* and refracted them in proverbial intertexts that dynamically comment on the morality and behaviour of his characters.

To appreciate the appropriateness of Armah's linguistic insertion of Fitzgerald's text, and to understand some insights into the proverbial discourse that results from his appropriation, a review of the two novelists' respective biographies and their social, political and cultural backgrounds is required. The comparison of the two writers' enabling conditions will not only strengthen a possible literary affinity between the two novelists, but it will also demonstrate that Armah has had a conscious recourse to

* Francis Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, (1925, London: Penguin, 1994). All references to this novel will be indicated between brackets within the body of our text.

Fitzgerald's text and has established with it a formulaic linkage, through which he evokes the contradictions of his society and presses his satiric insights upon the neo-values of independent Ghana. The parallels between the two authors' respective life experiences show clearly that both were disillusioned writers, who wrote in contexts of disenchantment. Their disillusionment grew out of former hopeful expectations: Armah lived up Ghana's independence struggle only to witness the betrayal of its revolution, whereas Fitzgerald saw his faith in the democratic and egalitarian ideals of the Jeffersonian Republic swept away by America in the 'Roaring Twenties'.

Scott Fitzgerald was one of the most representative literary figures of the 1920s in America, and one of its keen critics, too. After he had been demobbed from the army at the wake of WWI, he felt enough confidence to embark on an artistic career with wide national pretensions. His ambition was rapidly fulfilled as his first novel *This Side of Paradise* (published in 1920) became instantly a national literary success, and was hailed as the first American novel to express the disillusionment and rebelliousness of the post-War young American generations. As a result of the financial success of his first novel, Fitzgerald married a wealthy girl, Zelda Sayre, and left his native Mid-West to settle in the American East. His life in the Eastern side introduced him to the 'secret' world of Uncle Sam's moneyed classes for whom he had always felt a deep attraction. Yet the atmosphere of his new life in New York did not meet his expectations, especially as the American society of that time grew increasingly priggish and intolerant. So, like most of his contemporary emerging fiction writers, dubbed by Gertrude Stein the 'Lost Generation', he withdrew from his country for Europe (in 1924), and lived for a time in the French Riviera*. Fitzgerald's self-expatriation led him also to spend some time in Paris, where he had the opportunity to coast along and identify with his fellow disillusioned American expatriates, such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Gertrude Stein.

* Fitzgerald's life in the Côte d'Azur and his subsequent tribulations with Zelda are recorded in his last novel, *Tender is the Night*, (1934) which is partly autobiographical.

The years Fitzgerald spent in New York and then in France before writing *The Great Gatsby* were his formative years as an accomplished writer of social satires. Torn as he was between the wonderful world and limitless freedom of the wealthy, on the one hand, and a keen sense of the sharp Mid-Western morality, on the other, Fitzgerald experienced a crisis of identity. *The Great Gatsby* dramatises well this tension, through the tempered voice of Nick Carraway and the tempestuous behaviour of the Buchanans. At the end of the novel, Nick makes a clear stand against the artificial values of the East, and expresses his dejection at its lavish and extravagant lifestyle. His reaction reflects Fitzgerald's disillusionment with the frivolities of his age, its scandals and its tycoons.

Even though Armah did not spend his youth in glamorous parties among aristocratic and bourgeois classes, his early formative years convey the same kind of disillusionment and up-rootedness as the ones experienced by Scott Fitzgerald. Like most of his African contemporary artists and intellectuals in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he was a fervent nationalist young man, at the vanguard of the independence struggle. His formative years at Accra's Achimota School early introduced him to the domain of nationalist politics and political commitment. And when, in 1959, at the age of twenty, he won a scholarship to Groton School and then Harvard University, his stay in the United States coincided with the Blacks' struggle for civil rights. This period of American history witnessed a heady atmosphere of racial riots and Black revolution, together with the rise of charismatic Afro-American leaders, such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr, who went on claiming civil rights and dignity for their race. The radical ideology of the period might well have appealed to the mind of the young African student, whose country had just acceded to independence under the leadership of a pan-African champion, Kwame Nkrumah. However, Armah's stay in the United States was soon to be interrupted for ethical and personal considerations, related to the paternalist contempt of his American mentor. As a consequence, he travelled to France, where he spent a short period of time,

and then to newly independent Algeria, the country which seemed to offer an outlet for his revolutionary aspirations.

After a year's work for *Révolution Africaine* weekly magazine in Algiers, Armah discovered a country whose recent liberation had not led to its promised emancipation*. His dark prospect urged him to resume again his unsettled life, especially as he was jarred by a health breakdown, which obliged him to leave Algeria for the United States. In 1964, he returned to Ghana again. But his stay in his native country, too, was far from meeting his revolutionary aspirations. During the time span of Nkrumah's government, he witnessed the rule of those he would term later on "the political bosses", represented in *The Beautiful Ones* by Joe Koomson, the socialist minister. After the military coup which ousted Nkrumah from power, he was convinced that the country had made an atavistic return to the national politics of the 1940's, and had fallen under the grasp of the "jokers", i.e. the veterans of the Second World War who were the fiercest political opponents of Nkrumah. These events clouded his outlooks about Africa's revolutionary hopes, and compelled him to expatriate himself in different countries, such as the United States, England, and Tanzania.

Armah's and Fitzgerald's respective disillusionments and their crises of identity mirror to a great extent the drive towards disenchantment and the social meddle of their times and peoples. The public euphoria that followed Ghana's independence in 1959 can easily be paralleled with the American popular enthusiasm after their victory in World War One. Moreover, the feeling of confidence that was generated by these happy events rapidly faded as a result of the deficiencies that occurred in both countries' respective body politics. These deficiencies had their origins in the two nations' demarcation from their traditional moralities and their turning their back on their ancestral traditions.

* Armah's disappointment with the Algerian situation may be inferred through the voice of Solo, a character of his third novel *Why Are We So Blest?*

Hence, *The Great Gatsby* may be read against the growth of American capitalism which, by the 1920s, featured a disenchanting American society, seeking redemption in commodity consumption and wild enjoyment. The rise in the United States of mass commodity production and consumption created an aggressive capitalistic structure that objectified the social relationships and worked to efface the moral duties of the individuals. This period of American history is often compared to the post-Civil War phase of development of the American economy in the nineteenth-century, termed by Mark Twain the 'Gilded Age'. The Gilded Age was an age of economic improvement and Westward expansion, described as the age of 'internal imperialism'. However, while at that time the country's identity had been secured by the western Frontier, in the twenties the legendary western prairies were all settled, and the country could not find an outlet through which to express its authentic self. The result was the emergence of aggressive and ambitious middle class generations, who lost respect for the traditional Puritan hoarding ethos and went on enjoying the consumer spending boom of the decade. The latter became the symbol of a social and economic limbo, full of extremes and excesses, progress and decline, wealth and poverty, hope and gloom.

The American capitalist power structures, during the 1920s, produced an economic organization based on the ethos of expenditure and sustained by a big advertising industry. This economic orientation proved impervious toward the traditional moralities, not to say simply nefarious to the country's cultural identity. The shift from the traditional Puritan morality of hoarding -so characteristic of the end of the 19th century American culture which presented the "savings bank depositor [as...] the true hero of civilization" (Susman 111)- to the morality of abundance, leisure, mass production and consumption was matched with a shift in cultural values which left the American life in a state of "emotional and aesthetic starvation [... with ...] no heritages and traditions to which to cling" (Stearns, quoted in Susman, *ibid.* 115). The awareness of this tremendous cultural crisis in American life, and its encroachment on the country's sense of identity, led

Fitzgerald to believe that, when the uncertainties of the Great War were over, America went on “the greatest, gaudiest spree in history”. Fitzgerald also declared that the post-War generations had grown up to find “all gods dead, all battles won, and all faiths shaken”.

Obviously, the Jazz Age was a period of economic prosperity and financial good health, of priggish conservatism and lavish carelessness. Thus, while the Republican Party of this decade kept claiming that ‘the business of America is business’, and that every American has his share in the economy of goods, the Puritans’ reaction imposed on society the abolition of alcohol and the saloons, that triggered the phenomena of bootlegging and speakeasies. These are the words in which Fitzgerald summed up the contradictions prevailing during the ‘crazy’ years: “the whole golden boom was in the air –its splendid generosities, its outrageous corruption in the tortuous death struggle of the old America in Prohibition” (ibid.). Actually, even though he seemed to embody the spirit and contradictions of the period, in his writings Fitzgerald had always managed to distance himself from its fake moralities. And when, in 1932, he looked in retrospect to the twenties, he identified its peculiar characteristics and wrote: “it [the Jazz Age] was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, it was an age of satire [...] it was a borrowed time anyhow” (ibid.)

Deceived expectations, consumption and corruption are all features which also describe Ghana’s post-colonial history. On March 6th, 1957, Ghana was the first African colony to gain independence. The event was celebrated among tremendous popular excitement. During the ceremony, the country’s celebrated leader, Kwame Nkrumah, solemnly declared that Ghana was “free for ever”, and that the new African was “ready to fight his own battle and show that after all the black man is capable of managing his own affairs” (quoted in Lazarus 1). Nkrumah’s hopes reflected the aspirations of his whole people, who looked back to the harsh memories of the colonial days and the sufferings induced by the independence struggle, and converted every frustration into heroic

sacrifice. A passage from Teacher's reminiscences in *The Beautiful Ones* echoes similar idealistic yearnings. In this passage Armah captures the whole spirit the period and writes: "We were ready for big and beautiful things. The promise was so beautiful. Even those who were too young to understand it all knew that at last something good was being born. It was there. We were not deceived about it" (p. 85). Yet as Teacher's anomic condition and bitter memories suggest, the good promise was not fulfilled and, after independence, the people's revolution was recuperated and institutionalised, and the whole sovereignty was confiscated.

The confiscation of the struggle of the Africans and their independence triggered numerous commentaries on the part of native African intellectuals, as well as Western scholars and thinkers. Frantz Fanon was one of the first Black intellectuals to voice his contempt towards the African nationalist movements, and to disparage the national bourgeoisie. For him, the national middle class, who led the independence struggle, was but the natural outgrowth of the European colonial interests. It came to power in the name of a narrow nationalism, and if during the revolutionary struggle it rallied the masses, it was only to secure the position of power and to exploit its own society. Beside, economically speaking, this class is an underdeveloped class, which identifies itself with the decadent phase of Western bourgeoisie, without ever being an active, entrepreneurial class (1990: 123). After independence, it became a "tool of capitalism" (ibid. 120) and "a transmission line between the nation and a capitalism [...] which [...] puts on the masque of neo-colonialism" (ibid. 122).

Fanon's overall descriptions of the national middle class presents it as a hybrid, duplicitous class. It is young and old at the same time, native in origin and European in outlook, half-way between its people from which it grew, and the colonial state apparatus, it has inherited. Its lack of imagination, together with its inability to lead the revolution, show in the fact that, to use the words of Ade Ajayi, it "had little conception of the kind of society [it was] striving to build outside of vague concepts of Europeanization and

modernization” (quoted in Lazarus 7). In other words, even though African nationalists fought against the colonial domination and its unfair capitalist system, their ambition was “to overthrow not capitalism, but *foreign* capitalism” (Worsley, quoted in Lazarus, *ibid.* 8 italics in the text). This inadequacy in the nationalists’ strategy led them to betray the revolutionary hopes of their people, by consolidating their proper power position, at the expense of abolishing the colonial legacy, whose unfair system they rather helped to perpetuate.

Following the lead of Frantz Fanon’s ideas, many African artists decried the neo-colonial political arrangements adopted by the colonial powers towards their former colonies in order to perpetuate their subordination after independence. For instance, Armah describes independence as a fabrication and a sick joke (1969: 141); Achebe calls it a “great collusive swindle” (cited in Lazarus 22); Ama Ata Aidoo speaks of it in terms of “a dance of the masquerade called Independence” (*ibid.*). In a way or another, all these intellectuals considered African Independence a sham. Their works published in the period were all concerned with the question of knowing what went wrong with the revolution. Probably, more than any other novelist, Armah was the one to express his scepticism louder. His early corpus of novels broke completely away from the celebratory vein of narratives written by his fellow African writers a generation earlier. In addition, right from his first novel, he made it clear that his vision of the *African dream* is a shattered vision, and that the African society had, in his view, grown senile, decadent and corrupt, without ever achieving the strength and maturity that goes with its relatively young age. To our mind, it is this aspect of *The Beautiful Ones* which makes it comparable to *The Great Gatsby*.*

* In fact, we hold no authorial pronouncement which indicates that Armah has read or reacted to *The Great Gatsby*. However, the ‘Gatsby revival’ which took place in America during the 1950s and 1960s, that is during Armah’s stay in the States, enables us to speculate that it was impossible that the African author has not read or heard about this novel. For more details about the fortune of *The Great Gatsby*, read Richard Anderson’s “Gatsby’s Long Shadow: Influence and Endurance” (1999).

Armah's borrowings from *The Great Gatsby* and his re-employment of its materials show particularly at two layers of unmarked references: one, his refraction of Fitzgerald's character types, such as Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, who represent the leisure identity in America in the 1920s; two, his re-application of the American novelist's pattern of imagery into metaphors and motifs that portray the fashionable and expensive world of the wealthy and comment on their behaviour. In the first instance, Armah relies on the characters and moralities of Jay Gatsby and Tom Buchanan in order to mark the class identification of Joe Koomson, the Ghanaian embodiment of the self-made man and the decadent bourgeois at the same time. In the second instance, Armah, like Fitzgerald, develops a metonymic imagery, concerned with grotesque features of the body to which he reduces his characters. Still in the fashion of Fitzgerald, Armah associates also his characters to object and colour imagery that is often distopical in its meaning. In the whole, he constructs a proverbial discourse and an allegorical narrative model, whose main assumption suggests that corrupt people always fail whatever wealth they may accumulate and whatever status they may reach. This theme informs the main concerns of West African popular narratives, which stage for their readership social and domestic dilemmas within didactic plots and tales.

In the following analysis, we suggest to subject the above mentioned similarities to ample scrutiny in order to show how Armah borrowed the imagery and characterisation of Fitzgerald and reprocessed them in a proverbial, didactic narrative. Our investigation will be culturally localised, since it is our intention to always read the similarities between the two writers' discourses in the light of their respective societies' customs. The theoretical paradigms which enable us to fulfil this task are essentially provided by Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) and Fanon's ground-breaking study of the national bourgeoisie advanced in his essay "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness". In addition, our discussion of the character and behaviour of Koomson will also be conducted through

Ali Mazrui's critique of African style of leadership, developed in his seminal article "The Monarchical Tendency in African Political Culture" (1967).

The Great Gatsby is informed by a social satire, whose main targets are the members of the moneyed classes, represented by the patrician wealth of the Buchanans and the new wealth of Jay Gatsby. To a great extent, Fitzgerald's satiric portrayal of these two categories of characters found inspiration in Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption. Veblen (1857-1929) is an American sociologist and economist, who developed a theory of economic growth which runs counter the doctrine of Social Darwinism that was employed to serve the purposes of America's Robber Barons during the Gilded Age. His theory reads as a satirical attack on the Gilded Age's financial and industrial tycoons, such as the Andrew Carnegies and the John Rockefellers. Central to this theory are Veblen's concepts of Conspicuous Leisure and Conspicuous Consumption. They are the social performances through which the leisure classes, i.e. the rich, transform their wealth into status and establish their position in society. These social performances take two forms: extensive leisure activities and lavish expenditure. The element of waste is common to both activities; in the first case "it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods" (Veblen T, chap. 4)*.

The two elements of waste mentioned above seem to characterise well the respective behaviours of Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, because it is through them that Fitzgerald articulates the leisure identity of America in the 1920s. The wealth of Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby should, nonetheless, not be put on equal footing for, while Tom's property is old money, inherited passively, Jay's is new money acquired through hard work. As a result of the difference in origins of the two characters' wealth, a social hierarchy develops between them since, in Veblen's view, "wealth acquired passively by

* Veblen writes that leisure does not connote indolence or quiescence. What it rather connotes is "non-productive consumption of time. Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness" (chap. 3).

transmission from ancestors to other antecedents presently becomes even more honorific than wealth acquired by the possessor's own effort" (ibid. chap. 2). The characterisation of *The Great Gatsby* is obviously the projection of these two themes.

The obsession with money in *The Great Gatsby*, its acquisition, accumulation and waste transform the sensual atmosphere of New York into a stage of 'predation', where the competition for leisure and consumption becomes the only expression of both the nation's and the characters' identity. Being representative figures of their time, Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby equally surround themselves with leisure manners and ostentatious leisure. But this behaviour is mere mimicry and expenditure for Gatsby, whose quest for Daisy, and thus his whole embodiment of the American dream, is most of the time reduced to a search for leisure entailment. His search for status through flaunting his newly acquired wealth enables Fitzgerald to indict the ideal of the American dream, whose essential components, to his mind, failed to express the essence of the American identity during the 1920s.

Gatsby's parvenu identity enables us to draw a parallel between his portrait and the formative elements of the character of Joe Koomson, in *The Beautiful Ones*. Both of them are archetypal figures of the self-made man, and pure products of their respective age. They represent the aspirations of their fellow country-men for wealth and status, and personify both the success and the corruption of their time. Their successes are the result of both the moral slackness of the community and their own ability to seize business opportunities at hands. Their corruption shows in the suspicious origin of their money, their orgy of spending, and their acquaintances.

Formerly James Gatz, Gatsby is the son of poor Mid-western farmers from North Dakota. He started his life as a miserable clam digger, before he rises to a leisure position. In New York, he indulges in the illicit activity of bootlegging and amasses a big fortune. Gatsby embarks also on the task of sanctifying his new wealth with social acceptability, especially as his leisure neighbourhood sees consuming goods in unlimited quantities as

honorific and noble. For this sake, he lavishly displays his wealth and vulgarly puts it in evidence: he purchases a large mansion which looks like a 'Hôtel de Ville in Normandy' (p.11); he buys an expensive car which looks like a "circus wagon" (p. 127); last but not least, he organises fabulous parties which establish his fame, or rather notoriety, as the reincarnation of Petron's character Trimalchio. Yet, in spite of his ostensible waste of goods, and in spite of the sophisticated ceremonial atmosphere of his parties, Gatsby can gain neither the social esteem of his patrician surrounding, nor the approval of his beloved Daisy.

Fitzgerald presents Gatsby as a nouveau rich, who has no sense of tradition and who merely imitates others. His lack of taste shows in his sartorial choice (he wears a pink suit), his gaudy, cream-coloured car, and the "elaborate formality" of his speech, which, in Nick's words, "just missed to be absurd" (p. 49). His speech affectations are an imitation of the English aristocracy, meant to secure a parvenu's entrance to the "secret society" to which Tom and Daisy belong. Hence, at the core of Gatsby's dream, we can perceive a betrayal of the American dream, reduced, as it is in his behaviour, to the illegal acquisition of wealth, its ostentatious display, and lavish expenditure.

Joe Koomson, too, is a man of his time, who embodies its successes and weaknesses. Like Fitzgerald's popular hero, he had a humble beginning, as a railway man and then a docker. Helped by the rampant materialism of post-independent Ghana and its shoddy bargains, he enriches himself. Thanks to his membership in the Party, he occupies a position of responsibility in the government, which enhances his social status and makes him benefit of influential connections in public institutions. However, wealth and success are not the only features that describe his identity. Like Gatsby, he is also deeply involved in the corruption of his time.

Koomson is a swindler who sets his own interests above that of the community's welfare and keeps claiming that "socialism is a nuisance" (p. 136). In the novel, he is shown contracting a lucrative business affair with the Man's family and abusing them. He

is also described as a careless minister who mocks the country's elite and leads an extravagant lifestyle. His extravagance is suggested by his frequent visit to the Atlantic Caprice International Hotel and Takoradi's night clubs. It is also revealed in the objects of wealth which furnish his living-room, such as his stock liquor cabinet, that remind the Man the 'enslaving' trinkets of Europe.

Like Gatsby, Koomsoon pursues a (pseudo) aristocratic scheme of life. This dimension of his behaviour may be inferred through Ali Mazrui's analysis of the fashions that underlie the African style of government. In his essay, Mazrui (1967) perceives a monarchical style of politics in the continent's political culture*. Inherent in this royal theme is a "quest for social ostentation" (231), which takes the form of a 'partiality for splendid attire, for large expensive cars, for palatial accommodation, and for other forms of conspicuous consumption.'[†] According to Mazrui, the origin of this 'cult of ostentation' goes back to the advent in the continent of the money economy and Western education. The two factors have produced, in the social critic's words, "a form of ostentation which contributed to the erosion of traditional ways" (ibid. 233)[‡].

* According to Ali Mazrui, the monarchical tendency in African political culture shows in the combination of four elements of political style. These elements are: one, the quest for the aristocratic effect; two, the personalisation of authority; three, the sacralisation of authority; four, the quest for a royal historical identity.

[†] Fanon outlines the same idea and writes that the African middle class spends large sums of money on display, such as "cars, country houses, and all those things which have been justly described by economists as characterizing an under-developed bourgeoisie" (125).

[‡] In his essay "African Socialism: Utopian or scientific", Armah echoes the same ideas as those of Mazrui. For instance, he decries Senghor's and Nkrumah's versions of socialism and argues that they mystify the African past and describe it in terms that are too much like the ones decried by Mazrui in his essay. Here is what he writes

It is important to note that Socialism is here [Africa] conceived of as a projection into the present and the future of certain *moral* qualities that are supposed to have been characteristic of pre-colonial Africa. As to the location and time and space of this virtuous old Africa, the available formulae are vague and at times unhistorical tales of kings dressed in scintillating robes, possessing countless slaves and spending gold with grand *insouciance*. These fables defeat the purpose of African Socialism, for though they might warm the cockles of spectacle hungry bourgeois nationalist hearts, they leave any informed socialist quite unimpressed. Conspicuous waste of resources in conditions of scarcity is not one of the tenets of Socialism (1967: 24).

As an epitome of Ghana's post-colonial leadership, Koomson contrives an aristocratic effect in his lifestyle. His material opulence betrays a weakness for what Mazrui calls "the plush effect and palatial living" (ibid. 232). For instance, he rides a powerful chauffeured Mercedes car and dresses in a beautiful, expensive suit; he mocks and patronises the people who are socially inferior to him, and disguises his coarse dockers' accent by imitating the whites' accent; he lives in a residential estate that previously served as the place of accommodation of the coloniser; finally, he adorns his house with silver boxes, radio and TV sets, and other objects of wealth, all of which have come from foreign lands. Through all this flashy display of material appurtenances, Koomson tries to accrue his social status, and to conform to the new morality, which measures the individual's worth by the yardstick of his material acquisitions. At the same time, he also aspires at acquiring the civilised manners and the material symbols of the Western way of life. This last feature of his behaviour informs the decadence of his class, and its entrenchment behind the selfish interests inherited from the bourgeoisie of the 'mother country'. It enables us to draw a parallel between him and Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, especially as both are examples of the bourgeois class, in its final stage of decadence.

Tom's wealth sanctions his embodiment of the American dream of success. But unlike Gatsby who has made his wealth alone, Tom holds a patrician position. He identifies with people of the East, and dwells among the exclusive and self-regarding community of East Egg which, unlike its neighbouring estate West Egg, observes the rules of formality and tradition. The residence that houses Tom and his family is a fashionable Georgian mansion, whose origin goes back to the colonial period. This house, exhibited by Tom as a trophy and the token of his pecuniary strength, serves as a basis of his repute and esteem. It establishes the Buchanans' identity as the heirs of America's Robber Barons, and the whole leisure identity of the Gilded Age.

The leisure descent and the pecuniary strength of Tom Buchanan are made obvious in Nick's following comment

His [Tom's] family were enormously wealthy –even in college his freedom with money was a matter of reproach- but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man of my generation was wealthy enough to do that (p. 12).

Tom's enormous and accumulated wealth frees him from many social occupations. Actually, following the scheme of life of the leisure classes, his occupations are not productive at all. They can be summed up in a few leisure accomplishments, like sport and other 'exploits'. For example, Nick informs us that, among his various physical accomplishments, Tom "had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven" (p. 12). This non-productive activity betrays the idleness of the rich, also apparent in Daisy's complaint, when she asks: "what'll we do with ourselves this afternoon? And the day after that, and the next thirty years?" (p. 124).

Besides his leisure activities and his exceptional pecuniary power, what defines Tom's identity is his attempt at acquiring the 'branches of learning and the cultivation of manners' that go, in his view, with the preservation of civilisation; meaning, the preservation of his own class interests, manners and power position. During a conversation with Nick, Tom evokes a book entitled *The Rising Tide of Color*, which claims that "civilization is going to pieces". Tom takes a clear stand with the racist assumption of this book, and argues that the Nordic race has produced "all the things that go to make civilization – [...] science and art, and all that" (p. 20). By endorsing this idea, Tom positions himself as the protector of the country's heritage. Yet the cultural heritage he sets himself to protect is essentially and exclusively white, protestant and Anglo-Saxon.

The class identification of Tom Buchanan and his decadent spirit allow us to flesh out the similarities between him and the bourgeois character of Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones*. The analogy between the American and the African bourgeoisies is put forward in *The Wretched of the Earth*, wherein Fanon equates the beginning of the

indigenous African middle class with the stage of decadence of its Western counterpart. According to Fanon, the colonial conditions of birth and growth of the African middle class created in it a “permanent wish of identification with the bourgeois representatives of the mother country” (1990: 143). Its wish of identification led it to adopt ways of thinking and behaviour characteristic of the mother country, and to alienate itself from its people, which it exploits and oppresses. Moral failure, enjoyment and vulgar display of consumer goods and contempt towards the mass of people are, thus, the defining features of the native bourgeoisie in the colonial and post-colonial worlds. These are also the defining features of Joe Koomson, the socialist minister, who stands as the caricature embodiment of the post-colonial ruling classes.

Koomson’s decadent spirit is first suggested by the “flabby softness” of his hand, derided as “ideological hands” (p. 131). It can also be assessed through the nature of the business deal contracted with the Man’s family. In this deal, the socialist minister plays the intermediary between Oyo and the fisherman, without ever going into investing his money. Beside, he places himself at a vantage position, which secures him commissions and protects him from the failure of the boat affair. The legal responsibility being endorsed by the two business partners, Oyo and the fisherman, Koomson exhibits keen business acumen, without ever showing himself capable of industrial inventiveness.

Koomson’s mimicry of his erstwhile colonial masters pertains to the same behaviour among the country’s elite, whose only purpose is to approximate the behaviour and possession of the white man. Fanon details further this practice in his *Black Skin, White Masks*. The following descriptions highly synthesise Koomson’s and Estella’s constructed identity

The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievement.

Most of the objects mentioned in the above quotation furnish a set of images with which Armah surrounds the Koomsons and adorns their expensive world. His imagery partakes to the same artistic decorum in *The Great Gatsby*, where Fitzgerald defines the identity of his bourgeois characters by a constellation of expensive objects that intensify their desires and construct around them a world of luxury and sophistication. Following the discourse of his American counterpart, Armah develops a metonymic language concerned with grotesque features of the body, to which many of his characters are reduced. He also invests the antithetical quality of the imagery of *The Great Gatsby* in order to convey the characteristic qualities and emotions of some of his characters. In our view, the manner in which Armah incorporates the metaphors of his American counterpart speaks of the same practice among the popular writers of Ghana, who utilised within their narratives an array of images and motifs borrowed from foreign texts, and extrapolated their meanings in order to create new meanings consistent with their thematic designs. The connection of this writing practice with the traditional practice of proverb use is suggested by the fact that, as Finnegan tells us, the general truth touched on in proverbs is most commonly conveyed through metaphors (395).

The images that identify the character and personality of Tom Buchanan evince the same kind of bodily imagery deployed in *The Great Gatsby*. Nick Caraway introduces Daisy's husband through the "two shining eyes [which have] established dominance over his face" (p.8), and describes his body as a "cruel body" capable of enormous leverage. Nick's overall descriptions convey Tom's supercilious attitudes, his brutal behaviour and the contemptuousness of his social class. These impressions are confirmed in other parts of the narrative, where Tom is shown, among other things, breaking Myrtle's nose with a "short deft movement" (p. 43) and destroying Gatsby's dream.

The extended bodily imagery associated with Tom Buchanan reminds us a similar one in *The Beautiful Ones* where characters are reduced to parts of the body. One instance is the timber contractor who is presented as "the belly" (p. 27) and the "teeth"

(p.28) in order to stress his voracious and corrupt nature. The other instance is no other than Koomson himself who is reduced in the Fourth Chapter to the images of “the suit” that stops in front of the street seller, and the “smile” (p. 38) that says hello to the Man. The two metonyms associated with Koomson are ironic representations through which Armah stresses the external aspects of his character and denounces the misleading nature of appearances.

The most recurrent bodily image in Fitzgerald’s and Armah’s respective novels is the eye symbol. In *The Great Gatsby*, the ‘gigantic eyes’ and the ‘enormous spectacles’ of the publicity figure Doctor Eckleburg are described to keep the vigil over the vast area of the Valley Ashes. But in spite of their size and in spite of the glasses’ power of correction, the eyes of Doctor Eckleburg remain a symbol of faulty vision, because the dwellers of the Valley of Ashes regard them as the all-seeing eyes of God, and because the wasteland over which they brood is an ironic displacement of Paradise, of which the eyes of God are said to stand. Through this ironic eye image, Fitzgerald conveys the moral blindness of the Jazz Age and deplores the hopeless illusions of a nation obsessively bent on pursuing the things of the here and the now.

The motifs of blindness and seeing operate also in *The Beautiful Ones*, where they keep denoting the ability to penetrate the surface level of things or the failure to go beyond external appearances. Thus, while we always see the Man striving to adjust his “famished vision” (p. 24) in order to distinguish the clearness of water from its dirt, the other characters’ eyes serve only to contemplate the gleam and desire the possessions of material goods. Evidence of faulty vision is provided by Oyo who turns a blind eye over Estella’s corruption and argues that her life is “nice” and “clean” (p.44). Yet Oyo’s failure to perceive life in moral terms is not a personal short-sightedness as much as it is a social callous blunder. The rest of the community, too, overlooks the corruption of its political elites and bestows respect and consideration upon corrupt individuals, such as Koomson, by considering them “big men”, “white men” and “big lords” (p. 37).

Next to the images of the body, Fitzgerald and Armah appeal extensively to the light imagery in order to represent the dreams of their respective characters and explore the nature of their quests. In *The Great Gatsby*, the American writer identifies Gatsby's quest with the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. This green light displaces the moonlight with which Gatsby associates the ideal of his love for Daisy. It stands for the promise of hope and renewal, of fertility and growth. But green is also the symbol of money, and all the vile means that corrupt Gatsby's innocent dream. Its dual/antithetical meaning hides a deeper irony, especially as Daisy stands for no moon and the green light for no star.

A corresponding light representation in *The Beautiful Ones* is suggested by the pervasive image of the gleam, which embodies the symbol of Koomson's salvation. This light seems also to incarnate the aspirations of the whole country. But in the Man's mind, the gleam holds no construction of happiness; it is rather the debased material promises of the "beautiful new houses and the shine of powerful Mercedes cars [and] the scent of expensive perfumes and the mass of a new wig" (p.56). In other words, the gleam is no more than the symbol of the alienation of the wealthy and the poor together. The former are insulated from reality by their senseless pursuits, whereas the latter are relegated into the dim corners of a society that has given over to materialism and lives in a moral vacuum.

Armah and Fitzgerald extend also the use of the light imagery in order to make an oblique reference to the attractive and expensive world of the wealthy. Throughout their respective narratives, light is associated with the opulent Koomsons and Buchanans. For instance, when Nick Caraway visits Tom's house, he is dazzled by the brightness and glitter of his mansion, where "the crimson light bloomed with light" (p.24). Similarly, when the Man steps in Koomson's villa, he is amazed by the amount of light which glints from every object. And when Estella descends the stairs, he feels that she has caught "each individual ray of light" (p.148).

Interconnected with the light imagery is the colour imagery, which helps Fitzgerald and Armah to draw the all-pervading redolence of the spheres of the wealthy. One colour extensively used in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Beautiful Ones* is the white colour. At the early part of the former novel, Nick moves in the white area of East Egg, reaches the white and red colonial mansion of the Buchanans, and sees Daisy and Jordan dressed in white. This set of white images elevates the leisure status of the Buchanan family and heightens Nick's esteem. But when Daisy speaks about her "white girlhood" (p. 26) with Jordan in Louisville, they shrink into an ironic association which outlines her racial contempt. Besides, as the narrative unfolds, we also become aware that the white colour associated with Daisy suggests neither purity nor innocence; it rather denotes her shallowness and irresponsibility, as well as her moral emptiness and destructive potential.

Like Fitzgerald, Armah employs extensively the white colour image. In his fiction, he associates it with two types of characters. The first type of these characters is the white men who dwelled at the "shining white bungalows" (p.67) and cultivated peanuts big as 'mangoes' and ripe like 'almonds'. The other group of characters is the post-colonial African ruling elite, who are deeply obsessed with whiteness, to the extent of turning their names into Europeanised surnames, which echo every idea of whiteness: Attoh-white, Kuntu Blankson, Acromond, etc. The thematic issue of the second association comments on the theme of Neo-colonialism, which is further developed through the image of the Atlantic Caprice international Hotel. The latter controls Takorady from above the hill in an "insulting white" (p.10) colour. Its impressive structure faces the ocean in the posture of an embrace that stands for the fatal testament of neo-colonial domination.

The dual symbolism of the white colour image in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Beautiful Ones* characterises also the image of the car. In the context of the American Jazz Age, the automobile was an object of power and a token of wealth that offered a new freedom for the upper classes. Its popularity may explain why in Fitzgerald's novel Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby look at each other's respective cars with contempt and disdain.

But though most characters behold the car as an object of wonder, Fitzgerald associates it with restlessness, violence, and death. At the end of his narrative, the luxury associated with the automobile shrinks into a death machine that knocks down Myrtle Wilson and kills her. The accident also ushers in the murder of Gatsby and the collapse of his dream.

The automobile exerted the same appeal upon the African bourgeoisie in the post-independence period, and like Fitzgerald, Armah does not fail to underline it in his novel. For example, when Koomson is first presented in the narrative, he is shown riding an impressive big car. The importance of this means of locomotion for his class is stressed again by Estella, who boasts her way of life and pretends that her sister Regina, who lives in England, “has fallen in love with a Jaguar” (p. 149), and that she will kill herself if she cannot have it. Nonetheless, even though the Koomsons present the automobile as a means of leisure and a token of wealth, Armah attributes to it an ominous aspect by describing it as an “object of power and darkness” (p. 36), and making it stand for another ‘enslaving trinket of Europe’.

The paramount importance of the car image in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Beautiful Ones*, however, is not symbolical as much as it is ethical. Its ethical dimension is conveyed by a conversation between Nick Caraway and Jordan Baker, when the latter drives so close to a workman that the fender ‘flicked a button’ on his coat. The conversation runs as follows

‘You’re a rotten driver,’ I protested. ‘Either you ought to drive more careful, or you oughtn’t to drive at all.’
‘I am careful.’
‘No, you are not.’
‘Well, other people are,’ she said lightly.
‘What’s that got to do with it?’
‘They’ll keep out of my way,’ she insisted. ‘It takes two to make an accident.’
‘Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.’
‘I hope I never will,’ she answered. ‘I hate careless people. That’s why I like you.’ (p. 65).

Jordan’s irresponsible driving speaks of the whole behaviour of her class. Indeed, Jordan is as careless a person as Daisy and Tom, and as irreverent towards moral

standards. The carelessness of these bourgeois characters informs their ruthless ethics and their absorption in earthly pursuits. In addition, their excessive concern with their own interests leads them to overlook the nature of the means through which they achieve their ends, as long as these means keep them always on the top of the social hierarchy. For instance, Jordan is shown, among other things, cheating in golf tournaments in order to secure material profits. Similarly, Tom and Daisy take advantage of Gatsby's sentimental outlook and make him bear the responsibility of Myrtle's death. The ruthless and fickle behaviour of these characters free them from ethical standards and confine them within a corrupt sphere of power, whose slogans are: the end justifies the means and money has no odour.

The ethical discourse contained within Fitzgerald's metaphors of the car and driving is reprocessed in *The Beautiful Ones* through two advice situations. The first of these two pieces of advice relates to Oyo's chiding of her husband about the urgency to play the 'national game' of corruption. The Man recounts his wife's advice in the following words

My wife explained to me, step by step, that life was like a lot of roads: long roads, short roads, wide and narrow, steep and level, all sorts of roads. Next she let me know that human beings were like so many people driving their cars on all these roads. This was the point at which she told me that those who wanted to get far had to learn to drive fast. And then she asked me what name I would give to people who were afraid to drive fast, or to drive at all. I had no name to give her, but she had not finished. Accidents would happen, she told me, but the fear of accidents would never keep men from driving, and Joe Koomson had learned to drive (p.68).

In this passage, the Man, through the words of Oyo, articulates the morality of the wealthy denounced by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*. But what is most insightful is not so much the fact that he appeals to the same metaphors of cars, driving, speed and accidents, as the way he refashions them in a form which strikingly evokes a very common proverbial practice in Ghanaian proverbial culture. This practice is the tendency to use a 'single concrete situation' to prove a 'general or abstract idea' (Finnegan 397). In the above quotation, Oyo explains that getting ahead in life entails the ability to take risks, and that

those who risk nothing get nothing. She also presses the point that moral scruples are most of the time obstacles to one's ambitions that prevent him from seizing the lucrative opportunities at hand. Hence, in Oyo's point of view, the more an individual is honest the less successful and prosperous he will be in his life.

As far as they comment on the behaviour and fate of the successful, and yet corrupt, minister Koomson, the metaphors of cars, driving, speed and accidents help to structure the events of the plot *The Beautiful Ones*. At the same time, they also enable Armah to elaborate one of the main themes of his novel, which teaches the moral lesson that, no matter how much wealth a corrupt man may accumulate, at the end, virtue is always rewarded whereas corruption is always punished. Needless to say that the insight inherent in this maxim reflects well the portraits and fates of the Man and Koomson: the one is the virtuous character that withstands pressures and owns recognition at the end, and the other is the unscrupulous thief who surrenders to his greed and at the end is driven out of the country.

Armah reiterates the above moral outlook through another proverbial passage, contained within the lyrics of the high life song, broadcasted by Radio Ghana, that the Man overhears at Teacher's place

Those whose are blessed with the power
And the soaring swiftness of the eagle
And have flown before,
Let them go.
I will travel slowly,
And I too will arrive.
[...]
And have climbed in haste
Let them go.
I will journey softly,
But I too will arrive (p. 51-2).

The above song fulfils educational functions; through it Aramah creates a textual situation in which, without any specific formal occasion, he develops a chunk of moral discourse that instructs and educates. This didactic situation is frequent in traditional culture where, according to Ruth Finnegan, "the generalizations implicit in many proverbs

make them suitable vehicles for [...] instruction” (414). Through the song inserted in his text, Armah exploits the utilitarian function of proverbs to drive a moral point about both the debased materialism that is rampant in independent Ghana and the people’s restless pursuits of material commodities.

Because in the narrative it is he, alone, who stubbornly clings to the virtues of honesty, integrity and hard-working, the Man’s attitudes pertain strongly to the moral stance carried in the highlife song above. Unlike his fellow workers at the station, he is tempted neither by bribes nor even by idleness. His scrupulous behaviour quietens his yearnings for material aspirations and prevents him from engaging in dubious activities that are likely to compromise his moral integrity. At the end of the novel, he is rewarded by being integrated into his family circle, and by winning the respect of his wife who recognises his worth.

By deploying an allegorical plot which transforms the narrative template of *The Great Gatsby*, Armah can be said to have complied with the artistic endeavour of Ghana’s popular writers, together with their readers’ constituencies and expectations. In this regards, Stephanie Newell informs us that her Ghanaian informants unanimously declared that local writers have moral role to play “as readers’ guides, educators, advisers, moralists and counsellors” (50). And one of the moral lessons that Ghanaian readership expects their writers to teach them is the one that stipulates that: “people who make a luxurious living by dubious means suffer after all. Also, people who are hard-working and committed succeed after all” (ibid. 31). This popular belief and audience expectation find their entire embodiment in the allegorical plot of *The Beautiful Ones*, which contrasts two groups of characters, the virtuous and the wicked. The contrastive quality of Armah’s characterisation allows us to clear the ambiguity of his female characterisation, assaulted by some critics for being debased caricatures and stereotypical images of women.

Abena Busia has dwelt on the image of the woman in *The Beautiful Ones*. In her article, which bears the suggestive title “Parasites and prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi

Kwei Armah's Novels", she underscores the negative image of the women presented in *The Beautiful Ones* and writes that: "women are always the lovers, wives, or blood relatives of the central male characters, and have significance in the text only in so far as they affect those characters" (48). Busia also adds that throughout the narrative, it is mostly women who are keener to succumb to the call of illicit wealth and the temptations of status. Even though this insight cannot be denied, it remains that, by sticking too much to the text of the novel, Busia has overlooked the constituencies and expectations of Armah's local reading public, who required from him to comply with specific artistic and social demands. According to Stephanie Newell, the relationship between the popular writer and his reading community is a dynamic relationship. It involves interactions between writers and readers wherein characters are fixed within gender roles and strict moral, editorial lines.

In taking up ideological positions on social issues in the same manner as their readership, popular authors, Newell writes, often claimed, along their reading communities, among whom figure women audiences as well, that "modern' Ghanaian women have been corrupted by 'western lifestyle' (33). This public opinion helped the shaping of a general editorial line among young authors, who formulated through their texts literal feminine figures, in which the image of the good-time girl and materialistic mothers and mothers-in-law are persistent motifs that evoke the disempowerment of their male counterparts. These motifs served the popular writers to generalise some personal experiences about some young suitors' incapacity to satisfy the excessive material demands of the women they wanted to marry. However, as Newell warns us, the fictional woman in Ghana's popular literature should not be taken as a 'closed stereotype' with 'fixed properties'. Instead, it should be read as a "proverbial' figure which can be related to different situations in Ghanaian social life" (ibid.).

Newell's insight into the proverbial aspect of the woman in Ghana's popular literature applies well to the female characterisation of *The Beautiful Ones*. In the latter,

the women are allotted a symbolic status through which Armah conveys the people's attachment to money and their yearning for more material opulence. In addition, their position within the narrative is given significance only in so far as they support a materialistic ethos that sustains the allegorical dimension of the plot. Hence, most of the time the behaviour of the women presented in the novel helps to implement the moral design of the narrative outline above. For instance, Oyo is a shadowy character inclined towards the acquisition of money, and whose acquisitive behaviour adds more to her husband's alienation. But at the end of the narrative she realises how much her material expectations were misguided. Likewise, Estella is a caricature image of the temptress who pursues a vague ideal of wealth and power, irrespective of the means to be used. Her ostentatious exhibition of her husband's possession and her contempt for local products situate her at the same level as the female figures presented in most Ghanaian popular fictions. At the end of the novel, she and her husband are separated from their wealth, just like, in the Bible, Adam and Eve are removed from the garden of Eden after they had succumbed to the eating from the forbidden tree.

The portraits of Oyo and Estella show that Armah has not shied away from the writings of his fellow young Ghanaian writers, who continued to write about contemporaneous social issues, which had as a major concern the changing morality and mores of their time. However, even though the ethical health of the country writs large in his narrative, this does not mean that his discourse is not connected to the country's political realities. Actually, inherent in Armah's moral and didactic themes is a concern with the issues of neo-colonialism and African servility to the West. This concern is articulated through the intertextual references that his novel sends to a major imperial narrative, namely Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In the next chapter, we shall undertake a comparison between this novel and *The Beautiful Ones* and show how Armah deploys the two types of hybridity, the linguistic and the intentional, in order to

appropriate Conrad's critique of Empire and grapple with the eulogistic rhetoric of Imperialism latent in his discourse.

References

- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988; New York: Collier Macmillan, 1969.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. 1961. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Busia, Abena. "Parasites and prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992. 48-71.
- Fitzgerald, Francis Scott. "Echoes of the Jazz Age". *Twentieth Century American Reader*. Ed. Jack Lare and Maurice O'Sullivan. Washington: U. S. I. A, 1999. 257-62.
- Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Mazrui, Ali. "The Monarchical Tendency in African Political Culture". *The British Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 18 (1967). Pp. 231-50.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fictions: Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life & other tales*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Susman, Warren I. *Culture as History. The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. 1973. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *Theory of the Leisure Class*. 1899.
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/VEBLEN/veb_toc.html

Chapter 3:

Intentional and Organic Hybridity, Grotesque and Monstrous Hybrids in *The Beautiful Ones* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

The comparison of *The Beautiful Ones* with *The Great Gatsby* conducted in the previous chapter has demonstrated the pervasive presence of Fitzgerald's text within Armah's discourse. This textual presence, which takes the form of metaphors, character types, dialogues and situations, is borne by a discourse that is organically hybrid. It opens advice-giving spaces that function like proverbs in traditional culture and exhibits keen concerns with the moral health of the country. However, does Armah's sustained interest in the Ghanaians' moral ethics alienate him from Africa's political reality made of a neo-colonial dependency on the West? In other words, is Armah's discourse a linguistic hybrid that merely borrows from Western narratives without proving itself capable of dialogising with its borrowings? In what follows, we shall explain how in *The Beautiful Ones* Armah summons a well-known Western master-narrative, namely Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and hybridizes its language in two discursive moments: a first moment in which he fuses its grotesque imagery to produce a parody of post-colonial African governments similar to Conrad's satire of the man of Empire; a second moment in which he disallows the discourse of Imperial authority, latent in Conrad's failure to imagine an ideological alternative to Imperialism, in favour of an authentic African leadership based on traditional values.

*Heart of Darkness** is a complex novella, which blends romantic motifs and Victorian themes within a biographically inspired sea tale and a modernist intricate form. Since its publication in 1899, it has become the “arch-text” (Arab 1996) of European modernism and a living part of the Western cultural self-awareness (Moore 223). Its literary fortune has crossed many times the Atlantic and in different directions, and its influence has often involved writers from different continents and cultures. During the period of African Renaissance, many native novelists responded publicly to it. One of these writers is no other than Chinua Achebe, the proclaimed father of African letters, who commented extensively on *Heart of Darkness*, both in his artistic as well as non-artistic works. Yet, though Achebe’s reaction was a negative response and deliberately polemical, arguably stemming from his ‘anxiety of influence’ and deep-heart patriotism, other post-colonial novelists welcomed the novella and paid artistic tribute to its author. Some of these writers are the Kenyan N’gugi Wa Thiong’ O, the Sudanese Tayyib Salih, and the West-Indian V. S. Naipaul. All of them felt involved with the universal themes of Conrad’s fictions and influenced by the elaborate sophistication of his narratives.

The endemic nature of Conrad’s influence on African artists makes it very improbable that Armah has not read him. And even if we hold no authorial pronouncement to support a probable contact between the two writers, we think that it is impossible that Armah, who completed his education in Western universities, is an exception to the post-colonial *obsession* with the colonial discourse of which *Heart of Darkness* is a watermark. The study which addresses this issue, to our knowledge it is the only one, is professor Arab’s “The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel” (1996), which maintains that Armah’s third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* is deeply related to *Heart of Darkness* since through it Armah enters in “wilful intertextuality” with Conrad. In order to sustain his comparative study, Arab resorts to two kinds of arguments: one, the

* Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899. London: Penguin, 1994). References to this novel will be inserted between brackets inside the body of our text.

place of *Heart of Darkness* as the arch-text of European modernism; two, the artistic affinity between the British writer and his African counterparts. The two arguments convince Arab that the shared experience between Conrad and his African counterparts created a 'bond of solidarity' and 'communion', which paved the way to intertextual interchanges between them*.

The purpose of the above paraphrase is solely meant to establish, or at least sustain, the contact between Armah and Conrad for, though Arab enumerates all the enabling conditions which plead for a plausible literary contact between the two writers, he does not push his analysis further in order to include the intertextual relationship between *Heart of Darkness* and *The Beautiful Ones*. Actually, we think that there is no study which addresses this comparison, and the reason behind this is the lack of any public declaration by the African writer, who has always remained silent about the sources of his fiction. Nonetheless, we think that Achebe's hostile attitudes towards both novels and his avowed revulsion towards the image of Africa carried through them sustain such an issue and validate the present comparative study between *Heart of Darkness* and *The Beautiful Ones*.

The present comparison between *The Beautiful Ones* and *Heart of Darkness* may be conducted through Edward Said's Chapter "Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*," included in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said published this study at the onset of Reaganism and Thatcherism, when an 'ideological shift' occurred in the Western world, and a 'new phase of history began'. During this (post-modern) period, narrative has lost its power to direct and 'plot the human trajectory in society', and "the discourse of resurgent empire (has proved) that the nineteenth imperial encounter continues today to draw lines and defend barriers" (Said 1993: 29). At the public level, there was a "prevailing Western consensus that has come to regard the Third World as an atrocious nuisance and a

* Arab's comparison was expanded further by B. Riche in his Doctorate thesis. See Chapter Three of *The Signifying Ananse*, op. cit.

politically inferior place” (ibid. 31). All these reasons led Said to believe that in the late twentieth century “the imperial cycle of the last century in some way *replicates itself*” (ibid. 21 my italics). This idea was pressed on by the persistent “nostalgia” for the imperial past, which led most westerners to rethink the process of decolonization, question Third World countries’ ‘capacity for independence’, and wonder whether Europe should not have remained true to its ‘civilizational responsibilities’.

Given the context of publication of *The Beautiful Ones*, which was characterized by post-independence disillusionment and despair, the background of this novel can easily be paralleled with the post-Cold War Period of Said. Indeed, when Armah published his novel, the public and official euphoria of independence started to decline, and seemed to intimate the idea that, in Said’s words, “*total independence (from the mother country was) a nationalist fiction designed mainly for what Fanon calls ‘nationalist bourgeoisie’*” (ibid. 20 italics in the original). In this respect, the nihilistic and pessimistic vision carried in Armah’s novel may be said to have anticipated (according, at least, to some of Armah’s reviewers) that kind of western discourse called “the discourse of resurgent empire” diagnosed by Said in his post-modern period. By discourse of resurgent empire, we understand the feeling of the futility of liberation struggles, and the cognition that the imperialized world could never engage in development and modernization independently of the former colonial powers.

Drawing on the political and ideological context of the discourse of resurgent empire in the 1990’s, Said maintains that Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is relevant to his day’s discussion of imperialism, as it was the day when it was first published, almost a century earlier. For him, the form of Conrad’s narrative makes it possible to derive two possible arguments, two visions, with regard to the post-colonial world. The first of these arguments “allows the old imperial enterprise full scope to play itself out conventionally, to render the world as official European or western imperialism saw it [...]. Westerners may have physically left their old colonies in Africa and Asia, but they retained them not

only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually” (ibid. 27). The second argument renders Conrad’s “tragic limitation” and his incapacity to “a fully realized alternative to imperialism [...] and because he seemed to imagine that European tutelage was a given, he could not foresee what would take place when it came to an end” (ibid. 28).

In our view, the two arguments above are perfectly applicable to Armah’s first novel and his context of post-independence African disillusionment. To begin with the first of these arguments, we can say that even though he was not a supporter of European Imperialism, Armah did attend unwillingly, desperately and helplessly to the post-colonial imperial acts of “mastery and will” performed by Europe over its former colonies. His helplessness resulted in a deep philosophical and ideological scepticism towards the capacity of the national ruling classes to govern African countries and overcome their reliance on the former colonial centres. Such deep pessimism and utter scepticism about the Continent’s Independence are voiced in many of his articles, in which he worked ‘to demystify’ African Revolution and Independence by arguing that they have always been “two myths, or, more accurately, two fabrications” (1969: 141). The depth of Armah’s scepticism seemed to his African fellow artists and intellectuals to border on the same nostalgia of the colonial past decried by Said in his essay on the western post-Cold War discourse on the Imperial past.

Armah’s first novel forcefully voices his scepticism towards Africa’s capacity to regenerate itself. As we have already said, his sarcastic vision of the neo-imperial condition triggered harsh reactions of disapprobation from his fellow African artists and critics, especially from Chinua Achebe. The latter’s negative assessment of *The Beautiful Ones* and his resentment towards Armah’s representation of Nkrumah’s Ghana led him to foresee that his fellow Ghanaian novelist would finish writing “like a white District Officer”. This assault on the personality of Armah and his mode of representation reminds us the same critic’s attacks on Conrad’s novella, wherein he not only chastises Conrad for

the degrading image carried in his narrative about Africa, but equally tags him as a “bloody racist”.

Achebe’s (consistent?) reaction towards *The Beautiful Ones* and *Heart of Darkness* proves that the two novels have, at least, one theme in common. Obviously, this theme is Conrad’s faith in the civilizational responsibilities of Europe, which can easily be paralleled with Armah’s lack of faith in Africa’s capacity for self-regeneration and renewal. To recycle another of Said’s arguments, during his neo-colonial time, Armah witnessed, just like Conrad had done before him, the ‘business of empire’ develop into ‘the empire of business’. His awareness of this ‘metamorphic’ quality of Imperialism forced him into the position of a helpless pessimistic observer of the (neo-imperial) politics at world stage. However, even though Armah did not write any article to denounce what seems to be Conrad’s faith in the moral and intellectual right of the West to rule over the imperialized world, his first novel, nevertheless, shows that his (artistic as well as ideological) reaction to neo-imperialism was more subtle than what Achebe would have thought it to be.

Speaking about Armah’s reaction to neo-imperialism brings us to the second argument developed by Said about *Heart of Darkness*. As we have explained, for Said, this novella suffers from a tragic limitation, since it provides no alternative to European Imperialism. Conrad’s incapacity to go beyond the *maelstrom* of Imperialism is not due, however, to any of his skills of an artist. In fact, as Said argues, Marlow’s narrative leaves us with a sense that “there is no way out of the sovereign historical force of imperialism, and that it has the power of a system representing as well speaking for everything within its dominion” (1993: 26). Given the ideological and historical force of European Imperialism to control, appropriate and subdue everything under its dominion, one wonders how African novelists, in general, and Armah, in particular, reacted to the forces of (Neo)Empire, and its discursive encroachment on both the history and psychology of the colonized. In our view, taking *Heart of Darkness* as a model text of the literature of Empire, and investigating the African novelists’ responses to it may fulfil an important

dimension of this task. This issue is of such an importance that it may throw light on the discursive process through which the post-colonial writer engaged the eulogistic imperial texts and discourses of the West in his fiction.

Many studies in African literary criticism have already involved Conrad's fiction(s) with those of his fellow African counterparts. The influence of Conrad is perceptible in the writings of at least three of Africa's most distinguished fiction writers: Chinua Achebe, N'Gugi Wa Thiong'o, Tayib Salih. In the three cases, it has been found that the African novelist, either enters into dialogue and polemics with his English predecessor (Achebe), or simply appropriates his intricate narrative techniques (Ngugi) and/or employs the *topoi* of colonial culture, such as the quest theme or the journey motif, in his own narrative (Salih). In this chapter, we expect to fulfil the same task, in relation to Armah's *The Beautiful Ones*, and with regard to Said's arguments mentioned above. Keeping in mind the latter's assertion as to the capacity of Imperialism to control everything and every discourse under its dominion, we propose to demonstrate, first, how Armah develops an organic hybrid discourse that appropriates the genre of the parody of romance and the demonic imagery of Conrad's novella. Next to this, we shall illustrate how intentional hybridity displaces organic hybridity in *The Beautiful Ones* and produces a language that works to undermine the authority of Conrad's imperial discourse and to unsettle the eulogistic rhetoric of the Western 'civilizing mission'.

The plot of *The Beautiful Ones* features an ordinary (anonymous) Ghanaian man grappling with the corrupt and oppressive environment surrounding him, either at home or at work. The Man's course leads him everyday from a bus *station* to the railway *station*, where he charts the trains' passages. His journey to work is the paradigm of the whole novel, since the narrative closes with the image of another bus, with the Man regaining home. The actions of departure and return feature the symbols of a journey, and evoke Marlow's removal from Europe to Africa, and then to Europe, again. Other actions and incidents from the narrative sustain the outline of this action, and demonstrate that, in

spite of its relatively thin action, *The Beautiful Ones* transposes many incidents of *Heart of Darkness*.

During the Man's everyday routine in the railway offices, his work involves him with colleagues and visitors, with whom he does not always feel in communion, not to say with whom he shares no sympathy at all, because all of them display a poor work ethic and are always ready to indulge in dubious transactions. The Man becomes therefore an isolated figure, whose isolation reminds us of Marlow's emotional estrangement from the other agents of the Belgian company. In addition to his lack of identification with the sulky teams with whom he operates, the Man, just like Marlow, is also indifferent towards the values held in fashion by his fellow-comrades. One of these values is the gleam, which stands as the new god that holds the whole people in sway and seems to embody the whole nation's aspirations for individual success and national prosperity.

The image of the gleam is reminiscent of ivory in *Heart of Darkness*; in Marlow's words, "the word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they (the company's agents) were praying to it" (p. 33). The gleam has the same allure in *The Beautiful Ones*, where most characters feel a deep attraction towards it. The Man himself experiences this attraction, and in moments of weakness, a confused feeling haunts his thoughts and reminds him of the poverty that strikes his family. Yet the Man is no pursuer of the gleam, and the person who seems to incarnate all its promises is one of his former schoolmates, called Joe Koomson.

Joe Koomson is the 'hero' of Takoradi, a 'big man', who wins the warm greetings of people and their respect, whenever they meet him in the streets. For instance, when he first appears in the narrative, he lands from a big gleaming limousine in order to buy some bread from an old woman street seller. Koomson wears a beautiful suit and a white shirt, and seems all draped in his political success and empowered by his high position in the government. The old woman instantly recognises him, and tells him that she had already seen his picture somewhere. So, Koomson engages in a mocking and patronising

conversation with her. And when his eyes meet the Man and he shakes hands with him, he pretends not to have seen him. Koomson's contempt irritates the Man, to the extent that, for a moment, he feels depressed. Later, when the Man tells his wife that he has met Koomson, she admonishes him and praises Koomson, because, in her view, he stands for the example her husband need to emulate.

During their unexpected meeting, Koomson promises the Man to come with his wife for a visit in a few days. Waiting for this visit, the Man carries his routine work everyday, while still enduring the contempt of his wife and mother-in-law at home, and the harassment of unscrupulous customers, such as the timber contractor, in the railway offices. His lack of identification with the materialistic values cherished by his fellow citizens throws him in a position of alienation and self-estrangement. However, even though he bears his alienation with great difficulty, his isolation draws him to a vantage position, similar to Marlow's self-effacement, through which he objectively observes his society and probes into its evils. And when the Koomsons come to dinner, his insights convince him rapidly that they are hollow individuals, whose sole work of genius is the racketing of public wealth. Furthermore, when the military coup occurs, he dissociates himself from his mates and refrains from going demonstrating in support of the new leaders. The Man has, thus, foreseen the corruption of the new rulers and anticipated the disillusionment of the whole country.

If *Heart of Darkness* ends with Marlow's commitment to Kurtz's memory, in *The Beautiful Ones* concludes with a similar scheme of action, since at the end of the narrative the Man performs a similar action of rescue involving Koomson. After the military coup, the new men in power decide to hunt after all Nkrumah's men and bring them before the court. Koomson could have endured this fate, had he not found shelter in the Man's house. Feeling pity for his former classmate, the Man cannot consent leaving him at the mercy of ruthless and bloody soldiers looking for vengeance. It is from this perspective that the main character's breach to the law can be understood, since without his help, the soldiers

would have probably killed Koomson. Endorsing again his tolerant and detached ideals, which have already kept him away from the shady bargains of his corrupt society, the Man offers his help to the fugitive Minister and leads him, first, out of the house through the latrines, and then to the harbour, where they hire a fishing boat to go outside the country. And when the danger is over, the Man dives in the sea and rejoins the coast, successfully leading the rescue.

The bulk of the parallels between *Heart of Darkness* and *The Beautiful Ones*, developed above, hides deeper connections and similarities, at the levels of characterisation, imagery and themes. To our mind, if these connections appear at various levels of the two narratives and discourses, it is due to Armah's assimilation and refraction of Conrad's novella's themes and genre. His thematic appropriation shows in his projection of a society which has freed itself from the direct control of Capitalism only to fall in neo-imperial domination, Capitalism third stage. This aspect of his narrative invites a comparison with the same theme in *Heart of Darkness*, where Conrad's ethical and political imagination used the novel's narrative space as a platform through which to dramatize the issue of imperial conquest and to discuss the ethical challenges of Imperialism. Early in the novel, Marlow informs his listeners that the light of civilization is in constant flickering, and precedes the telling of his tale with a reflection on Empire

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

This quote asserts the centrality of the theme of imperialism to the narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. In his novel, Armah develops a similar theme, since, right from the early pages, he alludes to the neo-colonial condition in which independent Ghana is trapped. His allusion is fulfilled through the image of the white Atlantic Caprice hotel,

which commands Takoradi city from above the hill in “an insulting white” (p.10). A symbol of foreign domination, the Atlantic Caprice stands at the same level as the old buildings of the big Ghanaian firms which, after Independence, changed only in names. In his focus on the betrayal of the dreams of Independence, Armah lays the blame on the “sons of the nation [who are] now in charge,” and whose rule shows “how completely the new thing took after the old” (p.10).

In addition to being important themes, imperialism in *Heart of Darkness* and neo-colonialism in *The Beautiful Ones* help also to define the genre of each narrative and the identity of most of their important characters. To begin with, Marlow’s journey of adventure in Conrad’s fiction can be read as a parody of the Romance of Empire. Romance of Empire* is an adventure story whose discourse endorses the liberal assumptions of Imperialism, and reflects the racial prejudices which underlie the European conquest of Africa. The common pattern of its plot is that of an English gentleman who ventures in the ‘dark continent’, becomes wealthy, and, by virtue of his European race and education, bestows his benevolent rule upon the natives. *Heart of Darkness* endorses the same pattern as most of these fictions, but with ironic overtones which strip the romantic idealism of these narratives and deflate the heroic rhetoric of their imperial discourse†. Its most patent irony lies in the subversion, one is indeed tempted to say debasement, of Kurtz’s civilizing expedition into a quest for ivory and his philanthropic mission into a desire to ‘exterminate all the brutes’. Hence, Conrad achieves a satiric portrait of the man of empire, and presents him as a “hollow” man, an intruder, whose effect upon the natives is disastrous.

* Some examples of Imperial romances are : Rider Haggard’s novels *She* (1887) and *Allan Quatermain*, Joseph Thomson’s *Ulu: An African Romance* (1888), and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*.

† As narrative structures, irony and romance are not far removed from each other since, in Northrop Frye’s view, “the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic mythical forms to more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways” (1990: 223).

Just like *Heart of Darkness*, *The Beautiful Ones*, too, fits the generic template of parody of romance. Its plot features a community bent on acquiring and consuming foreign commodities, and enthralled by an ideal of success represented by the gleam. The gleam is an ironic symbol, which renders both the dreams and promises of Independence and its betrayal. As a quest theme, it stands for the material ideal of most of the people. But as a false promise, it suggests the cultural impoverishment of the country, and a new form of domination. The two contradictory meanings find their embodiment in the characters of the Man and Koomson; the former's efforts at resisting the allure of the gleam estrange him from his family and community, whereas the latter's ability to spot (illegitimate) opportunities singles him heroically out from the rest of the community. Thus, even though the corrupt minister steals public money, betrays and derides the socialist orientation of the country, and leads an opulent life at the expense of the poor classes, Takoradi sees him as "a big lord", a "white man", and a "big man"; in one word, one of the heroes of the gleam.

Hybridity looms large in the respective identities of Kurtz and Koomson described above. By virtue of his highly refined education and his trans-European origins, Kurtz seems to reflect the Enlightenment idea of perfectibility associated with the concept of civilization. John Stewart Mill's definition of the word civilization articulates well this identity. "The word civilization", he wrote,

stands for *human improvement* in general [... and a country is called more civilized] if we think it more improved; more eminent in the best characteristics of Man and society; farther advanced in the road to perfection; happier, nobler, wiser. This is one sense of the word civilization. But in the other sense it stands for that kind of improvement only, which distinguishes a wealthy and powerful nation from savages and barbarians (quoted in Young 35).

On account of his poor origin and then his rise in the company's hierarchy, Kurtz seems to embody well Mill's ideals of advancement, eminence and perfection. However, Kurtz is fundamentally a displaced person, who has crossed the boundaries of Europe (both physical and cultural), and has come into contact with 'other' peoples. More than

that, during his stay in the jungle, in the far–entrenched inner station, the “pitiless breast” (p. 94) of the wilderness, he has increased his alienation. At length, he has also come to endorse the customs, rites and behaviour (in one word the culture) of the ‘savages’, to the extent that his character has become deeply altered: “the wilderness [...] had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite” (p. 69).

The spoiled nature of Kurtz’s character evinces a nineteenth century racial premise, endorsed by the German philosopher Johann Herder, who believed that the “hybridized, forced unions between nations [...] are bound to disintegrate, while colonists themselves will degenerate in unnatural climates” (Young 39). Herder’s anxiety as to the intermingling of cultures and races reflects the same anxiety as that of many nineteenth century English writers, who were concerned with cross-cultural contacts and other interactions between nations and races of the world. One of these writers is Rudyard Kipling, who qualifies one of his native characters that received an English education, as “the monstrous hybridism of East and West” (1994: 318). In our view, the transformations that underwent Kurtz’s personality in the jungle may well be associated with the same kind of hybridism, since all through Marlow’s tale, Kurtz is also presented as a self-deified person, hungry for wealth and power, and deeply fascinated by horror and violence.

If the hybridity of Kurtz’s identity is made obvious in his simultaneous embodiment of antithetical concepts, such as civilization and savagery, progress and degeneration, goodness and evil, the hybridity of Koomson’s identity stems solely from his awkward imitation of the manners and behaviour of the Whites. The two identities are therefore monstrous hybrid identities, because they intimate the ideas of success and failure, heroism and grotesqueness. Actually, Kurtz’s authoritarian practices and his genocide solutions foreshadow the post-colonial African autocratic rulers, the portrait of whom Armah ridicules and attacks in his novel through the personality of Koomson. In

The Beautiful Ones, Koomson seems to fulfil a function that can be best described, after Frantz Fanon's words, as the function of "the black man who is white".

The monstrous hybridity of Koomson's identity is best established through the grotesque imagery associated with him. The aesthetics of the grotesque being to a great extent the aesthetics of the monstrous (Bakhtin 1984: 43), Koomson's identity is mostly defined by his double-chinned, opulent body, which spots him outside 'folk universalism', together with his ill-acquired wealth, which sets him as an exemplar of African bourgeoisie at its worst. According to Frantz Fanon, the national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is a decadent replica of its Western progenitor. It follows it "along its path of negation and decadence [...] It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness, or the will to succeed of youth" (Fanon 1990: 123). This description applies well to Koomson, whose possessions, speech affectations, and manners all speak of his obsessive fascination with his former white masters. For instance, the minister lives in a house, located in the Upper Residential Area, and formerly occupied by white civil servants. The house is a well-kept place, adorned by luxury items, most of which have come from Western countries. And when he calls his servant Atinga, Koomson affects his shout with an accent that reminds the Man a similar accent of the white men who try to pronounce African names without any desire to articulate them well.

Koomson's grotesqueness is also featured in his enactment of the same fate as that of the old manchild. The latter is a metaphor which stands for the monstrous cross that resulted from the contact of Europe and Africa, induced by the imperial condition of colonization. The roots of this kind of monstrous hybridism may be traced back to a nineteenth century debate in biological and anthropological sciences over the issues of monogenism (which saw all humans as belonging to a single family) and ploygenism (which considered that human races as belonging to more than one species). Because of its overwhelming racial and political implications, the debate rapidly extended to the questions of miscegenation and hybridity. And among the different points of view held by

scholars* of that time, there was a thesis which claimed that the offspring of different races, i.e. hybrids, produces “a mongrel group that makes up a ‘raceless chaos’, merely a corruption of the originals, degenerate and degraded” (Young 18). The monstrosity attributed to inter-racial marriages within this racial theory functions as the motif which informs Armah’s metaphor of the old manchild. Hence, the freak can be said to function as an oblique commentary on the speedy growth of the country under the colonial regime, brought about by the unnatural social, economic and political conditions of Imperialism.

In addition to his appropriation of Conrad’s hybrid genre of parody and the sense of irony that underlays it, Armah’s organic hybridization of Conrad’s discourse shows also in his incorporation of metaphors and motifs that evoke the same imagery in *Heart of Darkness*. The latter’s structure of imagery is forcefully ambivalent, ironic, and grotesque. Irony and ambivalence work in it as discursive strategies which inform the complexity of the imperial condition, whereas the grotesque functions as an extended metaphor that evinces the corrosive atmosphere of corruption and decadence that characterises the political and economic bodies of the Belgian stations in the Congo. The assessment of these three kinds of imagery in *The Beautiful Ones* through the master-text of *Heart of Darkness* evidences the organic hybridity of Armah’s discourse and intimates the idea of continuity between Ghana’s colonial past and its post-colonial present. Definitely, for Armah, independent Ghana, of which the old bus is the most outstanding metaphor, seems to be no more than the continuation of the old colonial Africa, embarked as it was on Marlow’s decaying steamboat and crumbling under the Pilgrims’ stations of nightmare.

If Achebe is equally irritated by *Heart of Darkness* and *the Beautiful Ones*, it is because by fusing Conrad’s metaphors within his novel’s structure of imagery, Armah circulates a grotesque image of Africa and Africans comparable to European racial stereotypes in Conrad’s discourse. For instance, describing Marlow’s sail along the banks

* Robert Young presents a range of five positions taken by nineteenth century European biologists and anthropologists over the issue of the mixing of races. See Young, op. Cit. p. 18

of the Congo River, Conrad stages an atmosphere of “overheated catacomb” (p. 20). To repeat his words, it was as if

Nature herself had tried to ward off intruders; in and out of rivers, streams of death in life, whose banks were rotting into mud, whose waters, thickened into slime invaded the contorted mangroves, that seemed to writhe at us in the extremity of an impotent despair. Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particularized impression, but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints of nightmare (p. 20-1).

The banks along which Marlow sails presents a grotesque image of mud, rottenness and despair that imparts an oppressive atmosphere of furnace, grave and death. Amplified to Conrad’s whole portrayal of Africa, the banks of the River Congo appear to be a dystopian landscape of doom and gloom, hostile to human life and civilization, and impenetrable to every form of human understanding. Marlow progresses in this landscape with great toil and trouble, always fancying himself as if taking possession of “an accursed inheritance” (p.51).

Of equal grotesque order is also Marlow’s description of the natives. During his stay at the Central Station, he envisions them in a series of abnormal images that negate their humanity

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die (p.24).

The bulk of Marlow’s descriptions of Africa and Africans defines a continent steeped in disease, squalor and mystery. For him, the ‘dark’ continent is a place that challenges human understanding, and in which “reality fades” and the “inner truth is hidden”. Likewise, the natives are essentially *others*, who are slavishly driven by Kurtz and the Pilgrims, and easily impressed by the tokens of European technology, such as the whistle of Marlow’s steamboat. In sum, Conrad deploys a demonic imagery, which features, in Northrop Frye’s words, a world “that desire totally rejects: the world of the

nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it [...] the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly” (147).

No less unsettling and dark are the images conveyed by Armah about Ghana and the Ghanaians in *The Beautiful Ones*. Commenting on the workers of the railway station, the author represents them as moribund individuals, hardly capable of sustaining the monthly cycle: “the living dead could take some solace in the half-thought that there were so many other dead in life with them. So many, so frighteningly many, that maybe in the end even the efforts one made not to join them resulted only in another, more frustrating kind of living death” (p.22). The reductive, grotesque and deflationary imagery associated with these workers articulates the vision of a lost wholesomeness and accumulated corruption, whose result is the decadence of society at large. Seen from the perspective of Frye’s ironic modes, this imagery features a scene of “frustration, bondage, and absurdity”.

The corruption of the railway station’s workers yields also to the physical environment surrounding them. This landscape is often described as decayed and rotten*, very much in line with Frye’s demonic world mentioned above. One example which illustrates the grotesqueness of the landscape is a popular market that the Man crosses everyday in his way back home

Over the iron bridge the bus moves slowly. In gusts the heat rises from the market abandoned to the night and to the homeless, dust and perpetual mud covered over with crushed tomatoes and rotten vegetables, eddies from the open end of some fish head on a dump refuse and curled-up scales with the hardening corpses of the afternoon’s flies. Another stretch of free sea line. More than half-way now, the world around the central rubbish heap is entered, and smells hit the senses like a strong wall, and the eyes have something to register. It is so old it has become more than mere rubbish, that is why. It has fused with the earth underneath (p. 40).

* The gloom, decay and rot respectively associated with Armah’s Ghana and Conrad’s Africa compelled some critics to draw parallels between the two narratives and Dante’s *The Inferno*. With regards to Armah’s fiction, read Charles Nnolim (1979).

The physical decay of the market and its festering refuse draw a grotesque disturbing picture of desolation and decadence. It partakes to the same demonic language that structures most of Armah's imagery, such as the old bus, the decaying banister and the muddy stream. These images can be said to endorse a historical vision which suggests a general disease, and in which Kurtz's vision of "the horror, the horror" finds all its expression. In this respect, Armah's independent Ghana offers striking parallels to Conrad's Congo, parallels that impart the ideas of cumulative filth, corruption, exploitation, and above all, misguided rule.

Even though Conrad's and Armah's respective images of Africa and Africans have provoked the ire of Achebe and other critics, we can nevertheless assume that they are not meant to fulfil realistic representations, but rather to work as commentaries on the political monolithic systems set in motion by the economic organization of Capitalism, respectively at the end of the nineteenth century and during the post-colonial period. As powerful systems capable of mystifying reality, the two systems are respectively represented in Armah's and Conrad's narratives through the images of the gleam and ivory. Both are ambivalent and ironic metaphors, which impart the meanings of immaculate whiteness and illegal wealth. For instance, in Conrad's tale, the relationships between the agents of the different stations are punctuated by their yearnings for ivory and subordinated to its acquisition. Among all the agents, Kurtz is the one who amasses the most ivory. His lust for it is also unequalled. It has drawn him to the "heart of darkness", and compelled him to massacre whole tribes for its possession. According to the Harlequin, Kurtz alienates himself for long times in the jungle, with the only aim of hunting for ivory. The Harlequin recounts, also, that nothing seems to bridle Kurtz's appetite for ivory, since for the sake of its acquisition, he stops at nothing, even murder.

The gleam, too, has a mystifying power similar to that of ivory, and serves as a metaphor for the social nexuses that prevail over individual relationships in independent Ghana. In his analysis of the ontological vision of *The Beautiful Ones*, John Lutz (2003)

associates it with the reification process set in motion by the system of international Capitalism. Lutz explains that the gleam reflects the displacement of the natural order of the community, and achieves two processes: one, a process of production and exchange, whereupon the articulation of human autonomy is negated by the oppressive presence of marketplace values; two, a process of mystification whereupon the true condition of the social world is misrepresented, and the gleam constructs its own reality by hiding the dislocation of the community (Lutz 103). The mystifying power of the gleam distorts the perceptions of the individuals and transforms all that is dirt and corruption into virtues and desirable qualities. Oyo's chiding of her husband testifies to its power to falsify reality and distort values. Her twisted vision is obvious when she exclaims, "it is nice. It is clean, the life Estella is getting" (p.44).

Thus far, in our analysis, we have attempted to read the parallels between the grotesque reality of Empire encountered by Marlow during his "experience of nightmare", and the post-colonial grim world described by Armah in *The Beautiful Ones* as the tokens of the African novelist's linguistic hybridisation of Conrad's discourse. Our analysis has shown that these parallels are both structural and thematic. They revolve around Conrad's and Armah's common recourse to the genre of the parody of romance. The assessment of the features of this mode of writing in the two novels allows us to presume that the two novelists intended their narratives as vehicles of demystification: Conrad demystifies the so-called European civilizing mission, whereas Armah demystifies Ghana's independence.

The parallels between *The Beautiful Ones* and *Heart of Darkness* are also thematic. Read from the perspective of Edward Said's critique of Conrad, they seem to suggest that Armah, like his English counterpart, could not find an alternative to the imperial discourse, of which *Heart of Darkness* captures the most striking metaphors. His discourse is so laden with motifs of violence, exploitation, and fetishism, that it can hardly be distinguished from Conrad's discourse. Hence, the African writer can be said to have anticipated what Said calls the 'discourse of resurgent Empire', by endorsing the Western

later consensus, which regards Africa as an ‘atrocious nuisance’ and a ‘politically inferior place’, and advocates the idea that the West should remain truthful to its civilizing ‘responsibilities’.

However, to claim that Armah’s disillusionment with Ghana’s independence and his lack of faith in the country’s leadership have led him to espouse Conrad’s racist premises and his imperialist faith is to disregard the complex process through which he dialogizes his borrowings from *Heart of Darkness*, and invests them with a meaning that is different and fundamentally contestatory. In our view, Armah dialogizes Conrad’s discourse through intentionally hybridizing his discourse and unsettling the eulogistic imperial rhetoric implied in it. This intentional hybridization appears in the interplay of the traditional African festival of the Apo and the purgation rite involved in it, on the one hand, and Conrad’s language, on the other. In other words, Armah deflates and unsettles Conrad’s discourse of Imperialism by bringing it into textuality with the satiric function of the Apo celebrations and making the Man’s journey, which echoes Marlow’s, unfold along the carrier ritual cleansing.

In an article published just a year before the publication of *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah charges explicitly Africa’s autocratic regimes with the betrayal of the African revolutions and the perpetuation of the continent’s subordination to the West. His indictment of Africa’s indigenous leaders goes as far as naming Senghor and Nkrumah themselves, two outstanding and emblematic leaders, and asserting that their respective doctrines of Negritude and Consciencism perform a function for the post-independence African leadership “similar to that performed for the colonial administration by the ideological twins Christianity and the white man’s burden” (1967: 28). *The Beautiful Ones* voices a similar discontent with Ghana’s political direction and shows that Armah was eager to grapple again with the country’s nationalist politicians, whom he sees as the true agents of neo-colonialism. Working as a social and political satire, this novel adopts a focused political statement: “the sons of the nation were now in charge, after all. How

completely the new thing took after the old” (p.10). From this point of view, Armah draws a harsh critique of neo-colonialism by relying on the tradition of the Apo. The latter is the satiric interface which enables him to lampoon the heirs of the white masters and to predicate his subversive commentary on the colonial condition and all its legacies.

Armah’s mobilisation of the Apo satirical potential shows in three aspects of his novel: one, the satirical passages of Chapter Six which develop Teacher’s disenchantment with the country’s ideological orientation and the demise of its political elite; two, the presentation of the Man as a ritual carrier who goes in a ritual process / journey for the sake of tracking the colonial legacy of corruption and cleaning the country from its contagion; three, the caricature image of Koomson as a representative figure of African indigenous leaders. In the first instance, Armah confers to Teacher the function of a popular ritual performer of the Apo incantations, whereby he attacks the corruption of the country’s rulers. The following satiric passage from the novel offers evidence of Teacher’s pillorying of those who are seen as responsible for the betrayal of the Revolution and accountable for the decline of traditional communal values

How long would Africa be cursed with its leaders? There were men dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power they did not have. We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs. These men who were to lead us out of our despair, they came like men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power they had never struggled for, old before they had even been born into power, and ready only for the grave [...] (p. 80-1).

The scathing, caustic tone of the passage above and the biting ridicule of African leaders involved in it are met with another passage in which Teacher harshly attacks President Kwame Nkrumah himself. The latter’s return to Ghana during the anti-colonial struggle, his words about ‘eyes needing to be opened and the world to be looked at’, together with his speeches about freedom and the necessity of action are all recorded in a sarcastic style that looks back both with regret and resentment to the struggle for

independence and the hope triggered by Nkrumah's arrival. The resentment contained within Teacher's bitter reminiscences translates his dissatisfaction with Nkrumah's regime and develops rapidly into satiric passages that slander his government and decry his rule: "After a youth spent fighting the white man, why should not the president discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor himself, to live above all blackness in the big old slave castle?" (p. 92).*

Teacher's incrimination of Nkrumah's regime and his attacks on his government are at home within the ritual of the Apo commemorations. However, while Chapter Six develops a rhetorical style which engages openly the author's political sentiments, in the remainder of the narrative Armah relies on the carrier ritual, which attends to the commemorations of the Apo, in order to implement his satirical purposes. Thus, the Man is made to undergo the different phases of the ritual, whose metaphoric actions inform also the structure of the plot of the novel. The unfolding of the Man's behaviour through the thread of his ritual function enables Armah to open up, in Derek Wright's words, "speculative fantasies of the panoramic cleansing of [African] history right back to pre-colonial times" (1992: 136). In the process, the Man's action revisits much of Marlow's predicament in *Heart of Darkness*, while Armah's discourse subtly unsettles much of Conrad's imperial rhetoric implicit in his discourse and imagery.

The Man's endorsement of the carrier's identity sets him in a position of weakness, very comparable to Marlow's passive behaviour and his continuous negative response to the environment surrounding him[†]. Likewise, his ritual task leads him to a symbolic

* The critics who have dealt with the passage above have faulted Armah for his incrimination of President Nkrumah, and considered it as an error of judgement on his part (Obiechina E, 1971). These critics seem to be unaware that, by reprimanding Nkrumah and his men, Armah simply dramatizes the satiric function inherent in the Apo celebrations.

[†] Conrad's narrator's unwillingness to identify with the values held in fashion by all the other agents of the company and his resistance to the call of the unfriendly jungle lead him to experience an acute identity crisis, and force him to always interact negatively with his surrounding. Thus, during his 'progress' in the Congo river, his reaction towards the surrounding environment is always negative. For instance, he describes Kurtz as "no idol of mine" (p. my italics); portrays the other Pilgrims as lazy agents, and Manager of the station

journey similar to the sea voyage of Conrad's narrator. This journey starts with him riding an old rusty bus, reminiscent of Marlow's decaying steamboat, and entering the city in a time of darkness. As he walks in the dirty streets of Tackoradi and proceeds to his work place, the Man confronts hostile individuals and an ugly environment. The railway station is one of these hideous landscapes. In its "squat massiveness" and "lumpy heaviness", the building is a decaying remnant of colonial days, indeed the avatar of Marlow's stations of nightmare. However, as he goes on in his symbolic journey, the Man metaphorically re-enacts the motions of the cleansing carrier. Unlike Marlow, who engages in the journey merely to experience an exclusively personal kind of enlightenment, Armah's protagonist undergoes different ritual formalities, whose ultimate outcome is the restoration of the community's health and the cleaning of society from its accumulated, "unconquered filth". In this sense, the Man becomes a kind of redeemer who undertakes the task of freeing the prisoners of the gleam from the state of impoverishment to which they are reduced; prisoners that Marlow merely observes with detachment during his 'progress' in the River Congo.

The first metaphoric motions of the Man show him, to use the author's own words, continuously "pressed down with burdens other than his own" (p. 46). The 'burdens' loaded on the Man's back are the sins, iniquities and twisted desires of the different members of his society. They are also the littered garbage of the waste containers, and other excrements and filth which result from the consumption of Western manufactured commodities. The former category of corruption involves him in direct contacts with unscrupulous and / or low morality individuals. It can be illustrated through the bus conductor's sense of guilt and his vindictive behaviour, the timber contractor's bribes, his family's materialistic yearnings, the Koomsons' corruption, etc. All these characters work

as a man with "*no genius (...) no learning (...) no intelligence (... who) originated nothing*" (p. 31, my italics); perceives all the African land as a primitive land hostile to civilization, and all forms of social or human organization as beast-like, animal behaviour ... etc.

in turn in order to alienate him and impute him both their wickedness and wrong doings. In front of their hypocrite and aggressive behaviour, however, the Man remains passive and uninvolved, patiently waiting to achieve his task of ritual cleansing.

The Man is also made to deeply interact with the physical corruption surrounding him. Many times in the narrative, he is shown mechanically attracted towards images of rot or decaying objects of his excrementalised universe. For example, in his journey to work, he gets closer to the waste boxes that contain the social waste and excrements; during the lunch break, he settles on a concrete slab and sharpens his vision on a muddy stream; after the second meeting with the corrupt timber contractor, he lets his hand slide down the “dirt-caked banister” (p.111) ...etc. All these motifs demonstrate that decontagion is a theme that rings so clearly in each one of the Man’s action, even when his motivations are not explicitly specified.

The most important token of the Man’s endorsement of the carrier’s burden lies in his involvement in Koomson’s escape. A party hack and a pampered government minister, Koomson stands as a representative agent of the neo-colonial African political elite. He is a materially opulent party man, extensively involved in the dilapidation of the country’s riches. He also lives in an insulated residential estate that previously accommodated the white coloniser. His assimilation to the white colonisers’ culture and behaviour makes him the utmost representative of the neo-colonial ruler. His very name *Koomson*, which reads *comes soon*, a Christian hymn sung in Easter to celebrate the resurrection of the Christ, epitomises the *Osagyefo* (saviour/redeemer) image adopted by Nkrumah to sanctify his autocratic rule. Through it, Armah exploits its religious symbolism in order to intimate, not the resurrection of the Messiah, but the return of the white man’s rule during the independence period.

The portrait of Koomson offers a stylized picture of Kurtz’s identity in *Heart of Darkness*: the latter is a man of Empire, who plunders the ivory of the Congolese, and the former is an agent of Neo-Empire who builds up his fortune by siphoning public funds. In

addition to this parallel, the two characters are also made out to be iconic figures that incarnate the aspirations of their fellow countrymen; aspirations that lead them to consume their respective lives in the pursuit of ivory and the gleam. Yet, even though people are in awe of them, the two characters' respective moralities are wicked: their priorities value greed and graft over morality and personal success over the community's interests.

Besides Kurtz, Koomson resembles also many figures presented in Conrad's fiction. For instance, his expensive attire and shallow personality make him look like the manager of the Central Station, who is singled out from his mates through his carefulness about the neatness of his clothes and the organization of his room. The two characters remain bores, because they simply initiate nothing. All these parallels show that the character of Koomson 'condenses' by stylisation and parody many types of the imperialists, most of which are found in *Heart of Darkness*. The parodic traits associated with him disclose Armah's intention to disallow the image of the men of Empire, by making the ultimate ritual task of his protagonist their evacuation out of the country.

After the military coup, the Man's ritual behaviour unfolds rapidly, especially as the coup draws most party men to fall from their position of power. Koomson's escape to the Man's house gives the latter the ritualistic finale, through which he effects his purification task, by driving the corrupt fugitive minister out of the country. Armah proceeds to describe Koomson's escape through a vivid olfactory imagery of flatulence and stench that inverts most of the cleanness and perfumes previously associated with him. Through this imagery, Armah reverses the religious connotations inherent in the redeemer image, and intimates the idea that the party-man has become a decayed body of waste and excreta, ready to be ejected via the latrines.

The Man's help to Koomson recalls in many ways Marlow's commitment to Kurtz. Yet, while Marlow pledges faithfulness to the memory of the company's 'best agent', the Man feels no sympathy whatsoever towards his former school mate. His help is

impersonal, detached, untainted by any form of duty, except that of fulfilling the ritual task of removing the residual filth of the old regime, to which Koomson has now become reduced. The merit of this symbolic rescue cannot be appreciated, unless Koomson's symbolic identity is appropriately grasped. Indeed, in removing Koomson out of Ghana, the Man evacuates an agent of neo-colonialism, whose main feature is its capacity for renewal and rebirth. For, as we have already outlined, the identity of Koomson is linked to the Christian belief in the resurrection of Christ; a resurrection that has already taken a secular form after independence, when Koomson was seen to re-incarnate the neo-colonial agent of domination already fulfilled by Kurtz in colonial times. Therefore, in evacuating him outside the country, the Man achieves a heroic action, whose profits return to the whole community. This heroic action distinguishes him from Marlow, whose final, personal enlightenment pushes him into further alienation, especially as he is forced to lie to Kurtz's fiancée about his death. At the same time, in concluding his narrative with a positive assertion of his protagonist's ritualistic identity, Armah opens a new perspective wherein traditional customs fulfil a function of resistance and offer an alternative to the artificial materialistic values inherited from colonialism. The assertion of the country's popular identity is Armah's strategy to escape the pervasive influence of colonial discourse with which Conrad had already struggled without ever being capable of overcoming its hegemonic thrust.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*".
<http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/achcon.htm>
- Arab, Si Abderahmane. "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel". *The European Legacy*. Vol. 1. N° 1. International Society for the Study of European Ideas (1996).
- Armah, Ayi K. "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?" *Présence Africaine*. 64 (1967) 6-24.
- "A Mystification: African Independence Revalued." *Pan-African Journal*. 2 (Spring 1969): 141-151.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. 1961. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. 1957. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. 1901. London: Penguin, 1994.
- Lutz, John. 'Pessimism, Autonomy, and Commodity Fetishism in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*'. *Research in African Literatures*, 34 (2003) 94-111.
- Moore, Gene M. "*Heart of Darkness*". *Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*. Ed. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1993.
- Wright, Derek. "Motivation and Motif: The Carrier Rite in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continent Press, 1992.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Conclusion

This first part of our dissertation has attempted to read Armah's *The Beautiful Ones* through the concepts of hybridity and proverbs. The issues at stake within the three chapters have been the novel's structure of imagery, decried by Achebe as alienating imagery deprived of African authenticity, and its rhetoric, classified by Priebe within the gambit of myth. In our discussion of the two critical points of view, we have resorted to two theoretical paradigms: Bakhtin's concepts of the intentional and the organic hybrid discourses and Newell's notion of proverbial space. The two paradigms have proved efficient to conduct our analysis since they have permitted an in-depth investigation of the novel's language.

The concept of the organic hybridity involves the practice of literary borrowings, which is, according to Ashcroft et al., at the heart of the postcolonial novelist's strategy of appropriation from Western literature. Along all the three chapters that compose this part, we have been trying to press the critical opinion that Armah should not be blamed for his recourse to this strategy. A marked feature of Africa's elite as well as its popular literature, appropriation is a mode of artistic creativity that enabled, not only the positive *insemination* of his own artistic imagination, but also the development of all African literature in its two different wings, the international and the local.

Our study of the *appropriation* impulse in Armah's imagination has not been conducted at a surface level by merely chasing after the sources of the marked and unmarked quotations inserted in his novel. Instead, the intertexts we have spotted in his novel have always been analysed through the concept of proverb and its functions as they transpire in traditional African culture. A facet of folk wisdom and witticism, the use of proverbs is a hallmark of African culture, wherein they keep fulfilling important functions linked to individual and societal needs. In Armah's novel, they take the form of segments of intertextual discourse, such as metaphors, sententious phrases and statements, and fulfil different functions, all of which are compatible with the same functions in oral

culture. Their pervasive presence within his text steeps his narrative in its social milieu and attunes him with the culture of his people. It demonstrates that he is not an alienated native as Achebe and Priebe have described him; he is rather an African writer, a product of the educated elite of Ghana's urban centre. And if, unlike Achebe, he has not had recourse to the proverbs of his traditional culture, it is because at the time and place of his writing, the use of proverbs in the traditional sense was limited to elders.

Armah's recourse to fiction as an alternative platform for the public display of quotations foregrounds a proverbial discourse that illuminates the refraction of his borrowings into advice-giving situations. The literary resources he mobilized are various; they range from romantic poetry, such as Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality", to modernist poetry and novel, such as Yeats's "The Second Coming", Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. But the mobilization of this imported material does not seem to revel on the simple imitation of their discourse or imagery. For whether they come from poems or novels, Armah's quotes are reprocessed in an original way; they are borne by a proverbial hybrid discourse, whose intertexts /proverbs are didactic because they offer in a nutshell moral lessons deeply attuned with the morality of the country.

The pervasive occurrences of intertexts which function like proverbs in *The Beautiful Ones* lead us to consider this novel as a book of proverbs, analogous to, say Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It is true that these proverbs do not belong to the traditional lore of the Akan culture. They are steeped in the literary practice of the West African semi-educated, urban writers who interacted productively with Western texts in their novels. Nevertheless, this is no reason to sideline their originality or their authenticity. The functions they fulfil within the narrative matrix of the novel prove that they are all congruent with the same functions in the traditional proverbs handled by elders.

Our focus on the Armah's hybrid, proverbial discourse has not prevented us from engaging the political dimension of his novel. This task has been conducted through the

comparison we have undertaken between *The Beautiful Ones* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The comparison has shown that the organic hybridisation of discourse continues to be the dominant feature of Armah's language. This organic fusion of language has been demonstrated in the different similarities between the two fictions. The bulk of these similarities suggests that Africa is still entrapped in a cycle of decadence and defeat. It is this aspect of his fiction which has caused Armah to receive scathing criticism from his fellow African writers and critics.

However, by endorsing such a sceptical view, Armah's narrative does not evince an anti-nationalist sentiment, since his primary impulse towards the issues of culture and political leadership intimates with force that his ideological thrust remains fundamentally and uncompromisingly anti-colonial. In his novel, he projects his ideological stance through the mobilization of the Apo festival and the carrier ritual attendant to it. The merit of this lore is two-fold: it invests and asserts a facet of Ghana's popular carnivals and it intentionally hybridizes the Western imagery inserted in the text. One such imagery is the metaphors of light, darkness and death which permeate and structure Conrad's discourse. Through the unfolding of Armah's protagonist's ritual cleansing task, these structural metaphors and symbols are disempowered in the novel and made to vanish altogether after the completion of his ritual duties. In his second novel, *Fragments*, Armah continues to rely on both Western texts and African popular culture to produce a kind of fiction that displays hybridity, not only at the level of its mode of writing, as it is the case with *The Beautiful Ones*, but also at the level of its genre.

Part Two:

Hybridity, Menippean Satire, Liminality, and Modernist Aesthetics in *Fragments*

Introduction

Armah's second novel *Fragments** (1969) presents so many similarities with *The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born* that it can be read as its sequel. The continuity between the two fictions can be seen, first and foremost, in the incidents of their respective plots. In the first novel, the narrative concludes with the image of the Man returning home after a long voyage in the sea, during which he evacuated Koomson from the country. The protagonist's homecoming assumes a heroic dimension, because he has succeeded to both save the life of an otherwise doomed soul and win the approval of his wife and children for the righteousness of his principles. The same motifs of homecoming and heroic crossing open *Fragments*, which dramatises the return of an African intellectual, named Baako Onipa, from a long period of scholarship in the United States of America. Baako's return takes place in the period that followed the fall of Nkrumah's regime; i.e. the time period at which *The Beautiful Ones* concludes.

The name Baako Onipa means *the lonely man*; that is, the same name as the protagonist of *The Beautiful Ones*. This patronymic similarity between the two protagonists yields into fictional analogies between their respective actions in the two novels. In *Fragments*, Baako assumes the same functions as the ones attributed to his fictional counterpart in Armah's first fiction. To begin with, the two characters function as agents of disillusionment and observers of the socio-political scene of Ghana. They also open up for the reader the perspective of honest, isolated individuals, struggling against a

* Ayi Kwei Armah, *Fragments* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1979). Further references will be included between brackets within the body of our text.

corrupt environment to maintain their moral and professional integrity. Their honesty and estrangement are the vantage points through which Armah probes into the issue of the post-independence African leadership and sharpens insights about the consumer culture of the neo-colonial period.

The similarities between the two novels read also at different thematic and formal levels. For instance, both fictions feature a Ghanaian community which has, literally, fallen apart, and an African society which is increasingly moving towards a westernised lifestyle. They also develop similar insights into the country's post-independence problems, related to wide-spread corruption, rampant materialism and cultural alienation. As he goes on demystifying the socialist rhetoric of post-independence regimes, Armah does not fail to stress, now again, the estrangement of the masses from the country's leadership; estrangement which results from the ever-recurring problem of the duplicity and deceptive behaviour of the country's bourgeoisie.

The thematic similarities between *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments* extend to their respective forms and modes of writing. Once again, Armah has resorted to modernist aesthetics, by drawing on circular narratives and experimenting a discontinuous, fragmented mode of events presentation. In addition, he has also carried the use of Ghana's grotesque tradition, by borrowing most of his imagery from the Akan carnivalesque tradition of the Apo. The abuse tradition of the Apo is also rounded off with another oral source, which is the archetypal story of *Ananse*, the spider. The evocation of this archetypal figure is so conspicuously felt in the narrative, that it can be said, after the modernist terminology, to provide the structural scaffolding of the fragmented narrative sequences that make up the plot of the novel.

Like *The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born*, *Fragments* has attracted a spate of criticism, even though it has caused no critical controversy, but the one that Armah himself has provoked in his rather caustic polemical response to Charles Larson's *The Emergence of African Fiction* (1971). The criticism accumulated about this novel has been

engaged with the thematic aspects of the novel, without ever going beyond socio-cultural appreciations. Thus, the novel is basically approached through the thematic outline of the been-to's return to his country. Many critics expanded on this thematic outline and went on investigating it through the perspectives of the family and the community demands. Their critical interest is sustained in the novel by the thematic binary opposition Armah weaves around the two been-to prototypes, namely his main character Baako Onipa and the caricature figure of Henry Brempong.*

Besides the theme of the been-to returnees, Armah's critics were also interested in other topical peripheral thematic outlines, such as the theme of the community, alienation, cargo cult, etc. However, the subject that has proved so pervasive in the criticism of *Fragments* is that of the artist, his status, role and place in the post-colonial African societies. Right from the early reception of the novel, to the most recent criticism, the theme of the artist shows itself as the main locus of the criticism of *Fragments*. Charles Larson's early review is a case in point. For him, the novel is undoubtedly an autobiographical work, that "probes [...] into the cranium of the artist/intellectual in contemporary intellectual society, and into the near impossibility of being an artist in Africa today" (268). This point of view is shared by many other later critics of Armah's work, who have brought to it more or less critical refinement. For example, Neil Lazarus's belated criticism of the novel (1990) qualifies most investigations of the subject and argues that the main artist figures of the novel, namely Baako and Ocran, are committed artists who derive their inspirations and ideologies from the African tradition[†]. Lazarus grants a

* For more details on the been-to problematic in African literature, see "Been-to's Returnees: A Colonial Replica" from Dr Hocine Maoui's doctoral dissertation (2007). And for the development of this theme in *Fragments*, read Joe Lurie's "Fragments: Between the Loved Ones and the Community" in *Ba Shiru*. 5. 1 (1973).

[†] Lazarus's criticism is mainly a response to Robert Fraser's analysis of the novel, especially his dichotomy between Baako's view of creative intellectualism in contemporary African society and his master's, Ocran, view on the same issue. In fact, in his early commentary, Fraser maintained the idea that while Baako defends an African communal notion of art, Ocran seems to mirror a western individualistic point of view. He wrote: "Ocran, the art master, is heir to the whole post-Romantic European tradition of the artist as a man alone

central importance to the character of Juana, the Puerto Rican psychiatrist and intellectual, whom he sees to expand the debate over the novel's "politico-existential strategies" that are so cogently relevant to the issue of the artist in the novel*.

Besides the theme of the artist, the other concern of Armah's critics has been the oral material included in his narrative. Riche's doctoral dissertation (1998) is a work that thoroughly details this issue, by reading the narrative of *Fragments* in the light of a "dialectics" that Armah plays between "two literary styles: one African drawing on Ashante/Akan oral tradition, the other Western, utilizing the techniques of modern European literature, each attuned to portraying its own corresponding reality" (105). In his emphasis on the oral style of the novel, Riche shows how Naana and Baako displace archetypal figures related to the Akan folklore and mythology[†]. For instance, the first and last chapters of the novel stylise an Akan ritual dirge performance that speaks of the priestly function assumed by the character of Naana. Likewise, the ritual patterning of the novel seems to originate from the trope of fragmentation inherent in the story of Ananse (the great spider), Baako's mythical surrogate. According to Riche, the differences in functions between Naana and Baako result into two dialectical visions of tradition, that are at the heart of any intellectual culture at almost every epoch (ibid. 135).

It is true that *Fragments* presents a dense thematic texture that lends itself to such various criticisms. However, the investigation of hybridity in the context of the narrative is as yet an unexplored territory. This part of our dissertation attempts to enter this territory through both the genre of the novel and its mode of writing. As an aspect of the novelistic

wrestling with a unique destiny. Baako counters this with a vision of the artist very much nearer the traditional African one of a man who serves the spiritual needs of his community" (1980: 35).

* Lazarus sees that Juana is both the heir of Frantz Fanon's ideas concerning the role of psychiatrics in colonial contexts and the embodiment of Theodore Adorno's intellectual modality of redemption.

[†] For more details on the Akan myths summoned by Armah in his novel, see the sixth chapter of Danièle Stewart's *Le roman africain Anglophone depuis 1965 d'Achebe à Soyinka* (1988).

genre and discourse, hybridity in *Fragments* may be tracked through Bakhtin's typology of hybrid discourse and the genre of Menippean satire. In Part One of our study, this concept has been foregrounded in *The Beautiful Ones* at the level of its mode of writing, which conspicuously blends intentional and organic forms of hybridity. But in the context of this second part, this subject can also be extended to qualify the plot of *Fragments* which, in our view, bears striking conformity to the features of Menippean satire, as listed by Bakhtin in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984).

Central to the genre of Menippea is the dialogical thrust that produces a variety of tones and styles within the narrative framework. Inherent in it is also the ability to absorb and transform other genres. These two cardinal features make it stand as a hybrid genre *par excellence*. Applied to Armah's second novel, they show how he rejects stylistic unity for discordance, appropriates and transforms other genres, includes extra-literary ones, and brings different ideologies in conflict. All these aspects depict Ghana at an historical crossroads, expose the fallacies and machinations underlying the national, neo-colonial culture and experiment verbal parody. In other words, the protean, dialogical and hybrid nature of *Fragments* reveals Armah's intention to contest the hierarchy of social and ideological power in post-colonial Ghana and to fuse different discourses and genres within his novel.

The anchoring of *Fragments* within the mould of menippean satire enables us to highlight the process through which Armah interacts with the works of local African writers and imbricates the discourse and fictions of foreign authors within the boundaries of his hybrid text. Chapter One of the present part is intended to flesh out our assumption about the Menippean genre of the novel. This task will give us an opportunity to illustrate Armah's quoting process and show how he appeals to stylisation and parody as writing strategies of organically and intentionally hybridizing discourse. The investigation of the novel's hybrid discourse and genre will be carried out through a comparative perspective, involving the novel with many other oral and literary texts, belonging to traditional

African poetry and modern Ghanaian writers. One of these texts is Efua Sutherland's short story *New Life at Kyrefaso*. Written during the same post-colonial context as that of *Fragments*, this short story evidences the tensions and polemics that underlie Armah's discourse in relation to the issues of tradition, nationhood and hybridity.

Chapter Two will focus on the comparison of *Fragments* with a single Western master-narrative, namely William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* is a play known worldwide, and Shakespeare is an English writer whose body of works is widely engaged by post-colonial writers. Even though Armah says nowhere in his writings (either literary or extra-literary) that he has read this play, we can assume that, during his scholarship, either in Africa or in the United States, he surely met and read it. The mapping of Shakespeare's influence has often shown that some of his plays and characters have fired the imagination of many postcolonial writers. Accordingly, it seems highly improbable that Armah did not read him prior to his publication of *Fragments*. In our view, this novel clearly demonstrates that Armah, too, can be considered as an *active* reader of Shakespeare. However, contrary to most well-known post-colonial writers who competed with Shakespeare's narratives in order to theorize the issue of colonial encounter and express racial difference, Armah appropriated *Hamlet* in order to draw metaphors and situations that interact productively and organically with his thematic concern over the liminality of the modern African intellectual.

The last chapter of the present part is a tentative comparison of *Fragments* with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This comparison offers an opportunity to invalidate Armah's denial of any contact with the work of his Irish counterpart, even though we do not intend to affirm unequivocally that Armah had already read Joyce's autobiographical novel. The main assumption that we rather intend to foreground in our study is that, by the end of the 1960's, when Armah published his second novel, modernist aesthetics became so much disseminated in world literature that its formal innovations became like proverbs, in the sense that the techniques of

modernism acquired the fixity of proverbial expressions and became almost anonymous in their provenance. In other words, by the time African literature came to age, in the 1960's, *A Portrait* had acquired a proverbial status which permitted Armah to express his own crisis of culture, as Joyce and other Western modernists had already circulated their dejection at Western politics before him.

References:

Fraser, Robert. *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* London: Heinemann, 1980.

Larson, Charles. *The Emergence of African Fiction*. Bloomington/ London: Indiana UP, 1971.

Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Maoui, Hocine. *Disillusionment and Resistance in the Post-Colonial Novel: The Example of Ayi Kwei Armah and N'gugi wa Thiong'o*. Annaba University, 2007.

Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. Unpublished Doctorat d'Etat. University of Algiers, 1998.

Chapter 1:

Menippea, Intervocality, and Organic and Intentional Hybridity in *Fragments*

In the present chapter, we intend to approach Armah's second fiction from the perspective of its novelistic form, by fitting it within the proto-novel genre of Menippean satire, as defined by Bakhtin in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). By emphasizing the protean aspect of the plot and discourse of *Fragments*, we do not imply that it does not evince a proverbial sensibility as the one we have previously highlighted in *The Beautiful Ones*. Actually, the examples which illustrate the proverbial nature of the novel's discourse are numerous and it is our intention to pinpoint some of them. However, in addition to this task, we shall also engage in a larger critical endeavour consisting in unveiling the different voices and texts which are anchored in the language of the novel. In this respect, our embedding of *Fragments* within the hybrid genre of Menippea is a purposeful one, since it opens a generic framework through which to account for the plurality of voices and styles in the novel and to understand how they interact with each other. In other words, if in the following chapter we lay stress on the plot of the novel, it is in order to better appraise the hybrid, organic and intentional, construction of Armah's discourse.

The literary antecedents of Menippean satire go back to the serio-comic genres of the antiquity. Bakhtin describes this period as one of a decline in ethical norms and 'national legend', of an atmosphere of intense philosophical contention amid the rise of a new religion, Christianity. When Menippea appeared, the external social position of the Hellenic mind was devalued, as was also destroyed the 'epic and tragic wholeness of man

and his fate' (Bakhtin 1984: 119). All these historical factors contributed to the rise of the serio-comic genres, and above all menippean satire, which were the most adequate artistic expressions of their epoch.

Read against Armah's post-colonial period, Menippea's background of disintegration described above reveals striking affinities. Indeed, the post-independence decade of Ghana's history saw the erosion of the country's ancestral tradition and the fragmentation of its community, which ushered into the ruin of the traditional social organisation of the extended family. At the political level, the national bourgeoisie strengthened its control over the country's political institutions, and established a precarious political configuration. Amid this situation, Nkrumah's leadership grew as the symbol of both unquestioned authority and national failure at the same time. Definitely, with the failure of Nkrumah, the hero of the independence struggle, suspicions about neo-colonial domination lent themselves more readily to the disillusioned minds of the Ghanaian masses. Last but not least, at the artistic level, the disillusionment with the African 'independence' and 'revolution' silenced most African artists of the first generation, who found no literary outlet with which to grapple with the new situation. And if Armah's early fictions broke so conspicuously in this context, it was thanks to a new mode of writing, whose poetics is at home within the satiric spirit of Menippean satire.

Bakhtin sorts out three features inherent in the serio-comic genres of antiquity: one, their freedom from tradition and their propensity to criticize it; two, their blending of the sublime with the grotesque and the plurality of voices and styles that broke free from the monologia of the classical genre of the epic; three, their immediate relationship to actuality and the folk patterns of experience. All three qualities elucidate the genres' kinship to the tradition of the carnivalesque and validate their incorporation of comic, satiric and parodic elements.

According to Bakhtin, Menippea derives from two sources: the carnivalesque element of holiday festivals and the Socratic dialogue and symposium. The first source is a

set of motifs and attitudes from carnival free play, in which population is given licence to flout and abuse social, religious and political hierarchy rules, whereas the second source is a dialogical inquiry which involves the provocation of opinions. Bakhtin distinguishes fourteen characteristics that define the genre of Menippea. In his view, this genre is intellectual, topical, publicistic, and encyclopaedic. Its form is hybrid and protean, especially in its relation to other genres, which it parodies, amalgamates and inserts, to the extent of producing a variety of tones and styles. The characterization of Menippea, Bakhtin adds, explores abnormal psychology, and dramatizes characters that suffer from eccentricity, insanity, split of personality, etc; the eccentricity of these characters often involves them in dramatic scenes characterised by scandalous and unseemly kinds of behaviour. At the level of plot, Menippea's actions feature fantastic situations and events that defamiliarize ordinary experience and test ideas. The menippean plot juxtaposes ideologies and produces ideas and multiplicity, not resolution, and discredits the possibility of a norm or an ultimate authority. As regards the setting, it often stands for the thresholds between the hierarchical planes of existence, in classical works Olympus/earth/netherworld. Finally, the symbolism and imagery of Menippea include sharp contrasts between crude naturalism and mystical religious symbolism, and sometimes a social utopia (Bakhtin 1984: 114-9).

The relevance of the genre of Menippea to our discussion of Armah's *Fragments* lies mainly in the dialogical thrust that is inherent in its plot. It is true that the atmosphere of the narrative is far removed from what Bakhtin calls the 'folkloric chronotope', the epistemological system of an agrarian culture, wherein time is collective and generative, and sex and death are connected to the fertility of the land (1992: 206). This atmosphere of folk merriment is altogether absent from the debased urban condition exposed in Armah's novel. The latter depicts the city of Accra with a strong element of gross naturalism that leaves no place for the carnival ritual laughter and gaiety. But the mood that dominates the atmosphere of the novel can still be traced to a sub-genre of the

carnavalesque tradition. This sub-genre is no less than the debased condition of the anti-carnival, which often involves the active debasement of carnival figures; a debasement that is itself carnivalistic.

Many folk gatherings in *Fragments*, not to say all of them, illustrate the debased carnival atmosphere of the novel. One of these instances is the passage which describes the sinister hunting and killing of a feverous dog in Accra's streets. The dog is described clinging peacefully to the tarmac, while around it gathers several circles of armed men, competing for the decisive deathblow. Suddenly, a man with a conspicuous bodily deformity steps forward and executes the dog with one brutal blow from his pickaxe. Seized by an uncontrolled happiness, the man goes on displaying his masculine power over his comrades. But his success is just a temporary relief since, no sooner has he accomplished his macabre deed, than he feels a flow of urine dripping along his leg. Actually, the man cannot control his inner fears, so he unconsciously leaves his water run free. Besides this humiliation, and once his unscrupulous deed is done, the killer receives a volley of insults from a boy, to whom the dog belongs.

In narrating this event, Armah insists so much on the details of the killing, that in the fullness of his descriptions, the gathering's frenzied behaviour sounds like a ritualistic attitude that pertains to similar ritual motifs of carnival practices: "they were a lot of men around just one dying dog [...]. They had several weapons in their hands, these men. [...] the man swung and shook the whole cutlass, trembling with anticipatory happiness or fear, it was impossible to tell [...]" (p.18). In addition to these minute ritualistic descriptions, Armah incorporates also into the event the crowning / uncrowning logic of the carnival. This logic applies to the hunchbacked individual who strikes the deathblow. Armah recounts his fortune in a mock-heroic form that travesties the very idea of debasement that pertains to the carnival ritual of crowning/uncrowning

The circle broke in silence, and the men who formed it strained almost involuntarily, following the last man who had become the first to kill the dog, first with their eyes, and then bodily walking after him.

The triumphant killer walked off with his prize in a strange way, as if it were his intention to go through all the motions of a runner while keeping a walker's speed [...] But from the man himself something else had commenced to drip: down along his right leg flowed a stream of something yellow like long-thickened urine mixed with streaks of clotted blood. A look of terror stopped the man's triumph as first he felt the drip and then looked down to see what it could be [...].

[...] Something that had stayed locked up and poisoned the masculinity of his days was now coming down, and in spite of all his shame he seemed seized by an uncontrollable happiness that made him walk with the high, proud exaggerated steps of a puppet (p. 20).

The beginning of the passage above shows the dog killer as a hero; he is described as an intrepid champion, followed by the eyes and bodies of the whole gatherers. For a while, he is, thus, crowned as the true king of this mock-carnival; a king who enjoys the awe and admiration of followers. However, no sooner is his macabre deed forfeited and the atmosphere of the mock-carnival is dissipated -in other words no sooner the carnival is over- than he is debased and mocked. The debasement of the hunchback shows in his sexual/masculine impotence; that is, in that very virtue with which he strives to impress the other members of the gatherings. The image of urine dripping along his leg betrays his frustrated masculinity, which finds no outlet to express itself, but in the infliction of crude violence on helpless victims. And even though, in the end, the deformed man is shown again walking with pride, the narration debases him a second time by likening him to a carnival puppet, beaten and insulted by the crowd (the boy in this case).

The debased atmosphere of the dog killing pervades other scenes and events of *Fragments*. Some such events are the irrational sea-shore gathering around a prophet, Araba's baby's outdoor ceremony, Akossua Russel's artistic soirée, etc. All these folk meetings elicit the debased social and intellectual condition of the Ghanaians, wherein innocent individuals, such as Baako and the baby, just like the dog in the incident mentioned above, play the scapegoats for a fragmented urban society severed from the innocence of its earlier communal culture*. This breakdown in the spirit of the community

* In fact, the dog killing incident informs and foreshadows the tragic fate of Baako when, at the end of the narrative, his family chases him and confines him in a mental asylum.

results in the loss of the folkloric consciousness of the people, and the severance of the personal life of individuals from the historical course of the community. Such is indeed the characteristic feature of the folk gatherings presented in *Fragments*, reduced as they are to irrational, urban and artificial festivals that have lost the carnival's ritualistic potential of regeneration, fertility and laughter.

Within the atmosphere of the anti-carnival highlighted above, Armah's narrative framework embeds dialogic relations between the different ideologies that underlie the concepts of selfhood, tradition and national culture in the post-colonial Ghanaian society. Thus, his novel invites a dialogic reading on three levels, all of which are mentioned by Bakhtin in the chapter "Discourse in Dostoevsky" of his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Bakhtin's three broad applications of dialogism within a literary text are: one, the dialogue between the language of the author and the language of the protagonist; two, the dialogue between the language of the protagonist and the languages of other characters in the novel; three, the intertextual relation between the language of a character and/or text and the language of other external texts, explicitly or implicitly mentioned within the narrative. In the following analysis, we intend to explore the applicability of this typology to the range of dialogues and voices embedded in *Fragments*. Our objective is to show the extent to which Armah's novel is an unfinished project that draws on the concept of heteroglossia in order to raise questions about the place of tradition and change in modern Ghana, and orchestrate a dialogue with different post-colonial intellectual thoughts with regards to the nation's cultural past and present. It goes without saying that heteroglossia and dialogue are the expressions of the hybridity of discourse, because they involve elements of parody and stylisation, which are at the core of the intentional and organic hybrid constructions of languages.

The most conspicuous voices presented in *Fragments* are those of Naana, Juana and Baako. All are autonomous individuals, dramatised characters and social types, whose centrality to the intellectual debate of the novel is asserted by the outstanding place they

occupy in the narrative. Unlike Baako and Juana, Naana is not an intellectual figure. Nonetheless, she remains a voice of authority, which speaks with the whole weight of the country's ancestral tradition behind it. Armah sanctions the prominence of her voice through the stratification he operates in the narrative point of view, between the first and last chapters, on the one hand, and the other chapters of the novel, on the other. Unlike all the sections of the narrative, the opening and closing chapters of *Fragments* are narrated in the style of the first narrator point of view, lending their perspective to the interior monologue of Baako's grandmother. This style of narration asserts the prominence of Naana's voice and credits her with the same intellectual potential, if not more, than the one attributed to the intellectual figures, Baako and Juana.

In her ultimate soliloquies, Naana describes herself as an old, blind person, removed from the centre of her family, and ready to join the world of the spirits, i.e. dead. In her own words, she is a "stranger unable to find a home in a town of strangers" (p. 193). However, her bodily infirmities do not estrange her from her surrounding world, as much as it unites her with the world of *Nananom*, the world of the ancestors. In this regard, her blindness makes her listen so hard to the past that her tongue/voice acts as mere translation of the spirit and essence of tradition. Therefore, Naana's can be said to be a voice that elicits an ancestral vision of unity and wholeness. This vision offers a moral and spiritual perspective, and articulates a code of behaviour that can be weighted against the prevalent westernised lifestyle of urban Ghana. Naana's embodiment of the ancestral oral tradition of the Akans makes her character and speech liable to a *Zumthorian* analysis of verbal performances.

Read from Zumthor's oral poetics, Naana seems to stand for the interpreter / artist of the traditional oral poetry. According to Zumthor, in the traditional world, the priests, the saints, the old people, the blinds, etc are all privileged bearers/interpreters of what he calls "la parole force" (83). In the voice of these interpreters originates the authority of the political ruler, of the peasant and the seed (*semence*) (ibid.). Concerning the figure of the

blinds, Zumthor explains that they are persons emancipated from the common worldview, and reduced to the sole status of voices (ibid. 64). What is revealed to the listeners through their discourse is the unity of the world. This unity, Zumthor adds, is a warrant of survival for the listeners, because it makes the world intelligible to them. Assessed from this oral poetics, Naana's soliloquies offer a holistic vision, that makes no distinction between the spheres of the religious and the secular, the spiritual and the material, the individual and the communal, all defining themselves with each other.

The Naana sections of *Fragments* represent the most direct oral interventions in Armah's text. Their intervocal dimension can be asserted through linguistic and metalinguistic elements. Both elements can be inferred and illustrated from the opening paragraph of the novel

Each thing that goes away returns and nothing in the end is lost. The great friend throws all things apart and brings all things together again. That is the way everything goes and turns round. That is how all living things come back after long absences, and in the whole great world all things are living things. All that goes returns. He [Baako] will return (p.1).

Taken within the perspective of the genre of the late medieval novel, which burst, according to Zumthor, "au carrefour de l'oralité poétique traditionnelle et de la pratique scriptuaire latine" (307), this passage parallels what the French critic qualifies as the "exclamations de chanteurs de geste" (ibid. 306). These exclamations imply "un jeu performantiel" (ibid.), indicated in the novelistic discourse by the author's use of the present simple tense of narration. As Zumthor explains, "l'emploi, remarquable dans la narration, du présent de l'indicatif –trait souvent relevé- s'explique moins comme figure de « présent historique » que comme présence vocale" (ibid.). Accordingly, Naana's interior monologues, couched as they are in the present simple tense, can be said, after Zumthor's words, to offer an instance of verbal performance. Its vocal traits evoke the intervocality of Armah's text and inform the process through which he inserts in it unmarked quotations from ancient Akan oral dirges.

The linguistic mark of intervocality within Naana's soliloquies, indicated by the use of the present simple tense, is strengthened by the thematic linkages that bind Naana's discourse to traditional Akan funeral songs. Funeral songs are important aspects of the Akan oral culture. They are used on different occasions in relation to the mourning of the loss of a member of the community, either caused by death or by a journey. They all spring from the Akans' conception of the universe, their belief in after-life and in the harmonious continuation of the ties of kithship and kinship after death (Nketia 6). In *Fragments*, Naana's chants coincide with two ceremonial occasions, Baako's departure ceremony, in the first Chapter, and the preparation for her own death, in the last Chapter. In the first of these two occasions, Armah freely quotes from a traditional dirge which evokes the continuity between the living and the dead through the theme of gifts. The traditional dirge with which Naana's thoughts achieve intervocality is the following

Mother, I am struggling; all is not well as it appears.
 Mother, if you would send me something, I would like a parcel and
 a big cooking pot that entertains strangers.
 [...]
 Mother, if you would send me something, I would like perched corn
 that I could eat it raw if there was no fire to cook it [...].
 (Nketia 38)

Inherent in this dirge is the theme of gift exchange. It takes the form of the mourner's supplication of the dead to send her a cooking pot and perched corn from the other world. These gifts would stand for the tokens of the deceased care for his/her family. By and large, they also assume the functions of channels through which the living communicate with the dead and the present with the absent. Therefore, it is no wonder at all that during her mourning of Baako's departure, Naana evokes the same motif. In her dirge, the old woman sings

And when he returns
 let his return, like rain,
 bring us your [i.e. the dead ancestors'] blessings and fruits,
 your blessings
 your help
 in this life you have left us to fight alone (p. 6).

The images of gifts and goods described in this passage of Naana's dirge stylize the traditional funeral laments and evoke a larger cosmogonic worldview linked to an organic conception of the community. This worldview reaches another dimension in Naana's final soliloquy, where she laments her own death. The ubiquitousness of the theme of death in the last monologue, together with a stock of expressions related to the ancestors and the journey to the other world, give us reasons to believe that Armah is still quoting and stylizing his country's mourning songs*

Nananom, I am coming. Long and often I have thought of this decline into you. Days when I was sick in my body or sick at heart or in my soul, I have reproached you for not calling me when I needed to hear from you. Nights when I was in the grip of some torturing disease and was wishing for the end of this long crossing, that I would be free of this wasted body which gives me no more pleasure, only pain [...]

I am confessing to you now. Be kind to me: a new child coming back to you. You knew me ready to die again and enter this world those here above think so real, this world which you know is only the passing flesh of everything that lasts, the soul of our people (p. 199- 200).

The intervocality between Armah's literary text and traditional African dirges shows at different thematic and discursive levels. One of these similarities is related to the importance of the theme of death in the Akan cosmogony. For the Akans, death is the transition to the other world, the world of the ancestors. This is why funeral dirges represent the continuity between life led on this earth and the transition to the after-life, the realm of ancestorhood. According to Nketia, the celebration of the ancestors is common to all Akan funerary performances. In his collection of Akan traditional poetry, he underlines the importance of this theme for the Akan traditional communities, and explains that, from the point of view of lineages, "the theme of the ancestor emphasizes that the members are not a people without a tradition, without history of which they could be proud. The deceased and the living are not 'displaced' persons or people with no bonds

* For more details on the components of the Akan dirge songs and their structural patterns, see J. H. Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*, (Achimota, 1955). Read also Chapter Two of Dr Riche's *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*.

without a group of Akan people they can call their kinsmen... It is for this reason that a mourner might wish to say in her dirges: “We are from creation. / It was my people who first came here” (25-6).

The frame chapters of *Fragments* voice loudly the same concern with the concept of kinship affiliation. Through Naana’s ritual singing, Armah’s text identifies and assimilates Baako’s grandmother with Nananom, the ancestors, whose wisdom she is made to invoke in her most ultimate thoughts: “You [Nananom] are the end. The beginning. You who have no end. I am coming” (p. 201). The notions of beginning and end associated with Nananom invite a parallel with both the position of Naana’s sections in Armah’s narrative and their content. As already explained, these sections frame the narrative of *Fragments*. They are its beginning and its end. But in the epilogue, Naana persistently speaks of an unbroken circle and evokes another beginning. Her insistence on her organic kinship affiliation to the community at large, together with her consistent evocation of the ancestors, enable her to assure the link between the present and the past, the living and the dead, and, by the same token, affirm that the Akan are not a displaced people, without history and tradition.

As an authentic voice of the Akan tradition, unfortunately bound to extinction as suggested by Naana’s death, and the repository of the Akan oral culture, Naana’s vocal alterity enables Armah to stratify his narrative style and to voice some grievances linked to the country’s ethic. In addition, as she lies dying, Naana foregrounds important concepts in the ideology that underlies Baako’s behaviour as an authentic artist, whose ideology desperately seeks atonement with the country’s ancestral heritage. Most important of all these concepts are the ideas of reciprocity, the organic link to the community, and the symbolic continuity between the past and the present. During Baako’s departure for the United States, Naana is shown as the guardian of all these values. For instance, Armah writes that Naana’s blood “was poisoned with the fear of what would happen if Foli’s greed for drink was allowed to break the circle and to spoil the perfect beauty of the libation” (p.

7). Her respect for tradition compels her to scrupulously look over all the symbolic rituals that attend such an event: she sings dirges, invokes protection from the gods and holds ritual libations. Only then is she confident that “the circle is not broken in any place” (p. 11), and that her grandson will safely return from his journey.

In her dramatized monologues, Naana holds a dialogue with many members of her family, namely her daughter Efua, grand-daughter Araba and Araba’s husband Foli, whose mindsets relate to the materialistic values which spur society at large. But all these characters remain impervious to her ideals. For example, intervening in the organisation of the outdoor ceremony of Araba’s child, Naana warns that the ceremony should take place eight days after the child has become accustomed to its new environment. But Efua and her daughter show no reverence to her advice, and contrive a plan to coincide the event with senior and junior officials’ paydays so as to ensure the likelihood that the family would receive presents of significant monetary value. In the end, the two women’s greed transforms the outdoor ceremony into a grotesque and dramatic event that ends with the death of the newly born child.

In her ultimate thoughts, Naana recalls Baako’s journey and the fate that awaited him among his family and society and draws a moral lesson that translates most of her insights into a proverbial discourse. The moral lesson is predicated on Efua’s and Araba’s perversion of the traditional conception of the gift associated with the individual’s voyage abroad into a pseudo-ritual meant, not to attune with the traveller, but exclusively to acquire foreign goods. She says: “there were those left behind who had their dreams and put them on the shoulders of the traveller returned, heavy dreams and hopes filled with the mass of things here and of this time” (p.198). Naana reflects also on the outdoor ceremony and expands it beyond the tragic death of the innocent child. For her, the crass materialism and disregard for the human life that are so characteristic of Efua’s and Araba’s behaviour are but the extension of a larger process of disintegration and

destruction, that has its roots in the country's past, and has become an integral legacy of Africa's history

The baby was a sacrifice they [Efua and Araba] they killed, to satisfy perhaps a new god they have found much like the one that began the same long destruction of our people when the elders first –may their souls never find forgiveness on this head- split their own seed and raised half against half, part selling part to hardeyed buyers from the beyond the horizon, breaking, buying, selling, gaining, spending till the last of our men sells the last woman to any passing white buyer and himself waits to be destroyed by this great haste to consume things we have taken no care nor trouble to produce (p. 199).

The above quote fuses a historical with a moral discourse in order to develop some insights into the issue of slavery. As a moral discourse, Naana's language pertains to the proverbial tradition in African culture. Her insights fulfil didactic functions linked to the ethical as well as the political health of the community. But as a historical discourse, it relates to Armah's wider assessment of the African past, assessment that does not spare the responsibility of the African themselves in the tragedy of slavery. Armah reiterates Naana's historical vision through Baako, who re-articulates Naana's plight with the added dimension of the intellectual / artist, whose language is organically hybridized to actualize the voice of tradition of which the old woman is the most primitive and the most authentic expression. Baako's ideas about the necessary continuity of the traditional African value system and the need for communal solidarity are in congruence with Naana's notion of reciprocity and her belief in the lifelong organic relation between the members of the community. Hence, Baako's ideology of an artist can be said to agree organically with Naana's traditional worldview on at least three levels: one, both reject the westernised lifestyle adopted by the country's elites and abhor the debased materialist condition to which the masses are reduced; two, both celebrate communal solidarity and reciprocity; three, both believe in the organic relationship between the members of the community.

Thanks to his position of a young committed intellectual deeply moved by the plight of his country, Baako plays the role of a mediator. This role consists mainly in finding the most suitable means for reaching the masses and interpreting the country's

traditional value system for them. For this sake, Baako rejects creative writing, and embarks on the career of a script writer at Ghanavision Broadcasting Company. His choice of television scripts is motivated by his eagerness to disseminate his ideas to a wider audience. As he himself explains to his former art master, Ocran, “doing film scripts for an illiterate audience would be superior to writing, just as an artistic opportunity. It would be a matter of images, not words. Nothing necessarily foreign in images, not like English words” (p. 81).

The organic link between Baako’s and Naana’s respective discourses is established right from the first chapter of *Fragments*. In this section, much of the old woman’s thoughts invoke the character of her grandson, and his journey abroad. In her farewell ritual song, Naana interprets this journey in traditional, spiritual terms, which make sense in her belief that “each thing that goes away returns and nothing is lost” (p.1). So, Naana equates Baako’s journey with a ritual death which will give birth to another birth. She also endows Baako’s return with spiritual wisdom that will benefit to the whole community

You are a piece of us,
Of those gone before
And who will come again.
A piece of us, go
And come a piece of us.
You will not be coming,
The way you went away.
You will come stronger,
To make us stronger,
Wiser to guide us with your wisdom.
Gain much from this going.
Gain the wisdom
To turn your back on the wisdom
Of Ananse (p. 3-4)

To a great extent, Naana’s prophecy is fulfilled; after five years spent in the United States, Baako returns to Ghana as an accomplished intellectual, ready to serve his community. His intellectual vocation and commitment show in the typewriter and the guitar that make up his western cargo. However, Naana’s farewell song contains a deep irony which, in the course of Baako’s work in Ghana, inverts her hopeful expectations.

After all, Baako returns from abroad with true wisdom only to find that his country has developed in the meantime into a materialistic world in large part composed of self-centred individuals. In other words, the *intellectual cargo* that Baako brings with him after his prolonged sojourn in the West is far from meeting the new (material) expectations of his society. Therefore, instead of integrating him into his family and community, this cargo works rather to alienate him, to the extent that his predicament becomes like T. S. Eliot Magi in his *The Journey of the Magi* (1927).

The magi in Christian history are the three wise men from the East who brought gifts to the baby Jesus. In *The Journey of the Magi*, Eliot dramatizes their return to their kingdoms through the monologue of an elderly narrator, weary and reflective. During his return to his country, this man realizes the spiritual distance between him and his fellow-countrymen and bleakly assesses their reality. The spiritual burden of the journey is conveyed right from the first line of the poem which reads as follows: “A cold coming we had of it”. The two other stanzas that follow this line detail further the spiritual and physical hardship of the journey. In the third stanza, the poem achieves its climax as the magus wonders at the idea of death brought to their minds by their sight of Christ

This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

This dramatic monologue is organically fused to Naana’s dirge quoted above and encapsulates Baako’s overall predicament. Indeed, as he returns from his long journey to the United States where, in Naana’s words, he has acquired wisdom, Baako discovers that his old world has changed. His awareness of the degrading world welcoming him is mirrored by his sense of uneasiness towards the urban transformations of Accra city and the larger materialistic ethics which is rampant in his society. Armah’s ironic presentation

of Baako as a lonely, marginal figure, alienated and abused, contributes to enforce the idea of futility and death more than the rebirth celebrated in Naana's song. Baako himself underscores the idea of death awaiting his homecoming, when he writes in his essay on the cargo cults of Melanesia: "the been-to has chosen, been awarded, a certain kind of death" (p.157). On the account of the uneasiness that overtakes Baako, part of his predicament in the novel becomes the overriding of the materialist longings attached to his return. To successfully achieve his task, he needs to ritually die in Efua's world in order to be reborn with his true vocation. His madness is a testament to his ritual death, because it is only then that he frees himself from the materialistic demands of his community.

The predicament Eliot's magi is not the only plight which defines Baako's character and condition. Much like Albert Camus's Meursault (meurt seul?) in his *L'étranger*, Baako is a lonely man incapable of identification with the demands of his society. In one passage of the novel, Armah draws the lyrics of a popular song that celebrates alienation and estrangement and seems to send echoes to Camus's text

Tomorrow I will be dead,
vultures flying over my roof,
where I am only a stranger
so stranger,
let me dance my dance (p.94).

There is no doubt that the above lyrics refer to Baako; during Akossua Russell's poetic soirée his art master and friend Okran addresses him as "stranger" (p.108). A feature of existential life, estrangement mirrors the individual's sense of futility as a consequence of the absurd, fragmented and unwholesome life and world surrounding him/her. Applied to Baako, it reflects his divorce from his society's dissolute identity and its loss of ethical and social direction. The prospect of living in such a society triggers no emotion of desire in his mind. Instead, when he is presented Araba's newborn, a feeling of disgust overwhelms him: "babyhood, infancy, going to school ... the thought of a person having to go through the whole cycle again brought back his nausea, and suddenly the room to him felt too humid, too full with the mother, the child and him" (p.86). The image

of nausea mentioned in this quote is a Sartrean metaphor that cannot be missed. Taken from the novel of the same title, *La nausée*, it is re-applied in *Fragments* in order to comment on the meaninglessness and cheapness of human life in independent Ghana.

In spite of his failure to fulfil both his intellectual aspirations and his family's material expectations, Baako remains the central character of *Fragments*. A problematic hero, his centrality is not acquired because of his artist status*, as much as by the fact that through him Armah weaves threads of dialogue with many characters of the novel. One of these characters is no other than his grandmother, Naana, the voice of tradition. The complicity between the two characters is so great, that the possibility of a dialogue between them has remained hidden for many critics of Armah's novel. In fact, even though Baako's ideological commitment to the continuity of a traditional African value system that celebrates communal solidarity seems to pertain to Naana's traditional worldview, his voice cannot be fully equated with hers, because hers is speakerly/oral voice, whereas his is a writerly/literary voice.

Baako is rarely shown talking to his grandmother, to the extent that some critics consider that there is no emotional tie between them (Joe Lurie, quoted in Lazarus N, 1990: 113). In our view, the lack of continuous communication between the two characters means neither the inexistence of emotional bonds, nor the impossibility of dialogue between them. This is because Baako's imagination is a dialogical imagination and his language is a polyphonic language. His discourse appropriates the speech and/or ideas of some characters and enters in dialogical relationships with other linguistic/ideological communities. The relationship between Baako and Naana falls in the first kind of polyphony, because his speech, just like that of Naana, reads against the dominant voices of Ghana's neo-colonial culture. Besides, much of the ideas contained within his different

* After all, all the artist figures in Armah's early works, namely Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones*, and Solo and Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?* are failures.

scripts and essays are congruent with her traditional notions of reciprocity, communality, and organicity.

The polyphony/hybridity of Baako's speech offers also a layering of voices through which Armah embeds other dialogical threads. *Fragments* deploys three kinds of dialogues, most of which involve Baako's consciousness/language. These dialogues are: one, the dialogue between Baako and his grandmother; two, the dialogue between the narrator and Baako; three, the dialogue between Baako and the committed intellectual figures in the novel, namely Juana and Ocran. To this last kind of dialogue, we can add another dialogue, which involves Armah's use of parody in order to mock the intellectual options presented by corrupt intellectuals, such as Asante Smith and Akossua Russel. All in all, Armah's dialogisation of different intellectual options can be said to partake to what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia; i.e. the ideologies inherent in the various languages that compose a given society, such as the language/ideology inherent in a given social class, profession, a time, a geographical region etc.

The dialogue between Baako and Naana takes place at the *Awo* chapter, when he informs her that the outdoor ceremony of Araba's child will take place five days after her delivery. Naana objects and reminds him that the ceremony ought to be organized eight days after the birth of the child. She also warns him that, as the uncle of the child, the matrilineal tradition of the Akans requires of him to attend after these ceremonial occasions. But Baako replies that he has no knowledge of all these customs, and that he thinks that Araba's husband, Kwesi, is more qualified to perform this role. To this argument, Naana retorts

Ah, that is a shame. The ceremony you ought to understand, or where do you get the meaning of it, even if it is done right? Don't you see? You know the child is only a traveler between the world of spirits and this one of heavy flesh. His birth can be a good beginning, and he may find his body and this world around it a home where he wants to stay. But for this he must be protected. Or he will run screaming back, fleeing the horrors prepared for him up here. How is it that you do not understand that? (p. 97).

In her speech, above, Naana reprimands harshly Baako for his inability to attune with the community's tradition. Her outrage proves prophetic, in the sense that the outdoor ceremony ushers into a tragic event that causes the death of the newborn. Baako bears the blame of this tragedy, not simply because of his lack of understanding of the mystics that preside over this ritual and failing to pour the necessary libations that accompany the organisation of the ceremony. Actually, while he himself benefited from Naana's blessing before his departure to the United States, he does not show any such concern towards his nephew's rite of passage. Besides, he seems unaware that, being the uncle of the child, the matrilineal tradition of the Akans imposes upon him full responsibility upon the ceremonial. In other words, to Naana, Baako is the true father of the child, whereas Kwesi is only the biological progenitor. As an intellectual who longs for organic relationships between all the members of the community and assumes the role of the guardian of the community's traditional identity, Baako's perfunctory behaviour during the ceremony betrays an intellectual failing that cannot accommodate the communal commitment that he himself attributes to his mission.

Baako's failure to prevent the perversion of Araba's child's ritual and to assume the traditional role incumbent upon him in such events is the occasion which enables Armah to engage in a dialogue with his main character. This dialogue takes place in Chapter Eleven, entitled *Iwu*, death in Akan. In it, the narrator keeps referring to Baako as the "clown". The clown is a comic, popular figure that plays with words and mimics and mocks others' speeches and behaviours. His attitude is above all irresponsible and stupid, because it is in disjunction with conventional forms of behaviour. The application of this description to the character of Baako informs his uninvolved conduct during the outdoor ceremony. Through it, Armah hints at the cultural marginality of his protagonist; a marginality which results from his status of an intellectual who has shied a little away from his family duties and the mainstreams of his traditional culture. Indeed, in the course of his intellectual commitment, Baako seems to have overlooked his

responsibilities towards his family, obsessively concerned, as he is, with the salvation of the whole community. It is this predicament that Armah stresses in investing the comic image of the clown and projecting it on Baako. The latter stands for the prototype of a third-world intellectual, who cannot meet the complex demands of his mission, and thereby loses sense of priorities.

The dialogisation of Baako's language and consciousness shows also in the other dialogues that Armah embeds between his protagonist and the other characters of the novel. These characters are mostly intellectual figures like Baako. They can be classified roughly into two groups: one, his girlfriend Juana and his art master Ocran; two, the poetess Akossua Russel, the director of Ghanavision Asante Smith, and, to a lesser extent, his mother Efua. Although all these characters can be described in Gramscian terms as organic intellectuals, we can, nevertheless, distinguish between them through their willingness to resist the neo-colonial western hegemony and their commitment to the fulfilment of the needs of the community and bringing the expected social, political and ideological change. Depending on these criteria, the narrative voice of the novel associates or dissociates itself with each character's voice, through a narrative discourse that interacts in conjunction or in disjunction with the characters' thoughts. A marked feature of the disjunctive kind of discourse is the abuse poetry inherent in the traditional satiric performances of the Halo, whose spirit permeates so much the discourse of *Fragments* that it transforms it into a social and literary satire.

The character that experiences the closest plight as that of Baako is undoubtedly his girlfriend Juana. Being a Puerto Rican expatriate, who is moved by the same nationalist sentiments as his, she discovers many affinities in character and ideas between herself and Baako. Out of her commitment to the ideals and goals of African revolution, she joined Ghana with leftist beliefs and a healing task in mind. Her relationship with Baako elicits the post-colonial search for community, since both of them develop similar insights about the post-colonial condition of Ghana. Their insights converge in both the

historical origins of the present decadent situation, and the manifestations of this decadence in the people's everyday life. Armah writes: "he [Baako] had gone up and down, across the land with Juana, and he'd seen the same sterility riding on top of everything, destroying hope in all who lived under it" (p. 132).

A foreign expatriate and a practicing psychiatrist, Juana seems to stand for the character through whom Armah comments on the situation in Ghana within a wide sociological and historical perspective. Through her involvement with her patients at the hospital, Armah lays also bare the social and psychological contradictions that undermine the society's recovery from the scoria of slavery and colonial domination. In several passages of the novel, we feel behind Juana's insights the same symptoms of violence and mental distress and disorder as those underlined by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The debilitating effects of the Ghanaians' psychological response to imperialism are reminiscent of the same psycho-existential problems encountered by Frantz Fanon in Algeria, and recorded in different chapters of his study, namely "Concerning Violence" and "Colonial War and Mental Disorders". The congruence between Juana's and Fanon's insights illustrates another instance of Armah's organic hybrid discourse, through which he reformulates the psychological patterns of deviation induced by the Algerian war of liberation in order to delineate the existential wounds of the Ghanaian masses and their cynical withdrawals from the working of their own society after independence.

Besides Juana, the other engaged intellectual whose ideology enters into dialogical relationship with Baako's is the art master Ocran. Like Baako and Juana, Ocran, too, struggles against both the general decadence of society and the canons of officialdom, represented by corrupt officials, such as Asante Smith. Yet unlike Baako and Juana, he is not shown dispirited by the general carnage. The reason of his self-sustaining optimism does not lie in his lack of commitment to change. In fact, Ocran finds sustenance in the avoidance of direct action and the exclusive dedication to art. His artistic dedication forces him into a defensive position of social alienation. For instance, when Baako goes to see

him with the prospect that he would recommend him for a position at Ghanavision, Ocran advises Baako to work alone, and not to rely on anybody else. By the end of the novel, during Baako's internment, Ocran reiterates his advice. But this time, Juana counters his intellectual strategy by affirming that the strategy of alienation does not suit the African context, simply because "salvation is such an empty thing when you are alone" (p.194).

The dialogue between Baako, Ocran and Juana at the hospital fulfils an important dimension in the dialogical thrust of *Fragments*. It can be related to one of the main features of Menippean satire. As we have already stated, Menippea features naturalistic settings at the thresholds of hierarchical planes of existence, with the purpose of testing the hero's ideas (*sunkrisis*). In our view, the hospital discussion between Armah's main intellectual figures fulfils well this characteristic. It is in this dialogue, *à trois*, that Armah confronts the different intellectual options, strategies and postures that lent themselves to the dedicated post-colonial intellectual, after the failure of the African revolutionary nationalism to bring the expected change. It is not at all fortuitous that many of Armah's critics have focused on this scene and have gone in different ways in order to unfold the intellectual sources and traditions from which spring each character's thought and, thus, deduce Armah's own ideology*. However, what all these critics failed to notice is that, being a novel which fits the Menippean mould, the plot of the novel moves to multiplicity and disjunction, not resolution. Besides, no one among these critics has explored the possibility that Baako, Juana and Ocran involve the dramatization of the different intellectual options that presented themselves to Armah's mind at a turning point of his career. This idea, in congruence with the genre of Socratic dialogue, finds support in the fact that each character among the three is an ideologue, whose portrait can be traced to an intellectual voice that Armah had encountered in his early youth. The biographical materials about Armah and historical data about the African nationalist struggle concur to sustain this interpretation.

* The critics that we have in mind are mainly Robert Fraser (1980) and Neil Lazarus (1990).

The set of dialogical connections that we have explored so far is associated with intellectual options with which Armah had felt more or less sympathy during his youth. Baako, Juana and Ocran are all ideologues and their ideological community is set in opposition to the dominant voice/ideology of the official culture in post-independence Ghana. In the novel, the thoughts of each character is organically fused with the writer's narrative discourse. However, *Fragments* inserts other dialogues oriented toward other voices and texts and with which the narrative voice conspicuously dissociates itself. This kind of dialogical relationships evokes discordant discourses, implicitly or explicitly mentioned in the novel. Among the texts implicitly evoked in the narrative is Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. In his doctoral thesis, Bouteldja Riche has compared this novel to *Fragments* and shown how Armah's narrative revises Achebe's borrowed trope of fragmentation by drawing on the native myth of Ananse and the gourd of wisdom. By spotting the native myth that structures Armah's plot, Riche has demonstrated that Armah is a deeply nationalist writer, in spite of the modernist ideology that underlies his work and in spite of his departure from Achebe's social realist mode of writing.

In addition to Achebe's text, the narrative of *Fragments* resounds with the voices of two other African artists. These are the Ghanaian writers Kofi Awoonor and Efuwa Sutherland, who are explicitly referred to in the novel. They are represented through the images of two characters, respectively Asante Smith and Akossua Russell. Smith and Russell are speaking persons in the novel and their words are ideologemes. During the lifespan of Nkrumah's government, the former, just like his fictional counterpart in Armah's fiction, was the director of Ghanavision, whereas the latter was at the head of Nkrumah's *Obrafo* players, the royal performers that he attached to his service. The resonance within *Fragments* of these two figures' respective languages makes it invite a dialogical reading different from the one we have carried above between Baako, Juana and Ocran. In the remainder of this chapter, our analysis will focus on Russell's poem incorporated within the narrative discourse of the novel. The poem, "The Coming of the

Brilliant Light to Amosema Junction Village”, offers a verbal parody of Efua Sutherland’s short story “New Life at Kyerefaso” and expands on the theme of cultural hybridity that we are studying in Armah’s ideology.

Armah’s dialogisation of Sutherland’s and Awoonor’s respective ideologies involves the use of satire and polemics as means of intentionally hybridising their discourses. Most of his satire is directed against their elite positions within the Ghanaian government, and their grabbing for material comfort out of their official duties. The satire develops also into ideological polemics, which decries their complicities with the new regime’s autocratic rule and the collusion of their personal (material) profits with neo-colonial interests. For instance, during a meeting at Ghanavision, Baako quarrels with Asante Smith over the issue of national culture and asserts the centrality of the country’s past to this culture. Baako forces the idea that slavery is a paramount fact in African history that should be neither overlooked nor belittled, even when the country’s officials boast its hard won independence. His underlying message is that, it is only when they recognise the similarity between past and present that the people will be eager to abandon their dependency and struggle to free themselves from their enslavement to the West. To this, Smith responds by affirming that the duties of a post-colonial artist are the celebrations of the newly won independence and the singing of the praise of the nation’s big shots. The divergence between the two characters’ ideological orientations informs much of Baako’s subsequent seclusion, his retreat into himself, and his eventual nervous breakdown.

If the dialogue between Armah and Awoonor is predicated mainly on the issue of slavery and is dramatised through the conversation between two characters, the dialogue between Armah and Sutherland is more complex and multi-layered. It brings the narrative/authorial voice to a direct ideological and verbal contest with the text of Sutherland; a contest that can be described as an open polemics, which involves the use of parody and satire. The polemics raises thorny questions, related to the artist’s attitude towards local myths and national culture, together with his place and duties within the

wider perspective of international audience. Armah casts his verbal parody in the *Osagyefo* chapter of the novel, which stages a literary evening organized by Akosua Russell, who runs a local literary society. During the *soirée*, Russell is noted for an opportunistic behaviour that looks obsessively after status and material gains. And one device she uses to accrue her status is a poem she keeps reciting in every ceremonial occasion. The poem quotes from and distorts much of Sutherland's "New life at Kyerefaso" with the purpose of undermining its conceptual references. Armah writes

Say
Say it
Say it just this way
Gently, gently,
For this was how the maid,
High-born princess of Amosema
Brought light from a far, far land
Unto her knighted village people.
Say it
Pastorally, pastorally
Say (p. 112).

This passage openly alludes to Sutherland's short story "New Life at Kyerefaso*", which opens with the following words: "Shall we say/ Shall we put it this way/ Shall we say that the maid of Kyerefaso, Foruwa, daughter of the Queen mother, was a young deer, graceful in limb?" (p.18). The different connections between the two portions work through Armah's imitation of linguistic as well as thematic aspects of "New Life at Kyerefaso". The thematic link that binds the two texts relates to the female heroines' (princess Ekuia in *Fragments* and Furowa in the short story) search for a husband and their final marriage to a white man. As for the linguistic similarities, they mainly show in Armah's imitation of Sutherland's formal language and the pastoral atmosphere of her text. The bulk of all the analogies contained within Armah's poem interweave with a variety of satiric elements that enable him to construct a parodic destabilisation of the

* Sutherland, Efuia. "New Life at Kyerefaso". *Unwinding Threads : writings by Women in Africa*. Ed. Charlotte H. Bruner. London: Heinemann, 1983. Subsequent page numbers are taken from this edition

speech of his fellow Ghanaian writer and discuss important assumptions related to national identity and culture.

Parody in Russell's poem reveals itself in Armah's inflation of Sutherland's formal diction, inflation that drives its satiric energy from the abuse poetry of the Halo. For instance, Armah uses dated and archaic English expressions and idioms, such as "damsel", "thou" and "lucent dawn", in order to undermine Sutherland's tendency to stress prescribed English usage in her narrative. He also exaggerates his borrowing from the romantic repertoire of the short story and fills his text with pastoral and romantic words, as evidenced in the following lines: "village maidens fetching snowy water/ from pure gurgling spring streams,/singing, playing in their normal ecstasy/espied a handsome stranger from strange lands/ on their happy, joyful way" (p. 113). The stylistic effects of these distortions disclose Armah's critique of Sutherland's lack of realism and her tendency to sublimate the violence of the racial confrontation induced by European colonisation. Indeed, what comes out of the reading of "New Life at Kyerefaso" is the sense that foreign domination has had no consequences whatsoever on the native culture, and that modernity is no less than the pacific alliance of traditional Akan sources and the new ways brought by European cultural influence.

In his parody of "New Life at Kyerefaso", Armah equates Eku's desire to marry a white man, and hence Sutherland's entire sympathetic attitude towards the European cultural legacy, with the coloured woman's inferiority complex toward the white man decried by Frantz Fanon in Chapter "La femme de couleur et le Blanc" of his *Black Skin, White Masks*. This chapter brings under scrutiny the autobiographical work of the Martiniquean woman writer Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis Martiniquaise*, and underlines the unconscious pathological impulse towards whiteness that lies latent in the psyche of the writer. For Fanon, *Je suis Martiniquaise* illustrates well the black woman's twisted love for the white man, whose pathological feeling betrays the inferiority complex and the cultural alienation of the colonised woman, whose mind unconsciously elevates whiteness

to an ideal to be desired and searched for whatever prices to be paid. Fanon quotes long passages from this novel to show that Capécia's love for her white master is an instance of unnatural love that subjects more than emancipates her from the racial unconscious conflicts instituted by the colonial organisation of domination (1993: 37).

Russell's Ekua manifests all the symptoms of cultural/racial alienation and inferiority complex diagnosed by Fanon in the autobiography of Mayotte Capécia. Above all, she is arrogant and contemptuous towards her fellow countrymen: "the maiden Ekua, royal, exquisite, / searched her mother's queendom for a mate / and found none worthy" (p. 112). Her contempt for the black suitors forced her to defy the marriage customs of her tribe and to desire a foreigner as a husband. Eventually, Ekua becomes enamoured with a "handsome stranger from strange lands". This stranger is credited with all the attributes of whiteness: "for the stranger had shiny flaxen hair, / limpid pools of blue eyes, / the greatness of a thousand men, / skin like purest shiny marble" (p. 113). His physical appearance portrays the same white male prototype desired by Capécia: "Moi qui pensais toujours à M. le Curé, je décidai que je ne pourrai aimer qu'un Blanc, un blond, avec des yeux bleus, un Français" (quoted in Fanon F, 1993 : 42). Furthermore, the man brings with him a "dazzling chariot from beyond the seas", that reveals itself to be the white cargo that perpetuates the country's subordination to the West even after it has achieved its political independence.

The cultural and ideological critique that Armah marshals against Sutherland's ideology also discusses the hybridity discourse latent in "New Life at Kyerefaso". As Baako informs Juana, Russell's poem plays a variation on a local myth called 'Mame Water and the Musician'. The myth elicits a hybridity motif closely linked to fertility and renewal rituals of passage. Armah's discussion of the use of this myth within the broader context of his narrative, in general, and within the confine of the parody he achieves of Sutherland's short story, in particular, projects two types of divergent cultural discourses, which are: cultural nationalism and cultural hybridity. The two strategies of desire take their entire

meaning if put in the context of Baako's and Juana's search for a post-colonial sense of community.

The Mame Water, also spelled 'mamy watta', is a myth linked to a ritual of fertility in the coastal regions of West Africa. Inherent in it is the belief in a water divinity, Mame Water, meaning beloved in some vernaculars, which appears at fixed times of the year probably at the times of fertile tides. It is also believed that this divinity makes love with lovers of her choice before returning to her abode in the waters, leaving her lovers in faith of her reappearance or in madness in the case they are not armed with faith in her. Most of these motifs are recorded in the version Baako tells Juana, with the exception that for him the lover is a singer and the topic focus is the musician, not the sea goddess. Baako says

The singer goes to the beach, playing his instrument. These days it's become a guitar. He's lonely, the singer, and he sings of that. So well a woman comes out of the sea, a very beautiful goddess, and they make love. She leaves him to go back to the sea, and they meet at long, fixed intervals only. It takes courage. The goddess is powerful, and the musician is filled with so much love he can't bear the separation. But then it is this separation itself which makes him sing as he has never sung before. Now he knows all there is to know about loneliness, about love, and power, and the fear that one night he'll go to the sea and Mame Wter [...] will not be coming anymore. The singer is great, but he's also afraid, and after those nights on the shore, when the woman goes, there's no unhappier man on earth (p. 120).

The importance of this myth has prompted Armah to provide its original story and to employ it twice in his novel: one, in Russell's mock-epic poem, which supplies an instance of the poetess's perversion of her country's fertility rites; two, in the structure of the plot as a whole, where it serves as a structural frame for the love relationship between Juana and Baako. Of great pertinence to the two variations is the theme of hybridity they both carry.

The motif of hybridity in the fertility rite of the Mame Water and the musician is evoked by the image of the sea goddess and its union with the musician. A mermaid, living both in water and on earth, Mame Water is a hybrid creature, combining the features of women and fish. Its love for the musician figures an unusual union between humans and fish. Their ritual, liminal union during seasonal rites bears regenerative potentialities for

the community as a whole. The underpinning of Baako-Juana love relationship within this myth and the variation Akosua Russell plays on it invite a commentary that is likely to highlight Armah's idea and position towards the trope of desire carried in the cultural politics of hybridity.

The parallels between the Mamy Watta ritual and Russell's poem are too conspicuous to be overlooked. Both poems stage pastoral settings which house an unusual love story. However, while in the myth the lover is a native male and the beloved is a foreign woman/mermaid, in the poem the roles are reversed; they involve an African royal woman in love with a foreign white partner. Hence, Russell collapses the hybrid/liminal union between the two lovers into an inter-racial romance story, between whites and blacks. Through conflating this poem into an exercise of verbal parody, Armah expresses his rejection of this kind of unions. For him, princess Ekua's romance with a white stranger pertains to a neo-colonial conspiracy that acts to pervert native myths and perpetuate the country's dependence on the West. This interpretation is supported by the other version Armah plays on the myth, and which patterns Baako and Juana love relationship.

Juana's overseas (Puerto Rican) origins, her frequent meetings with Baako at the sea-shore where they usually make love, together with Baako's artist status and his final mental collapse during Juana's absence are all motifs of Armah's displacement of the Mamy Water fertility myth. But more important than these details is the fecundity Armah attributes to their union and his faithfulness to the hybrid identity of the sea goddess, signified in the novel by Juana's Puerto Rican origin. Indeed, Juana assumes a healing presence for Baako. And if at the end of the novel, during her absence, Baako resigns from his job and undergoes a psychological breakdown, her preparation for an unused room for him in her apartment provides the hopeful note of the novel's ending. All Armah's critics agree to acknowledge this positive conclusion.

By mating Baako with Juana, Armah dramatises the post-colonial nationalist search for community. For him, two features may fulfil this desire. The first is a nuclear family that breaks with the traditional ideal of the extended family, which has become burdensome because of the corrupt materialist expectations attached to it. The second is a union based on the ideals of solidarity and the continued struggle for liberation and revolution. Hence, Armah's displacement of the Mame Water myth draws the image of two post-colonial nationalist intellectuals bound by the same ideals of social commitment and revolutionary change. Through his re-reading of the hybrid identity of the sea goddess through nationalist, anti-imperial solidarity, Armah rejects Russell's inter-racial relationships and complies with the nationalist ideology of the post-colonial struggle for revolution and revival.

Armah's insertion of the original version of Mamy Watter myth, his employment of this narrative in his novel and his parody of Sutherland's short story are very enlightening, because they unequivocally evoke the issue of cultural hybridity. And if Armah seems to repudiate the racial miscegenation inscribed in the cultural desire of hybridity, as his parody of Sutherland's text shows, his attitude towards the overall issue of hybridity, be it cultural or linguistic, seems, the least of all, ambiguous. This ambiguity springs from his consistent literary practice which consists in organically hybridizing his discourse by fusing elements of language and text whose origins are Western. In this chapter, we have mentioned the examples of Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi*, Camus's *L'étranger* and Sartre's *La Nausée*. Although they do not occupy outstanding place in his narrative, they still function as important intertexts that help defining Baako's identity and the environment in which he moves. In the next chapter, we shall attempt to move a step beyond the level of language to show that Armah borrows Western narrative templates as well, namely the one which informs Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

References:

- Armah, Ayi Kwei. "African Socialism : Utopian or Scientific ?". *Presence Africaine*, 64 (1967), 6-24.
- *Fragments*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1974.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. 1981. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.
- *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Peau Noire Masques Blancs*. Algiers: Enag, 1993.
- Eliot, T. S. *The Journey of the Magi*. <http://www.blight.com/~sparkle/poems/magi.html>
- Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Nketia, J. H. *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*. Achimota: UP, 1955.
- Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. Unpublished Doctorat d'Etat. University of Algiers, 1998.
- Sutherland, Efua. "New Life at Kyerefaso". *Unwinding Threads: Writings by Women in Africa*. Ed. Charlotte H. Bruner. London: Heinemann, 1983.
- Zumthor, Paul. *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale*. Paris : Seuil, 1987.

Chapter 2:

Organic Hybrid Discourse and Liminality in *Fragments* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

In the first chapter of this second part of our dissertation, we have anchored Armah's second novel *Fragments* within the protean, hybrid genre of Menippean satire. We have fulfilled this task by investigating the polyphonic/dialogic thrusts of its discourse. In the present chapter, we intend to develop the subject of literary hybridity further, by showing how the plot of the novel absorbs and transforms the plot of tragedy, and how its characterisation features abnormal, liminal states of mind, which break away from the classical view of the complete, harmonious body. As a literary genre which absorbs and transforms other discourses and genres, Menippea stands as an organically hybrid form that fuses different traditions. Therefore, it can be said to partake to the same creative impulse inherent in most Ghanaian popular novellas and pamphlets. Drawing on this feature of both the genre of Menippea and the nature of Ghana's market literature, we shall attempt to situate *Fragments* in its social and anthropological context by relating it to Shakespeare's *Hamlet**. Our aim is to show how Armah appropriates Shakespeare's tragedy to construct the image of a community in transition, and in which the artist is caught in a web of cultural contradictions that frustrate his desires for social reform and organized political structure.

The plays that best exemplify the postcolonial writers' extensive process of appropriation and abrogation of Shakespearean ideology include mainly *The Tempest* and *Othello*, whose respective characters Caliban and Othello provided outlets for the

* Further quotations from this play will indicate the act, scene, and verse numbers, between brackets and inside the body of our text.

postcolonial novelist to grapple with the cultural legacy of English Imperialism. The invocation of these two literary figures within post-colonial fictions has often shown instances of intercultural and/or interracial tensions. The interlocking of race, culture and religion inherent in Shakespeare's representations of the Moor, the Jew, and the Black has given birth to a post-imperial literature that is fundamentally subversive and contestatory vis-à-vis this icon of colonial culture. Hence, the studies which address the influence of Shakespeare on postcolonial fiction writers often stress the latter's revisionism of the former's texts; a revisionism that is read in terms of cultural conversation involving dialogue, polemics and / or abrogation.

In their obsession to focus on the subversive appropriation of Shakespeare, postcolonial critics, such as the contributors to *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999), have often neglected the figure of Hamlet as the other side of postcolonial interactions with Shakespeare. Unlike these critics and theorists, who focus on the issue of cultural revisionism and uphold *The Tempest* and *Othello* as the major shaping Shakespearean influences on the postcolonial novelist, we think that Shakespeare's plays have not only lent themselves to the abrogation impulse in the postcolonial fiction, as it is often claimed, but to its appropriation impulse as well. This inclination towards borrowing and imitating Shakespeare is related to the postcolonial writers' endeavour to articulate the issues of national culture, nationhood and selfhood within the context of post-Independence disillusionment. An archetype of an intellectual, torn between two cultures, and struggling against the 'rotteness' of the state, Hamlet articulates a set of issues that all tell of the plight of the postcolonial intellectual and with which any postcolonial novelist might have identified. In this regards, a host of post-colonial characters (such as Armah's Baako, Achebe's Obi Okonkwo) can be said to enact the same tragic fate as that of Shakespeare's tragic hero. And if most post-colonial scholars overlooked the appropriateness of postcolonial appropriation of *Hamlet*, it is because they were excessively bent on reading

the postcolonial fictions' discourse as a subversive language that abrogates more than it appropriates.

Our second aim in engaging Armah with Shakespeare is linked to the creative dialectics behind the invocation of Shakespeare's texts within postcolonial narratives. It is our contention that Armah's process of appropriation of *Hamlet* is not dissimilar to the practice of local Ghanaian popular writers, who quoted creatively and extensively from the text of the English playwright, within marked and unmarked quotations. The versatility of these writers' quoting mode made them express the influence of Shakespeare in a variety of ways, ranging "from simple allusion to a clear imitation of titles and content of literary texts" (Obiechina 1973: 72). This Chapter situates Armah's appropriation of Shakespeare within a similar literary practice.

The presence of *Hamlet* in the text of *Fragments* is signified by the numerous similarities in the characters and stories of Baako and Hamlet, together in the atmospheres of the two works. These similarities prompt us to consider that Armah has purposefully fused the intellectual portrait of the young prince within the portrait of his main character and has organically employed features of his tragedy within his own plot. What makes this appropriation relevant to our investigation of the hybridity of Armah's discourse is the fact that in many African cultures, including the Ashanti of Ghana, the concept of story is often conflated with the concept of proverb (Finnegan 391). The connection in meaning between the two concepts is often regarded as the reason behind the conspicuous presence within the African novel's text of narrative proverbs. According to Obiechina, the latter are an "essential feature of the poetics of the African novel" (1993: 125). They function as "images, metaphors, and symbols and advance the meanings and formal qualities of the narratives in which they occur" (ibid.). In *Fragments*, Armah's imagination absorbs Hamlet's tragedy within the novel's Menippean plot and produces a narrative of poetic synthesis wherein images, metaphors, motifs and situations evoke the plot and imagery of *Hamlet*.

Kofi Owusu's "Armah's F-R-A-G-M-E-N-T-S: Madness as Artistic Paradigm" (1988) is an essay that has attempted an investigation of the relationship between madness and artistic creativity in Armah's second novel. Owusu premises his study on a parallel between Shakespeare's character Hamlet and Armah's Baako, arguing that both of them share the same predicament. The protagonists' predicament speaks of two sensible minds that retain certain integrity of purpose and oppose the corrupted norms of their societies. As a consequence, they become noted for an anti-social conduct that forces them into madness. Owusu reads madness in *Fragments* as a literary motif that suggests, after the words of the French philosopher Dubrovsky, a "new reason attempting to establish itself" (7).

By pinpointing the motif of madness, Owusu has established a strong literary connection between *Fragments* and *Hamlet*. However, Owusu does not elaborate his comparison further. And one limitation of his study is that it is oblivious of the social anthropological dimension of the two works, through which Armah keeps invoking and articulating the double constitutive liminality of the protagonist and his community. By liminality we mean the anthropological concept coined by the Belgian folklorist Arnold Van Gennep in his study of rites of passage. Taken up by the English scholar Victor Turner (1969), this concept has now become a key term to describe the situations and/or states of transition and marginality in the modern industrial culture. As a social and cultural paradigm, liminality can be used as a principle for studying different aspects of Armah's and Shakespeare's respective narratives, in terms of the mythic consciousness it provokes, and how these aspects relate to each other. Liminality can also be extended to investigate the context of the two writers, which feature transitional historical periods, full of contradicting ideologies and thoughts.

Shakespeare is a shaping influence of Africa's international writers and its popular authors because, during the colonial period, both group of writers were educated at the same school study of English. Emmanuel Obiechina (1973) reports that Shakespeare is

“the principal author from whom popular pamphlet writers take their allusions, plots and occasionally, titles” (73). Obiechina mentions two reasons for this: one, Shakespeare is the only English author to be always included in the literature syllabus and examinations of West African countries (ibid.); his eminence among the literate elites of these countries, who often draw easy parallels between his rhetorical, epigrammatic and metaphorical discourse with their own image-laden oral tradition (ibid.). The latter reason makes that the English playwright’s statements are often used by market writers in order to support their opinions and attitudes ‘in much the same way as they use traditional proverbs’ (ibid. 74).*

Africa’s popular writers are not alone in quoting Shakespeare’s body of plays and verse. The continent’s international writers, too, accommodated Shakespearean materials to their own writings[†]. The only difference between the two categories of writings lies, as Obiechina explains, in the subtlety and craftsmanship each group brought to its allusions (ibid. 76). In other words, Africa’s intellectual writers’ practice of quoting from Shakespeare, and other Western authors, differs from that of popular pamphleteers in the fact that, in the fictions of the former, references are well accommodated to their context and narratives, whereas in the latter they are integrated without much elaboration.

The assessment of Shakespeare’s place as a leading and lasting influence on African literature prompts us to consider that it is highly improbable that Armah did not read him in the course of his studies prior to the publication of *Fragments*. As a widely disseminated play that has been staged and published many times, *Hamlet* enjoys a wide international audience among intellectuals and laymen, alike. What strengthens our hypothesis is the motif of Baako’s madness featured Armah’s narrative. As an anti-

* Notice that Obiechina’s ideas as to the proverbial use of quotations in African popular writings is in line with Stephanie Newell’s linguistic hybridity. To this critical convergence, we can also add that Newell, too, counts Shakespeare among the most quoted English authors, along the same line as the text of the Bible.

[†] In this context, it should be noted that, within the context of the recent developments in postcolonial fiction and postmodern theory, Shakespeare is widely appropriated and interpreted, in terms that were scarcely intelligible to Onitsha pamphleteers. See *Postcolonial Shakespeare*.

canonical motif, this theme rarely occurs in England's 'Great Tradition', to the extent that *Hamlet* can be considered as the greatest exception to this rule. In our time, one cannot speak of madness, melancholy and tragedy without evoking Shakespeare's hero that strikes any reader by his deranged mind and his witty spirit altogether.

Much of Hamlet's tragedy can be seen to be created by the historical moment of transition between the religious, chivalric tradition of the Middle Ages and the secular, critical mind of modern times. *Fragments* can be interpreted in analogous terms; Baako's tragedy is informed by the social tensions inherent in the changing times of the postcolonial period. The latter witnessed the rise of neo-colonial domination, which ushered in the erosion of Ghana's ancestral tradition and the questioning of the recently gained independence. Put in socio-anthropological terms, the African Renaissance was a marked instance of a shift from one state to another, as a communal 'separation' phase. Amidst its cultural, social and political contradictions, Armah, in the manner of Shakespeare, constructs a plot that culminates into a tragic *agon* that opposes Baako, the protagonist, to his society. Baako's tragic conflict involves the problematization of the social relations in post-independence Ghana and the increasing displacement in this society of the image of the intellectual from one of a saviour to that of a scapegoat. In what follows, we shall review and compare the contexts of Shakespeare and Armah and pinpoint the elements of transition common to their respective cultures. Next to this, we shall show how the liminalities of the protagonists and communities are simultaneously constructed to embody identical and opposing aspects of each other. By doing so, we intend to fulfil two objectives, both of which are related to the organic hybrid construction of *Fragments*: one, to unveil the elements of Shakespeare's language, discourse and characterization that Armah organically fuses in his narrative; two, to shed light on the process through which his Menippean plot appropriates and absorbs the framework of Hamlet's tragedy and re-employs it to articulate the loss and threat induced by the cultural and social changes that are taking place in modern Ghana.

When Shakespeare staged *Hamlet* around 1600, England was undergoing radical transformations, at different levels of life, encompassing philosophy, politics and society. The humanist ideas of the Italian Renaissance had well reached England, and the Lutherean *protest* had already mobilised most of the members of the English clergy. As a consequence, the religious culture of the Middle-Ages started to recess, without ever disappearing altogether. The change was taking place slowly, among conflicting oppositions and resistances of all sorts.

Obviously, Reformation was the major issue at that time, especially as the people's view of the world and their place in it continued to be religious. However, Mary Tudor's aborted attempt to overthrow Queen Elisabeth in 1588 had convinced most English people that religious and political stability was not at hand, and that the country could fall in turmoil at any moment. By 1600, the declining health condition of the English Queen increased these fears. Apprehensions about the identity of the successor to the un-married Queen contributed to give the people a frightening sense of insecurity. This sense of insecurity was aggravated by the identity and personality of the most probable heir to the English Crown: James V, King of Scotland. On at least two accounts, James was different from Elisabeth: he was a young catholic man, more inclined to the modern intellectual culture than to the chivalric tradition of the medieval times. In other words, James was the perfect embodiment of the Renaissance man, with all the virtues and flaws of the word.

By the end of the sixteenth century, England felt secure from external threats. It had already defeated the Spanish armada and developed a strong national navy which took control of the sea. But at the internal level, the situation was not as safe. The reason was that the medieval view of the monarch as a military adventurer was still dominant, and the private armies, led by powerful Lords, were still settling their disputes through bloody skirmishes in London's streets (McEvoy 2006). Confronted to this situation, Elisabeth waged many armed operations to disarm the bellicose Lords; operations which brought her deep resentment among the class of aristocratic warriors. The situation

worsened in 1601, when Robert Devreux, Earl of Essex, former favourite General of the Queen, had attempted to dethrone Elisabeth by force. Devreux was supported by many other noblemen, including Shakespeare's patron, Earl of Southampton. Eventually, the coup was aborted and Earl Devreux was beheaded for treason. As a consequence, the Queen's Government started to move towards a more administrative form of management, by emphasising political and administrative skills over the military valour and accomplishments, hitherto privileged (ibid.).

Many incidents in *Hamlet* indicate that the old heroic virtues of the Middle Ages are still prevalent in Denmark. One of the starkest examples is the figure of Old Hamlet who is described as a monarch who lived and believed in the heroic-chivalric values of the medieval world. When he first appears on Elsinore's battlements, Horatio describes him in a medieval language, and relates an incident that happened twenty-five years earlier, when Prince Hamlet was still a child

[...] Our last king,
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet-
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him-
Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a seal'd compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror
(I 1 83-92)

The lines above tell how King Hamlet settled the conflict between Denmark and Norway over a territory, by inviting King Fortinbras to a single combat. King Hamlet won the duel and the piece of land was returned to Denmark. But now, young Prince Fortinbras has grown up and sworn revenge for the honour of both his father and his country. Horatio informs us that he is raising an army in order to march on Denmark. Fortinbras's revengeful schemes participate in the same revenge motif which predicates the whole plot of *Hamlet*. This motif and theme is another indication that Shakespeare's play features a world in transition, much similar to its author's own Renaissance background.

Armah's post-colonial context is a liminal historical period, too. The 1960's are, indeed, a transitional period in African history in general, and Ghana's history in particular. Almost a decade earlier, the country became a sovereign state free of English rule, and most other African countries were moving on the same path of liberation. Once the Independence acquired, these countries undertook the task of establishing new systems of government and new forms of management in order to replace the positions left vacant by colonial civil servants. But this task of renewal was overwhelming, especially as local politics, which still smacked of the influence of the former colonial leadership, could not accommodate the countries' native traditions. In spite of their political autonomy, these states could not give free expression to their cultural selves. Actually, the African countries which emerged from a state of war in the 1960's could not meet the requirements of the state of peace wherein they found themselves, as if thrown there unwillingly. The result was that most of the newly independent states were neither fully emancipated, nor fully dominated. Standing between a local wishful politics, which aimed at more liberation, and a sour reality, which kept them reliant on western economy, these countries were thrown again in the *marginalia* of world affairs.

Armah's *Fragments* reflects well the convoluted values which underlie independent Ghana's social and political life. It opens with Naana performing the traditional libations for a traveller; libations that Uncle Folli, she tells us, refrains from accomplishing. Folli's lack of respect for the traditional ritual pre-figures the corruption that Baako will encounter after his return from the United States: new buildings which copy the architecture of Europe; women and senior civil servants imitating Western styles of dress, talk, behaviour; an intellectual elite bent on serving its own interest and singing the praise of political leaders etc. All these practices are as many assaults on the community's conceptual culture which, by the last chapter, shrinks into the dying voice of Naana. The latter's ritual singing renders well the disruption of the boundaries of the traditional social life. At the same time, they speak of the old woman's helplessness before

the future of her community. The frame chapters of the novel draw the picture of a time which is not what it was and not what it will become, an undefined community that is vague and marginal.

Shakespeare's and Armah's Renaissance contexts and the transitional worlds dramatized in their fictions yield into discourses of liminality and blurred identities, involving intellectual figures and madness as literary paradigms. Richard Priebe (1988) is a critic who has documented the theme of liminality within the broad context of Armah's first three novels. His insights have convinced him that Armah is a novelist who writes from a mythical consciousness, and that his heroes' action patterns meet well the structure of what Joseph Campbell calls a monomyth. A monomyth is an archetypal narrative in which "a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men" (Campbell quoted in Priebe 1988: 22). In his appropriation of this definition, Priebe places the emphasis on the phase of the hero's initiation, that Van Gennep and Turner call the condition of liminality. For him, Armah's heroes are "characters who live on the margins of society in opposition to the values by which those inside society live their lives" (ibid. 22-3).

Priebe's application of the liminality paradigm to *Fragments* leads him to read it as a novel whose structure is built around the third phase of the hero's ritual passage, the return (ibid. 38). Obviously, it is Baako's return from the United States which exemplifies this phase. In Priebe's view, Baako returns to his community and family only to become aware that their myths are perverted and corrupted. As a result, Baako enters in an inevitable confrontation with his society, and becomes the scapegoat through which his community ritually carries away its guilt. According to Priebe, it is Baako's internment that enables him to complete his heroic crossing (ibid. 40-1). His madness intimates the idea of a ritual death, which prefigures positive transformations. The positive note of the

novel lies, therefore, in Baako's realisation that "the marriage of artist and society is a marriage of opposites, inharmonious yet ultimately beneficial to everyone because of the tensions inherent in the relationship" (ibid. 42).

The return, or re-aggregation, phase that Priebe identifies in *Fragments* is the last of the three phases that mark the rites of passage. The other two phases are separation and marginality. The latter is also called liminality because, during his phase of initiation, the initiate (or the limen) is removed from the centre of society to undergo ritual transformations in interstructural, liminal situations. In his "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," from *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), and "Liminality and Communitas," from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), Turner details further the liminal process, by re-organizing Van Gennep's morphological model, into phases he calls: the pre-liminal, the liminal, the post-liminal. These phases have strong bearing on the reading of *Fragments* that we want to suggest.

What is important in Turner's theory of liminality for the study of Armah's novel is the cross-cultural distinction he establishes in his later works between the liminality of tribal rites and that of modern arts, which he qualifies with the adjective 'liminoid'. According to Turner, the former distinguishes itself from the latter in its emphasis on communal participation, obligation, a strict respect for profane/sacred continuums, and its relative degree of subversion. Turner recognizes that rebellion is inherent in what he calls 'the liminoid zones' of tribal cultures, in which he sees the germ of the liminoid in modern arts. Yet, he identifies the liminoid as being most characteristic of modern cultures, since it is in them that it often develops into a counter-culture, an anti-structure to which members can affiliate themselves by paradoxically passing through a liminal phase reminiscent of tribal rites. Turner qualifies the degree of subversion in the liminoid of pre-industrial and industrial cultures in the following terms

Liminal phenomena, may, on occasions, portray the inversion or reversal of secular, mundane reality and social structure. But liminoid phenomena are not merely reversion, they are often subversive, representing radical critiques of the central structures and proposing utopian alternative models (1992: 57).

In other words, unlike liminal phenomena, which concern primitive tribal societies and are experienced collectively, liminoid phenomena take place in the complex industrial world, and are the products of individual or particular group efforts. In addition, the liminoid originates outside the boundaries of the economic, political, and structural process, and its manifestations often challenge the wider social structure by offering social critique on, or even suggestions for, a revolutionary re-ordering of the official social order.

Turner's distinction between the liminal and the liminoid proves the limitation of Priebe's reading of *Fragments* from the cultural-anthropological perspective of liminality. Besides his confusion of the two concepts, mistaking the liminoid for liminality, Priebe overlooks some other applications of the ritual process of initiation, which make that the re-reading of *Fragments* from Turner's point of view is still valid. Actually, after his return from the United States, Baako's passage through liminality is momentarily frozen; he is stuck in a nameless, faceless, uncreated condition of a liminoid, neither what he was nor what he will be. As a result, he is left liminally stranded between his phase of passage and the society to which he is unable to make a reverse crossing.

The other limitation of Priebe's analysis shows in Baako's and his community's dual constitutive liminalities that illuminate the plot of *Fragments*, and that the critic does not seem to be aware of. The deep transformations of the community which alter the whole social order of the Akan worldview illustrate the social liminality featured in the novel. These transformations leave Naana in a baffled condition, to the extent of misapprehending her world: "things have passed which I have never seen whole, only broken and twisted against themselves" (p. 196). The twisted and broken fragments of Naana's world inform a world in transition and change, which has not retained the

wholeness of the traditional community and does not achieve the harmony of a new social order.

As a socio-cultural and anthropological paradigm, liminality is also a discourse on hybridity, which enters under the scope of “border-crossing experiences”. It also fits well Robert Young’s definition of hybridity as a model “which involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining” (22). The ambiguity and ambivalence of hybridity as a cultural paradigm describe well the features of the liminal personae singled out by Turner in his above mentioned works. Turner informs us that, during the seclusion phase (liminal initiation), the ritual subjects become “invisible” subjects, neither male nor female, deprived of rank, status and property, and confined within a “no longer/not yet” status (1967: 93- 103). The symbols exhibited during this phase intimate the idea that the liminal personae are neither living nor dead, and both living and dead; that is, they are living expressions of the overall ambiguity of the interstructural period. In sum, then, the liminal subjects are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 1969:95). Extrapolated to the ritual community, this statement relates a social order caught in a cultural limbo, a community lost to itself, and upon which the rules of sacrality and tradition are erased, inverted, or completely nullified.

Bearing in mind the limitations of Priebe’s investigation of liminality in *Fragments*, and the idea that the discourse of liminality is a cultural synonym of hybrid discourse, we undertake, now, a comparative analysis between Armah’s second novel and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Our comparison foregrounds the idea that Armah had organically fused the liminality of Shakespeare’s hero in his narrative, in order to comment on the social dissolution in post-colonial Ghana, and invoke the dilemma of the post-colonial artist. Through his main character, Armah dramatises the issues of tradition and change,

and predicates the tragedy of the post-colonial African intellectual, torn as he is between his desire to redeem his community to its lost culture and the family's increasing materialistic demands to which he is obliged to conform.

Hamlet's statement "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right!" (I. 5. last verses) sums up well his dilemma and informs much of the tensions that predicates Baako's attempt to reform his society in *Fragments*. The point is that both characters are intellectual figures caught in periods of personal and social transition. As a result of their social marginality, they undergo pseudo-liminal experiences, not to ensure the flow of *communitas* into their communities, but to undermine them further from within. The negative sense of the two characters' liminality is respectively evoked by the dissolute atmosphere of Elsinore and the corrupt urban setting of Accra. In other words, when Shakespeare and Armah evoke liminality as a prop to their narratives, it is not because it continues to be a sacred element of the cultures they describe, but rather because it has become a mere metaphor for their states of dissolution.

Hamlet opens with the talk of two sentinels, Marcellus and Bernardo, at the battlements of Elsinore, keeping watch over the castle. The sentinels discuss the apparition of the ghost of the deceased Danish King, Hamlet, in full armour, during two successive nights. They also ask their friend Horatio why the need for the intense watch and the preparations for war. Horatio informs them that the country is on the verge of war, because the young Norwegian prince Fortinbras is raising an army in order to attack Denmark and recover the land of his country lost to his defunct father. As for the apparition of the Ghost, Horatio avows that he is unable to explain it. All that he can say is that, in ancient Rome, just before the fall of Julius Caesar, there were similar harbingers, such as the opening of graves and walking of ghosts in the streets, comets, eclipses, etc which portended the fall of the whole empire. Horatio implies that the ghost is an ill omen: "this bodes some strange eruption to our state" (I 1). In the subsequent scene, his

point of view is shared by Hamlet himself who suspects “some foul play”, and Marcellus who foresees that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark”.

The events outlined above foreground important motifs and themes of liminality. For instance, the castle’s battlement is an image of liminality, because its ramparts are the lines which protect the Danish royal castle/state, by separating its insides from the outside world. The preparation for war is another motif of liminality. It indicates that Denmark is not in a state of peace, nor in state of war; it is in between the two states, enjoying peace and yet mobilising its armed forces for the war. But more important than these two motifs, the ghost of Hamlet’s father is the best illustration of liminality. This is the way he himself describes his marginality to Hamlet

Doom’d for a certain time to walk the night
And for the day confin’d to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg’d away
(I 5 10-13).

What the Ghost of the dead king explains is that he did not die a natural death. Instead, as he was once sleeping in his orchard, his brother Claudius, now the enthroned king of Denmark and the husband of the deceased King’s widow, poured a poison in his ear, which instantly produced a leprous skin transformation and killed him. So, Hamlet, the father, died instantly, before he could receive the Sacrament or Extreme Unction. His sudden death has left him in an undesirable state in the Purgatory, which forces him to hover over the castle’s battlements in order to seek for the revenge that would enable him to redress the crime committed against him, and thus complete his transition to the next world.

The truth about his father’s death opens Hamlet’s eyes to many other violations of the natural order at Elsinore. These violations make it plain that the trouble with Denmark is not from an outside menace, but rather from within its political centre, the royal castle. As the European culture of the Middle-Ages established strong connections between the

health of the community and the behaviour of its head of state, most of Denmark's plights originate from King Claudius's corrupt leadership. His corruption shows in his regicide and fratricide, together with his marriage to Old Hamlet's widow; a marriage that Elizabethans would see as incest. Claudius offends also the order of the kingdom, by usurping the crown to Prince Hamlet, in spite of the fact that there is no failure in the line of succession to the throne.

What evidences further Claudius's corruption is the dissolution and intrigues of his court. An underlying sense of this dissolution is suggested in the political manipulations of Polonius, who is shown many times spying and eavesdropping. A fine courtier, Polonius is also a Machiavellian character that understands that the political world of Elsinore requires duplicity, deception and betrayal, which are all hallmarks of his behaviour. For instance, he cautions his daughter Ophelia about Hamlet's attentions to her, saying they are but "the perfume and suppliance of a minute" and "his will is not his own" and that she should not "your chaste treasure open" (I 3); he gives his son Laertes some advice, including "This above all: to thine own self be true,/And it must follow, as the night the day,/Thou canst not then be false to any man" (ibid.), and, yet, he commissions Reynaldo to spy on his behaviour in Paris; he takes to the King the secret of Hamlet's love for Ophelia, and offers himself to enquire more on the relationship in order to discover the Prince's unending grief. In sum, just like Claudius, much of Polonius's character reflects the duplicity and decadence prevalent at Elsinore.

Hamlet, and to a lesser degree his friend Horatio, are the characters that are the most aware of the unwholesome condition of Claudius's court, and by extension the whole state of Denmark. When we first encounter Hamlet in the play, he is introduced as an alienated Prince, dressed in black*, and talking about losing interests in life. His alienation stems from his father's death, which he is still mourning, and his disagreement with his

* Hamlet's black dress indicates both the scholar and the bereaved. His university scholarship is meant to fit him into his future role of leadership. Hence, we can assume that Hamlet's student status is another liminality motif, since his education stands for a transitional period that prepares him for his future role of a monarch.

mother's "o'er hasty marriage", which he perceives as an incestuous relationship. But when the truth about his father's death is revealed to him, he becomes doubly alienated. In the rest of the play, Hamlet plays also the dispossessed, the avenger, the mad and the malcontent. All these roles force him in many liminoid/transitional/marginal situations and sharpen his insights into the mainstream socio-political situation of Denmark.

As a sixteenth century Prince, Hamlet stands for the perfect embodiment of the ideals of the Warrior and the Intellectual*. His skills in arms are displayed at the end of the play, when he defeats all the Danish court to himself, whereas his intellectual competencies are intimated by his scholarship at Wittenberg. The two sides of his personality enable him to fulfil two important demands: one, sensing the different manifestations of the corruption of the state of Denmark; two, avenging his father, and thus redressing the health of the community lost to Claudius's rule. The two tasks impinge upon one another, especially as Hamlet proves himself an intellectual with a thoughtful turn of mind. Before proceeding to avenge his father, he goes through lengthy speculative thoughts on metaphysical questions, such as life and death, and questions his society's traditions and customs. For this sake, he holds a dialogue with the King and the Queen, and stages a play, "The Murder of Gonzago", in order to check the assertions of the ghost. All his reflective behaviour leads him to delay his revenge and prolong his marginal position. Hamlet's procrastination enables Shakespeare to employ liminality in his plot, in order to both unmask the corruption of the community and problematize the value of continuity and change. Hamlet's liminality and behavioural pattern have strong bearings on Baako's intellectual predicament in *Fragments*.

Like Shakespeare, Armah features a society in crisis, caught in a transitional period that blurs the cultural references of the community. In her blindness, it is Naana who best perceives the fragmentation of the traditional world, the wrenched time of the postcolonial period: "the larger meaning which lent sense to every small thing and every momentary

* A statement that is commonly held about Hamlet is that he stands for the ideal Renaissance man, who has reached perfection only to die.

happening years and years ago has shattered into a thousand and thirty useless pieces. Things have passed which I have never seen whole, only broken and twisted against themselves” (p. 196). In this ‘time out of joint’, and in spite of the intensity of her perception, Naana is unable to redress the community’s situation. What defines her condition is her estrangement from her family circle and the community at large. She describes her estrangement through a series of metaphors, which portray her as a “traveller”, a “stranger”, a “ghost” and a “dead”, and link her to the world of Nananom, the ancestors. All these metaphors suggest liminality and evoke the same condition and functions as Shakespeare’s character of the Ghost. Like it, she is a crippled character, unable to communicate with the larger outside world. Furthermore, the only person capable of understanding her is her grandson Baako, just like the only person capable of communicating with the Ghost in *Hamlet* is Hamlet himself. The organic bonds between the two pairs of characters, Hamlet-Ghost and Baako-Naana, inform much of the critique that Shakespeare and Armah marshal against their respective societies.

An alienated character, ready to join the ancestors’ world, Naana functions as a liminoid figure that prompts Baako’s commitment to his society, just like the Ghost prompts Hamlet’s revenge. When Baako leaves for the United States, Naana is strong enough to attend upon the libation ritual and chastise Folli’s greed. But after his return, she is old, crippled and lacks identification with her family and society. During Araba’s child’s outdoor ceremony, she remains powerless before her daughter’s, Efua, manipulative schemes. Naana’s infirmity makes that her presence in the novel becomes a symbolic one, while her function as a critique of the mainstream of post-colonial society devolves obliquely upon Baako. The latter is presented as an intellectual figure deeply attuned to the country’s past and tradition. Armah makes his main character’s commitment evident through the conversation Baako has with his master Ocran over the most adequate strategy for the artist to reach the masses. During the conversation, Ocran senses “the ghost of a missionary inside [Baako], bullying the artist” (p. 81). All through

the novel, Baako's missionary spirit is made manifest through his infallible intellectual commitment to his community. This commitment leads him to produce, among other things, subversive television scripts and essays which have direct relevance to his country's crisis.

Like Hamlet, Baako is an intellectual returnee considered by his community as the summit of humanity. Like him, he is different from his fellow countrymen. His difference originates from his consciousness expansion which creates in him social marginality and liminality similar to Hamlet's madness. Furthermore, like the young prince, he is also shocked by the "rotteness" inside his community. This 'rotteness', which causes his nervous breakdown, has different manifestations and calls to mind the same images and motifs which describe the decadence of Elsinore and provoke the young Hamlet's madness in Shakespeare's play. For instance, the broader social implications of Gertrude's unfaithfulness to the memory of her deceased husband and her incestuous relationship with Claudius evoke the country's unfaithfulness to its true traditions. In his novel, Armah takes on this motif of betrayal and projects it in the behaviour of many of his women characters to signify on the same theme. One of these characters is Efua, Baako's mother, who manipulates the date of the newborn outdoor ceremony in order to coincide it with payday and ensure maximum donations. The other character is Akossua Russell, the *mother* of the country's letters, who travesties the country's myths to make the heroine of her poem marry a white man and benefit of his chariot full of goods. The two characters' sordid, self-serving motivations suggest betrayal because they oppose the traditional norms and reverse priorities: for them, greed and personal status replace ethics and the spiritual health of the country.

Official corruption, featured in Polonius's conduct in *Hamlet*, is also present in *Fragments* through the character of Asante Smith. The director of the state's TV corporation, Smith is an insidious and opportunistic bureaucrat who makes it obvious that the troubles with independent Ghana, too, originate from its political centre. To further

his own and his masters' interests, he entrenches himself behind his senior official position and keeps flattering his superiors. When Brempong speaks about him to Baako, he informs him that he has "the sweetest tongue in all of Ghana for singing his master's praise". The subservience of Smith's ideology to the ruling class interests alienates Baako and by and large all the Ghanaian masses. His duplicitous, dishonest behaviour is unmasked when he censors Baako's scripts on the basis that he is too abstract in his approach. His censorship triggers a reaction of dismay from Baako and forces him to resign from his job. After his resignation, Baako finds himself in a precarious condition which foreshadows his tragic failure to fulfil his intellectual outlook and provide a sense of direction to the people.

An unusual been-to, stuck in a liminal condition after his return from abroad, Baako stands for an alienated artist, an outsider to the dominant outlooks. His marginal condition is suggested right after his homecoming, since he is never shown fully integrated into his community as an independent, autonomous individual. Much of his committed, thoughtful behaviour markedly contrasts with the opportunistic, status-seeking behaviour of the official intellectuals engaged in the novel. His marginality is compounded by the nervous breakdown that plagues his health; a fracture in personality that leads him, just like Hamlet's madness does, to withdraw into a state of introspection that confines him within the fringes of the social nexuses of his community. The origin of his illness goes back to his stay in the United States. During his passage through Paris, he felt the same uneasiness. But after his resignation from Ghana television, his state deteriorates, only to be interned in a mental hospital. Here are the words uttered by his pursuers, while they tie a rope around his ankles

"It was books, they say."

"And he was clever at school."

"A been-to, returned only a year ago. His mother waited a long time, and now this happens to her."

"He was very quiet."

"Is it true that he was a graduate?"

"Yes, and a been-to."

“We saw him walking to take the bus every morning, so we were not so sure.”
“A graduate all right. Hundred percent.”
“Strange, he didn’t have a car.”
“They could at least have given him a bungalow.”
“Strange.”
“Strange.” (p. 173-4).

This conversation is among the best statements to describe the liminoid condition of Baako’s intellectual position and to demonstrate that his liminality runs as an oblique critique of his society. The irony inherent in the passage informs the large scale perversion and distortion of the values that are likely to ensure the survival of the community as a cultural entity different from the West. For Baako’s pursuers, normal reality is inverted: his knowledge is the cause of his own failure and the whole malaise he inflicts to his family; his bus riding is an unnatural behaviour for an intellectual; that he does not benefit from the material advantages conceded to been-toes is another unusual thing. All this makes that, besides endorsing the duties of an intellectual who takes it upon himself to probe into the social malaise surrounding him, Baako plays also the scapegoat in order to enable his community to purify itself from its ritual guilt.

Baako’s and Hamlet’s respective marginal conditions entail liminoid experiences that sharpen their insights into the values encoded in their respective communities’ pseudo-rituals. As a complex arrangement of socio-political and personal values, rituals and myths are the expression of the cultural identity of any community. Inherent in them is also an ethical discourse that measures the community’s social health. By analogy, any perversion of these traditional narratives and reiterative social patterns signals the manipulation of the community’s socio-political structures and warns its loss. It is in historical periods of transition, such as Shakespeare’s and Armah’s renaissance periods, that they are most subject to change, transformations and/or rejection. During these liminal periods, tradition is appropriated, coerced and, sometimes, abrogated in order to legitimize particular positions, institutions and/or worldviews. As Naomi Liebler argues: “just as the creation of tradition and custom serve political ends, so too do both the revival

and the suppression of tradition and custom” (176). Accordingly, manipulating the ‘old ways’ may lead to unfettered consequences: “as with its enforcement, the rejection of a particular tradition or custom acts to suppress the full complex of values signalled by that tradition or custom” (ibid. 176-7). It is with respect to the issues of ritual, memory and ethics that we intend, now, to carry on our comparative study of *Fragments* and *Hamlet*.

As we have previously outlined, Hamlet is an intellectual who exhibits keen concerns about Denmark’s cultural and political identity, together with its community’s stability and fluidity. His mourning of his father yields into the mourning of the state’s true traditions and customs. When Ophelia reproaches him for his extended grief for his father, and reminds him that he died ‘twice two months’ ago, Hamlet mocks her and directs her attention to the forgotten fertility ritual of the hobby-horse: “[t]hen there’s/ hope a great man’s memory may outlive hi life half/ a year [...]or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with/ the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is ‘For, O, for, O,/ the hobby-horse is forgot” (III 2 127-31). These lines establish a strong connection between the hobby-horse rite and the world order that pertains to King Hamlet’s time, on the one hand, and memory, on the other hand. Through the evocation of the hobby-horse, Shakespeare problematizes the value of past customs and summons memory as a cure to his community that seems to neglect its rites of distinction.

The medieval hobby-horse ritual practice enacts the figure of a man dressed in a horse mask and a hoop-like skirt under which he catches and then releases village maids in an aggressively mimed fertility dance. As a folk seasonal festival, the hobby-horse dance signified fertility, and the more aggressively athletic the better. Shakespeare underlines the importance of the hobby-horse in opposition to the corrupt rites that King Claudius attempts to instate in the court. At the opening scenes of *Hamlet*, Hamlet is confronted to the royal court’s festivities, which feature the revel and the carousal of the king among canon shots and trumpets. Hamlet regrets and disapproves this careless behaviour and observes: “to my [Hamlet’s] mind, though I am native here/ And to the manner born, it is

a custom/ More honour'd in the breach than the observance" (I 5). Hamlet's statement reflects and extends the issue of the perversion of socio-political structures through the manipulation of customs and rituals. His point is that this custom gives their country a bad reputation for excessive drink. As a ritual practice unsanctified by tradition, the court's revel reads like the anti-thesis of Hamlet's highly praised and mourned hobby-horse.

Inherent in the hobby-horse rite is a motif of hybridity which associates it with the social health of the community as a whole. This motif of hybridity lies in the physical appearance of the hobby-horse, which aligns it along mythical figures of animal-human hybrids. It seems to combine the ritualised promise of communal renewal and regeneration with the hybridisation of man and beast (Liebler 179). Still in Liebler's view, the overt sexual reminder of the hobby-horse "signals a longing for old days and old ways, a nostalgia that would restore what was lost by the king's [Hamlet's] murder: political and familial legitimacy, those customary and legal guarantors of order and perpetuation" (ibid.). The ethical discourse upon which this folk festival is inscribed reads in the opposite direction to the political functions encoded in Claudius's ritual manipulations.

Shakespeare associates the changing times of Claudius's rule with the image of an animal-human hybrid. In his reproach to his mother's marriage, Hamlet analogizes his father to Hyperion and Claudius to Satyr: "so excellent a king; that was, to this [Claudius],/ Hyperion to satyr" (I 2 140-1). Hyperion in Greek mythology was a Titan, son of Uranos and Gaia, the respective gods of heaven and earth. Unlike it, satyr makes reference to the Greek god of wood that was half man and half beast. Through this analogy, Hamlet elevates his father's rule and time to the fertile union between the heaven and the earth and, hence, the immaculate origin of all things, and reduces Claudius and his court to a sterile, debased and promiscuous woodland wanton. Contrasted together, the hobby-horse and satyr reveal two ethical discourses inscribed in the hybridity motif carried through them. Liebler details these discourses in the following terms

Hobby-horse and satyr are positioned here [in *Hamlet*] as binary opposites; although both are human hybrids, they are inscribed within different ethical discourses. The hobby-horse is admitted, indeed conscripted, into the totemic pantheon of early modern social life as a guarantor of fecundity, continuity, and memory; the satyr is excluded as uncivilized, a destroyer of order and structure. Hamlet's hobby-horse is domesticated, owned, a household figure among the *lares* and *penates* of Elsinore as of Elizabethan England. Ejected, "forgot," its promise of renewal is broken (Liebler 179 italics in the text).

Contained within Shakespeare's hybridity motifs is, therefore, an ambivalence that speaks of both an undesirable change and a forgotten promise. The two discourses serve as overt allusions to the social and political stability of the community, whose rites of distinction's purity is the barometer of its spiritual health.

The issues of rites, memory and ethics find all their meanings in *Fragments*, too. The perversion of the Akans' fertility rites and the ambivalence of hybridity figures describe also the social reality portrayed in it. The examples from the novel which illustrate the moral discourse and the maiming of the country's traditions and customs are so conspicuous that they force the idea that, behind the Westernized lifestyle of the Ghanaian elites, just like behind the pretentious revelry of King Claudius, lies the same rottenness as that of Hamlet's Denmark. They include, among many others, Folli's aborted attempt to withhold the libation during Baako's departure, Efua's and Araba's removal of the outdoor ceremony to coincide it with senior officers' payday, and Akosua Russell conflated feast to collect American money for her personal profit. More important than all these practices that distort local rituals is the perversion of the traditional myth of the voyage abroad and the 'hero' idea attendant to it. Baako details this idea in a hospital conversation he has with Juana

The member of the family who goes out and comes back home is a sort of a charmed man, a miracle worker. He goes, comes back, and with his return some astounding and sudden change is expected [...]

The voyage abroad, everything that follows [...is] very much a colonial thing. But the hero idea itself is something very old. It's the myth of the extraordinary man who brings about a complete turnabout in terrible circumstances. We have the heroes who turned defeat into victory for the whole community. But these days the community has disappeared from the story. Instead, there is the family, and the hero comes and turns its poverty into sudden

wealth. And the external enemy isn't the one at whose expense the hero gets his victory; he's supposed to get rich mainly at the expense of the community (p.103).

Baako's above statement details the traditional myth of the voyage abroad and its perversion. In its articulation of a fundamental belief, this myth informs much of Baako's predicament and the two interpretations ascribed to his journey. The first of these interpretations is Naana's, whose opening dirge singing translates the traditional and authentic message that sees the voyage abroad as a kind of a journey to the ancestors' world. The journey back from the land of the dead is accompanied by the exchange of gifts and greetings that ensure the continuation of the bounds of kithship and kinship. The ethical values encoded in this interpretation is contained within the following lines from Naana Chapter

Watch over him [Baako], fathers.
Watch over him
And let him prosper
There where he is going.
And when he returns
Let his return, like rain,
Bring us your blessing and fruits,
Your blessings
Your help
In this life you have left us to fight alone (p. 6).

Naana's dirge above is in line with the traditional longing for continuous fellowship with the ancestors. J. H. Nketia records a similar prayer: "send us something, Mensa, / do send us something, / [...] if the departed could send gifts / they would surely send something to their children" (7). The resemblances between the two passages translate a wish for continuous fellowship between the dead and the livings and the former's invisible participation in the fulfilment of the community's needs. However, in its modern version, the spiritual dimension of the myth has disappeared altogether and is replaced by the family's materialistic yearnings for Western goods. As Baako makes it clear to Juana, the exclusive family interests have superseded the interests of the community, and the positive reversal of the community's fortunes against the external enemy is turned into a false materialistic consciousness.

The process through which the myth of the voyage abroad is perverted drives Baako to draw a correlation between the maimed rites of his community and the extreme rituals of Melanesian cargo cults. In the two instances, an illusory, asymmetrical exchange of goods is expected to take place between the natives and the West through the intercession of the ancestors. During the exchange, the been-to is awarded a kind of death, a ritual loss of identity, since cargo is expected to follow his return. The breaking point in Baako's consciousness expansion reflects this ritual death, wherein his artist identity is negated only to be reborn in a new form after he achieves his re-aggregation phase.

Baako's internment within a mental hospital fulfils the last phase of his liminal experience. This event signals the completion of the phase of ritual marginality. It can be paralleled to the voyage Hamlet undertakes to England. During this voyage, Hamlet remains momentarily stuck in a transitional/liminal space, between the states of Denmark and England, leaving the former without ever reaching the latter. In this position, the physical and political boundaries between England and Denmark are arbitrary and blurred, and the liminal separation is at the highest degree of separation, the fact which signals the beginning of the phase of re-aggregation. In other words, when Hamlet leaves physically Denmark, his journey assumes ritually (and paradoxically) a reverse crossing to the country he is leaving. His return assumes a definite shape in the churchyard, another liminal space, where he announces himself to Claudius and his family in a language that leaves no doubt about his new identity: "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane" (V 1).

Hamlet's strong affirmation of royal identity marks both his physical and ritual return to Denmark. Now, hesitation defines his identity no more; to paraphrase his famous soliloquy, he seems capable of taking arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing ends them. Definitely, he is able to fulfil his promise to his father and to redress the maimed rites of his community, perverted to Claudius's rule. However, his redemptive task has a price; it is the lives of all the court's members, including his own. He, thus, becomes a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat, figure, through whom ritual change and purification

are accomplished. His tragedy is also the tragedy of all Denmark, since his defeat ushers into the fall of the whole country into a foreign power.

Baako's fate may be read in similar terms as those of Hamlet. His internment at the hospital reads as an intense phase of ritual liminality; the hospital is a marginal place where patients are temporarily kept until they recover their health. At the same time, it points at a ritual death, which foreshadows both the perversion of the traditional spiritual mission associated with his return from abroad and the failure of his social mission as an intellectual working for the improvement of the community. In his essay on cargo cults, Baako underlines the liminal status of the been-to returnee by comparing him to a 'ghost', a 'zombie' figure that functions as an intermediary between two worlds in order to ensure the transmission of material goods and gains. Baako stresses also the idea of death inherent in this system, whenever the been-to refuses to comply with the role assigned to him. He writes: "the been-to has chosen, been awarded, a certain kind of death. A beneficial death, since cargo follows his return. Not just cargo, but also importance, power, a radiating influence capable of touching ergo elevating all those who in the first instance have suffered the special bereavement caused by the been-to's going away" (p. 157).

Baako's above idea reflects his awareness about the impossibility for him to fulfil his task of an artist working for the community, as long as his family perceives him as a been-to, whose sole function is to be a mere cargo carrier. His failure to implement his mission evokes Hamlet's tragic failure in the sense that, instead of redeeming the health of his community, he helps undermining it from within, and in the process he is himself destroyed. The unwholesome outcome of Baako's action and the irony underlying his redemptive endeavour strengthen the parallels between his story and that of Hamlet. In his attempt to set his time 'right', the latter brings his own downfall, the downfall of his whole family and the loss of the whole Denmark to a foreign rule. Through this tragedy, Shakespeare illuminates the dual constitutive liminality of both his hero and his

community and underscores the tragic potential inherent in all historical periods of transition. He also stresses the idea that resolving liminality does not belong to any individual alone, since defeat does not lie exclusively in Hamlet's failure to efficiently perform revenge, but in his community's incapacity to redress its ills as well.

The tragic outcome of Hamlet's action characterizes Baako's attempt to heal the fractures in his community, too. By refusing to identify with the new interpretation given to his return from abroad, Baako has become an undefined, vulnerable person who reflects a disruption rather than continuity with his family expectations. His liminoid condition and committed behaviour increasingly displace his status, from saviour to scapegoat, to the extent that his values become the antithetical embodiment of his family's norms. His eventual internment in an asylum for deranged individuals signifies not only the unwholesome outcome of his desire for order and structure, but also the tragic failure of all his society to look critically at itself and examine its social relations. The sense of tragedy created by Baako's breakdown and his family's inability to come to terms with his intellectual vocation and to endorse his social vision is made more analogous to Hamlet's tragedy by the fact that it involves the fall of almost all the Onipa household. The fall of the household of Onipa is suggested by the death of Araba's child, Baako's internment and Naana's preparation for her death. It is also intimated through Efua's renunciation to build a large house in which her extended family will dwell. The unfinished walls of this house stand as the symbols of the unfinished project of postcolonial African desire for the community and the incapacity of post-independence societies to sustain a coherent, homogenous and authentic cultural identity.

The analogies that we have underlined in Hamlet's and Baako's tragic longings for an ordered and healthy political and social systems warrant the hybridity of Armah's narrative, wherein the sense of tragedy in Shakespeare's play, its ethical discourse and its imagery organically function to dramatize the issue of change in *Fragments* and to create the tragic dilemma of the postcolonial artist. Like Shakespeare, Armah constructs the

drama of a community in crisis caused by political, social and cultural change. Like him, he also features the reciprocal relations between the community and its members as tragic relations. Moreover, like Shakespeare, Armah makes his protagonist fulfil the antithetical functions of a hero and a liminoid, a priest and a scapegoat, a victim and a villain. In the next chapter, we shall dwell further on the complex portrait of Baako by highlighting the trickster behaviour that structures and gives sense to his action in the novel. This task will be carried out through the study of the modernist dimension of the novel's aesthetics and ideology.

References:

- Awosu, Kofi. "Armah's F-R-A-G-M-E-N-T-S: Madness as Artistic Paradigm". 1988. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 136. Ed. Jeffrey W Hunter. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001.
- Desmet, Christy and Robert Sawyer ed. *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Liebler, Naomi Conn. *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Loomba, Anita and Martin Orkin ed. *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Mcevoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: the Basics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Nketia, J. H. *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*. Achimota: UP, 1955.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. *An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets*. Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel". *Research in African Literatures*. 24 (1993): 123-140.
- Priebe, Richard K. *Myth, Realism, and the West African Writer*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988.
- Shakespeare, William. "Hamlet". *The Complete Work of William Shakespeare*. Oxford: Wordsworth Editions, 1996. 670-713.
- Turner, Victor. *Blazing the Trail*. Tucson & London: University of Arizona Press, 1992.
- *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Chapter 3:

Hybrid Discourse, Modernist Aesthetics and Myth in *Fragments* and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

This chapter addresses the issue of Armah's supposed indebtedness to James Joyce, claimed by Charles Larson in his *The Emergence of African Fiction*, first published in 1971. In the last chapter of his study, entitled "The Novel of the Future: Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah", Larson marks Armah as an exile, whose novels are modernist narratives, far removed from the main stream of African realist fictions, and deeply at home within the tradition of the autobiographical novel of the West, as enshrined in the works of André Gide's *Les faux monnayeurs*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*. Larson's daring extrapolations and conclusions as regards Armah's alleged borrowings from Joyce triggered a harsh reaction from the Ghanaian writer. In a polemical essay published just five years after Larson's study, Armah refuted the critic's "allegations" about the indebtedness of *Fragments* to Joyce's autobiographical fiction and contended that he had never put himself in the position of contact with the work of his Irish counterpart (1978: 12). Armah took also to task Larson's overall comparative project, dismissing it as a mere "larsony"; i.e. a larceny that the operated by the American critic over the originality of contemporary African literature, in general, and his own originality, in particular. Finally, Armah went further and asserted that it is only "within the framework of white western racist prejudices about Africa that Larson's assertions make sense" (ibid. 13).

Armah's harsh critique of Larson's comparative project raises the thorny question of the validity of comparative studies over his body of works. To our mind, Armah should not be heeded in his resentment against comparative scholarship. In *Studies in Classic*

American Literature (1923), D. H. Lawrence advises the critic “never [to] trust the artist [and to] trust the tale [because] the proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it” (8). In this chapter, it is our intention to take Lawrence’s advice by investigating further the literary relationship between Armah and Joyce. Our aim is neither the refutation of Armah’s assertion as to the complete originality of his work, nor is further evidence that can be added to other critics’ findings about his borrowings from other writers. Instead, our study rests on the assumption that, given the conclusions reached by Newell after her examination of African popular literature, national (elite) literature, as well as all individual artistic productions, are far from being closed compartments, because literary discourse is a system of literary relationships that transcend mere graphical boundaries. In the light of this epistemological posture, the emphasis in our dissertation will be placed on both Armah’s individual talent and the entire modernist tradition from which he found inspiration for his novel.

The present comparison is grounded in Bakhtin’s concept of unintentional hybrid discourse, which it tentatively develops into a theoretical framework that accounts for the post-colonial writer’s appropriation of the Western modernist aesthetics. Our point is that, by the 1960’s, when Armah wrote his novels, European modernism became for the African novelist a matter of possibility. Rephrased, this statement amounts to saying that, after the dissemination of Joyce’s, Eliot’s, Woolf’s, and many other modernist writers’ works, in the sixties, modernist aesthetics developed into a kind of universal literary lore, shared by novelists belonging to different nations and cultures. This universal lore spurred the imagination of non-western writers, belonging to nascent national literatures written in colonial languages. Despite their heart-felt nationalism, these writers quoted extensively from modernist themes and techniques and refracted their borrowings in organic hybrid discourses, either to give free reign to their personal artistic creativity or to express deep

anxieties about their own crisis of culture*; a crisis of culture which meant, to borrow Bradbury's and Fletcher's definition, "an unhappy view of history" (26).

The relevance of the concepts of proverb and hybrid discourse to this chapter is asserted by both the various meanings of the concept of proverb in African traditional culture and the spirit of modernist artistic creation. In the aesthetics of modernism literary production is often conflated with what Bradbury and McFarlane call the "search for a style in a highly individualistic sense" (29). As a novel which experiments a new kind of narrative style made of disrupted narrative sequences and focused perspectives, *Fragments* pertains to the same spirit for formal artistic novelty in Western modernism. Its spirit for novelty and originality finds also all its meaning in the traditional African poetics of proverbs. Actually, not only does the word proverb in local languages connect with anecdote and story (Finnegan 391), but its form, structure and techniques have often been sources of inspiration for native poets in search of original forms of expression. Nketia comments on the Ghanaian poet's proverbs' use by writing that

in addition to drawing on it [i.e. proverb] for its words of wisdom [... the Ghanaian poet] takes interest in its verbal techniques – its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement, and so on. Familiarity with its techniques enables him to create, as it were, his own proverbs. This enables him to avoid hackneyed expressions and give a certain amount of freshness to his speech (quoted in *ibid.* 390).

This quotation highlights the traditional African poet's anxiousness as to the originality and freshness of his proverbial expression. It also shows that taking inspiration from the forms and techniques of available proverbial materials is a wide-spread practice among proverb users in Africa. From the two points we can deduce that Armah's borrowing from Joyce's techniques deployed in his autobiographical novel, together with his transformation of the borrowed materials, are part and parcel of the same sense for language and technique that moved traditional poets. They testify to the organic hybrid construction of his narrative, which seems to use the narrative template of *A Portrait* as a

* For more details on the impact of the Western modernists' unhappy view on history on the African novelist's perception of his own culture, see David Ker's *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*.

spur to explore new possibilities of engagement and produce a mode of artistic expression which is not possible in the conventional realist novel.

Our reading of *Fragments* through modernist lenses will be guided by Malcolm Bradbury's and John Fletcher's insightful study *Modernism* (1976). The latter provides a large-scale investigation of the subject and one of the most exhaustive examinations of the modernist writing strategies. However, our analysis will take exception to their definition of Modernism, which they perceive as a "movement towards sophistication and mannerism, towards introversion, technical display, internal self-scepticism" (26). Contrary to the two critics, who place emphasis on the movement's formal innovative spirit, our perception of modernism will underscore the historical context which gave birth to it as well. Our revision of modernist ideology is inspired by Nicholas Brown's *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (2005), which is a Marxist study that articulates the common pathways that traverse modernism and African literature. It takes as its point of departure the partial displacement during the twentieth century of capitalism's "internal limit" (classically conceived as the conflict between labour and capital) onto a *geographic* division of labour and wealth. Drawing on this Marxist perspective, Brown argues that neither British modernists between the world wars nor African literature can be understood in their own contexts; rather, the full meaning of each "only emerges in relation to the other and to the rift, both internal and external, which they each try in different ways to represent" (1).

Considering the emergence of new classes based on capital within post-colonial societies, we deem it appropriate to read historically Armah's novel, despite Simon Gikandi's warning against any attempt to explain the modernist novel in Africa in simple socio-historical terms (72). It is true that, unlike many Western modernist writers, African writers are not formalists and have never celebrated form and technical experimentation for their own sake. But the assumption which holds that Western modernists are all alienated writers who pursue formal sophistication at the expense of social commitment is

only a partial view, not to say a mere avatar of both the traditional English social tradition of thought and the Lukcasian preference for narrative realism over modernism. Such a point of view is indeed oblivious of modernism's reaction against nineteenth century positivist, bourgeois culture, which was also shaped by the Empire's tremendous power system. The "rift" between Western Capitalism and the vanguard of Euro-American culture in the 1920's connects the literature produced at that time with the post-colonial writings, which grappled with the ideological remnants of the imperial system. The affinity between the two literatures created a "kinship" whereby African writers engaged, took over and refashioned modernist tropes and strategies in a completely novel way (Brown 1).

Hence, the industry and politics of the Empire were paramount factors that helped in the shaping of the "reactionary" spirit of Modernism. As a system of power politics and economic exploitation, imperial ideology also gave birth to leisure classes, who are reminiscent of the emergence of the African decadent middle class during the colonial period. Allan Bullock reports that, by 1900, a "hybrid society with wealth as its single common denominator" rose in the West (60). This class, arrogant and ostentatious in the vulgarity of its taste, stratified the whole society into rich and poor, ostensibly marked by their respective educations and mentalities (ibid. 60-1). The class distinctions that were so characteristics of this period defined also the African background in the aftermath of the period of independence. During that period, an aggressive middle class held power in Africa in the name of a narrow nationalism, while in effect it behaved like Western decadent bourgeoisie. At the same time, this class worked to perpetuate metropolitan power and privileges over the peoples it was expected to serve. A consequence of the rise to power of this decadent, western-minded bourgeois class was the marginalization of the masses, and the alienation of the native intellectuals and artists. Artistic expression and ideology also underwent profound changes, especially as African novelists, such as Achebe, N'gugi, Soyinka, Armah and Ouologuem broke away from traditional celebratory narratives, written in the social realist vein, to more refined artistic expressions that found

inspiration in the vast artistic revisionism operated by modernist authors over the artistic heritage of the West.

The analogies in the global historical conjunctures of Modernism and post-colonial literature underscored above validate our claim as to the tremendous influence of Western modernism over African novel. There remains, however, something to write about the relevance of Armah's recourse to Joyce's body of novels in order to strengthen this tentative comparison. Joyce is considered as a modernist writer par excellence. His endorsement of his age's aesthetic spirit and standards is manifest in all his novels. In addition, the sophistication he has brought to the art of the novel makes him a modernist master. However, he, too, belonged to an oppressed, colonised race. His writings can be read against a backdrop of domination, both foreign and internal to Ireland. By foreign and internal dominations, we respectively mean England and the Irish Catholic Church. Their respective role in shaping Joyce's anti-colonial and anti-parochial outlooks can never be overestimated.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, when the Irish nationalists' agitation for autonomy was at its climax, the spiritual power of the Church grew increasingly political. And when this religious institution retrieved its support to the nationalist leader James Stuart Parnell, it undermined all the nationalists' efforts towards freedom. Taking profit out of the disintegration of the Irish political parties, the Church worked also to prevent the planting of the seeds of European Enlightenment's thought in Irish soil. Its frequent interferences in political matters compounded the complex Irish situation, and contributed to the maintaining of a status quo wherein the hopes for the Irish revolution became illusions, and the dream of Ireland's unity a utopia.

Joyce's confrontation with both the British coercive colonization and the Church's hegemonous encroachment on the Irish mind means that he, too, is a post-colonial writer, who struggled for the emancipation of his people. And even if by the end of *A Portrait of Stephen*, meaning Joyce, proclaims his artistic independence and goes on a life-long, self-

imposed exile in Paris, his heart still remains deeply attuned to his country. After all, does not Stephen recognise that Ireland produced him, and that the English language will always remain for him an acquired language? Besides, does not the autobiography conclude by Stephen's promise to create within the 'smithy of his mind' the 'uncreated conscience' of his race? It is this kind of committed reading that we want also to underscore in the present analysis.

Armah's *Fragments* does not figure in Brown's study corpus, even though it highly conforms to the historical reading framework he suggests. As regards the critics who dared approaching it from a modernist perspective, such as Gikandi, they did not investigate it to the fullness of the modernist techniques which it deploys. As for the parallels between it and *A Portrait of the Artist* drawn by Larson, they are too flimsy to suggest a full interpretive framework. The reason behind this critical reluctance to apply modernist criticism to Armah's fiction lies mostly in the critics' a-historical perception of Modernism, which dominated Western and postcolonial criticism until recently. Nonetheless, whatever the reasons that prevented Armah's critics to engage in an in-depth comparison with Joyce are, we think that his novel accords well with the modernist aesthetics, on conditions that it is approached historically, not just formally, and that the interpretive framework accounts for the search for originality inherent in African artistic expression and the organic hybrid construction that underlies this search.

In the light of all that has been said above, the fore-coming analysis will not only focus on the way Armah organically fuses modernist experimental prose and themes in his novel, but it will also stress the complex process of refraction through which he re-employs the pattern of Joyce's novel and fits its themes in a narrative template that articulates his proper anxieties and speaks of his own culture. In other words, this chapter will not content itself with underscoring the analogies between Armah and Joyce, but will equally examine the way the African novelist adapts modernist strategies as the best way to achieve postcolonial ambition of cultural independence. While tracing the similarities

between the two fictions, it is our intention to show that Armah's second novel sustains a reading along Joycean formal and thematic lines, even though he clearly denies this influence. But in drawing the differences, we intend to stress the distinctiveness in the cultural visions of each writer and to underscore the African inspiration of *Fragments*. This task will be achieved through the investigation of the indigenous mythical patterns that structure the narrative and convey its cultural identity.

Modernist aesthetics has found in James Joyce its prophet and in his body of novels its manifestoes. The publication of his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in 1916, marked a new turn in the relationships between the artist, his medium and his society. Even though the novel drew heavily on its author's educational career in order to comply with the increasing demands of the realist fiction of the nineteenth century, it, nevertheless, brought new themes and techniques that were deeply stirring the imagination of modernist artists. Actually, Joyce intended his fiction as a *bildungsroman* i.e. a novel of development. The roots of this genre go back to a European tradition that includes diverse narratives, such as Stendhal's *Vie d'Henry Brulard*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But in emphasising the artistic vocation of his protagonist, Joyce made of his autobiography a *Kunsterroman*, i.e. a novel about the education and growth of an artist. By the same token, he also aligned it on one of the most important modernist themes: that of the artist. Bradbury and Fletcher write: "the theme of the portrayed artist is a recurrent one in the modernist novel, and one of the means by which the aesthetic self-consciousness of the species develops through the great classics of modernism" (404).

The figure of the artist, highlighted in the above quotation, is the most immediate link between *Fragments* and *A Portrait*. The artist's conflicting relationship with his society is the other parallel that we intend to examine in the following analysis. But our analysis would not stop at these two points. It would rather extend to other modernist aspects of the two fictions, namely their displacement of mythical patterns. All these

aspects are there to demonstrate that Armah has assimilated in his narrative Joyce's modernist themes and has invested them in an organically hybrid discourse that both renders his own preoccupations with technique and translates his own thematic interests with national culture and tradition.

A Portrait charts the first twenty years of Stephen Dedalus, a young Catholic boy growing up in late nineteenth century Ireland. As the title suggests, it is not just a story of a young man, but of a boy developing into a mature, dedicated artist. As he matures, through several family conflicts and periods of study, Stephen begins to rebel against his family, religion, and country. Finally, in order to establish himself as an individual and assert his identity as an artist, he seeks self-imposed exile in Paris. Conflicts and rebellions are important phases in Stephen's maturation process. They involve him in constant struggles with the traditional symbols of Irish identity, and lead him to face all the forces that attempt to shape his individuality. It is through the study of Stephen's conflicting relationships with his surrounding environment that we can understand some insights into his identity and trace the parallels that connect Baako with him.

The first conflict drawn in *A Portrait* involves Stephen with his parents. During his childhood, he is attuned to both his father and his mother, an admirer of the former and a lover of the latter. But as he grows up, his attachment to them becomes problematic for him. To begin with, his father, Simon Dedalus, is a source of continuous humiliation. In a trip with him to Cork during his adolescence, Stephen undergoes a painful experience, wherein he captures all his misgivings about the personality of his father, especially his drunken bragging and sentimentality. The failure of Simon to stand up to his son's expectations leads his son to apprehend him in an image that speaks of the failings of the Irish character. Definitely, like most Irish folks, Simon is "an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur, a shouting politician, [...] a drinker, a good fellow, a story teller, [...] and a praiser of his own past" (p. 227).

Because of the tension between her love and his disbelief, Stephen's relation to his mother is no less conflicting. Initially, in his early childhood, he is attracted towards her; she represents to him warmth and security, a tender mother who smells nicer than his father and plays piano for him. Her religious piety and sincere devotion to the Clergy prompt her to wish that her child would become a man of the Church. But when Stephen declines the Church's offer and frustrates her wish, he creates an emotional cleavage with her, whereby he weans himself from her love. His proclaimed autonomy forces him to feel "his own futile isolation" at home, and stand to his parents, brothers and sisters "rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, foster child and foster brother".

Stephen's rejection of priesthood ushers into his separation with the Jesuit order and his whole repudiation of his religious faith. His emancipation from religious duties is achieved through a gradual, and sometimes painful, process of reversal and separation. His education at the Jesuit school has fostered in him a deep faith and awe in the moral authority of the Church and its teaching. However, as he becomes aware of the treacheries of the Jesuit teachers and the political perversity of the Irish Catholic Church, he withdraws himself from the institution that offers him to share its "secret knowledge and secret power" (p.181). By repudiating Roman Catholicism, Stephen makes a decisive choice in his career. Rather than becoming the servant of the Church of Ireland, he chooses to become "a priest of the eternal imagination", who transforms daily, personal experience into artistic epiphanies reaching after the sublime.

In the same breath as his repudiation of the claims of religion, Stephen rebels also against the demands of the nation. During his university studies, he reaches a higher political awareness, which prompts him to decry Ireland as the "the old sow which eats its farrows" (p. 231). The episode of Parnell's fall had already left its mark on his childhood imagination. Years later, he not only grows sceptical of the Irish capacity for revolution and independence, but he also comes to believe that if there is any kind of salvation in Ireland, it is only through individual salvation: "when the soul of a man is born in this

country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (p. 131). This plea for individual independence and voluntary exile voices loudly his decision not to serve those ideals in which he no longer believes: “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church” (p. 281).

Stephen seems to find in Lucifer’s *Non serviam* the utmost credo to define his personality. The negative interaction with the surrounding environment, that such an attitude intimates, belies a loss of identity, apparent in the very motion of parricide he goes through. Stephen becomes, therefore, like Baako, an anonymous artist, with lost parents, lost faith and lost country, and walking alone. The analogy becomes more obvious when we remember the meaning of Baako’s name (Baako Onipa translates into the *lonely man* in the Akan language) and his respective entanglements with his mother at home and Asante Smith at work. The conflicts that oppose Baako to these two figures carry within themselves a sense of fragmentation similar to Stephen’s disintegrated faith. As regards Baako’s confinement in a mental hospital, it parallels Stephen’s ultimate retreat into himself through the experience of exile.

Like Joyce, Armah, too, makes his hero go through many experiences and incidents that alienate him from his surrounding environment. Besides, like Stephen, Baako stubbornly refuses to be contaminated by the widespread diseases that plague his country. For instance, unlike most been-to returnees, such as H. R. Brempong, he returns to the country with no cargo, and the only goods that accompany his return are a typewriter and a guitar, which are two symbols of his artistic vocation. Such a dedicated behaviour markedly contrasts him to Brempong. The latter is welcomed by a crowd of relatives who sing his praise amidst a conspicuous, inflated welcome ceremony. Contrary to Brempong, Baako anonymously enters Accra city and spends a night at a hotel before joining his family. And when he finally meets his mother who asks him about his car, he tries to stand above her demand and pretends not to have heard her.

Baako's dedication to his craft is made more explicit in a conversation he holds with his art master Ocran. During the exchange, Ocran senses the spirit of a missionary in his student's heartfelt commitment to the awakening of the community. Ocran's insight is also shared by Nana, when her grandson informs her that in his scripts he writes things to enlighten the mind of the people: "it sounds like a priest" (p. 154). Baako's priest-like perception of his role urges him not to accommodate the ideological orientation of Asante-Smith and to withdraw from his job. It also compels him to dissociate himself from his family's corrupt practices and their obsessive craving for foreign material things. When he first meets Juana at the hospital, Juana puts her finger on the cause of his estrangement and says: "You're going against a general current", (p. 103). Baako shows agreement and portrays his plea in a stronger image: "as a matter of fact it's beginning to look like a cataract to me" (p. 104). Baako's artistic predicament becomes, therefore, similar to Stephen's, since both run against established orders and engage in the quest of an ideal that cannot be fulfilled in their respective societies. The precariousness of Baako's artistic creativity shows that Armah has assimilated the modernist perception of the artist as an alienated figure and has projected within his novel the same suffering and loneliness that predicate Stephen's condition in *A Portrait*.

Inherent in Stephen's and Baako's respective aloofness, stressed above, is a shared lack of confidence in their society, coupled with a keen sense of the fragmentation of the traditional community. Their disenchantment seems to tell of the modernist intellectual conventions of plight, alienation and nihilism. As Bradbury and McFarlane recognise, "the idea of the modern is bound up with consciousness of disorder, despair and anarchy" (41). The ideas of anarchy and despair associated with the modernist world vision were the outcome of the philosophical, political and military upheavals that shook Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. One such upheaval was the breaking out of WWI and the great number of deaths and sufferings it brought with it. This traumatic event refashioned the Western spirit and fostered among modernist artists an apocalyptic

perception of their time, deemed as a time of the apocalypse. The deep disillusionment with culture that WWI gave birth to nurtured also in the modernist mind a subjective feeling of belonging to a ruined civilisation or, to paraphrase Ezra Pound's verse, a civilisation that is "botched". In their estrangement, Joyce's and Armah's protagonists are made to sense and reflect on the anarchy that pervades their society and culture.

Even though chiefly concerned with the figure of artist and often read as a *bildungsroman*, *A Portrait* obliquely touches upon Irish politics and openly challenges Dublin's social order*. In fact, the turbulent politics of Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century casts a shadow upon the whole narrative. Joyce comments on the dissensions that marked this chapter of Irish history in the Christmas dinner episode, in the first Chapter of novel. In this episode, Stephen, even though still a boy, attends helplessly to a conflict between his aunt Dante, on the one hand, and his father and uncle, Charles, on the other. The arguments of the two sides over Parnell's divorce case are so full of rift, that Mary Dedalus pledges reason and tolerance. The rift sets the political tone of the novel and shapes once for all Stephen's view about his country's politics. In the remainder of the narrative, Stephen is shown at best sympathetic to Parnell. Most of the time, however, he is an uncompromising critique of everything that smacks of Irish politics. In *Ulysses*, Joyce's second novel, Stephen voices loudly his discontent and claims that "[Irish] history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (40).

Stephen's 'unhappy view' of his country's history is common to many characters of *Fragments*. These characters are Naana, Juana and Baako. They all regard the traditional Akan world order as fragmented. Through their perspective Armah endorses the modernist writer's vision of plight and disorder and re-applies it on his own postcolonial African society. For instance, in her soliloquies, Naana muses on the loss of harmony in

* It is worth-mentioning here that this novel is the outgrowth of Joyce's collection of short stories *Dubliners*. Even though written in a different mode, the assumptions regarding the paralysis of Irish individual's desire and the inability of the Irish to sustain an independent, free stance of mind, put forward in the stories, still pervades *A Portrait*.

her social order and stresses the shattered state of her surrounding: “the larger meaning which lent sense to every small thing and every momentary happening years and years ago has shattered into a thousand and thirty useless pieces. Things have passed which I have never seen whole, only broken and twisted against themselves. What remains of my days will be filled with more broken things” (p. 196). What makes Naana’s plight read akin to Joyce’s perception of history as a nightmare is the sweeping historical perspective within which she sets the fragmentation of the Akan traditional world order

The baby was a sacrifice they [Efua and Araba] killed, to satisfy perhaps a new god they have found much like the one that began the same long destruction of our people when the elders first – may their souls never find forgiveness on this head – split their own seed and raised half against half, part selling part to hardeyed buyers from beyond the horizon, breaking, buying, selling, gaining, spending till the last of our men sells the last woman to any passing white buyer and himself waits to be destroyed by this great haste to consume things we have taken no care to produce (p. 199).

The historical perspective within which Naana’s sensibility avails itself makes it similar to modernist apocalyptic vision of history. In this regard, Armah is not an Achebe, and the whole group of first generation African novelists and poets, who felt pride in representing the pre-colonial period of their people in celebratory modes of narrative. For him, African history is neither a factor of self-pride nor a redemptive force. It is rather a source of anxieties that informs the disintegrated and uncertain present of the continent. And even if the figure of Naana may invite some extrapolations regarding a heroic Akan past, hers is essentially a principle of a popular, spiritual order unattained by any political consideration. Thus, Armah recreates in Naana’s mind his people’s cycles of life and death without ever evoking any kind of praise towards Africa’s institutionalised history, such as the one enshrined in the works of Negritude poets, Senghor and Césaire, or Nkrumah’s ancient prosperous African kingdoms.

Naana’s perception of the fragmentation of the traditional order is shared by Juana and Baako. In her drive around the town, the former senses different kinds of loss and experiences an oppressive inner pulse forcing her towards more estrangement and more

despair: “what meaning could hope have in an environment so completely seized with danger and so many different kinds of loss? It was too widely spread, the damage. Even of physical destruction, of broken bodies, the town was a prolific creator” (p. 23). Baako, too, keenly perceives the sense of futility that overwhelms Juana’s vision and the (alien) force which broods destruction over the whole people and country. In the fullness of his struggle, his ultimate objective becomes the desire to repudiate the “glorious past” sung by Asante Smith and to channel to his people the true images of their disintegrated condition. However, in his attempt ‘to forge the consciousness of his race’, Baako becomes himself a symbol of alienation and disintegration, very much similar to the modernist anti-heroes, who are mostly lonely outsiders and restless wanderers.

Baako’s scripts “The Brand” and “The Root” are the means through which Armah lends a historical perspective to his disenchantment with Ghana’s modern history. “The Brand” deals with the theme of survival in independent Ghana. It presents a dark circle, which stands as the habitat of an oppressed people. The circle is superposed on a white square that represents the oppressors. The circle features a man of the people struggling against the men of the square to get more rights and advantages for his class. However, in his climbing to the square, the hero crushes his own people and uses them as a ladder. And as soon as he reaches out to the whiteness of the privileged, he becomes himself a force of oppression. Definitely, the hero is overtaken by the coercive forces of colonial domination and becomes himself an agent of subjection. In the process of his ascent in the social hierarchy, he comes to see his people as “some kind of devils in a burning hell” and himself as a “happy brand plucked” from the burning (p. 148).

“The Brand” is a satire on the country’s elite who step in the shoes of the former colonisers and remain adjuncts to it. It is an outgrowth of “The Roots” that tackles the issue of slavery, past and present. For Baako, the Ghanaians accepted the slave trade in the pre-colonial past in order to get access to European goods. Their behaviour is, therefore, similar to the present situation wherein the people are enslaved by their

irrational craving for Western means and ideas. The idea behind “The Roots” develops and complements Naana’s thoughts. In the frame chapters of the novel, Naana denounces her family’s manipulation of tradition in order to ensure material profits. She also draws a parallel between the ancient African chiefs, who sold their people, and the post-colonial rulers who have become busy in “their reaching after new things and newer ways to consume them” (p. 198). The convergence in point of view between Naana and Baako about the inglorious aspects of Africa’s past confirms that Armah does not hold in high esteem his country’s institutionalised history. It also embeds him in the Western modernist disenchantment with culture and their quest for a world redeemed from the scoria and incontingencies of history.

By representing the fragmentation of the traditional Akan world order through the subjectivities of Naana, Baako and Juana, and by focusing his narrative perspective on their thoughts, Armah aligns his novel on the inward-looking kind of narratives. This kind of fiction is one of the most important developments in modernist aesthetics. Bradbury and Fletcher write that the modernist novel “hangs on the border between the mimetic and the autotelic species of literature, between an art made by imitating things outside itself, and an art that is internally coherent making” (401). Because it swarms in the minds of the characters, this new form is also called the subjective narrative. Its characters’ mental representation of reality is always made to matter to them more than the social reality itself. Simon Gikandi recognises also that, in the subjective narrative, “irony and empathy are juxtaposed with ease” (74). The juxtaposition of irony and empathy may help to vindicate Armah’s recourse to this kind of fiction; the first device allows him to achieve distance from the events he describes, whereas the second enables him to mediate his characters’ search for a sense of balance in their dislocated world. In the fullness of his writing process, and in the manner of Western modernist masters, Armah intersects historical time with the movement and rhythm of his characters’ subjective minds, and

develops a narrative made up of focused episodic sequences, with each episode standing for one character's point of view.

It is certainly the above-mentioned modernist features that Armah's critics have taken hold of in their assessment of the modernist influence on his second fiction. A case in point is Larson who recognizes the image of the artist in the novel and stresses its centrality in order to reach the conclusion that *Fragments* reads in the continuity of the Western bildungsroman tradition, in general, and Joyce's *A Portrait*, in particular; Gikandi, on the other hand, underscores the subjective turn of *Fragments*, and develops the trope of fragmentation that structures it. It is true that Armah organically fuses these aspects of modernist ideology and aesthetics in his novel. However, his appropriation of modernist literary lore looms larger in his fiction. Actually, for Armah, the heir to Ghana's popular writers, appropriation of Western (modernist) literary texts and strategies cannot be overestimated. His debt to the modernist discourse is, nonetheless, refracted in a literary discourse that is engaged in re-formulating modernist canons in order to suit his own representational ends. As for his borrowings from Joyce's mode of writing, they are so skilfully integrated and refracted within his language that they may seem difficult to be recognised at first sight. Besides, his re-employment of aspects of Joyce's discourse creates a narrative model that brings a new world into existence with local connotations. To show how Armah has taken full advantage of the novelty that Joyce's literary medium offered him, we shall, now, extend our analysis of *Fragments* to cover an important dimension of modernist writings linked to the use of myth as a way of salvaging history. The displacement of myth as a structuring device is strongly steeped within modernist poetics and highly reflected in Joyce's *A Portrait*.

One noticeable feature of modernist writings, which finds all its meaning in Joyce's work, is the use of myth as structural scaffolding to narrative. This literary practice has an epistemological significance in the wider philosophical development of modernist thought. The latter grew out of the awareness, Bradbury and Fletcher write, "of ephemerality and

discontinuity of modern reality, of the evanescence of character, the disorderly sequence of time” (411). Within this situation, myth commanded itself as a highly effective device for imposing symbolic and poetic order on the ‘chaos’ of modern life, and offering the opportunity, in Frank Kermode’s words, to “short circuit the intellect and liberate the imagination which the scientism of the modern world suppresses” (quoted in McFarlane 82). In his second novel *Ulysses*, Joyce greatly exploited the poetic and symbolic potential of myth, by borrowing the mythical framework of Homer’s *The Odyssey* and applying its pattern on the main character’s, Leopold Bloom, roaming in Dublin. An earlier novel, *A Portrait* does not display such an elaborate degree of sophistication. Nevertheless, it, too, is a narrative that is developed through frequent allusions to Christian and Classical mythology. Moreover, the novel conspicuously displaces some mythical prototypes in order to unite the central theme of individual rebellion and illuminate the essence of Stephen’s formed identity and the motivations behind his behaviour.

The basic myths that give structure to the plot of *A Portrait* are three: Prometheus, Daedalus, and Saint Stephen. The last two are suggested by Stephen’s very name, whereas the former is alluded to in different passages of the novel. In Greek mythology, Daedalus was an architect, inventor and artisan. By request of King Minos, he used his ingenuity and built a labyrinth on Crete to contain a monster, Minotaur, half-bull and half-man. Later, for displeasing the King, Daedalus and his son Icarus were both confined within this labyrinth, which was so complex and elaborate that even its creator could not find his way out of it. Lost inside the maze, Daedalus had the idea of fashioning wings of wax and feather so that he and his son could escape. Finally, when they soared over the labyrinth, Icarus disobeyed his father, set up his own course and flew so near the sun that the wax melted and he fell in the sea and drowned. Daedalus, on the other hand, followed the appropriate course and landed in Sicily, where he was warmly welcomed by the people and honoured by its king.

The Daedalus myth structures the narrative of *A Portrait* and enables Joyce to draw important themes and motifs related to Stephen's personality and vocation. For instance, in parallel to his consciousness growth, Stephen is shown as if caught in a maze, just as his namesake Daedalus was: the schools are a maze of corridors; Dublin is a maze of streets; Stephen's mind itself is a convoluted maze full of dead ends and circular reasoning. Stephen is always shown roaming in these labyrinths, searching answers for his questions. The pressures exerted upon him turn his ideas into melancholy thoughts, to the extent that his proud spirit chooses to reject the painful burden of reality. In the end, when his mental development is completed, he decides to rise above all his environment and pursue a way out of his country, looking out towards the continent. However, in making his own way to unknown lands, and against the consent of his progenitors, Stephen runs the risk of living alone and probably re-incarnating the tragic fate of Icarus. Joyce's hero realises this and is prepared to accept it, because for him alienation is the cost of living a life of and for art.

The other myth summoned in *A Portrait* is that of Prometheus. For ancient Greeks, Prometheus was a god, belonging to the caste of Titans, and a craftsman who had created figures of clay that became men and women. Because of his creation of humans, it was believed that he was the patron of human civilisation. Prometheus was also remembered because of his rebellion against the authority of Zeus and his commitment to mankind. To the Greeks, it was he who stole the fire from the hearth of gods and brought it to men who were shivering in the cold. His behaviour angered Zeus and cost him a long and harsh punishment: Zeus had him carried and tied on Mount Caucasus where, everyday, an eagle picked at his liver and plucked his eyes. After a long time of punishment, Zeus had his revenge. Yet the term promethean remained synonymous with people of great creativity, commitment and boldness.

Joyce evokes the myth of Prometheus in many passages of his narrative. The first of these passages is Dante's warning at the boy Stephen, when he expresses his wish to

marry Eileen, the next-door protestant girl: “pull out his eyes,/ apologise,/ apologise,/ pull out his eyes” (p. 8). The other reference happens at school, where some children stole the bread of the otter from the altar. The respective motifs of punishment and rebellion suggested by these two passages are open allusions to the archetype of Prometheus. But the most striking parallel between the narratives of Prometheus and Stephen is undoubtedly structural. It relates to Stephen’s education at the Jesuit school and his subsequent withdrawal and repudiation of the fathers of the Church. Joyce makes the parallel all patent when he has Stephen considering the priest’s offer of priesthood as an invitation to share “secret knowledge and secret power” (p. 181). Stephen is first tempted by the proposal. But, then, he would live a “grave and ordered and passionless life [...] without material cares” (p. 183). This ascetic prospect does not rejoice him and throws him in a deep crisis of vocation. And when, finally, he makes up his mind, he experiences his decision as a moment of epiphany. This moment of revelation, triggered by the sight of a beautiful young girl walking by the seashore, urges him to turn down the call of priesthood and respond to the call of life. In a Promethean fashion, Stephen makes the heroic crossing from the world of the privileged gods, i.e. priests, to that of the oppressed humanity, i.e. Irish common folk.

By rejecting the service of the altar, Stephen becomes, like Prometheus, a betrayer of his own kind. However, to enlighten further the personality of his main character, Joyce appends to the personality of Stephen the myth of Saint Stephen and entails a deep sense of irony to his use of this myth. In Christian mythology, Saint Stephen was the first disciple of Jesus to receive the martyr’s crown. The Church acknowledges him as a man full of faith, grace and fortitude. The personality and fate of Stephen Dedalus evoke the personality and fate of Saint Stephen through Stephen’s faithful dedication to art. Besides, by repudiating family, religion and country for the sake of pursuing the course of the artist, Stephen makes a sacrifice similar to the Saint’s ultimate martyrdom. In this regards, Joyce’s displacement of the Christian myth enables him to formulate his priest-like

dedication to art and emphasise the modernist faith in art as a way of containing the formlessness of reality, born, as it was, out of the fragmentation of the modern world order.

Joyce's displacement of archetypal patterns and the meaning of Stephen's formed identity hide important tenets of modernist thought. One of these tenets relates to the 'ironic literary self-consciousness' of the modernist writings. This irony results from the application of mythical frameworks to secular, modern forms. As Eliot put it with regards to Joyce's *Ulysses*, the re-incarnation of Homer's mythical hero was "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense paradox of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (quoted in McFarlane 83). In other words, for modernists, myth was often a way of escaping the immediate past, transcending historical time and salvaging the chaos of modern history. The mythologizing of the trivial and the everyday within modernist narratives involved also the use of parody and pastiche, whereby the modernist writer invoked "a world of lost and broken forms" (Fletcher and Bradbury 405). The artistic outcome was an immersion within individual consciousness, a neglect of social context and the development of self-reflexive forms: "the [modernist] novel contains the degenerate history which the symbol must transcend; the compulsion towards technique becomes a feature of a world in which there is no coherence to give outside the coherence of art" (ibid. 405-6). The introverted turn of the novel and the compulsion towards technique and style were at the heart of modernist formalism.

What comes out of Joyce's displacement of mythical patterns in the light of the above modernist ideology and the implications of the different myths summoned in his narrative is a figure of the artist as a recluse, a self-exile religiously dedicated to his art, and oblivious of all social and political considerations. Stephen expresses this artistic concern through his creed of *non serviam* (not to serve): "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church" (p. 281). Inherent in this statement of artistic independence is Stephen's repudiation of Ireland and

his attempt to go beyond the constraints of native culture. Stephen expresses his rejection of commitment through the metaphor of flight inscribed in the myth of Daedalus, and which he expands on to signify his desire to leave his country: “when the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (p.231). At the heart of Stephen’s desire for flight are a priest-like dedication to art and a relationship to literary production that is detached and impersonal: “the artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (p. 245). It is this impersonal and cosmopolitan perception of the artist as conveyed by the different displaced myths summoned in *A Portrait* that we want to invest now in relation to Armah’s attempt to structure the disruptive sequences of his novel through mythical patterns. Our objective is to trace Armah’s use of myth as a scaffold that structures the action of his characters and highlights their motivation. As a formal device, the displacement of myth offers an instance of his re-application of Joyce’s narrative style. But as an archetypal narrative, it highlights the cultural identity, the ethical and ontological principles that underlie his perceptions of the postcolonial artist and his relationship to his society.

Like in *A Portrait*, the displacement of mythical patterns is a conspicuous feature of *Fragments* that cannot escape the attention of a fine critic, especially a critic who is familiar with modernist aesthetics. It testifies to Armah’s familiarity with the modernist ideology and the various techniques and objectives to which mythological lore was employed by Western modernists. For instance, Armah projects the myth of the Mamy Watta, already developed in the first chapter of this part, in order to articulate Baako’s and Juana’s search for a postcolonial sense of community. The pattern of this myth provides the frame reference for the reader, so that Armah can concentrate on the two lovers’ flow of thoughts and the collective psychologies of the other characters. The narrative flexibility of this fertility ritual enables also Armah to associate Baako’s difficulties and the de-

structuration of his society with the disappearance of the divinity surrogate representing fertility and faith in its regenerative powers. Hence, the underpinning of the plot structure within the myth becomes an ironical commentary on the sterility of postcolonial African society; an urban society that has lost faith in its traditional myths and rites.

Another archetype offers Armah a perspective to explore the essence of his fragmented world and a scaffold to organize the disrupted narrative sequences that make up his novel. This archetype is that of Ananse the trickster. To a certain extent, the displacement of this mythical figure projects the same irony as the one inscribed in the displacement of the Mamy Watta myth, and fulfils the same aesthetics and epistemological functions related to Western modernists' search for meaning within the broad framework of myth. However, if we consider the anthropological meaning of this myth and the ritualized function of rebellion attributed to Baako's behaviour through his association to it, we notice that Armah's borrowing of the trickster metaphors significantly distinguishes him from Joyce's appeal to European myths. For, while in his novel Joyce creates a cosmopolitan version of modernism by recasting Ireland's cultural parochialism in the context of Europe's originating myths, Armah appeals to local myths that pertain to the Akan *Ananesem* oral tradition (i.e. storytelling) and elevates them to narratives of cultural identity that are likely to redeem local culture from the social and ethical fragmentations caused by the intrusion of a foreign system of thought and its impingement upon the natives' conceptual worldview.

In what remains of this chapter, we shall try to pinpoint some facets of Armah's appeal to the trickster archetype and examine the tasks they fulfil in the narrative in the broad context of post-independence Ghanaian disillusionment. Our objective will be to steep Armah's narrative in the *Ananesem* tradition and to show that Baako's commitment to art and his rebellion against his society's neo-colonial ethics make sense within the framework of the Akan Trickster tales. By so doing, we hope to demonstrate that, even though Armah has assimilated the aesthetics of modernism and has organically

fused Joyce's literary techniques in his fiction, he still contests some ideological tenets of Western modernist ideology, namely the one related to Joyce's cosmopolitan pretensions and the esthetic quest behind Stephen's self-imposed exile. To our mind, Efua's comment on Baako's commitment through the metaphor of "the eagle who refuses to soar" (p. 175) is here to testify to Armah's breaking away from Joyce's perception of the relationship between the artist and his society and to signal the increasing movement of his discourse towards the intentional hybridization of Joyce's vision of the artist's social role and, by and large, the Western modernist epistemology.

In *A Portrait*, Stephen proclaims loudly and proudly his desire to 'fly over the nets' of the constituent parts of his Irish identity and to escape the moral cheapness into which he was born. In the ultimate passage of the novel, he records in his diary his sense of exultation at the prospect of leaving Ireland and vows his ambition 'to create in the smithy of his mind the uncreated conscience of his race'. In a certain sense Stephen's expatriation has a positive sense, because, as John Gross writes so well, Stephen, understand also Joyce, has "to leave Ireland in order to be able to write about it, and he still [has] to elude the claims of nationalism if he was to celebrate the country on his own terms –with [...] the comprehending love of an artist for his subject" (25). Like Stephen, Baako is willing to serve his society. However, his longing for social improvement and cultural revival are carried from within his society, not from the outside. By enacting his regenerating role from the centre of his society, his narrative touches on many of the themes and behaviour of the trickster in Akan culture. Like this category of folk heroes, who are, in the words of Robert Pelton, "apparent individualists [who] become sources of community because they join the transcendent and the daily, the center and the circumference, the formed and the formless in their revelation of man himself as the confluence of the same forces that are shaping his world" (227), Baako embodies the qualities of the trickster, and stands, not so much as a hero who triumphs over his society's misfortunes as it is suggested by Efua's

perverted myth of the journey abroad, but a cultural exemplar that unveils his society's foolishness and brings new social visions into being.

In Akan tradition, Ananse is an ambiguous, paradoxical figure, whose tales are, in Christopher Vecsey's words, "sometimes myths, sometimes legends, sometimes connected with ritual sometimes no. [...] They can evaluate, explain, and reflect upon realities clearer and more profound to the people who hear and tell the tales" (161). According to Pietro Deandrea, his tales "are made of violated taboos [...] but also of a final moral and aetiological meaning" (2004: 2). They question the given order and allow social change to occur (ibid. 3). Robert Pelton expands on the same theme of rebellion and explains that Ananse is a liminal figure, whose 'defiance of mythic seriousness and social logic' should not be attributed to an instinctive drive towards chaos, but should be understood as a way to unveil the ethical and religious principles of the Akan society (1). Ananse, in his view, attacks the established order only to allow its regeneration under new shapes (ibid. 36-7). All these features of Ananse and its tales clearly demonstrate that Armah's appropriation of this enduring facet of Akan oral culture is far from being a mystification. It is rather a device that helps him emphasising the inconstancy of post-colonial Ghanaian social values. An anti-foundational element, the narrative of Ananse fits well Armah's intentions of ascribing a corrective quality to his main character's behaviour and formulating an ideological critique against Western-minded postcolonial Ghanaian elites.

Baako's archetypal portrait of the trickster should first be understood as complementary to Naana's religious worldview. While on his journey to the United States, Naana offers libations accompanied by words that invoke Ananse

Gain the wisdom
to turn your back on the wisdom
of Ananse.
Do not be persuaded you will fill your stomach faster
if you do not have others' to fill.
There are no humans who walk this earth alone (p. 4).

Naana's above evocation of Ananse is negative. It opposes his selfishness to a principle of collective solidarity which has lost its sense among the Ghanaians' rush for material acquisitions. After his return from abroad, Baako does not share his society's new materialistic ethics, yet, he, too, is forced into an individualist behaviour that alienates him from his grandmother and her traditional worldview. The differences in the functions of the young artist and the old woman inform the former's secular perception of life. Operating at a mythical as well as a realistic level, and moving between two opposing ontological outlooks, embodied by his crippled grandmother and his materialistic mother, Baako enacts a movement between his society's margin, represented by Naana's dying voice, attuned as it is to a tradition of the past, and its centre, represented by his mother's neo-colonial society, which seeks gratification in post-independence consumer culture. Through his movement, he becomes an agent of creation that brings Naana's liminality into the structure of urban Ghana, overrides the boundaries that exist between different world visions, and ensures that the function of the artist is not outside society, as it is the case with Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, but inside it and within its boundaries.

Among the bunch of tales featuring the great spider (i.e. Ananse), the one displaced by Armah in his novel is that which relates Ananse quest for the wisdom of the world. This tale goes that, one day, Ananse felt dissatisfied with the state of wisdom in the world and went on a long journey to collect and store wisdom. After he finished his task, he placed the wisdom in a pot and tried to carry it to the top of a tall palm tree. Halfway to the top, Basil Davidson writes,

he got into difficulties: he had tied the gourd in front of him, and it hampered his climbing. At this point, his son Ntikuma, who was looking up from below, called in a shrill young voice: 'Father, if you really had all the wisdom in the world up there with you, you would have tied the gourd on your back'. This was too much even for Ananse, who was tired from long labour. He untied the gourd in a fit of temper and threw it down. It broke and all the wisdom was scattered far and wide. After a while people who had learned their lesson came and gathered in their gourds whatever each would find. It is this that explains why a few people have much wisdom, some have a little, but many have none at all (17).

The above story contains two tropes that display striking correspondence with the tropes that inform the ideology of modernism. These are the tropes of fragmentation and irony. The former shows in Ananse's dissatisfaction with the scattered/fragmented state of wisdom on earth, whereas the latter relates to the unwholesome/ironic outcome of his attempt to gather the wisdom of all peoples. The two tropes highlight much of Baako's behaviour in *Fragments* and underlie much of the novel's themes. Indeed, the social environment Armah features in his novel is a blasted setting that has gone, in Naana's words, into "a thousand and thirty pieces". Armah has Baako move in this environment to fulfil a task similar to that of his mythical surrogate Ananse, by making him travel in different regions of Gold Coast in order to collect knowledge about his people. Ultimately Baako fails in his task, and his mental collapse becomes analogous to the Trickster's broken gourd. However, the correspondence between the Akan tale and Armah's novel goes beyond these flimsy parallels. The folklore/carnival attitude, within which Ananse's/Baako's narrative is embedded, confers to Baako the status of a cultural hero, an anti-structure social figure. His embodiment of the destabilising function of the trickster engages him in the attempt of reforming his society, whose order becomes, thanks to his action, a transparent one. It is this aspect of Armah's narrative that has misled his critics to the belief that his is a modernist novel that invites comparison with the nihilistic, blighted vision of most Western modernists.

The parallels between Baako's behaviour and Ananse's quest in the tale are too conspicuous to be missed. A been-to, Baako travelled to the United States and acquired knowledge about creative arts. After his return to Ghana, he commits himself to the awakening of the masses by writing TV scripts. He also goes in frequent journeys with Juana around the countryside to probe into his people's condition and know more about their myths and customs. For instance, he visits the villages of Tamu, Wanu and Bibiani. The latter name means everywhere in Akan. Baako's collected materials are stored in his scripts, such as "The Roots" and "The Brand", and essays, such as "Re Cargo Cults". By

assuming the role of the Akan true wisdom gatherer, Baako's fulfils the same mission as that of his mythical surrogate Ananse. At the same time, he also becomes the symbol of the Fanonian intellectual, who moves to "the interior" regions of the country, seeks for "contacts with the rural masses" and displays a sympathetic attitude towards the people (Fanon, 1990: 151). In other words, thanks to the myth of Ananse, Armah kills two birds with one stone: he asserts the country's ethnic identity by evoking an enduring spoken motif of its culture, and evokes the liminality of the postcolonial artist that enables him to counter-act the neo-bourgeois ideology of Ghana's post-colonial elites, such as the one represented by Asante Smith, the head-manager of Ghanavision.

By opposing the ideology of Asante Smith, Baako unmasks the ideological fallacies of post-colonial African leadership. Likewise, by dismissing Brempong's and Efuah's perception of the been-to and the material cargo he is supposed to bring with him, he also unveils the neo-materialistic expectations that have taken hold and perverted the traditional social organisation of the extended family. But Baako's role does not always involve him in the resolution of problems by bringing them to the conscious mind. Instead, his behaviour is the embodiment of that paradoxical, eccentric quality of tricksters, which is also the defining trait of the characters of Menippea. In his investigation of the trickster images, Klaus-Peter Koeping writes that, even though the trickster wills good, "the result might turn out to be evil, yet the evil he wills is reciprocated by unintended blessings. The trickster is the culture hero who, though his cunning intelligence goes awry, mediates between gods and men; his intended actions bring unintended consequences, and vice versa" (206). This feature of the trickster's tales finds its full embodiment in Baako's behaviour and the paradoxical outcome of his actions.

Baako's lack of identification with the values held in fashion by his mother Efuah and his sister Araba is best exhibited during his nephew's outdoor ceremony. The latter is an inflated feast solely meant to take full advantage of the guests' generosity by travestying and perverting the traditional outdoor ceremony. During the event, Baako

agrees to be the Master of Ceremony but refuses to dress in suitable clothes. Instead of a suit, he wears 'reasonable clothes, a shirt, and a northern *batakari* over a pair of shorts'. His dressing contrasts him to all the guests and fills an air of scandal over his uninvolved behaviour. Armah strengthens further Baako's disjunctive conduct by addressing him sometimes as "the fool" and sometimes as "the clown", two functions endorsed by Ananse. Foolery is an important feature of the Trickster's behaviour, which transgresses socially-accepted norms only to unveil the masks of hypocrisy. As Robert Pelton writes, *anasesem* accords importance to Ananse's mythic value as well as his comic value (28). Thus, Baako's comic behaviour connotes the negation and reversion of the gathering's values and credits him with a positive conduct, even though the narration keeps referring to him as the "fool" and the "clown". Furthermore, even though the outdooing leads to the death of the new-born, and contributes to Baako's alienation, the unwholesome outcome of Baako's actions has positive consequences upon his career as an artist; after all, it is Baako's mental collapse that mediates between him and his family and contributes to making his vocation accepted by his mother Efua.

If Baako's internment is the event that shows that his intelligence has gone awry, his mother's penitence is the incident which demonstrates that his action has also unexpected (positive) consequences. The positive consequences of Baako's internment show in his reconciliation with his mother, Efua. Realising her own misguided expectations, Efua invites her son to a journey she calls "soulcleaning". During their journey, she brings him to an unfinished house she was building for the entire family. Amidst unfinished foundations and walls, Efua expresses her disappointment that her son does not seem to share her dream for them. She, nevertheless, shows respect for his behaviour and informs Baako that, by now, she has given up her project. Efua's penitence foreshadows Juana's arrangement of an unused room in her apartment to host Baako. Baako's and Juana's union is the fulfilment of their desire of nuclear family that precludes their search for a post-colonial community.

By making Baako endorse the paradoxical, protean role of the traditional African trickster, Ananse, Armah can be said to have drawn on a character whose social function is analogous to Homi Bhabha's colonial subject, who is at once the same as their coloniser and different from them. The cultural critique of colonialism implied in Bhabha's colonial subject is, indeed, analogous to the cultural critique Armah marshals against his society through Baako, the been-to who has crossed boundaries of different cultures and acts to destabilise and subvert the authorities of both native leadership and colonial political legacy. A native intellectual educated in the United States, Baako is the type of character with a double heritage. He is an African intellectual who has, in his mother's words, "gone so far up [that] everyone here beneath must look so foolish to [him]" (p. 178). Simultaneously, he is also a native intellectual deeply committed to the plight of his people. In other words, it is thanks to Baako that 'newness' enters Ghanaian culture, because he is a man of both the margin and the center, who does not accommodate the neo-colonial ethics prevalent in Ghana.

Baako's rebellious attitude towards his social environment has prompted some critics to see in his action the embodiment of the Greek myth of Prometheus. Joyce Johnson is a critic who has attempted to apply this idea to *Fragments* by equating Baako's portrait with that of 'revolutionary intellectuals', whose concern for humanity often lead them to violate boundaries, break the laws of the ruling classes and sacrifice themselves for the welfare of their communities. Even though Baako's fate seems to dramatize the same tragic fate as that of the Prometheus archetype, we think that the resemblance between him and this archetypal figure is due to the fact that Prometheus himself is another manifestation of the trickster. This fact is established by Klaus-Peter Koeping, for whom Prometheus is no other than the Greek version of the trickster (206).

From our reading of Baako's *portrait* through the archetypal prototype of Ananse, we can note the deep ontological differences between Joyce's and Armah's respective perceptions of the artist and his role. Unlike Stephen, who sees that his social function can

be fulfilled only if he alienates himself from his family and society, Baako believes that forcing his way to the center of his society is the best solution for him to undertake his reformatory mission, even if the price to pay is sometimes his own wellbeing. That is why, contrary to Stephen's aloofness, Baako is seen always moving to the center of his society, as illustrated in his participation in Efua's and Akossua Russell's ceremonies, his TV scripts destined for the masses, his journeys around the country and his meetings with ordinary people, etc. Baako's altruistic, committed behaviour markedly contrasts him to Stephen's conduct, in which a sense for liberal, individualist emancipation at the expense of social commitment is perceptible. Furthermore, even if Armah seems to borrow and employ the same modernist esthetic techniques as Joyce, he does not seem to delight in the mere prospect of artistic formalism. For, if Joyce sees his mission as that of a priest of eternal imagination dedicated to the service of his art, Armah ascribes a priest-like commitment to his protagonist only as long as his art connects him more strongly to his society and its tradition. For Armah, just like for Baako, art is not an end in itself; it is an opportunity for further interactions between the people and their elite.

In his novel, Armah downplays also Joyce's revision of his country's founding myths through the evocation of Europe's creation myths. In a well known statement, the Irish writer had publically declared that, by writing his novels, he wanted to 'Europeanize' Irish literature. This aspect of his ideology is endorsed by the different European myths summoned in his autobiography and highlighted in our analysis above. Unlike him, Armah does not seem to borrow foreign archetypes to enlighten the structure of his plot and the motivations of his characters. And even if his text swells by the many instances in which he intentionally and organically hybridizes his discourse, this hybridity is not achieved at the expense of the cultural identity of his country. Instead, when Baako debunks the center of power in post-independence Ghana, it is only to ensure the flow of its marginalized tradition into it.

References

- Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane: "The Name and Nature of Modernism".
Modernism. Ed. Malcolm Bradbury. 1976. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.
- Brown, Nicholas. *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature*. Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Bullock, Allan. "The Double Image". *Modernism*. Op. cit.
- Davidson, Basil. *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*. Boston: Little Brown, 1979.
- Deandrea, Pitro. "Trans(l)atlantic I-Con: The Many Shapes of Ananse in Contemporary Literatures". *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. Vol. 2, 1 (2004): 1-26.
- Fletcher, John and Bradbury, Malcolm. "The Introverted Novel". *Modernism*. Op. cit.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Reading the African Novel*. London: Jones Currey, 1987.
- Gross, John. *Joyce*. Ed. Frank Kermode. Fontana Modern Masters, 1972.
- Johnson, Joyce. "The Promethean Factor in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. London : Penguin, 1996.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Harmonds worth : Penguin, 1969.
- Koepping, Klaus-Peter. "Absurdity and Hidden Truth Grotesque Body Images as Manifestations of the Trickster". *History of Religions*. Vol. 24, 3 (Feb. 1985): 191-214.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. London: Penguin, 1971.
- McFarlane, James. "The Mind of Modernism". *Modernism*. Op. cit.
- Pelton, Robert. *The Trickster in West Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Vecsey, Christopher. "The Exception that Proves the Rule: Ananse the Akan Trickster". *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. 12, 3 (1981), 61-77.

Conclusion

This second part of our dissertation has examined Armah's quoting mode of writing through the hybrid, dialogic genre of Menippean satire. For this, we have first taken the concept of linguistic hybridity to mean heteroglossia. The latter is a Bakhtinian concept that refers, broadly speaking, to the different stratifications of a language in a given society and involves polyphony and dialogism. Its wide scope has enabled us to highlight some of the many voices that are summoned in *Fragments*. The voices steeped in Armah's text and singled in our analysis are various; they encapsulate a wide array of languages belonging to different linguistic repertoires and ideological communities. They range from the speakerly voice of the traditional African oral culture, such as Naana's Akan worldview, to Euro-American writerly languages, such as T. S. Elliot's poetry and Camus's imagery; from an artistic language, such as Akossua Russell's poem, to professional jargons, such as Juana's Fanonian thoughts; from subversive language, such as Baako's speech, to official discourse of authority, such as Asante Smith's authoritarian language. All these voices compete in *Fragments* and produce a dialogical narrative, whose utterances are all hybrid, because they carry both Armah's ideological intention and the meaning in the original text from where they were first produced.

The intertexts singled out in the first chapter of this part show that the impulse in Armah's discourse towards proverbial hybrid quoting is still strong in his second fiction. This aspect of *Fragments* is implemented through Armah's borrowing from the texts of the African dirge singing and stylized in the frame chapters of his novel, namely the Naana Chapters, and which achieve intervocal relationships with the Akan oral tradition. The ontological and aetiological meanings inscribed in the two chapters fulfil proverbial functions, because they provide an ethical frame of reference through which Armah brings correctives to the materialistic outlooks of the Ghanaian post-independence generations. Contrary to these intertexts, the ones which bind *Fragments* to Eliot's "The Journey of the Magi", Camus's *The Stranger*, and Sartre's *The Nausea*, fulfil a mere aesthetic function,

since they just supply themes and imagery for Armah to portray the isolated condition in which his protagonist is trapped. The incorporation of these Western texts into the discourse of *Fragments* without transforming them into proverbs endows them with all the meanings of Bakhtin's organic hybrid language, which is a closed and opaque language.

The other meaning ascribed to linguistic hybridity in this part is linked to the concept of story, or plot. Taking hold of Finnegan's remark that in Akan culture the word proverb is often conflated with story, we have embarked on a comparative study that has involved *Fragments* with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The element of madness common to the two works has been the main motif to prompt us to undertake the comparison. An anti-canonical motif in the 'great tradition' of English fiction, it is also a sign of the double constitutive liminality of both Hamlet and Baako, on the one hand, and their respective societies, on the other. Grounding the comparison in Victor Turner's anthropological concept of liminality, which is another manifestation of cultural hybridity, we have attempted to unveil the process through which Armah has organically fused aspects of Hamlet's tragic plot into the story of his protagonist.

One of these aspects relates to Baako's overwhelming uneasiness towards the 'rotteness' of his social environment, a rotteness expressed through the marginalization, evacuation and/or perversion of its founding myths. The other aspect is linked to the perversion of traditional rites within the two protagonists' respective communities. Like Hamlet, Baako is driven by his intellectualism to redeem his community's ethical health by endorsing the role of an outsider, a liminoid, who questions and destabilizes the social and political structures inherited from colonialism. In the process of his commitment to change, he cannot escape the fate of Hamlet. Like him, he develops into an existential communitas and is caught in a maelstrom of social interactions that usher into his resignation from his job, a nervous breakdown, and the loss of his son-in-law. All these

events confer a sense of tragedy upon *Fragments* that evokes the tragic outcome of Hamlet's attempt to redeem the corrupt court of Denmark.

The last chapter of this part has involved *Fragments* in a comparison with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* over the issue of modernist aesthetics and myth. In front of Armah's denial of Joyce's influence on his second novel, we have invoked D. H. Lawrence's advice to the critic to trust the tale, not the artist who created it. The comparison has also been rendered possible thanks to the widespread practice among proverb users in Ghana to search for inspiration in the forms and techniques of available proverbs in order to create and embellish their own proverbs. The search for new techniques means the creation process through which artists in Africa continue to be original by organically hybridizing their artistic creations. Armah proves to be no exception to this practice, since his novel consciously deploys a modernist narrative style and themes.

Among the modernist analogies that straddle both *Fragments* and *A Portrait* are the theme of the artist and the displacement of myths. Both narratives are concerned with the figure of the artist belonging to an oppressed people and convey his task through the evocation of enduring archetypes. However, if these analogies betray Armah's familiarity with the modernist aesthetics enshrined in Joyce's body of novels, in general, and *A Portrait*, in particular, his perception of the social function of the artist and the cultural identity of the mythical lore he summons in his fiction testify to a deliberate attempt from his part at revising Joyce's perception of the artist. For Armah, estheticism is not an end in itself, and the divorce between the artist and his society is not something desirable. The artist should rather move between the centre of his society and its ancestral tradition in order to heal those aspects of its culture corrupted by colonialism and to ensure that it remains faithful to its authentic cultural self. The search for authenticity and the construction of a cultural community, through revisionism and appropriation, are at the core of Armah's next novels.

Part III:

Ideology, and Organic and Intentional Hybrid Discourses in *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*

Introduction

In the previous two parts of this dissertation, we have shown that the popular practice of linguistic hybridity writes large in Armah's first two fictions. Deeply steeped within the discourse of *The Beautiful Ones* and the genre of *Fragments*, it has allowed Armah to appropriate and/or engage Western texts, character and plot types, as well as to quote from traditional oral poetry, and to create hybrid texts that blend traditional with modern aesthetics, oral with written poetics. Therefore, we can say that much of Armah's creativity seems to derive from his ability to appropriate and inflect materials and to put them to a new use within his narratives so as to fit them to his thematic and ideological designs. His middle fictions, namely *Why Are We So Blest ?* (1972) and *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1978), further illustrate this process. Though each of these fictions deploys the creative thrust of hybridizing discourse for a specific purpose, they all demonstrate astute moves towards epistemic and artistic eclecticism and contain moments of ideological fixations around a particular master-narrative, discourse and/or narrative form. The containment of these aspects of Western texts and ideology opened to Armah imaginative platforms through which he launched new artistic and epistemic formulas through which he re-adapted his borrowed materials into ever original and experimental fictions.

To begin with, *Why Are We So Blest ?* stands apart from all Armah's fictions, and is probably the novel that exhibits the best the orientation of his literary imagination

towards the popular writing mode, in general, and the notions of intertexts and proverbs, in particular. Noted for its formalist artistry and its modernist impulse towards the experimentation with narrative organization, on the one hand, this novel is also decried for its violent tone and radical ideology, on the other hand. Its deployment of a narrative form, which borrows from the genre of diary fiction, and its topical concern with the fate of the postcolonial African intellectual educated in the West have made that a few, not to say none, are the interpretations of the novel which approached it from the traditional African poetics of orature. Actually, if orality as a mark of African authenticity seems to be absent in the novel, it is because this fiction attunes itself to African originality more strongly through the inter-textual practice of Market literature and its hybrid writing aesthetics of proverbial quoting. As for the theme of cultural hybridity, it is deeply inscribed within the characters' liminal identity and the narrative's concern with the condition of being entrapped between two cultures.

Why Are We So Blest? was published during a transitional period in Armah's artistic career, at the juncture of two different creative thrusts in his literary imagination: an initial esthetic impulse wherein he worked as a pungent critic and satirist of post-colonial African regimes and societies, and a later ideological enterprise wherein he worked to imaginatively reconstruct Africa's past for the purpose of establishing directions for its future. On account of this shift in the writer's artistic and ideological orientation, the novel seems to deserve the attribute of liminality: it presents both continuities and ruptures with the writer's first two novels and announces his later fictions. A transitional novel, *Why Are We So Blest?* develops liminoid characters caught in liminal space and time continuums. It also appeals to a hybrid linguistic poetics which owes much of its authority to advice-giving situations encoded both in its refraction of a foreign generic mode and its inclusion of marked and unmarked quotations from Western master narratives.

Why Are We So Blest? has attracted both thematic and comparative kinds of criticism. The thematic interpretations of the novel read as a response to the “radical” vision carried through it; it approaches it as a realist fiction of resistance, with radical overtones and a few experimental twists. Some critics, such as Edward Lobb, Robert Frazer and Neil Lazarus, inscribe the novel within the realm of resistance fiction and assume that its unifying vision is informed by the same Manichean worldview that had already characterized the colonial world. Without going into the details of this criticism, we can presume that it falls under the sway of the African neo-colonial dilemma and the Afro-American racial struggle of the 1960s, the backcloth against which the action of the characters is played.

Comparative scholarship, too, has not escaped contextual criticism. Overall, it suggests that Armah’s third novel intersects ideologically with two schools of thought: Camus’s and Sartre’s philosophy of Existentialism and the Black Arts radical ideology in the United States. For instance, Tommie Jackson (1997) tracked the literary affinities between Armah’s first three novels, including *Why Are We So Blest?*, and the theoretical and fictional works of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. Likewise, Bouteldja Riche draws parallels between the same novel and Radical Black ideology as developed in Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman* and *The Slave*. Riche discusses also the dialogue that Armah engages in his fiction with Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Perry Miller’s *Errand Into the Wilderness*. All these comparative studies testify to the novel’s hybrid construction, wherein other texts and ideological voices are incorporated in conjunction or in disjunction with Armah’s ideology.

Our objective in the first chapter of this third part is to bring evidence about the organic bond between *Why Are We So Blest?* and two Western fictions, namely Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* and Carson McCullers’s *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. The contact between Armah and these two fictions is empirically verifiable. It is revealed by Armah himself in his fictions: in *Fragments*, Baako is described reading Lessing’s fiction,

and in *Why Are We So Blest?*, Solo writes that during his stay at the hospital he has read McCullers's novella. Our aim in engaging the two comparisons is to bring further evidence of Armah's literary appropriation and to show that in his third fiction, he does not stop at assimilating Western master discourses and transforming them into proverbial quotations; he goes further and appropriates the narrative template of the diary fiction and re-functions its genre in order to produce a distinctive narrative that comments on its own form and evokes the same function as the one fulfilled by African narrative proverbs.

Unlike all the chapters of this dissertation, the second Chapter of this Part does not involve Armah's fiction in comparison with any fiction. Instead, it is interested in the complex process through which in *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah borrows ideological materials and refashions them to create a theoretical platform that carries his epistemic designs and his polemical observations. Owing to the orientation of this novel towards the scrutiny of African history and the construction of a viable past, necessity seems to have been felt for him to elaborate a historical frame within which to insert the historical experience of his people and to create organic links between their past, present and future. African history having suffered too much from the cultural mystifications and denigrations inherited from Western anthropology, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah seems to have purposefully escaped modern Western historicist tradition in order to devise a revised version of African history. His epistemic eclecticism landed him on the ideological ground of 'salvation history', whose origin goes back to the historical doctrine through which the early English Puritans explained their migration and settlements in the New World. By appropriating and inflecting its divine conceptions of time and space, Armah attempted to draw a historical frame which bears the weight of his revisionist and constructivist approaches to Africa's past.

Written in a style that conflates historical with oral discourses, *Two Thousand Seasons* has caused much ink to be spilt on its literary affiliations. The dominant orientation among critics affiliates this novel to traditional African oral epics. Isidore

Okpewho praised its epic frame and the grandeur of its vision, and ranks her among the best African fictions. For him, what defines it is its attempt to revise tradition and to go beyond received standards. Paradoxically, Berth Lindfors downplays the same aspect of the novel and considers its imaginative reconstructions as literary falsifications equivalent to 'Hollywood B-grade movies'. The wide gap that separates the two critics' appreciations informs their ignorance of the ideological and epistemic sources from which it drives its historical vision. As already stated, the philosophy of history to which this novel's vision of African past pertains is the Puritan Ecclesiastical history. Armah subtly recontextualized this philosophy to lay the foundations of a new African history, which is more serviceable to the Black community.

Written much in the same vein as *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers* summons history and imagination to re-write the Anglo-Ashanti encounter at the third quarter of the 19th century. Deeply inscribed in it is also Armah's attempt to recover the virtues of traditional story-telling by fusing motifs and images belonging to traditional African epics within its narrative discourse. Yet, in spite of the outstanding place of orality and imagination in this fiction, the work declares itself in the front page as an historical novel. If by historical novel is meant the kind of fiction enshrined in Georg Lukcas' *The Historical Novel*, this fiction simply fails to meet the standards of this genre. Its inability to sustain this criticism has drawn scholars to classify it within alternative genres. One such an attempt is Lindfors's, whose criticism has been, once again, unfavorable to Armah. For Lindfors, the novel's autonomous stand from the bounds of official history makes it an inauthentic narrative which deserves a place among the shelves of juvenile, not serious, literature. Nonetheless, the same aspect of the novel for which this criticism chastises Armah is praised by other critics. Ahmed Saber is a case in point. His article demonstrates that Armah's imaginative construction of the caste of the healers attains the limits of myth-making.

However, even if numerous are the studies conducted upon the narrative style and ideology of *The Healers*, no work has already attempted to read it dialogically. By dialogism here, we mean the way the text of the novel intentionally hybridizes its discourse in order to enter into polemics with other texts. Actually, we think that Lindfors was to the point when he classified the novel among juvenile fictions. However, he failed to pursue further his criticism and to establish connections with similar fictions published during the apogee of English Imperialism. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* was such a novel. Its reputation stands not so much by its outstanding place among its author's fictions, since it is ranked as his best, but by the imperial ideology embedded within it; an ideology which has led postcolonial theorists, such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, to present it as the blueprint of Imperial hegemonic discourse over non-white peoples.

Our ultimate chapter, then, illustrates the other type of hybrid discourse, i.e. the intentionally hybrid, by arguing that Armah's creativity in his fifth novel is oriented towards conflict and polemics. Our discussion will revolve around two issues: one the relevance and pertinence of Armah's recourse to Kipling's juvenile adventure story, in general, and the narrative of identity formation, in particular; two, the discursive strategies of reality and desire which were inherent in the Imperial enterprise of domination. The first of these two issues valorizes Armah's attempt to draw authority from Kipling's fiction and the appropriation of his mode of writing; it looks for drawing parallels between different aspects of *The Healers* and *Kim*, such as plot, characterization and setting. As for the second, it tries to illustrate how Armah positions himself outside Kipling's Imperial rhetoric and produces a counter-discourse that generates an alternative culture to Kipling's project of colonial mimicry, based on the mythic creation of a class of healers trained to cure the class divisions among African societies and prepare the way for a future re-unification of the continent.

References:

Fraser, Robert. "The American Background in *Why Are We So Blest?*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.

Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Lindfors, Berth. "Armah's Histories". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Op. Cit.

Lobb, Edward. "Personal and political Fate in *Why Are We So Blest?*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Op. Cit.

Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. University of Algiers, 1998.

Saber, Ahmed. "Armah's Myth-Making in *The Healers*". *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 136. Ed. Jeffrey W Hunter. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001.

Chapter 1:

The Proverbial Space, or Diary Fiction and Romantic Love in *Why Are We So Blest?*

Though considered by critics as the most radical of Armah's novels, *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) is the fiction that best illustrates the popular sources of his art. Not only does it consciously and openly appropriate and inflect Western discourse about love and the genre of diary fiction, but it equally, and strongly, sustains a formal and thematic analysis with popular fictions published by market authors. In this third novel, Armah recombines his borrowings from the West with the literary practices of local writers to produce a narrative that sustains a contrapuntal reading, because it is at home within the two traditions. However, if critics were prompt to acknowledge his indebtedness to Western writers, they seem to have been unaware of the popular creative thrust that produced his novel. This popular dimension is apparent in almost all aspects of his fiction: its plot, character types and themes.

Critics have early noticed the innovative turn played by Armah on his third novel's narrative, and have gone on appraising its literary merit in the light of the modernist aesthetics ascribed to his art, right from his first fiction. An instance of this exercise in modernist formalist aesthetics is David Ker's *The African Novel and the Modernist Aesthetics* (1997), which submits that Armah's third novel is influenced by William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. In his comparison of the two fictions, the critic merely points at formal affinities in narrative perspectives, wherein the voice of narration is distributed among the different 'distorted visions' of the main characters (103). A modernist experimental technique, shifting perspectives, Ker suggests, allows the

emergence of a “fair balance of sympathy and judgement” from the rapport between participant narrators and the subject of their narration, the reader and the subject of narration, the reader and the narrators and, finally, the reader and the story (ibid.104).

However, Ker’s comparison does not allow much commitment to the character’s revolutionary longings and endeavor, nor does it seem to have noticed the profound organic correlation between the novel’s narrative strategy and the African poetics of proverbial quoting. To begin with the first point, we can say that formal estheticism is refuted by Solo himself; in his final diary entry, he decries the estheticism and detachment of the Western artist and wonders: “why not simply accept the fate of an artist, and like a Western seer, close my eyes to everything around, find relief in discrete beauty, and make its elaboration my vocation?” (p.231). Solo answers his rhetorical question and writes: “impossible. The Western artist is blest with that atrophy of vision that can see beauty in deliberately broken-off pieces of a world sickened with oppression’s ugliness” (p.231). This statement functions both as a warning and an invitation: it warns against any attempt to approach the novel from a purely formalist perspective that allows too much for the artist’s art and far less to his commitment; an invitation to fetch behind its ‘broken pieces’ a healing ideology that is likely to salvage the “wreckage” of Africa.

A return to the African poetics of proverbial aesthetics is a critical endeavor that is likely to throw more light on the deep correlations between the novel’s theme and form and to highlight the hybridity of the narrative’s formal construction and its larger implications. This critical endeavor can be achieved by linking the novel to the genre of diary fiction to which it belongs, and investigating the way Armah drives his point in the light of the African verbal techniques of storytelling. Accordingly, this chapter purports to fit *Why Are We So Blest?* within the genre of diary novel and to establish the organically hybrid nature of both its generic format and its discourse about love. In our opinion, one cannot appraise the merit of Armah’s narrative and embrace its vision without accounting for his refraction of Doris Lessing’s generic template in *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and

Carson McCullers's discourse about romantic love, expounded in her novella *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. In refracting and re-contextualizing the two fictions, Armah has not only proved himself a proficient quoter of foreign texts, but he also opened up an intimate advice-giving space, that bears upon the same aesthetics and concerns as those of his country's popular writers. The proverbial quality of this novel can be studied at different levels, ranging from its generic construction, its re-configuration of the Western ideal of romantic love, up to the didactic propensity inscribed in the roles and functions of some of its characters.

The Golden Notebook^{*}, published at the outset of the sexual revolution in the West in the early 1960s, is a novel that charts the malaise between the sexes and voices Lessing's discomfort with sexual status quo in the years that followed the decline of revolutionary Marxism as a revolutionary alternative to Western liberal governments. Among its various accomplishments is Lessing's investigation into the meaning of femaleness in contemporary Western culture and her charting of gender web of power patterns in the West. The deep tensions, and dissensions, that plagued Western feminism at that time, together with the tribulations of sexual politics caused the novel to receive a hostile reception: some critics regarded it as an intolerant feminist text, 'a tract about the sex war', while others reduced it to a 'trumpet for Women's Liberation'[†]. However, when all these simplifications are overridden, the book stands, in the words of Ellen Morgan, as "a superb rendering of that state of alienation from themselves, from authentic selfhood, to which women, like blacks and members of other minority groups, are subjected until they find solidarity and begin to confirm and legitimize their experience" (63). Written in the genre of diary fiction, Lessing's fiction deserves this praise, because it is noted for its

^{*} Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*. 1962. London: Flamingo, 2002. Subsequent paginations are to this edition.

[†] For an account of the hostile reception of the novel, read Lessing's own introduction to her novel and Chapter 6 of Gayle Greene's *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change* (1994).

thematic richness, its formal elaboration and esthetic self-consciousness, as well as for the deep connections between its form and content.

Classified among Manichean fictions, Armah's third fiction, too, did not enjoy a warm reception after its publication. And yet, most of the critical categories for which *The Golden Notebook* is praised today can be found in it. As we have already explained above, no critical endeavor ventured enough to compare it to Lessing's masterpiece, least of all to the genre of diary fiction from which it drives its vision. In fact, Armah reveals his awareness of the diary's capability to signify through its form. His recourse to the generic form of *The Golden Notebook* is a conscious, racial rather than feminist, minority attempt to appropriate the genre of diary fiction and to manipulate its form in order to reinforce his novel's thesis. Moreover, his functional use of the expressive form of the diary fiction aligns his verbal practice with the traditional African poetics of proverb/storytelling, in which the poet's familiarity with the techniques of proverbs/performance enables him to create his own forms of expression.

Lorna Martens is a critic who has undertaken an in-depth investigation of the genre of the diary novel. In her *The Diary Novel* (1985), she writes that the genre is a "discontinuous", "diffused" and "mimetic form", i.e. an artistic conception borrowed from traditional confessional writings, that has taken on different conceptions throughout its formal development in the last two centuries (25). Its great degree of independence from real diaries offered writers a generic template through which form could be consciously used to express particular artistic ends in view: to convey the impression of immediacy, to show the development of character, to present variations on a theme, to establish a context for irony ... etc. Twentieth century writers exploited this aspect of the genre and played on its different variations and innovations. Their innovations involved playing with the form on the implications of the diary's content. In this regard, Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* remains a prominent example of the genre's ability to establish organic and paramount connections between its form and its content.

The Golden Notebook and *Why Are We So Blest?* fit well the generic category of diary novels for, at least, three reasons: one, both novels stand by their respective writers' sense of disaffection with the traditional novel and the sense of chaos that underlies their subjective perceptions of the socio-political world surrounding them; two, both are loose narrative forms, made of sequential pieces; three, both allow the expression of individual experiences that are unable to identify meaningfully with their social realities. This last reason accounts for the genre's expressive use of literary form, wherein narrative becomes a vehicle for presenting a psychological study of the fictive diarist through deep breakthroughs into his/her self-consciousness.

Doris Lessing is a novelist deeply aware of the implications of the form of the diary novel. In her metacritical writing, she reveals that she conceived her novel as an experiment in stating through form: "that was an extremely carefully constructed book [...] the meaning is in the shape"* (quoted in Martens 234). Her experiment with narrative structure is rendered through the diaries of a woman writer, Anna Wulf, the main character of the frame novella *Free Women*, who suffers from acute alienation, leading to extreme self-awareness and paralysis. As she pursues the career of a writer and committed feminist through a series of damaging individual relationships with men, Anna records her thoughts in four notebooks: The Black Notebook which records her young womanhood in central Africa and the transactions related to her novel *Frontiers of War*; The Red Notebook which records her political activities and the tribulations that ensued her inconclusive experience in the Communist Party; The Yellow Notebook which contains her attempts at fictionalizing her own experience by writing a novel, whose heroine is Ella, her alter-ego; The Blue Notebook in which she attempts to psychoanalyze herself and to

* It is paradoxical that in her novel Lessing, through her main character Anna, repudiates Marxism and, at the same time, exhibits an awareness of the formal implications of literary works that is akin to Marxists' concern about the ideological complicity of literary conventions and institutions. In addition, Anna seems to espouse the Lukacsian perception of the novel. Among many other passages, she writes that the novel "has been claimed by the disintegration and the collapse" (p.115).

experiment a realist mode of writing by the collage of newspaper cuttings. All these notebooks speak of Anna's need to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, formlessness and breakdown.

The overall impression suggested by Anna's notebooks is that of fragmentation. It mirrors the disintegration of the fictive diarist's self and expresses her conviction that the novel "has become a function of the fragmented society, the fragmented consciousness" (p. 75). In this regard, the structure of *The Golden Notebook* resembles the mental condition of Anna Wulf's consciousness: fragmented. In other words, Anna's consciousness of herself is split up into several notebooks of different colors. The separation symbolizes her relationship to herself, to men, to the communist party, and the prevailing means of struggle available to women during the 1960s.

Armah's refraction of *The Golden Notebook* is made manifest in different aspects of *Why Are We So Blest?*. First and foremost, it is apparent in the form and structure of the narrative. The latter is constructed through fragmented sections, made of the main characters' diary entries. Each diary corresponds to the life-experience and sensibility of one of these characters: Solo, Modin, and Aimée. Though written separately, their meaning is inter-related, especially as their careers inter-connect with each other, physically, emotionally and ideologically. Taken together, all entries to the narrative sequences are framed narrative situations, which evoke the confusion and lack of cohesion that exist in the lives of the protagonists. Hence, just like in Lessing's fiction, the meaning of Armah's novel seems to bear on its form, and his overall artistic endeavor seems to be no less than an attempt to play on the variations of the genre of diary fiction.

As an attempt to manipulate a borrowed form and signify through it, Armah's appropriation and inflection of Lessing's narrative template enable him to launch a dynamic narrative that can be read as a proverb in a wider sense. Part and parcel of popular writers' writing practices, using a (foreign) narrative model as a proverb is also deeply rooted in the African oral tradition. The pertinence of his appropriation shows in

the genre's propensity to signify through its form; a propensity that we can describe as its underlying metaphor. As we have indicated above with regard to Lessing's fiction, the underlying assumption of *The Golden Notebook* is fragmentation. This theme pervades *Why Are We So Blest?* as well.

Frustration and breakdown are two major themes in *Why Are We So Blest?*. They are developed through the fates of two African intellectuals, Modin Dofu and Solo Nkonam, who are torn from their roots, peoples and even humanity. Modin acts as a dynamic incarnation of Solo's past and ends triggering a sympathetic identification from him. A failed writer and revolutionary, Solo ponders on his absurd life and acts as a chorus to Modin's tragic involvement with a white American woman called Aimée. His intimate insights into both his own condition and Modin's revolutionary longing, together with his recovery and organization of Modin's and Aimée's respective diaries, enable him to edit the fiction he has never been able to write. The unifying impression of all the narrative sequences is one of dislocation: the diarists are misfits, incapable of transcending their subjective sense of entrapment and defeat. Trapped as he is in "idiocy" and "mediocr[ity]" (p.85), Solo conveys well this idea when he ironically comments about "the place of [his] dream", wherein he finds only "pain, not fulfillment" (p. 115). Modin lays out the same point when he writes about his "periods of dissipation": "I throw out pieces of myself, some I fling dangerously wide indeed, then after reaching exhaustion I need to bring the pieces, if I can find hem, back together [...] Each time I thought I was coming back into myself not to lick my wounds –I saw none yet- but to escape the sheer situation of too much forced living" (p.158).

The sense of fragmentation projected in the genre of diary fiction draws us to bring a correction to the criticism which insists on the Manichean allegory of *Why Are We So Blest?*. In our opinion, this interpretation stems from the critics' unquestioned habit of seeing fiction as a constructed or organically fused totality. It is true that Armah's demystifying impulse is particularly strong in the novel. However, Manichean allegory

belongs much more to the critics than to Armah. In fact, the trope of fragmentation that structures the narrative undermines its polar opposites from within, to the extent that the narrative vision upholds no authoritative racial position. This is because one of the most recurring ideas pressed through the main characters' discourse is the loss of unity and the absence of vision. So, how can *Why Are We So Blest?* support the clear-cut categories of Manichean aesthetics when Armah has all his characters suffer acute identity crises, bordering with schizophrenias? Restated in simpler words, *Why Are We So Blest?* cannot be charged for its underlying Manichaeism and radicalism, simply because all its main characters are dispersed individuals, incapable of achieving wholeness. These characters suffer from splits in their personality and hopelessly attempt to break the ideological and political bounds that paralyze and incapacitate them. The open-endedness of their diaries further undermines their ideological positions and may even reflect what Martins identifies as the genre's "material and metaphysical empty center" (196).

The sense of defeat conveyed in Solo's diaries, together with his construction of the novel out of the other characters' diary entries, prompt us to draw a parallel between him and Lessing's Anna Wulf, because both of them function as central consciousnesses that reflect upon their conditions, hold personal journals and produce novels in the form of a diary fiction. In addition, the two characters share many similarities, related to their status of alienated intellectuals, initially committed to revolutionary change, but trapped in an absurd existence that paralyzes their desires. In our opinion, the analogies in the portraits and functions of the two characters hide Armah's attempt to appropriate and inflect Lessing's gendered discourse into a racial discourse that comments on the position of the postcolonial westernized African minority elite, the so-called native *evolués*. A cursory comparative survey of the history of Western feminist literature with postcolonial African literature may highlight Armah's pertinence in drawing upon Lessing's proto-feminist discourse.

The history of modern English literature, up to the twentieth century, shows a literature dominated by the visions and imperatives of Imperialism. A political as well as a social system, Imperialism was in the 19th century part of the ongoing development of Western identity. Its narratives operated at more than one level, and lurking behind all these levels were impulses for the exploitation and appropriation of other lands and the repression of other cultures. To vindicate this practice, the narratives of imperialism conveyed a sense of a superior and unified Western identity, which is racially white and sexually male. The congruence in imperial grand narratives of racial and gender discourses are evidenced in the analogies in their languages used to refer to other nations of the earth or to the other sex, respectively. For instance, the taking of a foreign land had often involved the use of an imagery borrowed from the jargon of sexuality, such as the dark continent (women's sex), penetration, the interior, ravishing of a land etc. Inherent in all these similarities in language are three characteristics of Imperial discourse and practice: one, the desire to exploit others that haunts the enterprise of Empire; two, its tendency to repress troublesome aspects of existence such as sexuality and the body of others; three, a sense of identity that is coherent and stable (Cobley 129). Implied in them is also a marked tendency to alienate both women and non-whites from the discourse on culture and power.

The repressive and exploitative impulses inherent in nineteenth century patriarchal, imperial culture were the main targets of 20th century development in Western Feminist thoughts. For example, the groundbreaking works of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1947), which explored the forms and ideologies of feminine passivity in Western culture, and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which denounced middle class women's oppression as consumers and housewives, were followed by a spate of influential women manifestoes by radical groups during the 1960s and early 1970s. This *revival* in women studies led to "theoretical and sociological studies of women in contemporary society, along with reinterpretations of history, literature and other

cultural practices in light of the women excluded, repressed and resisting within their conventional forms” (Bowlbey 326). The rise of these studies coincided with the emergence of modern African literature in English, which developed writing strategies that aimed at almost the same objectives of resistance and assertion as those of modern feminist literature.

The Golden Notebook is among the early feminist works to raise the issue of women’s emancipation and militancy in modern Western culture. Its merit lies in its attempt to connect the feminist awareness with left-wing politics and to denounce the misgivings of such an alliance in English politics of the 1950s. Lessings implements this thematic concern through Anna Wulf, a leftist communist militant and a woman writer, who aspires to live as a ‘free woman’, but experiences an overwhelming sense of defeat, bordering into disintegration: “the point is that”, Anna writes in the opening page of the novel, “as far as I can see, everything is cracking up” (p.25). In her youthful years, Anna’s life was guided by an ideal of hope that she calls “act of faith”. By act of faith she means the ‘forward movement’ created in the twentieth century by the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. The two events were a source of hope for her and many other intellectuals, especially during World War Two, which she spent among a group of English communists who were leading anti-colonial activities in colonial Rhodesia. However, by the time she joined the English Communist Party in the early 1950s, and by the time of Stalin’s death, which uncovered his tyrannical rule, her revolutionary aspirations and leftist beliefs were brought to a severe test: the party has become torn by inner divisions of purpose, ushering into the marginalization of most of its intellectuals, including her. To repeat Anna’s metaphor of disillusionment, that “well”, i.e. Revolution, ran “dry” and all the painful forward movement faded, leaving place only for fragmentation and absurdity. In addition to this political disillusionment, Anna undergoes other disappointments mainly related to her gender and her status of an intellectual.

The other sources of Anna's pains are her relationships with men. Her first love for Michael, the father of her only child Janet, was a frustrating experience to her. Actually, nowhere is she seen to have recovered from this experience, to the extent that her subsequent involvements are all unsuccessful experiences that diminish her and force her within self-deprecatory attitudes. Hence, most of her encounters are synonymous with the unhappy dislocations between the sexes; dislocations that work to alienate her further from both her own self and her own sex. For all these failures, Anna's life shrinks into a personal, endless and doomed, struggle against social, political, cultural and psychological constraints. As for her inner conflicts, they drive her to experience different forms of entrapments, such as radical alienation and self-division. The unhappy experiences cause her also to suffer from a severe identity crisis and writing block, and a paralysis of the will which forces her within a position of withdrawal from the larger social and political surrounding. It is from this position that Anna negotiates the meaning of her femaleness and her status of a committed woman writer searching for change.

The major metaphor that defines Anna's condition and predicates her (lost) senses of purpose and commitment is the metaphor of "boulder pushers". During an exchange with Saul Green, she explains this metaphor

There is a great black mountain. It is human stupidity. There are a group of people who push a boulder up the mountain. When they've got a few feet up, there's war, or the wrong sort of revolution, and the boulder runs down [...] So the group of people put their shoulders to the boulder and start pushing again. Meanwhile, at the top of the mountain stand a few great men. Sometimes they look down and nod and say: Good, the boulder-pushers are still on duty. [...] Bad luck for both of us, we are both boulder-pushers (p.544-5).

This passage is an open allusion to the myth of Sisyphus, elevated by Albert Camus to the rank of the "absurd hero" (313). Like Sisyphus in Greek mythology, who is condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain whence it will fall back again and again, Anna engages in painful relationships with men without ever finding the kind of egalitarian and emancipating love she is looking for. Besides, her revolutionary longings are all betrayed to the extent that she no longer hopes to find

fulfilment in politics. Her existence has become a meaningless one, just like Sisyphus, whose whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. And yet Anna seems willing to continue working for revolutionary change, even though she is aware that her efforts always amount at no results.

Doomed but resigned, wretched but conscious, powerless but rebellious, Anna's victory, like that of Camus's Sisyphus, seems to lie in the same instrument of her torture: self-awareness. Indeed, Anna is an "all self-conscious and sex-conscious" woman (p.61), to the extent that she is presented as "a central point of awareness" (p.563). But her self-awareness is not without negative influence upon her, since it paralyzes her will and inhibits her desire to write: "I am incapable", she writes, "of writing the only kind of novel which interests me: a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create a new way of looking at life. It is because I am too diffused" (p.76).

Anna's identification with Sisyphus and her disintegrated mind is not without reminding us Solo's mental fatigue and his nervous breakdown. Much of the former's visions and experiences structure the latter's thoughts and militancy as well. To begin with, Solo's first diary entry, which is also the first entry to the novel, entails a sense of fragmentation analogous to Anna's: "even before my death I have become a ghost, wandering about the face of the earth, moving with a freedom I have not chosen, something whose unsettling abundance I am impotent to use. There is no contact possible. Life goes on around me, and with a clarity that has grown painful, I see it flow like a stream in slow motion" (p.11). Much of the predicament of this passage speaks of the same plight as Anna's. The similarity in the mental condition of the two characters is due to the analogies in their experiences. Like Anna, Solo was a committed intellectual, deeply engaged in liberation ideology and revolutionary politics. However, his subsequent enrolment in the Party leadership and acquiescence in the betrayal of the principles and goals of independence movements have left him in a disillusioned state. Ridden by guilt and self-accusation, Solo is unable to escape his tortured consciousness. He shuts himself

to the outside world and keeps focusing his mind on his own psychological state, self-analyzing and filtering his thoughts and emotions.

The relationships between Solo and the members of the People's Union of Congheria are strained. His visits to the Party's headquarters serve him to focus his thoughts on the process of social and political disintegration that has plagued and destroyed the continent's revolutions in the past. In the present, Solo sees that the movement is replicating the same socio-economic class divisions that exist under colonial rule. These divisions are visible in the sharp hierarchy and contrast between the office worker who runs the Party's office and the minister who heads the movement's foreign delegation: "at times I just sat and thought of them, and all the slogans and the dreams of equality and justice dissolved in my imagination into an endless procession of masters and servants, men who would remain managers and workers even in moments when they were engaged in fighting some third oppressor"* (p.52). The constant reminder that revolutionary ideals that he fought for are betrayed makes Solo's mind sink in despair and his life in absurdity: "I wish I could have gone completely dead with the first loss of hope. To go on, capable of being moved and yet to have lost all sense of destination, to have no desired place, to have nowhere to direct the urge that rises and seeks a way out, that is an unending torture" (p.54).

The analogies in Solo's and Anna's frames of mind extend also to their emotional life. Like Anna, Solo cannot enjoy the gratifications of healthy, self-fulfilling love. His frustration first aroused from his involvement with a Portuguese girl called Sylvia. The two lovers were about to marry were the white girl not persuaded by her family to give up her relation with the black African. Solo apprehended his involvement as an inter-racial

* In the wider context of the narrative, Solo's critique of the CPP functions also as an oblique critique of the Marxist approach to African culture and revolution. Modin's diary fulfils the same function and demonstrates that Armah has never developed close affinities with Marxism. For Armah's critique of Marxism in *Why Are We So Blest?*, read Chapter Three of Bouteldja Riche's thesis. As for Armah's indictment of Marxism in general, see his article "Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis" (1984).

relationship that was likely to open the two races to each other. But Sylvia's retreat convinced him that the racial divide is wide open no matter how high are his romantic ideals. In the end, just like in *The Golden Notebook* Anna's 'sex-consciousness' prompts her to lose faith in egalitarian relationships between the two sexes, Solo's enhanced racial awareness pushes him to relinquish his inter-racial dream and convinces him that his love story with Sylvia is but a romance of failure.

Many constraints confine Solo's life within a Sisyphean condition, in which his self-identity loses every sense of belonging. His disillusionment with inter-racial love, his internal exile in Laccryville, together with his hopeless, meaningless career at Congheria's People's Party, all conspire to devoid his former commitment off its revolutionary essence. Here are the words through which Solo couches his plight

Almost everyday I walk down the road from where I live to the center of the city. Laccryville is a hilly city, and the area in which I live is one of its hilliest. All the way down to the Post Office or the bureau of the Congherian people's revolutionary movement I rush downhill as if some force were pushing me from behind. The walk back is just the opposite. All the way up I must struggle against a force that seems many times stronger than the one that pushed me down. In either case the pace of the walk is never something I am free to choose. It is imposed on me, and I submit it (p. 15).

Solo's everyday routine seems to dramatize Sisyphus' endless effort at rolling the stone up to the mountain. Its absurdity is pointed out, not so much by his physical effort at mounting the hilly city and reaching his home, but by the tedious boredom of his existence and the burdens of his past experiences. In this sense, his portrait becomes just like that of Anna: the two characters are lonely, failed and neurotic revolutionaries, deeply self-conscious of their crippled state. What worsens their respective conditions is their inability to write and function as creative artists. Indeed, both Anna and Solo suffer from writing block. Anna writes: "All I am doing is to say to myself: You are right not to write again. It's all so humiliating and ugly you should just keep out of it" (p. 262). Solo voices the same plight and records: "I have not written yet, and most probably I never will write" (p.13). A little farther he adds: "always my thoughts have remained impotent, unable to

give birth to anything I might offer” (p.14). The way Solo and Anna overcome their writing block unveils deeper analogies between *Why Are We So Blest?* and *The Golden Notebook* and shows how Armah has consciously appropriated and inflected Lessing’s narrative to comment on the condition of the post-colonial African intellectual, who aspires to serve his wider community and yet finds himself inhibited by the knowledge he acquired in the West*.

To overcome her inability to write, Anna Wulf has recourse to two writing devices: one, the fictionalization of her own experience, in a Yellow notebook, through the character of Ella, her alter-ego; two, the psycho-analysis and *deconstruction* of her everyday life, especially her different involvements with men, in a Blue notebook. The two writing devices open up to Anna perspectives about her (female) behavior and identity. To begin with, Ella is Anna’s replica, and her relationship with Paul is but the fictional version of Anna’s involvement with Michael. Like Anna, Ella is a woman writer with feminist and leftist beliefs. She lives in a London flat with a friend, Julia, with whom she often engages in men-women issues, just in the same manner Anna frequently discusses gender questions with her friend and room-mate Molly. Through Ella’s experiences, Anna’s explores and renders the ‘role conflict’ that riddles women’s lives in a society on the brink of feminism: Ella, like her creator, is torn between roles of single parent, political worker, writer, lover, friend, “living the kind of life women never lived before”.

Anna writes also about the men she is involved with. She presents them as “sexual cripples” fixed within bounded egos. For instance, she shows Richard, Molly’s husband, as a man defined solely by his wealth, status and power, and incapable of understanding the ‘free’ life she and Molly want to lead. By freezing Richard within his social class and gender, Anna articulates the major differences between the role imputed to women by

* For a wider and more detailed discussion of the influence of Western knowledge on Armah’s characters, see M. Fouad Mami’s Magister dissertation: *Western Knowledge and the African Intellectual in Aji Kwei Armah’s Novels: Why Are We So Blest?; Two Thousand Seasons and The Healers* (2004).

traditional society and the role she herself looks forward to assume. She also presses the idea that men are often frozen within their gender position, which prevents them from evolving and developing. Likewise, by recording her involvement with the young American writer Saul Green, she fixes him as *other* and demonstrates that male and female behavior assume, most of the time, typical, stereotypical postures, because the two sexes always remain locked in the gender roles allowed to them by society at large. But when their “cycle of bullying and tenderness” is over, Anna becomes able to break through Saul, circumscribe her experience with men and forge a new kind of relationship with them. Her insights yield a new notebook, *The Golden Notebook*, which re-evaluates her previous diaries and allows her to recover the unity of her self lost to her different disillusionments.

Solo’s recovery of his self and his overcoming of his paralysis follow almost the same pattern and procedure as Anna’s. Although he does not divide his experience into different notebooks, his break through the revolutionary thoughts contained within Modin’s private journal enables him to develop unique insights into the essence of African revolutionary struggle: “these notebooks [Modin’s and Aimée’s] have broken my paralysis. I search them, filling in holes, answering questions I have asked myself and found no answers to, speculating, arranging and re-arranging these notes to catch all possible meaning” (p.231). Though not Solo’s fictional representation, Modin is to a large extent his living double, through which he relives his past and develops a comparative perspective for re-examining his experience: “I [Solo] see myself in the couple; I see them in me. The man in me: the African absorbed into Europe, trying to escape death, eager to shed privilege, not knowing how deep the destruction has eaten into himself, hoping to achieve a healing juncture with his destroyed people” (p.232). Hence, in Modin’s case, Solo sees a parallel to his own prior position and fears that Modin pursues a course of action which will lead him to self-annihilation. But his sustained interest in Modin’s life entails more than a concern for his welfare; it extends to a deep understanding of the problematic

condition of the postcolonial intellectual, since Modin's diary provides the inspiration for much of his commentary.

Solo and Modin fit well Homi Bhabha's category of the migrant and the homeless. They are liminal figures, caught in a historical cross-road created by the end of Empire and the birth of free nations looking forward to achieve nationhood. Their stay in the West as a minority elite group, and then their life in Laccryville as alienated intellectuals, embed them in a place that Bhabha calls "the recesses of the domestic space", a creative 'third space' which is a site "for history's most intricate invasions", and wherein "the borders between home and world become confused" (13). The traumatic aspect of their commitment breeds in them "the desire for recognition, for somewhere else and for something else" (ibid. 12). It also develops in them a claim for freedom and liberation, marked, in Bhabha's words, by a "right to difference in equality" (ibid. xvi).

In other words, Solo and Modin belong to a minority, creative group of postcolonial African intellectuals educated in the West. Their training in the cultural center of Europe and America enabled them to escape "the crudest forms of manipulation" (p.33), what Modin designates as the periphery's "planned ignorance" (p.33). However, their recognition of the intellectual poverty of their homeland does not prompt them to embrace wholeheartedly the prospects of Western culture. Instead, their awareness of the racial and cultural divides between the West and Africa develop in them a creative impulse for commitment that aspires to serve their nations, from whose tradition they have been up-rooted. But their commitment is undermined by their education which is steeped in the Western competitive and individualist value system. Nonetheless, thanks to their awareness of their marginal position, they become fixed within an 'in-between', 'interstitial', 'third space' from which they perform and negotiate their cultural engagement. Their negotiation of the meanings of selfhood and nationhood is also entailed with strategies of survival that perform affiliative and antagonistic procedures.

In his self-imposed exile, Solo shows himself aware of his membership to an assimilated elite. Nonetheless, his thoughts are still able to uncover the hidden motivations underlying the action of postcolonial elites, especially the West's forces which inhibit his potential for resistance: "That creative ability also I have lost. [...] What is ordained for us I have not escaped – the fate of the *évolué*, the turning of the assimilated African, not something creating its own life, but into an eater of crumbs in the house of slavery" (p.84). Solo's critical insight into the continuity of slavery uncovers the forces of assimilation which work to prevent his awareness of the creative potential inherent and latent in the 'third space'. It also matches the neo-colonial perverse role of the "factor", highlighted by Modin in his diaries. In pre-colonial times, the factor was a native who facilitated the capture and sale of slaves. After independence, this role has taken on a new shape, linked more to a system of values than to commodities exchange. It has become incumbent upon the chosen few natives who have been indoctrinated in the West to serve neo-colonial interests by forming a comprador class tied to the dissemination of Western values. From Modin's perspective, there is a strong parallel between the evil practices of yesterday's factors and the perverse culture of neo-colonial, westernized elites. Modin's effort at repudiating the fate ordained to him by his scholarship in the United States of America speaks of his attempt to lead a cathartic experience of revolution that will free the Africans from their dependency upon the West.

Modin's revolutionary thought and endeavor are articulated into a strategy of resistance in Solo's ultimate diary. In this entry, Solo bears witness to the problematic aspect of his and Modin's lives and acknowledges the liberating effect Modin's tragic experience. He also develops a radical consciousness which overcomes his earlier pessimism and reclaims "authentic revolution" and "the destruction of destroyers" as creative actions for the liberation of colonized peoples. This revolutionary project empowers him to transcend his former passivity by invigorating his life and giving him a new sense of purpose to his political action.

In addition to Modin's cathartic experience, Solo breaks also through Aimée's behaviour and diary. Like Anna in *The Golden Notebook*, who fixes Saul Green as a gender *other*, Solo *otherizes* Modin's girlfriend and keeps portraying her in a caricature image, symbolic of the destructive aspects of Western culture. For example, when he first encounters her in the Party's Bureau, he describes her as a "big [...] tall, bony" girl, who moves "as if control were something alien to her nature, and her behavior, her words and her gestures as she talked – all gave the impression of a destructive wildness, of a lack of self-control. She seemed the kind of person it would be impossible to share a small space with" (p.62). Solo's apprehension with regard to Aimée's sincerity, her superficiality and insensitivity are confirmed by her diaries, in which she avows that, for her, revolution is merely an escape from boredom, an intense, exotic experience that is likely to make her feel alive.

The grotesque scene wherein Modin is captured, tortured and killed by a gang of French mercenaries, demonstrates Aimée's lack of involvement. During the event, Aimée collaborates with her captors and seems to find a perverse pleasure in the sexual orgy that ushers in her beloved's castration and death. Shortly afterwards, she leaves Algeria and abandons her radical views, renewing her allegiance to her former bourgeois life. Her uninvolved behaviour confirms Solo's apprehensions about the racial/cultural divide that separates the Whites (Westerners) and the Blacks (Africans). It also convinces him that there is no possible solidarity between oppressors and oppressed, and that the revolutionary community he is longing for is one based on shared suffering and sustenance, not romantic, inter-racial love: "in place of isolate bodies, greedy to consume more privileged to set us above, apart from others, there would be community: sustenance, suffering, endurance, relief, danger –all shared" (p.114).

The caricature portrayal of Aimée has sparked negative reactions from many Western critics, who found that, as a character, she is unconvincing and unrealistic. Robert Fraser is one of these critics. In his "The American Background in *Why Are We So*

Blest?” (1978), he writes that Aimée seems to function as “an allegorical figure: she exists simply to demonstrate the rapacious main chord in her personality. [...] From where in the book does this kind of distortion receive its inspiration?” (43). It is true that Aimée functions as an allegorical figure. This is why any attempt at fitting her within a realist mould will end in charging Armah with racial segregation and intolerance. But what Fraser has ignored is that the portrait of Aimée is at home within Ghana’s popular narratives, in which authors create intertextual, didactic and proverbial female types to comment on certain kinds of (amoral) behavior. Stephanie Newell warns that these female figures should not be interpreted realistically and observes that all of them “are loaded with moral baggage, embodying the Christian moral concepts of ‘fidelity’, ‘obedience’, ‘temptation’, or ‘adultery’” (64). This quotation offers a perspective to (re)evaluate Armah’s presentation of his novel’s main white female character.

The main things to be noticed about Aimée are that she is a morally strained character and an intertextual figure: her diary contains chunks of colonialist discourse and her portrait evokes images of at least two western archetypes, the temptress and the imperialist. Her imperialist thrust had brought her to Africa among Peace Corps volunteers, long before she met Modin. During her stay in the continent with her colonialist husband, Kapitan Reitsch, she behaved just in the same way her (literary) imperialist ancestors, such as Joseph Conrad’s Kurtz, did before her: she endangered the Operation African Junction project by seducing some natives and sleeping with them. One of these natives is a boy, Mwangi, who found his end after Kapitan Reitsch had surprised him in bed with his wife. Aimée’s perverse nature reveals Armah’s intention to create a distance between her and the reader. Armah strengthens further this distance by exaggerating the imperialist discourse of Aimée’s private journal, whose *literariness* makes her diary read as a parody of Western imperial rhetoric, particularly the genre of imperial travel writings.

Aimée's involvement with Modin is the reiteration of her temptation of the African boy, Mwangi, and her whole behaviour is a parodic inversion of the Eve archetype in the Bible. Her duplicitous behaviour demonstrates her character's proverbial nature and the didactic quality attached to it. To configure her vices, Armah inscribes her character type in the register of the promiscuous, deceitful woman, which is a familiar character type to Ghana's popular audiences, and re-contextualizes the discourse of imperial master-texts by instilling in her conduct his preoccupations about racial and political struggles. The political and moral elements fused in Aimée's portrait enables Armah to parody the Bohemian ideology and to construct a literary character which symbolizes both the decadence of the West and the moral depravity of the American youth who espoused Bohemia as an opposition strategy to the American establishment during the 1960s. Thus, Solo's disapproval of Modin's girlfriend operates as more a critique of the American youth movement than a Manichaeian division of the world into virtuous, innocent Africans vs. evil, manipulative Westerners.

Warning, advice and rebuke are important functions of traditional African proverbs which find all their meanings in Solo's comment on Aimée's behavior and the rapacious nature of her character. Hence, Armah's negative configuration of Aimée ought to be applied in a didactic way and interpreted as the expression of a morally degraded woman, sexually exploitative, who lures men and brings about their deprivation. By instilling amorality in Aimée's conduct, Armah draws a female figure familiar to his Ghanaian audience and complies with its gender, political, as well as moral preoccupations. At the same time, he also articulates his concerns about inter-racial relations in the light of the anti-colonial means of resistance which were available to the African intellectuals of the 1960s.

Most of Armah's recriminations against Aimée are voiced through Solo, whose diary offers, among many other things, a moral evaluation of Modin's involvement and an ethical assessment of the Western ideal of (romantic) love. Solo, who plays almost no

central role in the plot, occupies a voyeuristic vantage-point, similar to most male, first-person narrators that pervade Ghanaian popular fictions. Stephanie Newell writes that these narrators are mostly close relatives or confidantes of young protagonists. They listen to their dilemmas, comment freely on some situations and counsel characters on appropriate responses. Their texts teach readers how to differentiate between false and authentic friendship, between a woman's cunning intentions and her passionate words of love (Newell 103). Put in the didactic context of popular narratives, first-person narrators offer moral assessments of protagonists and provide the readers with interpretive pivots for the judgment of characters (ibid.). These tasks and functions are fully endorsed by Solo in his diary and in his relationship with Modin.

The plot of *Why Are We So Blest?* is permeated by a poetics of desire, concerned with the themes of love and involvement. Armah articulates this thematic concern through the weaving of a love relationship between Modin and Aimée. To mediate this love story, he positions Solo as an authoritative expert in the 'art of loving' and allows him a voyeuristic position from where to interpret the two lovers' behavior. In addition, he also makes Solo freely quote from Carson McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Café* in order to offer insights into the value of Western love, in general, and the dangers of erotic love, in particular. Armah's concern with the theme of love and its value, together with his quotations from the hypo-text of McCullers's fiction, align his narrative along Ghana's popular fictions, which explore gender relations by borrowing and regenerating metropolitan texts. This affinity is suggested by Solo's diary's frequent breaks into Modin's life and his insights into his behavior. In many ways, Solo's engagement with Modin's revolutionary commitment reminds us the function of the first-person narrators in popular fictions. Like them, Solo presents himself as an authoritative counselor who mediates the protagonist's story and guides the lives of the readers. At the same time, his statements' detachment and generalizations about the value of Western love assume the same use in traditional proverbs in which, according to Ruth Finnegan, "the speaker

stands back, as it were, from the heat of the actual situation and draws attention, for himself and for others, to its wider implications” (407).

The Ballad is the narrative of an unusual (unrequited) love story between a wealthy, Amazon-like woman, Miss Amelia, and a hunchbacked dwarf, Cousin Lymon. Its plot revolves around Amelia’s café’s growth, which turns a desolate Southern town into a high stage of romance, and its subsequent decline, induced by Lymon’s betrayal of Amelia’s love. At a deeper level, McCullers’s novella is a literary parable which probes behind the heroine's unusual love for Cousin Lymon the secret truths of Western love. Its accomplishment lies in the way it illustrates how the tropes of desire structure Western love stories and determines its quality. John Vickery writes that throughout all her works, McCullers has been concerned with the exploration of the world of love, and that in *The Ballad* “the archetypal pattern of love is presented in its clearest and simplest form” (14).

Why Are We So Blest?, too, is involved in the search for the kind of social relationship which breaks the characters' isolated condition and amends the community's fragmented situation. The theme of love emerges in this work as a major issue. Right in his first diary entry, Solo presses this idea and writes: "the thing I hoped to hold was love, the attraction of one person to his opposite, the power that brings the white to the black and leads them all to open to each other areas of themselves which they have long kept hidden from everybody else" (p.12). In this quotation, Solo refers to the disappointed expectations attached to his love for the Portuguese girl Sylvia. But the subsequent unfolding of the narrative convinces us that it also alludes to Modin’s involvement with Aimée. The allusion is captured after his first encounter with the couple in the Party’s bureau: “two people”, Solo ponders, “so different, yet so wilfully assimilated. The thought came to me: here was *an acute case of love*” (p.56 my emphasis). What remains of Solo’s discourse about love shows itself attuned to many Western master-texts about love. One of these

master texts freely acknowledged is McCuller's love theory expounded in her novella, which Solo has read during his stay at Laccryville's hospital.

McCuller's love parable presents love as a private emotion, experienced differently by the lover and the beloved, and involving the lover's "pain, perplexity, and uncertain joy" (p.30). To use her own words, the lover and the beloved "come from different countries" (p.33), but whereas the lover takes it upon himself to determine the quality and value of love, the beloved acts merely as a catalyst who stirs up the lover's stored emotions. For McCuller, the lover is a possessive individual, who is "forever trying to strip bare his beloved" (p.34). He is also an irrational person because he creates a subjective world of illusions, which are "intense and strange, complete in himself". The possessiveness and irrationality of the lover triggers a hostile reaction of the beloved

Almost everyone wants to be the lover. And the curt truth is that, in a deep secret way, the state of being beloved is intolerable to many. The beloved fears and hates the lover, and with the best of reasons. For the lover is for ever trying to strip bare his beloved. The lover craves any possible relation with the beloved, even if this experience can cause him only pain (p.34).

Inherent in this quote, and most of McCuller's theory of love, is Jean Paul Sartre's account of freedom and control embedded in love. For Sartre, love falls into masochism and sadism (Neu 55). It induces a war of recognition, in which "it is indifferent whether we hate the Other's transcendence through what we empirically call his vices or his virtues [...] The occasion which arouses hate is simply an act by the Other which puts me in the state of being subject to his freedom" (quoted in *ibid.*). In other words, love, in Sartre's view, is a story of "the inherent futility of love". Aiming at the full possession of a free being, "desire must fail as possession insofar as the other is free, and it must fail in terms of freedom insofar as the other is possessed" (*ibid.*). Hence the ambivalence of love: the lover's denial of the beloved's personality and freedom provokes a defensive attitude whereby the beloved rejects the lover's oppressive affection. This duplicitous aspect of love

is deeply embedded in all the love stories woven in *The Ballad*. Thus, even though Macy, Amelia, and Lymon happen in turn to be faithful lovers, none of them proves to be a requited beloved who reciprocates his partner's emotions. They rather develop a feeling of hatred and reject the affection bestowed upon them by their respective lovers. Amelia/Lymon and Macy/Amelia love stories evidence the structure of love – hate relationship.

When Amelia was a young girl, Macy fell helplessly in love with her and courted her for almost two years. During all this period, he reformed his character and improved his sociability by attending the Church services and giving up swearing and fighting. Macy learnt also good manners and used to be good to his foster mother. But though the positive transformations of love were manifest in his behaviour, and though the whole town rejoiced at his new character, Amelia remained unconcerned by his affection, and when she agreed to marry him, she did so only to reject him.

The tragi-comic affair Macy's marriage bore in itself the seeds of its own destruction. These seeds lie in the possessive quality of his affection which urged his beloved to assume plainly her femininity and to renounce her masculine self-image. But since Amelia refused to accommodate Macy's masculinity, she refrained from sharing the bed with her groom, and only ten days after their marriage she repudiated him. She also dispossessed him of his belongings and sold them at the premises with all the presents he had given her. Her conduct implies the double-edged image of love and illustrates its hidden and sinister aspects, i.e. the aspects of hatred and negation.

The forces which destroyed Macy's marriage are similar to those which bring Amelia's love to its doom and wrecked her café. The latter is inscribed as the product of her love for Cousin Lymon and the token of her affection for him. But though Lymon takes the greatest profit out of the café - he has a deep fear of death and the café is a means

through which he entertains himself - Amelia's love grows intolerable to his soul. In order to free himself from the love of Amelia, Lymon does not hesitate to connect himself with the revengeful schemes of Marvin Macy and to help him beat Amelia, wrecking her business, and crushing her dreams.

As Lymon betrays Miss Amelia's love, he reverses the plot of *The Ballad*, from a fable of love to a story involving hatred and betrayal. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, this perspective provides an outlet for Armah in order to equate the Western ideal of love with hate. Solo reads *The Ballad* as "the story of the ambiguity of love [...and] its closeness to hate" (p. 28). Solo's interpretation shows a profound understanding of McCullers's love formula and the different psychological impulses that underlay the tropes of desire in Western love stories. His understanding seems to determine his attitude towards all forms of involvements between whites and blacks.

As he draws on McCullers's assertion that " the beloved fears and hates the lover, and with the best of reasons" (p.34), Solo does not develop any romantic conception of love. His scepticism prompts him to apprehend Modin's involvement, right from the first moment he saw him, and to consider Aimée's love for Modin as a form of hatred. In his diaries, Solo keeps identifying Western love with hatred and wonders

What draws a white woman to any of us, lonely results, creatures of her people's destructive thrust against ours, against the world? What kind of love fires the white-haired American, sucking life that cannot fertilize her dryness, from sources already several times desiccated? What is this love of their people's creatures but a love for the manipulable, the already manipulated, open to further shaping? What is this love but *hate* smilingly embraced by the *hated* ? (P. 208) [my italics].

In addition to quoting from McCullers's passage about the hatred inscribed in the beloved's behavior, Solo shows himself also aware of the ideas of freedom and possession

entailed in the plot *The Ballad*. In many passages of his diary, he records Aimée's distorted sense of the act of loving and her emasculation of her love object

The girl [Aimée] could shift instantly from equal comrade to dependent woman, free to attack the man for not seeing clearly what was to be done. The man's [Modin's] voice expressed a bottomless weariness.

Each following morning, when I saw him in daylight, the thought slipped across my mind, gliding on its own: "This man ill." [...] He was sick enough: not simply sick in his soul; in his body too there was disease. Once- more often it must have been: the remembrance is so definite- he smiled an apology at me after another of his peaceless nights with the girls he loved (p.139).

This portion of Solo's diary shows the extent of Modin's dependence on Aimée, whose love expresses itself through acts of possession and domination. Actually, Modin's love for Aimée seems similar to the pathological cases of Sadean/Sartrean love. Armah reiterates this idea in the American girl's diary, when she describes the torments inflicted by the French soldiers on Modin, and her delight at her beloved's helplessness: "the [the French soldiers] moved me so close to him [i.e. Modin], and always drew me back[...] I threw myself forward as far as I could. I felt him hot inside me. I never wanted to continue more. The pain of not having him in me after that was worse than when he refused to be Mwangi" (p.286). Aimée's pleasures at making love to helpless Modin and her pain at the separation of her body from his bounded body speak of the ideas of possession and control she associates with love.

Solo expands on the freedom issue at stake in Aimée's love to draw a parallel between the possessive nature of Western love and Europe's pretentious racial conquest over Africa. According to him, all the white women's craving for African males is similar to the racial lust of their forefathers who brought their prejudices to the African continent. They represent "the hyperactive embodiment of that energy, that hatred that has implied Europe against us all" (p.129). In this statement, Solo decries the freedom/submission dialectic implied in African interactions with the West. For him, Western love, as represented by Aimée-Modin's bohemian relationship, cannot offer a viable strategy to

launch revolution and end colonial oppression, simply because its dialectic is based on the same logic as the one inscribed in European Imperialism. Jorge Manuel, the Party's leader, puts the idea more forcefully when he admonishes Solo with regards to his excessive concern about Modin enrolment in the party. He says: "an African in love with a European is a pure slave. Not a man accidentally enslaved. A pure slave, with the heart of a slave, with the spirit of a slave. We don't like anyone like that here" (p.255).

Inherent in McCullers's love theory is also a death wish that inhabits most Western tropes of desire, and of which Solo shows equal awareness. The correlation between love and death in *The Ballad* is intimated in Amelia's pain-causing love and Lymon's betrayal. Indeed, at the height of Amelia's pursuit of desire, her love object betrays it and precipitates it to death. Definitely, Lymon's deception brings the story to the point of 'demonic epiphany'. To use Northrop Frye's words, the town becomes "the city of the dreadful night in the desert" (1990:239), and the café stands as the symbol of the '*tour abolie*' i.e. abolished of its gaiety which founded its reputation before. The powers which cause the apocalyptic vision to vanish from the town and the demonic powers to appear can be spotted at the same sources which have already brought it to life: Amelia's initial creative love generated a destructive hatred from her beloved, and if her premises took profit of her changing mood, it was only a temporary success before that Lymon's hate brings it to a state of living death.

Many critics have assessed the correlation between love and death in *The Ballad*. For example, Richard Cook observes that McCullers's definition of love "doubles as a death warrant for the café and the town" (93). Like Cook, Ihab Hassan perceives the implication of death in Amelia's love story. In his article "Carson McCullers : The Alchemy of love and the Aesthetic of Pain", Hassan writes : "by far the most startling consequence of Mrs. McCullers' idea of love is its avowal of pain, *of death* itself" (218 his italics).

The correlation between love and death in McCullers's work is not her own individual and subjective invention; it is rather immanent in Western love stories and deeply embedded in its romantic tradition. For instance, in the medieval romances and tales, love often intensifies the lover's pains and seeks its own impediment. In his book *Love in the Western World* (1940), Denis de Rougemont maintains that whenever it manifests itself, boundless desire, or Eros, hides the powers of the death wish and "intensifies our desires only in order to offer them up in sacrifice" (66). The parallel between De Rougemont's assertion and McCullers' conception of love is stressed by Ihab Hassan who argues that "the omnipresence of pain in the work of Carson McCullers, the spectacle of a love forever seeking its denial, leads us to a similar conclusion" (219).

In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Armah draws heavily on the desire of death which masks the Western master discourse about love. For instance, his character Solo interprets his involvement with Sylvia as "a call of *death* [...and] guilt with all the sweetness of the force itself of life, affection" (p.150 my italics). Solo identifies Aimée also with the desire of death and considers her a destructive object "powerfully hurled against him [Modin] from the barrel of a powerful destructive culture" (p.115). His outlooks are shared by Modin's girlfriend, the Afro-American secretary Naita, who does not believe in white-black love and advises Modin not to get involved with any white American woman. Naita affirms that "there is no friendship between us [blacks] and them [whites]" and warns Modin that "they'll mess you up" (p.123). Her insight proves to be true, first in Modin's love relationship with Mrs. Jefferson, and then in his involvement with Aimée. The first experience has ushered into deep physical injuries, whereas the second one causes his death.

The death wish which haunts Western discourse about love and associates it with pain and domination may serve to vindicate Solo's/Armah's repudiation of Bohemia as an

opposition strategy of anti-colonial struggle. In Armah's view, anti-colonial struggle should strive to preserve the authenticity of African cultures and the identity of its intellectuals; an authenticity and an identity that the Western education given to Modin and Solo attempts to suppress in order to spirit them away from their people. Aware of his alienation from his people, Solo ponders on his former relationship with Sylvia and Modin's involvement with Aimée and finds another threat to their intellectual commitment. His interpretation of his love to the Portuguese woman as the outcome of his "confusion", the "dissolution" of his self and his "loss of identity" (p.139) demonstrates an acute knowledge of the tropes of death and loss that underlie Western love stories and many Western texts about love. In his *The Art of Loving* (1957), Erich Fromm explains that erotic/romantic love is "the craving for complete fusion, for union with one other person" and adds: "*it is by its very nature exclusive and not universal; it is perhaps the most deceptive form of love there is*" (48 my italics).

The deceptive form of erotic love and its tendency towards fusion bring about the dependency of the lovers upon each other and the loss of the attributes of their personality. Therefore, erotic desire can be said to connect strongly with problems of self-identity, which may be regarded as its vulnerable, hateful feature. Jerome Neu writes that merging involves "the overcoming of individual separation and so the end of the beloved (as well as of oneself) as a separate individual, and so a kind of death" (56). With the attachment of love, fusion always puts the lovers' identity at stake and may even imply the denial of the other's otherness. It is this truth that Solo seems to have grasped and translated in his commentary on Modin's involvement.

As he downplays erotic love as a viable option for inter-cultural association between Africa and the West, Solo upholds brotherly love as strategy of resistance. In his diary he records: "in place of isolate bodies, greedy to consume more privileges to set us

above, apart from others, there would be community: sustenance, suffering, endurance, relief, danger –all shared” (p.114). What this quotation advocates is a type of community held together by the kind of love called brotherly love. Unlike erotic love, brotherly love is not exclusive; it is the experience of human solidarity, wherein individuals relate themselves as equals, all in need of each other (Fromm 44-5). Fromm writes, “by having compassion for the helpless one, man begins to develop love for his brother; and in his love for himself he also loves the one who is in need of help, the frail, insecure human being” (ibid.45). It is this relation that binds Solo to Modin, and it is this kind of community that Solo aspires to forge in order to lead his people to the path of freedom and liberation; it is a community in which members experience their identity individually, while, at the same time, they remain concerned with one another’s happiness and welfare. Unfortunately, neither Modin, nor even the UPC’s members are aware of it. This is why Solo remains forever a solitary intellectual, stuck in unfamiliar physical and intellectual surroundings.

Definitely, then, by exhibiting keen interest in Modin’s fate, and his people at large, Solo becomes similar to most Ghanaian popular first person male narrators, who are concerned with the moral health of their nation. The similarities in their role and function demonstrate the popular dimension of Armah’s art; a dimension that is strengthened by his deployment of a proverbial quoting mode of writing. As the above analysis has attempted to show, in *Why Are We So Blest?*, Armah articulates his thematic concern about the decolonization of Africa through a mode of writing that is steeped in the popular aesthetics. This mode of writing prompted him to borrow and transform the generic template of the diary novel from Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* and to transform it into a narrative outline that speaks of the fragmentation of the African postcolonial intellectual’s consciousness.

The transformation of available proverbial/story materials is a practice deeply underpinned in the traditional African poetics of storytelling. Armah has recourse to it in order to create a narrative which reads like a proverb in a wider sense. Add to this, he has also resorted to intertextual quotations from Western master texts about love, such as Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, De Rougemont's *Love in the Western World*, and McCullers's *The Ballad*, in order to warn against the inter-racial solidarity based on the Bohemian ideal of erotic desire. Instead of erotic love, Solo advocates brotherly solidarity as the cement which should unite the oppressed peoples together. In his view, brotherly love is the only kind of love that is likely to spare individual identity, enhance the community members' sense of struggle, and overcome the greedy appetites of corrupt politicians. In sum, even though Armah's political program calls for the destruction of the destroyers, his aesthetics still thrives on Western texts and genres. This reliance is confirmed by his next novel *Two Thousand Seasons*, whose originality lies in its strategic and eclectic deployment of the two types of hybrid discourse.

References

- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Why Are We So Blest?*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Camus, Albert. "The Myth of Sisyphus". *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- Copley, Paul. *Narrative*. Oxon: Routledge, 2001.
- De Rougemont, Denis. *Love in the Western World*. Trans. Montgomery Belgion. 1940. Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Art of Loving*. 1957. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1975.
- Fraser, Robert. "The American Background in *Why Are We So Blest?*" *African Literature Today*, 9 (1978), 39-46.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.
- Greene, Gayle. *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change*. The University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Hassan, Ihab H. "Carson McCullers : The Alchemy of love and Aesthetics of Pain". *Recent American Fiction, Some Critical Views*. Ed. Joseph J. Waldnier. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963.
- Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*. 1962. London: Flamingo Modern Classic, 2002.
- Martens, Lorna. *The Diary Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- McCullers, Carson. *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963.
- Neu, Jerome. "Odi et Amo: On Hating the Ones We Love". *Freud and the Passions*. Ed. John O'Neill. Pennsylvania State University, 1996.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fiction*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Philips, Robert S. "Painful Love : Carson McCullers Parable". *Southwest Review* (Winter 1966). 80-86.
- Vickery, John B. "Carson McCullers : A Map of Love". *Wisconsin Studies*. (1960) 13-24.

Chapter 2:
**The *Magnalia Africana*, or Hybrid
Discourse and Salvation History in *Two
Thousand Seasons***

In the previous chapter, we have shown how Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*, presented by critics as one of his most radical fiction, is informed by an organic hybrid discourse which is at home within the popular tradition of Ghana's market writers. The intertextual construction of the narrative makes it sustain comparisons with many Western texts. Nonetheless, Armah seems to have refashioned his borrowings to wind up the genre of fiction that functions like traditional proverbs: definitely, the novel's form is another extended commentary on its content, and most of its textual borrowings fulfil didactic functions. In this chapter, we intend to investigate the narrative and language of *Two Thousand Seasons* with the aim of highlighting the hybridity of its discourse. Considering that Armah predicates this fiction on the imaginary reconstruction of Africa's past, the issue of the origin, nature and function of the historiography he deploys in the novel will be our main concerns. The motoring idea of our investigation suggests that *Two Thousand Seasons* fuses the traditional African poetics of storytelling with a historical thought that is apocalyptic and eschatological. The origin of this ideology of history is Ecclesiastical History through which the Puritans explained and construed their removal to New England. In our view, Armah borrowed and inflected this philosophy in order to articulate an analogous historical vision and produce an ideology of African history which is different from the philosophy of Negritude and colonial historiography, with which he was deeply dissatisfied.

Among all Armah's fictions, *Two Thousand Seasons* is the one which is the most noted for its reliance on the story-telling poetics and its expansive integration of oral materials. The textual and para-textual indices that anchor it in the African traditional oral performances are many and critics have not failed to pinpoint them. One of these critics is Pietro Deandrea for whom the work is an attempt at the 'griotization' of the novel, since "the storytelling features of the language are a supporting skeleton for the whole book" (2002: 10). Deandra aligns his assessment on that of Derek Wright who asserts that *Two Thousand Seasons* "is the kind of 'novel' that a griot would have written if he had access to literary form" (86). Wright's point of view is shared by Lief Lorentzon, whose extended exploration of the novel's 'unusual' we-narrator convinced him that it is "typical of the modern African epic, of which Ayi Kwei Armah's fourth novel is a most remarkable expression" (232).

The analogies that *Two Thousand Seasons* shares with the traditional African epics are strengthened by the impact of the oral poetics Armah deploys in his narrative. Steeped within the practice of intervocality, the oral style in the novel is borne by elements of satire and stylization, whose sources respectively spring from the Akans' *Halo* performances, Ghana's traditional songs of abuse, and the story-telling tradition of *Anansesem*. The poetic effects of the *Halo* performance are felt in the satiric thrust of the novel and its grotesque imagery; it corresponds to what Paul Zumthor calls the carnivalistic side of oral culture. As for the *Anansesem* tradition, they participate to a writing strategy that can be best qualified after Bakhtin's concept of stylisation. The opening passage of the novel highly evinces the orientation of this writing sensibility towards the intentional and organic hybrid forms of discourse

Springwater flowing to the desert, where you flow there is no regeneration. The desert takes. The desert knows no giving. To the giving water of your flowing it is not in the nature of the desert to return anything but destruction. Springwater flowing to the desert, your future is extinction.

Hau, people headed after the setting sun, in that direction even the possibility of regeneration is dead. There the devotees of death take life, consume it, exhaust every living thing. Then they move on, forever seeking new

boundaries. Wherever there are living remnants undestroyed, there lies more work for them. Whatever would direct itself after the setting sun, an ashen death lies in wait for it. Whichever people make the falling fire their aim, a pale extinction awaits them among the destroyers (p. xi italics retained).

In this prologue, Armah assumes the function of a story-teller and engages in a literary mode of writing that assimilates two native rhetorics, namely dirge singing and abuse poetry. To achieve the literary effects of stylisation, he inserts marked themes and stylistic elements of Ghana's traditional dirge chants in his text and re-shapes them in a literary construction built on the practice of intervocality. The intervocal relationship between Armah's prologue and Akan dirge songs shows in the thematic and stylistic parallels that bind them together. Among these parallels, we can mention the formal repetitions of sentence structures, such as 'springwater flowing to the desert', and the incremental return of key words, such as 'desert', 'sun' and 'springwater'. To these stylistic elements, we can also add the themes of death and return which are at the heart of traditional funeral chants. But the stylization Armah operates on all these elements of oral tradition does not prevent him from borrowing from the other tradition of Ghana's oral poetry, namely the satiric practice of the *Halo*, and to make it interact with other ideological voices.

If stylization in Armah's prologue appears in the intervocal relationship between his text and the traditional dirge performances, parody is made plain in the simultaneous movements of his text towards both intertextuality with Western texts and the satiric expression of the *Halo*. The interplay of these two artistic impulses can be illustrated in the allusions Armah's text sends to George Berkeley's poem "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America". George Berkeley, or Bishop Berkeley (1685-1753), was a British philosopher contemporary of John Locke. In 1729, moved by a sentiment of being excluded from the European continent, he travelled to America and formed the project of founding a college in Bermuda for training ministers for the colonies, and missionaries to the Indians. Impressed as he was by the new prospects that the American colonies seemed

to offer him, he composed a poem in which he presented the progress of human civilization as analogous to the progress of the sun around the earth, from East to West. For him, commencing in Asia, civilization moved to Europe and would complete the circuit by landing on the American continent. In the following stanza, Berkeley points out the future position of America, and its connection with its preceding empires

Westward the course of empire takes its way;
The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

The intertextual link between this stanza and the portion of Armah's prologue quoted above cannot be missed. The two passages dramatize time and speak of movement: movement of the springwater in Armah's and Empire (i.e. civilization) in Berkeley's. Besides, both involve the idea of life: life-giving water in the former, and civilization, the life of nations, in the latter. However, beyond these similarities, Armah's discourse works openly to unsettle Berkeley's racial assumptions. His image of the 'setting sun' is an unmistakable sarcastic reference to the West. As for his statement "in that direction [i.e. setting sun] even the possibility of regeneration is dead", it clearly dismisses Berkeley's faith in the Westward movement of civilization. Condensing images of death and destruction, such as in "whichever people make the falling fire their aim, a pale extinction awaits them", Armah sets also to destroy the bishop's prophecy of the rise of a new era in the American continent, as sung in these lines: "there shall be sung another golden age/the rise of empire and arts/the good and great inspiring epic rage". The sinister images of 'ashen death', 'pale extinction' and 'devotees of death', contained within Armah's lament over the African's loss of social direction, are all metaphors that arouse the pathos of menace and death. They offer his readers warnings not to search regeneration and revival in the West.

Armah's dialogization of his prologue, through the disabling of the racial assumptions patent in Berkeley's poem, and his stylization of some enduring features of his country's orature may suggest that much of his discourse is oriented towards the intentional hybridization of his borrowings from foreign texts in favour of the Africanization of his language. However, apart from this instance of ideological disjunction, the remainder of his narrative shows him more inclined towards fusing his borrowings from non-African sources than contesting and disarticulating their ideological authority. The threads of his discourse which exhibit his poetics' organic hybrid construction are the historical and religious narrative discourses through which he revises and reconstructs African history. Products of his appropriatory imagination, they are carried in his novel within its all encompassing survey of the African historical experience. They testify to the existence in his novel of an organic discursive process through which he appropriates a Western ideology of history and re-fashions its premises to construe an original African history, different from the official historiography of Negritude and the historicism inherited from the Western anthropological imagination.

Historical and religious discourses are paramount features of *Two Thousand Seasons*. The first of these features has prompted critic Keith Booker to undertake a notable contribution in order to fit the fiction within Georg Lukacs's genre of the historical novel (1997). Booker's critical endeavour relies on the claims that Armah's fiction is a historical novel engaged in the indictment of the decadent values that the colonial, bourgeois society forced upon its colonies. The second, religious, dimension, too, is deeply imbedded in the narrative. A Magister dissertation conducted at the University of Algiers (Hamadeche 2006) has shown the extent to which Armah's imagination is steeped in monotheistic religions, in spite of his text's repudiation of Islam and Christianity. Armah's borrowings from the two religions' concepts of 'prophet', 'the way', 'exile' etc, and his reinsertion of this material within local African animistic beliefs demonstrate how much

syncretic his imagination is. Syncretism being the religious version of hybridity, the student's dissertation is a successful attempt that substantiates Armah's hybrid poetics by bringing evidence of how intertextuality allows him to "subvert some versions [of Western ethnographic texts and grand narratives] and revitalise others" (31). However, even though the student mobilized postcolonial, post-structuralist and new historicist theoretical tools and pursued a comparative approach, his scholarly endeavour does not reach a systematic analysis of Armah's historiography deployed in his novel.

History and religion are conflated in *Two Thousand Seasons*. In his *Myth in Africa*, Isidore Okpewho has shown the extent to which the two discourses deeply impinge upon one another in Armah's text and attain the level of myth-making. The critic has underlined Armah's concern with the revision of traditional African myths and praised the originality of his vision: Armah, Okpewho writes, is taking "his visionary programme one step further, and in this way perhaps gives us something more than traditional myths do: the potential victory over the forces of destruction is actually realized" (214). The forceful mythopoetic thrust of the novel has led Okpewho to pinpoint some cases of similarities between some of its narrative situations and biblical archetypes. The consistency of these similarities demonstrates that *Two Thousand Seasons* may also function as a kind of a religious tract. It is the interweaving of the religious and the historical as constructed discourses involved in revisionism (polemics) and reconstruction (appropriation) that we propose to tackle in the following analysis.

Our investigation of the interplay of the writing strategies of revisionism and reconstructionism in *Two Thousand Seasons* looks forward to illustrate the hybridity of the novel's discourse through the framework of the historiography Armah deploys in his work. The origin of this historiography deutes from the Puritan ideology of Ecclesiastical history, also called Salvation, or Providential history. Armah reprocessed, refashioned and re-contextualized its main tenets to produce what may be qualified as a genealogy of African history that aspires to create a kind of ideology of history analogous to the

eschatological foundations of American exceptionalism. The strategies of hybridizing discourse are the processes through which Armah fleshes out the structure of his ideological borrowing and fulfils his revisionist and reconstructivist ambitions. They enable him to conflate indigenous oral forms, the epic and the *Halo*, with the written poetic of literary texts and to incorporate motifs and images taken from foreign and local textual sources. The interplay of orality and literacy in the novel results in two different discursive moments in the narrative: one, an agonistic moment of demystification wherein Armah contests the versions of African history as inscribed in the philosophy of Negritude and Western anthropology; two, an organic creative fusion wherein the religious historiography concurs with African oral and written texts to produce actions and situations of epic grandeur and visions of social, political and cultural redemption.

Before landing on the ground of the investigation proper, it is appropriate to situate Armah within the different ideologies of history that dominated the postcolonial intellectual scene during the publication of his novel. This endeavour is likely to demonstrate that, when he wrote his novel, Armah found himself at a political and epistemological context that bore strong affinities with the historical period in which English separatist Puritans had fled to America and developed their millennial perception of history.

The first intellectual thought confronted by Armah in his revision of Africa's past was the colonial historiography. Going back to the time of Enlightenment, this philosophy presented Africa, at its best, as a continent without history. Yet, this view did not content itself with simply denying creativity, knowledge and social organization to the black people. Helped with a cohort of missionaries, explorers and anthropologists, it succeeded to construct a huge pattern of thought which presents Africa as Europe's dark other, wherein no form of human organization and benevolence had taken place during the bygone ages. The bulk of the imaginative invention of the imperial organic intellectuals gave shape to a dense ideological construction which sustained regressive myths about the

continent, its people and its past. Most of these myths drew a negative image of Africa in order either to advertise for the supposed philanthropy and rationality of the West, or simply to sell the idea of imperial expansion for the profit-thirsty Europeans. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) are among postcolonial works which attempt to deconstruct these euro-centric myths and unveil the thrusts of power and hegemony that inform them. Though they were not available to Armah when he published his novel, we can nonetheless be sure that his artistic sensibility shared with the two studies the sentiment of deep disapprobation towards the history ascribed to Africa by its colonial masters.

Negritude philosophy, the other philosophy confronted by Armah, is a native African reaction to the Western stereotyping of the continent's identity and historical experience. A racial philosophy of renaissance and decolonization, focusing on what Senghor believed to be the peculiarities and originality of the Black race, it broke in Paris in the 1930s, and rapidly conquered the local intellectual elites, seduced as they were by the racial pride and consciousness for which it preached. In the period of independence struggle, Negritude became the blueprint for political and cultural liberation. And when most African countries gained their independence, this philosophy continued to find in the celebration of the continent's traditions and folklore and the restoration of its ancestral values the ground upon which to lay the foundations of African nationalism and revival. However, the vast intellectual terrain it conquered did not mean that it went unquestioned. Frantz Fanon's was one of the most important voices which rose to decry its excessive romanticization of the continent's historical experience. Though a former supporter of Senghor and Césaire, Fanon turned to revolutionary politics and advocated armed struggle as the best means to restore nationhood. Many other intellectuals followed on his wake, especially during the post-independence period.

It was in Anglophone Africa and during the post-colonial period that Negritude was most resisted. Ezekiel Mphahlele, Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah are among the

continent's intellectual figures who openly declared their opposition to the organic correspondence between this philosophy and European thought. In an article published in 1967, the last named harshly castigated Senghor's personality and considered his ideology vitiated; "Senghor", Armah writes, "is a colonial political boss, necessarily janusfaced, guiltily hating and despising his black roots but being pushed back to them" (1967: 21). As for his philosophy of liberation, it is a "flight from the classical Cartesian big white father France into the warm, dark, sensuous embrace of Africa into the receiving uterus of despised Africa" (ibid. 19). Negritude, Armah adds, is an attempt to perpetuate Western assumptions and stereotypes in reverse because "the image of Africa available to Senghor is obtained through the agency of white men's eyes, the eyes of anthropologists and ethnologists, the slummers of imperialism" (ibid.)*.

Armah's impatience with Senghor and his Negritude indicates the extent of his alienation from the continent's official historical image. Coupled with his deep despair at African governments' capacity for national recovery, strongly voiced in his early fictions, this alienation might have pushed him to embrace a philosophy of history which is altogether different from the one(s) professed and endorsed by the Continent's nationalists. Aware as he was of the importance of history for any attempt at cultural revival in Africa, he had surely found in the Puritans' experience an outlet through which to envision an imaginative reconstruction of the past of the Black race and to project his ideology of history. Ironically, the epistemic foundations of his ideology seem to spring from the sources of American exceptionalism, the ones that his character Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?* sets consciously to destroy in an argument with an American student called Mike. A believer in New England's sense of mission, Mike affirms that America is "completely innocent of those crimes against humanity which have turned the European experience into such an exquisitely ambiguous heritage" (98). Developing a scheme of

* Armah's attitude towards Negritude should not be taken literally. Actually his is a too much inconsistent position. For further details read Ode Ogede's "Negritude and Africa: Armah's Account" (1993).

thought borrowed from the Pilgrims Fathers' rhetoric, he is also convinced that "the myth of paradise finds its full meaning here in the New World" (ibid.). Mike pursues his argument further and explains

Paradise is a state of grace, and grace is space – the distance that separates the holy from the merely human, the sacred from the profane, separates and protects. That distance that removes the motion of the greek athlete, effortlessly perfect, from the awkward stumblings of unblest humans, that distance that marks off the pedigreed race horse from labouring hybrids – that distance is grace. And that is the distance between the American commonwealth and the remnant of the world. It is the measure of our blessedness (p.98-9).

Inherent in this passage are Perry Miller's concepts and thoughts on the ultimate goal and mission of the Puritan migration to America, announced in his *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956). One of these concepts is the puritan dream of a model society built in purity by the elect in the new continent out of their conceptualisation of the wilderness. Though repudiated by Modin, much of this millenarian thought informs the experience of the twenty African youngsters, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, whose initiation into manhood in the traditional African rite of passage leads them to play a providential role in the liberation struggle of their tribe and assume responsibility over the historical fate of the whole continent. The intentions and purposes of this guerrilla faction shows that Armah wilfully returned to the Puritan's eschatology, as interpreted in Miller's text, in order to articulate an African sense of mission and politics of identity. The main thrust of this ideology revolves around Armah's dissatisfaction with the historical frameworks within which African historical experience was hitherto inscribed, and his millenarian ambition to bring reformation to the present-day African 'corrupt' governments. Indeed, central to Miller's interpretation of the Puritan colonial experience is the assumption that their emigration to New England would entail the fulfilment of religious reformation in America and then the exportation of this reformation to their mother country. Miller writes that the early Puritans who removed to the New World were

an organized task force of Christians, executing a flank attack on the corruption of Christendom. These Puritans did not flee to America; they went in order work out that complete reformation which was not yet accomplished in

England and Europe, but which would quickly be accomplished if only the saints back there had a working return model to guide them (11).

It is clear from this passage that, according to Miller, the root causes of the Puritan 'errand into the wilderness' was their lack of identification with the Church of England, and that their political agenda involved a return to their native country in order to bring religious reformation to it. Avihu Zakai concurs with this idea and writes: "separation from – and not identification with – England constituted [...] the very theme of the Puritan migration to America [...] for according to the Puritans only alienation from sinful England could bring them a true reformation, and hence to reconciliation with God" (122). The separation as demarcation and the return as reformation entailed in this ideology partake to the same spirit that animates Armah's revolutionary fraction. After their ultimate exploit of freeing their tribe from the corrupt rule of 'the parasites' and the political domination of 'the destroyers', the narrator warns that this is only an intermediary step in the whole process of purifying the continent from foreign rule: "the way is not an old road ready for consumers to travel on; the way is a call to creation. Easy it is to fall into the trap of loneliness if we forget that our people are not just of the present, not just the walking multitudes of murdered souls and zombies now around us, but many, many more gone and many, many more to come. [...] What are we if we see nothing beyond the present, hear nothing from the ages of our flowing, and in all our existence can utter no necessary preparation for the future way?" (p.203-4).

The millenarian hopes enclosed in this quotation entail more than a similarity in the political agenda between Armah's revolutionary youths and the New England church leaders. Through the narrative, the African writer makes his protagonists play in a time and space settings that are deeply embedded in salvation history. Simultaneously, he also arms them with a critical awareness and historical consciousness that enable them to reinterpret Africa's past in light of his own struggle with the colonial historiography and the Negritude doctrine. In this way, Armah succeeds to make a purposeful use of history

for polemical ends. However, as we have already outlined, Armah broke with colonial history only to turn to another Western ideology of history, namely the Puritan Ecclesiastical History.

But what is Ecclesiastical History? And how can we vindicate the appropriateness of Armah's recourse to it? The answers to these two questions lie in Avihu Zakai's study *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (1992). This book explores the ideological origins of the Puritan migration to America and their political, social and religious experience in New England. For Zakai, in order that the Puritans could explain their dissent from the Church of England and fulfil their 'mission' in the New World, they constructed a mode of historical thought that was apocalyptic and eschatological, and created categories of sacred space and sacred time. The two dimensions of space and time enabled them to reconstruct a unique culture wherein all aspects of their life were said to rest upon the sacred word of God. Zakai's identification of migration as the heart of Ecclesiastical history and the distinction he establishes between the two types of Elizabethan plantations in the New World are paramount to our investigation into the historiography of Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*.

In his autobiographical *The Eloquence of the Scribes**, Armah relates how, during his childhood, he felt "fascination" with the native narrative forms of *abakosem* and *anansesem*, and how these narratives "deepened into increasingly systematic, specialised studies in fiction, drama and poetry, on the one hand (equivalent to *anansesem*), and, on the other, history, philosophy, sociology, (the equivalent of (*abakosem*))" (2006: 41). Much of these narratives dealt with the migrations of the Akan people and their settlement in present Ghana. They were elaborated from a version of Akan chronicle published in 1939 by Reverend Gaddieh Acquah, a Fantse convert to Christianity (ibid.). In this book, Acquah assured that the Akans had their origin in North Africa, in the far-off Sudan, the

* The quotations from this book are taken from the first instalments in its serialisation published in *New African magazine* in 2006.

site “of a very big black nation” (quoted in *ibid.*). But after the intrusion of Islam, the Akans rejected this religion and spread East and West of the continent. Those who travelled east reached Benin and then joined Ghana by the sea, whereas those who went west, they founded Techiman, the Akans’ ancestors (*ibid.*).

Armah’s fascination with the natives’ tales of origins, together with his reading and approval of Acquah’s chronicle of Ghana’s history, calls for two remarks with regard to the appropriateness of the Ecclesiastical History approach to the historical perspective of his *Two Thousand Seasons*. First, Armah, and just like Reverend Acquah before him, seems to define the history of the Akans in the light of their religious dissent from Islam and their subsequent escape from the bounds of this religion. Second, Armah seems to endorse Acquah’s account of the Akan stories of origin, since he does not speak of any resistance to his chronicle. Considering that Acquah was a convert to Christianity, one wonders the extent to which his history of Ghana was influenced by his readings of the Bible, the source from which the Puritans, too, developed their ideology of history. Yet whatever the extent of this religious influence on Acquah was, and by oblique affiliation on Armah himself, it is an established fact that, since his childhood, Armah was impressed by the migration of his ancestors. And when he came to write his novel, it is likely that the Puritan experience gave him a structural and ideological pattern through which to express and develop the history of his people. We have already brought evidence of his contact with Perry Miller’s *Errand into the Wilderness*, a study which addresses the ideological foundations of the Puritans’ migration to the New World*. In what follows, we will strengthen this assumption by showing how the definition of Ecclesiastical history and its characteristics apply on Armah’s historical ideology in *Two Thousand Seasons*.

* Some early (pan-)African nationalists, too, believed in the ‘providential’ aspect of the African historical experience, including the episodes of slavery and the Middle Passage. A case in point is Edward Wilmot Blyden, whose racial ideas pervasively permeate Armah’s history novels. This influence strengthens further our thesis as to Armah’s recuperation of the Puritan ideology in order to chart an original ideology of history.

Avihu Zakai describes Ecclesiastical history as “a system of thought in which history is defined exclusively as the story of salvation and redemption, comprising a special dimension of space and time in which progress is made from promise to fulfilment, from prophecy to salvation” (4). Central to this definition is a strong element of religious and prophetic revelation, whose fulfilment seems to be the focal point in the progress of historical time. Considering that Armah is an atheist and his narrative abjures both Christianity and Islam, these two dimensions may seem incompatible with the secular vision of his historical thought. However, to claim so is to ignore the religious dimension he grafts to his narrative and the millennial expectations he attaches to it. Anoa’s prophecy and its influence on the unfolding of the action of the protagonists, not to say on the unfolding of the historical events mentioned in the novel, confirm the metaphysical dimension of Armah’s epistemology, even though he takes care to distance himself from the faiths of Christianity and Islam. It is probably this religious dimension that Isidore Okpewho had in mind when he wrote that Anoa’s appeal is analogous to Jesus’ exhortation to his people to cast away all family ties and sentimental connection in favour of a more rewarding and enduring ideal. Okpewho concluded: “whether he likes or not, the socialist vision which underlies the concept of ‘the way’ bears a strong relation with Judeo-Christian myth and dogma” (214).

Anoa is an uncommon girl and her utterance is an unusual utterance: “at the time she [Anoa] spoke she was not of an age to have gained wisdom from experience. She had not lived enough. [...But] thought seized her, and young as she was her seriousness itself imposed a silence around her no matter where she was” (p.14). Hers were not the first prophetic words to be mouthed in Anoa; many minor voices announced prophecies similar to hers: “Anoa was not the first, not the second, not the third to speak. Hers, however, was a different, fuller utterance” (p.13). Thus, Anoa’s utterance was a major prophecy, a culminating event, announced by minor ones. Just like the people of Israel who received many revelations before the final redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, the

tribe of Anoa had witnessed a lineage of seers, hearers and utterers, all of whom announced and foretold the definitive revelation of the young progeny. Definitely, Anoa's speech was the culmination of all previous prophecies and the final, ever-lasting word, the one which plainly talked to the people about themselves, their past and their future. It encapsulates in itself and structures many aspects of the salvation history Armah is charting for his people.

The portrait of Anoa is not without reminding us the character of Anowa of Ama Ata Aidoo's eponymous play. Aidoo's play (1970) relates to the African history from an ideological perspective that resembles Armah's approach to the African past in *Two Thousand Seasons*. Set in the middle of the 19th century, during the first days of the English colonization of Gold Coast, *Anowa* revolves, among other themes, around the issues of community and slavery. The head-strong heroine, Anowa, who is predestined by her parents to become a priestess, is the character through whom Aidoo presses her anti-slavery sentiments. Because she marries the 'good for nothing' Kofi Ako without her parents' consent, Anowa is obliged by her mother to leave home and to lead an indigent life with her husband, away from their native town. Overwhelmed by his poverty, Kofi Ako turns rapidly into slave dealings with white traders in the coast in order to improve his material living conditions. But his wife disapproves of his business and withdraws into herself. The play ends with a conflict between Anowa and Kofi, which ushers in their death.

Anowa's repudiation of slavery credits her with a prophetic vision which predicts the atrocities of the Middle Passage. In his novel, Armah appropriates both the character's vision and her perceptive qualities and expands them in order to give substance to Anoa's prophecy of one thousand seasons of destruction and annihilation. The stylization he operates on Aidoo's heroine is achieved through her temporal removal from the middle of the 19th century to the early beginnings of the Anoa's community's migrations. By thus embedding her in a distant time, he enables her to emerge as a prophetess from a time

that is mythical and epic and which is linked to the ancestral Akan world of origins. The two visions she foresees in her early youth further amplify her grounding in mythical time.

It was in a season of rain, Armah informs us, that Anoa spoke, in two voices. Armah presents her first voice as one which spoke of “a terrifying catalogue of deaths – deaths of the body, deaths of the spirit; deaths of single, lost ones, deaths of groups snared in some killing pursuit; death of nations, the threatened death of our people” (p.15). To this vision of hardship, torments and destruction, Anoa added another prophecy, serene and optimistic: “for every shrieking horror the first voices had given sound to, this other voice gave calm causes, indicated effects, and never tired of iterating the hope at the issue of all disasters: the rediscovery and the following again of our way, the way” (p.16). A strong sense of history emerges out of Anoa’s utterance. Armah writes that “until the utterance of Anoa the reason itself for counting seasons had been forgotten” (p.2). In other words, Anoa’s prophecy is the dividing line between a primordial past, probably assuming the form of an African utopia embedded in an uncharted African setting, and a sacred, historical time which relates to the future vicissitudes of the tribe, its struggles, persecutions and triumphs.

The link between prophecy and history implied in Anoa’s utterance is at the heart of Armah’s eschatological thought. In their historiography, the Puritans placed prophecy within history and situated history within prophecy. As Zakai puts it, “sacred and profane history [...] became one and the same, giving rise to a new sense of history” (54). This new sense of history fused the sacred with the secular and produced a belief in man’s ability to comprehend the course of history (ibid.24). One of its most important achievements was the transformation of the saints’ role in the world, from alienation from the world to active participation within it (ibid.). Hence, salvation, providential history enabled Protestants to develop a new critical awareness and historical consciousness through which they examined the English historical context and interpreted their break with Rome in increasingly nationalistic terms.

The perception of history as an economy of salvation, involving secular and divine elements and entailing a special dimension of space and time in which progress is made from promise to its fulfilment, informs Armah's historical project, too. The African writer correlates the realization of Anoa's second prophecy, the vision of salvation and regeneration, with the people's return to "the way": "two thousand seasons, a season going into it, a second thousand crawling maimed from it, will teach you everything about enslavement, the destruction of souls, the killing of bodies, the infusion of violence into every breath, every drop, every morsel of your sustaining air, your water, your food. *Till you come again upon the way*" (p.17 my emphasis). Inherent in this prophecy is a strong eschatological sensibility conferred to the concept of 'the way'. Presented as a sort of religion "whose beginning is reciprocity, [and] whose continuation is reciprocity", the way is much more than a simple tribal ethics. It is also the vision of a future re-unification of Africa, the apocalyptic promise of a glory to come, analogous to the Kingdom of God in the Bible.

The full implications of Anoa's prophecy may be noticed in the unfolding of the actions of the novel, which imply further than the personal fates of the twenty rebellious youngsters. These developments assert the centrality of Anoa's personality and vision within Armah's salvation history, just in the same way Christ was the main focus of the Puritan Church history. For the Puritans, Christ's first coming augured the beginning of history. The latter gradually unfolds towards the divine plan of his second coming, which signifies the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God. Likewise, for the tribe Anoa, Anoa's prophecy was the beginning of the counting of seasons, i.e. history. It is through faith in her vision that the tribe secures participation in salvaging Africa's tormented condition. Simultaneously, all subsequent African history moves towards the fulfilment of her two prophecies, the one of destruction, first, and then recovery. In this sense, the tribe's history would bear the mark of Anoa's first vision, until that the

continent will recover its unity and return to the way of reciprocity preached by the prophetess.

By configuring Anoa and her vision as the centre of Akan history and its secular religion, Armah has drawn the centre of the salvation history he is creating for his people. Two other components are necessary for him to re-contextualize the Protestants' ecclesiastical history and construe an analogous salvation history to his people. These are the agent(s) through which to implement the millennial revelation of the way, and a sense of (providential) struggle through which to give sense to the action of Anoa's faithful subjects. These two components are embodied in Protestant Ecclesiastical history respectively by the institution of the Church and the apocalyptic struggle between "the city of God" and the "city of Satan" (Zakai 5). The Church is "the spiritual body of Christ" since, until Christ's Second Coming, it is the faith in the Church which determines history (ibid.). In other words, the Church is the instrument of Christ without which there is no salvation. As for the apocalyptic struggle, it is the very theme of Protestant history, the scenario through which the Church attempts to bring the fallen world to the reconciliation with God. In this sense, history is interpreted as a "divine epic of salvation and redemption", stretching back in time to creation and pointing forward to the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God (ibid).

The 'people of the way' are Armah's body of followers through whom he gives life to the spirit of Anoa's prophecy. In these men, the ideal of reciprocity is fully embodied. Bent on action, these people are pathfinders actively engaging the 'destroyers' hegemonic practices and developing strategies of cultural and military resistance. Their liberating vision is fully endorsed by the twenty youngsters, eleven girls and nine boys, who perform the initiation rites of their tribe. These youths ensure the spiritual continuum between the departed and the living. What distinguishes them is no personal, individual achievement; they are rather noted for the transcendental, providential force and the communal spirit which inhabits them. The narrator says: "there is indeed a great force in the world, a force

spiritual and able to shape the physical universe, but that force is not something cut off, not something separate from ourselves. It is an energy in us, strongest in our working, breathing, thinking together as one people; weakest when we are scattered, confused, broken into individual, unconnected fragments” (p.63).

All the twenty initiates are aware of the debasement of their community. Their awareness leads them, first, to resist the corrupt rule of king Koranche. And when the latter sells them to slavery, they also experience the hardship of the Middle Passage; an ultimate initiation, which develops in them the skills of guerrilla warfare against the menace of ‘the white death’. Guided by wise Isanusi, the handful of people begin an armed struggle for the liberation of the land of Anoa. Launching military assaults from their jungle hideout, they finally succeed to free their land from Koranche’s rule and get rid of the white presence in the town. Finally, the communal narrator, who represents all the youths, concludes their story by an appeal to the future generations to step in the shoes of these pathfinders and walk in their footsteps in order ensure the permanence of the spirit of the way, the principles of reciprocity and communalism.

Classless, united, dedicated and disciplined, the twenty initiates are inhabited by a providential spirit. Their struggle against foreign invaders and their local stooges achieves sense in the wider historical framework of the Akans’ ancestral struggle against foreign domination. With an eye on the tribe’s present destruction, made of (royal) treasons and dissent from the ‘way’, and another eye on the fulfilment of Anoa’s millennial prophecy of regeneration, these people’s struggle infuses meaning to African history at large and brings it to bear on the continent’s past, present and future. The wide time span implied in the youths’ experience elevates African history in Armah’s narrative to a nearly divine epic of salvation and redemption. Through this epic, Armah transforms the Protestant religious experience into a racial one, without ever losing sight of the sacred, transcendental dimension that his story/history ought to carry.

Hence, the ideology of history in *Two Thousand Seasons* looks forward to achieve three objectives, which are all analogous to the objectives of Puritan historiography:

One, to create a millennial eschatology based on the religion of 'the way' and Anoa's prophecy. This creation can be paralleled to the Protestants' belief in Christ's Second Coming and the approaching of the Kingdom of God;

Two, to append to the fulfilment of Anoa's prophecy a dimension of sacred historical time. Sacred time enables Armah to assert Africa's place in historical time and contest the old prejudices about Africa inherited from colonialism. This objective can be paralleled to the Protestants' attempt to create a dimension of sacred time in order to historicize their experience in the New World;

Three, to provide directions for the future generations and incite for further actions in order to complete the continent's liberation. This objective finds a parallel in the Puritans' endeavour to establish political and religious autonomy in New England, by desacralizing the old continent's political and religious centres (England and Rome) and transforming their colony into the centre of Ecclesiastical History.

By catering and accounting for these three dimensions of time, and by correlating them with Anoa's primordial prophecy, Armah has created a dimension of time which is analogous to the Puritans' sacred time.

Besides appropriating the three components of Puritan Ecclesiastical History and re-contextualizing the dimension of sacred time entailed in it, Armah also appropriates and inflects the Puritan notion of sacred space. This notion is strongly bound to the English Protestants' apocalyptic tradition which upheld the idea that God's providence would select a (holy) land upon which His chosen people would play a crucial role in the unfolding of the Christian drama of salvation. Immanent in this creation of sacred space is the idea of migration and the ethical and religious meanings inscribed in it. In this context, Zakai identifies two models of English migrations, and thus two types of Elizabethan plantations, whether they are dominated by Protestant or Puritan thoughts.

The first, Protestant, was based on the Genesis model. It posits “a peaceful religious migration”, extending rather than challenging the mother country. Contrasting this model is a second, Puritan rather than Protestant, type of migration, based on the Exodus model. Here the country of origin is condemned as immoral and repudiated as the centre of sacred history. This ‘judgemental crisis’ is followed by an ‘apocalyptic migration’; America is substituted for England as the centre of sacred time and the site of the coming kingdom.

Both ideological models described above can be checked in the geographical movements of the people of Anoa in *Two Thousand Seasons*. Armah writes: “we are not a stagnant people, hating motion. But in that fertile time before Anoa’s utterance even our longer journeys were absorbed in a lasting evenness. From that long, forgetful peace our exile has been harsh and steep has been our descent” (p.3). This quote makes it clear that the people of Anoa witnessed two kinds of migration. The first was peaceful journeys ending always in harmony with the host land; they mostly happened before Anoa’s utterance. The second was forced “exile” from the land; this type of movement occurred after Anoa’s utterance. The development of these two types of migration shows the extent to which they can be analogous to the two models of English colonization of the New World, as described in Zakai’s study of the history of the English migration to America.

As it transpires from the writings of English Protestants’ clerical elite, the ideological foundations of the settlement of Virginia were drawn from the Genesis, more particularly from Abraham’s migration. The latter symbolized a peaceful migration based upon God’s promise to Abraham to make out of him and his seeds a great nation. The significance of this geographical movement shows in God’s promise to a chosen nation that it should inherit a new land and spread the Gospel. Hence, the imagery of Genesis marked the colonizing activities of English who settled Virginia. It tended to reflect the idea that “as God made Abraham into a great nation, so now it was through England, the elect nation and the locus of providential history, that God would fulfil His promises and

prophecies, both in the Old and the New World” (Zakai 63). In Protestant epistemology, therefore, America could assume the dimension of sacred space only through its association with Britain, God’s elect nation. Otherwise, the New World would have no significance in Protestant providential history.

Even though, later, the Puritans grafted many political motives and millenarian hopes to the Protestants’ model of the Genesis type of migration, the Protestant migration was initially a peaceful removal which aimed at transforming America “from *Terra Incognita* to *Terra Cognita* in the English mind” (Ibid. 102). Robert Gray, a Protestant preacher, recognized that, like the children of Joseph in the Bible, “the duty of the people” of England “is to enlarge their territories and dilate their [geographical] borders” (quoted in *ibid.* 103). Notwithstanding his millenarian ideology, William Symonds developed a similar thought. Interpreting Abraham’s migration as a ‘heavenly calling’ which commended him “to take a journey” out of his land, Symonds stressed the idea that the calling was not a cosmographical but a moral one; it was “subject to the general law of replenishing the earth” and inhabiting all lands (*ibid.*107). It is this peaceful expansionist perspective, concerned with the exploration of the earth and taking profit out of its resources, that offers a parallel to the geographical movements of Anoa tribe before Anoa’s prophecy.

The communal narrator of *Two Thousand Seasons* locates their home somewhere in North East of Africa, about present-day Sudan or Egypt. However, the narrator does not seem willing to give a precise location of their land, nor to map the different locations of their geographical displacements. Armah writes: “of our first home we have more certainty. That it was here, on this land, we know. We have crossed lakes and forded rivers changing resting places, but never have we had to leave our land itself, though we have roamed thousands of days over it, and lit a thousand thousand fires in thirty thousand places” (p.3). This statement connects the motion of the tribe with a geographical description of a vast landscape. It tries to define and appropriate African space by

connecting it to the migrations of the people. Though the firestones may hint at an attempt at historicizing the space, the vague and general configuration of the landscape makes it a symbolic rather than a real space. The symbolism of this landscape makes it assume the form of a utopian land, unspoilt by the tribe's intrusion into it. It is no wonder that just below this passage Armah writes: "this land is ours, not through murder, not through theft, not by the way of violence or any other trickery [...]. Here we began. Here we will continue [...]" (p. 3-4). Obviously, this chunk of the text alludes to the subsequent foreign invasions which claimed African lands for themselves. Inherent in it is Armah's hinted assertion that the land belongs to the one who identifies harmoniously with it, not the one who destroys it.

Anoa's harmonious interaction with African places is evidenced in those "movers in the mind" (p.5) who travelled so far in the land that they left but dim remembrances. These communities' movement calls to mind English Protestants' migration to the New World and the religious interpretation they gave to their removal. Of these African communities and their motives Armah's narrator says: "their news was also of relationships of a beauty still to be realized, of paths still to be found. Their news was of the way, the forgotten and the future way" (p.5). What this passage suggests is that these communities' journeys were spiritual ones; they were prompted by a desire to enlarge the ethical frame of the community by pursuing a quest dedicated to its moral improvement. To a certain extent, the migration of these people can be contrasted to the movement of subsequent factions whose expansion on the hospitable lands of the continent was triggered exclusively by motives of subsistence.

Those who journeyed for subsistence merely responded to the call of seasons and weather conditions. Their migrations led them across rivers, mountains and forests. Unlike their ancestors, who spread "connected over an open land" (p.5), theirs was a forced movement, which caused the dispersal of the primordial community. For instance, the people of Antobam moved to a forest because their soil was no more fertile; Tano were

forced out of their home because rain turned their land into soggy dough; Ambantem migrated because drought dried their soil. The treks of these tribes are here to testify that Africans knew how to interact positively with the African landscape, without ever offending its land, nor emptying it off its riches.

Armah's narrator devotes but a short narrative space to record the motion of the early African tribes. Migration achieves significance in the course of his story/history only after the bloody contacts induced by foreign white intrusions to the continent. It is the confrontation with the Arab 'predators' which gives Anoa reasons to move away from its land and transforms its tribal experience into a historical one. Through the contact with the Arabs, first, and the Europeans, next, migration achieves prominence in the narrative as a dramatic event which ideologizes the entire historical imagination of the fiction. At the same time, the revolutionary significance accorded to migration as a flight for racial survival and regeneration testifies to the extent to which the Puritan, separatist eschatology fired Armah's historical imagination. In the context of early English settlements in America, Puritan eschatology operated a 'revolutionary shift' in the Protestants' perception of providential history and fashioned "a new vision of America as an independent and autonomous sacred space within the confines of providential history" (Zakai 130). It is this revolutionary dimension, entailed in the puritan migration to the New World, which Armah exploited in order to dramatize Anoa's experience within the confines of Anoa's prophecy.

Unlike the Protestants' migration to America, the Puritan removal was an intentional repudiation of England as the centre of salvation history. In the context of their theocratic universe, their migration transformed the New England wilderness into 'the new stage of acts' with the puritan emigrants as the new 'actors' (ibid.122). Hence, they modelled their migration on the Exodus type and perceived it as an escape from the impending judgement to fall upon England. For them, New England was both the place of hiding from the divine punishment to come upon the mother country and the land of

ecclesiastical experiment. Thus, the Puritans rooted their migration in a 'radical new ideology', whose premises ultimately meant the separation of the New World from the Old. Zakai states: "Puritans construed the first original American ideology which stressed, for the first time since the discovery of America, that the New World had a unique destiny of its own within the boundaries of sacred, ecclesiastical history" (ibid. 130).

'Errand' and 'Wilderness' are two concepts intrinsically woven in the Puritan version of Ecclesiastical history. Interpreting their pilgrimage as an 'errand' from a doomed world to an unknown place of perils, the Puritans came rapidly to associate their experience in New England with the wilderness state or condition. Their 'Errand into the Wilderness' became the sacred, prophetic, and redemptive "Church of the Wilderness," through which they attempted to desacralize England in order to make possible the sacralization of New England. The 'Errand of the Church of the Wilderness' was, therefore, both apocalyptic *flight* into the wilderness for shelter and refuge and *reformation* in a location devoid of any corrupted religious life and experience. In this eschatology, and amidst the believers' religious fervour, wilderness acquired a singular formative and redemptive role. To let Zakai speak for himself, "the wilderness was [for the Puritans] a place of temptation and danger, or the realm of demons and death. And yet, it was the place of covenant, as well as the place of refuge, shelter, purgation, and consecration" (ibid.147).

The meaning of sacred errand in the wilderness as a radical and uncompromising quest, inherent in the Puritan historical imagination and their ideological experience, finds its full consecration in Anoa's migrations in *Two Thousand Seasons*. Aware as he was of the exceptional experience of the Puritans in the New World as a minority, persecuted group looking for religious and political reforms, Armah modelled the journeys and motives of Anoa and the twenty youngsters on the Puritan eschatology. For this, he first borrowed the framework of the Puritans' 'providential' errand and their settlement in New England and then conceptualized the journeys of his primordial African tribe and its

establishment in the town of Anoa in order to flesh out his borrowed ideological outline. By so doing, Armah aimed at imbuing Africa, so far the land of wilderness in European imagination, with sacred, redemptive significance. The underlying structure of his historical creation is the tribe's quest for the fulfilment of Anoa's millenarian prophecy of the regeneration of Africa from the scars of foreign colonisations; a quest that can be fulfilled only by the retrieval of the eschatological meaning of 'the way' and the faithfulness to its providential spirit. William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* can prove to be enlightening on the way Armah's imagination projects the Puritans' eschatology and their concrete, historical voyage through the Atlantic on the first migrations of Anoa in the African continent.

The first movement towards the land of Anoa, i.e. modern Ghana, was triggered by the intrusion of the Arabs to the community. Welcomed into their home as poor 'beggars' needing hospitality, these 'white' foreigners rapidly proved themselves 'predators', that treated their hosts as animals and turned their women into playthings for sexual pleasure. The 'predators' brought also with them a 'pernicious' religion which ensured the 'spiritual enslavement' of the blacks even after the revolt of the women which had forced them out. A first result of native conversions to the religion of Islam was the splitting of the tribe into different warring factions. Willing neither to give up the religion of 'the Way' and embrace a new religion, nor to cause further schism and bloodshed among their community, the majority of the people decides to go on a long journey searching for a new a land. Behind their journey into unknown and dangerous places, faithfulness to the traditional way of reciprocity seems to have been the most ultimate motive: "for how were we, a people of friendship, a people of reciprocity, people of the way, how were we to accept a road of life constructed by a god of hate, god of unreasoning violence, a childish god who promises each of his heavy-lidded dotard slave followers virgins for his final, unending lechery?" (p.42).

Much of the above statement of fidelity to 'the Way' and the militant spirit inscribed in it echo the Puritans' dedication to their reformed Church. Vindicating their removal from Leyden to America, William Bradford wrote that one ultimate reason for the pilgrims' exile was in accordance with "the divine proverb, that a wise man seeth the plague when it cometh, and hideth himself". In light of this dictum, he envisioned the Separatists and their experience as "skillful and beaten soldiers" who "were fearful either to be entrapped or surrounded by their enemies so as they should neither be able to fight nor to fly". From his prolonged sojourn in Holland, Bradford was also convinced that only the migration to America could put an end to all his brethrens' sufferings and miseries, because 'in this wilderness [America]', the Lord "Us shelter still in th' shadow of [His] wings". Much of this Puritan wisdom seems to be projected in the behaviour of the people of the Way in Armah's narrative. As already mentioned, these people are dedicated to their faith in the ideals of reciprocity, wholeness and the prophetic vision of Anoa. Their long journey south of the Sahara and the series of tribulations that ensue it further evidence their commitment.

The road of escape led Anoa's community to encounter many other tribes, with whom they always interacted positively, by sticking to the principle of reciprocity that forms the marrow of 'the way'. In one of these towns, they were offered plenty of food and water. Were they not a friendly people faithful to the ideal of reciprocity, they would have established themselves among them. But the search for a homeland prompted them to travel further. Yet the route was not always hospitable; desolation and death claimed many places: "we came to a large town, larger than where we had stopped among the gentle people. But here only the physical place was left [...]. There was not one living creature there. Death had visited this place, and time had passed over it. There were no corpses, only skeletons" (p.46-7). The desolation of this place dispirited most of the people, who started to feel assailed from everywhere by death. Their sufferings were relieved for a moment when they crossed a peaceful passage which healed their wounds

and enabled the regeneration of the whole community. However, this was a momentary relief, since news of an abrupt change in the character of the place rapidly reached them. Actually, a vast area of bog lands stretched itself before them and barred their passage to the land that the pathfinders had already located farther ahead. The crossing of the bog was so tiresome that some of the people refused to move. All the four pathfinders who had reached the end of the swamp went delirious and three among them died. Their death settled more doubt and anxiousness among the community, especially as the bog land retreated only to leave space for a hilly landscape. But the hills were the last ordeal before that the people reached the land of their dream and settled there.

The hardships encountered by the people of Anoa and their crossing of the bog land is not without reminding us the Exodus of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, because both are mass migrations involving escape from religious and political oppression and the passage of a whole people across a vast, hostile landscape. However, the Puritans, too, projected this archetype on their experience of exile. For instance, in his diary, William Bradford identifies the Atlantic Ocean with the desert of Sinai and projects most of the calamities that befell Moses' people during their way to the Promised Land on the Puritans' troubles during the sea voyage to Cape Cod. Of the crossing of the Atlantic, Bradford writes that it was "the time of most distress", which left most passengers in a "low & sicke condition". Battling against the fierceness of the ocean and disease, half of the pilgrims died. Nonetheless this was an occasion which showed their 'true piety', their fervent love for the 'way of God' and also demonstrated love for one another as true Christians.

The significance of the bog land and the furious ocean, respectively in Armah's novel and Bradford's diary, is encoded in the symbolism of the Desert in Old Testament. According to Eric Voegelin, the Desert is not only a redemptive space, but also a "symbol of a historical impasse. It [is] not a specific but the eternal impasse of historical existence in the "world", that is, in the cosmos in which empires rise and fall [...]. When the world

has become Desert, man is at last in the solitude in which he can hear thunderingly the voice of the spirit that with its urgent whispering has already driven and rescued him” (quoted in Zakai 148). As a redemptive space, implying suffering and hardship, the passage of the swamps refers to the physical and spiritual initiation of the whole people. But as an historical impasse, it problematizes the issue of space embedded in the possession of African lands and riches. Before this cathartic event, Armah’s configuration of space is vague; it draws a vast, utopian land marked by grasslands and rivers which function as archetypal images of fertility and bounty. But when the people of Anoa cross the bog and settle in a new homeland near the ocean, Armah endows his setting with definite and concrete topographical contours. The sharp change in his spacial descriptions informs his attempt to historicise the African space. It also discloses his intention to counter the arguments of Western imperial narratives, such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, which present Africa as an empty, blank space to be subdued for the service of European Empires and civilization.

The parallels between Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* and Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* may be stopped at the point of Anoa’s crossing of the swamp. But Armah’s appropriation and re-contextualisation of the Puritans’ experience can be pushed further since his literary imagination pursues historico-ideological ends analogous to the apocalyptic eschatology utilized by the English Puritans to vindicate their break with the religious and political authorities in the Old Continent. The appearance among Anoa’s community of monarchy and the subsequent rebellion which follows Koranche’s corrupt rule strengthen further our assumption as to Armah’s refraction of salvation history in his narrative. The narrator of *Two Thousand Seasons* calls Anoa’s first monarchs “new ostentatious cripples [...] with deep inadequacies of the soul” (p.61). For him, they operated a deep alteration of the egalitarian principle of the tribe. One such alteration of the spirit of communalism is the rise of new social classes in the tribe, whose stratification was until then alien to Anoa. A direct outcome of the new political order, class

stratification implied hierarchical relations and feudal practices which are incompatible with the traditional social organization. King Koranche exemplifies the most despised aspects of this system.

A son of an incestuous king, Koranche knew an unusual childhood. His failure to undergo the tribal ritual initiations to manhood set him apart from the youths of his age and alienated him further from Anoa's ideals of unity and reciprocity. As a consequence, when he acceded to the throne, common welfare meant nothing to him. His exercise of power becomes rather synonymous with exclusive accumulation of wealth and privileges. With such selfish objectives in mind, Koranche isolates the community's true *fundis*, the masters of eloquence such as Isanusi, and surrounds himself with corrupt courtiers, whose rhetorical powers falsify the reality of his policy and ensure the pacification of the growing discontent of the tribesmen. He also operates political junctions with the white invaders at Poano in order to consolidate further his tyrannical rule and engage in trade with them. The corruption of Koranche sets him as the prototype of pre-colonial African chiefs who, in the words of Armah's first novel, "sold their people and were celestially happy with the fruit of the trade". Simultaneously, Koranche is also a Koomson; that is a postcolonial corrupt and decadent leader bent on dilapidating the country's riches.

King Koranche is a character that functions more at a literary than a historical frame of interpretations. His absolute power and physical and psychological infirmities are tokens which allude to the heroic figure of Sundjata, the hero of the Mandingo epic. By and large, Armah intends the parallels between the two characters as vitriolic attacks on the native pre-colonial kingship and the heroic tradition of African oral epics. Most of these attacks are consistent elements of the mock heroic tradition and parody inherent in the Halo poetry of abuse. Armah summons them and puts them to use in his novel in order to turn the heroic standards of the epic upside down and denounce the 'ostentatious' 'crippling' quality of African leadership. This feature of his work is best illustrated in Chapter Three, "The Predators", where he mentions a number of African ancient kings and

subjects them to a satiric treatment, which mockingly sings their vices and decries their demise.

It is in its opposition to Koranche's corrupt rule that the rebellion of the twenty initiates connects with the historical experience of the English religious Separatists. Writing about the early English political dissenters, Perry Miller asserts that their "errand" in New World "was being run for the sake of Reformed Christianity; and while the first aim was indeed to realize in America the due form of government, both civil and ecclesiastical, the aim behind that aim was to vindicate the most rigorous ideal of the Reformation, so that ultimately all Europe would imitate New England" (11). Corroborating this idea, Zakai quotes a Puritan leader who argued that "seeinge the Church hath noe place left to flie into but the wilderness, what better worke can be there be, than to goe and provide tabernacles and foode for here gainst she comes thether" (Zakai 143). When he accounts for the revolutionary task of his protagonists Armah's voices a similar ideological aspiration. He writes

Our choices in the life we were ready to begin would not be many: we would fit into existing arrangements, abandoning our dreams of that better world, dreams of our way, the way. Or we would try to realize the way. That would mean fighting against the white road, the white people's system for destroying our way, the way.

However, the correspondences between the early Puritans and the twenty youngsters do not stop at this analogy in their revolutionary aspirations. The concrete experience of the initiands involves them in another rite which has much in common with the Puritans' errand into the 'wilderness'. When they are about to fulfil their initiation's ultimate rite, the group is sold into bondage, and it is as slaves bound by heavy shackles inside a slave ship that they achieve full awareness of their political and historical situation. At this moment the group decides to dissent from Koranche's rule and lead liberation actions. For them, just as for the Puritans the Church of England was comparable to Laodicia, the most sinful church in Revelation, Koranche was an apostate, a betrayer of the Way and a deceiver of his people. Hence, they decide firmly to fight against

both their King and his white allies. Their resolution, taken inside the slave ship, endows the ship with an ambivalent connotation, because it stands for both the leviathan state, i.e. a state of chaos and disorder, and the place of formative wilderness from where the movement for African freedom is first launched. The connotations of disorder and chaos common to the wilderness and the leviathan state are the junction through which Armah parallels the formative elements of his twenty initiates at the bottom of the ship with the Puritan experience in the untamed forests of the New World.

After the success of their mutiny, the rebellious group becomes fully aware of the necessity for revolutionary action and resolves to wage war against the white invaders and their African collaborators. It is very significant that for the group to gather forces, organize themselves and lead guerrilla actions against the whites' strongholds, they recognize another wild landscape as shelter: "from our conversation the decision rose that our path should lead us toward Anoa. Not back to Anoa, not to any illusory home, but to the fifth grove, the secrecy of seers, refuge of hearers, keeper of the utterers. From there we would make a beginning to destruction's destruction". Located deep in the forest, the fifth grove is the land of the rebels' early initiation. It is a virgin place that Armah refrains to describe as a wild landscape. Much like Homi Bhabha's 'third space', the fifth grove is a liminal space that exhibits the features of a spiritual shrine and detaches itself both from the dangerous life in the bog land and the corrupt life in the town

The fifth grove is not a place of visible paths. Dwellers there have always been quiet movers, disturbing nothing they need not disturb. Yet even here the eye searching for easy access is drawn naturally to openings between plants, openings that would be beginning of paths and obvious passages if other than seers, hearers and utterers had heard the voices of their soul calling them this way (p.186).

The above descriptions are clear indications that Armah constructs the fifth grove as a landscape of both formative and redemptive significance. The redemptive dimension of the place shows in the fact that only the most virtuous members of the community can get access to it. For instance, when Isanusi and Idawa fled the town of Anoa, they found refuge there. And when the group of initiates achieves escape from the slave ship and

awareness of the necessity of resistance, they walk in the footsteps of Isanusi and decide to transform the fifth grove into a bulwark, where they can hide, plan and execute military operations. Concerning the formative dimension of the site, it is enough to mention that in it is in this place that the group has already fulfilled the rites of their initiation, and that after they return there, they start to take education from Isanusi about the knowledge of the ancestral fundis. A liminal space in the traditional meaning of the world, the fifth grove is a place which abolishes the community's structure and establishes a true *communitas*, which, in the words of Victor Turner, gives recognition "to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no society*" (1969: 97 his italics)*.

And yet, the initiates' identification with the fifth grove is only a momentary identification, for their task extends the liminal, formative stage, and looks forward to redeem and reform their society at large. The redemption of the community's misgivings being inscribed in the spirit of Anoa's prophecy and in the faith in the Way, the group embarks on the mission of cleansing their community from its 'parasites'. To this end, they raise an army of freed slaves, bargain powder and rifles and then start guerrilla assaults on strongholds controlled by whites. Concentrating their efforts on the city of Anoa, the rebels finally succeed to exact justice on king Koranche by making him confess publicly his crimes and then putting ritually an end to his life. The group's liberation of Anoa stands too much at the level of the symbol, because it is presented as a victory which should pave the way to many others and which would augur a new era and new forms of resistance against the invaders. It is no surprise, therefore, that the communal narrator closes his

* We think that the traditional culture encoded in the 'fifth grove' is Armah's subtle correction of Blyden's call for the re-emigration of the American Negroes to Africa. For Blyden, it was divine providence which had brought the Africans to suffer the pangs and the atrocities of slavery in America in order to eventually return to the Black continent and convert traditional Africa into modern Africa. Unlike him, Armah sees that the return of the Africans of the diaspora is incompatible with the nationalist task of preserving intact the essence of Blyden's very concepts of "African Personality". For more details on the contradictions underlying Blyden's thoughts, see "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality", by Yu Frenkel, in *African Affairs* (1974).

(hi)story by praising the youths' way of resistance and evoking Anoa's millenarian prophecy, whose fulfilment, the narrator assures, is unmitigated

[...] what a scene of carnage the white destroyers have brought here, what a destruction of bodies, what a death of souls.

Against this what a vision of creation yet unknown, higher, much more profound than all erstwhile creation! What a hearing of the confluence of all the waters of life flowing to overwhelm the ashen desert's blight! What an utterance of the coming together of all the people of our way, the coming together of all people of the way (p.206).

Ultimately, then, the above assessment of the revolutionary role of Armah's protagonists and the extended symbolism he encodes in the fifth grove convince us that his ideology of resistance and reformation looms large in the Puritan concept of the Errand of the Church of the Wilderness, as highlighted by Perry Miller in his groundbreaking *Errand into the Wilderness*. Taken beside the analogies that we have already underlined between the Puritans' salvation history, which is at the heart of their apocalyptic eschatology, and the double meanings of Armah's imaginary creation of Anoa's millenarian prophecy, these similarities certify that Armah borrowed consciously from the source of American exceptionalism, embodied by the ideological foundations of the Puritans' ecclesiastical history. In transforming the premises of this apocalyptic tradition, Armah rejected the euro-centric vision of Africa's past and derived a unique African culture made of a utopian past, millenarian expectations and a secular religion which preaches unity and reciprocity. Through these constructions, Armah not only escapes Western historicism, which is the source of all the backwardness attributed to the African history and character, but he equally designs an eschatological view of historical time, revolving around Anoa's prophetic revelation and involving the continent's past, present and future. This eschatological, divine perception of historical time charts history, not through a progressive time of successive, Darwinian, evolutionary phases, but through historical periods strongly bound to the fulfilment of a divine prophecy. It progresses in a continuum from a historical revelation to a future unveiling glory, and from a prophecy to its realization. Armah projects all these meanings on Anoa's utterance and on the youths'

revolutionary activities. All in all, his historical imagination reads as an attempt to give a new impetus and sense of purpose to the long process of (cultural) decolonization. It is also an attempt, not so much at the retrieval of some racial pride in the continent's past, as was the case with the Negritude ideology, but to inscribe of a sense of glory in Africa's future.

References

- Aidoo, Ama Ata. "Anowa". 1970. *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology*. Ed. Helen Gilbert. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Armah, "What Colonial Education Did to Africans". *New African*. May 2006.
- . "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific ?". *Presence Africaine*, 64 (1967), 6-24.
- . *Two Thousand Seasons*. 1973. Oxford: Heinemann, 1979.
- Berkley, George. "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America"
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13220/13220-h/13220-h.htm#BERKELEY>
- Booker, Keith. "The Historical Novel in Ayi Kwei Armah and David Caute"
- Bradford, William Bradford. *Of Plymouth Plantation*.
http://members.aol.com/calebj/bradford_journal.html
- Deandrea, Pietro. *Fertile Crossings: Metamorphosis of Genre in Anglophone West African Literature*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Armah's Histories". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.
- Lorentzon, Lief. "Ayi Kwei Armah's Epic We-Narrator". *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. Vol. 38. (1997), 221-234.
- Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. 1956. Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Ogede, Ode; "Negritude and Africa: Armah's Account". *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 14. 4. (1993). 792-801.
- Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Wright Derek. "Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*: A Dissent". *African Literature Today*. London: James Currey, 1992.
- Zakai, Avihu. *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Zumthor, Paul. *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale*. Paris : Seuil, 1987.

Chapter 3:

Intentional and Organic Hybridity, Mimicry and Identity in Armah's *The Healers* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

In the previous chapter, we have shown how Armah went to the source of American exceptionalism, the very ideology he had decried and parodied in his *Why Are We So Blest?*, in order to drive an eschatological, almost divine, significance to the Akan people's migrations in the vast African Savannah, and to historicize their encounter with foreign invaders within the broad framework of salvation history. Though it does not deal with any philosophy of history *per se*, the following chapter attempts to show that the same creative process of ideological repudiation and literary appropriation is at work in Armah's fifth fiction *The Healers** (1978). Our reading of this novel convinces us that it belongs in the genre of adventure story, the one enshrined in the English tradition of imperial romance and the particular works of imperial writers, such as Joseph Conrad, Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling. By establishing a boy as hero, Armah has drawn precisely on the kind of Rudyard Kipling's juvenile fictions. To be more accurate, it is our assumption in this final chapter that, in writing his fifth novel, Armah set consciously to inflect and re-apply the genre of Kipling's *Kim* on his hero's adventures, and intentionally hybridized the English novel's imperial rhetoric in order to produce a subversive language that is both an anti-imperial and Africanist discourse.

* Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Healers*. 1978. Oxford: Heinemann, 1979. Subsequent paginations are taken from this edition.

First, let us say that, like *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers* seems to pertain to the same kind of syncretic plots and discourses which characterize the magic realist novels. Brenda Cooper (2004) describes this kind of plots in the following passage

The form of magical realist plots, however different their contents may be, is this syncretism of disparate elements. The genesis of this bonding is the interplay of the history of cruelty and imperialist oppression as well as the celebration of indigenous culture and beliefs, especially those which contradict a modern, 'Western', 'scientific' view of reality. It is a utopian imagining of a society that is simultaneously modernizing and also returning to an original, nurturing source (36).

The syncretism, or hybridity, of the plot of *The Healers* appears in its fusion of different types of discourse, such as the ironic and the epic, in its blending of the genres of the historical novel and adventure stories, as well as in its incorporation of elements of African orature in the narrative. Most of these literary categories and materials depend upon, and make sense only if combined with, one another. For instance, the exuberance of the historical details summoned in the plot ensures a sense of verisimilitude to Densu's heroic actions, whereas the novel's narrative style, which pertains to the story-telling tradition, relies on both the satiric and heroic rhetorics of the traditional griots' oral narratives. The inter-relatedness of all these materials within the narrative evinces a syncretic sensibility that announces the works of future African magical realist novelists, such as Ben Okri and Kojo Laing.

Being a hallmark of the novel's narration, the oral/vocal style within *The Healers* deserves that we dwell a little about it, especially because Armah's conscious appeal to traditional African aesthetics of story-telling makes his narrative sustain analysis with Zumthor's vocal paradigm. It is not our objective, however, to develop too much this analysis because the novel's orality is extensively investigated by its critics. Suffice us to say that, by adopting the style of the griot's oral performances and tracing his story-telling to the continent's "masters in the arts of eloquence", the *Joculateur vel fabulator* (specialists in narration) in Zumthor's jargon, Armah appeals to what the French medievalist calls "les valeurs vocales, émanant de la texture même du discours poétique"

(44). In addition, the African writer includes so many indices of vocality in his text, such as his recourse to verbs like 'listen', 'tell', 'remember', and nouns like 'tongue', 'ear', 'tale', that his overall literary endeavour seems to inscribe the novel's writerly text within a narrative register that resembles the secondary type of orality in which, according to Zumthor, the vocal aspect of a text is recomposed by writing. In the light of this outstanding place of traditional story-telling in Armah's narrative, we think that it is legitimate to compare Armah's narrative style to the hybrid style of magical realist writers, for whom, to quote Arif Dirlik's words, a return to tradition is "not so much [an] agony over identity [but... a] new found power" (cited in Cooper 19).

It is our intention in this chapter to classify *The Healers* in the genre of romance. By doing so, we are echoing the critical assessment of many of Armah's critics. For example, Simon Gikandi writes that the main characters in the novel are "cast more on the fabular mode than the historical one" (1992: 322). Y. S. Boafo proceeds from the same critical vein and finds that the action of the novel is "idealistic" (324). Even though the two critics do not explicitly expand on their criticism to account for genre in which the novel belongs, they seem to join Bernth Lindfors's point of view, which classifies it within the realm of juvenile literature. As for our own assessment of the genre of the novel, it concurs with this critical orientation towards seeing the novel as belonging to the idealistic genre of fiction, but resists the pitfalls implied by Lindfors's scathing criticism. One such pitfall is his favouring of historical realism over imaginative reconstruction of history, which prompts him to consider the novel as "a cartoon, still comic-strip history. It will not persuade adults because it falsifies far more than it authenticates" (1992: 275). This point of view is debatable on many accounts.

To refute the pitfalls implied in Lindfors's classification of *The Healers* within adolescent fictions, suffice us to evoke, at the outset, Jean Webb's study of the culture issue in imperial English children's literature. In this study, Webb begins by dismissing the point of view which presents children fiction as "innocent literature" and argues that it

is “ideologically driven” (71). The ideological potential inherent in adolescent fiction is here to testify to the seriousness of Armah’s literary endeavour and to elude the comic triviality within which Lindfords would have liked to see it confined. But this is not the only argument in favour of the seriousness of Armah’s novel. Pursuing the investigation of her subject, Webb remarks that Imperialism is a pervasive theme in children’s literature published in all former English colonies, particularly the United States, Australia and Ireland, the so called gems of Empire. To let the author speak for herself

Whenever the world map was coloured pink on the march of imperialism, so English children’s literature appeared. During their early histories the colonies [...] were economically unable to produce their own books for children. [...] Reading materials were imported from the home country, the seat of industrial power in the nineteenth century, and therefore the ideological forces derived from imperialist England were also carried along (ibid.).

In the light of this statement, it is appropriate to say that, if the ‘prosperous gems’ of English Empire, such as the American colonies and Australia, could not afford a literature for their children, African colonies were even more incapable of providing a literature for (their) children and thus were more dependent upon English creative writings. The reasons behind their dependency were economic as well as social: printing was not developed in the continent and local tales circulated mostly in oral rather than written form. In this context, it is worth reminding the image of the two children in Armah’s *Fragments* playing Jill and Jake. This image dramatizes the issue of national culture and the dearth of native cultural elements with which to feed the imagination of the country’s youth. Therefore, we can but value Armah’s recourse to juvenile fiction, especially because this kind of novel often involves concomitant themes of the establishment of personal identity and cultural self.

What make Webb’s survey of postcolonial literature for children more relevant to our discussion of Lindfors’s critical point of view about the seriousness of *The Healers* are the three cultural patterns she singles out in the development of this kind of fiction. The three patterns are:

- 1- Suppressed cultures establish separation and identity by reflecting on landscape and a sense of cultural self;
- 2- Suppressed cultures force through the dominant culture by constructing and reconstructing myth;
- 3- Suppressed cultures realize identity by the rewriting of history (ibid.72).

In the forecoming analysis it is our intention to develop all these patterns in *The Healers* through the comparison that we shall undertake between this novel and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim**. One of our objectives in the comparison is to unveil the strategies of desire in their respective discourse in order for us to illustrate how the interaction of imagination (fantasy and myth, for example) with the real (history) within Armah's fiction produces a narrative of cultural and political self-awareness. Personal identity being strongly underpinned in cultural and political awareness, it is our second objective to demonstrate that Armah deploys dialogical narrative strategies to account for the socio-political forces that shape his protagonist's subjectivity. By dialogical narrative strategies, we mean a heteroglotic conception of the novelistic discourse wherein different discourses of power are represented. One of these discourses implicitly contained and countered is the issue of mimicry implied in Kipling's narrative. Armah does not include any intertextual reference to the latter text; yet, the economy of culture and power, the enduring facet of colonial desire, is strongly explored in his novel from a historical perspective that allows the articulation of a new exercise of power that is native and essential.

The literary connection between Armah and Kipling is a matter of facts. In his survey of the scholarship of the former at Groton and Harvard, Lindfors (1997) has already drawn attention to the fact that, in his academic essays, young Armah was always eager to grapple with the proponents of the 'white man's burden'. The idea of the white man's burden is an (in)famous statement coined by Kipling himself in an eponymous

* Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. 1901. London : Penguin, 1994. Subsequent page numbers are mentioned within the text of the dissertation.

poem. In this poem, a gushing statement of English imperialism, Kipling endorsed Ruskin's exhortation of England to found colonies "as far and fast as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men [... and] teaching their colonies that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and their first aim is to be the advance the power of England by land and sea" (quoted in Paffard 28). Echoing this political programme, Kipling sang

Take up the White Man's burden
Send forth the best ye breed
Go, bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait, in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild
Your new caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.

Born in India in 1865, where he also lived and wrote during a period of his life, Kipling founded his literary reputation on the adventure stories he created for children. *Kim* is one of these tales, and probably the best one. It presents a nostalgic picture of India that encapsulates his vision of both childhood and Empire. Even though it was written in the same vein as Kipling's former short stories and novels, such as *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep* (1890), *The Jungle Book* (1894), and *Stalky and Co.* (1899), it distinguishes itself by its portrayal of the sheer density of the natives' cultural life and its evocation of the British Great Game, the Secret Services, in India. In his *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said explores it as a serious imperial fiction and affirms: "*Kim* was Kipling's only successfully sustained and mature piece of long fiction; although it can be read with enjoyment by adolescents, it can also be with respect and interest years after adolescence, by the general reader and the critic alike" (1993: 159).

Said's assertion as to the literary seriousness of *Kim* makes Armah's appeal to its hypotext a judicious one. This judiciousness may be further appreciated if we compare the history of English colonisations in Africa and India, and the representations of these two areas in the colonial literature and imaginations. Indeed, the history of English occupation

of India reveals similar patterns of domination, exploitation and racial prejudices as the English imperial expansion in Africa. For one, the educated English unreluctantly described Indians in general as 'black' men (Paffard 7). Colonel Creighton in *Kim* illustrates perfectly this tendency among English sahibs to assimilate the Indians with the blacks, when he warns Kim to never mistake the racial divide between Europeans and non-Europeans: "I have known boys newly entered into the service of the government who feigned not to understand the talk or the customs of *black men*. Their pay was cut for ignorance. There is no sin so great as ignorance" (p. 160 emphasis added).

The assimilation of the Indians' complexion to the Africans' skin colour meant also to attribute to them the features of backwardness and savagery already consigned to the Africans. This belief was in full swing especially after the mutiny among Anglo-Indian troops in 1857. Mark Paffard writes that the English people took the native uprising "as proof that Indians were barbaric people whom it was a heroic duty to rule and civilise, while the India's North-West frontier was the classical locus for the defence of civilisation against another kind of barbarism, that of the mighty Russian Empire" (2). Paffard sustains his point of view further by quoting the statement of John Lawrence, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, who described the Mutiny as a struggle "between Christianity and civilisation on one side and barbarism and heathenism on the other" (ibid. 7).

The analogies in the Western imaginary construction of both the Orient, and hence India, and Africa as indistinct parts of Europe's foiled others are highlighted in the works of many African and Eastern academics. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Valentin Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) are two cases in point: the former is a study of Western recreation of the Eastern, Islamic world, while the latter is an investigation of the foundations of African philosophy, *gnosis*, as constructed in Western works of imagination. The two studies, underpinned in Michel Foucault's notion of archaeology of discourse, analyse the European encounters with the non-European peoples induced by

the practice of Imperialism, in the light of the Enlightenment discourse and ontology. Their aims are to unearth the set of latent, unconscious assumptions and approaches of the West to the East and Africa, respectively.

From the reading of Said's and Mudimbe's respective books, *Orientalist* and *Africanist* discourses seem to exhibit many points in common. First, both systems of thought stress the separateness of Europe from the other parts of the world, be them Africa or Asia. By doing so, they press upon the *other* cultures of the world (pseudo)scientific paradigms whose aim is to stress their backwardness. Behind this cultural/scientific hegemony lies a power discourse that fulfils politico-ideological aspirations, related to the subjection of the natives and the justification of the whole enterprise of Empire. As Said bluntly puts it with regards to the otherizing practice of Western sciences in the nineteenth century

The point to be emphasized is that this truth about the distinctive differences between races, civilizations, and languages was (or pretended to be) radical and ineradicable. It went to the bottom of things, it asserted that there was no escape from origins and the types these origins enabled; it set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins. A scientist could no more escape such origins in his research than an Oriental could escape "the Semites" or "the Arabs" or "the Indians" from which his present reality –debased, colonized, backward- excluded him, except for the white researcher's didactic presentation (2003 :233).

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said develops further his deconstructive analysis of the Western hegemonic discourse in order to account not only for its latent hegemony upon the Orient, but also on other cultures of the worlds, such as the African and the Indian. In this research, Said proceeds from the same premise as that of *Orientalism*. He demonstrates that "almost all colonial schemes begin with an assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, 'equal,' and fit." (80) For him, the origin of this assumption is the geographical and cultural centrality of Europe. To quote him another time, "European geographical centrality is

buttressed by a cultural discourse relegating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, ontological status" (59). One consequence of Euro-ethnocentrism is, according to Said, a ranking of the races which set the Europeans at the apex of human civilization and placed the remainder of humanity, mainly the Africans and Asians, at the bottom. Said finds that the tendency to "devalue" the non-western world found expression in the works of many Western "poets, philosophers, historians, dramatists, statesmen, novelists, travel writers, chroniclers, soldiers, and fabulists" (83). Thus, behind the literary images of many Western writers' writings about all the Occident's cultural others, such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Kipling's *Kim*, lurks the same latent, dominant thesis which postulates that all non-European races are inferior, backward and childish.

In our opinion, it is very probable that, when Armah read Kipling's body of works, in general, and *Kim*, in particular, the above highlighted analogies in Western representations of Africa and India have created in him a feeling of sympathy towards the subdued Indian subjects. In front of the debased representation of the Indians in Kipling's novel, Armah might, indeed, have identified with the plea of the natives, and felt revulsion at the English writer's glorification of the British rule at the expense of the natives' free government. However, if revulsion means Armah's disapprobation of Kipling's hegemonic discourse and implies an attitude of dialogue and polemics, enough evidence is here to demonstrate that he also found some aspects of Kipling's fiction topical enough in order to indulge himself in the creative process of literary appropriation. For if Armah's discourse seems uncompromising as concerns the African duty to govern themselves by themselves, the genre of his narrative and the unfolding of its action exhibit striking similarities with the patterns of *Kim*'s adventure and education in the eponymous novel.

Therefore, our first postulate in this comparison is that, like Kipling in *Kim*, Armah in *The Healers* is engaged in the writing process that Northrop Frye calls "the kidnapping of romance", that is "the absorbing of it into the ideology of an ascendant class" (1976: 57).

A literary form which has lent itself through the ages to the ideals of different social and intellectual classes, romance is noted for its search for new hopes and desires to feed on (Frye 1990: 186). It sends its roots deep in the creative imagination and functions both mythically and historically. Inherent in its mythical element is a belief which is essentially “a statement of desire to attach oneself to, or live in or among, a specific kind of community” (Frye N, 1976: 170). This desire projects myth and attempts to recover it through a return to the early creation. As for the association of romance with history, it is based on the “peculiar emotional intensity” of the human nostalgia when it contemplates the past and desires its transformation (ibid. 176). According to Frye, one half of the operation of recreating the past in romance is to bring it to the present. The other half consists of “bringing something into the present which is potential or possible, and in that sense belongs to the future. This recreation of the possible or future or ideal constitutes the wish-fulfilment element of romance, which is the normal containing form” (ibid. 179).

The present comparison will be grounded in the theoretical framework described above. It sets to show that Densu’s experience in *The Healers* is part desire and part history, part adventure and part dialogue, part a formation of subjectivity and part a quest for a cultural identity. By embedding all these aspects within the action of the protagonist, we intend to show that Armah’s narrative coincides with the three positions of the developmental patterns highlighted by Jean Webb. Thus, the way we understand the relevance of romance to *The Healers* is guided by the shaping influence of the romantic, polarized landscape (both political and natural) surrounding Densu in his construction of both a personal identity and a cultural self. This shaping embodies Armah’s ideology of culture and the movement of his imagination towards a (re)construction of myth. The latter is the device which enables him to distance his narrative from colonial anthropology and re-write history from a native perspective.

The element of adventure, which is the most conspicuous aspect in the plots of *Kim* and *The Healers*, is the essential element of romance (Frye 1990: 186). This kind of plots

is sequential and achieves its literary form through the element of quest (ibid. 186-7). When it is successful, the quest involves three stages: the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, which involves the hero's conflict with his foe; the exaltation of the main character, who proves to be a hero (ibid.). Conflict in romance entails two groups of characters: the protagonist who is the virtuous hero and the antagonist, or the enemy, who symbolizes demonic powers. Following this polar division in characterization is another division at the level of setting; hence the opposite poles of the hero and the villain are respectively assimilated to the opposition of apocalyptic and demonic landscapes. The former is 'the upper world' of happiness and goodness, whereas the latter is 'the lower world', associated with darkness, confusion, and sterility.

The respective actions of *Kim* and *The Healers* revolve around two orphan boys' rise to manhood in adverse circumstances. Much of their growth is generated by personal quests and the demands of external circumstances, which cultivate in them acute powers of observation and action. Central to Kim's and Densu's quests is a sequence of adventures, which culminates in tentative assertions of selfhood and attempts at the establishment of cultural identity. The two protagonists' adventures offer a dramatization of the split in their personality and the psychological crises that ensue as a consequence of their blurred loyalties. To help the heroes overcome the confusion in their identity and assist their psychological growth, the two writers accompany them by two adult characters that fulfil the functions of surrogate fathers. These surrogate fathers educate them into areas of adult life and help them, in turn, to develop their spiritual faculties and enhance their political awareness.

Kim is centred on the growth of a young Indian boy called Kim. Kim, or Kimball O'Hara, is an Irish orphan, born to a soldier in the Irish regiment the Mavericks and a nursemaid belonging to the same regiment in India. Kim's mother died just after she gave birth to him and his father died a few years later. After the loss of his parents, he was left in the care of a half-caste woman, who raised him as a poor vagabond Hindu boy in the

streets of Lahore, fully admitted and integrated into native life and culture. Kipling describes his protagonist as English infant who, though “burned black as any native” and speaks “vernacular by preference”, is verily a “white [boy] –a poor white of the very poorest” (p.7).

Kim’s white origin and Indian up-bringing create in him mixed loyalties, which yield into two distinct searches, tightly linked to his personal sense of belonging. His meeting with, and befriending, of a Tibetan Lama is the occasion which enables him to fulfil his searches. The Lama is a holy man, who goes on a long pilgrimage seeking ‘the River of the Arrow’, which is supposed to clean him of his sins. Kim joins him with the status of a *chela*, i.e. religious disciple, and embarks with him on two adventures in one: a spiritual adventure in quest of the holy river and a personal adventure in search of the meaning of his father’s prophecy of a “Red Bull on a green field”.

During their journey through several Indian cities, the old man and the boy accidentally cross a green field in which the English flag is planted. Kim recognizes the symbols of his father prophecy and proceeds to the camps of the English regiment. Captured by the regiment’s Chaplin, Kim owes his safety to the leather amulet tightened around his neck. The latter is his birth certificate, which certifies his Irish identity. Recognizing the boy’s identity, the regiment’s officials hold him on and decide to send him to a school for sahibs, Saint Xavier’s, which prepares agents for the Great Game of spying. Thanks to the Lama’s finance, Kim spends three years at the school under the supervision of an expert ethnographer, Colonel Creighton. During these training and learning years, he succeeds to further develop his exceptional mental skills through the acquisition of the essentials of the white man’s knowledge, such as mathematics, map making, the art of disguise... etc. After the acquisition of all these skills, Kim leaves Saint Xavier’s with a white man’s mindset, a sahib in native clothes, fully equipped to endorse the duties of an agent of British Intelligence in India.

After the completion of his training, Kim resumes his discipleship with the Lama. However, sympathy to the old man is not the only reason for which the boy, now an adolescent of seventeen, goes on for a long pilgrimage through many Indian cities, such as Simla, Umballa, Benares, to the Himalaya. Actually, Kim goes also on an errand to intercept two foreign spies, a Russian and a French. The spying mission and the religious journey give him the opportunity to discover new places, meet new people and become familiar with the rich variety of Indian life which wholly offers itself to his eyes and mind in the Great Trunk Road. Kipling describes this road as “the backbone of all Hind”, “a wonderful spectacle ... -such a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world”. In front of its spectacle, Kim sharpens his sight whereas the Lama shrinks into his own thoughts

The lama, as usual, was deep meditations, but Kim’s bright eyes were wide open. This broad, smiling river of life, he considered, was a vast improvement on the cramped and crowded Lahore streets. There were new people and new sights at every stride –castes he [Kim] knew and castes that were altogether out of his experience

By facing hardship and overcoming many problems, Kim’s journey tightens also his relationship with the Lama and strengthens both their attachment and their dependence on each other; the Lama claims much of the youth’s guidance and wit, while Kim claims much of the elder’s wisdom and advice. Thanks to their comradeship, and thanks to his spiritual search and spying errand, Kim matures, develops his personality and achieves his initiation to adult life.

Densu’s pursuit of vocation follows almost the same course and pattern as Kim’s. An orphan boy, who early lost his parents, Densu is a gifted youth who does not identify with his tribe’s violent games of initiation and looks forward to construct his own sense of identity. Eager to fulfil a quest related to his personal vocation and the wider sense for his community’s health, he rejects his step-father’s, Ababio, offer of kingship, distances himself from his manipulative schemes and devotes his life to the inspirational work of the healers’ community. In repudiating the complicity with the royals and refusing to be implicated in their tactics, Densu exposes himself to harsh reprisals. Ababio contrives a

scheme to have his name involved in Prince Appiah's murder, make him endorse the crime, and proceeds to his arrest and condemnation. Yet with the help of his friend Annan, Densu succeeds to escape his jailors and take his way to the Eastern forest, where he joins the healers' community. His stay with Damfo and his daughter Ajoa at Praso enables him to fulfil his initiation to the science of healing and to give free reign to his compulsive love for action and adventure.

Densu's training at Praso is conducted under the supervision of the master healer Damfo. Damfo is a virtuous character who teaches the youth important notions of hope, faithfulness, and non-violence, and influences his perception of Gold Coast's political and social world. Damfo notices quickly Densu's innate predisposition to action and employs him in different errands. In one of these errands, he sends him to gather information in Cape Coast and to find out the plans of the white commander Sir Garnet Wolsely. To conduct his mission, Densu pretends to be a witch doctor and lures the local kings assembled at Wolsely's stronghold. Thanks to his disguise and wits, Densu succeeds to attend their meeting and know about the number of their soldiers, their arms, as well as their dissensions and weaknesses. All this information proves to be very helpful to Damfo's patient General Asamoah Nkwanta, whose retreat from the leadership of the Asante's army has not obliterated in him the patriotic sense for his nation's security and welfare.

Nkwanta is Densu's second mentor. A strong, inventive and obeyed army general, he is deceived by the royals' ritual murder of one of his favourite nephews. The deception of the royals and the loss of the nephew caused him to undergo a psychological collapse and to look after rest and care among the healers' community. His healing at Damfo's hands coincides with Densu's initiation. Impressed by the youth's quickness of spirit and ability to gather information, deceive enemies and speak different languages including English, the General asks him to collect intelligence about the other white commander, namely Captain Glover. Densu succeeds in his mission, and participates in the General's

ultimate battle against Wolseley's and Glover's combined invasion of the city of Kumasi. The fall of the latter as a consequence of the Queen mother's betrayal constitutes another formative event in his rise to political awareness and the larger configuration of his personality.

The spying missions and the pursuits of adventure that we have above pinpointed in the respective plots of *Kim* and *The Healers* are the archetypal, stylized forms of all romances. Deeply underpinned in their actions is a psychological quest for an authentic self and a cultural identity. The quest is dramatized through the heroes' departure from the initial status of their respective identity and their alienation from their former social circumstances. In *Kim*, Kipling's eponymous hero undergoes two emotional crises prior to his ultimate, climactic exclamation "I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim?" (p.374). The first occurs when he is taken to the British school at Lucknow, after eleven years of immersion in native culture. The second takes place after his release from St Xavier's, when he is reinitiated to Indian society and is about to join the Lama again. The two crises come at crucial junctures of his life when he transits from one culture to another. They achieve an emotional climax near the end of the novel, after the successful completion of his errand.

Densu, too, experiences an identity crisis which alienates him from his society. Early in the novel, Armah informs us that many questions disturb the youth's mind and urge him to wish to talk "to someone older and more experienced, someone who would understand his mind's desire, and perhaps point out paths he wished to follow in his mind but could not yet see in the real world" (p.26). His "long search for understanding and knowledge" (p.66) brings him, first, to question the meaning of the ritual games meant to prepare him for adult life: "the present games made him uneasy. Nothing they offered gave him an answer to his soul" (p.39). His revulsion at the tribal ceremonies yields into an attitude of utter aloofness that breeds almost a double self in his soul. Armah writes

From that time on, whatever Densu did at Esuano, he saw himself in a kind of a double vision. In spirit he had long decided to say farewell to the world there around him. But as yet he had not found a welcome into the world his soul desired. So he went through the motions of living in the old world, as if he were still involved in it. But always, no matter what he did in the old world, there were a second, detached self which stood apart and watched the involved self. [...] the double vision gave him a strange kind of heightened consciousness of his actions, and an increased sensitivity to the how and why of everything he found himself doing (p.86).

The way Kim and Densu resolve their identity crises and recover stable selves informs the respective ideological orientations of both Kipling and Armah. The first thing to be noticed at this stage is the influence of the social environment and the physical landscape in shaping their personalities. By social environment we understand the identity, views and roles of their respective mentors as well as their impacts on their formed identity. As for the physical landscape, it relates to the significance accorded by the two writers to the portrayal of place, and the extent to which this portrayal both reflects the polarized setting of romance and fulfils a sense of cultural self inherent in juvenile novels. As Jean Webb argues, the establishment of identity and cultural self through landscape and the relationship of the narrative to that environmental shaping embody the ideology of culture carried in this kind of fictions (72). In addition, the interactions of cultural ideology and imaginary landscapes produce cultural myths that define the national identity of all peoples.

The second aspect of the narratives which is worth considering is the place of the imagination and history. Though the genre of adventure story is not concerned with history per se, romancers return always to the past and tend always to recreate their ideals in some forms of narratives with the aims of attaining literary forms close to the level of myth, or what Frye calls wish-fulfilment dream. Seen from the perspective of the cultural patterns of development in children novels, myth and the reconstruction of myth “form a barrier between the suppressed people and the dominant culture, until there is sufficient distancing ‘bulk’ to enable the suppressed culture to rise up from its protective barricade” (ibid.). Hence, myth-making is always at the heart of adventure narratives for children.

Finally, if we think of the return to the past and the reconstruction of myth together, we reach a broader sense of personal identity and national culture, a realization of the cultural ideology whose ultimate ambition is the re-writing of history and the production of subjects who embody a given cultural identity. This is the last stage in the developmental pattern of children novel. According to Webb, it demonstrates the “movement of the imagination into the real, the step that then enables a culture to move into a position of declared self-awareness, and an openness that other cultures can read without threat to the subdominant culture” (ibid. 86-7). The reading of *Kim* and *The Healers* through these three patterns enables us to demonstrate that the ideological and cultural implications of Armah’s fiction run counter to those of Kipling’s narrative, and that far from being a “comic strip of history”, *The Healers* is a mature fiction which allows for the emergence of new political and cultural positions that look forward to implement revolutionary change through the mind of children.

Much of the ideological and cultural values implicated in the narratives of *Kim* and *The Healers* are encoded in the way the respective protagonists resolve their identity crises and achieve their reintegration in their community. In our exploration of Kim’s growth, we have highlighted the double heritage in his identity, bred as he is in native culture and then educated at an English school for intelligence agents. The duality in his personality is evidenced in the three crises he undergoes as a result of his movement from one culture to another. Edmund Wilson writes that, as Kim successfully concludes his errand, it is expected that he “will come eventually to realise that he is delivering into bondage to the British invaders those whom he has always considered his own people, and that a struggle between allegiances will result” (30). However, as Wilson pursues, this conflict will never take place

We have been shown two entirely different worlds existing side by side, with neither really understanding the other, and we have watched the oscillations of Kim, as he passes to and from between them. But the parallel lines never meet; the alternating actions felt by Kim never give rise to a genuine struggle. And the climax itself is double: the adventures of the Lama and Kim simply arrive at

different consummations, without any final victory or synthesis ever being allowed to take place. Instead, there are a pair of victories, which occur on separate planes and do not influence one another: the Lama attains to a condition of trance which releases him from what the Buddhists call the Wheel of Things at the same moment that the young Anglo-Indian achieves promotion in the British Secret Service (ibid.)

Wilson's criticism implies the absence of the climactic struggle in Kipling's fiction.

Edward Said confirms this point of view and writes: "so far is Kipling from showing two worlds in conflict that he has studiously given us only one, and eliminated any chance of conflict appearing together" (1993: 179). Part and parcel of every adventure story which involves the theme of quest, struggle is the means through which the hero proves himself a hero and is recognized as such. However, in *Kim*, instead of a conflict implicating the cultural loyalties in Kim's mind, Kipling plays a twist in the plot and stages a minor struggle between his hero and two foreign agents, who are no more than stage comic characters. By this twist, Kipling ensures the hero's full integration into the English ruling class in India and makes the elements of native culture embedded in his identity serviceable to English interests. Thus, Kim's identity becomes the site wherein the conflictual economy of colonial discourse, what Edward Said in *Orientalism* describes as the tension between the synchronic demands for essential identity and the diachronic, counter-forces of historical change, takes place. Kipling resolves this conflict by creating a prototype of a new imperial breed, who is simultaneously native-born and bred individual and English trained and obedient administrator. This new imperial breed is a product of imperial desire and imagination. It rejects all kinds of racial miscegenation and calls for colonial mimicry as an elusive and effective strategy of knowledge and domination. In other words, by creating and upholding Kim's hybrid cultural identity and subordinating it to the British Intelligence in India, Kipling evacuates every kind of racial miscegenation and creates a 'mimic man'. Homi Bhabha define colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (122, emphasis retained). Latent in this construction of desire is a double

articulation of colonial power which visualizes power by regulating and appropriating the native, on the one hand, and intensifying its surveillance, on the other. The cultural bias implied in Kim's forked identity reminds us one of Kipling's poems where he proclaimed his racial perception of cultures and sang: "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet".

Unlike Kipling, Armah seems more respectful of the narrative pattern of romance. Right from the opening pages of the novel, he makes it clear that Densu does not attune with the values surrounding the ritual games and the wider social life at Esuano. In addition, the boy shows overt affinities towards the master healer Damfo and his philosophy of inspiration. Densu's attitude alienates his step-father from him and even owes him the persecution of the whole caste of the 'manipulators'. As a result, the social world surrounding Densu becomes divided into two opposite camps: 'manipulators' and 'inspirers'. Ababio and the people involved with him, such as the priest Esuman, Buntui and all those who collaborate with the white invaders, represent the former group and stand for the villains; Damfo, his daughter Ajoa, Araba Jesiwa and all those who sympathize with the healers' community represent the latter group and stand for the pure.

As Densu goes through stages of immaturity, experience and self-awareness, he identifies his vocation with that of the healers and becomes sure that his fate is to belong to their community and to achieve their ambitions. However, to give his dream flesh and bone, he has to prove himself innocent of the charge of Prince Appia's murder. For this, his ultimate adventure after the fall of Kumase leads him to confront his former mentor and tormentor Ababio. With the help of Damfo, Densu surrenders to Ababio, Esuano's new king, and asks to be brought to the town's court of justice. As Esuano has fallen under the whites' control, the trial is held under the supervision of white judge. During the event, Ababio, with the complicity of the court's priest Esuman, exposes and exhausts all evidence about Densu's guilt. But when Araba Jesiwa, the victim's mother, appears and tells the true story of the murder, she deals the coup de grace to their Machiavellian

schemes and cleanses Densu of all the charges against him. Finally, Ababio is convicted of the murder and Densu is offered again kingship. But Densu, who has by now proved both his innocence and his worth, refuses leadership and devotes his life once for all to the work of healing. By fulfilling his dream, the youth succeeds to establish his cultural self and to stabilize the sense of his personal identity.

The dénouements in the respective plots of *Kim* and *The Healers* call many questions considering the narrative imperatives of romance, on the one hand, and the large culture issues at stake in the two works, on the other. For instance, why does Armah's stage a conflict in his plot while Kipling does not? What are the culture/power issues inscribed in the two heroes' fulfilment of their respective quests for identity? How do the two writers represent the social voices/forces in their respective narratives? Finally, how do these voices/forces shape the protagonists' subjective awareness? Granted that the concepts of identity and individual consciousness are formed, in Robyn McCallum's words, "in dialogue with others and with the discourses constituting the society and culture s/he inhabits" (3), we shall now attempt to demonstrate that *Kim* and *The Healers* construct and impose two different worldviews upon their respective protagonists. The first construction is Kipling's. It is a unified, monologic worldview which represses the ideological voices which were firing the Indian political scene at the end of the nineteenth century and replaces it with what Bhabha calls "a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry" (130). The second construction is Armah's. It fully exploits both the dialogical potential of the novel, which is according to Bakhtin so characteristic of the novelistic discourse, and the symbolic division of the romance, which are the main sources of its impingement on the world of myth. In doing so, Armah constructs a discursive space of intervention and agonism, wherein he historicises and politicises the language surrounding his protagonist and displaces the colonial project of mimicry in favour of a cultural identity based on native knowledge. By fulfilling these two objectives, we hope both to unveil the power discourse underlying each novel and to

illustrate how Armah produces a counter-cultural, intentionally hybridized discourse which discredits Kipling's form of government devised for English colonies.

The best way to begin our discussion is to underline the affinities in the chronotopic contexts of the two novels in order to pinpoint the heteroglotic voices which storm within them. By chronotope we mean the correlation between time and space involved in each narrative. What can be noticed here is that both *Kim* and *The Healers* dramatize their action in a period of tremendous political change taking place within the ruling strata of India and Gold Coast, respectively. To begin with Kipling's novel, the period of time within which he sets the action of his novel seems to be the end of the nineteenth century, in the aftermath of *the Sepoys' rebellion* of 1857. Though this rebellion had as direct cause a religious problem within the native troops of the English army, it nevertheless became the expression of national social, economic, religious and political resentments against the British presence in the Indian sub-continent, and signalled the beginning of a new era in the relations between the two nations. Edward Said is to the point when he states that the mutiny was a "clear demarcation [... which] reinforced the difference between the colonizer and colonized" (1993: 177). As a consequence of this rebellion, Britain felt threatened and tried to inaugurate a new form of administration in her colony. By 1858, the East India Company was abolished and India came under the direct rule of the British Crown, inaugurating the historical period called the period of the British Raj. In 1861, the first step was taken toward self-government, but the colonial power was reinforced in 1877, when Queen Victoria assumed the title of "Empress of India".

In his novel, Kipling alludes twice to the tremendous change that was taking place in his country of adoption. The first relates to the Russian spy who describes Huree Babu as a little representation of "India in transition" and observes "it is *we* who can deal with the Orientals" (p.318 original italics). If the word 'transition' is an explicit statement about the changing times in India, the character's second statement hides subtler meanings as regard the power struggles which were waged in the underground for the domination of

India. By the time Kipling published his novel, the British presence in the sub-continent was more fragile than ever, and the threat was more internal than external. As Kipling himself writes in another context of the novel: “India was awake, and Kim was in the middle of it, more awake and more excited than anyone” (p.101). Implied in this statement is the nationalist agitation which rose in India after the Sepoys’ rebellion, and which culminated into claims for more participation in government administration by the end of the nineteenth century. John Mc Lure states that, in the last decades of the nineteenth century,

The central [British] bureaucracy, aided by improved communications and inspired by the theories of despotic utilitarianism, was tightening its control over officers in the field. At the same time, Indians educated in Western ideals of the government of law were calling for the end of arbitrary personal rule. The Congress party, through which this group coordinated its attack on the status quo, was founded in 1885. By 1900 it had spread throughout India and was widely regarded as the party of the new middle class of Indian professionals, government officials, and businessmen (28).

The chronotopic context of *The Healers*, too, was one of change, even though the change in Gold Coast’s leadership by 1870s meant the white invaders’ rise to the summit of the power hierarchy in the region and the decline of Ashanti Empire. This change in the region’s ruling class took place during the reign of King Ashantehene Kofi Karikari and his wife Queen mother Efuwa Kobri. Karikari took possession of the ‘Golden stool’ (I.e. throne) of Ashanti in the early 1870s, a few years before the Ashanti-*Sagrenti* war, which is Sir Garret Wolseley’s version of the Anglo-Ashanti war of 1873-4. This war opposed the Ashanti to the Southern confederations –namely the Fantse and the Ga- allied to the British troops of Wolseley. Its aim was to counter Ashanti’s political, economic and military influence on the neighbouring areas. By launching his expedition in 1873, Wolseley not only captured the capital city of Kumasi, but he also precipitated the fall of the Ashanti Empire with all its vassal states of the north. A turning point in the region’s history, this event ushered into tremendous political changes caused by the redistribution of power among Gold Coast’s chiefdoms.

Armah's Ababio is a character that understands well the implications of the whites' control over Gold Coast. In an exchange with Densu, he explains: "the world has changed in ways some people do not yet understand [...] those born to rule must understand all these changes" (p. 29). Ababio's point is that time has come when the people should reflect and decide for their future leaders, taking into consideration the fact that the white invaders are tightening their control over the region and any resistance to their expansion means both defeat and loss of power. For Ababio, it goes without saying that the wisest stand is to collaborate with the invaders; this is the best warrant to preserve, or gain, leadership. As he himself puts it: "those who take care to place themselves on the right side of big changes, when the big changes have taken place, become big men. Those stupid enough to place themselves against such changes, of course they get crushed into tiny pieces" (p.29). In front of this dilemma, Densu remains circumspect; he intuitively rejects Ababio's offer collaboration without ever knowing how to counter it.

The transitional period of change in leadership within which both *Kim* and *The Healers* are set informs much of the discourse on power in the two narratives. At the second half of the 19th century, the challenge that faced the English colonial authorities in India was how to cope with the natives' claims for self-government while still maintaining both their ruling position and their economic interests. To overcome this problem, England adopted a new policy based on the control of the educational system, by giving English training to the natives and preparing them to the service of her imperial interests. An expression of the conflictual economy of colonial hegemony, this strategy echoed the insights of Lord Macaulay's 'Minute', which had already called for the education of a class of interpreters "between us [the English] and the millions who we govern –a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (quoted in Bhabha 124-5). In his novel, Kipling mirrors this strategy through both Kim and Huree Babu, who are both native bred and English trained agents. However, through the devices of irony and parody, he disqualifies the option of the native trained, as

exemplified by the Babu, and allows for an intermediary class of interpreters, who are racially akin to the English, as embodied in Kim's Irish origin. By so spotting Kim within the colonialist chain of command and disallowing Babu's hybridity, Kipling erases the 'menace' immanent in colonial mimicry, what Bhabha qualifies as 'a difference that is almost total but not quite', and retains a truncated version of mimicry which is 'a difference that is almost nothing but not quite' (131). Such a truncated version of mimicry alienates further native culture and shuns every threat to colonial power.

Kim's willing subordination to English rule drives us to discuss the way Kipling represents the process of his hero's subjectivity formation and to contrast it to the same process in Armah's narrative. Lying at the heart of the concept of identity, subjectivity is the "individual's sense of personal identity as a subject –in the sense of being subject to some measure of external coercion- and as an agent -that is, being capable of being conscious and deliberate thought and action" (McCallum 4). It is formed in dialogue with the social discourses and ideologies constituting the culture in which an individual inhabits. Its representation in the novel involves the heteroglotic representation of the multiplicity of the social voices and a dialogic orientation of the novel's discourse. Heteroglossia and dialogism are thus formative elements in personal maturation within children literature. According to McCallum, the preoccupation with personal maturation in adolescent fiction "is commonly articulated in conjunction with a perceived need for children to overcome solipsism and develop intersubjective concepts of personal identity within this world and in relation to others" (ibid. 7). Therefore, any attempt by a writer to control or suppress heteroglossia and polyphony in his/her novel can be equated to an attempt to subvert the fiction's thematic concerns and press a form of cultural and ideological position that negates both intersubjectivity and the whole dialogic relationships which go with its representation.

Dialogism as a process leading to the construction of identity and intersubjectivity has much to bear on the presence/absence of conflict in the respective plots of *The*

Healers and *Kim*. Edward Said's analysis (1993) of Kipling's work as a blueprint for imperial hegemony provides irrefutable evidence about the English writer's tendency to manipulate the voices of the Indian subjects and to suppress the oppositional ideologies of their heteroglotic world. In what follows, we shall demonstrate that not only does Kipling repress the polyphonic aspect of the novel, that is its capacity to represent the different ideological voices of its historical chronotope, but he equally represses many usual features of romance narratives. Unlike him, Armah fully exploits the narrative form of romance and draws on its symbolic divisions of characterisation and setting in order to articulate a vision of the Anglo-Ashanti encounter that is strongly embedded in both history and imagination. By combining and accommodating history and imagination, Armah dramatizes different ideological voices and develops a process of initiation that induces a higher historical, political and social awareness from the main character. To rephrase it in simpler words, Armah opens his narrative to its heteroglotic environment by voicing the different ideological discourses, which were storming in Gold Coast during the Anglo-Ashanti war, and allows them free access to the subjectivity of his protagonist. Unlike him, Kipling, and in spite of his inclusive vision of the Indian ethnies and religions, denies polyphony to his novel, and is careful to shut up his hero's subjectivity to the external, mainly native dissenters', voices and to confine him within a sphere of discourse, and hence power, that is either exclusively colonial or simply marginal.

The first thing to be noticed about *Kim* is that it does not seem to observe the romance's polarized representation of landscape, least of all its oppositional construction of characterization. It constructs a vast expansive setting, and draws characters that enjoy the harmony of the luxurious variety of their religious and ethnic background. And even if critic Edmund Wilson (1964) seems to see the Lama and most native characters, on the one hand, and the English sahibs, on the other, as the representations of 'two distinct worlds', the fact is that, the first stock of characters never rises enough to stand as a foil to the second. It is probably their simplicity of mind and their lightness of character that

have encouraged some Western critics to praise the novel for the 'striking absence of evil' in it (Wilson A, 1987: 33). However, what really makes the incorporation of the native voices presented in Kipling's narrative a harmonious inclusion is either their wilful collaboration with the British Intelligence, or their sheer allegiance to British Crown. The study of the native characters that revolve around Kim demonstrates that their political/ideological awareness is either repressed or simply manipulated. To rephrase this idea in Said's words, much of the massive presence of colonial system's apparatuses behind Kipling's discourse imposed upon him a language that is full of emphases, inflections, deliberate inclusions and exclusions (1993: 162-3). In the remainder of this chapter, we shall examine the characters' voices in the novel and unveil the process through which Kipling articulates through them a monologic worldview that cannot favour the development of his protagonist's intersubjective and historical awareness.

Kim's mentors can be divided into two categories: natives and sahibs. The latter are all members of the British Services, such as Colonel Creighton, Lurgan Sahib, Father Bennett, etc. Their loyalty to Britain cannot be questioned, and as such they represent the official ideology in India. By training Kim to the Great Game, they attempt a shaping of his personality to fit it within the English mindset. An examination of Lurgan's and Creighton's teaching programmes reveals that they are matter of training and acquisition, not dialogue and initiation: training at disguise, acquisition of writing, and learning cartography. Heavily influenced by the colonial military hierarchy and discipline, St Xavier confines its students within subject positions and does not allow them to question the education dispensed to them. Therefore, if any freedom is left to Kim to engage in dialogue with his mentors, it could only be with his native mentors, namely the Lama, the horse dealer Mahbub Ali and the agent Huree Chunder Babu. However, the last two are too much insiders to the Great Game than outsiders, and their worldview can be assimilated to that of the ruling class; Mahbub's trade thrives through his deals with the colonial army, whereas Babu's most cherished dream is to join the Royal Society of

Science. On this account, the Lama seems to stand for the only authentic native voice which remains untamed by the dominant hegemonic discourse of the novel. Yet his voice's authenticity can stand only if we turn a blind eye on the distortions and elisions Kipling plays on it.

In spite of the entire saintly aura attached to his status of a Buddhist priest, the Lama remains a childish figure, lost between "the mixture of old-world piety and modern progress that is the note of India today" (p.20). Drifting from the mighty hills of the Himalaya in search of a sacred river no more real than its legend, the Lama's search becomes more and more dependent on Kim's discipleship. When he finally completes his search, he acknowledges his chela's help and avows that without him he would have never purified his soul: "I have lived on thy strength as an old tree lives on the lime of a new wall. Day after day, since Shamlegh down, I have stolen strength from thee" (p. 360). The Lama's indebtedness to Kim sanctifies the latter's centrality to their pilgrimage and intimates the idea that the old man's spirituality, just like the rich panorama of Indian life, can be preserved only if supervised by the 'superior' culture of the English colonials.

The authenticity of the Lama's voice is also compromised by the latent, implicit meaning inscribed in his quest's resolution. When he confides to Kim his ultimate vision, the old man says,

My Soul drew near to the Great Soul which is beyond all things. At that point, I saw all Hind, from Ceylon in the sea to the Hills, and my own Painted Rocks at Such-zen; I saw every camp and village, to the least, where we have ever rested. I saw them at one time and in one place; for they were within the Soul. By this I knew the Soul had passed beyond the illusion of Time and Space and of Things. By this I knew I was free (p.381).

Commenting on this key passage, Said remarks that the Lama's "encyclopaedic" vision of freedom "strikingly resembles Colonel Creighton's Indian Survey, in which every camp and village is duly noted" (1993: 172). This analogy uncovers the true meaning of the boy's friendship with the old man. Actually, Kim, and hence Kipling himself, is not interested in the religious search as much as he is concerned with the ethnographic survey

of India. And if the Lama's pilgrimage seems to bestow upon the narrative a touch of native authentic spirituality and exoticism, it is only at the price of an ideological complicity between Western ethnography and Imperial power. On this account, the priest's inclusive and redemptive vision seems to stand for a stratagem to hold every part of the Indian sub-continent within Imperial grasp by drawing Kim's errant spirit at the centre of everything and integrating him within the English chain of command. This is indeed Kipling's solution for India's claims for autonomy; it is a subtle scheme for its perpetual servility to the British Crown.

Unlike Kipling's falsification of India's historical reality and his repression of some aspects of the romance narratives, Armah seems fully implicated in a dialogical process whereby he valorises dialogue and polyphony, respectively for the construction of his hero's subjectivity, on the one hand, and the representation of heteroglossia, on the other. The representation of the different ideological consciousnesses in *The Healers* takes two forms: one, the use of the discursive styles of stylization and parody; two, the use of the direct or indirect speech of characters. These three forms of heteroglossic representation work in conjunction with the polar divisions of romance characterization and the historical reality that prevailed during the fall of the Ashanti Empire. For, unlike Kipling, Armah maintains a clear division of characters and distinguishes between two stocks: the 'inspirers' and the 'manipulators'. These two groups reflect another division at the level of setting: Esuano, the centre of political intrigues, competition and murder, and the Eastern Forest, the land of peace, authenticity and creativity.

Esuano and the Eastern Forest are integrated to their cultural milieu and made to represent two antagonistic worldviews. With the ideas of competition and violence associated with the Games of Remembrance, the town is the expression of a decadent cultural milieu, an un-idealized condition of existence. It is an area of fragmentation, intrigue and murder, in one word manipulation. The town's negative connotations connect it with a broader setting, the turbulent, masculine River the Nsu Nyin, where armies

confront each other and slaves are ritually sacrificed. The historical validity of Esuano and its physical surrounding is further suggested by the narrator's expansive descriptions of the different streams and rivers, together with his detailed account of the Ashanti culture as encoded in the tribal ritual games. Ahmed Saber praises this aspect of the fiction and writes: "this setting is in fact the product of a meticulously researched background, because the novelist wished to bring to life a vanished age, an earlier social order, and to do so in such an accurate and appropriately documented detail that, without harmful, idealised delusions, the reader would experience the Asante past" (11).

Deeply intertwined with the above setting is the group of characters called the 'Manipulators'. Most of them are villains, who inspire the ideas of 'destruction', 'poison' and 'disease'. Their only aims are to conquer, maintain and/or serve kingship, whatever the means to be used. Their social worldview is hierarchical and their political ideal is disunity. For instance, for Ababio a human being is "nothing better than an obstacle to be tricked, lied to, manipulated and shaped by force or guile" (p.50). This character represents the entire caste of the royals. The latter know well that collaboration with the white invaders will drive them personal worth and material profits. Their manipulative tactics are best illustrated in Queen Mother's betrayal of Asamoa Nkwanta through her secret surrender to the white army general, Wolseley. Read in the historical context of the Anglo-Ashanti War, the caste of 'manipulators' represents Armah's denunciation of the duplicitous role of Ashanti leadership in one of the most dramatic chapter of its modern history. Much of the historical material included in his fiction is corroborated by the history of Wolseley's expedition against Kumasi in 1874, and the subsequent fall of all Ashanti's vassal states in 1896.

Opposed to Esuano and the caste of 'the manipulators' are the Eastern Forest, which hides the town of Praso, and the society of the healers which dwells in it. Identified with the feminine, calm river the Nsu Ber, the forest is a place of meditation and inspiration. Among its big trees and dense vegetation, many persecuted persons, such as

Densu, Araba and Nkwanta, find peace and shelter. Thanks to the ideals of harmony and (social and bodily) health inscribed within it, this landscape attains ideal dimensions, which recall the apocalyptic settings associated with the hero's world in romance. Ahmed Saber is certainly to the point when he affirms that the presence of the Eastern Forest contributes greatly to the mythic constructions of *The Healers* (12). The identity and functions of the healers' society further strengthen this mythical dimension. Sharply contrasted to the 'manipulators', this dedicated caste is tellingly referred to as 'inspirers'. They represent an alternative society, moved by an ethical view of existence which works for the unity of the entire Black nation and the harmonious interplay of a person and his 'true self'. The mythical design inscribed in the creation of this caste reinforces the novel's thematic focus and its topical validity to the postcolonial political and cultural problems in Africa.

The idealized environment and the cultural milieu mentioned above are integral to Armah's imagination's orientation towards both history and myth. His superposition of the two structures produces a binary cosmic vision that drives two complementary interpretations. The first is a creative thrust oriented towards local colour presentation, a tendency to write in the realist mode of writing, which aims to achieve verisimilitude. The second is a creative thrust that is mythopoetic. It intensifies action and setting and adds to the novel's didactic matrix. Its objective is to develop a cluster of meaning associated with the ideal of the unity of the Black nation. Read together, the mythical and the historical elements of the narrative certifies that Armah's novel is not the kind of children fiction which hides behind the protective barricade of myth in order to draw a eulogised version of the past. It is rather a work of imagination that advocates a return to the past to take lessons from it. These two creative thrusts and the dual representation entailed within them are reiterated in the characters' presentation.

The polar characters' and setting's divisions of romance highlighted above offered Armah outlets for achieving three main objectives, all of which are congruent with the

three patterns of development singled out by Jean Webb in her study of serious children fiction. The three achievements are: one, the mythologizing of some and the historicizing of other aspects of the Anglo-Ashanti encounter at the second half of the 19th century; two, the dramatization of the different heteroglossic voices of that encounter; three, the enforcement of historical awareness in the mind of his young protagonist. The reassessment of Densu's interactions with the human world surrounding him and his movements from one area to another reveal that, unlike Kim's, his is an initiation that faces another reality of imperial domination, not the acquisition of a colonial education, bent on increasing his dependence on a dominant, coercive ideology. Besides, by summoning the linguistic extra-literary strata of his novel's chronotope, and by intersecting this hierarchy of voices within his novelistic discourse, Armah's discursive strategy foregrounds a construction of the main character's identity that is not merely subject to external influence. Instead, Densu's subjectivity and sense of history are capable of active discernment and action far more than Kim's manipulated, not to say suppressed, historical and cultural awareness.

The first influence on the formation of Densu's personality is his step father's. A man of influence deeply involved in the court's intricacies for power, Ababio represents the ruling class at Esuano and in miniature the official ideology among Gold Coast leadership. Armah presents his attempt at shaping Densu's identity in the form of a dialogue over the issue of royal succession. The verbal interchange between them is held at Ababio's own request, because, as he tells his guest, the situation is 'urgent'. During the conversation, Ababio explains that Esuano should look ahead and accommodate itself to the new power configuration in the region; otherwise it risks heavy losses in the near future. Ababio's speech is persuasive, looking for convincing rather than forcing his interlocutor. It springs from his sheer certainty that Densu is an intelligent and perspicacious individual, born to lead his people, not to serve the royals. As he tells the youth: "you're a natural-born victor". Yet, in spite of all its enticements, Ababio's speech

does not succeed to rally Densu to his clan. The youth intuitively rejects kingship because he does not feel inclined towards the exercise of political leadership.

By failing his step-father's expectation, Densu downplays a political ideology, and a culture of power, that Armah presents as the main cause for the fall of the Ashanti Empire and the subsequent English colonization of the region. Enough to mention in this context that Asamoah Nkwanta's strategy to defeat the white armies falls victim to an analogous scheme designed and implemented by the Queen Mother herself. An ingenious tactic of resistance, Nkwanta's strategy represents another ideological language dramatized in the novel. A fearless warrior and an army General, this man is a speaking person in the novel, whose speech offers an alternative to the collaborative ideology of the royals. In an important passage of the novel, Nkwanta expands on his insights and instructs Densu on the reasons behind the rivalry between the ruling class and the heads of their armies. Behind his explanations looms the struggle for power in postcolonial Africa, when political instability led to numerous military coups and civil wars, in many countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria. Addressed to the continent's present situation more than to its past, the General's dialogical discourse is another heteroglotic voice that enhances Densu's cultural and political awareness.

The most formative language in Densu's construction of identity as a free agent capable of discernment and action is Damfo's. Prompted by an inner compulsion to resist the lures and pressures of the manipulators' world, the youth's search for vocation leads him straight to the healer Damfo, with whom he feels to share many affinities. After insistent demands, the youth convinces the master healer to initiate him to the science of healing. The initiation takes place in the Eastern Forest and involves him both in the learning of the healing rules and long conversations with his mentor. The teaching develops in Densu high intersubjective skills, linked to his positions as both a subject open to the formative knowledge of his teacher and an active agent able of deliberate action and influence on his environment. In an important conversation, Damfo insists that his

disciple learn not only to respect the integrity of individuals, but equally to comprehend the sounds of all things, including plants, animals, birds, rivers etc. Embedded in this teaching is the healer's repudiation of manipulation and his heartfelt dedication to inspiration: "manipulation steals a person's body from his spirit, cuts the body off from its own spirit's direction. The healer is a lifelong enemy of all manipulation. The healer's method is inspiration" (p. 81).

Central to Damfo's vision is also the principle of the unity of the Black race. In more than one context in the novel, and with more than one character, the master healer presses this point. For instance, in one of his numerous conversations with Asamoah Nkwanta, he ensures him that "if the past tells you the Akan and the black people were one in the past, perhaps it also tells you there is nothing eternal about our present divisions. We were one in the past. We may come together again in the future" (p. 176). This statement mirrors Armah's desire for a pan-African ideal. It decries political divisions as the sources of Africa's dependency on the West and advocates the re-unification of the continent's different countries into a single, strong state. A postcolonial desire of freedom and strength, Armah's dream evokes Kipling's desire to see India's different ethnies unified under the banner of the British Crown. But unlike the English Writer, Armah advocates the political unity within native, racial lines, not foreign, European domination. It is this vision which provides the strongest argument to read Armah's novel as a counter-discourse that answers back Imperial fiction.

In spite of its tendency to function as a counter-discourse, Damfo's language remains a highly stylized language that fuses Western cultural elements. His seven principles for a disciple to become a successful healer remind us Benjamin Franklin's resolutions in his *Autobiography*. As the previous chapter has already brought evidence about Armah's familiarity with the American Puritan culture, it is not at all improbable that he has also appropriated Franklin's social ideology and underpinned Damfo's healing philosophy within it. This influence may be perceived in the intertextual relationship

between some of Armah's rules and Franklin's virtues. Thus, Damfo's first rule, which stipulates that the aspiring healer "does not drink or smoke intoxicants" (p.92), evokes Franklin's first ideal of "Temperance" (p.78); the second and third rules of non-violence (against other peoples and other religions) re-inscribe the Founding Father's ideal of 'Justice', in which he forbids to wrong others by doing them injuries. They can also be said to articulate the morality of 'Chastity' inherent in Franklin's denunciation of anyone who injures his own or someone else's reputation; the interdiction of gossip and quarrel (the fifth rule) connects to Franklin's pledge for 'Silence' and the avoidance of trifling conversations. As for the sixth rule of the economy of time, it relates to the virtue of 'Industry': "lose no time", says Franklin; finally, the respect for elders, Damfo's last rule, seems to re-inscribe Franklin's puritan virtue of 'Humility'.

Besides the writing strategy of stylization, the dialogism of Armah's discourse is also oriented towards the use of parody. This writing device is employed to represent the speech of the white characters of the novel, namely Glover and Wolsley. A chuckle of their coercive language is presented when Armah has Wolsley's African interpreter translate the whites' mission in Gold Coast

The great white man comes from a great white queen, powerful beyond all kings on earth. This queen –her name is Victoria- has ears that hear everything that goes on everywhere in the world, even here. She has heard how much damage the Asante armies have done against us on the coast. She has therefore sent us this powerful white man, out of the kindness of her heart and the fullness of her might, to help us drive away the Asante armies and defeat them thoroughly, so they will never rise again (p.201).

This passage voices Wolsley's will to defeat the Ashanti and to extend his domination over the whole region. Underlying its hyperbolic language is Armah's sarcastic attitude towards the hegemonic pretensions of the English army general. The same writing strategy is carried over again when Densu serves the other English Captain, Glover. The youth discovers that Glover is a man full of 'manic energy', who suffers from paranoid thoughts: "Glover was at night a morose, solitary being [...] often when he slept, he would

hold long arguments with invisible people, telling them they knew he was right and would succeed, if only they would stop blocking his path at every chance they got” (p.259).

Densu’s intelligence errand at Glover’s headquarters is not his first encounter with a white man. When he was twelve, he befriended a white man called Collins and a priest called Warner. A melancholy trader, who escaped Cape Coast and found his only consolation in drink, Collins taught Densu English for two years, the time-period that lasted his stay at Esuano. However, just after Father Warner joined him at the town, he mysteriously died. Taking notice of the boy’s knowledge of the English language, the priest asked him to help him translate the Bible into Akan and to work for him for the rest of his life. Withstanding Ababio’s pressures to accept the job, Densu declined the proposal and withdrew himself from him.

Densu’s experiences with an English trader, a priest and an army man are not without reminding us Kim’s white mentors in the Great Game. Being all agents of colonialism, they seem to offer him an alternative worldview in congruence with his step-father’s ideology of collaboration and in opposition to the healers’ philosophy of authenticity and togetherness. Densu dismisses all these voices and considers his experience with them as unrewarding experiences, which cannot accommodate his personality’s inner traits and the sense of mission inscribed in his healing vocation. In alienating his protagonist from the whites’ world, Armah disclaims Kipling’s Western education and counters the strategy of colonial desire carried through colonial mimicry by a cultural authenticity that allows for essentialist native qualities. The essentialism of his discourse can be inferred from Damfo’s belief in a true, natural self, as opposed to a betrayed self. Underlying this belief is Armah’s Blydenian assumption that the individual, as well as collective, identity have exclusive defining features, which distinguish men and cultures from each other. Implied in it is also Fanon’s psychoanalytic insights which convinced him that the Blacks’ “collective unconscious” was created out of the Whites’ “cultural imposition” upon them.

According to Fanon, the 'cultural imposition' to which the Blacks were subjected appears in their assimilation of the European unconscious psychic schemas and their cultural assumptions, however racially-biased they are (1993: 186). Fanon sums up the tenets of this ideology in the maxim: 'turn white or disappear'. His polar perception of the colonial interactions disallows hybridity and recognizes only two poles in the racial representation map: the Whites and the Blacks. To all evidence, Armah makes stand with Fanon's essentialist thought and repudiates both the colonial mimicry project and the postcolonial hybridity paradigm. His imaginative construction of the group of traditional healers and the creative, curative potential he endows them with are the strategy of desire through which he counters the colonial discourse of mimicry and advocates a strategy to heal Africa's division. A creation of desire that attains the limits of myth-making, the healers' society is also Armah's alternative community through which he attempts to foreground cultural and power directions for the present political and cultural situation, and to derive a racial philosophy that is likely to make for the rise of a distinct and original African culture and identity. However, in spite of all his good will, the alternative culture he advocates seems to be incapable of escaping the influence of the West. As the analysis of his novel has shown, Western discourse and aspects of its culture and literature are pervasive in his intellectual thought and literary imagination, even when they are summoned only to be repudiated.

References

- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Healers*. 1978. Oxford: Heinemann, 1979.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Oxon: Routledge, 1994.
- Boafo Y. S. "The Nature of Healing in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Healers*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.
- Cooper, Brenda. *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*. 1998. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Peau Noire Masques Blancs*. Algiers : Enag, 1993.
- Franklin, Benjamin. "The Autobiography". *American Trails. An Anthology*. Ed. Pierre Deflaux. Paris: Armand Colin, 1970.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. 1957. London: Penguin, 1990.
- The Secular Scripture A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Gikandi, Simon. "History and Character in *The Healers*". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Man's Burden".
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Kipling.html>
- . *Kim*. 1901. London: Penguin, 1994.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Armah's Histories". *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Three Continents Press, 1992.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*. New York and London: Garland, 1999.
- McLure, John. *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction*. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1981.
- Paffard, Mark. *Kipling's Indian Fiction*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1989.
- Saber, Ahmed. "Armah Myth-Making in *The Healers*". *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 136. Ed. Jeffrey W Hunter. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1993.

----- . *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 2003.

Webb, Jean. "Text, Culture, and Postcolonial Children's Literature: A Comparative Perspective".

Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context. Ed. Roderick Mc Gillis. New York: Garland, 2000.

Wilson, Angus. "Kim and the Stories". *Modern Critical Views Rudyard Kipling*. Ed. Harold

Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

Wilson, Edmund. "The Kipling Nobody Read". *Kipling's Mind and Art*. Ed. Andrew Rutherford.

Stanford UP, 1964.

Conclusion

Just like the first two parts of this study, this third part convinces us that, in his middle novels, too, Armah has taken full advantage of the two types of discursive hybridity, the intentional and the organic. His tendency to hybridize the discourse of his novel seems the constant of his literary imagination, however different are his novels' thematic interests and however various are his esthetic choices and ideological postures. Of the two types of hybrid discourse, it is organic, or linguistic, hybridity which looms larger in his creative imagination, and it is the one which enables a more significant critical re-assessment of his middle fictions. A feature that well describes all Armah's novels, it steeps them in the popular mode of writing of African Onitscha market writers, and highlights the proverbial space foregrounded by his quotations. Simultaneously, it also elicits the eclecticism of his borrowings and points at the sources of his fictions. For this reason, this conclusion will start by synthesizing the results reached after the analysis of the different texts organically fused within Armah's middle fictions.

Why Are We So Blest?, presented by critics as Armah's most daring experimentation with narrative structure and his most radical fiction, shows itself to be the fiction which best testifies to the influence of the popular aesthetics of proverbial quoting on his works. Predicated by a concern towards the plight and the liminality of the postcolonial artist/intellectual, this novel develops further the same theme tackled in *Fragments*. But, unlike the latter novel, it does not allow further space to the traditional African oral poetics. The absence of intervocality within the confine of its text, however, does not necessarily imply a lack of authenticity. The authenticity of *Why Are We So Blest?* seems rather to spring from its conspicuous and organic hybridization of its discourse; a hybridization which foregrounds an intertextual, proverbial space that deeply anchors it in the poetics of popular writers. Beyond the didactic functions fulfilled by this proverbial space, it is Armah's supposed radicalism that can be qualified.

Armah's appropriation of Doris Lessing's narrative template and discourse in *The Golden Notebook* has the merit to strengthen the conclusion reached after our comparison of *Fragments* with Joyce's *A Portrait*, and which has convinced us that Armah does not pursue formal sophistication for pure aesthetic ends. Instead, besides his interest in technique made manifest in his borrowing of the genre of diary novel, and which remains an authenticating interest since it connects him to popular and traditional writers' search for originality and freshness of expression, he is equally concerned with the relation of the African artist and his society. As two postcolonial intellectuals, Solo and Modin are noted for their yearnings for a sense for African community and anti-colonial struggle, even though their education, acquired in the West, works to spirit them away from their native culture, and the corrupted ideology of their party confines them within the margins of their societies. Their heartfelt commitment contrasts to Stephen Deadalus's detachment and exile and echoes Lessing's protagonist's, Anna Wulf, commitment to the cause of women. Anna's gendered, committed discourse and her dissatisfaction with her country's gender politics are appropriated and re-employed by Armah to circulate an analogous struggle, racial rather than feminist.

The other source of Armah's radical discourse is Solo's 'manichaeic' worldview, his supposedly racial binarism, which seems to reject inter-racial bonds and advocates the separation of African from Western culture. This aspect of his language is conveyed by his apparent rejection of the ideal of romantic love, as it transpires from his utter condemnation of Aimée-Modin love relationship. However, Solo, who functions as a popular character type, an expert in the art of loving, and a mediator of Modin's experience, does no more than quote from authoritative Western texts about love, namely McCullers's *The Ballad*, Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and De Rougemont's *Love in the Western World*. By so doing, he returns in to the West the very ideology into which he has been educated and endorses the didactic role of first-narrators in popular fictions. Indeed, separated as he is from his tradition, the only alternative left to him in order to attune with

his native culture and atone with his *imagined community* is to turn to the didacticism of popular aesthetics in order to guide his readers and warns them against the dangers of Bohemia as a resistance strategy. Instead of an inter-racial/cultural ideal, Solo envisions a community built, not on the Western ideal of romantic love, but on the concept of brotherly love which, in his view, is more likely to preserve the African identity as a cultural entity different from the West. To his mind, to secure a sense of African identity is the best warrant which can allow for the perennity of revolution and the continuity of the liberation struggle in the continent.

Even though it exhibits many instances of intentional hybrid discourse, *Two Thousand Seasons*, too, carries on the same strategy of appropriation deployed in *Why Are We So Blest?*. This aspect of its discourse is elicited by the ideological framework which structures its narrative, and which is constructed through the model of Salvation, Providential history and the English Puritans historical experience of migration to the New World. Underlying this construction is also Armah's conjunctive and creative elaboration of different texts within his novel. These texts are either African ones, such as the Akan oral performances of Ananasesem and Aidoo's *Anowa*, or foreign ones, such as Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Their inclusion in the narrative in stylized forms has permitted Armah to flesh out and substantiate his ideological reconstruction of the African past. The large scale process of appropriation through stylization in *Two Thousand Seasons* prompts us to consider it as an epic of quotations, wherein organic hybridity, constructed out of different borrowings, reveals Armah's preoccupation with the way 'newness enters the world'. Indeed, even when his hybridization of discourse is not politically charged, i.e. not intentional, Armah seems capable, thanks to the elaborate sophistication of his creative imagination, to transform his borrowed materials in order to produce a new and original mythologized version of African past.

Besides its deployment of the hybrid discourse as a writing strategy of appropriation, *Two Thousand Seasons* utilizes also hybridity as a strategy of subversion.

Instances of this have been shown in Armah's abrogation of Western texts belonging to various authors, such as Berkeley, Conrad and Defoe, who circulate a stereotypical image of Africa as a place of darkness and evil, or an empty land waiting to be filled by the European tokens of desire, power and knowledge. The allusions to all these Western imperial narratives are born by a satiric style, which finds its source in the Akan tradition of abuse, the Halo. Like in his first novels, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah grapples another time with imperial discourse, and another time he appeals to his culture's oral performances to dialogize his borrowings. To all evidence, then, the vocality of Armah's text is always the warrant of its hybrid, subversive functions.

The Healers also sustains a reading along the lines of the literary hybridity paradigm. Though our last chapter has involved only one comparison, namely to Kipling's *Kim*, it has, nonetheless, succeeded to illustrate the working of the two kinds of hybrid discourse, the organic and the intentional. The text of *The Healers* hides both a creative impulse towards the fusion of the adventure narrative as a means to elaborate the postcolonial desire for cultural revival and historical revisionism, and a coercive impulse that transgresses colonial historiography and produces an Africanist counter-discourse. The subversive language of *The Healers* is oriented towards the theme of mimicry inscribed in Kipling's novel. This theme is obliquely touched in some of Armah's early fictions, namely *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*. But in his fifth novel, it stands as one of the most important issues and is developed to its fullest bloom.

What comes of Armah treatment of cultural hybridity through his response to Kipling's mimicry project is an uncompromising rejection of the hybridity of culture. Sensing behind Kipling's narrative a political thrust towards the maintaining of English power, Armah rejects the merging of races and cultures. For him, indeed like many African nationalists leaders, mainly Blyden, every race has its distinctive features, and cultural hybridity is a threat to the Africans' exercise of political power, which has already been eroded by foreign domination. Therefore, it can be said that, in *The Healers*, cultural

hybridity, as the expression of Bhabha's concepts of 'newness' and 'transgression', has no place. What rather ensures the resistance to European domination is the cultivation of an essential self, attuned to the essence of the community from which it springs. Unfortunately, Armah does not develop the essence of the African personality he believes in. And if we consider that some of Damfo's teachings depute from foreign cultures, such as the Puritan culture as conveyed in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, we think that the least that can be said about his attitude towards cultural hybridity is that it is inconsistent. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Solo's and Modin's double cultural heritage is repressed, to the extent that, for them, national culture becomes a narrative of loss and contradiction, that forces them in the liminoid condition of an existentialist communitas that functions, at best, as a critique of Western culture and the education they have received. In *The Healers*, Armah transcends the negative sense of this community, but only at the price of returning to an essentialist worldview.

General Conclusion

Relying on Bakhtin's typology of the hybrid discourse and Newell's study of the proverbial aesthetics in Ghanaian popular fictions, our dissertation has attempted an intertextual reading of five of Ayi Kwei Armah's novels in order to demonstrate the hybrid construction of his texts and the proverbial function fulfilled by some of his borrowings from Western master-texts and narratives. Our comparative approach to Armah's novels has run against his resistance to comparative scholarship voiced in his polemical response to Charles Larson's *The Emergence of African Fiction*. It has been rendered possible thanks to the deployment of the paradigms of organic and intentional hybridity. A writing strategy that has, according to Bakhtin, ever been a hallmark of language and literary development, organic, or linguistic, hybridity is the process through which popular writers in Ghana continue to produce works of imagination that absorb Western texts, generic and narrative templates and character types, and transform them into original, hybrid textual artefacts that sometimes resist critical efforts to locate influences or ideologies, or to fix specific art forms within a distinct ideology. This creative impulse is often read by the critics of African literature in opposition to the creative thrust of intentional hybridization of discourse, or abrogation, deployed by the continent's international, elite literature. Unlike the works of Onistcha Market literature, the latter is an assertive literature, characterized by its self-conscious use of the language and its orientation towards the ideological confrontation with Western literary canons. Armah's oeuvre is often read from this perspective. Therefore, by reading him through the hybrid, proverbial aesthetics of urban writers, we think that the first, and most important, conclusion that our study warrants is the unification of the modern African literary experience. This unity of the continent's literary experience is denied by most of the Western critics' various contributions to African criticism.

Richard Priebe's *Myth, Realism and the West African Novel* is the first case in point. Predicated by an arbitrary division of African postcolonial generations of writers

into first and second generations who write from two different rhetorics, respectively the ethical and the mythical, Richard Priebe has established a genealogy of the African novel that has remained unquestioned ever since the publication of his study. His arguments in favour of this arbitrary division revolve around the distinctions he perceives in the narrative ideologies of Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah, his work's two focal writers. Achebe, Priebe argues, writes from a rhetoric of realism, which works through similes, is historical and didactic, and functions like a proverb. Unlike him, Armah, according to the same critic, writes from a mythical rhetoric, which is a metaphorical, ahistorical mode that projects a worldview that ranges from the fantastic to the prophetic. Our reading of the proverbial space in Armah's fictions does not concur with this idea, and testifies to the existence within Armah's literary imagination of a creative thrust bent on extensively quoting from foreign sources and transforming the intertextual material into proverbial expressions or extended metaphors. Furthermore, the equal proportion of Armah's citations from foreign and native resources, as respectively illustrated in our investigations into the proverbial discourses of *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments*, demonstrates that he is at ease within both the continent's traditional oral culture and the modern, literary culture of its urban centres.

Thanks to the proverbial space foregrounded by their intertexts, Armah's fictions evince also a strong didactic propensity. The study of *The Beautiful Ones* has elicited a strong underlying impulse to teach, guide and advise its audience. Armah's borrowings from European authors, such as Wordsworth, Eliot and Yeats, are re-worked to function as an extended moral commentary on the ethical state of the country. This orientation of Armah's discourse towards the ethical has also brought evidence of the symbolic, moral dimension of his characters. When the latter are not presented as popular, polluted types, which comment on the country's social dislocation and degeneration, such is perceived in the configuration of Oyo, Efua and even Aimée in *Why Are We So Blest?*, they are described as moral, didactic figures recognizable in their moral uprightness. Didacticism is

thus a marked feature of Armah's writings, which connects him, not only to Onitscha writers, but also to the same ethical frame of Achebe's fiction.

It is very paradoxical that in the ultimate chapter of his work, Priebe includes a reading of Ghana's popular novels, initially published in 1978, and draws parallels between them and international fictions belonging to Armah and Awoonor, without ever noticing the proverbial space they both create for the enforcement of their moral themes. It is the presence of this proverbial space within their fictions which demonstrates the unity of vision in the modern development of African letters. An enduring facet of African oral culture throughout history, the use of proverbs seems now to furnish a trajectory of writing that connects, not only the African first generations of novelists with younger ones, but also the writers who come from provincial areas with those who have been raised in the new urban centres produced by colonialism.

The argument developed against Priebe's compartmentalization of modern developments in African literary imagination can also be re-used to qualify the studies of some critics of African literature, which are meant to single the development of its popular writings out of the continent's international fictions. One such study is Newell's *Ghanaian Popular Fiction*, which has furnished the hybridity paradigm for our dissertation. In the conclusion to her work, Newell recognizes that many African elite writers include themes and concerns which spring from the same sources as those informing local novelists. This fact prompts her to admit that the esthetic boundaries between international and market fictions sometimes dissolve. However, Newell means her assertion only to the cases in which the elite writer declares that his fiction is intended to local audience. Apart these cases, such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Amma Darko from Ghana, the melting away of the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' literature does not seem systematic in Newell's reading of the African novels. Furthermore, even though she focuses her study on the Ghanaian fiction, nowhere does she speak of the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah, as if they are the great exceptions to the framework of her proverbial, hybridity reading theory.

Newell's insights can be completed through many perspectives. First of all, proverbial quoting from Western literary resources is not limited to popular writers in Africa. Armah's body of novels testifies to the deployment of the same strategy. Whether it is *The Beautiful Ones* or *Why Are We So Blest?*, the discourses of the two fictions are organically hybrid and proverbial. The former is a didactic narrative that explores issues related to money, personal ethics, etc. It makes sense in the wider context of the materialism rampant in post-independence Ghana. The latter is no less didactic. Even though it is predicated by its characters' revolutionary longings, it borrows chunks of Western discourse and character templates and re-employs them to comment on the theme of involvement. The theme of involvement pertains to the same concern of local authors, who often caution their audiences against the dangers of miss-mating.

Armah's novels have also the merit to quote from traditional texts to implement their didactic designs. *Fragments* is a case in point. In the first chapter of the second part of our study, we have singled out many Western texts mentioned in the narrative within unmarked quotations. However, we have failed to spot any moral dimension appended to them. The reason behind the absence of Western texts functioning as proverbs in this narrative lies in the fact that most of the novel's proverbial discourse devolves to Naana and is borne by her vocal text. Holding an intervocal relationship with traditional Akan performances, such as the practice of dirge singing, the old woman's discourse is deeply proverbial. It sets the moral standards against which the other characters' behaviors and ethics are weighted. It is meant both to denounce and correct the social abuses and evils behind the fragmentation of the traditional community.

The third shortcoming in Newell's analysis is her exclusive focus on the issues of money, marriage and gender in her discussion of the social impact and relevance of Onistcha market fictions. What this methodological orientation implies is the limitation of the relevance of popular proverbial thrust to the sole sphere of urban, social life. However, our study of the proverbial space in Armah's fictions convinces us that his quotations fulfil

a bunch of other functions, all congruent with the same functions attached to the elders' use of proverbs. Not least of all these functions is a concern with the estheticism of verbal expression and the techniques of narration. The comparison of *Fragments* with Joyce's *A Portrait* has warranted that Armah has found inspiration in the esthetic experimentation of Western modernists, including Joyce. As for the comparison of the same novel with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it has brought evidence that Armah has employed the concept of story as a synonym of proverb and applied Shakespeare's eponymous hero's narrative as template to comment on the dilemma of the postcolonial artist, torn as he is between different loyalties in a rapidly changing world.

Armah's versatile use of the hybridity of the novelistic discourse brings us to the discussion of his claims for originality advocated in his response to Charles Larson's *The Emergence of the African Fiction*. If by the originality of his fiction he means a personal imaginative construction untainted and untouched by the intervention of a foreign imagination, his claim simply does not stand and does not make any sense. Our study of his novels has shown that even when the abrogative thrust in his work is very powerful, such as in the comparisons between *The Beautiful Ones* and *Heart of Darkness* and *The Healers* with *Kim*, elements of borrowings, wherein deliberate hybridization of discourse increasingly displaces organic hybridization, permeate his discourse. In other words, even when Armah consciously sets his novel to debunk and dismantle the strategies and ideologies of Western narratives, recourse to appropriation from the same sources has been necessary to him. Without this element of appropriation, abrogation would simply be impossible for him. For, how would it be feasible to disempower an ideology, discredit a world vision, without ever marking it and singling it, even at the price of a faint allusion, within the discourse one's fiction?

If Armah's claim to originality is untenable, it is not due so much to his incapacity as a novelist to shield his literary imagination from foreign influence, or his failure to deploy elements of his native culture in order to ensure an original expression to his art.

Instead, as Bakhtin's theory of the organic hybrid demonstrates, fusing different discourses is at the core of the development in literature in all epochs. Does one need to remind in this context Shakespeare himself, the enduring icon of English literature, whose most outstanding plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc, were all borrowed from other European literary traditions, and reworked in a novel way which has ensured his perennial authorship? Having written his fictions in a period of literary renaissance similar to Shakespeare's, we think that there is no shame to claim that Armah, and all the African writers of the same period, have purposefully appropriated and fused their borrowings from foreign texts within their artistic creations.

A nascent literature born thanks to some Africans' access to education in European languages, African literature, be it Francophone or Anglophone, needed resources in order to grow and sustain its development. As long as in its beginning it was an assertion of ethnic identity, elements of native culture seemed to fulfil plainly this task. However, the African novelist's consciousness of his intermediary position, familiar as he was with two cultures, fostered a new artistic awareness through which he tried to express himself in a mode of writing and a foreign language that bear, in Achebe's famous expression, the 'weight of his own culture'. It is at this junction that most African appropriations from the Western literature make sense.

The other junction that has made for the African writer's organic appropriation from Western literature inheres in the traditional African culture itself. As recent studies in African popular culture tend to show, such as the contributors to Karin Barber's *Readings in African Popular Culture* (1997), the African interactions with the culture of the Europeans has never been a static one. Africans have rather been always eager to invest elements of Western culture and cosmogony or, to put it in a more forceful phrase, to 'cannibalize' the intellectual and cultural heritage of the West in their arts. If we believe Ruth Finnegan, and there is no reason not to, this tendency shows, among other things, in the traditional African artists' propensity to use proverbs and their techniques of

expression as models for the development of individual, original artistic expressions. It is within this framework that Armah's claim of originality and the whole correspondences between his fictions and Western narratives should be understood. In other words, Armah's texts participate in the same spirit of celebration that Achebe singles as the essence of the *Mbari* ritual.

However, if literary hybridity writes so large in Armah's texts, cultural hybridity is shunned. What rather transpires from the reading of his novels is a latent anxiety vis-à-vis the merging of cultures. The most important manifestation of cultural hybridity in Armah's works remains the liminality of most of his main characters. Cases in point in his first fictions are Baako in *Fragments* and Solo and Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?*. The three characters function as existential *communitas*, cross-over intellectual figures deeply aware of their marginal positions within their societies. They can be contrasted to the normative *communitas* of the group of twenty initiates and Densu, the respective protagonists of *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. The differences between the two groups of characters inform how Armah employs the creative energy of the anti-structure (i.e. *communitas*) and for what purposes. An instance of Bhabha's 'third space', liminality is indeed the yardstick through which Armah's attitude towards the hybridity of cultures can be measured.

Baako, Solo and Modin are all African intellectuals educated in the West; yet, even though their education seems to single them out of the other members of their societies, their opinions about it remain low. For instance, Baako shuns creative writings, which appeals to 'foreign' (English) words, and prefers to deal with images as an artistic opportunity, which is more likely, in his view, to attune him with his people. Likewise, Modin stops his studies at American universities and embarks on a 'perilous journey' to join the revolutionary struggle in the African continent. To his mind, the education acquired in the United States is 'twisted knowledge', meant to manipulate Africa's 'best breed' in order to ensure the continuation of colonialism by 'other means'. His perception,

shared by Solo, mirrors Armah's uneasiness towards the power relations inscribed in Western knowledge. Affected as he was by the strictures of neo-colonial hegemony, Armah made all his protagonists suspicious of the Western education given to them. His ideological suspicions prompted him to mobilize the existential *communitas* of his early fictions in order to function exclusively as cultural critiques of the power/culture structures inherited from colonialism, and to confine the workings of the main characters within scapegoat roles that tragically long for a traditional, conceptual mode of a community bound to disappearance.

The limitation of the creative, anti-structure potential inscribed in Armah's early *communitas* to the exclusive roles of cultural critiques is the cause of the tragic and pessimistic vision carried by *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*. The sense of tragedy in these two fictions is probably Armah's most notable contribution to the post-independence African literature, especially to the issues of the African intellectual, his role within society and his relationships to his tradition. For example, Baako's failure to meet the materialistic demands of his family informs the corrupted expectations grafted to traditional values of continuous fellowship between the dead and the living. Much of this corruption emerges as the outcome of an unequal cultural exchange induced by the power relations inherent in the two different ontological and cosmogonic worldviews, related to the cultural entities of the West and Africa. Baako is certainly to the point when he outlines the resemblance between the Ghanaian neo-culture inherited from colonialism and the Melanesian cargo cults. Irrational as they are, these cults have overtaken the traditional Akan rites and warn the disappearance of their conceptual meaning. Seen from this perspective, the interplay of Western and Akan cultures seems to produce a negative aspect of cultural hybridity, and Baako's liminality/liminoid condition is the agent which unmasks the nefarious consequences which spring from it.

However, the fact that Baako is not made to valorize any aspect of the culture inherited from European colonization makes that he does not succeed to achieve a

peaceful re-aggregation with his community. His nostalgic attachment to the ideal of cultural purity alienates him from his society at large and compromises his integration within it. In the whole, Armah's social vision is negatively affected, since his narrative does not envision solutions to the dilemma of the postcolonial intellectual. After all, what are the solutions that can be envisioned to the imperialized world's intellectual, when his social responsibility is perceived merely in terms of a quest for a culture on the brink of disappearance? Besides, if we endorse Armah's social diagnosis, does not the corruption of the neo-culture he so much decries point to the incapacity of traditional culture to bear the weight of a foreign, namely European, culture? If, now, according to Armah, traditional culture has proved incapable of resisting (absorbing?) the intrusion of a foreign conceptual framework, what sense can have Baako's attempt to revive it? In our view, it is here that Baako's and Naana's experiences meet one another, and it is also here that lies the sense of Baako's tragedy, i.e. in Armah's belief in his culture's weakened energies to resist and/or absorb the intrusion of foreign values into its system. Finally, it is also here that Armah's artistic and social visions become blurred, due to the fact that he seems at pains to reconcile himself with the idea of the cultural hybridity induced by the colonial momentum.

What is said about Baako can be extended to Solo and Modin, especially if we overlook the popular dimension of *Why Are We So Blest?* and adopt the traditional essential reading of the novel. The two characters form an existential *communitas* that debunks Western neo-colonial hegemonism and African revolutionary movements from the inside. As such, they are noted for their keen anti-colonial insights. However, their longings for an essential, racial ideal without too much substance lead them to tragedy, in the case of Modin, and futility, in the case of Solo. In other words, the two characters encapsulate the same fate as Baako's, its sense of the absurd and its sense of the tragic. First, like Baako, Modin is moved by ideals of race and revolution that cannot be fulfilled, because society at large has changed towards a hybrid, heterogeneous culture form, and its

change warrants no place to old values, and far less to revolutionary ideals. Second, like him, Solo, too, does not succeed to attune with his community, because identification with a society that has gone individualistic is simply absurd. The reason behind the two visions, the tragic and the absurd, that permeate *Why Are We So Blest?* seems to always spring from the same sources in Armah's creative imagination: his oversight of the phenomena of hybridization of cultures, which wrapped his ideology so much as to confine it solely within the realm of resistance literature. This oversight should be contextualized, though. It seems to stand for the product of a definite historical period in African thought that went nationalistic and nostalgic. Nonetheless, how much essentialist his third fiction is, Armah has the merit to have pursued the logic of African cultural nationalism of the 1960s to its logical, unfettered consequences.

Unlike Baako, Modin and Solo, the protagonists of *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* complete their liminal initiation and successfully re-aggregate with their communities: the group of twenty initiands re-captures the town of Anowa, previously lost to colonial forces, and Densu is admitted to the society of the healers. Their re-insertion into their societies enables Armah to transcend the dark vision of his previous novels and to suggest cultural and political alternatives to the traditional values eroded (hybridized?) by colonization. The positive note of the two novels could not have been achieved without Armah's return to a distant African past, in order to steep the liminality of his main characters within a liminal organization that is seemingly traditional and authentic. The evocation of the initiation rites along a traditional organization and the anchoring of the narratives in history fulfil ideological designs related to Armah's attempt to construct a new cultural framework that fits his perceptions of the African history and identity. This creation is an essentialist one; it tries to abrogate Western stereotypes about the Black man and to retrieve a sense of a primordial 'African personality'.

However, the native essence of this personality does seem to be solely imagined from authentic African cultural elements. Enough to mention, here, Damfo's rules of

healing, whose origin has been traced back to Puritan culture. Therefore, in a way or another, Armah's cultural invention in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* is trans-cultural, not to say simply hybrid. It contrasts sharply to the orientations of *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*, where the main characters search for atonement with their native culture mainly through the repudiation of the cultural heritage of the West, even if the price is their self-sacrifice. This fact raises a serious question as regards the consistency of Armah's attitude towards the issues of cultural hybridity and essential identities. To rephrase the problem in other terms, we wonder why Armah had evacuated cultural exchange in his early novels before he set himself to large scale appropriations in his later (historical) fictions. We are aware that his anchoring of *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* in a distant past enabled him to fuse his borrowings more opaquely, and thus to transcend some inconsistencies related to the essentialist stance of his (racial) ideology. But what would have been the fates of Baako, Solo and Modin, respectively in *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*, and by extension the cultural vision of the two fictions, if their author had allowed for a more flexible attitude towards the phenomenon of hybridity? The answer to this question heralds the new direction adopted by the next generation of African novelists, such as Kojo Laing and Ben Okri, and the metamorphosis of the African fiction towards the magic realist mode of writing, where cultural hybridity, its most patent paradigm, seems to provide the answer to the dark, pessimistic vision of the postcolonial African novelist.

Bibliography

Primary Sources : Works by Ayi Kwei Armah :

1- Novels:

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988; New York: Collier Macmillan, 1969.

Fragments. Oxford: Heinemann, 1974.

The Healers. Oxford: Heinemann, 1978.

Two Thousand Seasons. Oxford: Heinemann, 1973

Why Are We So Blest?. London: Heinemann, 1974.

2- Short Stories :

"An African Fable". *Presence Africaine*, 68 (1968), 192-196.

"Contact". *The New African*, 4, 10, December 1965, 244-246.

"The Offal Kind". *Harper's Magazine*, 1424, January 1969, 79-84

3- Essays ;

"African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific ?". *Presence Africaine*, 64 (1967), 6-24.

"Apartheid Was Regrettable but Africans Were not ready for Democracy". *New African*.
June 2006.

"A Mystification; African Independence Revalued". *Pan-African Journal*, 2, 2, Spring
1969,141-151.

"But Sir, Christ Himself Never Went to University". *New African*. May 2006.

"Don't Mention Slavery". *New African*. July 2006.

"Larsony, or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction". *Asemka*, 4, September 1976, 1-14.

"What Colonial Education Did to Africans". *New African*. May 2006.

"Who Were the Ancient Egyptians?". *New African*. 2006.

"Why Should Democratic Americans Find Democrat Lumumba so Threatening?".
New African. June 2006.

Secondary Sources ;

1- Works about Ayi Kwei Armah ;

- Booker, Keith. "The Historical Novel in Ayi Kwei Armah and David Cauter". *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. Vol. 38 (1997).
- Folarin, Margaret. "An Additional Comment on Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*". *African Literature Today*, 5 (1982), 116-129.
- Fraser, Robert. "The American Background in *Why Are We So Blest?*" *African Literature Today*. 9 (1978), 39-46.
- Fraser, Robert. *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* London: Heinemann, 1980.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Reading the African Novel*. London: Jones Currey, 1987.
- Gorlier, Caudio. "Post-Marxism in an African Context: The Usability of Antonio Gramsci". *Research in African Literatures*. 33, 3 (2002): 97-103.
- Ibitokun, B.M. "Binary Aesthetics in Armah's Novels." *Commonwealth*, 9,1 (1987), 109-112.
- Innes, C.L. "Conspicuous Consumption and the Body Politic in the Writing of Ayi Kwei Armah and Ama Ata Aidoo." *Essays on African Writings*. Ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah. Oxford : Heinemann, 1995, 1-18.
- Izevbaye, D.S. "Ayi Kwei Armah and the "I" of the Beholder". *A Celebration of Black and African Writing*. Ed. In Bruce King and Kolawole Ogunbesan. Ibadan: Oxford University Press,
- Larson, Charles. *The Emergence of African Fiction*. Indiana University Press, 1972
- Lazarus, Neil. *Resistance in African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Lobb, Edward. "Armah's Fragments and the Vision of the Whole". *Ariel*, 10,1 (1979), 25-38.
- Lorentzon, Leif. "Ayi Kwei Armah's Epic We-Narrator". *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. Vol. 38. (1997): 221-234.
- Lutz, John. 'Pessimism, Autonomy, and Commodity Fetishism in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*'. *Research in African Literature*. 34 (2003): 94-111.

- Lurie, Joseph. "Fragments : Between the Loved Ones and the Community". *Ba Shiru*, 5, 1(1973), 31-41.
- Mamadu, Ayo. "Reflections in a Pool : Armah's Art on Artists and the Arts". *Research in African Literatures*, 16, 4 (1985), 514-524.
- Nnolim, Charles. "Dialectic as Form : Pejorism in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah". *African Literature Today*, 10 (1979), 207-223.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Review of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*". *Okike*, 1 (1971), 49-53.
- Ogede, Ode; "Negritude and Africa: Armah's Account". *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 14. 4. (1993). 792-801.
- "The Rhetoric of Revolution in Armah's *The Healers*: Form as Experience". *African Studies Review*. 36, 1 (Apr 1993): 43-58.
- Porter, Abioseh. " Beyond Self-Deprecation and Racism: Versions of African History in *Bound to Violence and Two Thousand Seasons*". *Journal of Black Studies*. 20, 1 (Sep 1989): 3-14.
- Priebe, Richard K. "Demonic Imagery and the Apocalyptic visions in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah". *Vale French Studies*, 53 (1976), 102-136.
- *Myth, Realism, and the West African Writer*. Trenton : Africa World Press, 1988.
- Saber, Ahmed. "Armah's Myth-Making in *The Healers*". *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 136. Ed. Jeffrey W Hunter. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001.
- Solomon, Joan. "A Commentary on Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*". *English in Africa*. 1,2 (1974), 25-31.
- Steward, Danièle. "L'être et le monde dans les premiers romans d'Ayi Kwei Armah". *Presence Africaine*. 85 (1973), 192-208.
- "Disillusionment Among Anglophone and Francophone African Writers". *Studies in Black Literature*. 7,1 (1976), 6-9.
- *Le Roman African Anglophone depuis 1965*. Paris : Harmattan, 1985.

Wilson-Tagoe, Nana. "Narrative, History, Novels: Intertextuality in the Historical Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah and Yvonne Vera". *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. 12, 2 (Dec 1999): 155-166.

Wright, Derek. "The Metaphysical and Material Worlds : Armah's Ritual Cycle". *World Literature Today*, 59, 3 (1985), 337-342.

.....Ed. *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*. Three continents Press, 1992.

Yankson, Kofi. "*Fragments : The Eagle that Refused to Soar*". *Asemka*, 1, 1 (1974).

2- Works Cited in Comparison

Aidoo, Ama Ata. "Anowa". 1970. *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology*. Ed. Helen Gilbert. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

Berkley, George. "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America"
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13220/13220-h/13220-h.htm#BERKELEY>

Bradford, William Bradford. *Of Plymouth Plantation*.
http://members.aol.com/calebj/bradford_journal.html

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1902. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994.

Eliot, T. S. *Ash Wednesday*. <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/ash-wednesday/>
..... *The Journey of the Magi*. <http://www.blight.com/~sparkle/poems/magi.html>

Fitzgerald, Francis S. *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. London : Penguin, 1994.

Franklin, Benjamin. "The Autobiographie". *American Trails. An Anthology*. Ed. Pierre Deflaux. Paris: Armand Colin, 1970.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. 1916. London : Penguin, 1996.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. 1901. London: Penguin, 1994.

Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*. 1962. London: Flamingo Modern Classic, 2002.

McCullers, Carson. *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. Harmondsworth Penguin, 1963.

Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. 1956. Harvard University Press, 1975.

Shakespeare, William. "Hamlet". *The Complete Work of William Shakespeare*. Oxford: Wordsworth Editions, 1996. 670-713.

Sutherland, Efua. "New Life at Kyerefaso". *Unwinding Threads : writings by Women in Africa*. Ed. Charlotte H. Bruner. London: Heinemann, 1983.

Wordsworth, William. 'French Revolution'. *Selected Poems*. 1805. London: Penguin. 1996
..... 'Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. *Selected Poems*. 1806. London: Penguin, 1996.

Yeats, William Butler. "The Second Coming". *From Sidney to Sillitoe: An Introduction to English Literature*. Ed. F. Grellet and M-H Valentin. Paris: Hachette, 1984.

3- Criticism about the Works Cited in Comparison

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*".

<http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/achcon.htm>

Arab, Si Abderahmane. "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel". *The European Legacy*. Vol. 1. N° 1. International Society for the Study of European Ideas (1996).

Broccoli, Matthew. Ed. *New Essays on The Great Gatsby*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Cook, Richard. *Carson McCullers*. New York : Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1982.

Desmet, Christy and Robert Sawyer. Ed. *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Eble, Kenneth. *F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York : Twayne Publishers, 1963.

Evans, Oliver. "The Achievement of Carson McCullers". *The English Journal*. 5 (May 1962). 301-308.

Everett, Barbara. *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies*. Oxford: Calderon Press, 1992.

Gilbert, Stuart. *James Joyce's Ulysses*. Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with Faber and Faber, 1963.

Greene, Gayle. *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change*. The University of Michigan Press, 1994.

- Gross, John. *Joyce*. Ed. Frank Kermode. London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1971.
- Guilbert, Georges-Claude. *Carson Cullers : Amours Decalées*. Paris: Belin, 1999.
- Hassan, Ihab H. "Carson McCullers : The Alchemy of love and Aesthetics of Pain". *Recent American Fiction, Some Critical Views*. Ed. Joseph J. Waldnier. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963.
- Ker, David. *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*. New York, Peter Lang, 1997.
- Le Vot, Andre. *F. Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby*. Paris : Armand Colin, 1969.
- Liebler, Naomi Conn. *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Loomba, Anita and Martin Orkin ed. *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Mcevoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: The Basics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- McLure, John. *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction*. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1981.
- Stape J. H. Ed. *Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Myles, Anita. *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*. New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1991.
- Norris, David and Flint, Carl. *Introducing James Joyce*. Cambridge : Icon Books, 2000.
- Paffard, Mark. *Kipling's Indian Fiction*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1989.
- Parkinson, Kathleen. *F. Scot Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby*. London: Penguin, 1987.
- Philips, Robert S. "Painful Love : Carson McCullers Parable". *Southwest Review*. (Winter 1966) 80-86.
- Presley, Delma Eugene. "Carson McCullers and the South". *The Georgia Review* UN,UD. 19-32.
- Schorer, Mark. "McCullers and Capote : Basic Patterns". *The Creative Present : Notes on Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. Nora Balakian and Charles Simmons. New York : Garden City, 1963.
- Vickery, John B. "Carson McCullers : A Map of Love". *Wisconsin Studies*, (1960) 13-24.

Wells, Stanley. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Bloom, Harold. Ed. *Modern Critical Views Rudyard Kipling*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

Rutherford, Andrew. Ed. *Kipling's Mind and Art*. Stanford University Press, 1964.

Southam, B.C. Ed. *T. S. Eliot's 'Prufrock', 'Gerontion', 'Ash Wednesday' and Shorter Poems*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1978.

4- Anthropology, Philosophy, Literary Theory and Critical Studies

Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann, 1975.

Aristotle. "One the Art of Poetry". *Classical Literary Criticism*. Ed. Dorsch, T.S. London : Penguin, 1965.

Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Empire Writes Back*. 1989. London: Routledge, 2002.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Cary Emerson and Michael Holoquist. Austin : University of Texas Press, 1992.

..... *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

..... *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Indiana University Press, 1984.

Barber, Karin. Ed. *Reading in African Popular Culture*. London: the International African Institute, 1997.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Oxon: Routledge, 1994.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence : A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1975.

Booker, Keith. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998.

Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane. Eds. *Modernism*. London : Penguin, 1985.

Brown, Nicholas. *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature*. Princeton University Press, 2005.

- Camus, Albert. "The Myth of Sisyphus". *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- Chinwezu, Onwuchekw et al. *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics*. 1980. Washington, Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Cobley, Paul. *Narrative*. Oxon: Routledge, 2001.
- Cooper, Brenda. *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*. 1998. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Davidson, Basil. *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*. Boston: Little Brown, 1979.
- De Rougemont, Denis. *Love in the Western World*. Trans. Montgomery Belgion. 1940. Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Deandrea, Pietro. *Fertile Crossings: Metamorphosis of Genre in Anglophone West African Literature*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002.
- . "Trans(l)atlantic I-Con: The Many Shapes of Ananse in Contemporary Literatures". *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. Vol. 2, 1 (2004): 1-26.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Peau Noire Masques Blancs*. Algiers : Enag, 1993.
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. 1961. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Fitzgerald, Francis Scott. "Echoes of the Jazz Age". *Twentieth Century American Reader*. Ed. Jack Lare and Maurice O'Sullivan. Washington: U. S. I. A, 1999. 257-62.
- Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. London : Penguin, 1990.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Art of Loving*. 1957. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1975.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism* . Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.
- . *The Secular Scripture A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Reading the African Novel*. London: Jones Currey, 1987.

- Innes, C.L. "Through the Looking Glass: The Writing of the Irish and African Nationalists". *African Literature Today*. 5 (1982) 10-24.
- Julien, Eileen. *African Novels and the Question of Orality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Ker, David. *The African Novel and the Modernist Aesthetics*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Man's Burden". <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Kipling.html>
- Koepping, Klaus-Peter. "Absurdity and Hidden Truth Grotesque Body Images as Manifestations of the Trickster". *History of Religions*. Vol. 24, 3 (Feb. 1985), 191-214.
- Lare, Jack and O'Sullivan, Maurice. *The Twentieth Century American Reader*. Washington: U.S.I.A, 1999.
- Lawrence, D.H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. London : Penguin, 1971.
- Lemay, Leo. Ed. *An Early American Reader*. Washington: U.S.I.A, 1999.
- Lindfors, Bernth. *African Textualities: Texts, Pretexts, and Contexts of African Literature*. Asmara: Africa World Press, 1997.
- Martens, Lorna. *The Diary Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Mazrui, Ali. "The Monarchical Tendency in African Political Culture". *The British Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 18 (1967). Pp. 231-50.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*. New York and London: Garland, 1999.
- McCullers, Carson. *The Mortgaged Heart*. Ed. Margarita G. Smith. Boston : Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.
- Neu, Jerome. "Odi et Amo: On Hating the Ones We Love". *Freud and the Passions*. Ed. John O'Neill. Pennsylvania State University, 1996.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Ghanaian Popular Fictions: Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life & other tales*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Nketia, J. H. *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*. Achimota: UP, 1955.

- Petersen, Kristen Holst and Anna Rutherford. Ed. *Chinua Achebe: A Celebration*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1990.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. *An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets*. Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel". *Research in African Literatures*. 24 (1993): 123-140.
- Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Pelton, Robert. *The Trickster in West Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Piersen, William D. "A Resistance too Civilized to Notice". *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin(g), & Slum Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Ed. Gena Dagel Caponi. University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition". *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 18. London: Thousand Oaks, 2001.
- Priebe, Richard K. *Myth, Realism, and the West African Writer*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988.
- "Popular Writing in Ghana: A Sociology & Rhetoric". *Reading in African Popular Culture*. Ed. Karin Barber. London: the International African Institute, 1997.
- Rattray, Sutherland. *Ashante*. Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1993.
- . *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature, and the African World*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Susman, Warren I. *Culture as History. The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. 1973. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Turner, Victor. "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 6 (4), 1979.

- *The Forest of Symbols. : Aspects of Ndembu Rituals*. Ney York: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- *Blazing the Trail*. Tucson& London: University of Arizona Press, 1992.
- *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.
- Veblen, Thornstein. *Theory of the Leisure Class*. 1899.
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/VEBLEN/veb_toc.html
- Vecsey, Christopher. "The Exception that Proves the Rule: Ananse the Akan Trickster". *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. 12, 3 (1981), 61-77.
- Webb, Jean. "Text, Culture, and Postcolonial Children's Literature: A Comparative Perspective". *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. Ed. Roderick McGillis. New York: Garland, 2000.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Zakai, Avihu. *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Zumthor, Paul. *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale*. Paris : Seuil, 1987.

5- Unpublished Materials

- Amazit, Nadia. *Cultural Decline in the Works of Ellen Glasgow, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor*. Magister Dissertation. University of Algiers, 1989.
- Guendouzi, Amar. *Ayi Kwei Armah's Individual Talent and the Anglo-American Literary Tradition*. Magister dissertation. University of Tizi-ouzou, 2003.
- Mami, Fouad. *Western Knowledge and the African Intellectual in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels: Why Are We So Blest?, Two Thousand Seasons and The Healers*. Magister Dissertation. University of Algiers, 2004.

-

- Maoui, Hocine. *Disillusionment and Resistance in the Postcolonial Novel: The Example of Ayi Kwei Armah and NGugui Wa Thiong'O*. PhD Dissertation. University of Annaba, 2007.
- Riche, Bouteldja. *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction*. PhD dissertation. University of Algiers, 1998.