

University of Algiers 2
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Department of English

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**The Concept of Nation-State in the
African Novel: Chinua Achebe, Ngugi
wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi
Awoonor**

Submitted by:
Mr Abdelkader Babkar

Supervised by
Prof M'hamed Bensemmane

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Board of Examiners

Chair: Dr/Prof.....University of.....

Supervisor: Prof....., Univ of.....

**Internal/ External Examiner: Dr/ Prof.....Univ
of.....**

Déclaration Sur L'Honneur :

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

Date.....

Signed.....

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Dedication

To my mother and father who gave me life and raised me, despite the adversities.
To my love and my wife Sabah. Your love, Sabah, patience and support have given me stamina to read and write. To my dear son MOHAMED ADAM.

Abstract

The idea of the nation in Africa has been widely dealt with in modern African literature, arising from the fact that writers are bent on expressing their concern about the future of their countries. Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Kofi Awoonor are some such writers, as witness their efforts at conceiving of Afrotopia, or at best viable socio-political systems in the wake of colonial situation.

The present research work aims to examine closely these novelists' ideological convictions as they are expressed in their fictions and often shown to be in opposition to the practices established by the state apparatuses in place.

My study shows how the African situation has been characterised in African novels by both a common continental experience and a number of facts that dramatise the historical predicament of slavery, colonialism and a problematic independence. These representations carry dialogical voices which underpin the authoritative voice of the authors. The narratives of the nation are shown to be ambivalent, for they seem to act in defence of the novelists' culture, yet they jettison its very quintessence in the sceptical view they reflect about its significance in modern times.

Caught between the imperatives of modernity and the nostalgic drives of the past, the novelists are somehow drawn to condemn the metropolis and to celebrate it at the same time.

The point is to accept the construction of the nation-state in connection with universal concepts developed by the Western world and Europe essentially. The different 'utopias' offered by the writers under scrutiny cannot be divorced from the theory and practice that have led to the construction of European models of nation-states. Hence our reliance on important scholarly works in the field, particularly Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism*, Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*. But for the theoretical link between nationalism and literary interpretation, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture*, Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* and Bakhtin's *The dialogical Imagination* are fundamental supports for my discussion.

Critics that have approached this subject are restrictive in number, but I have taken account of the studies carried out by James Ogude on Ngugi, Leif Lorentzon on Armah, for example, or general works like Abiola Irele's *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* or Kanneh Kadiatu's *African Identities*, amongst others, to substantiate this study.

Due appreciation of the different styles used by the writers is expressed here from a modernism used by early Armah and Awoonor, to the realism of Achebe and Marxist-populist treatment of fiction and nation-building of Ngugi, as well as the essentialist slant that can be studied in Armah's later fiction.

Concepts such as hybridity, ambivalence, liminality, developed by Bhabha, are useful elements of analysis in the examination of the evolution of prose fiction in Africa from the early writings of Achebe to the later works of Armah and Ngugi. They allow us to see how the African novelists produce meanings that underscore the realities and difficulties met in the construction of stable and genuinely independent nation-states in Africa.

Introduction

Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awoonor are outstanding African writers who, in their novels, have endeavoured to address fundamental issues concerning the future of their nations. This thesis is meant to examine the manifestations of nationhood's imaginings in some of the above mentioned writers' novels. These imaginings, as they appear, because of the Janus-faced nature of the nation as a concept and an entity, do not only show how complex and ambivalent their stances are vis-à-vis their respective nations; they (the novelists) mostly constitute a challenge to institutions and at the same time invite a questioning on how to abide by an authority based on the notions of nation-state, nationalism or nationhood in Africa. The apparent reason behind this ambivalent position in their literary expression is that what they deem as the sources of inspiration, what they consider as the genesis of their *imagined communities* and what could have been the latter's history, had it not been for the intrusion of colonialism, is at odds with the legal and philosophical values that characterise the modern nations. The contradiction observed here does not suggest the writers' helplessness and inability to find ways out of the *status quo*; rather, they endeavour, through the art of novel writing, to suggest alternative world views which by implication foreground critically and in a corrective way what they consider a 'distorted' history of black Africa. Still, as James Ogude maintains, a great contradiction persists because the kind of nationalism discussed and touched upon in many African works is "the nation-centred nationalism rooted in the kind of modernist politics that eventually had a major influence on the colonies, focusing on the European-defined boundaries and institutions, and on notions of progress shaped by capitalism and European social thought" (Ogude, 1999: 6-7). In my analysis I will endeavour to identify the factors that make these novelists "narrate their nations" through their personal sensibilities. I will do that by situating the writers in question within the socio-historical contexts against

which they write. One must note that they consider themselves as pioneer philosophers who have intended to serve their beloved nations, attempting to describe through novel writing what they consider as factors that caused the origin of the present predicaments of Africa.

The novels and ideas they embody cannot be read distinctly from the ideas advanced in movements such as Negritude, African Personality and PanAfricanism. In this respect, such movements, despite the particularities of each, are endeavours to put forward the distinct black African experience and identity. This is significant in the sense that the writers studied in this research identify themselves not only with their fellow citizens in their respective nation-states, but also with black Africa as a whole. This, for many, was ignited by the long historical experience of enslavement and the accompanying negative stereotypes which went hand in hand or rather which preceded the act of enslavement if we follow Edward Said's use of Michel Foucault's concept of knowledge as power. This resulted in what Abiola Irele has seen as "positing a structure of mind common to members of the black race, an informing principle of a collective vision of the world" (Irele, 2002: 03). Although scholars such as Anthony Kwame Appiah consider the ideas held in relation to these movements as being misled, these movements shall be assessed in relation to whether they incorporate or aspire to social projects, for, as Hans Kohn argues, "no individual, no people, no history of people, no state is like any other." For this reason, criteria of beauty, the good and truth are not the same. If one nation does not follow its "way" and instead takes another nation as a model, the former gets, in Kohn's words, "suffocated", for civilization is created essentially in making use of the potentialities of a nation. Also, Kohn contends that each nationality was a unique carrier of a "common humanity, living and unfolding itself in all nationalities" (Kohn, 2008: 233).

The notion of nation-state, nationhood or nationalism constitutes the main concern of my research. Therefore, I will first and foremost place the literary works that I have selected for study within this framework. One of the

monumental scholarly works that can be associated to my research on nationalism is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. He argues that the nation exists only in the minds of the people who regard themselves as belonging to one nation. This is so in view of the fact that for him nobody in a nation has ever met (and will never meet) the whole people in his nation, yet in the mind of each exists the imagining of his communion. Anderson traces the origin of the concept and numbers its manifestations: capitalism, print, newspapers, museums, jobs (nowadays pilgrimage as he put it) and so on and so forth. What can be of interest in *Imagined Communities* is the link that Benedict Anderson makes between the novel form and the nation or what Homi Bhabha would call narrating the nation. Benedict Anderson argues that the simultaneity or what Walter Benjamin called the messianic time is emphasized in the novel. In modern secular times this time has turned into what Benjamin called "ambiguous empty time", clock or calendrical time.

On reading the African novels in question, we will soon realise this fact, for the reason that the African writer, as it were, while narrating his nation is at the same time trying to set his 'imagined community' free by defining his nation in the manner which, he thinks, fits its distinct nature.

Hans Kohn's seminal work *The Idea of Nationalism* is significant in trying to flesh out the notion of nationalism, its history and development. Kohn's view of nationalism is inspired by what is called Cultural Zionism which is a combination of liberal, cosmopolitan and nationalistic view of what is an ideal socio-political organisation. Kohn also argues that nationalism is a process of self-discovery, self-transcending; it is for him a permanent manifestation of humanity unfolding.

Other interesting sources on nationalism are Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, and Eric J Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*.

Post-colonial theory of literature is a useful support for my analysis. In particular, Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* are of great

significance. This is so because his approach to Western works in literature and history is that of meticulousness and caution as to the underlying motives of their Euro-centred contents. In other words, literature and history books written about the 'other' are thought by Edward Said as 'representations of truth' connected to serving the interests of one's nation more than truth *per se* or as he put it they are (literature and history writings) representations that are meant to "maintain the superior superior and the inferior inferior." Ngugi makes this relation explicit in *A Grain of Wheat* when he describes the motives of Mr Thompson's interest in the history of the British Empire. For at first his studying of history was impersonal, but when he read the poetry of Kipling "he experienced a swift flicker, a flame awakened. He saw himself as a man with destiny, a man poised for great things in the future" (Ngugi, 2002: 52).

Homi Bhabha's writings concerning the same theory are of paramount importance in approaching literary writings in the "periphery." This is so because these writings cannot be looked at as solely 'writing back' or narrating one's nation; rather, they are 'hybrid' and the ideologies and the standpoints incorporated in there are 'ambivalent' so much so that there could be a 'double dedication' to two cultures that are at many levels at odds with each other. For Bhabha, ambivalence, hybridity, liminality and mimicry deprive the text of the authoritative voice for the mere presence of the native or the 'other' in the English text, for instance, is in itself an implied recognition of the existence and the voice of the other. In this work I use Bhabha's above affirmation with the texts produced by Africans as well. For instance, while the novelists in question Achebe, Armah, Ngugi and Kofi Awoonor narrate their respective nations, by describing -in a messianic time- individuals (characters) who never meet one another (in their entirety) but are still connected in the sense that they belong to one nation, they (the novelists) at the same time resist this created entity (the nation) by attempting to represent their relevant *natios*, or individuals inside them as being actually able to meet all members of their own clans. A vivid illustration for that is the games played in *The Healers*, or the big meeting in Thabai to celebrate *Uhuru* in *A Grain of Wheat*. This is also evident when we

consider the fact that these African writers combine the oral tradition characteristic of pre-colonial African societies and the print tradition. The former suggests the direct contact of the storyteller and the audience (who are usually a group of people); the latter suggests the individualistic engrossing in, and contact of the reader with the story, and by extension, with 'culture' as a whole.

Books of history on Africa written both by Westerners and Africans would be of significance in this research work. For the writers in question, while narrating their nations, are also narrating the past, the history of their nations, and of course, (not a 'false' history) their attempts are at representing the 'true' history of their nations. Their endeavours, in Basil Davidson's words, are meant to reinstall "Africa's peoples within the culture of the world" (Davidson, 2002: 04).

I will be using sources such as Basil Davidson's *The Search for Africa: A History in the Making*, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, *A History of Africa*. Also, the books written by Cheikh Anta Diop are of paramount importance in our research. Although his theory came under harsh criticism from scholars such as Bruce Graham Trigger about the issue of the Egyptians being black, his studies are important for us in this context: not only does Cheikh Anta Diop question the way African history was looked at because of the 'scientific racism' of scholars such as Carleton Stevens Coon who used concepts of 'inferiority' and 'superiority' of races in describing black Africans living in sub-Saharan Africa, but he also shows how aspects of African history that were glossed over demonstrate how the political organisation in Africa in pre-colonial time was no less important than the nation-state framework. If adopted after independence, as Davidson argues in *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, Africa would be a different place today. For Diop African history was distorted because now Ancient Egyptian history is read as the history of white people.

History or rather 'true' history and the attempts to show, in Achebe's words, "where the rain started to beat [the nation]", occupied a significant place in

several novels written by the writers who are the focus in this research. For they incorporate in their novels issues such as the beginnings of history like the myth of creation in Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* and its permeation in other works like *A Grain of Wheat*. It is worth quoting this myth as shown in Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya*:

According to the tribal legend, which as a boy I heard from my grandfather's talk with other elders, and which many of our people are familiar with, we are told that from the beginning of things, Ngai or Mogai (god or divider or benefactor), when he was dividing the world into territories and giving them to the various races and nations that populate the globe, gave the man Gikuyu a territory full of good things of nature. The Mogai commanded Gikuyu to establish a home for himself and his descendants. Gikuyu and his wife, Moombi, built their first homestead at a place called Mokorwe wa Gathanga, and had many children (Kenyatta, 1968: 23).

The myth's representation in *Weep Not Child* goes as follows:

. . . At the foot of Kerinyaga, a tree and grew up . . . a holy tree . . . This was Makuyu, God's tree. Now, you know that at the beginning of things there was only one man (Gikuyu) and one woman (Mumbi). It was under this Mukuyu that he first put them . . . And the Creator who is also called Murungu took Gikuyu and Mumbi from his holy mountains. . . God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them. This land I hand over to you. O man and woman. It's yours rule and till in serenity sacrificing
Only to me, your God, under my sacred tree. . .' (*Weep Not Child*, 23-4).

As argued by Regis Debray, the role meant for myths such as this is to set "two anti-death processes". These are, first, "delimitation in time", or the assignation of genesis, in terms of an *Ark*. This means that nation does not develop from an unlimited "regression of cause and effect". The origin is fixed at a certain point in time: the "mythic birth of the *Polis*, the birth of Civilization or of the Christian era, the Muslim Hegira, and so on." Regis Debray argues that "this zero point or starting point" is what permits ritual recurrence, the "ritualization of memory", festivity. In other words, all those structures of supernatural

actions are a representation of overcoming the “irreversibility of time.” The second naissance sign of any nation is its

delimitation within an enclosed space. Here also there takes place an encounter with the sacred, in the sense of the *Temple*. What is the Temple, etymologically? It was what the ancient priest or diviner traced out, raising his wand heavenwards, the outline of a sacred space within which divination could be undertaken. This fundamental gesture is found at the birth of all [nations], in their mythology at least. But the myth presence is an indication of something real (Debray, 1977: 27).

These anti-death processes are also noticed in *A Grain of Wheat* where history is rendered as a chain of events which, small as they seem to be, contribute to the achievements of significant things. Resistance of the colonial powers started small, but it started, at any event, with the beginning of the encroachments of colonialism in Africa in general and in Kenya more specifically. Nonetheless, history and the unfolding of its ‘true’ events are not always easily accessible by ordinary people, for there could be false heroes who are still viewed as legitimate by their people. In *Petals of Blood*, characters such as Karega endeavour to understand and correct the history of Africa. History for Karega is looked at from a Euro-centric standpoint and not from an African standpoint. Likewise, slavery and how local chiefs took part in the enslavement of their people is to be found in Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*, *Osiris Rising: a novel of Africa past, present and future* and *Kmt: in the House of Life: an epistemic novel*. Another historical issue covered in these novels is the ‘true’ (usually concealed) history of Africa. There is a great deal of Egyptology in Armah’s novels in the sense that the protagonists discuss the idea that Egypt was a black nation.

The writings of Frantz Fanon are of great use in this research and in relation to interpreting the history and the psychology of the coloniser and the colonised. The *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin White Masks* analyse how culture and its ‘death’ could have created in the former colonised people an inferiority complex which made them look ‘enviously’ at the coloniser while he was going to and fro enjoying himself in their countries. This happened for lack of a will

to re-establish links with what constitutes the 'true' history and culture, and by extension, the personality of Africa. Fanon's analysis leads us to conclude that it is this loss of sight of one's 'true' history and identity that has led the leaders in post-Independence Africa to want only to emulate the Western bourgeoisie and take avariciously all the wealth of their people for themselves (reiterating by that the colonial practices), instead of leading their people towards true development and civilisation. For him this emulation is unwarranted because these leaders did not take part in the phase of innovation and creativity that the Western bourgeoisie went through.

Moreover, V.Y Mudimbe's works will be used in this line of thought on history. *The Invention of Africa* and *The Idea of Africa* are works in which Mudimbe attempts, focusing much on the epistemological methods, to show how African knowledge and the African 'experience' were approached by Western historians starting with Herodotus. Not only that, but he also traces the beginnings of how the history of Africa was biased and ordered, and how thoughts and stereotypes about Africa started to exist even in the early paintings of the West. For him this was not an accident because that was done to place "everything within the order of its system, rules, and norms" (Mudimbe, 1994: 23). In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah puts the blame on local intellectuals for playing an intermediary role in destroying their own nation:

in this system the factor is a link that must be hidden. An irreplaceable link whose functioning depends on his being embedded in his people, destroying them-a solvent-yet protected from reprisals because his functioning is secret. Thick walls, the elaborate rituals of our education. This is all a system for hiding our factorship from the victims we make, our own people. There is no justification in this kind of system (*Why Are We So Blest*, 223).

The modes of writing that have been adopted by the writers selected for this discussion are to be paid due attention. Mikhail Bakhtin's book *The Dialogic Imagination* is referred to because of its distinct approach to the novel form as a form that does not contain any "presumption of authority, a claim to absolute language", and because of the awareness of the "impossibility of full meaning,

presence, it is free to exploit such a lack to its own hybridizing purposes” (Bakhtin, 1981: xxxiii).

The novel form is chosen in this research work for many reasons. First, the novel incorporates other genres. Bakhtin argues “the novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, re-forming and re-accentuating them” (Bakhtin, 1981: 05). Moreover, the novel form emulates the nation in its unfolding nature. “It is the only genre that was born and nourished in a new era of world history and therefore it is deeply akin to that era, whereas the other major genres entered that era as already fixed forms” (Bakhtin, 1981: 04). As the novel contains within it other genres it renders them freer and more flexible. The language is renewed by including “extraliterary heteroglossia” and the “novelistic” strata of fictional language, “they become dialogized”, pervaded with “laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody.” Bakhtin argues that the most salient element the novel’s language incorporates into these genres is “indeterminacy, a certain semantic openness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the opened present)”. The novel for Bakhtin is the only genre that is still developing and therefore it reproduces more profoundly, more fundamentally, more perceptively and quickly, nation in the course of unfolding. Bakhtin adds that it is “only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process. The novel has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely in the making; it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and is in total affinity with it” (Bakhtin, 1981: 07). Bakhtin’s work is significant in this context also because of his coined term *chronotope*; that is, time and space and their inseparability as the novelists seem to consider. He shows, by tracing the history of the novel and its approach to time and space, how novelists emphasize and give more importance to the past and the present-because of their connection to the concrete realities- than they give to the future which is abstract and unreal. Nevertheless, in these very novels the future is “presumed

obligatory and true”, so much so that the novelist attempts to “infuse it with being, to join it to time, to counterpose it-as something that actually exists and is at the same time true-to the available reality, which also exists, but which in contrast is bad, not true” (Bakhtin, 1983: 148-9). Bakhtin’s *The dialogical Imagination* contains also an interesting term for our discussion, heteroglossia, or the dialogical voices in the novel as this helps us to see the ambivalence and ambiguity inherent in narrating the nation through the portraits of differing characters. Besides, this term can be used to shed light on the African novel’s embodiment of multiple (and contradictory) strata of discourses even in what seems to be a neutral narrative voice.

The novels in question will also be read as utopian narratives, reflecting the political, ideological and psychological aspirations of the novelists in question. The narratives could be seen as symbolic enactments of the “political unconscious” to displace the dystopic nationalistic prospects in colonial times.

This study is divided into five chapters, each meant to examine and circumscribe an aspect of African nationalism and its narration. Chapter one incorporates an examination of the concept of history in relation to Africa and how it was interpreted from two standpoints: the European and the African. Denying history to Africa was shown to match the interests of the Western scholars’ nations’ colonial enterprise (sometimes even personal interests). The African interpretation of history both in scholastic and literary works (along with some European works) has tried to demystify these prejudices. This was done through representing the African precolonial situation as being a normal self-satisfied human experience. Some African scholars and literary writers chose to embrace an Egyptologist interpretation of African history. Chapter two is about the African experience’s representation as both a singular and a normal, human one, given the experience of slavery, colonialism and the post-independence era of dictatorships. Yet these representations carry dialogical voices which hide the authoritative voice of the author. The mainstream European interpretation of religion, for instance, is maintained but stylised with a sympathizing tone of the novelists where the latter’s communities are

concerned, which is not the case when it comes to the Western world view. Also, the philosophical movement of Négritude has tried to show how rewarding the African cultural experience is; however, what it seems to have missed is that it fell in the trap of race as being a classificatory criterion of mental and psychological human traits. Senghor makes of black Africans distinct human beings that need to be read, interpreted and appreciated only through the psychological effects of racism. In other words, if it had not been for Western racism, by extension colonialism, against the blacks, there would not be an African personality, negritude, literary expression or spirituality. By conceding that Africans are more sentimental and spiritual than being rational, Senghor seems to be suggesting that he agreed to the Western racist stereotypical depictions of blacks. What Senghor appears to be saying is ‘yes blacks are less rational; they have juvenile minds, but they have other traits that are positive.’ He seems to be justifying the blacks’ humanity. Thus Césaire celebrated the Africans as

those who have invented neither gunpowder nor compass
those who tamed neither steam nor electricity
those who explored neither the sea nor the sky.(Quoted in Jeremiah,
1998: 22)

Chapter three examines the ambivalent narration of the African nation. Its being ambivalent is attributed to the fact that the narratives seem in defence of the novelists’ culture yet they jettison its very essence by doubting their relevance in the modern time. The Janus-facedness of the nation-state is reflected on its narration, for the African novel transcends the artificial frontiers, yet it consolidates them via deploying the elements of modernism. Chapter four is about the ‘recuperative return’ to Africa from the diaspora, which can be seen as a utopic narrative. The mythic and ideological drawing on the collective unconscious is a symbolic enactment of the collective unconscious. It compensates the asymmetry found between the modern time and the precolonial culture by means of the symmetry between the elements of orality and the print tradition. Mythmaking can be traced in the novels in question in that the main

element of myth, escaping the constraints of time and space, can be found in the novels. In chapter five I examine how the novelists, trapped between the prerogatives of modernity and the nostalgic drives of the past, condemn the metropolis and celebrate it at the same time. Besides, the novelists' condescending stances vis-à-vis their nation-states can be traced in the novels. In addition to that, the idea of return to Africa is shown to be more connected to Afro-Americans than to Afro-Brazilians. Also, some of the novelists advocate a return to African values, even if they do not discount modernity in their daily existence. Moreover, narrating the nation in the African novel is more associated to the factors which brought about the nation-state than the ones that would bring it down. For the print tradition, the novel form, the modern workers and the ambiguous empty time (as argued by Benedict Anderson) are all elements which reinforce the modern nation. Furthermore, some of the Afro-American scholars, who seem to be in defense of Africa, risk the accusation of looking at Africans in a selective and patronizing manner. Finally, the critical view with which Armah views Western philosophy and religion is paradoxical, for the novelist falls into the same mode of thought while attempting to contradict it. The Marxist manner of seeing things is not only utopic but leads, as history proves, to have counterproductive consequences for it calls for the denial of individual possession, which is almost inseparable from human nature. Also history bears witness that Marxist regimes have been mostly dictatorial, and wars were waged amongst communist nations.

Our discussion will be guided by a number of queries regarding the novelists' representations of their respective nations and Africa at large.

How has African history been represented and interpreted by both Western and African scholars? and how do novelists intervene to mark the effects of misrepresented African nation-states? Indeed, to what extent are the African novelists in question narrating their nations? How does the nation-state, being Janus-faced and influenced by Western paradigms, manifest itself in these novels? ; do the African novelists resort to discourses similar to the European to represent their communities in print? ; to what extent are their portrayals

different from the mainstream European view of African emerging nation-states? ; what is the role of religion in imagining the nation? ; how do these narratives reflect African History and how is this reflection different from the Western scholastic works of the antebellum period? ; are the novels mere reiterations of the Negro Myth or do they carry counter arguments to it? ; in fact, to what extent are the novels in question reproducing the African nation-states invented by the West through the philosophies the novelists deploy in narrating their nations?

Addressing these questions will hopefully shed new light on the role of such significant novelists as Achebe, Armah, Ngugi and Awoonor in their projecting a vision of what the modern African state would look like in the future.

Chapter one:

African History Seen from Europe and from Africa: Facts or Ideologies

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, 1940

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Ernest Renan, *What is a Nation?*, 1882.

This chapter will examine how African history or, in simpler terms, the African past, is interpreted by European scholars and philosophers on the one hand, and how it is seen by their African counterparts on the other. The terms “interpreted” and “seen” are used to make it clear from the outset that history, which is associated with the terms: discipline, memory, events, achievements and identity, could incorporate in it, while being recorded, both actuality and a great deal of fiction. The latter does not necessarily mean “unreality” or “lies”, for it also means “representations” which often stem from the almost inevitable subjectivity of the seer or the interpreter. The *subjective interpretation* of history could render this discipline a mere myth. V.Y Mudimbe, quoting Lévi-Strauss, argues that ““even history which claims to be universal is still only a juxtaposition of a few real histories within which (and between which) very much more is left out than put in”” (1966: 257). A generalization could be drawn from this view is that history is basically a myth. Indeed, as “Lévi-Strauss says, “what makes history possible is that a sub-set of events is found, for a given period, to have approximately the same significance for a contingent of individuals who have not necessarily experienced the events and may even consider them as an interval of several centuries” (Mudimbe, 1988: 33). This is so because incidents be they huge or small are not only sometimes deliberately glossed over, but also purposefully distorted in the process of recording and representation for several reasons. These are, though interconnected with others, shame, interest and the want of dominance. The last is particularly so when it comes to representing the history of nations other than one’s nation. For instance, European philologists did not comment on what they considered as embarrassing in relation to the Attic purity. They preferred to pass over those embarrassing passages in which the Greek themselves admitted the hybridity of their past in the sense that “Greek civilization was known originally to have roots in Egyptian, Semitic and African roots” (Said, 1994:16). For the same reason did the nineteenth century European historians gloss over the fact that the Frankish Knights were involved in the cannibalistic practice of eating

human flesh (Said, 1994:16). In the case of Africa, there had been unscientific remarks concerning, for instance, even the natural human liquids that African black bodies incorporate. Herodotus (484-425 BC), the father of History, contended that their colour (the liquids) matches the colour of their skin¹ (Mudimbe, 1994: 21).

The British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper was frequently quoted for, as described by Ali Mazrui, his “notorious words” about Africa having no history of its own. For Hugh Trevor-Roper “may be in the future there will be African history, but at the moment there is none. There is only the history of the white man in Africa. The rest is darkness-and darkness is not a subject of history” (Quoted in Mazrui, 1993:676).

In his *The Philosophy of History*, the German idealist philosopher, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) affirmed that Africa is “no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit.” Hegel argues that even the historical movements in the northern part of Africa belong to the Asiatic or European World. For Carthage showed there a significant transitory stage of civilization; however, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. For Hegel, even Egypt does not belong to Africa, because “it will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit.” Africa represents for Hegel “the unhistorical, undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History” (Hegel, 2001: 117).

Again for him, the reasons beyond this state of stagnation are an inherent human deficiency in the black Africans. For they have not yet reached the consciousness of their freedom. Consequently, they “sink [...] down to a mere thing-an object of no value”. He then goes on numbering other characteristics of black Africans that hold them back such as the lack of human sentiments

¹ Herodotus contended that the sperm of black men is black (Mudimbe, 1994: 21).

because of slavery, polygamy, the killing of a king they loathe, the untamed nature that is not “harmonious with humanity” , the chaos, as he made it, that existed in the *political constitution* such as in Dahomey¹. Furthermore, David Hume on his *Of National Characters* denies black people any distinguished talents and claimed that they are inferior to the white people. He declared in his infamous statement that he is “apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites.” He then assumes that humanity never witnesses a “civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation.” For him blacks have “no ingenious manufactures amongst them”, nor could they produce any kind of art or science. Hume draws in his statement a stark comparison between the blacks and “the most rude and barbarous” amongst the whites like the ancient Germans. The latter, he believes, have still something to be praised for such as their “valour, form of government, or some other particular.” For Hume such differences between the blacks and whites are constant and thus must have been the design of Nature. Hume ends his remarks with the assumption that none of the “Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe...discovered the symptoms of ingenuity.” These were to be compared to the “low people, without education” in the West who, for Hume, could at least “distinguish themselves in every profession.” Hume must have heard of a certain learned black Jamaican, but again he is bent on proving that blacks can never be equals to whites and thus describes the Jamaican as “a parrot who speaks a few words plainly” (Quoted in Morton, 2002: 59).

Hume’s theory of race, as Eric Morton argues in “Race and Racism in the Works of David Hume” (2002), went in the same line with several racist theories existing already in the eighteenth century. Those theories were formed after the race-based slavery in 1650 by colonizing nations which had begun

¹ Hegel brought Dahomey as an example. In Dahomey, when the King dies, the bonds of society are loosed; in his palace begins indiscriminate havoc and disorganization. All the wives of the King (in Dahomey their number is exactly 3,333) are massacred, and through the whole town plunder and carnage run riot. The wives of the King regard this on their death as a necessity; they go richly attired to meet it. The authorities have to hasten to proclaim the new governor, simply to put a stop to massacre.(Hegel, 2001:116)

their quest for wealth and power. The first theory attributed to David Hume and Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was that the mental and moral capacities of Indians and Africans differed considerably from those of whites. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707 –1788) and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752 –1840) held that being non-white was a critical deficiency. For the natural condition of man is whiteness, but due to ecological factors some people have lost their whiteness and with it, part of their human nature. A third view maintained by Edward Long (1734 –1813) went that some beings that have a human semblance are in effect not so, but are lower on the chain of being and represent a link between humans and apes. The fourth theory held that there are several theses, biblical and evolutionary, which separate human lines of creation and/or evolution, with Caucasian at the acme and some others at the nadir. Other psychological views prevalent at the time about the African temperament, and by extension the inherent incapacity to enter human history, were made by psychologists like Paul Broca (1824-1880), Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), Francis Galton (1822-1911), Granville Stanley Hall (1844 –1924) and Henry Goddard (1866-1956). Their views agreed on the low IQs amongst non-white societies (compared to those of the Caucasians'), particularly Africans and African Americans. One might note that the time when Hume's theory came forth was a time when Europe was knowing great external changes such as colonialism (and slavery) and internal transformations, mainly the move from agricultural societies to nation-states. These new political and economic changes led to the emergence of what is called a class society where economic power shifted from the "landed gentry to the middle classes and to the large-scale employers, who, themselves, were being confronted by a growing class of wage earners." The relegation of Africans to a lower human rank than Caucasians provided an expedient philosophical framework in which the ostensible humanity of European serfs, peasants, and other lower classes was made to seem preserved even if the economic changes then unfolding in Europe made their humanity challenged and even undermined. In this sense Nietzsche argues that Westerners will in all probability be those of miscellaneous, voluble

easily led and greatly employable workers who require a “master” a “commander”, as they call for their daily bread; whilst, consequently the “democratization of Europe will lead to the production of a type prepared for slavery in the subtlest sense: in individual and exceptional cases” the powerful man will be found to turn out more powerful and more wealthy than has perhaps ever occurred before -owing to the unbiased character of his instruction, owing to the remarkable diversity of exercise, art and disguise. In sum, what Nietzsche means to say is that “the democratization of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the breeding of tyrants in every sense of that word, including the most spiritual” (Nietzsche, 1973: 154).

What is worth mentioning also is that David Hume served in governmental positions at home and abroad as a writer, a lecturer and even served as a one-time British Under-Secretary of State, (where he dealt with colonial affairs). What is being suggested here is that his ostensible conclusions about Africans were not based on a scientific basis for there was no methodology of say experiment and observation that he followed to reach such generalizations. His claims could be best described as prejudices in the garments of science. Their strength and danger do not lie in their *truth* more than in the fact that he had other *well founded* arguments in the rest of his philosophy. Moreover, some other scholars like John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685 –1753) and John Newton (1725- 1807) had either been slave traders or even invested in companies such as the Royal African Company. The above allegations on black Africans entailed, as Anthony Appiah wrote, denying that “black people were capable of contributing to ‘the arts and letters’” (Appiah, 1992: 52).

It is worth mentioning for the purposes of our discussion that literary works reinforced the cultural and racial prejudices permeating Western eighteenth century philosophy. Novels such as *Heart of Darkness* could be classified in what is referred to as travel or adventure tales which, according to Glynne Griffith, plays a part in this multifarious power/ knowledge nexus, and each fictional representation of a nation could be viewed as a “consolidation of

old stereotypes or alternately, as an examination and denaturalization of stereotypes.” Griffith adds that the strengthened stereotype “informs and is also informed by particular way of seeing the world and the power relations in it.” The stereotype familiarizes life in the nation and makes it seem natural to the narrating subject who depicts this world through storytelling. But stereotypical representations of imagined communities and their cultures “can also serve as a significant ontological strategy.” These stereotypical depictions are the “canvas upon which he foregrounds his selfhood.” (Quoted in Morgan, 1999). Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is the best illustration of trying to consolidate the Western stereotypes about African nations. For the novel, great as it is aesthetically, is infamous for its racist discourse. As Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, Conrad could not set the native free in his portrayals, although, at a surface level, the novel seems to be denouncing Imperialism. The bows and arrows which were meant to kill the white man, fell short before the latter’s ‘civilized’ and ‘efficient’ methods. Marlow, like Kurtz, was an emissary of light. His aunt pleaded with him to “wean” the Africans “from their horrid ways.” Achebe wrote an essay entitled “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” where he proves with a number of arguments the racist outlook of the novel. Achebe notes that Conrad depicts Africa as the antithesis of Europe, of the West so much so that even the Thames River is shown to be the opposite of the Congo River, for the novel opens on the River Thames, calm, resting, serenely “at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks.” However, the real narrative will take place on the River Congo, the antithesis of the Thames. “The River Congo is quite decidedly not a River Emeritus. It has rendered no service and enjoys no old-age pension. We are told that “Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world”” (Achebe, 1977: 252).

Conrad makes it clear in the novel that the black Africans’ humanity is in question for he is implying the similitude of the black African attitudes to animalistic behaviour:

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there -- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly and the men were ... No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces, but what thrilled you, was just the thought of their humanity -- like yours -- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough, but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you -- you so remote from the night of first ages -- could comprehend. (*Heart of Darkness*, 97).

Achebe argues determinedly that it is in this passage that “the meaning of *Heart of Darkness* [lies] and the fascination it holds over the Western mind: “What thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity -like yours ...Ugly”, Achebe reacts to the above passage with an irony that generates bitterness.

It must be stated that Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* was a direct reaction to Joyce Cary’s *Mr. Johnson*. He made it clear in an interview that he set writing against Cary’s work as a future project: “Perhaps [Joyce Cary] helped to inspire me, but not in the usual way. I was very angry with his book, *Mr. Johnson*, which was set in Nigeria. I happened to read this, I think, in my second year [at University College] and I said to myself: “this is absurd... is somebody without any inside knowledge of the people he’s trying to describe can get away with it, perhaps I ought to try my hand at it”(Nkosi, 1964: 20).

Cary’s novel begins with a stereotypical description of Africans:

Johnson is not only a stranger by accent, but by color. He is as black as a stove, almost a pure Negro, with short nose and full, soft lips. He is young, perhaps seventeen, and seems half-grown. His neck, legs and arms are much too long and thin for his small body, as narrow as a skinned rabbit’s. He is loose-jointed like a boy, and sits with his knees up to his nose, grinning at Bamu over the stretched white cotton of his trousers. He smiles with the delighted expression of a child looking at a birthday table and says, “Oh, you are too pretty-a beautiful girl.”(*Mr Johnson*, 01).

Here I return to the *invented traditions* (my Italics) to argue that invented, so Mudimbe seems to be suggesting, is being designed, structured and manufactured in accordance with the *causa suit* Western philosophers reputed to be proud of possessing as Nietzsche put it in an essay entitled *On the Prejudices of Philosophers*. The “I think” which suggests “I” cause for “thought”; in other words making it, producing ,creating and inventing it, and still supposing or even affirming at many instances that this is absolute “truth”. For after all, the Western individual is naturally a man of reason, as Cromer claims, while the oriental is devoid of this faculty

Sir Alfred Lyall once said to me: “Accuracy is abhorrent to the oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim.” Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind. The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic . . . (Quoted in Said, 1978:38).

This leads to the conclusion that philosophers, in the context of prejudices on Africa, obviously did not differ from literary writers in the sense that they philosophized (and wrote fiction) in accordance with their nations’ interests; that is, to “maintain the superior superior and the inferior inferior”, as Edward Said put it.

Omissions as Mudimbe also shows in both *The Invention of Africa* and *Idea of Africa* occurred when it came to any achievement that could have taken place in Africa such as art or science. For instance, the Dogon tribe in West Africa was known for their astronomical knowledge. The Dogon held that the planets as well as the earth rotate about their axes as they rotate about the sun. They also held that Jupiter has four satellites and that Saturn is encircled by a ring. Moreover, they argued that the planets moved in elliptical not in circular orbits. Nonetheless, the only supposition Carl Sagan had in an attempt to explain their knowledge was that a Gallic must have visited them in the form of a diplomat, an explorer, an adventurer or an anthropologist. (Mudimbe, 1994:

13-4). Sagan could not hide; however, his surprise of the knowledge these people had

The Dogons contend that (Sirius) has a dark and invisible companion star which orbits Sirius . . . once every fifty years. They state that the companion star is very small and very heavy, made of a special metal called "Sagala" which is not found on Earth. The remarkable fact is that the visible star does have an extraordinary dark companion, Sirius B which orbits it in an elliptical orbit once each 50.04 ± 0.09 years. Sirius B is the first example of a white dwarf star discovered by modern astrophysics. Its matter is in a state called "relativistically degenerate," which does not exist on Earth, and since the electrons are not bound to the nuclei in such degenerate matter, it can properly be described as metallic (Quoted in Mudimbe, 1994: 13-14).

Mudimbe concludes that Sagan was prejudiced in relation to the source of the Dogons' astrological knowledge. Sagan, Mudimbe argues, suggested that this man (who ostensibly taught the Dogon) must have had a copy of Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World* published in 1928. For in this book there was a discussion of the white dwarf stars.

Basil Davidson in his *The Search for Africa: History Culture Politics* points out that "European belief in Africa's historical non-existence" has been so deep that each time any compliment was to be expressed regarding the historical achievements found in old African nations, "it was at once put down to the work or influence of peoples who had come from somewhere else." Davidson argues that modern archaeologists and historians spent more than seventy years to surmount the European ideas about the colossal stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe in the country which used to be called Rhodesia. "These proud walls, it was said, could never have been built by Africans but must have been built by someone altogether foreign and immigrant who had come from across the sea: the Hittites or the Phoenicians, or others yet more remote. It is in fact eighty-one years since the Scottish archaeologist, David Randall-McIver, demonstrated that the walls of Zimbabwe were built by Africans, and their date was medieval" (Davidson, 2002: 264).

My point is based on Said's *Orientalism* and his use of Foucault's dichotomy knowledge/ power. The *unconscious of science* that Foucault advanced, obviously, put in question not the usefulness of science but "the innocence" of its use. The danger in the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism is that these ideas and stereotypes do not seem to suffice to assume an imaginary, innocuous level, but they also go beyond that to be integrated in strategies put into effect for the sake of not only making the "natives" lose contact with their roots and culture, but also making them overlook the essence of their traditions, customs and rituals and begin connecting them to the "history" of the colonizer. Those strategies were emphasized by Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm in their *The Invention of Tradition*. They argue that the process of inventing traditions emphasized 'the symbolic nature' of those traditions and sought to "inculcate certain norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past [...] they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (Hobsbawm, 2003: 01). Some of these traditions were meant to create in the mind of the African the belief that he is always beneath the European in importance. This was done through the "hierarchy of the great house." The European self-image in Africa partly consisted of his belief that he had the right to have black servants. For example, when the labour crisis reached its peak in South Africa, "there were more black men employed in Johannesburg as domestic servants than as mine workers." Also, Ranger wrote that in 1914, the bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Western, contrasted Islamic society in Africa with Christian segregation. For example, the African Christian had nothing to hold on to but a few Europeans who bypass him in the street. The African feels beneath them, for however kind they may be to him, he could not rise above his being a "steward in their dining room, or a butler...but brotherhood? Well, it is not yet" there was no impulse towards 'Brotherhood' in colonial Africa." For the majority of Europeans the preferred image of their relationship with Africans was that of "paternal master and loyal servant. It was an image readily transferred to industrial employment. Throughout Southern Africa, African employees were not defined as workers

but instead controlled and disciplined under the terms of Masters and Servants Acts.” (Ranger, 2003: 223-4). Surprisingly, it is worth mentioning that in *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe portrays brotherhood to be lacking in the Ibo’s precolonial imagined community and was only introduced by the British missionaries.

Also, the British school system in Africa was designed so as to create neo-traditions in which Africans would be turned into governors, thus laying the ground for post-independence African systems of administration after the British manner. The Africans were exposed to British neo-traditions which took the form of the well-known boarding school, King’s College, Budu, in Uganda. The discipline introduced through games in a boarding school was used so as to create character as to enable the Baganda to take their appropriate place in the administrative, commercial and industrial life of their emerging nation-state. To put this simply, “in Buganda the missionaries aimed to place on top of the British-style elementary education a structure of British-style secondary education of a neo-traditional kind. They were always clear that their aim was ‘the adaptation of our English Public School method to the African scene.’” (Ranger, 2003: 221-2).

I think that the premise substantiated in *The Invention of Tradition* goes along the same line as Mudimbe’s *The Invention of Africa*. This is so because Mudimbe’s “invented Africa”, as he sees it, is the result of the use of science or knowledge for the sake of ‘axiomatizing’ some preconceived ideas on Africa for the sake of subjugating it to the will of the “centre.” This is done through, as I mentioned earlier, skimming over whatever scientific or artistic achievements of Africa’s glorious past. In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that preconceived ideas or stereotypes could elicit reactions matching them. In order to explain this he draws a metaphor about a lion. For Said if a man who has seen a lion only once in his life reports to his people that the lion is aggressive and violent, the people informed will hold only this idea about it. The result is that when those people face the lion for the first time, their attitude towards the lion would be influenced by the idea they hold about it. The lion for

its part will react in relation to their attitude and thus will confirm its made-up image.

The “invented tradition” was also effected through drawing maps about the lands of the “other”. Indeed, this was actually done in the Berlin Conference (1884-5), which drew the frontiers of modern African nation-states. Inventing traditions, or in other words, relating historically these traditions to the colonizer, implicates both relegating and negating the relevance and significance of the African cultural signs of a potential progress. Those traditions—“whether invented by the Europeans or by Africans themselves in response—distorted the past but became in themselves realities through which a good deal of colonial encounter was expressed” (Ranger, 2003: 212). First, the invented traditions in Africa are related to gentlemanly inventions inasmuch as they had been seen as a prerequisite to transform the whites into a plausible ruling class, “entitled to hold sway over their subjects not only through force of arms or finance but also through the prescriptive status bestowed by neo-traditions.” Also, this suggested that “the colonial experience in itself fitted the rest to acquire gentility.” Lord Bryce, Ranger goes on explaining, was stunned ‘by the large proportion of well-mannered and well-educated men whom one came across’ in the tropical wilderness’ of Rhodesia in the mid-1890s.

In addition, as Lord Bryce saw it, the colonial experience enhanced “personality developing itself under simple yet severe conditions, fitted to bring out the real force of a man”. Through these national sports, a national character was emphasized. Bryce did not hide his admiration for cricket played by white South Africans. For him “they are as much Englishmen in Africa as in England.” Moreover, gentlemanly culture was associated to redefining occupations in that being a store-keeper or a prospector had become gentlemanly activities. This extended to farming so that English-speaking farmers would be considered as gentleman farmers, because they would not

work on lands themselves; rather, they drew on “their neo-traditional powers of command in order to manage labour” (Hobsbawm, 2003: 218).

The result of this violence to both the body through slavery, cheap labour and so on, and the aggression to the African “personality” by this imposed linkage between the culture of the colonized and the culture of the colonizer on the one hand and by the questioning of the Africans’ humanity and intelligence on the other is only expected to create, as Fanon adequately argued, an “inferiority complex”. The latter would make the Africans always see themselves as less salient, peripheral, inferior and unable by any means to reach the same “performance” of development. Christianity had also been introduced to the Africans, particularly via the protestant church, in a way which made the Africans understand that in order to be a “good Christian” they had to abandon their past and question the wisdom of their ancestors. All this resulted in the desire to mimic and the will “not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It caused those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become ‘more English than the English’ (Ashcroft, 2005: 04).

The process of subjugating Africans also relied on the language policy in the African continent, through the installation of “a standard version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and the marginalization of all “variants as impurities”. This is not insignificant in the sense that language becomes one of the means through which a “hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated”. It also becomes the medium through which “conceptions of truth, order and reality” (Ashcroft, 2005: 04) are established. This is so because colonialism which has taken place in different historical periods has made gigantic changes in the mutual intelligibility amongst people living over many geographical spaces. For the coloniser, most of the time, imposes the language he speaks on the colonised. By time, this makes many languages die out. Intelligibility is not only connected to language since language is the container of culture. The latter would disappear too, giving way to new invented cultures that fit the interests of

the coloniser. In other words, what is taught by the residue of the authentic languages and the proverbs they incorporate about life, ethics, work and so on turns out to be at odds with what the modern cultural hegemony expects from the 'new converts'. The model of nation-state and the parcelling out of the African continent amongst the colonial forces in the Berlin Conference, did not only lead to the death of some languages or their usefulness in the quotidian, in the dreams and aspirations of young people, but it also led to linking Western languages and culture to their hopes and dreams. Also, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argue, "entirely new symbols and devices came into existence . . . such as the national anthem, . . . the national flag, . . . or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image" (Hobsbawm, 1983: 07).

The peace that used to exist prior to colonialism among tribes has now been disrupted. Instead, conflicts, enmity and rivalry have set in. Consequently, citizens in most African modern nations belong neither to the 'centre' nor to the periphery. This was done also through the encouragement of the growth of populations in order to reduce the cost of labour, yet at the same time forbid assimilation lest the great numbers, allowed to vote, would obliterate the entire system. (Memmi, 2003: 11). This state of belonging neither to the centre nor to the periphery along with the state of rootlessness are closely associated to the political philosophy of nation-state which is frequently described as 'Janus-faced'. This is so because, as Pericles Lewis argues, it is "a very complex fetish, complete with heads of state and government, ministries, literary and philosophical traditions, territory and citizens" (Lewis, 2000: 12). For Homi Bhabha this results in ambivalence. It is this state of in-betweenness that makes Albert Memmi exclaim: "how could he [the colonized] hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately?" (Memmi, 2003: 6).

The endeavour to dispel this exaggeration in denying a nation history or any civilizational achievement took also forms of historical scholastic works. Cheikh Anta Dip produced works wherein he advanced the premise that ancient Egypt's inhabitants were black. Diop, like Edward Said, seems to be disclosing the use of knowledge, which, at a surface level, seems to be objective science,

used for the sake of asserting a discourse meant to subjugate the Africans in that “the birth of Egyptology ...was marked by the need to destroy the memory of a Negro Egypt at any cost and in all minds.” His main arguments stand on ancient Egypt’s sculptures and the writings of some European historians such as Volney and the traveller Domenico de Rienzi. The former argued in his book *Voyage* that:

The Copts are descended from the ancient Egyptians; that the Copts have a bloated face, puffed up eyes, flat nose and thick lips, like a mulatto; that they resemble the Sphinx of the Pyramids, a distinctly Negro head. He concludes that ancient Egyptians were true Negroes of the same species like all indigenous Africans. To support his opinion, Volney invokes that of Herodotus, who apropos the Colchians, recalls that the Egyptians had black skin and woolly hair (Quoted in Diop, 1974: 51).

Ayi Kwei Armah read many of Diop’s writings and even tried (yet Diop prevented him) to translate his works into English. He was considerably influenced by the premise that the history of ancient Egypt was the history of black Africans. In other words, today’s black Africans are the descendants of ancient Egyptians. Armah points out in *The Eloquent of the Scribes* that he believes in the premises of Diop and expresses his desire to apply Egyptology to literature:

I find entirely reasonable the proposition, advanced by Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga that we would benefit greatly if a grounding in ancient Egyptian history, philosophy and culture became part of the education of all Africans. I think, by extension, that the study of African literature would be vastly improved if knowledge of ancient Egyptian literature became a standard component of the education of African literary scholars (Armah, 2006: 200).

This is featured in his later novels: *Osiris Rising* and *KMT in the House of Life*. The title *Osiris Rising*, besides naming each chapter using Egyptian words, reflects Armah’s new explicit reference to ancient Egypt as the history of black Africans. The main characters are aligned with the major movers of ancient Egyptian Osiris myth: the revolutionizing Asar identifying with Osiris, Asar's

friend Ast portrayed as Isis, and Soya signifying Set. Also, Asar is another name for Osiris in hieroglyph. Drawing on the ancient myth, the novel is about the conflict between order and disorder. Yet order for the author does not entail hierarchy. Like in *The Healers*, Armah is wont to denounce, in *Osiris Rising*, hierarchy in the nation-state. Seth's name identifies with Set who is Osiris's brother in the myth. Set murders Osiris and usurps his throne. In the novel Seth is also referred to as Deputy Director of state security. Seth underscores the fact that ancient secret societies were non-hierarchical to Ast: "the secret society that used the ankh sign or whatever you call it didn't have an internal hierarchy. It was bent on levelling society, beginning with itself. That's against human nature...Organization means hierarchy. Can you imagine any kind of civilization with no hierarchy?" (*Osiris Rising*, 36).

KMT: in the House of Life an epistemic novel similarly reveals Armah's Egyptologist approach to the history of Africa. Twentieth century historians argue that Ancient Egyptians referred to their homeland as "km.t" or *Kemet*. According to Cheikh Anta Diop, the Egyptians referred to themselves as "Black" people, or "km.t". Etymologically, Diop argues in his *The African Origin of Civilization*, "km.t" was the essence of other words, such as Kam or Ham, which denote the Black people in Hebrew tradition. Cheikh Anta Diop, William Leo Hansberry, and Aboubacry Moussa Lam have contended that *km.t* was derived from the skin colour of the Nile valley people, which Diop *et al.* claim was black. Nonetheless, many Egyptologists contradict this argument and hold that *km.t* denotes the black earth of the Nile Valley. *KMT: in the House of Life* illustrates well Diop's influence on Armah. For Armah now does not deal with the Manichaeist opposition between the Western world and that of Africa, he introduces instead a new trend in his novels, that is using scholastic knowledge such as Egyptology to prove his point. This is apparent in the novel's subtitle "*an epistemic novel*". In this narrative Armah suggests the necessity for a collective African academic revitalization. For this to be

achieved there must be serious studying of Egyptology and the hieroglyphics (Kakraba and Addei, 2011: 429).

Arguably, some critics view the relationship between the novel form and the communities or nations as problematic regarding Africa. The reason for this, as Patrick Williams argues in his *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, is that the novel developed hand in hand with the European nation-states and empires, thus is contaminated. African writers, therefore, should move more to indigenous forms of narrating their nations.

But, writers like Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kofi Awoonor and many others have decided to retain "the novel, increasingly using it as a vehicle for anti-imperialist arguments, but at the same time moving it closer to recognizably indigenous styles of narrative construction." What is salient about the relationship between the novel and nation-state is the recognition that national identity is historically changeable, and not static and fixed. It is a "historical construct constituted by (the ideologically loaded) narratives in which particular communities tell themselves about who and what they are." Hence, the novelists' "narratives are part of the continuing construction of national identity" (Williams, 1999:18-9).

To go back over Diop's thesis, one must note that Diop came up with other remarks. First, the Dogon tribe had similar spiritual and mythological systems to the Egyptians, such as the resemblance between the Dogon god-serpent and the Egyptian pantheon god-serpent. In both traditions, it is believed that this god dances in the shadow. This description can be found in an inscription on a sarcophagus at Marseilles Museum. This inscription accompanies the representation of the tomb of Osiris (Diop, 1976: 141). Diop also draws attention to the importance attributed by the Dogon tribe to cosmogony. The Dogon tribe as mentioned earlier was familiar with the star Sirius. The Egyptian calendar, Diop continues to argue, was based on "the heliacal rising of that star." For Amélineau the name *Anu*, used to designate the first black people who occupied Egypt, was applied also to Osiris. He also argued that Osiris had an "ethnic epithet indicating his Nubian origin" (Diop,

1976:76). Cheikh Anta Diop points out also that ancient Egyptians, like many parts of black Africa, were matriarchal. For instance, in Kano (Nigeria) the regulation of the succession to the throne was processed by matriarchy. This was halted by the Fulani domination. Other places and people where matriarchy prevailed were: Kordofan (Sudan) and Nubia (Diop, 1976: 142). Furthermore, the social stratification in black Africa is exactly the same as that in ancient Egypt in that in the latter it was as follows:

Peasants,
Skilled workers,
Priests, warriors, and government officials,
The king

In the rest of Black Africa, we have:

Peasants
Artisans or skilled workers,
Warriors, priests,
The king (Diop, 1976: 141).

Edward Said describes Basil Davison as one of the intellectuals who “crossed to the other side” (Said, 1994: xx). The latter argues, like Diop, that Egypt has to be put “back into its own continent, into its own African context”. Also, Davidson in his *The Search for Africa* shows the changes that took place as far as the manner whereby Europeans viewed Africans and their “ways” in the 1460s onward until after the seventeenth century. He made it that the records found about this period “speak often of “difference”; they do not speak of “inferiority.”” (Davidson, 2002: 45). To illustrate, in 1603 Andreas Josua Ultzheimer travelled to the kingdom of Benin and noted in his memoirs what were for him the striking similarities between the Roman Catholic manners and the beliefs in Benin. Everyone in the latter “wants to see the king, just as in Rome when the Pope celebrates his “Jubilee.” Six thousand people press towards him, and when he comes they all go down on their knees and clap their hands in greeting. For his part he waves his hands back and forth, just as does the Pope in Rome when he blesses the people” (Davidson, 2002: 45).

Moreover, the reports of diplomatic agents and Portuguese missionaries showed the peaceful relationship and the “mutual respect that reigned” between African kingdoms and Europeans. In 1516 Duarte Pires reports back to Lisbon that “the favour shown us by the king of Benin is due to his love of your Highness, and thus he pays us high honour and sets us at table to dine with his son, and no part of his court is hidden from us but all the doors are open.” (Davidson, 2002: 46).

Even the powerful English mariners such as Wyndham and Towerson, Davidson continues, who were forced to fight their way back against the French and Portuguese monopoly, did not have the impression that they were superior to the African authorities they encountered. Given all this, Davidson asks a question: “how wide, then, was the effective “technological gap” in 1600?”

As Achille Mbembe argues in his *On the Postcolony*, more than any other nations, African nations were viewed as a supreme container of the “West’s obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of “absence”, “lack”, and “non-being”, of identity and difference, of negativeness -in short of nothingness.” Also, contrary to M. de Certeau’s observation, Mbembe argues, the dilemma is not that Western thought “posits the *self* (self-identity) as *other than the other*.” Also, it is not the case that “everything comes down to a simple opposition between truth and error, or to a confrontation and that form of unreason called fable or even madness.” Actually, here is a theory of language and classificatory structure in which the fact that African imagined communities were different from Western nation-states is “not simply not to be like (in the sense of being non-identical or being-other), it is besides not to exist, or to be nothing. “Flying in the face of likelihood or plausibility, these systems of reading the world attempt to exercise an authority of a particular type, assigning Africa to a special unreality such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished” (Mbembe, 2001: 04).

Tony Bennet argues that “literature always constitutes the phenomenon to be explained just as surely as history provides the means of explanation; no other ordering of their relations is imaginable” (Bennet, 1990: 42). In this regard, Fredric Jameson maintains that history “is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious” (Jameson, 1996: 35). This leads us to say that the African texts embody unarticulated “real” histories, which embody unfulfilled political wishes. Its aesthetic combination of orality and the print tradition, its incorporation of contestant Janus-faced ideologies and *natios* express a hope to correct and surmount the “false” narrations of African history and predicaments resulting from the colonial situation. Moreover, the role of the African writers in question in relation to the African history is not constrained only to attempting to represent through their works the history of their respective nations as they see it. Their works could be considered as ‘writing back’, which has in its turn a double effect: it asserts the narration of the history of Africa from an African standpoint; also, it contributes into the regaining of the dignity denied to Africans by the Western racist and stereotypical portrayals be they in literary, historical or philosophical works. In this sense Achebe argues that the African writer’s purpose beyond writing is to “make [the African] stand on [his] feet again.” Prior to colonialism, the African cultural and literary heritage had been purely produced and handed down from one generation to the other through orality. However, by dint of adopting the print tradition, African writers, on disposing of the interregnum caused by the incursion of colonialism, resumed their connection with the storytelling which embodies the moral and spiritual teachings of the pre-colonial times in Africa. *Petals of Blood* incorporates a clear condemnation of the falsification of Kenyan history and an attempt to voice the vexed Kenyan narratives:

For there are many questions in our history which remain unanswered. Our present day historians, following on similar theories yarned out by defenders of imperialism, insist we only arrived here yesterday. Where

went all the Kenyan people who used to trade with China, India, Arabia long long before Vasco da Gama came to the scene and on the strength of gunpowder ushered in an era of blood and terror and instability – an era that climaxed in the reign of imperialism over Kenya? But even then these adventures of Portuguese mercantilism were forced to build Fort Jesus, showing that Kenyan people had always been ready to resist foreign control and exploitation. The story of this heroic resistance: who will sing it? Their struggles to defend their land, their wealth, their lives: who'll tell of it? What of their earlier achievements in production that had annually attracted visitors from China and India? (*Petals of Blood*, 67).

The fact that the pre-colonial times in which solely the African lived in Africa on his terms could be read through the act of writing, particularly when we consider an African story narrated by an African on African characters in an African land. It is both a re-presentation of independence and an endeavour to dismiss the colonial phase, especially when they ascribe little role to Western characters in their works. It is not possible, nonetheless, to miss the fact that most African writers won their literary careers in the former coloniser's language. Moreover, religion is a residue which cannot be denied. Yet, both Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o tried to do so in that the former refutes even the fact that African societies are spiritual and claims that religion is the stuff of "juvenile minds". The latter did that through abandoning the Christian faith himself. But Ngugi wa Thiong'o does not cease to see a lot of truth in Christianity and its use to raise the consciousness of his imagined community as long as it is seen through an African standpoint, that is to say as long as it is not used to subjugate the African. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* portrays at length the effect of Christianity on the African minds and on how it ultimately contributed *inter alia* to the obliteration of the Ibo world view and what equals some of the modern world's institutions. Achebe sheds lights through his narration on what could have been an African judicial system or even an African democracy when he describes the role that the elderly and wise people played in resolving conflicts. This is also shown through the punishment which befalls Okonkwo when he breaches the law by killing an innocent child, though he is one of the *egwugwu*, representing the spirits of the clan's ancestors that is, people who are most respected and feared. Another suggestion that even what

could have been considered by the colonisers as advantages of colonialism is merely a justification. This could be detected in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Healers* wherein he portrays Densu involved in innovation (when the need arose) when he comes to understand his immediate spiritual environment. Achebe, Armah and Ngugi all aim at displaying to Africans the mistakes they committed that made them fall prey to colonialism. In this respect, Achebe argues that African imagined communities did not hear of civilization for the first time from Europeans; that their nations were not "mindless" but commonly had a philosophy of great profundity and worth and beauty, that they had poems most of all, they had dignity. "It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain." The most horrible thing that can happen to any community is the loss of its dignity and self-respect. Achebe believes that "the writers' duty is to help them regain it by showing them, what they lost. There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them" (Achebe, 1964: 157).

Furthermore, the African writer, being an intellectual, should not himself side with or accept easy formulas of truth. In other words, in the case of African intellectuals they should not show one side of truth. Edward Said argues in this sense that "at bottom, the intellectual, in my sense of the word, is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do" (Said, 1996: 23).

Achebe similarly argues that narrating Africa's history should not be idealistic. In other words, it should not represent Africa's past without its shortcomings. "The question is how does a writer recreate this past? Quite clearly there is a

strong temptation to idealise it-to extol its good points and pretend that the bad never existed” (Achebe, 1964: 158).

The interpretation of the history of Africa factually or fictitiously is congruent with the interest of the interpreter’s nation. Conrad, as Said argues, was aware when he wrote *Heart of Darkness* of his nation’s interest, which is why he did not depict the ‘natives’ in the process of liberating themselves. By the same token, Hegel, Hume and other philosophers of history and historians were aware of these interests, mainly justifying slavery and colonialism. Similarly, African intellectuals, while involved in the process of writing back or interpreting the history of Africa, could be said to have fallen into subjectivity and catering for the interests of their nations. None the less, writing African history through an Afrocentric perspective maintains that the black people are one nation. Indeed, advocates of this standpoint like Du bois and Molefi Ashanti were called sentimental Afrocentrists or vindicationist. This trend in interpreting African history rejects the claims of denying the blacks any contribution in human civilisation. That is why many Afrocentrist scholars such as Diop and fiction writers such as Armah tried to establish links between black Africans and ancient Egypt. Stephen Howe argues that scholars such as Du Bois, who also saw the relevance of this link, connected their efforts to Freemasonry. In the 1890s, Du Bois admits that there were “nineteen black Masonic lodges” in Philadelphia. Still these were unrecognised by the main Masonic orders (Howe, 1999: 69).

Nation-state is an essential concept in this research work; therefore, shedding light on its origins and constituent elements or pillars would contribute to detecting its narration.

Nationalism, Definition and History:

The classic statements on the definition of nation are those of Renan, Stalin, and Weber. Earnest Renan defines the nation as a “solidarity sustained by a distinctive historical consciousness. For him it is a “daily plebiscite”. Stalin

argues that a nation comes into being only when a number of elements gather, especially economic life, language, and territory. Max Weber “examines the nation as a ‘prestige community’, endowed with a sense of cultural mission.” He claims that nations are too different to be “defined in terms of one criterion.” But he connects nations to communities which were “unified by a myth of common descent. What distinguishes the nation is the commitment to a political project.” (Hutchinson and Smith, 2012: 15).

From a socio-demographic approach, Karl Deutsch offers a functional definition of the nation which suggests that “the presence of sufficient communication facilities with enough complementarity to produce the overall result”. The objective of national organisation for Deutsch is to “strengthen and extend the channels of communication which can ensure a popular compliance with national symbols and norms” (*ibid*: 15).

From an anthropological angle, Clifford Geertz argues that there are two “competing yet complementary components-ethnic and civic-in the nationalism of postcolonial states.” He portrays the ethnic as the “commitment to the ‘primordial’ loyalties which endow individuals with a distinctive identity; the civic as a desire for citizenship in a modern state. Since state and ethnic boundaries often clash, the result is endemic conflict. For Anthony Giddens, the nation “only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed.” Walker Connor refutes tendencies to “equate nation with state, and nationalism with state patriotism.” Like Weber, he describes the nation as “a community of descent, but distinguishes it from ethnic communities by its degree of self-consciousness whereas an ethnic group may be other-defined, a nation must be self-defined” (Hutchinson, Smith, 2012: 15-6).

Ernest Gellner argues that nations and nationalism are not natural because they are not a lasting characteristic of the human condition but were brought about by industrialism. He explains that in pre-industrial societies people were defined through structure: “everyone knows everyone else’s roles and, therefore, their social positions. Structure furnishes identity; culture simply

reinforces structure” (Gellner, 2008: xxiii). Industrialization decides the type of relationships existing amongst people:

Complex, large-scale industrial society works differently from either small-scale society (usually hunter-gatherers) or large-scale and complex agrarian society. The scale of industrial society, especially in the modern city, means that people have encounters with one another, rather than enduring relationships. The occupational structure exhibits few fixed roles and positions but rather constant change. People move between many positions, migrating and changing jobs. It is impossible to identify people in terms of structure (Gellner, 2008: xxiv).

For Gellner “nationalism is not a sentiment expressed by pre-existing nations; rather it creates nations where they did not previously exist” (Gellner, 2008: xxv).

For Elie Kedourie, nationalism, which emerged in European philosophy at the outset of the nineteenth century, belongs to what he called ideological politics. This ideology sees society and state as a *tabula rasa* on which a painting of justice can be drawn. Kant is thought to have argued for this doctrine in his pamphlet *Perpetual Peace* in 1790. Peace can set in amongst human beings only if states turn into republics, and the former will be so only if citizens adjust their behaviour in accordance with the categorical imperative. Yet considering society as a *tabula rasa* on which one can draw any picture entails the obliteration of the former existing order of things, which on its part means resorting to warfare and bloodshed. This doctrine looks upon humanity as naturally divided into nations. The latter are known by certain attributes which can be ascertained (Kedourie, 2008: 1-13). This doctrine came into being as a result of both the philosophical debate and events that took place in Europe during the eighteenth century. The philosophy of Enlightenment held that the universe was governed by a certain law of Nature. Through the use of reason man could discover this law, and if society is governed by its provisions, it would attain happiness. The latter could be obtained through the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain. The duty of the rulers is to ascertain

by means of reason the greatest pleasure and welfare possible for inhabitants of their territory (Kedourie, 1969: 9-10).

Kant is considered as one of the leading figures that helped in shaping this doctrine. He argued that morality had to be separated from knowledge. By this he meant that the methods by which nature was studied and those by which man as a moral being was studied should not be one. Methods that govern morality should be independent. "Such independence is called freedom in the strictest, i.e. transcendental sense." For him man is free only when he follows the moral laws that could not be found but in what he called the good will inside man and that is not to be sought outside him. The post Kantians like Fichte and Schleiermacher advanced a theory of state based on their interpretation of Kant's views. For them the end of man is freedom, freedom is self-realisation, and self-realisation is complete absorption in the whole or universal consciousness. Besides, man should obey the laws of the state because they could not have stemmed but from the good will. Moreover, both Kant and the post-Kantians argued that freedom could not always be attained peacefully for there are despotic states where politics is the manipulation of power. In this sense, Fichte, in his *"Characteristics of the Present Age"* (1806), called for the abolition of Favouritism and the establishment of equal rights for all men; besides, all individuals should be allowed to dedicate their prowess to the state. Kedourie argues that in the Western intellectual tradition politics which is a practical pursuit used to be distinguished from the intellectual life, and that philosophers used to look contemptuously at politics. But what led people of thought like the post Kantians here to try and theorise in this field? (Kedourie, 1969: 41). The answer for him is that Schleiermacher and Fichte, in their description of the ideal state, fell short of their vision; they had before their eyes the circumstances in Prussia and the numerous other states in Germany where the rule and principle was absolutism. Moreover, society was divided there into castes with relationships among them based on hatred and jealousy. These writers belonged to a lower class which was relatively low on the social scale.

They were mostly sons of small farmers, artisans and so on. They managed in a way to become university students. But when they graduated they found that they were “little better than superior domestics, or . . . famished writers dependent on the goodwill of an editor or a publisher” (Kedourie, 1969: 45).

Benedict Anderson considers nation-states as imagined communities for the members of one nation can never meet or hear of the majority of the members of their communities, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Also, nations have imagined flexible boundaries; they have an imagined sovereignty; and it consists of an imagined community, which despite other human specificities, has a prevalent sense of camaraderie. Benedict Anderson writes that it is patriotic feelings which make people willing to kill as well as to die (Anderson, 1981: 6-7).

Hans Kohn traces the roots of nationalism to the Greco-Jewish cultural traditions, where he observes that it is the religious teachings which made the Jews accept to struggle as a community. The idea of nationalism for him existed in the past but it never had the same driving force like it did in the nineteenth century when it made people’s tendencies and feelings head in one direction.

Yet prior to that, nationalism existed as a natural feeling in human beings in that man tends naturally to love his birthplace with all its characteristics, the contours of its mountains and hills and its climate. He tends to love the familiar and wherever he goes he always has in mind the return to the familiar place, to its familiar tastes, traditions, language and so on. On the contrary, man tends to hate the unfamiliar at all levels. Here comes also the idea of superiority of one’s race or narcissism as Freud and Nietzsche would characterise it. Whatever is familiar and fathomable must be civilization and the rest must be barbarism or gentility. Kohn sees that the nation as an idea made people justify it, interpret history in their own way because of it, and even resort to metaphysical dimensions to justify its existence so much so that people belonging to the same

nation would name themselves 'the chosen people' or a nation endowed with a mission to the rest of the world.

What is remarkable in this context is that the demonizing look some Western scholars had vis-à-vis 'the African experience' extended to the political models they had adopted or could have adopted. For according to the British "there were no African models, these states would have to be built on European models" (Davidson, 1992: 12). Indeed, one of the effects colonialism and its accompanying modernity had on Africa was the embracing of independent African countries of nation-state. Many see this implementation as a deadly blunder which led them (African nation-states) towards dependency and alienation at all levels. Nation-statism, Anderson argues, had the looks, and really began, as a liberation. But this emancipating endeavour was ended. For Davidson, practically speaking, it was not a "restoration of Africa to Africa's own history, but the onset of a new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe." The fifty or so states partitioned by colonialism, each fashioned and governed as if their imagined communities had no history of their own, were turned into "fifty or so nation-states formed and governed on European models, chiefly the models of Britain and France. Liberation thus produced its own denial. Liberation led to alienation" (Davidson, 1992: 10).

As shall be discussed further, it is this very alienation that has made of most African writers uneasily trying to straddle the traditional and the modern worlds. Abiola Irele argues that African intellectuals are trapped dangerously between the values of their "traditional culture and those of the West." The procedure of transformation which they are going through has created a "dualism of forms of life which [they] experience at the moment less as a mode of challenging complexity than as one of confused disparateness" (Quoted in Appiah, 1992:54).

For Davidson, nation-statism was not an inevitable factor in the history of Africa, for there had been, as he put it, "untaken paths". The Western philosophy of the nation began to be utilized in Africa by what was called the

“recaptured” to refer to black African slaves freed by “the crews of the naval blockade.” The recaptured were around 50,000. They were set ashore at what is known now as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Yet the recaptured’s destiny was that they were no more slaves but could no longer join their traditional cultures. They had to adopt a new mode of life. They had, for instance, to create a new form of communication. This was known as “Krio” or Creole in English. Also, they “invented forms of self-administration or adopted those they remembered from home, and at the same time embraced an ardent Christianity in place of their native religions”. Many of the recaptives became “theologians, political thinkers, men of capable action and, increasingly, men of relative wealth.” Around the 1860s the number of intellectuals amongst the recaptives increased. They contributed along with their educated colleagues in towns like Cape Coast in copying the political ideas of nineteenth-century Britain to Africa. Most of all, there was the idea of nationalism and, in Davidson’s words, “its manifest destiny in the sovereign nation-state.” Ultimately, the recaptives naturalized their (and Africa’s) alienation (Davidson, 1992: 25-6). Other freed slaves returned to Nigeria and were called the Saro. The latter were treated like a detached class, an abnormality that should not be incorporated into the local society. They were tolerated, since after all, they were “fellow Yoruba, but the essence of the matter is that they were culturally and, in their disposition, fifth columnists who would mentally and ideologically team up with the British invaders [then pushing in , *manu militari*, from Lagos Island, annexed in 1861] rather than sympathize with the unlettered masses”(Davidson, 1992: 28).

Around the 1860s the recaptives were beginning to send their offspring to study law and other disciplines in London. “These alumni came home with a reinforced conviction that the job to be done, after British withdrawal, could not possibly be entrusted to “tradition” (Davidson, 1992: 33).

The British began to withdraw from shore stations in Africa, because they were unproductive. But before that, they made sure that, in the case of the Gold

Coast, for instance, “the acknowledged African chiefs [...] should best be left to their own jurisdiction, with only an appeal, when necessary, to the British magistracy.” But these acknowledged chiefs were recognized by the British withdrawing authorities at the expense of already existent local chiefs. African intellectuals who descended from the recaptives attempted to prove to themselves that Africa was to be ruled after the British manner. For instance, in the mid-nineteenth century, James Horton expressed in his book *West African Countries and Peoples* his desire to see a modern free Africa. But freedom for him meant the total abandoning of old African ruling models which should be replaced by “entirely new and non-African structures” (37). Horton prescribed the way some African states should be ruled. He suggested, for example, that the Fanti of the Gold Coast should adopt an authoritative monarchy. Also, republics should be installed amongst the Ga east to the Fanti.

An example of the African appointed chiefs used as an intermediary to facilitate the British dominance is Joshua in Ngugi’s *The River Between*. He “hopes for the power of the white man’s order to work through him” (Williams: 1999: 25).

In Siriana he found a sanctuary and the white man’s power and magic...The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly...He turned to and felt the deep presence of the one God. Had he not given the white men power over all (*The River Between*, 33).

Furthermore, half a century after Horton, Attoh Ahuma, a Gold Coast clergyman, in his *Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness* urged lettered Africans to help Africans “find a way out of Darkest Africa.” The latter for him is “no darker than the dark primeval forest of the human mind uncultured”. The solution for him is that Africans should “emerge from the savage backwoods and come into the open where nations are made” (Quoted in Davidson, 1992: 39). Ahuma also compared the reforms which were to take place among the Ga people in Accra to the ones followed at the Meiji in Japan. Another African intellectual belonging to the Gold Coast, John Mensah Sarbah went in the same direction into comparing the Fanti’s attempts at modernization to the Japanese’s

with the difference that Japan was not colonized and modernization did not have to mean alienation in it.

Africa could have taken other roads rather than embracing alienation. For Davidson proves that African pre-colonial states had all potentials to be powerful free African states. At the symbolic, the economic and the political levels, many African states were even equal to Britain. For example, the various groups of the Akan nation living in the Gold Coast had among them some kind of rivalry that prevented them from uniting. This had been so until priest Anokye created the myth of the golden stool and told king “Osei Tutu and all the people that this stool contained the *sunsum* (soul or spirit) of the Ashanti nation, and that their power, their health, their bravery, their welfare were all in this stool” (Davidson, 1992: 54). The relevance of the golden stool in terms of power and meaning could be compared, according to Basil Davidson:

to the power and meaning of the English crown: not the crown the monarch wears, any more than the Sika Dwa was or is the stool on which the king of the Ashanti sits, but the crown which no one has ever seen or ever can see: the initiating symbol of the English nation's unity and welfare, ritually acquired and ineffably empowered by convenience, coercion, and the manifold accretions of history. The golden stool, like the English Crown or comparable symbols, embodied a transcendental power beyond its material existence (Davidson, 1992: 56).

It is worth mentioning that the Ashanti Empire or nation had begun to witness changes at the economic level. For instance, there had been the concentration upon the production of food. Forests were cleared in preparation for the production of new crops. This resulted in a successful tropical agriculture. To sum up, the Ashanti had all the jurisdictions to be entitled a nation-state. “It had a given territory, known territorial limits, a central government with police and army, a national language and law, and, beyond these, a constitutional embodiment in the form of a council called the Asanteman, even if, during the nineteenth century, the charter of the Golden Stool remained a secret to outsiders” (Davidson, 1992: 59).

But by the time the British set foot on the Ashanti Empire/ nation, the latter started to dwindle away at all levels. The mercantile class which was to form the African middle class had been expropriated by the British colonial authorities. Among those powerful enterprises there was the asikafo. However, when the Ashanti Empire began to weaken on the British attacks the king was forced to give commercial concessions to the British trading companies to dissuade the Crown from invading it. The colonial time, Davidson argues, marked a long tension between the old nationalists and the new nationalists. While the former were for the “resurrection of the pre-colonial powers and prerogatives”, the new nationalists, considered doing this as an obstacle before the modernization and progress of Africa. On denying the old heritage, the new nationalists had to accept the new alien ideas of nationalism coming from Europe. For the old nationalists independence meant nothing without the return to the old legacy so much so that:

When the Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate eventually became independent Ghana in 1957, the celebrations were both vivid and popular. But the king of Ashanti was not present at them. He refused to attend the great festivities of Independence Day. For him, as for others of his kind, this independence could only be a preserve denial of the old independence, and the new nationals no more than usurpers of the legacy of Africa’s own development (Davidson, 1992: 73).

In his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, Hobsbawm divides the development of nationalism into three eras: 1830-1880; after 1880 until the end of WWI; and 1918-1950. He gives relatively little time to the early radical democratic movements such as that of the French Revolution, but instead concentrates on the economic rationality of the liberal bourgeoisie, whose concept of nation he assumes dominated this era. He shows how Adam Smith’s, for instance, and other classical economists’ views on global free trade and governmental non-interference led them to de-emphasize the notion of a “national economy.” Some functions of the state were however perceived as being beneficial to economic factors (guaranteeing contracts,

protection of property, etc.) and nations were deemed legitimate if they met the “threshold principle,” which states that a nation must be of an adequate dimension to be economically viable (Hobsbawm, 2007 : 31). So expansionist views of nationhood were preferred, which in turn relegates ethnic and linguistic factors to a subordinate position, as nations in theory embraced multiplicity. Historical continuity of the group, cultural dynamism (e.g. literary traditions) and “a proven capacity for conquest” were other pertinent factors to the dominant theorists of this era (Hobsbawm, 2007: 38). As a part of liberal ideology, this understanding of the evolution of nations is linked to the notion of human progress and the formation of larger and larger units of human identification (family-tribe-region-nation and eventually world). Again, while notions like language, common history, religion, or ethnicity could play crucial roles in creating nationalism (myth-making) among the populace after the state had been founded, these factors are not primary.

In the period after 1880 nationalist ideologies become more self-conscious about being oriented towards the masses. “State patriotism” is developed, frequently on the basis of stronger myth-making, which served to bring greater unity and common identity to the people (thus making them a “nation” after the creation of the state = nation-state). Even though these programs are implemented from the top-down, part of the program is to make the subject into a citizen, to supply notions formerly embraced by the radical democratic revolutionaries. Such programs were so integrative that they sustained allegiance to the nation regardless of the rise of class-consciousness; the vigorous support of the bourgeois state by the working class in WWI is given as an example (Hobsbawm, 2007: 89). The very accomplishment of these programs enhanced opposition in the form of certain “non-state nationalisms,” which in numerous cases were absorbed but which flourished in Eastern Europe. Such nationalisms were based on factors such as common culture, language, etc. (they were “imagined communities”).

The period from 1918-1950 is characterised by Hobsbawm as “The Apogee of Nationalism.” The principles of what makes a nation a nation, however, were different in the post-war division of Europe under Wilsonian principles than they were in the expansionist views of the 19th-century liberal bourgeoisie. While several nation-states were established after the war, this program was detrimental and served to realise the decline of the prominence of nations as such. Hobsbawm also argues that the decolonization process was more the outcome of anti-imperialist attitudes than it was nationalist sentiments, making the big number of states born after 1945 unclassifiable as “nations.” The political role of the nation as such only continued to decline toward the end of the twentieth century, as a “supranational” structure has taken center stage (Hobsbawm, 2007: 139).

Again, Benedict Anderson traces the origin of the concept and numbers its manifestations: capitalism, print, newspapers, museums, jobs (nowadays pilgrimage as he put it) and so on and so forth. Anderson argues that nations at first took a religious form such as the “transcontinental sodalities of Christendom, the Ummah Islam...” One of the factors which led to the emergence of the modern nation-state was, according to Anderson, the emergence of vernacular languages, which “were competitors with Latin” (French in Paris, [Early] English in London). This appearance “made its own contribution to the decline of the imagined community of Christendom.” The disappearance of religious imagined communities, for Anderson, was the result of the interaction of a number of factors. What made the “new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.” (Anderson, 2006: 10-1).

Many African writers narrate in their works, particularly novels, their nations. This, for example, takes the shape of the genesis of their ‘imagined communities’ like in *Weep, Not Child*, by Ngugi wa Thiong’o. No matter how

some African writers try to ridicule or claim its unimportance to African societies, religious thought insists on appearing and reappearing in African texts. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, for instance, could be read as the narration of the link between the dead, the suffering of the already born children and those as yet to come in Yoruba's imagined *natio*. Nonetheless, the realism whereby the author narrates his nation does not seem to provide satisfactory answers as to why people should suffer. What is the purpose of life? Is there a metaphysical explanation as to the very end of life? Should people surrender to the thought that people are either born happy or unhappy and thus should follow the scenario prepared for them until their death? Is there another life after death? Perhaps, this is why the protagonist Azaro, the spirit-child or *abiku* of Yoruba myth, is portrayed to flit between the paradisiacal world of pure dreams and the poverty and suffering of a modern West African slum where children are born and die every day. Kofi Awoonor, likewise, in his narration of the Ewe *natio*, shows how the protagonist Amamu finds final relief in death after having been tormented by the feeling of alienation while alive. Benedict Anderson states the link between nations and mortality and shows how religious stories make them eternal, stemming from an immemorial past and heading towards an endless future. The manner in which man dies often appears "arbitrary, his mortality is inescapable. Human lives are full of such combinations of necessity and chance. We are all aware of the contingency and ineluctability of our particular genetic heritage, our gender, our life-era, our physical capabilities, our mother-tongue, and so forth. The great merit of traditional religious world-views [...] has been their concern with man-in-the-cosmos, man as species being, and the contingency of life." (Anderson, 2006: 10-1). Anderson argues that the unusual survival over thousands of years of Christianity and Islam in dozens of various social constructs attests to their 'creative' response to the overwhelming and cumbersome burden of human distress-disease, mutilation, sadness, age, and death. "Why was I born blind? Why is my best friend paralyzed? Why is my daughter retarded?" Religions try to respond to ambiguous "intimations, immortality, generally by transforming fatality into

continuity (Karma, original sin, etc...). In this way it concerns itself with the links between the dead and the yet unborn, the mystery of re-generation" (*ibid*: 10-1).

Furthermore, in their attempts to narrate African History from an Afrocentric standpoint, some African novelists resort to portraying the African communities' common suffering like what Ayi Kwei Armah did in *Two Thousand Seasons* or their belonging to ancient Egypt like in *Osiris Rising* and *KMT*. They also attempt in some of their novels to show the changes, be they positive or negative, that took place in their imagined communities like in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Armah's *The Healers*, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. The narration of African nations, natioes or both and the novelists' endeavours to provide through storytelling what seems to them genuine histories will be examined in the following chapters.

Concluding remarks:

This chapter has been concerned with the examination of the concept of history in relation to Africa and how it was interpreted from two standpoints: the European and the African. Denying history to Africa was shown to match the interests of the Western nations' colonial enterprise (sometimes even intellectuals' personal interests). The African interpretation of history both in scholastic and literary works (along with some European works) has tried to demystify these prejudices. This was done through representing the African precolonial situation as being a normal self-satisfied human experience. Some African scholars and literary writers like Ayi Kwei Armah chose to embrace an Egyptologist interpretation of African history, which they used to base the notion of their imagined communities on race more than on culture. Created in Western philosophy, nation-state has been defined in different manners by different historians and cultural scholars, but they almost all agree on the fact that a compromise cannot be reached in relation to this concept. It is a Janus-

faced concept and existence. Also, the concept is connected to other terms that are present in all nations and many nation-states: language, religion, ethnicity and myths about the genesis of the nation, industrialisation, the print tradition and administration. The stereotypes created by Europeans about Africans, meant to fixate their identities, were not only about history but extended to art and politics. Also, like the invented traditions, the concept of nation-state was adopted by Africans after independence, which was at the expense of the “untaken paths” which could have put Africans’ historical, philosophical, economic and political efforts on track again.

Chapter Two:

The Narration of the ‘African Experience’

History, in other words, is not a calculating machine. It unfolds in the mind and imagination, and it takes body in the multifarious responses of a people’s culture, itself the infinitely subtle mediation of material realities, of underpinning economic fact, of gritty objectivities.

Basil Davidson, *Africa in Modern History*, 1994.

Si nous voulons, par la suite, répartir équitablement ces éléments suivant leur appartenance respective, la ruse, la tromperie, la tricherie, l’avidité et la cruauté seront incontestablement le lot du colonialisme tandis que l’autre moitié : la bassesse, l’infamie, l’impureté, l’hypocrisie et la trahison seront le lot de la colonisabilité. Malek Bennabi, *Colonisabilité : Problèmes de la civilisation*, 2003.

In the previous chapter the attempt was to shed light on the concept of history in relation to Africa. We discussed how it is seen from within and from without. Also, we have tried to show the implications of stereotypical portrayals of Africans as unhistorical people, the better to support the colonial enterprise.

In this chapter I am going to examine the embodiment of African narratives of a characteristically African experience. For, as Patrick Parrinder asserts, “fictional narrative gives us an inside view of a society or nation, just as it gives access to personal experiences very different from our own (Parrinder, 2006: 01). In order to have a closer view to this particular African experience, the concept of culture must be approached and analysed. This concept is emphasized and sometimes critically revised through ambiguous descriptions so as to point out the lack of consistency many African writers find in their pre-colonial nations when they are involved in the act of re-locating them in the modern world. As argued by Wilson Jeremiah Moses, advocates of the African standpoint, like the novelists in question, often show “hostility toward anyone who asks them to define what they mean by African personality or African world view. Invariably, their attempts to define what it is meant by African people will shift from a geographical to a racial perspective” (Jeremiah, 1998: 19). By representing the ‘singular’ experience of their nations using the novel form, the African writers in question aim at showing the particularity of the “Black” experience in terms of spirituality, language, philosophy, the concept of the family, and the colonial and the post-colonial phases of the history of African nations and how they did influence and are still affecting all spheres of life in those nations and natios. In other words, narrating the African experience denotes in this context drawing both implicitly and explicitly a comparison between the pillars of the modern nation-state and those of the African precolonial states and communities. Achebe, Armah, Ngugi and Awoonor would not disagree through their writings that the starting point of the disintegration of the African communities and states was the experience of being enslaved and then colonised. The first affected negatively and still do the

African psychology and identity. The second contributed highly to bringing down most of the pillars of culture in pre-colonial African states and communities. These pillars are: spirituality, communality, solidarity, simplicity, justice, morality, encouraging success without spurring jealousy in the hearts and minds of the community members, and the relevance of whatever the individual does to the community. The African community, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o maintains in his *Homecoming*, is at the disposal of the individual. The latter develops the full potential of his personality when he is working "in and for the community as a whole. Land, food and wealth is for the community. In this community, culture belongs to all. For the rich and the poor, the foolish and the wise are all free to participate in the national life of the community in all its manifestations. Perhaps that is what some have meant when they talk of African socialism. If so it is a worthy ideal" (Ngugi: 1972, 25).

We are told this through the novels of these writers; however, the bitterest phase of the Africans' experience is still contemporary Africa for it is in this epoch that the pillars of the philosophy of nation-state set in and are being buttressed. The outcome of all this, as shown in the concerned novels, is the re-emergence of psychological and social ills in the African communities in worse forms. The former shows in the dubious and ambivalent positions where most Africans, including the novelists in question, find themselves vis-à-vis their respective religions, social identity, sense of purpose, languages and even potential and existent African economic products. On the other hand and what makes this psychological position even direr and more complicated is the Africans' attachment to the new social norms introduced by modernity and, by extension, the 'invented' nation-state.

The pillars of precolonial African "imagined communities" are best illustrated in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. What the reader makes of the novel seen from this perspective is its defence of African culture. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe portrays a pre-colonial Ibo world that is exempt from the cultural alienation introduced by nation-state. It is a world where rituals, laws and other

worldly daily life practices go hand in hand. Although Achebe makes it clear that hard work and masculinity are prerequisites in order for every Ibo person to cross the threshold towards recognition by his kin, he also shows the difference between being part and parcel of the natio and being an outsider. In the latter case, when, for example, faced with a group of *egwugwu*, a white outsider would only portray them as a vivacious group of people whose role arises to little more than being entertainers. In other words, this outsider would not consider and appreciate the crucial role this group has in the Ibo imagined community. This brings to mind the way in which Conrad's mouthpiece, Marlow, an outsider in Africa, describes Kurtz's mistress in *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's description of the African woman obviously shows how he likens her to nothing more than an object owned by Kurtz. His first observation of her tells us nothing about her except that she has "brass leggings to the knee" and "brass wire gauntlets to the elbow." Marlow speaks of the "innumerable necklaces" that hang on her neck as do other charms. "She must have had the value of several elephant tusks on her," Marlow exclaims (*HD*, 135). Surprisingly, Kurtz who speaks at length of his fiancée "(my) Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my..." (*HD*, 116) has hardly anything to say of the African woman who we are made to understand was an important part of his life. It is only through the Russian character that we do hear of her:

She got in one day and kicked up a row about those miserable rags I picked up in the storeroom to mend my clothes with. At least it must have been that, for she talked like a fury to Kurtz for an hour pointing at me now and then... Luckily for me, I fancy Kurtz felt too ill that day to care, or there would have been mischief (*HD*, 137).

Achebe on the contrary shows the social role this group (the *egwugwu*) has in the Ibo natio. When the *egwugwu* make an appearance on social occasions, such as trying to reach a verdict at the court, their parade is looked at with awe and reverence. The only equivalent to the first institution established by the colonizers, the church, Achebe seems to be suggesting, took form in the most respected people like the elders and the *egwugwu*. The collapse of these individuals and the connections they had with the Ibo political, economic and

social philosophies entailed the eradication of the whole Ibo social structure. The author's objection seems to be about the disruption of the process of handing down the Ibo traditions from one generation to the next. Although Achebe suggests that the Ibo traditions incorporate both positive and negative elements, he seems to be implying that whatever the drawbacks it had, the Ibo natio managed to live adequately and self-satisfactorily at all levels by the laws they inherited from their ancestors.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe, simply but meticulously, shows the different steps and the already existing deficiencies in the Ibo imagined community which led to the annihilation of its economic and national sovereignties. For Achebe, the Ibo natio's naivety was an important factor. This is represented in the novel with the Ibo allowing the European evangelists to set up their church under the conviction that very soon none of them would survive the power of the evil forest. Achebe here emphasizes the animist beliefs prevalent in the African minds. He even suggests here that the Ibos believed they had a defensive force more powerful and lethal than the bows and machetes they could have tried to use to defend themselves before they eventually realised that they committed a blunder. This is so when he portrayed the protagonist utilizing a gun. Of course, he could not be implying that gun powder was invented in Africa, but rather stressed the fact that Africans could have taken advantage of their contacts with the Chinese. To show the ridiculousness of this thought Achebe does not abstain from portraying their stupor at the white man's 'immunity' to the evil forest's effect. The portrayal gives the impression that their gods have abandoned them. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in *Petals of Blood*, similarly, is critical of his imagined community's superstitious thought when he describes his fellow Kenyans looking with expectant eyes at the modernizing machinery in the process of bringing down Mwathi's shrine. Ngugi describes the villagers watching with awe the obliteration of this compound. This caricatured portrayal is made to appear as a snapshot of the disappearance of the last pockets of some old beliefs that are at odds with rationalism –the trend of modern times:

We said: it cannot be. But they still moved toward it. We said: they will be destroyed by Mwathi's fire. Just you wait, just you wait. But the machine uprooted the hedge and then it hit the first hut and fell and we were all hush hush, waiting for it to be blown up. Even when the Americans landed on the moon . . . we were not as sacred as when Mwathi's place was razed to the ground. The two huts were pulled down. But where was Mwathi? There was no Mwathi. He must have vanished, we said, and we waited for his vengeance. Maybe he was never there, we said, and the elder who might have helped, Muturi, had become suddenly deaf and dumb at the sacrilege (*Petals of Blood*, 94).

Criticizing the passive attitude Africans had owing to their superstitious thought is also directly expressed by Njoroge's half brother Boro's questions in *Weep Not Child* regarding the occupation of land: "How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting? And what was all this superstitious belief in a prophecy?" (*Weep Not Child*, 30).

Ngugi's portrayals, like those of Achebe, are ambivalent and divided between what constitutes the true experience of the Kenyan imagined community and the alien segments of the modern nation-state. For he downplays and seems to be unhappy with the myths connected to the colonial situation. For instance, both in *The River Between* and *Weep Not Child* we witness the protagonists, Waiyaki and Njoroge, fully-fledged nationalist young men in both novels, being instructed by their parents about their future role as saviours thus precursors of pillars of the modern Kenyan nation-state. "We are presented", in these works, "with glimpses of the 'proto-nationalists', those who seek to shake off the claustrophobic secrecy of the 'tribe' in favour of some wider social aggregate" (Ogude, 1999: 17-8). For along the obvious geographical markers of Kenya and the display of familiarity to them in *The River Between* (stating right from the beginning "The two ridges lay side by side" instead of 'two ridges'), as Ogude remarks, what Ngugi seems to be emphasizing is the unity of all tribes within one nation. Also, one of the credentials of Waiyaki as a nation-builder is his language which is "that of the 1960s 'moderniser': education, unity, advancement, growth, development, patriotism, high ideals, reconciliation,

tolerance, enlightenment, mission and vision are the words that form the backbone of his lexicon” (*ibid*: 17-8). This is a pattern noticed even in Ngugi’s later works, for protagonists such as Kihika, and Karega emphasize unity and nationness rather than natio. This is also observed in Armah’s *The Healers* when at the end of the novel Ama Nkroma cherishes the union of Ghanaian tribes (in one nation) in the aftermath of the Ashanti wars:

Ama Nkroma continued to laugh. ‘It’s a new dance all right,’ she said, ‘and it’s grotesque. But look at all the black people the whites have brought here. Here we healers have been wondering about ways to bring our people together again. And the whites want ways to drive us apart. Does it not amuse you, that in their wish to drive us apart the whites are actually bringing us work for the future? Look’ (*The Healers*, 309).

This trend of unity, as argued by Gyan Prakash in his *After Colonialism*, expressed in the “anticolonial nationalism was compelled to transgress colonial polarities as it sought to articulate an essentialized nation.” For the nationalists such as the above novelists believed that the colonized were a “national essence” against that of the colonizers. Turning a blind eye to the stage of difference embedded in social, regional and ethnic variations, African nationalist elites claimed the unity of their respective nations. Yet, the “subalterns’ social location defied the identities of nation and class, and their insurgent consciousness, religiosity, mythic visions, and notions of political community” (Prakash, 1993: 9-10).

Ambivalent portrayals of the ‘African experience’ show themselves clearly in the closing of Ngugi’s two (early) novels, because it does not bring a denouement; rather, we witness total vagueness and indecision about the protagonists’ end.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi seems to criticize the method employed by the Mau Mau fighters to make people take the oath because of its violent content and because the Mau Mau fighters intimidate those who refuse to take it. This can have an adverse effect in that they may win a hesitant member not deeply convinced of the cause like Gikonyo, or simply not willing to take part in the

struggle: this is the case of Mugo who ends up being a traitor to the cause of his nation.

Also, the novelists shed light on treachery, which is shown to be another social ill that quickened the change from precolonial African imagined communities to the modern nation-state. In *Things Fall Apart*, the interpreter who was helping the British to convert his imagined community could be considered to have contributed to his people's sufferings. It is noteworthy that Achebe could be implying that the interpreter belongs to the Saro who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were an alienated group which neither belonged wholeheartedly to the Ibo, nor did it belong to the culture that contributed to its alienation. The interpreter is portrayed as speaking with a weird accent. In the same manner, Armah, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, deemed African chiefs as responsible for the enslavement and suffering of their fellow Africans. The insistence on showing these failings in the pre-colonial times which made Africa "colonisable", to use Bennabi's coined word, denotes, on the one hand, the feeling of embarrassment before their peers -European intellectuals- when there is a suggestion that African writers embrace their respective nation's superstitious thought. On the other hand, pushed by an associated feeling that they (African writers), being educated in Western schools, have the wisdom of the modern time and are thus more eligible to guide their fellow Africans to reconnect to history than say the elderly (fathers).

Yet this wish of the "death of the father" cannot be dissociated in the context of African literature from the will, in Edward Glissant's words, to disclose the "false father" and, by extension, to reconnect to the authentic parent. Furthermore, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries European philosophical and literary works which practised aggression and even questioned the humanity of Africans, chiefly the thought that Africa had no history of its own, could be said to have given birth to the will on the African writers' part to re-present in print "the African experience" which is shown to be different, but by no means less important than any other human experience.

This is in the sense that the act of writing itself is proof of the genius denied to Africans in those ages. Moreover, the African novel incorporates elements of the oral storytelling traits characteristic of the pre-colonial time. This gives the impression that African writers assert meanwhile the genius of pre-colonial African nations and thus refute the suggestion that there was no genius in pre-colonial Africa and no history as a result. *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, is a story where the Ibos appear not only as self-reliant and self-sufficient, but they are also described as being in a total world of their own where the history of the individual went hand in hand with the history of the nation. If we consider history to be what happened in the past and the recording of it, then it is quite weird (Achebe seems to be suggesting) to perceive such harmony between the individual and his surrounding, particularly when we consider agriculture, local names for the tools and people as well as an abstract form of thought, and still characterise the Ibo as unhistorical. Achebe's portrayal of the Ibo tribe's daily life "reveals", in Bhabha's words, "the profound history of its locality (Lokalität), the spatialization of historical time, a creative humanization of this locality, which transforms a part of terrestrial space into a place of historical life for people" (Bhabha, 1994: 205). Hence, some of the novels are historical, because they narrate events that the novelists, as Walter Benjamin argues, experienced themselves or gathered from their own documents. Besides, they "in turn make [...] it the experience of those who are [reading their] tale" (Benjamin, 1968: 87). For example, Ngugi's *The River Between*, *Weep Not Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* narrate what Ngugi himself experienced particularly during the Mau Mau struggle. Waiyaki, for instance, reflects the fact that Ngugi has always had an ambivalent stance vis-à-vis Christianity. For he understood that being a good Christian did not denote in the case of Africans, according to the Protestant church, frequenting the church and reciting the bible more than following the British model in terms of dress, manners and even economy. Also Africans were made to understand that "if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality" (Fanon, 1961: 169).

This entails that Kenyans had to start looking at their national traditions, customs and manners with suspicion, for they are made to understand that there is an oddity between their being Christian and their clinging to African ways. Ultimately there was an equal doubt as to the wisdom of abandoning customs and rituals for the sake of modernity. This state of ambivalence cannot be missed in Waiyaki's words:

Not all the ways of the white man were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith, needed washing, cleaning away all dirt, leaving only the eternal. And that eternal that was the truth had to be reconciled to the traditions of the people. A people's traditions could not be swept away overnight. That way lay disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a people's roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning, Gikuyu and Mumbi (*The River Between*, 141).

Ngugi's feelings of "psychic ambivalence or intellectual uncertainty" (Bhabha, 1994: 206) would ultimately give way to giving up the Christian faith in 1969. *Weep Not Child* also reflects in many ways what Ngugi witnessed in his early life. In this respect Ngugi went:

Then came the war. It was the first the first big war. I was then young, a mere boy, although circumcised. All of us were taken by the force. We made roads and cleared the forest to make it possible for the warring white men to move more quickly. The war ended . . . We came home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us as a reward. . . But N'go! The land was gone. My father . . . died a Muhoi on this land. (1969: 25).

Moreover, Kamirithu village has been the focal point of the author's life. Ngugi represents this village under different names in his novels. It is the independent nation of Kaneno and Makuyu in *The River Between*; in *A Grain of Wheat* it is the village of Thabai and it is the village of Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood*. Kamirithu is twelve miles from the capital Nairobi. Despite the fact that Ngugi was not actively involved in the Mau Mau movement, he experienced the chasm within his family. Ngugi is a son to a tenant Gikuyu farmer and one of

the twenty eight children in an extended family. He had to witness a number of troubles which befell his family during the Emergency Period 1952-1962. The divisions in Ngugi's family caused by the Emergency Period, which ignited Ngugi's first novels, are clearly stated by the author in his preface to *Secret Lives*:

As I write I remember the nights of fighting in my father's house; my mother's struggle with the soil so that we might eat; have decent clothes and get some schooling; my elder brother, Wallace Mwangi, running to the cover and security of the forest under a hail of bullets from Colonial Policemen; his messages from the forest to continue with education at any cost; my cousin Gichini wa Ngugi, just escaping the hangman's rope because he had been caught with live bullets; uncles and other villagers murdered because they had taken the oath; the beautiful courage of ordinary men and women in Kenya who stood up to the might of British imperialism and indiscriminate terrorism. I remember too some relatives and fellow villagers who carried the gun for the white man and often became his messengers of blood. I remember the fears, the betrayals, Rachael's tears, the moments of despair and love and kingship in struggle and I try to find meaning of it all through my pen (Ngugi, 1975: 02).

Kamiriithu was destroyed because of Ngugi's brother's involvement in the Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau). In the following quotation Ngugi describes the ruins that were once his home village and his reaction to the way the colonials constructed it in 1955:

I came back after the first term and confidently walked back to my old village. My home was now a pole of dry mud-stones, bits of grass, charcoal and ashes. Nothing remained, not even crops, except for a lone pear tree that swayed in sun and wind. I stood there bewildered. Not only my home, but the old village with its culture, its memories and its warmth had been razed to the ground...

Kamiriithu was now no longer the name of a trough with a defiant pool of water, surrounded by a few Swahili houses, but the name of a new 'emergency village' on one of the sloping ridges next to the path I used to follow on my way to Kaamandura. I walked through the present site of Kamiriithu Community Theatre. All around me, I saw women and children on rooftops with hammers and nails and thatch, building the new homes because their men were in detention camps or away with people's guerrilla army (Ngugi, 1975: 73-4).

Ngugi attended Kaamandura School until the age of eleven and then Karing's Independent School in Maangua. Later Ngugi entered Alliance High School, "a model used for Siriana School in *Petals of Blood* and other novels." Also, Reverend Livingstone in *Weep Not, Child* was "modelled partially on Cary Francis, a principal of Alliance School." Also, what happened to Boro in this very novel "bear[s] resemblance to Ngugi's brother, Wallace Ngugi. The name and the death of Ngugi's stepbrother, Gitogo, parallel that in the plot of *A Grain of Wheat*" (Killam, 1980: 51).

Ngugi's father died as a landless Gikuyu. Thus he was called a *Muhoi*, which meant for the Gikuyu being landless and having to work on other people's lands for little return. Land was considered sacred for the Gikuyu, for according to the Gikuyu myth, god granted land to the first Gikuyu man and woman, Gikuyu and Mumbi, and ordered them to live on it along with their posterity. Ngotho, Njoroge's father in *Weep, Not Child*, works for a British colonial man, Howlands.

Another instance is that *Weep, Not Child* reflects in many manners Ngugi's perception of the events which took place during the Mau Mau struggle. But the account of these events was made through a child's view point. Ngugi did not actually impart much depth to his narration, for he had the intention of giving an honest account of how it felt like being a child in war times. This becomes clear when the following statement is considered:

In *Weep Not, Child* I just wanted to capture as much as possible the atmosphere of the situation, what it felt like to actually live in the small village at this time. So I wasn't trying what was very deep, but I was trying to capture what it felt like to live in a civil war. So that even if I didn't use my experience in many of the episodes, there are things which I have seen or heard or felt at the time (Quoted in Killam, 1980: 51).

In the same work some horrific happenings are witnessed such as the mutilation of Njoroge's father, Ngotho, before his eyes. Ngugi viewed his uncle being emasculated:

One did get the impressions. You are so young. You see your uncles being killed. British soldiers come to collect your uncles. You see some of your friends being taken from their homes. These things stay with you. You see an old man you respected being emasculated as a condition of war. These things leave you with the impression though you take these things for granted and just go on (Quoted in Killam, 1980: 51).

Armah is also said to have reflected his real experiences in print. Armah has been a travelling person, which has a bearing on his writing. “The focal theme and ideological stance in his five novels have a close connection with his personal experiences in America, Algeria, Ghana and Tanzania” (Lorentzon, 1998: 42). To these experiences we can add his stay in Lesotho, which appears to have left an impression on *Osiris Rising*. Armah began to teach at Lesotho’s National University in 1976. He realised that the literary courses at the English department had been “demonstrably biased in favour of English literature [...] In Africa the central concern of literature teachers ought to be African literature.” He suggested in several letters to the department not only a reformation of the literary courses, but also a complete restructuring of the entire department and its prospectuses. For him “an African’s vision of the world and of the Humanities, to be balanced and healthy, must start from an African point of view.” Considering “another letter from 23 October 1976, and the University Calendar of the 1977-79, Armah was successful in his African efforts. Next to creative writing, he himself came to teach oral, African, Oriental, and American & Caribbean literature” (Lorentzon, 1998: 16). Similarly, in *Osiris Rising*, Armah portrays the main characters endeavouring to reform the manner whereby African literature and other subjects were taught.

Moreover, Armah himself has admitted that *Fragments* is partly autobiographical. Also, the fact that Armah is too Francophone for an Anglophone African writer is apparent on reading his works. This is connected to his travels for he lived in France and Algiers. In Algeria he may have read the works of Frantz Fanon. Furthermore, Armah’s stays in America concurred with the upsurge of Civil Rights Movement. Several readings, mainly of *Why Are We So Blest?* have shed light on such an influence. In a similar way, the

fact that Armah wrote *Two Thousand Seasons* and the *Healers* while living in Nyerere's Tanzania, has spurred critics' curiosity as to the similarities between "Nyerere's African socialism and the thoughts of "the way" and healing in those two novels" (Lorentzon, 1998: 42). In his *Ayi Kwei Armah: The Radical Iconoclast Pitting Imaginary Worlds against the Actual* Ode Ogede summarises the influence of what Armah really experienced in life on his fiction:

This emphasis on fiction as mimesis of life, and on fidelity to actual experience is equally reflected in Armah's novels and short stories, which are fictional recreations of his experiences around the world. Thus, his first two novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968b) and fragments (1970), and the story "An African Fable" (1968a) mirror the space of corruption that engulfed his native Ghana in the years immediately after independence; "Contact" (1965) and *Why Are We So Blest?* (1974), attempt to convey the feel of Armah's American experience; *Two Thousand Season* (1979) and *The Healers* (1979), written when Armah lived in Tanzania from August 1970 to May 1976, demonstrate the influence of Nyerere's Ujamaa; and his latest novel, *Osiris Rising* (1995), mirrors his Senegalese experience. *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*, in sense, are particularly imitative of Mofolo's *Chaka*, whose imaginative indulgence of traditional heroism Armah's work somewhat advances (Ogede, 2000: 17).

We can see in this chapter how the writers in question, in their narration of the African experience, are divided between their gratitude to modernity and their distrust of its cultural relevance. This doubt as to the significance of Western culture concerning the attainment of a developed nation-state arises from the kaleidoscopic inter-connections the colonial situation has left in the psyche of independent Africans or what W.E.B Du Bois, Franklin Frazier, Malcolm X and the psychologist Kenneth Clarke would call "the damaged black psyche". The latter made Ali Mazrui argue in the 1979 BBC lecture series, "The African Condition," that despite the fact that blacks are not the "worst casualties of brutality" when compared to American Indians, they still "remain the worst victims of contempt." African people, Mazrui says, were "psychologically demeaned" by the experiences of slavery, colonialism and racism so much so that "Africans and people of African ancestry might be

regarded as the most humiliated in modern history” (Quoted in Jeremiah, 1998: 21).

As Ogede argues Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* provides a unique insight into the experience of slavery, which was “both the misfortune of a few and the destiny of the many”. Armah represents the “horrors, degradation and humiliation” of this experience. What most evokes the suffering undergone in this experience is the physical toll, whose worst form is witnessed in the scene of the fire-branding at Poano. Also the novel displays the pain of “being marched like animals through jungles, rocks, and rivers”. Besides, the mulattos, like John, are used to inflict members of his race with the “irrational violence of the white slavers” (Ogede, 2000: 109). John drives the red-hot rod on the captives’ bodies and “there was now raw, exposed flesh. The skin had come off in two pieces each as long as a middle finger and half as broad” (*Two Thousand Seasons*, 118).

The European fictitious treatment of African history, (including the link they established between black people and slavery) as discussed earlier would never have been so destructive had it not been for the pyramidal image of power the former colonizer had tried hard to create in the minds of Africans. This pyramid had at the acme all the positive appellations a nation could have: civilisation, possession of useful knowledge, development, mastery of industry and technology and advancement of lethal weapons. In the following statement Basil Davidson argues that the Europeans’ feeling of superiority was deepened by the industrial achievements:

Only the habits and attitudes induced in Europeans by the Atlantic slave trade and American slavery can explain the coexistence of this actual near-equality of effective technology with, at the same time, a deepening European conviction of “natural superiority,” such as became widespread after 1700. Late, of course, the immense achievements of the industrial revolution would provide an everyday demonstration of the superiority of European power. By 1900 the difference would be enormous and would be used as an easy justification for every dispossession of Africans, who, as the ideologists of a new European imperialism would brashly affirm, had “invented nothing” (Davidson, 2002: 59).

On the two sides of the pyramid there is Western culture, Christianity, English and a modern mode of life. At the bottom of the pyramid there is African culture, African tradition, local languages, traditional religions, and traditional modes of life. The connection goes as thus: the more Africans lose sight of their traditions and embrace meanwhile the colonizer's culture, religion and languages, the closer they come to a 'civilized and developed state' and vice versa, that is the further they alienate themselves from the axis of 'civilization', the more unhistorical and anti-civilizational they become. Yet, still this pyramidal relation would not have been efficient if it had not been for a strategy which combined the use of lethal weapons to inflict pain, death and horror, and the patronizing stance the colonizer had adopted at the same time to convince the Africans of the "burden" the white man had to civilize other nations. Of course these other nations as a result of this logic must be inferior at all levels to the colonizer, otherwise they should have been at the same stage of development.

Another fact that the white man has mentioned to proclaim that he is chosen to fulfil his civilizational mission was his skin colour. For him, being white is being chosen by God, it is being civilized, well-mannered and advanced at all levels compared to the African who had a black colour. The colour of the African was according to biblical narratives the result of a curse. This malediction was that blacks would always be beneath their white fellow humans in value. In other words, what the colonizer aimed at inculcating into the 'African mind' was that Africans were destined to be colonized, enslaved and to be underdeveloped, and that the only way out for them was to follow in the footsteps of their saviours, the colonizers.

According to Abiola Irele, the "African experience" is the common historical experience black Africans went through. The African experience discussed in his *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* has to do

with the link between the black African artist and the conditions which make his literary expression singular and thus must be treated differently from the art produced in the Western world. In order to be fair in approaching African literature, the literary critic should, according to Abiola Irele, be in tune with the intuition of the black writer. I do not totally subscribe to the expression “African experience” for the reason that it is overemphasized so much so that it makes black Africans seem as if they are one nation solely because of the fact of “blackness” and the myths created about them by some Western scholars and literary writers. However, the expression is useful for the current debate. The dubious look the African had vis-à-vis Western modernity stems *inter alia* from the manner whereby Africans were converted to Christianity which was, as mentioned earlier, full of condescension, especially on the part of the protestant church.

The approach to religion at this stage will be only in relation to what has already been tackled in the texts in question. These texts are Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, *Weep Not Child*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*; Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers*, *Kmt in the House of life* and *Osiris Rising*; Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*. The above mentioned writers portrayed in their works their imagined communities' religious experiences, because their nations, as argued by Benedict Anderson, were first and foremost religious communities which always undertook the task of answering the metaphysical questions regarding the destinies of their individuals, be that in terms of daily life anxieties, fears and expectations or in terms of after life concerns. Religion as discussed by Kohn in *The Idea of Nationalism* was the source of the nations' social and judicial systems. Durkheim went so far in his *The Division of Labour in Society* as to contend that “religion was the cause of social forms rather than the effect of them” (Durkheim, 1984: 130).

Adrian Hastings went further than this and argued that the “Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation.”

Hastings emphasizes that without this book, “and its Christian interpretation and implementation, [...] nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed.” The Bible referred emphatically to “nations and the world as a world of nations” (Hastings, 1998: 16).

Hastings illustrates his point by quoting different versions of the Bible: Isaiah, Matthew and King James

Isaiah’s ‘nation shall not lift up sword upon nation’ (Isaiah 2.4) or Matthew’s ‘nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom’ (Mt. 24.7) [...and in] King James Version two and half centuries later ‘of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation’ (Hastings, 1998: 16).

Moreover, Hastings adds that the Bible introduced in “Israel itself a developed model of what it means to be a nation- a unity of people, language, religion, territory and government” (Hastings, 1998: 18). In his article, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches”, Rogers Brubaker argues that nationalism has become like a religion since it mobilizes a “deep and compelling emotion” that is “essentially religious” (Brubaker, 2011: 2). Besides, nationalism is a religion both in a substantive sense, insofar as it involves a search for a kind of collective ‘salvation’, and in a functional sense, insofar as it entails a “system of beliefs and practices that distinguishes the sacred from the profane and unites its adherents in a single moral community of the faithful” (Brubaker, 2011: 3).

This is not to suggest, however, that the above mentioned writers approach religion in the same way. For while Ngugi quotes frequently the bible (yet abandoning the Christian faith himself), Armah assumes an atheist position in some of his literary texts; Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* incorporates the most obvious features of the clash between the traditional and the Christian faiths. My argument here stems from my reading of *Things Fall Apart* where the writer portrays the Ibo mind in a dialogic (to use Bakhtin’s term) contact with the Christian faith. Yet this very text, due to the writer’s apparent condescension, incorporates Achebe’s ambivalent and contradictory stance vis-à-vis his nation’s religious experience. In other words, Achebe criticizes the

social and judicial systems (stemmed from religion) which he seems to be defending. In the following passage from *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe seems to portray the protagonist in the process of questioning Christianity which he would later defend using heteroglossia in his text. Okonkwo asks abruptly the missionary through the interpreter about what seems to him a contradiction:

After the singing the interpreter spoke about the Son of God whose name was Jesu Kristi. Okonkwo, who only stayed in the hope that it might come to chasing the men out of the village or whipping them, now said: "You told us with your own mouth that there was only one god. Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then" The crowd agreed. "I did not say He had a wife," said the interpreter, somewhat lamely. "Your buttocks said he had a son", said the joker, "So he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks" The missionary ignored him and went on to talk about the Holy Trinity. At the end of it Okonkwo was fully convinced that the man was mad. He shrugged his shoulders and went away to tap his afternoon palm-wine. (103).

Okonkwo's objection could have arisen from two factors: the use of logic as well as the use of previous knowledge. The missionary described the Supreme Being he introduced to the Ibo as "the Creator of all the world and the men and women." (102). Being described as the one who created everything entails that he is unique, capable of everything and has nothing in common with human beings. But on mentioning that he has a son, the discourse is immediately characterised as being unreasonable. Moreover, Okonkwo reacts in such a manner due to his previous religious knowledge.

Moreover, Ngugi wa Thiong'o for his part represents this very ambiguous and Janus-faced view of the religious experience of his imagined community. To substantiate this, *A Grain of Wheat* makes a good example. The use of biblical references contributes to the ironic tone Ngugi sets throughout his novel and that begins with the epigraph which contains both a biblical reference and his own words i.e. the author's: sacrifice is important but it never worked for Kenyans or did it? It is worth quoting the epigraph for the purpose of illustrating the different dialogic voices Ngugi employed in his text:

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.

I Corinthians 15:36

Although set in contemporary Kenya, all the characters in this book are fictitious. Names like that of Jomo Kenyatta and Waiyaki are unavoidably mentioned as part of the history and institutions of our country. But the situation and the problems are real-sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all that they fought for being put on one side.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Leeds, November

1966

Obviously the first quotation is taken from the bible. Ngugi also makes sure that the reader knows the source of the extract. Yet put in the context of the novel, and if connected to the second epigraph, one would have a completely different interpretation compared to looking at it in solely biblical terms.

First, let us discuss the passage's original meaning; that is, in terms of what Jesus meant to get across to the Corinthians. The death of the body of the grain and its life again refer to the resurrection that people would go through after their actual death. In biblical terms, life in the hereafter is more important than life before death. For in the hereafter people who were good while in life would be rewarded with eternal and perfect life in heaven. The extract could have a literal meaning related to agriculture in the sense that the germ derives its first nourishment from the body of the decomposed grain in the earth. In any event, Ngugi's apparent purpose behind the epigraphs could be linked to the theme of sacrifice and betrayal which makes the object of *A Grain of Wheat*. The first meaning which can be given to the first epigraph in relation to this theme is that whoever gives his soul to the cause of the Kenyan nation would be rewarded with an eternal happy life, since he would make people to come survive happily.

On reading the novel, considering the predominantly ironic tone, we could come to the general remark that Ngugi has shown through the novel that Kihika's efforts and sacrifice along with the sacrifices and the fighting of those who survived have almost been to no avail. This result is foreshadowed in the second epigraph in that all that the peasants planted (the grains of wheat) have died without bringing forth an adequate outcome. This use of the bible comes as no surprise if we consider Ngugi's philosophical ideology. My argument here is that Ngugi's reading of the bible is Marxist. The latter is based on the belief that worldly things and material things are prior to the afterlife and spiritual things. For instance, the bible is meant to preach people about the recompenses in the hereafter and the importance of delayed gratification. But Ngugi seems to be suggesting that Kenyans want to see the rewards now and not in the afterlife. It is worth emphasising again that Ngugi abandoned Christianity.

Nonetheless, what cannot be missed is the confused and uncritical reading of the bible on the part of the novelist. Although he abandoned Christianity, Ngugi affirms in the paper he gave to the Assembly of Presbyterian Church of East Africa that because the Christian faith responds to human feelings of fear, hope, love and hatred, his writings would always narrate it:

I am a writer. Some have even called me a religious writer. I write about people: I am interested in their hidden lives; their fears and hopes, their loves and hates, and how the very tension in their hearts affects their daily contact with other men: how, in other words, the emotional stream of the man within interacts with the social reality. I believe that the Christian faith (or religious faith in general) is concerned with the inner lives of the people (Ngugi, 1972:31).

What is more, by drawing on some Christian images Ngugi seems to be trying to align the resistance and struggles of the African today to the Christ's figure. For instance, Abdullah entering the city on his donkey reminds us of the Christ figure entering Jerusalem. Besides, being a symbol of struggle and liberty, Christ, in his opinion, should not have been crucified. In his view, as shown by

Wariinga's dream in *Devil on the Cross*, it is the foe of struggle and liberty (like the African bourgeoisie today) that must be put on the cross:

Christ himself had always championed the cause of the Jewish masses against both the Pharisees (equivalent to our privileged bourgeoisie) and the Roman colonialists: he was in any case crucified on the orders of the Roman conquerors. One could say that if Christ had lived in Kenya in 1952, or in South Africa or Rhodesia, he would have been crucified as a Mau Mau terrorist, or a Communist (Ngugi, 1972:34).

Ngugi also believes in one version of the bible and not another. For the Christ figure for Ngugi is represented as a god: "Ask and it shall be given unto you; knock and it shall be opened; seek and ye shall find. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen." *Crowd: Amen (A Grain of Wheat)*, 214). This is to be found also in *Petals of Blood* when Munira asks his father and Rev Jerrod to repent to god or the Christ: "Kneel down, old man, and ask the forgiveness of Christ. In heaven, in the eyes of God, there are no poor, or rich, this or that tribe; all who have repented are equal in His eyes. You too, Reverend (*Petals of Blood*, 341).

According to *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* monotheism is "the belief in the existence of one God. It is distinguished from POLYTHEISM. ...Monotheism is characteristic of JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY and ISLAM, all of which view God as the creator of the world, who oversees and intervenes in human events, and as a beneficent and holy being, source of the highest good" (Safra, 1253: 2003).

Ngugi obviously believes in an interpretation of the bible that did not appear originally in the biblical text. By this I mean the trinity (Safra, 1894: 2003). The relevance of Achebe's treatment of religion and Ngugi's quotations from the bible and their interpretation of it to nation-statism is that the novelists are portraying honestly but ambivalently the extent to which modern African nation-states had been 'invented' at all levels.

For instance, Achebe, the father of African literature, portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* spirituality as a salient pillar of the Ibo nation both in pre-colonial and

colonial times. He describes at first how the Ibo's institutions such as the Egwugwu and the elders inspired awe because the Ibo community ignores and dares not try to know who they are in truth. The Egwugwu thus are treated like deities. A vivid example is in the court scene when Evil Forest (the judge), who apparently has a spiritual significance, asks Uzowulu, a character who complained about his wife to the court, if he knows him. The latter answers that he does not: "'Uzowulu's body, do you know me?'" asked the spirit. "How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge'" (*Things Fall Apart*, 64).

Also, we witness how the individual's good or bad *chi*, fate (or predestination), like Okonkwo's (and by extension the Ibo community's), is connected to the extent to which this individual pays due respect to his imagined community's beliefs. Also, Achebe portrays the steps the pre-colonial Ibo nation took before it was transformed into a modern nation-state after the Western manner. The first step that led to the Ibo's "tragic flaw" was the permission the Ibo made, out of ignorance, when they allowed the church to be built. The latter was portrayed as the first and most important institution of modern African 'invented' nation-states. For Achebe seems to be arguing that the print tradition, which Benedict Anderson believes to be one of the pillars of nation-state, was introduced to the Ibo via the church. For being converted to Christianity implied reading the bible and reading the latter entailed learning English. Certainly, the latter implied reading its literature and being able to appreciate it. Also, all this entailed building other institutions such as schools, hospitals and banks. Institutions had to be protected by an army. This is exactly what is witnessed in *Things Fall Apart*, since in the latter Achebe portrays how building a school followed building the church. Indeed, as discussed earlier, it was the missionaries who brought the British example of boarding schools in Africa and inculcated in the Africans' minds that even when they converted to Christianity, Africans remained always beneath their European 'masters'. To sum, as Terence Ranger argued earlier, the modern African nation-states, with all the modern institutions they incorporate and the administrative hierarchies they adopted, have been introduced by colonialism, but the most efficient transition from the nation

(tribe, religion and local languages) as the source of the state (legislation, sovereignty and administrative hierarchies) to the state as the source of nation, that is nation-state, was made through instruction or education. Above all, the church building in the novel could be interpreted as the two “anti-death processes”, which according to Régis Debray (as mentioned earlier), are the delimitation of the nation in time and space. The time here is the onset of colonialism and space “the encounter with the sacred, in the sense of the *Temple*” is the church in the Ibo land. Hence, Achebe seems to be tracing and narrating the birth of the modern nation-state of Nigeria out of Christianity and not out of the ‘heathens’ spirituality.

Furthermore, Achebe, Ngugi, Armah and other African writers seem to be in favour of the pillars of their pre-colonial nations such as traditional religions and institutions. However, they map that against the Western mode of nationalism and nationhood, by extension, the Western narration of religiosity. In fact, the novelists’ struggle through their portrayals to reconnect their modern nation-states to the spiritual sources (and the “untaken paths” in Davidson’s words) of their pre-colonial nations. Yet they are always caught, in their apparent attempts to straddle both models, in an interstitial third space or an ambivalent stance in Bhabha’s words.

Hence, if we return to *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator makes explicitly unfavourable remarks about the trinity when commenting on the beginning of Nwoye’s attraction to Christianity. For, as the narrator went, “it was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it.”(104) If we discern closely the narrator’s comment on how the missionary’s words on the new religion captivated Nwoye, we cannot miss the double voice which carries a dialogical view of the trinity. On the one hand, the narrator employed by Achebe describes the trinity as having a “mad logic”; meaning an irrational way of seeing things. This means that the narrator joins Okonkwo’s abrupt remark on the trinity that it was nonsensical in that Christianity, as introduced to the Ibo nation, was based on the belief that there is one God, but told shortly afterwards that He had a son. Nevertheless, the narrator adds the observation

“He did not understand it” which designates that Achebe does not mean a total disavowal of this “logic” since (the real problem) it has something challenging for Nwoye’s inadequate mind at this juncture. This could be confirmed by the narrator’s further remark that “Nwoye’s callow mind was greatly puzzled.”(104). Strangely enough, Achebe is contradicting the purpose which he set about to achieve for he does not seem, given the above comment on Nwoye’s mind, to be in the least supporting the African individual in his imagined community “to stand on his feet again”. This is so because instead of helping the African to regain his dignity, Achebe seems to be reiterating and reinforcing the stereotypes which were meant to dehumanize him. The remarks on Nwoye’s mind, by extension the African’s mind, coupled with his portrait of Okonkwo as being violent and arrogant (the impression left by reprimanding a man in public and being impatient with unsuccessful people) could not be taken as supporting the African people in his imagined community to “stand on their feet again.”

Indeed, further evidence of such ambivalent positions vis-à-vis the pillars of their nations and those of the modern nation-states can be found in the purpose African novelists set for their writings. For example, Joyce Cary’s *Mr Johnson*, which was the ignition that made Achebe write *Things Fall Apart* in the first place, depicts the Nigerian individual as being at odds with his immediate environment. Both Okonkwo and Nwoye are depicted to be uneasy within the social and cultural identities to which they belong. We should not lose sight of the fact that African novelists learnt in Western schools that the condition to make a good novel is to portray the individual at odds with his immediate surroundings. Indeed, Achebe, Ngugi, Armah and Awoonor do not seem to have missed this point. In his book of criticism *The African Imagination*, Abiola Irele argues that the narrative voice taken on by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* has to be attributed greatly “to his status as a Westernized African, the product of Christian education. This is a voice that speaks often,

perhaps even primarily, from the margins of the traditional culture.” (Irele, 2001: 118). The following passage is a clear evidence for this:

The night was very quiet. It was always quiet except on moonlight nights. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits... And so on this particular night as the crier's voice was gradually swallowed up in the distance, silence returned to the world, a vibrant silence made more intense by the universal trill of a million forest insects. (*Things Fall Apart*, 7)

The perspective from which Achebe views the Ibo society and its traditions, as the passage shows, is that of an outside observer, a standpoint that entails a “cultural distance from the background of life—of thought and manners— that provides the concrete reference of his fiction.” (Irele, 2001: 118). Another passage which illustrates this point is encountered in the novel: "Fortunately among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (*Things Fall Apart*, 6).

I find it salient to mention that Ngugi seems to downplay the biblical aspect of the story to reinforce the mythical features in that Kihika dies and nothing comes of it, yet the reconciliation of Mumbi and Gikonyo refers to the mythical birth of the ancestors of the Gikuyu nation. This point will be analysed further when features of hybridity, liminality and ambivalence are examined in the previously mentioned works.

With all this said, on reading novels written by Sub-Saharan African novelists, one can notice their common preoccupations with the problems of their respective societies without downplaying the argument that “Europe underdeveloped Africa”, to quote Walter Rodney. Writers do not accuse solely colonialism for the inadequacies Africa suffers from. They also take a critical look at the shortcomings responsible for the tensions in their social orders. One of the common concerns which many African novelists show as cause for the social hopelessness in Africa is, in Fanon’s words, “the death and the burial of their local cultures.” This is represented in various forms. However, it generally takes the shape of the problematic nature of the coexistence between tradition

and modernity. Another way some novelists put this forth is to show how culture is adulterated in their respective nation-states and exploited into justifying neo-colonialism. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the works which show this relation clearly. Achebe depicts a world order that, if it had not been for Western encroachments, would be working in accordance with the ambitions and satisfaction of the Ibo imagined community. The Ibo are described to have had their economic and judicial systems. Moreover, their children's upbringing operates in accordance with what the dictates of the social order require.

The modern mode of living is depicted to have brought the whole Ibo social construct into extinction. The epitome of this construct dies tragically because the traditions represented and observed have fallen apart, for the family, the basis of any social order, is being destroyed. Thus when the centre can no longer hold, Achebe says via W. B. Yeats, the entire system crumbles down. We shall see later that this family is replaced by new social elements that are congruent with the political philosophy of nation-state that is the functionaries who share the common language of the state.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Achebe tried to circumscribe the setbacks existing within the Ibo natio which led to its collapse. However, what Achebe and other writers seem to have missed is to clarify what tradition or rather culture means in the logic of nation building and nation downfall. We cannot help observing that the writers in question consider the revitalization and utilization of their respective cultures as the remedy for the contemporary social, economic and political challenges. Also, we get the impression that by merely finding a way of combining tradition and modernity, African imagined communities will live up to the expectations of both the élites and their people. The writers' self-appointed task is then to imagine an Afrotopia acceptable for all, the sort of Arcadia wherein all needs are satisfied. The question that does not seem to have been dealt with by the writers in question is, regardless of whether Africa had a history or not, to what extent are Africans ready to address their social malaise with the same rigour and devotion writers endeavoured to

show in their literary works? In other words, what are the spiritual, economic and political pillars Africans want for their nations? How indeed would they imagine African modern states on the international map as truly sovereign and independent? As a matter of fact, although the novelists seem to straddle the world of tradition and that of modernity, the latter is not totally embraced, for they are reluctant to portray their imagined communities in the process of asserting themselves at the economic, ecological and political terms, as would Anthony Appiah argue. If we take an example from Western literature, Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, published in 1888 and Wells's *The Time Machine* are both dreams set for their nations to reach the last phase of technological development where we could find underground networks of pneumatic tubes, plants and vegetables free from harmful diseases by the use of insecticides and so on. By the time Bellamy's *Looking Backward* was published (1888), "much of the wishful imaginings of Campallena and Bacon had already become realities with dramatic advances in hygiene, medicine, long-range transport and communications, and even some sort of flying in the air"(Ferns,1999:68-9). It is this inability to imagine Africa in the future that made a Nigerian scholar state that

The Negritude movement has run its course and, while it lasted, it had solved the problem of rehabilitating our essential humanity. I envisage that if our creative writers henceforth face the future through imaginative projection of our problems that are equally imaginatively solved, we shall have taken the first steps in solving Africa's development problems. Until our writers begin to depict Africa as a land of promise and project her as a continent with great future, there will always be a worm that squirms at the core of her development plans (Quoted in Ogede, 2000: 128).

The inability of the African novelists to imagine their nation-states in the future brings to mind Edward Said's remark on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (mentioned in chapter one). Said considers Conrad's inability to portray Africans in the process of liberating themselves as pertaining and maintaining the interests of the English nation. Given the fact that modern African nation-states are argued by many scholars to be an invention of the West, they could be

considered as pertaining only to the purpose for which they were created in the first place so that, as Mazrui argues, “the net beneficiaries of Africa’s resources lie outside the African continent” (Mazrui, 2004: 02). From factual remarks about the contemporary African backwardness, one could conclude that they are still maintaining this purpose. For these imagined communities do not pertain to the good will, the post-Kantians said is embedded in the state’s laws. They are not “maximizing the pleasures and minimizing the pains” of the people who make them up. Besides, colonials were portrayed in some African works such as *A Grain of Wheat* as being certain that African nations would not make headway without them. Mr Thompson in this novel makes this declaration clear before he leaves Kenya.

The argument so far has been presented to dispel the alleged colonial link between the Christian mode of life on the one hand and civilizational achievements on the other. For, if the above mentioned concepts are dependable, firmly and closely linked, then there would be a great wonder how the Western world with such paradoxical and illogical readings of the bible could achieve such an astonishingly developed world.

The Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah has portrayed what seems his extreme dislike to all that is Western. Still, his criticism of what he calls Western education seems to be suggesting that the complex scientific innovations and links between maths, physics and astronomy, for instance, would take different forms in accordance with the cultural, racial and geographical space wherein they take place. Armah deems education (in the Western manner) as a tool used to deepen the modern enslavement of Africans at large. This is what Modin concludes *a propos* what he considers as Western education in *Why Are We So Blest?*:

Factors then, scholarship holders, B.As, M.A.s, Ph.Ds now, the privileged servants of white empire, factors then, factors now. The physical walls stand unused now. The curious can go and look at them, as if slavery belonged to a past history. The destruction has reached higher, that is all. The factor’s pay is now given in advance, and sold men are not mentioned, not seen in any mind (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 161).

In the same work, Modin then considers Africans educated in the Western way as mere factors whose role in the colonial time was to facilitate selling people belonging to the same imagined community to westerners. The system created by the West, Modin comes to understand, was an inescapable entrapment which makes those who crossed over to the “sacred” arena harm insidiously the Ghanaian nation. For

in this system the factor is a link that must be hidden. An irreplaceable link whose functioning depends on his being embedded in his people, destroying them—a solvent—yet protected from reprisals because his functioning is secret. Thick walls, the elaborate rituals of our education. This is all a system for hiding our factorship from the victims we make, our own people. There is no justification in this kind of system (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 223).

Armah’s novels pertain in many ways to the modern African situation in that they deal with the backwardness, illiteracy and (neo) colonial ‘curses’ on Africa, yet what seems to be questionable is Armah’s Manichaeism in that he draws the line between two worlds in most of his novels: the African world, which is essentially good, and the Western world, which is fundamentally evil. For example, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah describes Africans as being unreligious people, following a more humanitarian ideology which he calls the “way”, and which teaches reciprocity, wholeness, justice, and productivity. The “way”, the narrator declares, “is reciprocity. The way is wholeness. Our way knows no oppression. The way destroys oppression. Our way is hospitable to guests. The way repels destroyers. Our way produces before it consumes. Our way creates. The way destroys only destruction (*Two Thousand Seasons*, 39).

Furthermore, Armah connects symbolically natural phenomena to moral characteristics. For instance, the river which was used to reach freedom gives way to the ‘dark’ unfamiliar sea standing for the West. Also, he connects the desert and its destructive and sterile attributes to the Arabs. Except for the lamenting purpose, *Two Thousand Seasons* falls in the trap of what Edward

Said called in his *Culture and Imperialism* the “the fundamentally static view of identity.”

Finally, these reactionary stances and sentimental descriptions of the ‘black experience’ could very well be derived from African philosophies and movements such as Negritude, the African Personality and PanAfricanism. This could be considered as a distortion of the ‘African experience’, for the latter denotes the daily life interactions of the individual with the cultural, spiritual and physical world in the African imagined communities rather than inexistent states of minds or nations (the black nation).

Concluding Remarks:

The African novelists discussed in this chapter attribute the predicament of their imagined communities both to the deficiencies in their pre-colonial nations and to colonialism. Achebe (Ngugi and Armah to some extent), for instance, represents ambivalently the radical change which occurred in the Ibo pre-colonial imagined community and attributes that to superstition, treachery, ‘cannibalism’ and the inhuman treatment of the elderly to the youth, and of men to women. External factors for Achebe, for instance, have to do mainly with religion and the church whose construction marked the total change from African nations to Western constructs of so-called African nation-states. Meanwhile, the African novelists showed that the African experience was both a singular and a normal human one, given the experience of slavery. Yet these representations carry dialogical voices which hide the authoritative voice of the author. The mainstream European interpretation of religion, for instance, is maintained but tarnished with a sympathizing tone of the novelists towards their communities and a seeming dubious look at the Western world view. Also, being influenced by the philosophical movements such as Negritude, the African novelists’ representations have tried to show how particular the African experience is; however, what they seem to have missed is that they fell in the

trap of race as being a classificatory criterion of mental and psychological human traits. Senghor makes of black Africans distinct human beings that need to be read, interpreted and appreciated only through the psychological effects of racism. In other words, if it had not been for Western racism, by extension colonialism, against the blacks there would not be an African personality, negritude, literary expression or spirituality. By conceding that “emotion is Negro and reason is Greek”, Senghor seems to be suggesting that he agreed to the Western racist stereotypical depictions of blacks. What Senghor appears to be saying is “yes blacks are less rational; they have juvenile minds, but they have other traits that are positive.” He seems to be justifying the blacks’ humanity. Also, the African novelists could not imagine their nations in the future. In other words, their works have not depicted the African imagined communities in the process of establishing a future that is congruent with the African personality and modernity which they seem to be in favour of. This means that the novels discussed in this research mostly reflect an ‘African experience’ in which the African imagined communities are obsessed with self-pitying and justificatory and ambivalent ideologies.

Chapter Three:

Ambivalent Narration of the Nation

Liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white [...] the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994

In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as 'containing' thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production.

Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 2000

The novels examined in this chapter and other parts of this research, embody what Edward Said (though differently), drawing on music, referred to as “contrapuntal reading”¹, what Mikhail Bakhtin called heteroglossia and its connection to chronotope, and what Homi Bhabha called hybridity, liminality and ambivalence.

For Bakhtin, the role of the novel is to open the authoritative into question and interpretation. Actually, the novel, like modern poetry, tries to familiarize and de-familiarize the reader with his immediate society including culture, religion and so on. In the context of African literature, it deprives the official discourse inherited from the past of its authority. Hence, the official discourse is to deal with Negritudist and Afrocentric ways of interpreting history, culture and art. It also incorporates living in the past, the apocalyptic view of the future of Africa and the dictates of the ‘outdated’ monopoly of age and gender.

Yet, heteroglossia in the text causes a dialogical relation *a propos* other social and political entities such as the government, different tribes, age group, the predominant hegemony, powerful countries, different social stratifications, social classes and the different interests which exist amongst them, the dominant class and what it does to cling to power, the inherited myths from the past and how they can also be reiterated in the novel in the interest of one tribe at the expense of others and the will to unite those tribes and yet to disunite them to maintain the interests of one’s tribe and individuals’ interests as well. Therefore, the novel, like the nation, incorporates into it many homogenous and yet contradictory features, especially when we consider the fact that both the novel as an artistic form and the nation-state as a political philosophy are strange to Africans in the sense that they are the result of colonialism as an intruding phenomenon. Also, there is the want of negating the modern nation in

¹ Still what Edward Said meant was the different voices existent in the literary text rather than the dialogical relation between them. Also, Edward Said called for a literary criticism that takes into consideration all these voices (Said, 1993: 18). It is the dialogic relation (or clash) between the heteroglossic voices or cultures that create hybridity, liminality and ambivalence.

favour of an absolute past. The discourse inside the novel condemns the intellectual, and the illiterate, the governed and the governor; it criticizes both the ordinary people and the national bourgeoisie. Out of this reality there is a strong want of a new reality that is truer in the sense that it is more representative of what Africa should be now at all levels: the ethical, the political, the economic and the cultural. An example of the heteroglossic voices of imagining the nation in the novel can be found in Ngugi's *The River Between*. As argued by Patrick Williams, there is an opposition, for instance, between "on the one hand Kabonyi's nativist or traditionalist model predicated on strict adherence to tribal custom and the maintenance of cultural purity, and on the other Waiyaki's belief in the combinatory potential of cultures." But these contradictions are sometimes to be found in the same character. For example, although Chege is a traditionalist, he sends his son to the British school; Joshua is "allied to modernity in the shape of Christianity and colonialism, but is the most reactionary of patriarchs"; Nyambura and her sister Muthoni aspire to a "blend of benefits" of the Western and Gikuyu spirituality; Kabonyi craves for cultural purity, but his "conversion to Christianity", as Patrick Williams argues, "makes him one of the most contaminated members of the community" (Williams, 1999: 30-32).

Despite being somehow 'hasty', the new meanings some modes of analysis bring about regarding the nation, Homi Bhabha argues, are valuable:

there is a tendency to read the Nation rather restrictively; either, as the ideological apparatus of state power, somewhat redefined by a hasty, functionalist reading of Foucault or Bakhtin; or, in a more Utopian inversion, as the incipient or emergent expression of the 'national-popular' sentiment preserved in a radical memory. These approaches are valuable in drawing our attention to those easily obscured, but highly significant recesses of the national culture from which alternative constituencies of peoples and oppositional analytic capacities may emerge — youth, the everyday, nostalgia, new 'ethnicities', new social movements, 'the politics of difference'. They assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change (Bhabha, 2000: 03).

These modes of reading the nation, according to Homi Bhabha, carry ideologies that are Janus-faced in their discursive manners. However, “the Janus face of ideology is taken at face value and its meaning fixed, in the last instance, on one side of the divide between ideology and ‘material conditions’” (Bhabha, 2000: 03). The narration of a political construct such as nation-state characterised as two-faced or Janus-faced in the African context, is shown in the African novel to exact a kaleidoscopic link between prerequisite elements of both the nation and the individual. Therefore, the mode of analysis employed to get hold of the real implications of narrating a post-colonial African nation should be multidimensional:

Without such an understanding of the performativity of language in the narratives of the nation, it would be difficult to understand why Edward Said prescribes a kind of ‘analytic pluralism’ as the *form* of critical attention appropriate to the cultural effects of the nation. For the nation, as a form of cultural *elaboration* (in the Gramscian sense), is an agency of *ambivalent* narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for ‘subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding’. ...We should develop, in a nice collaborative tension, a range of readings that engaged the insights of poststructuralist theories of narrative knowledge— textuality, discourse, enunciation, *écriture*, ‘the unconscious as a language’ to name only a few strategies — in order to evoke this ambivalent margin of the nation-space... In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as ‘containing’ thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production (Bhabha, 2000: 04).

In the same sense Ogude argues that the African narration of the ‘nation’s formation’ is in a dialogical relation not only with the former coloniser’s world of ideas, including the latter’s “discursive instruments the writers had appropriated to subvert the colonial project”, but also in “dialogue with other adjacent zones of knowledge such as history, anthropology, political science, religion, etc., within the academy” (Ogude, 1999: 01).

For this reason, the texts in question need to be read via various modes of analysis. The novels analysed will be looked at as incorporating dialogic and contradictory elements of the nation, which are meant to negotiate the

“incomplete signification” of the political and cultural authority. Thus while narrating the nation, the novelists in question utilize unconscious apparatuses to determine the nation’s fixed (politically) yet blurred boundaries of the nation. These boundaries, incompletely defined, are not only political, but also cultural, narrative, religious, individual, ideological and communal which show themselves in the process of being made. The liminal space resulting from the clash of two cultures (or more) created by the colonial situation tends to deny authority to “cultural polarities” situated at the extremes of the two colliding cultures:

Liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white [...] the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994: 04).

Still, the liminal space resultant from the African writer’s straddle between two cultures (his culture and that of the former colonizer), creates in the text an attempt both at blurring the boundary between tradition and modernity and at polarizing and differentiating them. In this regard James Ogude in his *Ngugi’s Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation* argues that Ngugi’s “nationalist orientation, like that of others, was shot through with contradictions. On the most obvious level elements of his Christianity and liberal individualism cut across his sentiments on nationalism and the writer’s role within it”(Ogude, 1999: 6).

This contradictory attitude could be detected in several novels written by African intellectuals such as Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother*, Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Fragments* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The depiction of African characters that are caught in-between the modern mode of life and the pre-colonial values created in the very characters’ minds, and by extension deeds, a “double dedication” or hybrid manner of looking at things. In

other words, the result of this interstitial passage is a third space whereby the African novelist, by dint of the use of English, the very literary form used to subjugate the African and the 'English book' tries to put an end to the authorial cultural voice implied by these elements. The above writings are again being recognized as a unique early example of a hybridized interface between Africa's pre-colonial oral folklore and literary modes of discourse (Wittaker, 2001: 02).

Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* (1971) subtitled *An Allegorical Tale of Africa* could be classified under the term African magical realism or African animist realism. This is so because it contains elements of the African religious thought blended with realistic components of life. The story is about a young lawyer Amamu in contemporary Ghana. He is an alienated African wherever he goes. His education started with colonial mission schools and ended with British university and law school training. He is set apart from the majority of his countrymen, which could not make him an integral part in his culture. According to William Alexander Walker, "Awoonor carefully uses the poetic passages to reveal that Amamu's separation from both Western and African culture is psychological and spiritual and not merely racial or nationalistic" (Walker, 1975:133). As suggested by the subtitle of the novel *An Allegorical Tale of Africa*, Awoonor meant the events and characters in the story as symbols to teach a lesson. Achebe says in the preface to the 1972 edition of the novel that:

An allegory is as good a name as one can call this rather unusual and highly personal form. It is in fact a medley of forms—intense and tight sequence of poetic prose alternating with more open stretches of realistic narrative and now and again broken by shots of running commentary, all moving sometimes forward in time, sometimes backward or in circles and yet other times completely flung outside our accustomed historical time scale (Quoted in Walker, 1975: 134).

In the same respect, Fredric Jameson argues that "[the] third world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national

allegory” (Jameson, 1986: 69). This allegorization of the nation incorporates the depiction of objects, people and the nation itself in the form of images and symbols. Allegory, according to J.A.Cuddon’s *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*, derives from the Greek term *allegoria*, ‘speaking otherwise.’ It is a story told in verse or prose with a double meaning (20). But for postcolonial theorists and writers, as James Ogude argues, it is being used differently or oppositely to what it used to mean. Postcolonial writers and theorists say that they have reappropriated allegory ‘as a strategy against the reconstruction of the colonised by the coloniser.’ It is so because allegory was historically a way of speaking for people other than Europeans-it was ‘a way of subjugating the colonised through the politics of representation.’ It is because of the challenge posed by these theories that allegory has metamorphosed into a field upon which ‘postcolonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of a literary, and specifically anti-imperialist figurative opposition or textual counter-discourse.’ Thus allegory provides these writers with a means of making these inherited notions exposed to the ‘transformative power of imagination.’ By doing this, allegory would help in the production of “new ways of seeing history new ways of reading the world” (Ogude, 1999:44-5).

Awoonor represents his nation’s past and contemporary reality with two strikingly opposed images: the Ghanaian field filled with butterflies and sunflowers, and the dunghill:

Bright bright days in the fields outside picking flowers catching rainbow-colored butterflies in a wild garden. Chasing after the tangible ghosts in the fields I caught one. It was perched on a yellow sunflower wide as the moon. All colors of all hues. Serene, I caught it. He has caught it the screamed. That was my first catch. And the hunter is born in the butterfly field in the wide field of sunflowers (*This Earth, My Brother*, 20).

As for the dunghill image:

The city itself grew with a vengeance. Nima grew alongside it like an ever growing and eternal dunghill...Near the septic latrines are huge dunghills which in the language of the Accra City Council are called refuse dumps...Here vultures mingle with the customers and sellers,

snatching offal from butchers' stalls and dashing off to the "refuse dumps" or to the roofs of the public latrines to devour their stolen goods with sad silent faces. This street, if we call it a street, occupies the highest line in Nima...It ends as if by design on the final dunghill... (*This Earth, My Brother*, 193-194).

The last image of the dunghills accompanies the realistic commentaries on the colonial and neo-colonial injustices. This imagery of filth refers at one point in the novel to the disillusionment with national leaders and the adulteration of his imagined community's history to be replaced by Europe's history of wallowing in materialism:

A nation is building. Fart-filled respectable people toiling in moth-eaten files to continue where the colonialists and imperialists left off. Follow my laws, my children, follow my laws for I am the one who brought you from the dust of degradation.

And he cast us back into degradation...With the cry of Long Live the Party, the party is supreme, he cast us into degradation.

Woman, behold the son; son, behold thy mother. This revolting malevolence is thy mother. She begat thee from her womb after a pregnancy of a hundred and thirteen years. She begat thee... and you woke up after the eight day screaming on a dunghill.

You crawl through the dunghill of Nima unto the blue Hills of smoke to catch the infinite immeasurable bliss to say to the dancers on the hills of spice, lift up your cloths for the nation is yours, the land has come back. The yoke has been smashed by the nights of valor, the corridors are cleared for new feet to walk through (*This Earth, My Brother*, 36-37).

This passage is built on irony. The "new feet" have only replaced the old feet of the colonials and the imperialists. The expression the "nation is building" is also ironic in the sense that the new leaders are actually not making significant efforts of innovating laws appropriate to Ghanaian traditions and structure of thought. On the contrary, they are only following in the footsteps of the old colonials. This is done through "toiling in moth-eaten files." In another passage in the novel Awoonor refers directly to Nkrumah as having only continued what the coloniser laid the grounds for:

Nkrumah, from all accounts, just continued the work of the British colonialists. Government by force of arms-vis et armis- government by chicanery, tricks, new tricks will be worked out with devastating logic for a one-party state in which colonial activists will attend a meeting where

they will collect a guinea per head to build a writers' and artists' home at the beach between the lagoon and the sea in the picturesque village of Botianor. Lectures will have to be organized to explain the African personality, the role of the press, and the importance of creating a new identity, after centuries of colonial rule, slavery and rape (*This Earth, My Brother*, 92).

Besides its depiction of the totalitarian regime Nkrumah set up in Ghana, the passage shows how some Ghanaian intellectuals joined the regime in using an Afrocentric discourse to convince the people that the battle being fought is theirs. After this passage, we encounter a description of the overthrowing of Nkrumah's regime. The new regime is depicted as emulating the old regime using the same slogans such as "Long Live Ghana". The new government starts to clear the pavement from the beggars to receive "overseas dignitaries coming to see the new first black nation being born". But when the dignitaries left the beggars "were brought back and released upon the pavements" (*This Earth, My Brother*, 93).

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born contains the same ironic tone about the old leaders being only replaced by the new ones:

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. They were lawyers before, something grown greasy on the troubles of people who worked the land, but now they were out to be our saviours. Their brothers and their friends were merchants eating what was left in the teeth of the white men with their companies. They too came to speak to us of salvation. Our masters were the white men and we were coming to know this, and the knowledge was filling us with fear first and then with anger. And they who would be our leaders, they also had their white men for their masters, and they also feared their masters, but after the fear what was at the bottom of their beings was not the hate and the anger we knew in our despair. What they felt was love. What they felt for their white masters and our white masters was gratitude and faith. And they had come to us at last, to lead us and guide us and to guide us to promised tomorrows (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 81).

It is contended both in *This Earth, My Brother* and in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* that Ghanaian national leaders only replaced the European

colonials. Nonetheless, Armah emphasizes in the above passage the psychological substructures of their treachery. Many critics agree that Armah was greatly influenced by Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The latter argues that the African bourgeoisie, unlike their Western counterparts, were not justified historically in the sense that they did not take part in any innovative movement. This is so because in Africa the energetic, initiating aspects, the quality of the discoverer and of the inventor of "new worlds" detected in all national bourgeoisies are deplorably lacking. In the colonial nations, the character of extravagance is prevailing at the heart of the bourgeoisie; and this is because the local "bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons". The prior, Fanon emphasizes, follows the latter "along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention, stages which are an acquisition of that Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances. In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end" (Fanon, 1961: 153).

Armah's allegorization of his nation is based on Fanon's analogy between the African bourgeoisie and the Western bourgeoisie. For example, the striking image of the premature decadence (mentioned above) in a picture Teacher saw when he was at school. This picture was in a book of 'freaks and oddities'. It showed a seven year-old child who has already grown old with grey hair. He was 'born with all the features of a human baby, but within seven years it had completed the cycle from babyhood to infancy to youth, to maturity and old age, and in its seventh year it had died a natural death (Fanon, 1969: 63). What can be withdrawn also from the image and Fanon's thought is that not only did African intellectuals get perverted by focusing on their personal interests at the expense of their nations, but they also did, as Basil Davidson would put it, help in connecting the history of Africa to Europe for good when they did not reconnect their nations with their pre-colonial political models, nor imagine

new continuities with their traditions. For the image of the elderly child could stand for a newly independent nation which shrinks shortly after independence into a weak nation heading towards backwardness instead of being put back on the track of its natural growth.

The images of dirt and decay in *This Earth, My Brother* are similar to those of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Such images are: the child with mucus overflowing from his nose and his mother sucking it; a woman with a disfigured body by "creases of prematurely tired skin"; "streets are littered with rubbish that overflows from dustbins onto pavements, banisters on building stairs are coated with vast accumulations of dirt, and lavatory walls are streaked with organic brown matter "about the level of the adult anus." Everybody is described as sweating, coughing and spitting. "All around decaying things push inward and mix all the body's juices with the taste of rot"(Wright, 1992: 102).

These images of dirt are not "the aesthetic discomfort of a foreign tourist" as thought by some critics such as Aidoo, Awoonor, Achebe and Obumsele. Rather they are "the anger of a nationalist at his country's degeneration" as Ode Ogede argued in his *Ayi Kwei Armah: The Radical Iconoclast* (Ogede, 2000: 33).

Also, many critics agree that the novel is about the Ghanaians' disillusionment with the postcolonial leaders, namely Nkrumah's regime and the coup d'état in 1966. For the African people soon realised, with the insistent symptoms of injustice, that the ideals of nationalism raised by African leadership notably Nkrumah are, as Armah sees it in his essay "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?", mere "sloganeering gimmick" which were forgotten shortly after attaining power (Quoted in Booker,1998:108).

The images of dirt in the novel, like in *This Earth, my Brother*, are brought in stark contrast with the 'gleam'. The two images in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are inter-related in that the commodity culture seen by Ghanaians as the 'gleam', something shiny and attractive, is itself transformed into the litter strewn on the streets after being consumed. Images of dirt also

stand for corruption which is represented in the novel as being unavoidable just like the organic functions and the decay of the body. An example of this is the lottery winner who tells the train station officer that he will bribe some officer at the lottery place to get his money:

“What will you do?” the man asked.

“I hope some official at the lottery place will take some of my hundred cedis as a bribe and allow me to have the rest.”

The messenger’s smile was dead.

“You will be corrupting a public officer.” The man smiled.

“This is Ghana,” the messenger said, turning to go (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 22).

Another instance of corruption is Koomson’s agreement with Oyo, the Man’s wife, to consider legally the fishing boat as Oyo’s propriety. Also, the timber man tries to bribe the Man, the booking clerk, in the absence of the latter’s colleague, the space allocation clerk. The timber man tells The Man: “if you work in the same office, you can eat from the same bowl” (34).

Moreover, Amamu in *This Earth, my Brother* could be compared to the Man and Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Amamu, like the Man and Teacher, is described as being absolutely alienated from the rest of Ghanaian people. Even in the midst of his drinking companions, he finds himself forced to withdraw:

Conversation flowed on. Amamu was leafing through a book he was holding. He had suddenly withdrawn from the discussion. His friends and the other club members were aware of this habit of sudden withdrawal. And they said he was a queer man. He also had a habit of introducing such outlandish topics as philosophy and theosophy...He would go on and on. Suddenly he would realise that no one said anything, no one interrupted. So he would become silent, withdrawal was his immediate refuge (*This Earth, my Brother*, 33).

Amamu’s alienation is caused by his realisation that his job, as a lawyer, and the privileges which it confers, are totally inadequate in view of the injustices and corruption prevailing in post-colonial Ghana. Besides, in popular tradition,

the lawyer, as a corrupt and powerful member in the nation-state is thus sarcastically portrayed:

A lawyer is next to God. He is the one who gets you out of trouble; he is the one who puts you into trouble. If you steal a thing and you are caught, get a lawyer; he is clever. He will argue with “them” and you will go free. He is the one who can talk with the law. And the police respect him. He is the one who can say anything to the police. And they can’t touch him. Because he knows the law (*This Earth, my Brother*, 203).

Abiola Irele points out that “it is not the drama of the class war in Africa that Kofi Awoonor's novel presents” (Irele, 2001: 216). The representation of the black elite is portrayed merely as an arraignment of the new leaders in the modern Ghanaian nation:

On the Liberty Arch the words are inscribed, "Freedom and Justice." The darkness of the black star lies in its square where immense appropriations are made to increase the striking force of the army of a starving, naked and diseased nation to march and wear its boots newly received from England under certificates of urgency—judging the state of depletion of the national coffers—the one who left stole all the money, the bastard, the b.f.—new epaulets, new strings, new crowns for newly appointed generals and brigadiers, and uniforms for latrine carriers. Fear death by guns (*This Earth, my Brother*, 30).

The Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* feels utterly alienated for the same reason for he is made to sense that only he cares about morality while the rest of the people in his imagined community care only about possessing the ‘gleam’ whatever the means. For instance, when he refuses to take bribes his wife, Oyo, accuses him of being a *chichidodo*, a bird that “hates excrement with all its soul” but “only feeds on maggots”, which “grow best inside the lavatory”, that is he is indirectly corrupted as well (Armah, 1969: 45). The Man’s division between satisfying the ‘loved ones’ and keeping his integrity intact, makes him feel extreme loneliness. His loneliness is only lessened when he encounters Teacher who tries to give him some (nonconformist) philosophical insights as to what underlies his situation. Nonetheless, what differentiates The Man from Amamu is that the former could find some sleep through the night before

anxiety wakes him up. “Before the clock’s alarm could ring, the man’s hand reached out and smothered it. He had been half awake for some time, and the chill before awakening had yet to leave him. These days it was as if there were an inner system, alerting him with his own anxiety, making him wake even without the mechanical help of the clock” (118). Unlike *The Man*, Amamu has lost his complete ability to sleep:

He could not sleep. His sleep was sold forever for a love that was within and outside his grasp. For a dream that was unclear. It was at times like this that his headaches would come on. His head would become large, wanting to explode, bells would be ringing it, and he would want to scream. But he couldn’t. He would be floating over a river, flying over a long winding river, awake. The bells would ring louder and louder. And he would pick himself up and step outside into the morning air. He would walk round the milkbush circle about fifty times. He counted every turn (*This Earth, my Brother*, 104).

The inability to act, the paralysis and the failure to be proactive on the part of the protagonist are all present in *This Earth, My Brother* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Apart from refusing bribery, *The Man* acts only when he ridiculously rescues Koomson through the lavatory hole. This is so because the description of *The Man* throughout the novel, except for rejecting bribes, gives us the impression that he is powerless and cannot act. Yet *The Man*’s swimming in the sea and his success to reach the shore could denote symbolically his purification. Amamu, on the other hand, acts only to begin a journey to his final doom. Yet, the narrative describes his death as being a victory, a reunification with the self and the past of his imagined community represented as a field of flowers:

He had arrived home at last. The Atlantic breakers boomed across the memory of years; seagulls careered upwards and downwards above the surf, and crashed into the sand like the madman at the rise of a new moon. The tumult was the signal for the calm that was promised, it was the legend of a final peace.

Then slowly he saw her, the woman of the sea, his cousin love of those years long long ago rising from the sea. She rose slowly, head first, adorned with sapphires, corals and all ancient beads her mother left for her pubertal rites. She rose slowly from a dream sea. The sea was real;

the sun was beating down hard and cruel. It was like a scene in that waking dream of river. It seemed suddenly that centuries and years of pain of which he was the inheritor, and woes for which he was singled out to be carrier and the sacrifice, were being rolled away, were being faded in that emergence. Her at last, he realised with certain boyish joy, was the hour of his salvation. It was coming at last. She rose up upon the waves... On her face a little smile; the sun gave out a radiance that recalled the bright sunshine of the butterfly fields and the hunt of childhood and her first epiphany. There an eerie silence clung to the earth and the sea, over the memorial funeral procession. In the company of one lonely gorgeous star she rose. She walked on the sand, her arms outstretched; she strode towards him, a smile on her face....From his island of solitude and joy, utter indescribable joy, he moved toward her. She was there standing in front of him. He sunk upon his knees. She enveloped him in her warm embrace. Her smell was cinnamon and wild flowers, ancient smells of treasure well kept for the children of the future (*This Earth, my Brother*, 226-27).

Emile Snyder in his review of *This Earth, My Brother* argues that Awoonor, in his dual approach to Amamu's death, is drawing on the Ewe's ritual of cleansing:

At the end, Amamu's frantic race to the seashore is an attempt to recover a unity with his soul. The sea woman who lures him, her lover, to her cavern, is Africa, but Africa is also the conflicting landscape of a butterfly field and the dunghill. Amamu's death must not be viewed in pessimistic terms. The final abandonment into the sea, a ritual of cleansing to the Ewe people, is articulated through a truly poetic language (Quoted in Walker, 1975: 142-3).

The woman of the sea in the Ewe tradition is also considered a goddess who "came out of the sea and taught people about herbs, cures and other secrets" (Walker, 1975: 143). Awoonor sheds light on the myth in an interview published in 1972:

...The mermaid, the woman of the sea. Extended imagery may be, but she is real in West African folklore. In my hometown right now there are stories of men who this woman has taken into the sea with her. They fall in love and follow her. And sometimes, after seven years, they come back with a knowledge of life, a complete awareness. They then exist beyond the purely bodily level. And in the mermaid I was trying to incorporate the imagery of the myth into another symbol of Africa. Somewhere she does exist as the repository of wisdom. She knows the

answers. She knows what I must do, what Amamu must do, what we all must do. And I must go with her in order to acquire this knowledge and survive in the truncation of the soul that society imposes. Unless we follow this path to wisdom, the Dance of Death will continue, onward and onward (Quoted in Walker, 1975: 143).

It is worth mentioning that when Amamu encounters the mermaid, he could be regarded as having entered into a realm, a passage or a third space where he neither belongs to the living nor to the dead. In this respect, in his study based on Van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage*, Victor Turner emphasized the symbolic aspects of the rites of passage. He studied in detail the "symbolism attached to, and surrounding, the 'liminal persona'" in the performances of rites of passage in African cultures. For him the symbolic features of a liminal persona are twofold. They are "no longer classified and not yet classified" at the same time. In the first case, the symbols that signify them are, in many African nations, derived from the "biology of death, decomposition, catabolism, and other physical processes that have a negative tinge." The crucial characteristic of these symbolizations is that the "neophytes are neither living nor dead from one aspect, and both living and dead from another." The state of liminal characters such as Amamu is one of uncertainty and contradiction. Victor Turner argues that when liminality is discussed, it is not the structural contradictions that are dealt with, but it is the "essentially unstructured (which is at once destructured and prestructured) and often the people themselves see this in terms of bringing neophytes into close connection with deity or with superhuman power, with what is, in fact, often regarded as the unbounded, the infinite, the limitless" (Quoted in Whittaker, 2001: 14).

It seems that Armah refers to the same myth in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* in a different variation. This is in the sense that the climax in Armah's novel is when The Man reaches the sea. In the same way, in *This Earth, My Brother*, the turning point of events and the denouement is Amamu's encounter with the mermaid and his death. Yet, while Amamu's contact with the sea has brought him final 'peace' and is symbolically meant to stand for the reconciliation with the old Ghanaian nation in its flowery days, The Man's

contact with the sea has confirmed to him that even traditional philosophy, as it were, cannot redeem him.

The Man, like Amamu, meets a woman but on his swimming back to the shore. Armah apparently changed the plot of the myth for the sake of giving a definitely pessimistic approach to postcolonial reality in Ghana. Manaah is the name of the woman The Man meets when he wakes up from the sleep that, according to the myth, was supposed to cause him a radical positive change, at least if he had an added knowledge that would answer all lingering and nagging questions in his mind. Unlike Amamu who becomes mad before his final redemption, The Man wakes up to meet a mad woman who has no rational answer to provide him. After calling her by her name, Manaah “laughed at the name, with a recognition so remote that in the same cold moment The man was certain he had only deceived himself about it. Then she walked away toward the distant town, away from the sun with her shadow out in front of her coloring the sand, leaving the man wondering why but knowing already that he would find no answers, from her, from Teacher, or from anybody else” (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 212). This is followed by an irony in the sense that now that The Man despaired of finding any answer to his highly pitched metaphysical questions he has to worry about “his sandals, left at the bottom of the sea.” (212)

One striking difference between the two authors’ approaches to traditional belief system is that Awoonor represents, as mentioned above, the Ghanaian nation’s past with the image of butterflies in the field; whereas, he chose the dunghill to stand for modern African cities, a landscape totally filled with corruption and spiritual barrenness. Awoonor admits in an interview that his view of Africa’s past was erroneous and that he intends to make up for it in his subsequent novel, *Comes the Voyager at Last*:

People have clearly pointed out the two images of the dunghill and the field of butterflies, which you may say have taken over my earlier duality. I saw the traditional society almost stupidly as a golden age, a beautiful and sinless kind of world. Kind of world. I no longer have that perception. I’m aware that corruption is an essential aspect of the human

condition, and I'm aware that suffering comes out of that condition (Moody, 1985: 34-5).

Armah apparently was aware of this for on *The Man's* realisation that there are no answers to his questions, he witnesses another scene of corruption. "The man had seen this gesture before, several times. Usually its maker would add the words, "even *Kola* nuts can say 'thanks'" (214). The expression "even *Kola* nuts can say thanks" is a metaphor. The latter, according to Derek Wright "has its humble origins in the giving of *kola* in traditional African society, either as a mark of hospitality to an important and influential guest or to someone from whom a favour was expected" (Wright, 1989: 82). This means that Armah is suggesting that corruption did not begin in post-colonial Ghana; it is rather connected to human greed and thus found also in traditional African imagined communities. Derek Wright argues further that Armah connects in his novel bribery, corruption and exploitation with people's natural needs like eating, digestion and excretion. This suggests the inevitability of corruption and immoral behaviour. The final passage of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* echoes in an ironical tone the analogy Oyo draws between *The Man* and the bird *chichidodo*. The man realises at last that on his coming home, he would go through the same routine and the same quality of life:

Over the school latrine at the bottom of the hill a bird with a song that was strangely happy dived low and settled on the roof. The man wondered what kind of bird it could be, and what its name was. But then suddenly all his mind was consumed with thoughts of everything he was going back to- Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o'clock, the office and every day, and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him. He walked very slowly, going home (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 215).

It was argued in chapter one that in the logic of imagined (religious) communities, death is seen as a continuation rather than a final end. This is in the sense that in people's search for answers to their despondency, they usually resort to religious and philosophical explanations. The latter would speak of another world, a transcendental world, a world where eternal happiness could

be gained by dint of being patient, repentant, and altruistic often with people in one's immediate environment. These attitudes, which remind one of the ephemerality of life, constitute some of the important practices in most religious nations. The journey to pilgrimage which has represented one of the pillars of *Umma* for Muslims is, for example, one of these "unifying rites". In this ritual Muslims identify with one another as belonging to one imagined nation regardless of where they come from or which language they speak. In fact, this ritual defined even symbolically and physically the boundaries of this nation. "The Berber encountering the Malay before the Kaaba must, as it were, ask himself: 'Why is this man doing what I am doing, uttering the same words that I am uttering even though we cannot talk to one another?' There is only one answer, once one has to learn it: 'because we ...are Muslims'" (Anderson, 2006: 54). African pre-colonial religious communities are no exception. As shown in *Things Fall Apart*, the Ibo hold the dead in reverence and performed rituals that defined and reinforced the Ibo precolonial nation.

Likewise, in relation to the Ewe natio, Awoonor states in his book of criticism *The Breast of the Earth* that "there is some comfort for the sufferer in life beyond the grave. The idea that we will exist in a spirit world at our death and thus escape the agonies of the flesh is a persistent one in the Ewe dirge" (Awoonor, 1975: 205). What I suggest here is that the journey whereupon Amamu dies is actually meant to stand for the Ewe spiritual healing of both the post-colonial pathological imaginings and smoothening the secular journeys in the quotidian of the contemporary Ghanaian functionaries.

The new rites performed in a secular nation after the Western Janus-faced political doctrine are no longer the ones perceived (in pre-colonial times) by the Ewe religious natio to guarantee an immortal (exultant) life for the individual and a healthy landscape or nation for the living and the as yet to be born. What guarantees the secular nation's continuity, as Benedict Anderson argues, is no longer religious rituals such as pilgrimage, sacred languages (which had a spirit

or *Sprachgeist*¹ in Johann Gottfried Herder's words) and the promises of eternity. Rather, the repetitive and daily frequenting at the work place by the "absolutist functionaries" has become the new pilgrimage and work colleagues are seen as fellow pilgrims. "The last thing the functionary wants", Anderson argues, "is to return home; for he *has* no home with any intrinsic value. And this: on his upward-spiralling road he encounters as eager fellow-pilgrims his functionary colleagues, from places and families he has secretly heard of and surely hopes never to have to see." However, in getting familiar to the fact that they are "travelling-companions", an awareness of "connectedness ('why are we...here...together?') is developed, particularly "when all share a single language-of-state. Then, if official A from province B administers province C, while official D from province C administers province B -a situation that absolutism begins to make likely- that experience of interchangeability requires its own explanation: the ideology of absolutism, which the new men themselves, as much as the sovereign, elaborate" (Anderson, 2006: 56).

Realising that by doing his job as a lawyer he is but deepening the rupture between his fellow people and the Ewe *natio*, Amamu decides to boycott the material prerogatives wrought to him by the administrative secular nation and reconnect to the "grandiose journeys of imagination"(Anderson, 2006: 55).

On the other hand, The Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is not meant to be a symbolic annihilation of the absolutist system of functionaries. Rather, he only hopes he can satisfy the needs of the 'loved ones' without having to resort to corruption. The Man does not question the new structure. The sketching of The Man along with the insights into the African

¹ As cited in *Literary Movements for Students*, 'The 'spirit' of the language, is not merely the medium through which speakers communicate but the sacred essence of a nationality. And Herder himself identified the highest point of the nation's language in its poetry,' in its literature. (Milne, 2009 : 611) "Sprachgeist" or "spirit of language" – a word that also alludes to the Hebrew concept of *ruah* ("divine breath"). David S. Ferris argues further "indeed, what else but this breath accorded humans and objects their "aura"" (Latin, "breath of air") (Ferris, 2006: 61).

leaders psyche, show that Armah's objection (at least at this juncture) is about the mediocrity and malfunctioning of this system, resulting from corruption and lack of innovation.

Furthermore, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* reflects this liminal space resultant from the hybridization that runs through the novel. For, although the novel gives an overall impression that it is narrated in a modern way, the discourse which runs throughout it is about the anxiety of the split of self that the post-colonial writer experiences. This division of the self is created by growing in terms of time and space at a time of the beginning of the clash of the African and Western cultures. The anxiety is "provoked by the hybridizing of language, activated in the anguish associated with vacillating boundaries – psychic, cultural[and] territorial" (85).

Being a black writer in English has many implications in relation to the African and colonial contexts. It is the language of the former coloniser that this writer adopts as a means of communication with people in his nation. This is contradictory if we consider the physical, psychological and cultural assault Africans underwent prior to (and during) colonization. It is the awareness on the part of the black African writer of this contradiction that creates a deeply felt anxiety in his works. The portrayal of two (or more) contradictory worlds, which at a surface level could be interpreted as wishing them apart, could be seen, on looking at them more deeply, as an anxious representation of two worlds in the process of melting into each other. Being influenced by Fanon, Ngugi makes use of the Manichean binary opposition between elements connected to colonialism and neo-colonialism on the one hand, and features of the colonized African on the other. The characters in *Petals of Blood*, for instance, are divided into two groups. A group apparently belonging to what Fanon would call petty-bourgeoisie: Nderi wa Riera, Chui, Kimeria and Reverend Jerrod Brown. The other group consists of characters coming from the grass-roots: Munira, Abdullah, Karega and Wanja. The first group represents the comprador class who care only for their personal aggrandizement. Nderi wa Riera, for instance, Ilmorog's M.P does not seem fit

to remain in contact with the town he represents as his town is far from the capital. In Nairobi, he avoids being ‘troubled’ by the demand of his constituency. As for Chui, he is described to have betrayed the slogans he seemed to have had as beliefs. Chui has become “a black replica of Fraudsham.”

It was his desire, nay his fervent prayer, that all teachers should stay, knowing that he had not come to wreck but to build on what was already there: there would be no hasty programme of Africanization (*Petals of Blood*, 171).

This combination of the high and low classes in one “national framework” corresponds to what Timothy Brennan describes in his “The National Longing for Form”. For him, the complex feature of the novel cannot be understood only racially or regionally. For the novel's rise came hand in hand with the changing notion of realism, which obtained its current association with the lower classes only after the Enlightenment when, as Auerbach describes, realism came to involve “the serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation” (Bhabha, 2000: 52).

When the socio-political, historical and psychological background against which and out of which *Petals of Blood* came into being are considered, hybridization results in an internal dialogue in the novel: a dialogue between English and Gikuyu, between orality and the print tradition, between the author’s authoritative voice and other heteroglossic voices of age, culture, education, class and gender. This creates an “anxiety provoked by the hybridizing of language, activated in the anguish associated with vacillating boundaries -psychic, cultural, territorial-” of which Ngugi’s text speaks (Bhabha, 1994: 85). The Western novelist who assumes he attributed no role or a subordinate role to the African character is mistaken according to some post-colonial critics. For the latter, the mere existence of the colonized Other within the textual structure suffices as evidence of the ambivalence of the colonial text,

an ambivalence that destabilizes its assumption for absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity.

Corollary to this view, although texts produced by black writers can be seen as 'writing back', African novelists cannot claim absolute authority and authenticity in their texts. This is so because works like *Petals of Blood*, for instance, incorporate not only national voices in the process of making meaning, but they also contain inevitably the voices of the former colonizer and his world view. The result of portraying national characters caught in a third space that they did not necessarily partake in creating is their being involved in attempting to make sense of it, while putting into question even what seems to be its pillars i.e. the spiritual and cultural ones. In so doing, the African novelist makes sure that the current state of affairs where national 'heroes' appear to be standing for the glorious past, is the very one in which the same Africans who, intelligently enough, do not jettison their new objective reality, nor do they try to deny other nations' cultural influence on them. For instance, the characters who belong to the proletariat in *Petals of Blood* search, each in his manner, to affirm to himself and to others his humanity with all its frailties and contradictions. Also, these characters are portrayed to be in the process of becoming fully-fledged Kenyan citizens who are conscious of what caused the current circumstances. These conditions are described to have humiliated these characters and rendered them incapable of planning their futures. Their challenge is to comprehend the cause and effect relationship between the objective reality and the world of ideas behind it. Karega, for instance, a trade union leader, who 'vaguely hoped for a vision of the future rooted in a critical awareness of the past' (*Petals of Blood*, 198), began to look for answers to the numbing questions that kept on coming to his mind. He made history his first interest:

It had seemed to him that history should provide the key to the present, that a study of history should help us answer certain questions: where are we now? How did we come to be where we are? How did it come about

that 75 per cent of those that produce food and wealth were poor and that a small group-part of the non-producing part of the population-were wealthy? (*Petals of Blood*, 198).

Then Karega expresses his disappointment with Kenyan professors of history who instead of answering such like questions ‘made him wander purposelessly from Egypt, or Ethiopia, or Sudan, only to be checked in his pastoral wanderings by the arrival of Europeans.’ After that, Karega concludes that ‘the learned ones never wanted to confront the meaning of colonialism and imperialism.’ Desperately, Karega tries political science in search of explanations or even mentioning of colonialism and imperialism, but in vain. All he encounters is abstract phrases such as ‘inequality of opportunities or the ethnic balancing act of modern governments’ (*Petals of Blood*, 199). Moreover, he does not find imaginative literature as an exception. For the authors depicted the *status quo* in a correct manner; ‘they seemed able to reflect accurately the contemporary situation of fear, oppressions and deprivation: but thereafter they led him down the paths of pessimism, obscurity and mysticism’, and then asks rhetorically ‘was there no way out except cynicism? Were people helpless victims?’ The lawyer makes him know later that those professors are mere shadows to the real master whom they serve. It is the very master that ‘robs’ the people. The lawyers’ guidance to Karega helps him constitute his own vision of history. He envisages history as being different from that of poets and singers telling ‘of great past cultures’; rather it is, for him, the magnificence of the people’s ‘present strife and struggles to right the wrongs that bring tears to the many and laughter only to the few’ (*Petals of Blood*, 301-2).

The questions that Karega starts to have were crystallized on the community’s journey to the city. The experiences the community goes through during this journey provide also the answers to some of these questions. A careful reading of the text with the use of the novelist’s frame of reference that is Marxism lead to the realisation that nationalist and religious discourses are used as masks to hide and justify the petty-bourgeoisie’s callous and selfish motives for self-aggrandizement. Chui, for instance, claims his loyalty to national culture and traditions, whilst all what matters to him is the privileges

and wealth that he obtains. When Munira and the others approach Chui's mansion, they start to hear songs in Gikuyu punctuated with others in Swahili. But the content of the songs is about learning English in order to hold interesting posts:

...Ciana citu ciaragie Githungu
Our children speak English
Harambee! Tuoe Madaraka
Harambee! We take up high offices... (1977: 150).

Also, Nderi wa Reira after being a champion of the “nationalisation of major industries and commercial enterprises: abolition of illiteracy and employment and the East African Federation as a step to Pan-African Unity”, believes now in “black and white partnership for real progress.” He even used the money he “collected from his constituents for a water project” in order to start his own business. Now he considers socialism as mere slogans and calls Africans to be realistic and accept capitalism as an inevitable phenomenon in their lives. But to cover all that “he remained a strong advocate of African culture, African personality, Black authenticity” (174). Besides, he insists on replacing the companies’ European names with local ones like *Uhuru*. Moreover, the adulteration of nationalism and the will to use it as a shield to maintain one’s place in power shows itself clearly when the MP calls for a total ban of strikes for their being anti-nationalist: “Strikes generated an atmosphere of tension which could only lead to instability and periodic violence. Strikes should be regarded as deliberate anti-national acts of economic sabotage” (*Petals of Blood*, 194). Nderi wa Reira and the likes, as Achille Mbembe argues in *On the Post Colony*, could be said to belong to the national bourgeoisie who uses the idea of nationalism “to maintain its own power”, yet it finds itself frequently taking over the “hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the conditions it rises up to combat”(Mbembe, 2001:151).

Not only is the doctrine of nationalism being used for this purpose, even religion is used to ‘hypnotize’ the poor and keep them in a state of

submissiveness. An instance of that is Reverend Jerrod Brown's reaction to the community's pleading with him to help them. He did not show any readiness to listen to them. He even interrupted them when they were trying to explain to him that they were not beggars and that they were tired and hungry because of the long walk from Ilmorog. Above all, there was a sick child among them. Yet, to their utter astonishment, all he could offer was prayers and a sermon on hard work: "The Bible is then clearly against a life of idleness and begging. This is what's wrong with the country .Most of us seem to prefer a life of wandering and begging to a life of hard work and sweat" (148). Accusing them of being idle may imply on its own right that the men of the church, who are benefiting from their position in the Kenyan government like other officials, use religion to mask the status quo, thus maintaining it in a sense that instead of criticising the state of exploitation the Kenyan peasants and workers suffer from (low wages while the few wallow in luxuries), they prefer to portray them as being idle. In this context V Y Mudimbe in his *Tales of Faith: Religion as political Performance in Central Africa* discusses what Jean-Marc Ela, a Cameroonian Catholic priest, considers as the kind of Christianity that a black priest should "actualize among the poorest of his brothers." Jean-Marc Ela says was stunned by the conditions of living he found in the northern region of Cameroon where he was supposed to preach:

I find myself in a northern region affected by a state of invisible slavery, as the older priest, Baba Simon, explained on the night of my arrival. My first impression was that the people of the high country among whom I would live for many years are not merely rejected and bereft of decision-making power; they are also totally defenceless and deprived. The mountain people are poor because they have been exploited and oppressed for generations, not because they do not work (Quoted in Mudimbe, 1997: 79-80).

Moreover, for Ngugi, the church was used in colonial times to condemn the Mau Mau struggles, for it "opposed Mau Mau, but never the colonial Caesar. It saw the Mau Mau liberation movement as being savage and anti-Christian: it

did not see the policies of the colonial powers, in depriving people of their land, in making them work for a pittance, in depriving them of legal rights, in having them beaten and mistreated . . . The church appeared to say: the white Caesar can do no wrong; white is good, while black is bad and wrong” (Ngugi, 1972:34).

Contrary to Karega who questions the status quo and tries to find ways out, Munira is the type of instructors who fear facing reality and deepening discussions about issues like politics and the world genesis. He tries even to suppress any attempt at opening the door to imagination. On one occasion, for example, when he takes his pupils in order to have them see and examine what constitutes their environment, one of the pupils says: “Look. A flower with petals of blood” But, stifling “the poetry in the child’s imagination”, as Killam put it, Munira answers that “there is no colour called blood. What you mean is that it is red. You see? You must learn the names of the seven colours of the rainbow. Flowers are of different kinds, different colours. Now I want each of you to pick a flower. Count the number of petals and pistils and show me its pollen. . . .”(*Petals of Blood*, 21). Likewise Munira is unable to answer the ontological questions his pupils put to him:

What was a law? What was nature? Was he a man? Was he God? A law was simply a law and nature was nature. What about men and God/Children, he told them, it’s time for a break. Man . . . law . . . God . . . nature: he had never thought deeply about these things and swore that he would never again take the children to the fields. Enclosed in the four walls he was the master, aloof, dispensing knowledge to concentration of faces looking up to him. There he could avoid being drawn in...But out in the fields, outside the walls, he felt insecure (*Petals of Blood*, 22).

Munira is portrayed as a schizophrenic intellectual who has social ambitions, yet who prefers to stay aloof and to place himself above his immediate environment. James Ogude argues comparing Munira to Gaturia in *Devil on the Cross* that although Munira is one of the main protagonists and one of the narrators in *Petals of Blood*, he stays detached and recluse like Gaturia. He is a perplexed “rebel hating his father’s lifestyle on the one hand and

secretly wishing to be a lord, a master and owner on the other hand.” He is overwhelmed with emotions of disappointment and failure. He is dissociated, remote and wants, like Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*, to “remain uninvolved and neutral. Munira is entrapped within the classroom walls. He finds refuge in teaching and ultimately takes to religion as a means to escape from reality” (Ogude, 1999: 82).

Women characters are also portrayed as negotiating meaning and searching for answers as to the underlying reasons for their suffering and humiliation. While they are also involved in a dialogical relation as far as gender and age are concerned, women characters in Ngugi’s writings witness a kind of progress in relation to the role the author imagines for them to assume in their imagined community. For while they are given the role of helpless victims such as Mumbi and Wanja in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* respectively, they assume a more efficient role in the combat against neo-colonialism like Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross*. In *A Grain of Wheat*, there is a noticeable heteroglossic rendering of reality. Mumbi carries the name of the Gikuyu genesis, yet she is reduced to an easily “seducible” woman who throws the vows of her bond with Gikonyo on no persuasive grounds. It is a rather surprising and inappropriate development on the part of Ngugi who otherwise seems to be more interested in narrating his *natio*. For though he could be said to be realistically depicting the extent to which wars could instigate unwholesome behaviour, the author could have chosen to rid himself of an ‘objectivity’ which, in Fanon’s words, “is always directed against” the native (Fanon, 1961: 77).

Ultimately, Ngugi can be read here, like some critics read his Nigerian counterpart Achebe, as having produced a counter effect to writing back. In other words, in attempting to deny, dispel and debunk Western stereotypical portrayals of black Africans as being ‘savage’, ‘cannibals’ and so on Ngugi (and Achebe as mentioned before) may be said to have furthered this point of view. Sketching the character Mumbi in the above mentioned manner, he could be viewed as orientalisng African women just like Conrad did in depicting

Kurtz's mistress. The latter was not endowed with the ability to talk. She was, in Conrad's words, "superb" and "vivacious" just like any exotic scene. On the contrary, Conrad made sure Kurtz's wife back in England is shown in the appearance of a "civilized" lady, caring much whether Kurtz's last words were about her.

In this respect, Ngugi shows some similarities with Gustave Flaubert. In his *Orientalist* accounts, Flaubert depicts Kuchuk Hanem in such a manner that denoted, according to Edward Said, that Flaubert "was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically oriental" (Said, 1995: 06). In their repetitive quest for a "different sexuality", Western novelists, for Said, made "Oriental sex" "as a standard, a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient" (Said, 1995: 190).

In *Petals of Blood*, Wanjia is depicted as a woman victimized by sex abuse. To add insult to injury, Wanjia is humiliated in front of the members of her village by the same act and the same person that is Kimeria. This transforms her from a prospective positive agent in the nation to a brothel proprietor who believes, paradoxically, in the motto "eat or you are eaten". What is paradoxical about this motto is that Wanjia is being exploited even when she thinks she has set up a business of her own. But by setting up the brothel, Wanjia is caught in an interstitial position, for she is an exploited woman and an exploiter at the same time. She adopts the prevalent ideology of neo-colonialism where the entire former colonised people are being exploited in a new manner. But she ignores the fact that she stands on the margin, because she belongs neither to the Kenyan national bourgeoisie who are mere intermediaries between the former colonials and their people, nor does she belong to the exploited people.

Furthermore, in *Devil on the Cross*, Wariinga is depicted as a helpless woman in search of her relevance in the Kenyan nation-state. Like Wanjia, she

is sexually abused by a member of the comprador class, Rich Old Man. She is exploited again by her boss Kihaahu after being rescued by Muturi on her attempt to commit suicide. The difference between Wanja and Wariinga is that the latter knows a total transformation when she becomes a mechanic and ends up using a gun to kill Rich Old Man. However, Ngugi's sketching of Wanja could well be allegorical in the sense that Wanja stands for the Kenyan nation. The latter has been turned by the African intermediaries to, as Fanon argues, "the brothel of Europe". In his essay *On the Pitfall of National Consciousness*, Fanon explains that the African comprador class "will be greatly helped on its way towards decadence by Western bourgeoisies, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big-game hunting and for casinos" (Fanon, 1961: 123). "In their portrayal", as Ogude argues, women characters frequently stand for the state of deprivation in a postcolony and in their determined gesture towards the possibilities of salvation and the "birth of a nation free of class exploitation in the first instance and free of gender inequality in the second" (Ogude, 1999: 109).

Still, in *Petals of Blood* despite their search for relevance in their postcolonial nation, the characters contradictorily reiterate the comprador's craving for material things. Karega's endeavours in the framework of trade unionism, Wanja's brothel, and Munira's hidden ambitions and regrets about not being as successful as his family members, do all reflect the characters' attempts to reach a respectable social status.

Wizard of the Crow, Ngugi's seventh novel, like *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, displays the author's commitment to revealing the real scale of the postcolonial African leaders' betrayal of their nations. The events in *Wizard of the Crow* are set in the fictional Free Republic of Aburiria. What seems apparently an African modern nation-state since an indefinite epoch has been under the dictatorship of one known simply as the Ruler. The political leaders in the Kenyan nation are (allegorized and) highly satirized in *Wizard of the Crow*. Their expenditure is in no way connected to their imagined community's needs; rather, it is linked to quenching their inflated egos. At the

beginning of the novel, for instance, a huge throng assembles to celebrate the Ruler's birthday and at the ceremony his ingratiating ministers, escalate the national 'acknowledgment' to their leader to the point where it is suggested that a structure be built similar to the Tower of Babel, called Marching to Heaven: This will allow the Ruler to be closer to God:

The whole country, the Minister for Foreign Affairs was saying, the entire Aburirian populace, had decided unanimously to erect a building such as had never been attempted in history except once by the children of Israel, and even they had failed miserably to complete the House of Babel. ...The Ruler would be the daily recipient of God's advice, resulting in a rapid growth of Aburiria to the heights never before dreamt by humans (*Wizard of the Crow*, 16).

The Ruler is a combination of Idi Amin Dada and Mobutu Seseseko. For the ruler's "Machiavellian grip on power is so absolute that his ministers trip over each other offering up slavish praises". The Ruler's "cult of personality is so strong" that he is often perceived on a par with God, and as frequently repeated throughout the novel. The Ruler and the nation are one and the same:

You little cunt of a man" the Ruler shouted angrily. "Why do you go on and on about my enemies and those of the country? Is there a distinction between me and the country... who know that you and the country are one and the same (136)

There is nobody in the whole Aburiria... "Sikiokuu pleaded tremulously, "who does not know that the ruler is this country and this country is His mighty country. It is also well known that many other leaders are jealous of that irrevocable identity (*Wizard of the Crow*, 161).

The magic realism used in the novel could reflect Ngugi's regained confidence in what is seen as absurd in *Petals of Blood*. The dilapidation of Mwathi's shrine is shown in the latter as a call for leaving superstitious thought. However, the shrine reappears in relation to the Wizard, but this time superstition is connected to the callous rulers, while the act of self-discovery to the common people. For the Wizard knows that he has no magic powers more than a strong aptitude at reading the hearts of his countrymen. He exploits the absurdity and foolishness of the ruling class and takes his act of sorcery to even

the state House and to New York. As with A.G., the Wizard uses “magic” to get people discern themselves and then speak what lies hidden in their minds. The Wizard’s shrine has the looks of a confessional, but rather than asking people to confess their sins, the Wizard has them confess their inmost ideas of who they truly are. “A shadow does cross A.G, but it is not the shadow of an enemy. It is the shadow of another A.G., the person that A.G. truly sees himself as and wants to become. The Wizard puts this shadow in the mirror so that from now on A.G. will see himself as he wants to be seen. Despite the fact that what the Wizard applies is unreal and a farce, A.G. lives not as the old A.G., but as one who has been freed from his thoughts. He begins to tell himself new stories of the world, stories that coincide with this new A.G., and, unsurprisingly, he succeeds where he previously failed.” It is vital that the Wizard makes his patients, including the Ruler himself, eventually speak their thoughts:

Good. If you can hear, you will certainly be able to talk. Don’t worry. There is a strange illness in the land. It is a malady of words; thoughts get stuck inside a person. You have seen stutterers, haven’t you? Their stammer is a result of a sudden surge of thoughts, or calculations, or worry. Now I ask you: who has more worries than a head of state... But don’t worry about putting your thoughts into words. What is important now is for the mind and heart to think and feel (*Wizard of the Crow*, 490).

Tajirika ultimately defeats the Ruler in a coup and then becomes an ogre neither black nor white. Before, he is presented as an insignificant entrepreneur with political connections. He becomes chairman of Marching to Heaven. Enthusiastic contractors queue outside his office and give him business cards fastened with kickbacks, in hope that the Global Bank will approve loan for the project and they will get fat contracts. Tajirika took three sacks of money home but immediately loses the ability to talk; he can only stare in the mirror and declare ‘if’ and ‘if only’ as he scratches at his speak. The Wizard makes Tajirika speak using a mirror. The source of his disease according to the Wizard is “White ache” which is another word for the “inferiority complex” the African national bourgeoisie feels:

Daemons of Whiteness took possession of your husband the night he brought home these three bags of money He suddenly realized that at the rate the money was coming in he would end up being the richest man in Africa...Do you now see the danger of words that want to come out but are unable to do so? (*Wizard of the Crow*, 175-180).

When he becomes the Head of State after the palace coup, he changes almost everything including his name to reflect this desire to be white:

The climax of Tajirika's ascension to power came when he addressed the nation as Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus Whitehead and pronounced the end of Baby D. a new era of imperial democracy had dawned, he said, and ordered the construction of a modern coliseum on the once earmarked for marching to heaven (*Wizard of the Crow*, 754).

Ngugi shows this as an instant of significant self-discovery. Tajirika was not aware of his "white ache". It becomes real for him only when he voices it into existence. The Wizard and Tajirika cooperate on a story in which they envisage what the white Tajirika would be like. They swiftly turn it into an admonitory tale, as the white Tajirika is left as an impoverished Englishman. The relation of this possible future encompasses such power that it terrifies Tajirika and his spouse of their craving to be white:

Your white English destiny is as a homeless ex-colonial couple living solely on the memories of what used to be. Now, how soon would you like to achieve your white destiny? No! No! Tajirika and Vinjinia shouted, opening their eyes in fright. "Black is beautiful. Give us back our blackness", they moaned, as if; the Wizard of the crow had already shorn them of it (*Wizard of the Crow*, 188).

In an interview with Kwadwo Osei-Nyame in 2007, Ngugi has this to say as regards the concept of white-ache:

It is important to change, at least question these signifiers. Regarding 'white-ache' my view was that the African bourgeoisie as a whole suffers from white-ache as described by Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon sees the African bourgeoisie as having a kind of incurable wish for identification with the worst aspects of the Western bourgeoisie, or the decadent ways of the Western bourgeoisie. That is how I saw white-ache. In those terms of a class that identifies with the Western bourgeoisie but

with the worst aspects of the bourgeoisie (Quoted in Maxwell, 2011:241).

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in many ways reveals the author's use of different dialogical voices in the novel. For example, concerning the protagonist Okonkwo, the plot of the story and the narrative voice are at work to leave the reader wondering which belief system the authoritative voice of the author supports. Achebe is Christian, but he tries to make sure his belief system is not used to judge the pre-colonial 'pantheon's' view which could be at odds with Christianity. For instance, Okonkwo is described in the novel as a man who achieved his respectable status in society by dint of hard work rather than by chance or spiritual benevolence.

The following excerpt from *Things Fall Apart*, simple as it may seem to be in terms of structure, embodies, when contextualized in relation to the novel and the author's voice, deep concerns and (perhaps unresolved as yet) problematic ontological questions for the author such as destiny. The passage is about the reaction of the crowd at the meeting to Okonkwo's humiliating remark against Osugo. The narration then seems to be in defence of Okonkwo:

Everybody at the kindred meeting took sides with Osugo when Okonkwo called him woman. The oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. Okonkwo said he was sorry for what he said, and the meeting continued.

But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm-kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself. Anyone who knew his grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say he had been lucky. If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his chi or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed. And not only his chi but his clan too, because it judged a man by the work of his hands. That was why Okonkwo had been chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo's wife (*Things Fall Apart*, 19).

Right from the outset of the novel we learn that Okonkwo's "whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness." This fear, the narration continues, "was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature...It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father" (*Things Fall Apart*, 09-10). It is this fear, that made Okonkwo "hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness" (*Things Fall Apart*, 10). It seems that Achebe made sure that the plot of the novel and reasoning behind it make us link the Ibos' ultimate fall apart and the blunders Okonkwo made, mainly out of this dominating fear. These faults are the result of his violence with his son Nwoye, his wives and most importantly against the missionaries. What could be understood from this is that Okonkwo can do nothing to control this fear, just like he did not choose his disappointing father. This entails that the protagonist's acts and tragic end are predestined just like the innocent child Ikemefuna described as "ill-fated" and "doomed" and just like the Ibo nation was to be invaded by Britain.

Nonetheless, in the above passage, the narrating voice affirms that Okonkwo's success is determined by his will. This is found in "it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm-kernels had been cracked for him"; "he had cracked them himself"; "that was not luck"; "Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed." (10)

What is notable here is that there is a contradiction between the fact that Okonkwo decided his acts and the suggestion that he is "ill-fated." What is noteworthy also is that the narrator shows a condescending agreement to the expression "good *chi*."

The concept *chi* for the Ibo nation means personal god in that it is the one which decides the individual's successes or failures. This means that predestination in Christianity is akin to the concept of *chi*. The *chi* concept is also said to resemble the guardian angel in Christianity. With this said, the story contains a 'dialogic tension' between two levels. The narrator's level "a belief system filled with its objects, meanings and emotional expressions", and the

author's level wherein the latter "speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story" (Bakhtin, 1981: 114). The author uses some techniques in order not to seem subjective as Bakhtin argues in the following statement:

This interaction, this dialogic tension between two languages and two belief systems, permits authorial intentions to be realised in such a way that we can acutely sense their presence at every point in the work. The author is not to be found in the language of the narrator, not in the normal literary language to which the story opposes itself (although a given story may be closer to a given language)-but rather, the author utilizes now one language, now another, in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to either of them; he makes use of this verbal give-and-take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, in order that himself might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two people (although he might be biased third party) (Bakhtin, 1981: 314).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are several instances in Achebe's portrayals in the novel that are meant to accentuate the fact that the Ibos' belief system carried within it the seeds of their destruction, even before the intrusion of the British new belief system. The throwing away of twins in the evil forest; the masculine harsh treatment; leaning on some unreliable defence system -the evil forest-; intolerance with people of a different nation or social status (the outcast, unsuccessful people), are all cultural elements which lead a section of the Ibo nation to believe in the new religion thus mark the Ibo's entering into a totally different (and sanguine) historical period. One of the techniques Achebe uses in order not to "give himself wholly to either" of the belief systems is to use the Ibo imagined community themselves seeming to contradict their belief system. For example, the author uses a proverb "when a man says yes his chi says yes also" instead of the proverb "where one falls, there his chi pushes him." This allows the author to state later "the saying of the elders was not true -that if a man said yea his chi also affirmed. Here is a man whose chi said nay to his own affirmation." Thus, Achebe points at the Ibo's belief system to be the principal factor of its falling apart. On the other hand, he emphasizes the reality that the new belief system would have won at any rate

the minds and the hearts of the Ibo society. For many of them must have felt the injustice of this system. The ‘curse’ of Nwoye’s ancestors (grandfather and parent) must be warded off now by the ‘brotherhood’ the new system preaches. Now reading the bible would entail Nwoye’s education and the prerogatives which go with it: “Okonkwo did not answer. But he left hold of Nwoye, who walked away and never returned. He went back to the church and told Mr Kiaga that he had decided to go to Umuofia, where the white missionary had set up a school to teach young Christians to read and write” (*Things Fall Apart*, 107).

It is worth mentioning that colonialism in Africa was introduced to Africans as an inevitable destiny with the pretext of bringing light to ‘the dark continent’. The dilemma with the African text is that although it is mostly read as “writing back”, the fact that it is mostly written in English makes it in accord with the world of the former colonizer. For given their education in English and with curriculums which put the Western world’s view first, African writers in most cases could neither escape writing in English, nor could they provide an alternative to the objective reality resultant from colonialism. This could be characterised either as a self-willed identification with the West or a symptom of a partial loss of memory.

Indeed, nation-state is best described as Janus-faced, for while it is in the process of taking the present shape, people who make it up usually forget even the massacres committed by some factions against other factions in the same nation. Homi Bhabha argues:

It is this forgetting — a minus in the origin — that constitutes the *beginning* of the nation's narrative. It is the syntactical and rhetorical arrangement of this argument that is more illuminating than any frankly historical or ideological reading. Listen to the complexity of this form of forgetting which is the moment in which the national will is articulated: 'yet every French citizen has to have forgotten [*is obliged to have forgotten*] Saint Bartholomew's Night's Massacre or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century (Bhabha,1994: 310).

But this forgetting does not occur only in relation to internal conflicts, but it has also to do with atrocities perpetrated by former colonisers. This forgetting is connected to adopting the cultural aspects of the former coloniser such as language, education, religion and political models. In this respect, Ernest Renan regarded forgetting, a historical error, as he put it, as “a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality” (Bhabha, 1994: 11). Not only that, but the people who compose the nation also go through a metamorphosis in that they start looking at the intruder’s cultural elements with pride. Martin Tom, in his essay *Tribes within Nations: the Ancient Germans and the History of Modern France*, argues that some French writers such as Ernest Renan and Chateaubriand began to view the French history from a Germanic perspective or what he called Germanism. “The Germanic invaders of Roman Gaul, the Franks, were depicted, through selective quotation from Tacitus, Caesar, and others, as a fierce, liberty-loving (but monarchical) Christian people that had created a fresh civilisation in the midst of imperial decadence” (Martin, 1994: 25). It is worth mentioning that France took its name after the German invader, that is, the Franks.

As far as the African context is concerned, (black) Africans can be said to have forgotten the massacres perpetrated against them in so far as the emerging African nations had naturalized their relations with their former colonizers. Not only that, but they also mostly adopted their former colonial’s language as the first language. It was the language of formality and administration, used by the colonizers, as Appiah argues, as a pedagogical weapon to connect Africa to Western heritage. Consequently, in the psyche of Africans, it had come to be associated to power, elevated education and wealth:

This is because the native intellectual has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own. He will not be content to get to know

Rabelais and Diderot, Shakespeare and Edgar Allen Poe; he will bind them to his intelligence as closely as possible (Fanon, 1961: 219).

Under different justifications like, as Fanon put it, “catching up” with the developed world, Africans started to imitate the former colonizer not in building an autonomous industry or a fruitful agriculture; rather, imitation took place in relation to language and the cultural “outward” appearance. “To speak a language”, Fanon argues in *Black Skin White Masks*, “is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is” (Fanon, 1986: 38). Fanon relates an anecdote of a time when he gave a lecture in Lyon. His French acquaintance’s impression was: “at the bottom you are a white man.” This brings to mind Mike’s observation to Modin in Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?*: “You belong here. The arrangement that brings you here has to be a good arrangement. In the Greek tradition you’d be a crossover. One of those who rise in the plains to live on Olympus. A hero. Part man, part god. Therefore more interesting than either” (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 101).

Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel *Our Sister Killjoy* is similar in many ways to Armah’s works in that it depicts an encounter between Africa (represented by the Ghanaian nation) and Europe. Sissie, the young Ghanaian female protagonist in the novel, like the protagonists in *Why Are We So Blest* and the narrative voice in *Two Thousand Seasons*, behaves and addresses the Western characters with dignity and a feeling of equality. Also, Sissie’s journey to Europe could be compared to Mustapha’s journey in Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*. Sissie’s travel to Europe, like Mustapha’s, is the reverse of Marlow’s journey to Africa. Paula Morgan reads *Our Sister Killjoy* as a travel narrative in her “The Risk of (Re)Membering My Name: Reading Lucy and *Our Sister Killjoy* as Travel Narratives” (Azodo & Wilentz, 1999: 187). Brian Street, writing about the classic European adventure tales, notes that “behind the apparently trivial and harmless exotica of the tales of adventure lie deep preconceptions about the nature of humankind, about how the variety of

human societies can be conceived of, described and understood and about the role of different cultures and “races in the world order” (Street, 1985: 95).

But Sissie’s journey is meant to stand for Ghanaian women’s deconstruction of the European paradigms. Ama ata Aidoo then reverses:

the direction of a classic colonial genre, the travel narrative, through which Europe typically represented its soon-to-be or already colonized Other, [also subverts] the gaze that constitutes Europe and its presumed obverse. This time around, it’s the protagonist’s black-eyed squint, not a white, usually male gaze that functions as the all seeing-eye (Needham, 2000: 77).

Sissie travels to Europe and assumes the vantage point of an observer. She criticises and ridicules the Western mode of life such as the materially-based relationship between husband and wife. This is exemplified in the German character, Marija’s relation to her husband. She hardly sees her husband because of the extra hours he spends at work to be able to pay the mortgages: “The need to pay mortgages and go on holidays kept married chambers empty for strangers’ inspection” (Aidoo, 1994: 62).

Korang Kwaku Larbi points out in relation to Aidoo’s novel:

The metaphor of a shipwrecked history becomes a useful mnemonic with which to characterize the Ghanaian writer’s reflection on the conditions under which the modernity of Africa is purchased. From a perspective that interprets a modern Africa in terms of her cannibalization into an alienating universe of discourse, Aidoo brings a sceptical feminine intelligence to an examination of her place within an unbroken continuum or a history of colonialism. The African woman writer seizes the initiative on Africa’s behalf to make a timely intervention into the discourses that a European cultural apparatus writes over her homeland (Quoted in Azodo& Wilentz, 1992: 52).

The narrative is introduced through a slanted vision, but the very alteration is meant as a corrective -to regulate the prejudice of a colonial bequest. The matter is how one can substitute a “white-eyed (Eurocentric) perspective with a black-eyed (Afrocentric) perspective and more relevantly

how can one work towards twenty-twenty vision” (Azodo & Wilentz, 1999: 193).

Furthermore, obviously, like in Armah’s *KMT*, the narrative sheds light on the ethical vices that Western culture instigates such as homosexuality. Lhoussain Simour in his “Ama Ata Aidoo’s Black-eyed Squint and the ‘Voyage in’ Experience: Dis(re)orienting” Blackness and Subverting the Colonial Tale, observes that Sissie journeys to Europe as a student and moves across the borders of ethnically and culturally dissimilar spaces. Simour notes that “it is through this movement that the reader becomes aware that Sissie is not the Other for the Western imagination; but Europeans, particularly Germans, are “the other for her firmly centered, African Self.” The position of Sissie’s “subjective centrality affirms the particular perspective of her black-eyed squint against the claims of the universal” which consider the West as “the great family of man”” (Simour, 2009: 458). Furthermore, Ama ata Aidoo depicts the Bavarian river like the Congo River in *Heart of Darkness*. “Looking at the river / how many / virgins had / Our sovereign lord and Master / unvirgined on their nuptial nights” (Aidoo, 1994: 25)

Reading beyond and against the brochure describing the German countryside and its glorious castles, Sissie’s black-eyed squint realizes that it’s not only virgin lands that were raped in the name of expansion and domination, but she sees in Germany’s river the primitive history of patriarchal, feudal exploitation, distressing rape, pain and anguish (Simour, 2009: 459).

Europe in this way develops instantly into a “heart of violence”, ferocity, obliviousness and lust. The Germans in Aidoo’s novel are the natives:

To describe the Germans, Aido uses tropes familiar to colonialist narratives whereby she primarily means to shake the West in its essence through a systematic reversal of the order of things. Through Sissie, Aidoo deploys a counter stereotypical discourse, twisting racial prejudices and sending them back to the source that has fabricated them. Hence, Aidoo’s narrative makes the Germans inarticulate and ignorant of Africa and by extension the whole world outside of their continent. Their heavy accent dehumanizes them further and highlights that ignorance. When first encountering Sissie, Marija (a phonetic and non- German spelling of Maria) immediately associates her to some Indian friends she had: “I really liked zose Indians. I sink of zem weri much as you speak

English” [26]; “Neeigeria, Ah-h, Nee-ge-ria. Vas did you go to do in Neeigeria?”[27] (Simour, 2009: 459).

Depicting Marija’s English in this manner reminds one of the African’s utterance “Mr. Kurtz he dead” in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Sissie’s expressions of revulsion and disgust at what she considers Marija’s degenerate sexual behaviour is also a celebration of her Ghanaian ethical behaviour and an outcry in the face of the West that Africans are not naïve to be used as sex toys. Sura Rath argues that it is “no longer whether the subaltern can speak but what s/he is saying and how loud and clear the voice is.” As a subalterned subject, Sissie makes a loud and clear voice against the degraded and degenerated moral structures of the West (Simour, 2009: 459).

If we use Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence, this very scene is presented within a multifaceted and unstable space which projects and renounces difference. To retain the ‘Other’ under control and to uncover his inferiority, the ‘Self’ proclaims his difference; thus, “in order to possess and appropriate the native, the colonial discourse allows him enough sameness so as to make him knowable and familiar...without really completely erasing the traces of his difference” (Bhabha, 1994: 66). These suggestions of difference are ambivalent territories for imaginings and cravings. Bhabha argues that “it is the force of [this] ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency, ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization” (Bhabha, 1994: 87). As Marija watches Sissie, she meets herself echoed in the black Other who turns out to be comforting and threatening at once; “a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994: 87).

Hence, Sissie’s difference has definitely contaminated her observer’s ‘purity’ and has drawn it in complicit sameness; and instead of functioning as a contrast, she turns into a fearful double that disorients the German identity. In an act of subversion and appropriation of the dominant codes of power, the protagonist drives Marija, who is caught in the notion of the exotic and sensuous Other, into despair and psychological trauma in two different occasions: when she refuses to succumb to her lustful tendencies and her erotic flow, and also when she unexpectedly left to the North of the country. What Marija gets,

accordingly, is total neglect and an incredible rejection (Simour, 2009: 460).

As far as the novels' external dialogic relation to the socio-political and economic environment is concerned, there is a notable predicament. The dilemma with the postcolonial novelist is the inharmonious relation between the intellectual, the common people in his imagined community and the state's institutions. In the West the novelist, like the political and the economist or industrialist, is integrated in the overall purpose of the nation. In other words, the intellectual's worth in developed countries is that he is integrated in maintaining and strengthening the nation's cultural, economic and international interests, and he is allowed "to lose himself in the whole" to quote Kedourie . Novelists like Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens were all, according to Edward Said, aware of their nations' interests, thus they were bent on portraying the 'native' in a subordinate position and the colonizer in a superior one. Therefore, for Said, literature is not innocent since it is never only about the aesthetic aspect of language or style; rather, since "masterpieces" such as *Heart of Darkness* could contain such explicit passages of racism and dehumanization of the 'other', this fact is meant to reinforce, consolidate and maintain the empire (and its representatives) superior and the otherised Africans always inferior.

Besides the above considerations, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works can be said to be in a dialogical relation with the real life of ordinary people and the political regimes in his imagined community as well. For, first, the novelist is a committed writer who does not only disclose the callous treatments of the new leaders of people who make up their nations, but he also makes sure common people have easy access to his works. He did that through allowing the peasants and workers to make additions to the original script of *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) while performing the play. This play that infuriated the Kenyan regime was cause for its author's victimization. Indeed, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was imprisoned without trial because of his explicit criticism of the neo-colonial regimes which, instead of ending the suffering their imagined communities

underwent, perpetuated the same practices of humiliation performed by the colonials. James Stephen Robson argues that the play was the reason behind Ngugi's detention for two reasons. First, "the play was not just a radical presentation to an isolated academic community; it was a grassroots community production in an indigenous language and therefore more threatening to the national bourgeoisie." Second, the theme dealt with in the play is land expropriation and freedom, the reason which led to the Mau Mau revolution. This same issue was "also persistent in land speculation and peasant alienation in Kenya today" (Robson, 1987: 12).

Also, this dialogical interaction of Ngugi and his writings with his imagined community is reflected on the novelist's changed view of Jomo Kenyatta as an important Kenyan national figure. Jomo Kenyatta was for Ngugi an embodiment of resistance and struggle for the independence of the Kenyan nation in that he describes him as having "support from the peasant masses and urban workers because he was a symbol of their deepest aspirations. To have imprisoned him was futile, because he was himself only a symbol of social forces which could never be finally put down by gun" (Quoted in Gikandi, 2009: 30). However, after twenty years, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was forced into exile. Now Ngugi saw Kenyatta as the personification of betrayal "Kenyan reactionary scholarship was about to give the final *coup de grace* to what Kenyatta started when in 1954 at his trial in Kapenguria; he described Mau Mau as an 'evil thing' which "I have done my best to denounce... and if all other people had done as I have done Mau Mau would not be as it is now." He shows in *Detained* the different Kenyattas that gave way eventually to the Kenyatta who washed his hands of his past and, by extension, the past of the Kenyan nation. For Ngugi, "there were then several Kenyattas, but they can be reduced to four." There was first the Kenyatta of KCA epoch who made anti-imperialist announcements. "He was then truly a spokesman of the peasants and the workers and he took up the cudgels against the British imperialist bourgeoisie for its [...] oppressive exploitation of the peasants in Kenya." After that there

was the Kenyatta of the KAU era who was a graduate of Malinowski's school of anthropology at London University, a "cultural nationalist." The third Kenyatta was that of the KANU era: "he was a prison graduate, an ex-detainee who had once again been out physical touch with the living struggle for nine years." Finally, there was the Kenyatta of the KANU in power. This Kenyatta "made sure that the petti-bourgeoisie in its new role of a comprador was fully entrenched in the party organization, in administration, anywhere, and who made sure that anybody associated with militant nationalism or with true worker /peasant organizations like Mau Mau were never anywhere near the seats of power" (Ngugi, 1981: 161-2).

Ngugi's new view of Kenyatta is clearly represented in *A Grain of Wheat* where he blurs the difference between heroes and anti-heroes or traitors. Ogude characterises this as "narrative calls for political scepticism and cynicism towards heroism and hero worship." Indeed, hindsight and introspection, instead of gullible celebration of dominant ideologies which was an attribute of the history of struggle in the 1960s, "are called for if the dream of a new Kenyan nation has to be realised" (Ogude, 1999: 25-6).

Moreover, Ngugi's incarceration did not prevent him from articulating his socio-political views. While in prison he managed to write the script for his fifth novel *Devil on the Cross* on toilet paper. The novel's draft was temporarily confiscated while in detention in September 1978. Ngugi describes the distress this three week seizure caused him and his determination to continue writing:

It was as if I had been drained from blood. Nevertheless, I made a new resolution: no matter what happened, I would start all over again. I would reconstruct the novel in between the printed lines of a Chekhov, or a Gorky, or a Mann or of the Bible...or of any book in my possession. It would not be the same novel, but I would not accept defeat (*Devil on the Cross*, 164).

After his release from prison, the novel was published in Gikuyu and in Swahili. This influenced the way it was read. For "it was read on public

transport and at social gatherings, such as eating places, people's homes, and so on" (Sander, 2006: 270).

Concluding Remarks:

The narratives of the nation were shown to be ambivalent for they seem in defence of the novelists' culture yet they jettison its very essence by doubting about their relevance in the modern time. The Janus-face reality of the nation-state is reflected on its narration; therefore, to discuss it, multiple modes of analysis were employed such as the postcolonial, the psychoanalysis (Fanon) and so on and so forth. One of the contradictions of nation-state is forgetting the enemies of the past be they internal or external and adopting their culture, language and even religion; above all, these cultural elements started to be viewed as the pillars of the modern African nation-states. The liminal spaces in Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*, for example, show the extent to which the African experience of being colonised and neocolonised has contributed in creating ambivalent positions vis-à-vis the "untaken paths" and the modern African nation-states, and vis-à-vis the illiteracy (and wisdom) of their (independent) nations and the power-knowledge relation implied in the modern united (and sometimes contrived) nations that culminated in one nation. The novelists discussed in this chapter try but fail to escape the landscape of the nation-state. In order to imagine a liveable nation-state the novelists seem to try to combine (although sometimes at the detriment of their traditional imagined communities) the pillars of the old nation with the pillars of their respective modern African nation-states. They also reveal that the source of their people's pains is the leaders and the people who betrayed their communities by their obsessive accumulation of wealth and search of power at the expense of the majority of the people constituting their nations.

Chapter Four:

Janus-faced Ideology, Diasporic Euphoria and Esoteric Utopia:

I SAID IN SIX MONTHS, I WAS IN JAIL. But this is only to mean the formal incarceration that follows the free roaming landscape of our historical prison. (We had freedom, since Emancipation, freedom to die of hunger, to rot in the blue nights of urban despair, to die in the sweet embrace of our Anglo-Saxon matron Liberty, the woman in the harbor, carrying the burning torch). Kofi Awoonor *Comes The Voyager at Last*, 1992

After the objective ontological unity of the world had been demolished, the attempt was made to substitute for it a unity imposed by the perceiving subject.....Henceforth the world as a “world” exists only with reference to the knowing mind, and the mental activity of the subject determines the form in which the world appears.

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*

In the previous chapter I examined ambivalence, hybridity and liminality as they show themselves in some of the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awoonor. The writers mentioned above were shown to be exemplary of contemporary African writers who blend in their writings the narration of their nations and at the same time their want to transcend the borders which are symbolic of the shackles of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Their narrations are also divided between advocating the modern 'absolute functionaries' and their inclination to perceive spots of truth, if not the entire truth, in the social organization of pre-colonial Africa, particularly in the imaginings of their religious communities.

In this chapter I am going to examine how Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awoonor, each in his manner, show their intention to reverse the first forced-journey of slavery. In doing so, they reflect the ambivalent feelings of (their) nostalgia for Africa (because of their exile, in Armah and Ngugi's cases), and their sense that African-Americans are both victorious, because of the emancipation they struggled for and obtained, and the victims of history at the same time because of their being humiliated in the past. Their portrayals however do not side-step the fact that a true investigation into history could only be done by Africans who have managed to cross to the other side be they African-American or African intellectuals living outside the constraints of censorship. Also, the novelists in the works studied in this chapter intend to correct history, to provide an authentic representation of it so as to prescribe a definite and final therapy to the "damaged African psyche" caused by the onset of slavery. For as long as black Africans deny and stay away from their origins, their Diaspora is only expected to deepen their alienation even in a nation where ostensibly all races and cultures melt. Nonetheless, the irony is that some of the novelists in question choose to live in the USA instead of staying in their respective nation-states to contribute in their development. The USA obviously guarantees more rights to Africans than their nations of origin do. Some of them such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Soyinka and Kofi Awoonor underwent even

physical incarceration in their respective countries. For them and for many Africans of high or average education, the USA still remains a dream. As for a colossal reverse immigration to Africa at a historical scale, it remains only a utopia. For, as Stephen Howe argues in his book *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes*, very few of the advocates of Afrocentrism in America “appear to have a serious desire either for mass emigration to Africa or for full political and geographical separation within the Americas” (Howe, 1999: 88).

Given the historical relevance of their being in the USA and their belonging mostly to authoritarian regimes in the African nations, Africans can be said to live on the ‘threshold of history’, either under the yoke of dictatorship or at the mercy of a constant reminder (carved on their black skin) that they once were only slaves in the New World. This is not to forget that African Americans still constitute a minority in the USA, a minority in which poverty, perversion and illiteracy are rife. Drawing on what is advanced above, some novels which aim at the reconciliation of Africans with their roots, particularly their physical reunion can be labelled both as esoteric and utopian. The novelists’ intentions can be understood both from their novels and extra-textual works. Armah, for instance, states in some of the few interviews he has given that knowledge of the true personality of the African should be shared from top to bottom. In other words, African leaders should not use knowledge as power against people who make up their nations. Rather, common people should be allowed to know about the purpose set for their nations as much as their leaders do.

Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Osiris Rising*, *KMT: in the House of Life* and Kofi Awoonor’s *Comes the Voyager at Last* are works which reflect the novelists’ attempts to reconnect African Americans in their ‘euphoric diaspora’ to their cultural utopia in Africa.

The Black-Americans’ return journey to Africa has been a common theme in African American writings. But it has not been so amongst Africans who

belong to the African continent. For the latter have made of issues that have to do with their respective nations or PanAfrican “wishful thinking” their main concerns. The return trope can be found in several novels written by African American authors. For example, there is Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple of my Familiar* (1989) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), Reginald McKnight’s *I Get on the Bus* (1990), Charles Johnson’s *Middle Passage* (1991) and Maya Angelou’s autobiography *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986).

Yet, this fictional reversal of the Africans’ journey back to the continent indicates also another corrective endeavour on the part of the novelists, who think that the history written by Westerners has been unfair to Africans and has eclipsed their contribution to science. Furthermore, there is an unmistakable attempt on the novelists’ part to show how knowledge and religion, if used for a particular purpose, could drive a whole imagined community to slumber, as it were, leaving them lagging behind other nations.

Awoonor’s *Comes the Voyager at Last*, like Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*, narrates the story of the enslavement of black people. Concomitantly, the protagonist narrates his journey back to Africa. The story is also about how exploitation was harnessed to religion. Like Armah, Awoonor, uses the desert to stand for Arabs. He associates negative attributes to the desert:

The desert, MAN’S DEATH LAND, birthplace. Washed over rolling sand dunes. Time stood still in these grains of sand. The toothy grin of the acacia, gnarled by centuries of heat. The desert was not long. Our journey commenced at this edge, a dreary outpost which could have been the terminus. Then the chains were fastened upon us, accompanied by the barking of dogs and men, the crying of children and the whimpering of women. Order came that our march southwards should begin at dawn. It is not easy to recreate the memory of that journey. But that memory hangs on like the tangible thread in a historic fabric long worn (*Comes the Voyager at Last*, 01).

Besides its deadly attribute, the desert is a geographical space belonging to the people who initiated the enslavement of the black ‘imagined communities.’ The journey is described as a very harsh journey through the desert where fragile

individuals such as newly born babies deace. Likewise, Armah begins his novel *Two Thousand Seasons* with a description of the desert and its antithesis Springwater: “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 the nature of the desert to return anything but destruction. Springwater flowing to the desert, your future is extinction” (*Two Thousand Seasons*, xi). Like Awoonor, Armah associates the desert to death: “this is life’s race, but how shall we remind a people hypnotized by death? We have been so long following the falling sun, flowing to the desert, moving to our burial” (*Two Thousand Seasons*, xi). The author uses three narrating voices in the novel. There is first the unnamed ‘I’ who has been captured, along with hundreds, to be enslaved. They are carried through a desert land, a forest then a river: “And this desert, once ploughed by our feet, fashioned the eternal frenzy and the howling waves of our history. The tree would swoon now with a solemnity that was the signal of distress in their heaven high above our sorrow” (*Comes the Voyager at Last*, 2-4). The second narrator is Marcus Garvey MacAndrews (Aka Sheik Lumumba Mandela), who relates with an Afro-American dialect the memories of his tough childhood and adolescence in Virginia. He also tells of his move to New York in 1956. He narrates his experience in a penitentiary and his conversion to Elijah Mohammed’s Harlem Mosque. The third narrator is an autobiographical Ghanaian who has just been made redundant in the aftermath of a coup d’état. He encounters Cheik at a night club. The former stabs a white man during a fight, whereupon he escapes with Cheik to the latter’s village. The African American goes through a trance-like experience during a ceremony. Somewhere at the end of the novel the African-American expresses his spiritual rebirth: “So the invulnerable arena of my soul was part of the landscape, of the magical leaping feat of the Fish, the purest witness to my primordial pain” (*Comes the Voyager at Last*, 136). The African American is shown to have been conditioned into accepting his status of slave through a religious discourse in which he figures as a child of God:

In Africa on many occasions, guys will come over and seriously want to know what it is like in America. And I will repeat for them the impotent myths of my land of sojourn, the legends of Negrohood, of my flamboyant ancestors who worked the land, tall African giants of unremembered savanas not unaware of pain or degradation, men whose only claim to humanity seemed to have been as the poet said their signal endurance record under the whip, of men who sought refuge in the good book, and actually believed that they too, as God's children, will be given brightly colored robes to cover their nakedness on that glorious judgement day(*Comes the Voyager at Last* , 08).

In his *The African Predicament* Kofi Awoonor explains that Africans who were taken to the New World were made to believe that they were rescued from the backwardness and darkness they had always lived in:

So those who were taken out of Africa were considered lucky. And they should thank their stars for such signal good luck that brought them out of the land of darkness into the land of infinite light. Witness the poetry of Phyllis Wheatley, the first true Afro-American poet (1754-1784), who wrote Augustan hymns of praise for her redemption from the horrors of hell by being brought out of Africa as a slave girl (Awoonor, 2006: 83).

This does show that the representation of Africa by the writers is both simplistic and patronizing. Comparatively Armah's vision of an Africa without its factual cultural components can be characterised as exclusionary. Indeed, his portrayals of religion, particularly Christianity and Islam, are presented as signs of cultural decadence that have 'infected' Africans. In his extra-textual sources Armah states that one of the most obvious factors which made Africans remain in a state of permanent amnesia vis-à-vis their cultural roots is the introduction of Islam and Christianity to Africa: "Sleepy states of ignorance through a series of cultural and intellectual and aesthetic dope. Now sometimes the dope is called religion -- Islam, Christianity -- and we go to it looking for relief. I mean people don't take dope because they are evil, they take it because they are suffering and they think that it will ease their suffering. Now, whatever the different names of the dope that we fill ourselves with, the effect is the same; to make us think we are nothing" (Armah, 1990: 01).

Awoonor's theme of reconciliation or the journey back to Africa is presented through a blending of the consciousness of two narrators in the story. These are the unnamed narrator and the Afro-American. This also shows that Awoonor hardly escapes the magic realism he employed in *This Earth, My Brother*. Cheik for instance has a recurrent dream of a funeral procession changing into a chain gang, which parallels the unnamed narrator's captor experience that occurred centuries earlier. Some critics suggest that Cheik's final "ecstatic vision" reminds one of Tutuola and Okri's creatures: "The people were of all the colours of the earth [...] Among them were some with heads reaching to the skies, some of whose feet were turned inside out, some were dwarfs whose nearness to the earth hardly afforded them somersaulting room (*Comes the Voyager at Last*, 137). Like Armah's use of the pronoun "we" in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*, Awoonor's blending of the consciousness or rather the lack of consciousness of the two narrators could be said to be an attempt on the author's part to represent the collective unconscious of a *natio*, a nation or a race at large. The renaming of the Afro-American narrator, Lumumba, could stand for both a spiritual and political reconciliation. Its political connotation arises from the fact that Patrice Lumumba was an incorruptible post-independence political leader of the Congo. Some critics view the relationship between the novel form and nation-state as problematic regarding Africa. The reason for this, as mentioned earlier, is that the novel developed hand in hand with the European nation-states and empires, thus is contaminated. African writers should, therefore, move more to indigenous forms of narrating their nations. What is implied here is that the primary factor behind the African writers' choice of Western forms is their European education. Elie Kedourie argues that Western education created a conflict in the minds of the youth as regards what their imagined communities expect from them and what alien instruction expects them to perform. This is so because Western education which has substituted traditional training was designed for and modified to the requirements of quite another nation; "what it teaches is at variance with the actual, visible conditions of non-Western societies, and

provides for the young not education but instruction; it generates in young minds an opposition between what is formally taught in the classroom, and what is inculcated by actual example in family and community” (Kedourie, 1969: 112).

Moreover, speaking and learning in a foreign language at school is of paramount significance in alienating the African child, a discourse which ultimately made Ngugi give up writing in English. For Ngugi, teaching the child in English has dangerous effects for English is loaded with antagonistic thoughts about the African self. English literature, adopted in African University curricula in post-independence Africa, is full of examples about the repugnance directed against black Africans. The effect of adopting a culture which is foreign to the African child is detrimental:

The dissociation, divorce, or alienation from immediate environment becomes clearer when you look at colonial language as a carrier of culture. Since culture is a product of history of a [nation] which it in turn reflects, the child was now being exposed exclusively to a culture that was a product of a world external to himself . . . the images of this world and his place in it implanted in a child takes years to eradicate, if they ever can be (Ngugi, 1986:17).

In this respect Ngugi wa Thiong’o gave a lecture at Clare Hall, Cambridge (May 1999), the title of which was “Europhonism, Universities, and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship.” Ngugi discussed the problem of identity that African scholars suffer from. He thinks the African scholar should contribute to the thriving of the African self (or collective unconscious) from the stage of “Being in itself as when an entity exists objectively undifferentiated’ to the stage of ‘being for itself when it becomes aware of itself as an entity”. But instead he argues that by writing in English, they contribute in one way or another to their self-effacement and thus they become subservient to others:

In the context of the collective social body, they become beings for others, at the very least beings against themselves, against the very soil that gave birth to them. African-language communities pay for intellectuals which cannot put a single idea, even about agriculture or health or business, or democracy, or finance, into the very languages which gave them birth. This great paradox of African scholarship in general is best mirrored in the particular case of the production of African literature (Ngugi, 1999).

This paradox is clearly shown in the fact that although the focal point in the novels in question is the reconciliation of the Africans and the African-Americans with their African territory and cultural roots, the way they are structured reminds us of the very stylistic components of modernism that incorporated, with the consequent depression and fear of the age, fragmentation, ‘reflexivity’, the phenomenological way of seeing things, the blurred distinction between genres and “a deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full and authority intact” (Barry, 2009: 79). Considering the novels’ titles, one could notice the authors’ mentioning of the genre. This is to be found in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Osiris Rising a novel of Africa past, present and future* and *KMT: in the house of life an epistemic novel*; Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother: an Allegorical novel* and *Comes the Voyager at Last: A Tale of Return to Africa*. This reflexivity could denote the authors’ will to distinguish their novels from the bourgeois novel. Yet on examining the structures and styles employed in the novels, one could have the sense that modernistic elements are at play. As mentioned earlier, the self-conscious or the self-referential novel is one of the characteristics of modernism. Both Armah and Awoonor use the term novel (or tale at least) in their writings to demonstrate their being ‘conscious’ writers. In other words, they would like to affirm the fact that their storytelling is based on the African manner of artistic expression; they are the masters of their art and not the bourgeois mode of writing. For the latter’s ideal of a good story is at odds with emphasizing ‘truth’ as seen from an African standpoint. This is apparent in *Osiris Rising*, for instance, when the author of *Journey to the Source* encounters the editor’s conditions:

The editor at *Occident* found the project promising. He would fund it and publish the resulting book if the author made certain changes in the outline. He offered detailed suggestions based on a realistic appraisal of the magazine's readership. The key to a successful launch would be accurate knowledge of audience sensibilities, and preferences and aversions. This knowledge should be integrated into key aspects of the book: structure, narrative, characterization, description, dialogue, imagery, diction, theme...The editor at *Occident* pointed out that historical truth, followed too faithfully, could blunt literary effect (*Osiris Rising*, 3-4).

In his *The Eloquence of the Scribes*, Armah points to the institutions of publishing as a continuing exploitation of the African efforts, just like old slavery:

The record of my problems with Heinemann, the British transnational publishing corporation that in the post-Independence decades ran the slyly names African Writers Series. What I am about to say can be summed up as a conflict between a large, established European corporation with a slave-raiding attitude, on the one hand, and an individual African producer determined not to succumb to the existing structure with its built-in injustices, but to find a better, African structure, or failing that, to help create one.

It might be tempting to describe the Heinemann African Writers Series as a colonial structure, but such a description would be inaccurate. The business model on which the so-called African writers' series was based was cruder than the colonial model, itself no paragon of refinement. Consider the nature of the business: a group of speculators operating out of Oxford and London created a company to exploit an African resource (Armah, 2006: 307).

Nonetheless, Armah cannot deny that his novels, particularly the last two, are characterised by the deployment of a specialized type of knowledge such as Egyptology. His previous writings, however, cannot be claimed to have inspired the ordinary Ghanaians who strive to improve their condition and have a nodding acquaintance with literature, storytelling and who are less acquainted still with the complex jargon whereby the author renders their realities. Frantz Fanon argues that resorting to history by the African intellectuals for the purpose of 'imagining' their nations will not be effective. "What he ultimately intends to embrace are in fact the cast-offs of thought, its shells and corpses, a knowledge which has been stabilised once and for all." On the contrary, a

“native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realise that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities.” The national realities Fanon means are what the people are struggling for. Moreover, as Fanon argues further, emphasizing cultural achievements, which Armah seems to give excess of in his last novels and Ngugi in his attempts to revitalize inactive political structures, is an attitude of a “foreigner”, for this is “strangely reminiscent of exoticism”. For Fanon, endeavouring to bring back to life abandoned traditions “does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people.” This is so because, Fanon argues, the significance of tradition changes when “a people undertakes an armed struggle or even a political struggle against a relentless colonialism” (Fanon, 1961: 180-81).

Why Are We So Blest? could also be seen as a ‘reflexive’ type of novel. The voice of a conscious (and distressed) writer cannot be missed even if he hides behind the chronicles of his character Solo:

I would not have written of changes in the lives of whole peoples, because I had come to stop thinking in such futile ways...
It is true that if I ever wrote about the things I have seen and the stories that have passed through my mind they would immediately come to me, asking with unbelief how any son of the land, no matter how low he had fallen, could do such a grave disservice to the revolution and callously mutilate the embryo of the future country in the pursuit of personal vocation. But I have not written yet, and most probably I never will write (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 12-13).

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* belonged to this trend as well, that is, the reflexive type of novels. Yet this novel reflects, like the novels in question, an abstruse and esoteric way of expressing views and feelings. Whether writing hieroglyphs and Egyptology, or even Ewe spirituality, the authors in question set so high a pitch of knowledge to their novels (including the fact that they wrote mostly in English) that the ordinary Africans or African Americans could hardly get access to their works. By doing this, as Terry Eagleton argued in relation to James Joyce, the novelists in question could be said to have both celebrated and

undermined the African (each writer in relation to his respective nation) “national formation at a stroke, deploying the full battery of cosmopolitan modernist techniques to re-create it while suggesting with its every breath just how easily it could have done the same for Bradford or the Bronx” (Eagleton, 2001: 36). Perhaps, the slight difference here is that both Armah and Awoonor suggest that the African big cities are no good example in terms of hygiene and productivity. I am not implying here that African works are to be read against the modernist spirit, for the writers in question, it cannot be denied, draw a lot on European modernism: the manner whereby the novelists render reality could be described in many ways as impressionistic and subjective. In other words, what matters, the authors seem to be hinting at, is “how we see things rather than what we see (a preoccupation evident in the use of the stream of consciousness technique)” (Barry, 2009: 79). The use of the latter could be noticed almost in all the works of the writers in question. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, for instance, we follow the careering of the Man’s fears, anxieties, squeamishness, expectations and disappointments. On reaching a cul-de-sac and on his wishes not fulfilled, The Man is left to his thoughts:

But then suddenly all his mind was consumed with thoughts of everything he was going back to—Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o’clock, the office and every day, and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 215).

His state of mind and the use of the technique are strikingly similar to the end of James Joyce’s *The Dead*. Gabriel, after the shocking revelation of his wife’s past, is described to have totally been paralysed just like the frozen surroundings:

He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover’s eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live...His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling...The time had come

for him to set on his journey westward...His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead (*The Dead*, 68-70).

The technique is employed as well with Solo and Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?*, Baako in *Fragments*, Asar and Ast in *Osiris Rising*, Lindela and others in *KMT*. At moments such as these, the character experiences as epiphany, a device used by a number of Western writers. James Joyce defines epiphany in his novel *Stephen Hero* as follows:

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany (*Stephen Hero*, 177).

Further on, he illustrates: “Imagine my glimpses of that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment of the focus is reached the object is epiphanized” (*Stephen Hero*, 177).

The last passage in the novel could read as an epiphany which The Man experiences. For The Man at last is certain that “this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him” (215). Likewise, the been-to, Baako is totally frustrated by the knowledge that his family expected from him neither knowledge nor a wisdom of any sort. What they all have been waiting to see him bring back home is the ‘gleam’, ‘last brands’ of commodities. In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Modin is sure, when it is too late, that the only kind of relationship that could exist between the West and Africa is that of exploited-exploiter. The knowledge makes him succumb to his doom silently, knowing that he has always been adamantly cynical to it. Modin says disappointedly “I wish [Aimée Reitsch] would let me walk on silently. I felt I would not be able to talk” (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 279).

Actually, it is the opposition between what is taught in class and what is “inculcated” by the family that differentiates James Joyce’s narration of his nation and the African writers’ imaginings of their respective nations. In his *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues that in the West “there is no disproportion between the life of the family and the life of the nation.” This is so because when “the child emerges from the shadow of his parents, he finds himself once more among the same laws, the same principles, the same values” (Fanon, 1952: 142). An example of the congruent relation between Joyce’s imaginings and his respective nation is to be found in the character Stephen Dedalus in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The latter expresses the importance of his nation in his growth as an individual: “This race and this country and this life produced me...I shall express myself as I am” (230). In another clearer instance Stephen retorts in reaction to Davin’s relentless Irishness: “the soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. 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” (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 231).

James Joyce’s education and apparently the non-conflictual relation between what he learnt in school and what his family expected from him made him even use a new form of the novel of disillusionment he inherited from Balzac, exemplified by the latter’s *Lost Illusions*. Joyce’s innovation is merging the destinies of the individual and the nation. Lewis argues that in reviewing the plot structure of the novel of disillusionment, Joyce endeavours to surmount the fundamental difference between the “objective view point of the omniscient narrator and the limited perspective of the individual character.” It is via the combination of these two standpoints at the end of the novel, with Stephen’s mounting to the role of narrator, that Joyce launches a “radical revision of the novelistic tradition. At the same moment, Stephen attempts to overcome his

own subjectivity by merging it in the larger fate of his nation” (Lewis, 2000: 13).

This merging of the fate of the individual and his nation can be found in the hero of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, whose collapse coincides with the disintegration of the traditions, religion and language which held his nation together. On the contrary, through *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah shows at all costs that the Ghanaian’s aspiration is at odds with that of his nation. At the end of the novel The Man is at a loss, for he cannot come to terms with the cultural and spiritual aspects of his nation or what is left of them. The plot of the novel is characteristic of the novel of disillusionment, for the main attributes of these types of plots, as Pericles Lewis argues, are: “the individual’s potential to step away from the demands of a temporal, fallen society, and to establish in the intimate sphere a relationship based on higher moral considerations” (Lewis, 2000: 15-24). This applies also to Ngugi’s *The River Between* and *Weep, Not Child* where, as discussed earlier, the protagonists, Waiyaki and Njoroge respectively, find themselves at a loss as to what course of action they could take. Women characters in Ngugi’s works, such as Mumbi, Wanjia and Wariinga are described as helpless before the societal strata and patriarchal propensity. In this regard, Pericles Lewis argues that “a major obstacle to a woman’s encountering society at large was of course the fact that the woman was expected to stay at home, not to venture out in the external hostile world.” That is why many realistic writers described disastrous ends for women characters on their “slightest attempt to leave home” (*ibid*: 15-24) like Wanjia who becomes a brothel holder and Mumbi who betrays her husband. Again, this is perhaps what Ngugi wants to emphasise by portraying the havoc that follows the phase of patriarchy in *A Grain of Wheat*. Still, women characters’ endurance could be read (allegorically), as argued in Ode Ogede’s *Ayi Kwei Armah: The Radical Iconoclast*, as having a pivotal role in

nation-building¹, for experiences such as Araba Jesiwa's represent a "reservoir of love, care, patience, and suffering which are the sources of spiritual healing and self-discovery" (Quoted in Ogede, 2000: 124).

Healing could be seen as the recommended remedy for the ills Ghanaians have acquired due to living in a city life landscape such as the one Armah described in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. It is worth mentioning that women are usually associated in a symbolic way to nation, native lands, country, and birth places. They are, as Ogude put it, the "central metaphor for the nation" (Ogude, 1999: 109). Women are, for example, associated to one's authentic language embedded in the expressions *mother tongue* and *mother land*. Also, the expression *virgin lands* is used in relation to territories which have not been settled or occupied. Hence, in some African novels such as Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*, Armah's *The Healers* and Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* "maternal femininity," like Nyakinyua's (in the fact she stands for the continuity of tradition), Araba Jesiwa's and Sissie's (in her ethical resistance in the face of Western moral degeneration) in Rachel Bowlby's words, "become[s] the measure of how far the good and genuine values have developed, how much progress has been achieved by motherly 'influence'" (Bhabha, 2000: 209).

Pericles Lewis argues in his *Modernism, Nationalism and the Novel* that modern novelists incorporate in their works techniques -multiple narrators, transcriptions of the consciousness, involuntary memory, and arcane symbolism- which shine a light on the individuals' psyches and how they are formed by the nation-state.

¹ Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval Davis argue in "Women and the Nation-State" that women participate in ethnic and national processes in the following ways:

- a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
- b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/ national groups;
- c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;
- d) as signifiers of ethnic/ national differences-as focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in construction , reproduction and transformation of ethnic/ national categories ;
- e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles. (Hutchinson & Smith, 2012: 313).

Indeed, as discussed earlier regarding Ngugi's early works, Ngugi's use of involuntary memory, represented by the autobiographical events in his novels, seems to display how the characters' personalities, and Ngugi's, are shaped by the events, philosophies, religions of the social environment in which they find themselves. Waiyaki's, and the narrator's indecision concerning religion and the type of leadership that could fit the Kenyans at this juncture reflects the nation's divided stances regarding these matters. Also, the events in *The River Between* and *Weep Not Child* are about the Kenyan nation's considerable debates on the (new) elements of their own identity. These debates were responsible for the foundation of Gikuyu independent schools in the 1930s which were built as Simon Gikandi made it 'on a very problematic philosophical foundation': that one could be educated in colonial schools and could still retain his affiliation with Gikuyu traditional culture. But Ngugi's career as a writer was also the result of his education in the Protestant Church and the mission schools before. These institutions, each on its part, 'held promises of emancipation from the bonds of class and ethnicity', yet they also resulted in 'unexpected dilemmas.' For instance, Protestantism was linked to the bourgeois mode of life. For one was not Christian merely because he embraced a certain belief; rather, being Christian was related to how far one was able to lead a modern way of life which constituted, as Simon Gikandi states in *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, a "new monetary economy, mode of dress, set of cultural values, and even architecture" (Gikandi, 2000: 39).

Furthermore, arcane symbolism cannot be missed especially in the works of Armah and Awoonor. We can find this in the severing of Solo's sexual genitals in the desert in *Why Are We So Blest?*; The Man's escape along with Koomson through the lavatory and the former swimming back to the shores; The Man's meeting with the old woman and her final words with him; the religious community at the shore in *Fragments*; Amamu's meeting with the woman of the sea and his final death in *This Earth, My Brother* and in the death of Abdulla's donkey in *Petals of Blood*.

It is worth noting that *This Earth, My Brother* echoes in many ways T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land". First, like Eliot, Awoonor incorporates references in his novel. These references are mainly from Dante's works, the Bible and religious existentialism represented by Kierkegaard. Indeed, Awoonor chose Dante's words on death as an epigraph for his novel:

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell of that wood, savage and harsh and dense, the thought of which renews my fear! So bitter is it that death is hardly more.

Dante's Inferno. Canto I

Still, by his use of the epigraph, Awoonor, as mentioned earlier, directs the reader's attention towards, and emphasises the persistency of "life beyond the grave" in the Ewe dirge". Kierkegaard's quoted words also emphasize the lamentation related to death: "infinite resignation is that shirt we read about in the old fable. The thread is spun with tears, the cloth bleached with tears, the shirt sewn with tears" (*This Earth My Brother*, 115). Then death is mentioned again through biblical verses: "nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (76). This verse, like the epigraph in *A Grain of Wheat*, emphasizes the sacrifice of one's life so as the whole nation survives.

Nonetheless, in many ways, the novels in question reflect the authors' will to see African nations becoming free from their colonial shackles. The novelists in question, as Fredrick Cooper argues, "were the first intellectuals to bring before a wide public inside and outside the African continent profound questions about the corruption within postcolonial governments and the extent to which external domination persisted" (Cooper, 1994: 1524). Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* and *Comes the Voyager at Last*; Armah's *Osiris Rising* and *Kmt* (including earlier writings such as *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*) do all reflect the authors' wish to see a different reality in Africa. The writers of these works, therefore, think that the "contamination" of European colonialism is not an "insuperable obstacle, that the language and the form can

be used in resistant or oppositional ways, reclaimed from their colonialist heritage and appropriated for African ends” (Williams, 1999:18). The novels above do this by what could best be described as setting ideals (old and new) or imagining their communities in the actual process of freeing themselves from the deficiencies of their objective reality or the *status quo*. Okpewho points out that the narration in *Two Thousand Seasons* “rejects the present social history of Africa as unrepresentative of its true character and so projects us ,in true prophetic fashion, to a vision of an African that is free of its shackles and guided by an ideology or religion -‘the way’” (Okpewho, 1983: 205).

Moreover, Armah’s (and Ngugi’s) novels can be read as complementary. In his early works, Armah was engaged in recording the present’s dissatisfactory realities; besides, he analyses the implications of these realities such as the complex coloniser-colonised relationship; then in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* he returns to the past to depict an African society which, imperfect as it was, is characterised by being a purely African landscape. Also, Ngugi seems to be doing what Armah did in five novels in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on The Cross* and *A Wizard on the Crow* wherein he depicts the present unpleasant realities, then moves back to an ideal past where things used to be purely African. This weaving of past and present has in it also an attempt to project a vision into the future. The dissatisfactory realities in Armah’s novels could be summed as: the total immersion of Africans in the materialism dictated by Western commodity culture; the betrayal of the ideals of revolution by African leaders; and seeking power for personal aggrandizement and the betrayal of nationalism and independence. One of the crucial factors of these predicaments is that those who were supposed to lead their people “have been conditioned to lose sight of the aim” (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 221).

This leadership is characterised by “its inability and unwillingness to connect organically with the African people because it always wants first of all to connect with Europe and Europeans” (221). In the same novel Armah contrasts these leaders who were made to lose sight of the aim with the Maji

Maji leaders who could drive people to resist the enemy by convincing them that extraordinary water, maji, had the power to make the warriors unaffected by gunfire. Armah argues that the Maji leaders were successful in two terms: first, psychologically, they removed “the fear of death” or “the fear”, as he continues, “of white people, agents of death.” Second, practically, they neutralised ‘the white people’s implements and strategies of death.’ Armah argues that maji was an invented idea, but an idea that stemmed from the local background of Tanzanians. Truly this idea as Armah sees it is “faulty, magical, not practicable”, but it is the responsibility of African leaders to correct it through the use of their position in power. Armah is for ‘inventing traditions’ by Africans to help them achieve their aims: “The maji is not something existent, waiting to be collected and used. It would be something to be created, an antidote to the potent poison of European poison absorb so much of it ourselves, we become completely incapable of creating a real, workable maji. We are addicted to the poison that kills us” (222). The “way” in *Two Thousand Seasons* could be considered as an ideology that is meant to stand for the creative solutions that the African identity should be armed with.

As mentioned earlier, the African novels, like the oral narratives, are meant to reinforce and “update”, as it were, the African identities. Hence, they are loaded with ideologies, like the “way”, which function as a source of knowledge of the identity of a certain imagined community. This is so because “ideologies”, as Appiah puts it, “succeed to the extent that they are invisible, in the moment that their network of assumptions passes beneath consciousness; genuine victories are won without a shot being fired” (Appiah, 1992: 60). Althusser views ideology as a ‘representational structure’ which allows the individual subject to envisage his “lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as the social structure or the collective logic of History.” Althusser thus has a structural reading of Marxism in which the mode of production or the structure, which is the entire system of relationships between the different levels (forces of production, relations of production, the economic, the political, the juridical, ideology and culture), is “an absent cause.” It was mentioned earlier

that the sense of history as an 'absent cause' is inaccessible to us only in textual form. Besides, our approach to it and to 'the Real' itself ineluctably passes through its previous textualization, "its narrativization in the political unconscious" (Jameson, 1981: 36). These ideas and system of beliefs of a certain class are represented as matching the interest of the whole imagined community: "Each new class is . . . compelled . . . to represent its interests as the common interests of all members of society, put in an ideal form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones" (Williams, 1977: 66).

Emmanuel Ngara's view of ideology as explained in, *Ideology and Form in African Poetry* is that it "refers to that aspect of the human condition under which people operate as conscious actors". Ideology, for Ngara, is the means through which "human consciousness works". The people's perception of religious conviction, political beliefs, ethics, art and knowledge is profoundly affected by their ideology. Ngara adds that what people observe and accept as true primarily depends on their ideology, for ideology is "the medium through which we comprehend and interpret reality. Reality itself exists objectively outside our consciousness and independently of any particular individual, but how one sees and interprets it depends in part on one's level of ideological development" (Quoted in Ngara, 1990: 11).

Karl Mannheim, in his *Ideology and Utopia*, discusses historically and philosophically the formation of the term ideology in order to contrast it later to the term utopia. He argues that although ideologies and utopias fulfil different social functions (the former operating as class devices, a set of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs in order to perpetuate a given social order, and the latter operating as devices of other classes to transform that order), they both derive from an ideal origin. They are 'incongruous with' the existing social situation, besides, 'both have an ideal content, since they overlap with the structure of empirical reality by carrying within them discreet and opposing sets of representations of society

and the world in general. For Mannheim the establishment of theoretical ground of idealist philosophy by Kant together with other German philosophers like Hegel had a crucial role in the formation of the concepts of ideology and utopia (Goodwin, 2002: 44).

This is consistent also with Fredric Jameson's view that makes of his interpretive endeavour a 'positive' Marxist analysis. For him the question which should be posed is: how is it possible for a text that contains its cultural background and "fulfils a demonstrably ideological function as a hegemonic work whose formal categories as well as its content secure the legitimation of this or that form of class domination"- how could it be possible for such a text to exemplify an appropriately Utopian impulse, or to reverberate a universal value which is not in agreement with the shrink confines of class privilege that "inform its immediate ideological vocation?" (Jameson, 1981: 288). For Jameson the answer to this question is considering "all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes-is in its very nature Utopian" (Jameson, 1981: 289).

The ideology or world view, inculcated orally by the family and natio, is used to narrate a different and distant history, a tradition, a singular culture and most of all a genesis. "Families", Mudimbe argues, "reenact this discourse in their ordinary lives". For example, "mothers consciously transmit its rules to their children (teaching the origins of culture as they force upon the child an internalization of a civilization [...and] its values)" (Mudimbe, 1994: xiii). Yet, Janus-facedly, this very ideology incorporates within it the awareness (be it false consciousness or true) that Western education or the 'printed' knowledge means power. What Ngugi, Armah and Awoonor have tried to accentuate in their novels is the teaching of an opposite ideology to the one taught by both the Western world and the illiterate or averagely educated people in Ghana (and Africa at large). Their utopian novels depict the modern African intellectual not as a passive onlooker, like Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* or

Baako in *Fragments*, but as an actual and active participant in the revitalization of (some) cultural elements of pre-colonial African imagined communities for the sake of invigorating the African educated people towards realising the ideals set in them (the novels). *The Healers*, for instance, depicts Armah's ideal leaders in the actual realisation of an ideology akin to the "way" spelled out in *Two Thousand Seasons*. The healers such as Damfo and the newly converted to their way, Densu, and others are, as Derek Wright argues, "a group of illuminate" whose aim is to raise the awareness of their society, to train extraordinary individuals to reorganize the political base of society and to rebuild a new life for the Black race. The practice of healing is the process by which this aim is to be materialised (Wright, 1992: 324). The philosophy behind this practice, like religion, satisfies Densu's metaphysical questions. Right from the beginning Densu, the twenty year old, is shown to be interested in knowing the source and meaning of the competition games in which people of Esuano held each chosen year. The narrating voice informs us that these are ritual games of remembrance that black people were one. Densu asks the elders about that, but it seems that no one heeds unity, for now all people of this village know and are interested in is that they are Fantse and that there are other tribes with manners and languages not much different from each other:

The older people, most of them, had not given much thought to that kind of question really. When Densu asked them what the games were for, some said they did not understand the question itself. Others asked Densu a question a question to answer his: why had such a question become so important to him? They asked, because at Esuano the remembrance of a larger community had become a faint remnant from a forgotten past. There were people who knew stories of a time when the black people were rather silent, as if the question raised in their minds a regret that overwhelmed their tongues. At Esuano the people, most of them, were content to know themselves as Fantse people. They knew of other people with ways and language not really different from their own: Denchira, Wassa, Assen, Aowin, Nzema, Ekuapem, Asante. But they had not been brought up in the habit of thinking of all these as parts of a whole embracing themselves. The meaning of ceremonies of unity had faded (*The Healers*, 6).

The narrator also relates that these ritual games, which were the symbolic rituals of people's struggle to reach a common destination, are now a field where individuals demonstrate their strengths and one person in the end will be declared triumphant:

Something else. A few remembered the old ceremonies as rituals in which all people of Esuano had done things together to reach difficult destinations. But then that too had changed. The games were now trials of individual strength and skill. At their end a single person would be chosen victor, and isolated for admiration of spectators and the envy of defeated competitors (*The Healers*, 6).

The healers give the impression that they are playing the role of guides of their community to the way again; that is unity; besides, efforts should be made towards the consolidation of community. Their creed (healing) is an attempt to heal first the individual by dint of reconciling his body and soul and making him explore his true self and refuse to live after the manner others would fancy him to live. Then the healers are willing to lead the whole community to an ideal state. But before that is realised there should be a preparation for the "way" again. This comes by persuading the members of the society that are ready to accept healing ideas and values. Densu, for instance, who is inquisitive to get deeper in matters rather than accepting things as they are, asks Anan, a member of the healers, about "which thing made him the happiest." "Seeing" is the answer Anan gives to Densu, and after another inquiry Densu makes, Anan clarifies that seeing that interests him is a special kind, it is the one that makes people comprehend things. This may suggest that Anan is encouraging Densu to observe natural phenomena around him instead of taking things for granted. For this way of "seeing" things would raise questions and that in its own right would lead to finding solutions to the questions.

This method, by extension, could be applied to society. Densu demonstrates his readiness to 'convert' to the healers' philosophy by refusing Ababio's attempt to coax him to defeat the prospective king, Appia, in the games. Now Densu "desired a life lived with people who did not see other human beings only as materials they could use and handle" (*The Healers*, 49).

This makes Densu approach the healers even closer and this time he holds a conversation with Damfo (apparently the leader of healers). In this conversation the young Densu expresses his disbelief in any deity and considers evil all that relegates life to death. The relationship between the sacred and people should be that of love, respect and fear. Therefore, Densu decides not to worship any deity. While teaching him the principles of the healers' philosophy, Damfo explains to Densu its political outlook: "the learner does not go to the king's court. . . The learner avoids going to any place where men go to seek power over other men'. The kind of power the heales might need is social but according to them that 'must not be diseased" (*The Healers*, 94). Damfo explains to Densu that the healers aspire to see a new kind of power which is to be sought in individuals with power who are ready to listen to them and believe in their claims. We learn later that the person with power they hope to find is the commander of Ashanti armies Asamoa Nkwanta. Armah chose to relate the story of Asamoa Nkwanta under the title *The Root of Asamoa Nkwanta's Sorrow*, which reminds one of the title of Baako's TV script in *Fragments*, *The Root*. In this sub-story Damfo tells Densu that the source of this commander's suffering was that he was treated like a slave by the royal court. Asamoa Nkwanta was humiliated by the killing of his nephew on the pretext of following the custom of avenging (by killing any one found on the streets) for the assassination of the king Nana Kweku Dua. Damfo thinks that in order for Asamoa Nkwanta to be healed he has to understand in depth what slavery means: "What happened to him is important . . . he was treated like a slave .That shattered him. If the pieces of his life are to come together again, he must understand what shattered him and conquer it . . . he'll be wise, in addition to being strong" (*The Healers*, 99).

Healing individuals is based on the belief that the individual's problem, even if physical like Araba Jesiwa's barrenness, finds its roots in his/her psyche. The problem be it what it may is shown to be the result of an asymmetry between the body and the soul that is caused by the different 'selves' in the

person. Because of lack of this kind of knowledge, the individual ignores which is among these selves is his true self, which could lead even to killing it.

In inspiration, the practice of healers against manipulators, there is no such a thing as forcing the person to do things for them. They give much importance to the individual's assent to share the work with them (which is altogether for the benefit of the community) rather than making him move for their profit: "If I'm not spiritually blind, I see your spirit. I speak to it if I want to invite you to do something with me. If your spirit agrees it moves your body and your body acts. That is inspiration" (*The Healers*, 81). The healers help the person recover the peace between his body and soul, but they also think of "the healing work-the kind that transcends the healing of individuals" (*The Healers*, 99). This means that their intention is to heal the whole community of the black race. The healers start by raising consciousness as to the importance of being acquainted to one's natural environment. The individual should understand the sounds of this environment and read the signs in it. For instance, Damfo tells Densu that he should know everything about the trees and how the leaves could be used in curing the body. He must be ready all the time to use this kind of knowledge. Damfo calls the "shadow" to nurse anyone injured. After he is cured by the healers, Asamoa Nkwanta intends to use this kind of knowledge to lure the British army into the forest. According to him, the British armies have devastating weapons but a weak spirituality, for they are not on equal terms with the "surrounding universe." On the contrary, the healers embody truth, harmony, insightfulness and intuitiveness. Appia's gracefulness is stressed in the ritual games. Anan teaches Densu the deep and right way of seeing things. Densu is prepared morally to resist the tantalising promises of Ababio. Densu could have easily secured a good future as a ruler on the side of the invading forces. But he is portrayed as someone who dislikes the use of power for personal aggrandisement. We learn by the end of the novel that the attempts to resist the Ashanti army led by Asamoa Nkwanta are doomed to failure. The latter is caused by the betrayal of Ashanti kings who prefer to maintain their position in power rather than fighting against the British armies. They think that

if Asamoah Nkwanta is left to lead the Ashanti armies, he could be a rival to their authority.

However, the healers could not have expected things to change over night, since destruction was the result of the accumulation of centuries of Africans being away from their true selves. The healers, therefore, believe that their mission requires patience and that results could take centuries to come out. Damfo explains to Densu that

The disease –the break-up of that community-has taken centuries and centuries, thousands of years. Most of our people do not even wish to imagine any such possibility of wholeness. If you talk to them now of the unity of all the earth's black people they stare at you like idiots. Some can understand, but even they are confused. . . Often, our confusion comes merely from impatience. The disease has run unchecked through centuries. Yet sometimes we dream of ending it in our little lifetimes, and despair seizes us if we do not see the end in sight . . . a healer needs to see beyond the present and tomorrow. He needs to see years and decades ahead. Because healers work for results so firm they may not be wholly visible till centuries have flowed into mellenia. Those willing to do this necessary work, they are healers of our people (*The Healers*, 84).

Furthermore, Armah's later novels *Osiris Rising* and *KMT*, and Awoonor's *Comes the Voyager at Last* contain the dream of the reverse journey from the diaspora to African nations, or as Ashcroft refers to it in his *Remembering the Future: Utopianism in African Literature* "recuperative return" to Africa. For Ashcroft "postcolonial utopianism, as for most contemporary utopian theory, Utopia is no longer a place but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world. The space of utopia has become the space of social dreaming" (Ashcroft, 2012: 02). Contemporary African writers such as Awoonor and Armah depict characters such as Lumumba, in *Comes The Voyager at Last*, Lindela in *KMT*, and Ast in *Osiris Rising* in the process of returning to modern African nations. In the latter Ast expresses the need for the return:

That was the key-creativity. But such crimes had shaped the country she was born in that she wasn't sure creative beginning could survive. True, the shaping crimes had yielded tremendous wealth. And certainly, wealth had given springs to a dynamic innovative drive. But this vast energy was

wasted in the same power lust that had deepened the destruction of Africa and turned her ancestors into captives in a country crowing freedom. She knew she would return (*KMT*, 01).

Like Ngugi, Armah seems to attribute education an influential role in ‘decolonizing the minds’ of members of his imagined community. Most of the protagonists in Ngugi’s works are educated like Waiyaki in the *River Between* and Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child* and Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat*. Except for Wanja, whose education had been cut short because of her being ravaged by Kimeria, the rest of the characters in *Petals of Blood* are all related to education in that they either teach at school like Munira and Karega, school boys like Joseph or potential ones like Wanja’s expected baby. Besides, Ngugi sketched some characters as teachers of traditions like Nyakinyua and of resistance like Abdullah. Likewise, protagonists in Armah’s fiction are primarily educated such as Baako, Solo and Modin. In his later novels *Osiris Rising* and *KMT* characters, including Asar, Tete, Ast, Professor Jengo, Lindela Imana, Djiely Hor and Astw Konate, are mostly PhD holders.

The above novels display how the Western educational system inherited by postcolonial Africa has contributed to creating confusion in the minds of the youth as to their true selves. Thus they could contrive no social projects meant to “heal” the whole imagined community. In *Osiris Rising*, Asar and his group Dineo Letsie and Bai Kamara argue that such a system is meant to maintain the Africans in a subordinate position, in a position where they are not manufacturers but mere consumers of the Western goods. As mentioned earlier, Armah’s portrayal of characters trying to reform the curriculum is a representation of his endeavours at the National University of Lesotho in 1976. This endeavour is similar to the curriculum suggested jointly by Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Henry Owuor-Anyumba, and Taban Lo Liyong in September and October of 1968 in the Department of English at Makerere University in Nairobi. Again, the revolutionary efforts the characters make in *Osiris Rising* echo the search for relevance and revitalization of old values characters like Karega are involved in *Petals of Blood*. The characters in *Osiris Rising* suggest

another curriculum of African Studies after providing a critical view of the old curricula, which, for them, matched the aims of the colonial enterprise that is to keep Africa underdeveloped:

PROPOSALS FOR A NEW CURRICULUM

In the past several years debate on curriculum change has intensified on this campus concerning the point of departure there is no controversy: the structure and content of our educational system were both inherited from the colonial administration. That would pose no problem if our present educational aims were compatible with the aims of the colonial system, They are not.

Those colonial aims were plain. Colonialism was a post-conquest European strategy for keeping Africans usably under developed and dependent. Our present educational aims are no less clear. In principal the focus is the liberation of African intelligence to work for the benefit of our continent and society. Reflexes designed long ago to achieve the subjugation of Africans cannot serve to free us. Training systems designed to inculcate servile reflexes cannot work to teach habits of freedom. Instruments designed to keep our economies and societies under developed independent cannot serve to develop our continent and to liberate our productive intelligence. To achieve our liberatory aims we need to abandon the old colonial reflexes and instruments, and to replace them with instruments and reflexes of our making, rationally tailed to the achievement of our aims. Hence the need to change the structure and content of our educational system (*Osiris Rising*, 213-14).

Armah makes the events under the projects detailed in the novel likely to happen, for although they look utopian, Armah seems to be suggesting that this utopia is an endeavour to correct and supplant the present dystopia of nationalism. In this respect Ashcroft argues in an article entitled *Spaces of Utopia* that:

The concept of the nation, or at least the nation-state, has been robustly critiqued in the field because the postcolonial nation is marked by disappointment, instituted on the boundaries of the colonial state and doomed to continue its oppressive functions. Postcolonial utopian vision takes various forms but it is always hope that transcends the disappointment and entrapment of the nation-state (Ashcroft, 2012: 04).

The protagonists in *Osiris Rising* provide an alternative detailed curriculum, which makes it seem as if the utopian were to be realised. But prior

to that, they mention how studying African nations in colonial times had different purposes: military, administrative and ideological:

The principal military purpose was to locate exploitable antagonisms between constituent African groups so that campaigns of military subjugation could be conducted with maximum effectiveness and minimal loss of European personnel and material resources. The administrative purpose was mainly to find out where the fissures and lines of force in African society ran, so as to enhance European penetration and control with a minimum expenditure of metropolitan effort, manpower and funds. The missionary purpose was ideological penetration: to find out the nature and limits of the African people's ideological defences in order to facilitate their breakdown, followed by the substitution of Eurocentric doctrines for African conceptions in the minds of growing generations of the conquered people (*Osiris Rising*, 215).

The reformists then provided a critical approach to the old curriculum of History. The latter aimed at presenting African imagined communities as unhistorical. History according to the designers of the old curriculum began in the West:

HISTORY

THE BACKGROUND

Colonial historiography here began and ended with the evolution of Western society. History began in Greece and culminated in NATO. Asia, Amerindian, Australia, the Pacific rim were at best a backdrop for the march of Western man.

African History did not exist. On this fallacy, Western scholars were unanimous, from conservative Oxbridgemen sure that Africans could never make history, to Marxists selling us the murderously generous dogma that it was European imperialism that brought Africans into history (*Osiris Rising*, 216).

The third domain which they suggested must be reformed is literature. The old approach of stereotypical formula was that Africa had no literature of its own. The belief was that the oral tradition was inadequate and thus Western literature was the solution to illuminate African learners:

LITERATURE

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The enormous wealth of African literary records, ancient, traditional and modern, should have made mystification in this area impossible. But the colonial educational system managed through a combination of ignorance and distortion, to create an academic myth of Africans as a haphazard collection of people with no literature.

Concurrently, the study of the literature of the world outside the West-China, Japan, Russia-was systematically ignored. Literature came to mean Western literature. In the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, that attitude was not abandoned; it was laundered. African Literature was considered a consequence of the impact of Western literature. Even scholars who sought the roots of African literature beyond the West contended themselves with imprecise indications of the oral heritage as latent source. The written literature of ancient Africa, the artistic record of ancient Egypt, remained unrecognized as the oldest source and instance of African literature (*Osiris Rising*, 219).

Besides, the old curriculum of literature taught African students that there was no link whatever between this field and “the political and ideological upheavals of society, except for received metropolitan ideologies” (*Osiris Rising*, 219). The focus in this approach was on the aesthetic aspect, that is, art for art’s sake.

The alternative approaches the students suggest have to do with the field they think must be reformed. As far as African Studies are concerned, they suggest an approach that would increase the consciousness as to the importance of transcending the false traditions and identities Africans recognized thoughtlessly as theirs after gaining the so called independence, which actually prepared to the stage of “in dependence.” Consequently, African studies have to have a PanAfricanist approach, besides taking into consideration reinstalling Africa into its ‘true’ historical legacy:

Principles for a New Approach to African Studies.

Our guiding principle is unitary not divisive. In place of the old anti-historical approach, we advocate a dynamic consciousness of history as process. We are for the inclusive use of all sources, written and oral. We propose a rational definition of the African people: historically, all continent’s inhabitants before the Arab and European invasions of the last few millennia. We advocate the reinstatement of Ancient Egypt at

the centre of African History and culture. We think African Studies programs should embrace the intellectual universe of our entire continent, including Ancient Egypt (*Osiris Rising*, 215).

As for History, it is suggested that a new approach should be pursued. Orality, archaeology and linguistics should be used as tools in order to surmount excess dependence on written documents. Moreover, Egyptology should be a central approach to studying African History. African students should, therefore, be taught hieroglyph to enable them to have access to first hand sources. Also, due attention should be given to world history instead of the irrational concentration on a section of it. Point 5 and 6 of the recommendations as to how African literature should be taught are markedly vital:

5. The production of written literature is not modern innovation Africa owes to the West. It is an ancient and indigenous skill once fully possessed, lost under conditions of dehumanization distress, now retrieved in different forms, under different circumstances.

6. There is a millennia-old literary tradition in Africa, both oral and written, in which literature fulfils a definite function in the enterprise of social construction. Within that tradition literary artists were skilled, professionally trained craftspersons. It should be the vocation of university departments to revitalize this tradition (*Osiris Rising*, 220).

Armah's emphasis on the importance of possessing institutions is for the sake of putting into effect the 'true' world view of Africans. For, as he notes, institutions help Africans "maintain the good" they have. The idealist "recuperative return" of African Americans, according to the logic of the novel, requires a preparation. For their return is not seen as a mere physical reconnection to Africa, but more as the establishment of "true" scholastic and intellectual institutions such as those in Ancient Egypt. "According to Ode Ogede (2000) Per Ankh means "The House of Life" and was the name of the cultural and intellectual institutions ancient Egyptians established for the preservation of their ancestral heritage" (Quoted in Kakraba & Addei, 2011: 428). Armah points out that Per Ankh or House of Life is

Ancient, millennia old. Behind it lies the understanding that left to themselves, ideas, however powerful the force of their logic, are impotent unless living individuals and groups can give them life through regular practice in institutional contexts. Otherwise, even if they do not disappear completely from consciousness, they exist as insubstantial ghosts, abstractions incapable of changing the brute quality of life (*Osiris Rising*, 295).

The endless questions coming from Asar, the Mystic Comrade and finally Tete to Ast constitute a training and introduction into the Per Ankh. Her preparation and initiation are of paramount importance in that they toughen her to be prepared for the hazards and sufferings that came her way in the novel. It is this basic knowledge that makes her subsequently accept Asar's death at the end of the novel. It also makes her stronger against the evil intrigues of the conniving character, Set, who represents the neo-colonial administration. Ast's journey to Bara has a symbolic implication. "Bara is the house of knowledge and it is where Ast finds her African identity. Her initiation into The Companionship of Ankh also begins in Bara under the tutelage of Tete" (Addei and Kakraba, 2011: 428).

According to Armah (1995), the New World Africans who go to Africa can be classified into two categories: On one hand are those who go in search of self-renewal, individual power, and personal healing. The second group are those genuinely seeking for communal involvement, for bonding; those who want to carry out work aimed at turning the whole society around. Though each group holds the belief that meaning, value, and love can be found only outside the alienating malaise of Western society, in Africa what distinguishes them is that the first category of people seek these things exclusively for themselves, while the second group not only wishes those things spread out to everyone in the society but works actively to realize the objective. It is a distinction between self-centeredness and modesty, between primitive acquisitiveness and a commitment to giving and sharing (Quoted in Addei and Kakraba, 2011: 428).

The first category of returnees is represented by the opportunist, Ras Jomo Equino Cinque and Earl Johnson while Ast belongs to the second one as she proves that she is dedicated to the entire rejuvenation of Africa.

The utopian return to African identity is a central theme in his seventh novel, *KMT: The House of Life* as well. In this narrative, Armah is still

consistent in highlighting the importance of the institution of education to recuperating Africa's lost legacy. Also, in this novel Armah insists on considering the current educational system inherited from Europe as a handicap, an obstacle before the 'awakening' can take place. In chapter three entitled *The Awakener*, a university curriculum is described as "a basic introduction to the universe in the shape of a monument built to meet European needs" (89). The reform or re-Africanization must produce a history that will restore Africa's true cultural image, liberated from the colonial legacy (history) which tends to westernize the African intellectual, whom Lindela Imana refers to as "... a new of African thinker with navels securely buried in Europe" (Armah, 2002: 134). The reawakening also exacts overhauling the whole educational structure, "moving from the old charlatanism that was our education" (Armah, 2002: 114). For this reason, in this narrative Armah prescribes the need for a collective African academic rebirth and a return to the study of Egyptology. Lindela and Jengo's visit to Yarw is symbolic like Ast's visit to Bara in *Osiris Rising*. Lindela Imana expresses her spiritual bond with Yarw on the way long before her physical contact with the place she has never been to before:

I could understand the feeling, steady all the way to the junction, that this was familiar territory. I'd been here before. What I could not understand was the persistence of this feeling after Jengo turned the car onto the track to Yarw. We were on our way to a place I'd never seen, yet the further we drove into this landscape, the stronger my impression that I'd been here, too, before (KMT, 126).

Lindela experiences a spiritual connection with Yarw akin to the spiritual contact between Ast and Africa long before she joins it physically. Lindela's spiritual connection with Yarw is equally significant in the sense that Yarw is "The House of Life and the symbol of the African culture and identity" In this novel Armah, like in *Osiris Rising*, continues to emphasize the idea of collective leadership for the sake of sharing the knowledge with the grassroots. It, therefore, calls for the union of scholars and traditionalists represented respectively by Professor Jengo and Lindela Imana on the one hand and Djily Hor and Astw Konate on the other (Kakraba & Addei, 2011: 430). This would

result in “moving in the same direction” “sharing the same vision, and knowing how to work” (Armah, 2002: 132). Armah argues that conversations held daily could disseminate ideas of a unified vision and moving in the same direction. This is so because conversations are more casual, and when held in daily life they are easier, closer to reality than speeches and lectures. This notion clearly comes out when Lindela engages Professor Jengo in a dialogue:

“Suppose you’re right, the wall gets broken down, and confidence is somehow established between traditionalists and academics. What do you expect to happen?”

“Honest conversation. For the first time, genuine contact between the traditionalists and us, academic scholars doing research, needing to know what they know.”

“Each group will have to learn to accept the other as an extension of itself. That’s an awfully difficult assignment.”

“But not impossible...” (*Osiris Rising*, 118).

Armah was preceded by a number of African American writers who brought up the Kemet in their literary writings. For instance, there was Martin Delany’s essay on ancient Kemet entitled “*Origins and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry*” in 1853. He writes, “Being a people of a high order of intellect, and subject to erudite and profound thought, the Egyptians and Ethiopians were the first who came to the conclusion that man was created in the similitude of God”. Delany recorded his knowledge of Egypt during the enslavement period when, in many states, literacy was still a crime in the case of Africans. Scholars who contributed to what is regarded as the Negro Studies movement, presented accounts of ancient African traditions as early as the antebellum period. In 1983 Harold Cruse urged agents of institutionalized Black Studies to create authentic fiction portraying ancient Antiquity that draws upon the imaginary regeneration of the works of William Leo Hansberry or Chancellor Williams. Hansberry was born in 1894 and Williams in 1898. Hansberry’s youth was a search for guides and sources that documented Africa’s olden role in world civilizations. By 1922 having taught courses on topics of African anteriority at Howard University, he had turned into an important critical voice on African

anteriority. Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilization* published in 1971 was the sum total of his lectures at Howard in the 1950s.

Creative writing as well showed the African American's wont desire to show the secrets of ancient Egypt. In *Invisible Man* (1947) Ralph Ellison's protagonist perceives the deprivation of an elderly dispossessed couple, remarking:

Yes, these old folks had a dream book, but the pages went blank and it failed to give them the number. It was called the Seeing Eye, The Great Constitutional Dream Book, The Secrets of Africa, The Wisdom of Ancient Egypt—but the eye was blind, it lost its luster. It's all cataracted like a cross-eyed carpenter and it doesn't saw straight. All we have is the Bible and this Law here rules that out. So, where do we go? Where do we go from here, without a pot--? (Ellison, 1989: 279-80).

Ellison signifies on the spiritual things African Americans have lost through their sleep. Louis Peterson in his play *Take a Giant Step* (1953) shows how when a white high school teacher mocks dismissively the agency of Africans enslaved in America, the protagonist Spence responds by saying, "when she got through talking they sounded like the worst morons that ever lived and I began to wonder how they'd managed to live a few thousand years all by themselves in Africa with nobody's help." "Even amidst recent (2008) re-evaluations of Peterson's work critics still ignore the direct reference to African anteriority while featuring only the insult to the enslaved" (Temple, 2012: 132). In James Baldwin's play *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1963), "he addresses the ancient record before Christianity and laments the loss of ancient African cosmologies related to immortalization":

MERIDIEN: I'm a Christian. I've been a Christian all my life, like my Mama and my Daddy before me and like their Mama and Daddy before them. Of course, if you go back far enough, you get to a point *before* Christ, if you see what I mean, B.C.—and at that point, I've been thinking, black people weren't raised to turn the other cheek, and in the hope of heaven. No, they didn't have to take low. Before Christ. They walked around just as good as anybody else, and when they died, they didn't go to heaven, they went to join their ancestors. My son's dead, but he's not gone to join the ancestors (Baldwin, 1963: 38).

As both Kemetic and cosmological inquiries, two of the three literary samples of subtle ancient reference address, as in Armah's novels, the question of the apparent paradox between Western religion and race. Kemet's importance resurfaced in the writings of Harlem Renaissance/New Negro represented by the works of W. E. B Du Bois and Alain Locke, mainly through the critics' concern with parades and ritual. W. E. B. Du Bois mentions Kemet in his 1911 pageant *Star of Ethiopia* describing Africa's gifts to the world, namely the "Gift of civilization in the dark and splendid valley of the Nile." Du Bois calls on a form of ancient Kemet with the call, "Hear ye, year ye! All of them that come to know the Truth, and listen to the tale of the wisest and gentlest of the races of men whose faces be Black. Hear ye, hear ye, of the Second Gift of Black men to this world, the Gift of civilization in the dark and splendid valley of the Nile. Men of the world, keep silence and hear ye this." The pageant introduces the "Gift of the Nile" as the "Second Gift of the Negro to the world," and the image Du Bois endeavours to suggest endorses the significance of the African ancient record:

The 100 savages [sic] thronged round the whole Court rise and stand listening. Slowly there come fifty veiled figures and with them come the Sphinx, Pyramid, the Obelisk and the empty Throne of the Pharaoh drawn by oxen. As the cavalcade passes, the savages, wondering, threatening, inquiring, file by it. Suddenly a Black chieftain appears in the entrance, with the Uraeus in one hand and the winged Beetle in the other. The Egyptians unveil the throne and the cavalcade, led by posturing dancers and Ra, and followed by Egyptians and savages, pass in procession around to the right to the thunder of music and tomtoms. As they pass, Ra is crowned as Priest and King. While the Queen of Sheba and the Candace of Ethiopia join the procession at intervals. Slowly intervals. Slowly all pass out save fifty savages [sic], who linger examining their gifts (Quoted in Temple, 2012: 134).

Another figure holding the same view was Paul Carter Harrison. In 1972 he declared that the Black man is "more than the sum of his Babylonian acquired parts, a force that, owing to its African cosmological orientation, its unique world view, defies sociological explanation and its growing strong, a force

gaining momentum of ancestral wisdom that is determined to break the cultural mode that has locked its energies, its expressions, its authentic cultural vision of reality...” He suggests a corrective remark with his review of the whites’ analysis of Ira Aldridge’s theatrical talent as if he was not a produce of “the vigorous models of excellence posited in the accumulative knowledge of our ancestors who raised Pyramids, carved God’s spirit out of stone.” He also admits “traces of [our] accumulative knowledge—our ancestral juju—which gives potency to our endeavors and guides us through proper relationships with forces so that we may be granted clarity of vision.” Regarding cosmology, Harrison writes “African thought presents a system of logic which is derived from a noncontradictory cosmology.”

He explains, African thought has not tried to force reality into fixed limits so it can be recognized as *real*. . . . Cosmic order brings things together on a basis that is nonmechanical in implication . . . At the root of human action and interaction there must necessarily be an explanation that deals with cosmic forces. . . . At the root of human action and interaction there must necessarily be an explanation that deals with cosmic forces. . . The revelation of any mode comes about through an experiencing of the impact of forces cosmically arranged in such a ways that our viscera is committed to the task of restoring harmony” (Quoted in Temple, 2012: 208).

For Armah, black Africa meant Egypt and the latter was the nation of black people. For him, the project of recovering the history of this nation should go hand in hand with recovering the African identity. Naming is a vital pillar of not only personal identity but also collective identity. For names usually carry meanings that stem from religious, geographical or cultural sources.

Kofi Anyidoho (1992), commenting on Armah’s first five novels, observes in his article “*Literature and African Identity: The Example of Ayi Kwei Armah*” that “In Armah’s work, there is a symbolic value to the use of names. Personal names, especially, frequently serve as keys to the cultural and social identity of the characters. The loss or retention of a true African consciousness and identity is often indicated by the name a character bears” (Weight, 1992: 36). Armah argues that “ancient Egyptians considered the loss of one’s name a form of

psychic death.” (Armah, 2006: 203). In *Osiris Rising* and *KMT* the names of the characters that form the Per Ankh and the companions in the house of life testify to this assertion. As in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah uses an overabundance of African names that cut across the entire African continent. Names like Asar, Ast, Manaan, Djan, Bai Kamara, Ndeye Kamara, Duma, Lamine Djatta, Dineo Letsie, Kojo Boanye and Moko in *Osiris Rising* and Lindela Imana, Jengo, Djiely Hor, Astw Konate and Maty in *KMT* have all African backgrounds. This common reference to African culture is significant in Armah’s PanAfricanist project. *Osiris Rising* reflects also Armah’s Egyptologist leanings, for he uses the Egyptian names Asar and Ast. Ast’s grandmother Nwt resists her parents’ determination to name her after a European saint but eventually gives her the African name Ast, the name of the most intelligent divinity (Armah, 1995: 8). Kofi Anyidoho additionally maintains that “with Armah’s central characters, names begin to take on special significance beyond the expression of identity. They lead us into the very center of the character’s being, his fundamental conception of the self as a basis for action or inaction” (Wright, 1992: 37). Indeed, the characters named are not lacking in vitality but are very dynamic and challenging representatives of the route for “clearing new paths to better directions of [life in African nations]” (Armah, 2002: 135), that is, the re-establishment of the African ideals (Kakraba & Addei, 2011: 430).

In the same sense, Ama ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* embodies the dream of the return of the African intellectual to Africa. Sissie appeals to all African migrants to return home. This request symbolizes a profound consideration for the primacy of the commitment to Africa. By doing so, she seems to be involved

in a counter discourse that aims at subverting the colonial stereotype which views the west as a source of wealth and power; a stereotype that is legitimized, reinforced and fostered by male African immigrants. Such a male myth is undermined by Sissie through uncovering the ideological insinuations inherent in the experience of black immigrants who are on a

permanent quest for instant success, urgent prosperity and accessible freedom (Simour, 2009: 461).

There the black African intellectual male is criticised as being a mere parrot reflecting the Western thoughts and manners:

What is frustrating, though in arguing with a nigger who is a “moderate” is that since the interests he is so busy defending are not even his own, he can regurgitate only what he has learned from his bosses for you (*Our Sister Killjoy*, 06).

Sissie is not only disappointed by what she calls a “moderate” male model of the intellectual, but she is also upset with the “idealist professional intellectual”. She affirms fervently that

The academic-pseudo- intellectual version is even more dangerous, who in the face of reality that is more tangible than the massive walls of the slave forts standing along our beaches, still talks of universal truth [...] without doubt, the experience is like what a lover of chess [...] must feel who goes to a partner’s for a game, but discovers he has to play against the dog of the house instead of the master himself (*Our Sister Killjoy*, 06).

Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s writings embody the Kenyan nation’s dream or utopia. Ngugi wa Thiong’o has been greatly influenced by Marx’s theory. In *Ngugi wa Thiong’o Speaks*, a book that contains an interesting number of interviews with Ngugi, he affirms this by considering socialism as the sole favourable frame of thought in dealing with serious matters such as changing the ‘imagined community’ for the better:

I think that any writer who is dealing with serious problems that confront an individual must write about the whole social and political society. I can even go further and say that I believe in the socialist vision. I believe that a writer must write not only to entertain people, but also to change [the nation] for the better. And so far as I am concerned, only if you are working towards a socialist vision, can you be working for the better (Sander, 2006: 23).

D G Killam notes in *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* that Ngugi has been introduced to Marxism through his readings of Fanon (Killam, 1980: 11). Indeed, Ngugi admits in *Decolonizing the Mind*, for instance, his being influenced by Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* which he considers together with Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* as the most informing sources of African writing (Ngugi, 1986: 63). In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon enunciates his philosophy of revolution. This philosophy is instilled from his involvement in the Algerian anticolonial struggle together with his work as a psychiatrist. His conclusion is that the only way for the victims of colonialism to liberate themselves is through fighting back with the use of the same method the oppressor used to repress them-violence. Fanon thought that the colonial victim does not need psychological treatment more than a weapon in his hand to regain his manhood and dignity. Moreover, disillusioned by the French left-wing parties, he concluded that the notion of solidarity of workers of the world was misleading. Therefore, he turned his attention to the peasants. For this class, according to him, is the only class which had not been corrupted by the Western individualistic values (Killam, 1980: 13-4).

Marxism, a doctrine which aspired to fulfil a classless society, is totally utopian. Although Marx criticised Hegel's idealism, he made use in his theory of his (Hegel) dialectic view of history. Instead of the Absolute Spirit he advanced what he called dialectical materialism of history. Friedrich Engels explains in his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* that Marx was greatly influenced also by Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau. The latter and other philosophers defended the view that people are equal by nature and that 'a person's happiness depended on reason and a justly organised society'. Rousseau considered feudalism, which is founded on private property, an unjust social organisation for it created the few haves and the majority have nots. The way out for him was the equal distribution of property among all members of society. Nonetheless, Marx and Engels considered Rousseau and other enlightenment philosophers as seekers of a petty-bourgeoisie utopia (Engels,

1999: 10). Marx was also greatly influenced by Feuerbach. The latter declared in his book *The Essence of Christianity* that there was nothing extrinsic to nature and humanity, and that the supreme beings that people talk of are merely fantastic reflections of humanity's own essence. In this context, Marx wrote having Feuerbach's philosophy essentially in mind that "the criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being" (Quoted in. in Engels, 1999: 15).

Furthermore, after the emergence of a new dominant class in Europe- the bourgeoisie, Marx, using the dialectical materialism, thought that the solution to the inequality and injustice that Europe was suffering from had to be socialism or communism. Joseph. J. Laski in his *Communism* says that communism can be considered as an ideal and a method. Its ideal is to achieve a classless community, for classes are to be eradicated as a result of the common possession of the means of production and distribution. Its method is that it "believes that its ideal can be attained only by means of a social revolution" (Laski, 1968: 11). Ngugi's writings, as a result, can be read as idealist in that such protagonists as Karega in *Petals of Blood* and Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* are both meant to be embodiments of a proletarian revolution against the petty-bourgeoisie to achieve ultimately a classless Kenyan nation. Moreover, the characters in *Petals of Blood* belong to different age groups: old people such as Nyakinyua; then young characters like Karega, Munira, Abdulla and Wanja; younger characters such as Joseph. Ngugi seems to be against age antagonism or the dictatorship of the elders. For him each age group should be given the opportunity to fulfil its social role in the time and space of history:

. . . History was a dance in a huge arena of God. You played your part, whatever your chosen part, and then you left the arena, swept aside by waves of a new step, a new movement in the dance. Other dancers, younger, brighter, more inventive came and played with greater skill, with more complicated footwork, before they too were swept aside yet a greater tide in the movement they helped to create , and other dancers

were thrown up to carry the dance with even newer heights and possibilities undreamt of by an earlier generation (*Petals of Blood*, 340).

Ngugi's invigorating yet revisionary attempt vis-à-vis the old values and traces of his nation touches upon not only the handing down of these values from old people to younger generations, but it also points to the handover of power. He sheds light on this passing of power in his *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams*. Itwika, the name of this act, means literally 'a complete break with what has gone before'; that is, the period of kinship that the Gikuyu had known before there was a revolution that brought about an egalitarian system 'rooted in the family as the basic unit.' The revolutionary councils of this system 'derived their authority from below.' This event was celebrated through a ceremony called after the name of the revolution around every twenty five years. 'The ceremony', Ngugi explains, 'also marks the passing of power from one generation to another' (Ngugi, 1998:38).

In his *Facing Mount Kenya*, Jomo Kenyatta explains in details how this revolution broke out, how the ceremony was held and a constitution was established. The Gikuyu nation were very unhappy with the despotic manner whereby the King ruled them. After asking the king to allow them to farm the land and set up permanent homes, but due to his despotic rule, he did not consider their request. This made the people very angry with him, and they revolted against him in desperation. Kenyatta wrote that the generation which revolted was called *iregi* (revolter). The next generation began cultivation and were named *ndemi* (cutters) "in remembrance of the period when the Gikuyu people began to cut down the forests and established themselves as agriculturists." After King Gikuyu was overthrown, the administration of the country was immediately transformed from a dictatorship to a democratic system which maintained the requirements of the majority of the Gikuyu imagined community. This revolution was given the name *Itwika*, which indicates a boycott with tyranny and change to democracy. This accomplishment was celebrated all over the nation; "feasting, dancing and singing went on with intervals for a period of six moons which proceeded the

new era of government by the people and for the people.” In order to manage the new government effectively, it was essential to have a constitution. This came in form of a revolutionary council, *njama ya Itwika*, which was formed to draft the constitution (Kenyatta, 1968: 187-8).

Kenyatta’s account of the revolution matches that of Ngugi in that the former recorded that in order to maintain the “spirit of the Itwika”, and to avoid any trend to return to the system of despotic government, the change and the election of the government officers should be based on a replacement system of generations. The government was divided into two groups: (a) *Mwangi*, (b) *miana* or *irungu*. The officers’ membership was determined by birth. This means that “if one generation is *mwangi*, their sons shall be called *mina*, and their grandsons be called *mwangi*, and so on. It was further decided that one generation should hold the office of government for a period of thirty to forty years, at the end of which the ceremony of Itwika should take place to declare that the old generation had completed its terms of governing, and that the young generation was ready to take over the administration of the country” (Kenyatta, 1968: 187-9). The group age in the *Petals of Blood* illustrates this point very well in that Nyakinyua represents the old generation; then Munira, Abdullah and Wanja another group; Karega stands for a younger generation; Joseph for another younger one and last and not least Wanja’s expected baby.

Armah’s novels can also be read as utopias for different considerations. First, the ‘way’ which embodies the world view and ethical characteristics of its followers is an ideology that is incongruent with the *status quo*. The narrative in *Two Thousand Seasons* seems to carry a prophetic voice teaching the way. Second, Armah uses liminality explored earlier to make people belonging to his imagined community aware of the inconvenience of adulterating their rituals and beliefs to embrace the modern trend which treasures objects more than men. However pessimistic it may appear, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* shows socially, politically and ethically the bitter daily realities of modern postcolonial Africa. The novelists seem to be addressing what Frantz Fanon describes in the following statement: “The problem is to get to know the place

that these men mean to give their people, the kind of social relations that they decide to set up and the conception that they have of the future of humanity. It is this that counts; everything else is mystification, signifying nothing” (Fanon, 1961: 189).

The liminality mentioned earlier in relation to Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother* can also be noticed in the works of Armah. For most of his protagonists such as The Man, Teacher, Baako and the group of healers are depicted to be aloof, alienated, and invisible sleepwalkers. In his interesting study of Armah, Richard Priebe uses Victor Turner’s work on liminality to argue that Armah’s novels incorporate this element. According to Turner, liminality is vital to comprehend the manner men organize their nations and their myths. In the liminal expressions of ritual it is observed that “social relations are simplified, while myth and ritual are elaborated. That this is so is really quite simple to understand: if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs”. Liminality can be traced in any individual or societal transformation from one state to another. Turner argues that the “threshold people” are in a paradoxical state because they belong neither to the future state nor to the former state. “The liminal figure is “structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible.’ As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture.” Since as far as their former state is concerned, they are considered as belonging to the dead, liminal *personae* are enclosed with symbols of bereavement and putrefaction. Meanwhile, insofar as they have not yet been introduced to a new state, they are surrounded by symbols of birth and revival. Their existence in this phase of womb/sepulchre duality can be a harbinger of new possibilities since there is a generation of new ideas and counter-to-*status quo* ideals (Priebe, 1976: 104-105). For Priebe, Armah’s narratives are depictions of two opposed realms of existence: the

current societal order/ *status quo* and the new chaotic societal order. Achebe depicts a social order in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* wherein people would love to live, while in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* “we see a [nation] from which we could desire only to escape” (Priebe, 1976: 106).

Given their abnormal features, the protagonists in Armah’s novels would be, according to conventional norms, considered as anti-heroes. However, when one looks at the whole postcolonial context considering negative phenomena generated by the colonial situation such as neo-colonialism and its entire implications, one could attribute regenerative powers to the protagonists. For not only do they imply the annihilation of the entire system, they also provide new horizons, new interpretations and novel manners through which their imagined community can conceive of themselves and their relation to the world. Priebe draws a comparison between Armah’s heroes and Murano, “the zombie-like character in Wole Soyinka’s *The Road*”. The Professor in the play says of him “when a man has one leg in each world, his legs are never the same. The big toe of Murano’s foot-the left one of course-rests on the slumbering chrysalis of the Word. When that crossed cracks my friends-you and I, that is the moment we await. That is the moment of our rehabilitation”. Murano has penetrated the limen, made contact with the ineffable, and is now speechless. In absolute humility and total commitment he exists as a servant to the Professor, but remains hidden from the sight of all the other characters in the play (Priebe, 1976: 107). This reminds us of A.G and Tajirika in *Wizard of the Crow* for losing the faculty of speaking is a preparation to a phase of consciousness and positive metamorphosis. The title *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* could denote that the beautiful ones are already there but require a rebirth in the sense of transition. The man is shown to be in a weak position because of his non-conformity to the social norms, yet he is meanwhile in a strong position being invisible, a recorder and an onlooker at his nation through a microscope that is meant to heal thereafter. The words he utters however inefficient they may be carry within them the strengths of genuineness. The comment of the narrating

voice in the novel shows this clearly: “*And so words and phrases so often thrown away as jokes reveal their true meaning*” (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 04).

The Man’s alienation, Baako’s madness and the sadistic killing of Modin could be read as, in Fredric Jameson’s words, a symbolic enactment of the political unconscious in the sense that they posit a project that is in opposition to the political and social landscapes existent in Ghana. The protagonists’ tending away from the existent institutionalization of the Western stereotypes about Africans is a symbolic and corrective attitude. Not being connected culturally to the physical world left over by the colonial regime, Ghanaians like other African ‘artificial’ nations do not move about as motivated people labouring in relation to a sense of purpose; rather they ‘walk’ about after petty dreams which are not their own. The former coloniser’s implicit recognition of their being equally independent can be characterised, in Bhabha’s words, as “sly civility” meant to incarcerate the Africans yet again but in the garments of freedom this time. This can be understood from the creation of new stereotypes, new appellations, and new labels such as ‘third world countries’, ‘developed world’, the ‘north’ and the ‘south’ and the condescending (label) ‘developing world.’ This is done still with the insidious economic impoverishments carried out through world institutions such as the IMF and the transactions that have the looks of a promising prosperity. The stick then the carrot strategies are demystified and shown to be a delusionary achievement of the ‘gleam’ that hides behind the introduction of a ‘neo-slavery’ era.

In *Fragments* it is shown that Baako realises that his family members no longer care about their own humanity and less about the others’. This is found in the tragic result of the traditional outdoorings of the child. The child is a state of liminality belonging neither to the living (according to the tradition of outdoorings) nor to the womb. But when its people let it die when nobody stays besides it to tend it they could be said to have broken the spiritual cycle believed to exist between the ancestors (who are dead) and the living. In the

words of Baako's grandmother Naana they are bowing to a new 'god'. Priebe argues that both the man and Baako go through a period of liminality or in Bhabha's words an interstitial space. They both go on a journey which marks their detachment, their being invisible or dead in accordance with the immediate landscape of their misery. "The African conceive of death as a passage from this world into the spiritual world where the individual gains his ability to bestow power to those left behind. Reasoning by analogy, Baako's relatives and friends see his journey as a kind of death. In describing Baako's departure Naana compares Baako and the other passengers with ghosts" (Priebe, 1976: 107).

Then we went outside to a long white fence behind which we stood with others like us who had come to weep for a departing one, and after a long time we saw the line of people, many white people but also others who were black, go like gentle ghosts. When it swallowed Baako in his turn, I could look no more. I did not turn to see it as it began to go into the air, though Foli was by me telling me to look, because like a child he saw only beauty in the going of the thing. The heavy sound made me fear for Baako. But I remembered how perfect the word have been for his departure and his protection, and I was happy inside myself that I had taken the drink from Foli and given the ancestors their need. The circle was not broken in any place (*Fragments*, 24-5).

The implicit concept of death in relation to Baako's journey is touched upon in the dirge-like tone of Naana's thoughts. The titles of the chapter in the novel, "Naana", "Osagyefo", "Iwu", "Obra" meaning ancestor, redeemer, death, life respectively are, actually, significant words in Akan dirges. Furthermore, the supplications that Naana utters for Baako incorporate a perceptible similarity to the dirge. The manner of prayer in the succeeding extract from a dirge documented by J. H. Nketia is structurally not dissimilar to Naana's prayer:

Send us something, Mensa,
Do send us something,
Alas, there is none to tell Grandsire,
That death has broken down his state.
Alas, there is none to tell Grandsire

That litigation and strife has broken down his state.
If the departed could send gifts,
They would surely send something to their children. (Quoted in Priebe,
1976: 107)

And when he returns
let his return, like rain,
and bring us your blessings and their fruits,
your blessings
your help
in this life you have left us to fight alone.
With your wisdom
let him go,
let him come.
And, you traveller about to go,
go and return
go, come (*Fragments*, 18).

Going back home from work, the man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* comes across a former schoolmate who has effectively followed the “gleam”. Koomson and his wife Estie do not at the beginning recognise “the invisible man of the shadows” (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 37); nonetheless, when they do perceive him, they are irritated at being prevented from a theatre arrangement. Thus, to get rid of The Man, Koomson hurriedly approves of visiting The Man’s house for dinner. However, when The Man shakes hands with Estie, her hand “is withdrawn as quickly as if contact were well- known calamity” (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 38). Like a novice in a traditional ritual of passage The Man has developed into a taboo object that is imperceptible for all concrete drives and thus precarious.

The agony of the man therefore grows intensely. As he goes back home on the bus, he is at the lowest point of his symbolic journey, and we are given the lengthiest and most deeply scatological passage in the novel. Along with the reverse of the promises of “the gleam,” the passage shows clearly The Man’s detachment (Priebe, 1976: 118)

The man gets in, choosing a seat by a window. The window turns out to have no pane in it. No matter. It is hardly a cold night. When the bus starts the air that rushes in comes like a soft wave of lukewarm water.

The man leans back against his seat and fingers recoil behind his head. He does not look back. It is possible, after so much time up and down the same way, it is possible to close the eyes and lay back the head and yet to know very clearly that one is at this moment passing by that particular place or the other one, because the air brings these places to the open nose (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 39).

Why Are We So Blest? embodies liminality in that the protagonists are revolutionary or are against the current order of things. Their revolutionary intents are thus a transcendent enterprise against the unpleasant and unrepresentative societal order. This is clearly shown in (the artist) Solo's outcry:

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? 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. I hear the call of that art too. But in the world of my people that most important first act of creation, that rearrangement without which all attempts at creation are doomed to falseness, remains to be done. Europe hurled itself against us-not for creation, but to destroy us, to use us for creation itself. America, a growth out of Europe, now deepens that destruction. In this wreckage there is no creative art outside the destruction of the destroyers. In my people's world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa's destruction (*Why Are We So Blest?*, 231).

The interstitial space created by the alienation of characters and their revolutionary drives is also in between the *status quo*, the ideal state they wish for their nation and the ideals by which the entire imagined community tries to approximate. In other words, the third space and the setting of new ideals by the protagonists is a symbolic act that is meant to boycott the false historic connections to the Western civilization be it in the form of the commodity culture, the "thingification" of everything, mankind included, the wrong role assumed by African intellectuals and disdaining ethics belonging to the authentic African identity.

However wishful thinking it may seem to be, utopia, as Karl Mannheim put it in *Ideology and Utopia*, has always been shaped with human concerns in mind.

When the imagination finds no contentment in the existing actuality, it seeks sanctuary in wishfully created places and ages. National myths, and other promises of humanistic dreams, travel romances, have been continually transforming expressions of what is lacking in actual life (Mannheim, 1998:184). The urge to abstraction, as A.N. Kaul describes in *The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*., is the result of enormous inner turbulence stimulated in man by the phenomena of the outside world; in religious aspect it is associated to a strongly transcendental touch to all notions. The function of abstraction in art is “to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context” and thus “to render it necessary and irrefragable to approximate it to its absolute value” (Kaul, 1970:316-17).

Concluding Remarks:

The ‘recuperative return’ to Africa from the diaspora can be seen as a utopian yet esoteric narrative. The mythic and ideological drawing on the collective unconscious is a symbolic enactment of the collective unconscious. It compensates the asymmetry found between the modern time and the pre-colonial nations with the symmetry between the elements of orality and the print tradition. Mythmaking can be traced in the novels in question in that the elements of myth, escaping the constraints of time and space, can be found and be traced in the novels. The Afrotopic imagination in the above discussed novels do not necessarily connect to what could qualify as their imagined communities’ aspirations. Truly, Ngugi sees a great relevance of the “untaken paths” such as the Itwika in modern times. He seems to be suggesting that democracy has its roots in the Gikuyu history. Also, Ngugi traces the birth of the Gikuyu nation in time and space. Nonetheless, with the exception of their stylistic use of some oral literary features, the African names given to their characters and trying to link democracy to some old revolutions like the Itwika, the African novelists in question fell short of imagining out of old wisdoms any

Afrotopias that could (virtually at least) break the yoke of the dire situation of 'underdevelopment' (they depict in their works) Africa still undergoes at the political, social and economic levels. As Fanon argues in a similar context, the African writers discussed in this chapter are wont to take their imagined communities to the 'fossilized' kind of past, yet doubt about the relevance of this very past in modern Africa. These writers still are not able to step into modernity with a clear conscience.

Chapter Five

The African Novel between the Condescension of the Metropolis and the Narration of the ‘Old’ Nations

Patriotism, in modern times, and in great states, is and must be the creature of reason and reflection, rather than the offspring of physical or local attachment. It was once said by an acute observer, and eloquent writer (Rousseau), that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice; the same might be said, with considerable truth, of the love of our country. It is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, of social happiness.

The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, 1934

Modernism is at once, contradictorily, an exhilarating estrangement of such clapped-out national lineage from the powerfully distancing perspectives of exiles, and an expression of the rootless conditions of an international monopoly capitalism, whose abstractly universalist forms are mimed by modernism's own progressively abstract techniques. If, like Joyce, you have little enough of a rich national lineage to begin with, then you become paradigmatic in your very colonial dispossession of the destiny of even advanced national formations in the era of international capital.

Terry Eagleton, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, 2001

The previous chapter was meant to discuss the utopian narration of old and modern African nations. This narration was characterised by placing the characters (and the nations) in a liminal or third space in order to reflect on the present dissatisfactory realities and provide corrective projects. This chapter is intended to be critical of the African novel's narration of the 'trap' of modernity which has gone hand in hand with the deceptive scholastic views of Africa's past, culture and the mental abilities of the black African. Given the reactionary writings which seem to link everything that has to do with Africa to the 'Myth of the Negro' and/or the phenomenon of slavery, these views could be said to have created a trench dug for Black Africans to cross with no sense of serenity. The African personality, the African experience, Africanity and Negritude, with their substantial concentration on the particularity of everything that is African, make it seem, as mentioned before, as if they were to justify or prove the humanity of the African. Therefore, given its racially-based and reactionary imagination of an African (almost continental) nation, PanAfricanism could not surmount, as Frederick Cooper argues, the colonial ruler's imagination of the African nation(s) (Cooper, 1994: 1537). This is done instead of making, as Anthony Appiah argues, the political, the economic and the ecological fields of attention. The last three domains and abstract elements such as culture, identity and philosophy are interrelated in that they could generate good politics, hard work and the improvement of health and hygiene. None the less the excess of mentioning them, writing about them and representing them through, paradoxically, the Western modes of narration and a language alien to people in African nation-states, make African writers in a position where they ostensibly observe and assert their respective cultures, while they actually prove their cultural lack of self-confidence. For as Terry Eagleton notes their cultural ideologies demonstrate their truthfulness only in contradicting other ideologies. Armah's criticism of Western ideologies such as Marxism, his cynicism and distrust of Christianity and Islam¹ as opposed to his being proud of the

¹ It was mentioned before that Armah called religion i.e. Islam and Christianity

fictitiously non-religious Africa, an esoteric ‘disputed’ knowledge of a past glory and the call for ‘so called’ common leadership show just how entrenched Armah’s view of the world is an emotionality and romantic escapade. Moreover, Armah’s criticism of Islam and Awoonor’s focus on the Ewe spirituality could be seen as an exclusionist reading of African history. Africa like all continents had known the spread of Islam and Christianity and Ghana is no exception. African Muslims, like Christian and polytheistic Africans, do cherish their Africanity as well as their religiosity. Also, like the bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Western mentioned earlier, Blyden argues in his *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, Islam influenced constructively Africans in that African Muslims ended up being more autonomous than African Christians in that the former could construct their schools and obtain what their nation required on their own, while Christian Africans had to wait for the colonial government to satisfy their needs. Blyden argues that the main characteristic of the black African found in Christian lands is “not docility, as had been often alleged, but servility. He is slow and unprogressive. Individuals here and there may be found of extraordinary intelligence, enterprise, and energy, but there is no Christian community of Negroes anywhere which is self-reliant and independent.” For example, the African ‘republics’ of Haiti and Liberia are simply fighting for existence, and can only do that by the “tolerance” of Western powerful nations. Contrary to the Christian nations in Africa, Blyden describes the black Mohammedan imagined communities in Africa as self-sufficient industrious, self-governing, and supporting, “without the countenance or the patronage of the parent country, Arabia, whence they derived them, their political, literary, and ecclesiastical institutions.” For example, the Mohammedans, in Sierra Leone, “without any aid from the government-

‘dopes’. Also, in an article he entitled ‘Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis’, Armah argues that “the assumption underlying this doctrine is that only a materially wealthy society can reach that level of economic, social and political democracy this is communism. In part, it was this assumption that misled Marx and Engels to rush down the unwise path of revolutionary prophecy (Armah, 2007: 499).

imperial or local- or any contributions from Mecca or Constantinople”, establish their mosques, maintain their religious services, manage their schools, and “contribute to the support of missionaries from Arabia, Morocco or Futah when they visit them.” However, this cannot be said about the black Christians in this imagined community. For, Blyden adds, “the most enlightened native Christians there look forward with serious apprehension- and, perhaps, not without good grounds- to the time when, if ever, the instructions and influence from London will be withheld” (Blyden, 1888: 12).

This indicates that Western colonials did not introduce Christianity in a manner that would induce autonomy like Muslims did. On the contrary, they made them understand that they were the chosen masters and that they had to be “good” servants, carrying out their “sacred” commands.

Besides, Armah portrays in *Two Thousand Seasons* the Arabs as being “predators”, while Timbuktu’s libraries are described by Basil Davidson to incorporate “practically the whole of Arabic literature. Works produced in Spain and the Maghrib stood alongside those of Egypt and Iraq.” Timbuktu won the reputation of being “the greatest intellectual centre of Sudan in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was, moreover, one of the great scientific centres of the Muslim world of that time” (Davidson, 2002: 49-50).

Moreover, Armah does not mention in *Two Thousand Seasons* that the bravery deployed by African Muslims during the Ashanti Wars was without compare to the attitude shown by peer Christians. In this respect, Blyden notes that “in the recent Ashantee war the most trustworthy Negro troops were the Haussas, who are rigid Mohammedans. The West Indian Negro troops were not relied on to the same extent” (Blyden, 1888: 13).

In addition, Armah contradicts himself regarding religion, because he downplays its role in nation building in some of his fictional and non-fictional works, while he emphasizes and admits its importance and power on other occasions (Okpewho, 1983: 214). In an interview Armah admits the power that religion embodies: “Now that interaction of minds moving towards a shared

goal is the closest thing I know to religious power” (Armah, 1990: 03). Thus whatever the references Armah makes about the Akan socio-political order in most of his writings (*Fragments, Two Thousand Seasons, The Healers*), what seems of interest to Armah is to be able to move people towards a shared aim. Certainly, if this aim is not religious it becomes apparent that Armah dreams of mobilizing Africans towards being powerful in practical terms. This is obvious when we consider his emphasis on institutions such as educational institutions. In the same interview Armah emphasizes the importance of justice and reciprocity, which the way in *Two Thousand Seasons* embodies. Armah argues that African nation-states have been organized for centuries according to the ethics of “profit and advantage”, which are totally alien to them. Armah believes that the principles of African nations are values of “justice, balance, reciprocity which the Ancient Egyptians called Maat. You will not find these principles at work in any of the great institutions of the modern world. The great institutions are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and so forth. And all our political leaders are going to these people and saying “teach us what to do”. For Armah these “banks and stuff” teach only destruction, because they induce people to cut down their forests and sell the wood cheaply so that they can get some foreign exchange. These institutions, Armah explains, convince Africans that with this “foreign exchange they can get some guns to defend their president against people who are hungry and who may get angry at—on account....” Now, we’re going along with this because we don’t know our own values. Our values are opposed to this kind of stuff” (Armah, 1990: 05).

Armah’s interest thus is to see African efficient institutions based on justice, equality and reciprocity. Again, Armah’s denial of religion is at odds with the fact that he represents religion in his narratives. The way, Armah’s Negritude in Ode Ogede’s words, in *Two Thousand Seasons* does not serve only as a substitute for the subordinating Western traditions, but it is also meant to be a religion of the ‘mature-minded’ people. Furthermore, the ‘dichotomization’ that

Armah displays in his narratives is an important characteristic of the three religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this context, Ali Mazrui explains in *Cultural Forces in World Politics*, that in monotheistic religions one is either for or against 'God', thus there is a tendency in these religions to 'divide the human race between believers and unbelievers, between the virtuous and the sinful, between good and evil, between 'us' and 'them' whereas in polytheistic religions (like in Africa) people are more tolerant because they are ready to accommodate additional 'gods' (Mazrui, 1990:13-4).

Above all, the Akan or Africans that Armah seems to represent are a religious community who believe in the existence of small gods and a supreme God above them. As Nana Akua Kyerewaa explains in *The Quest for Spiritual Transformation-Introduction to Traditional Akan Religion* that the Akan believe that there is a creator (Armah says Africans do not care whether there is a creator or not) Odomonkama, who 'first made the sky and then the earth, rivers and plants'. After that they believe that God created animals and men. Knowing that men needed protection in his environment he created the Spirits of waters, forests and rocks. He created also lesser gods, the Abosom, to take care of men (Kyerewaa, 2005, 16). In fact, what makes Armah's position incongruent with the "African situation" is that he wants to convince his readers that a social being can look with scorn at elements of his social or cultural teachings, although these are considered vital by his people, be educated after a "Western way of thinking" which he similarly disdains, and still be able to claim the role of representing his imagined community. This is done simply by calling Arabs and Western people "predators" as shown in *Two Thousand Seasons*, and alleging the existence of a philosophy, "the way", which he claims is superior to any other ethical belief.

Armah's attitude to culture and religion would not be described as "an existential angst or absurdist ennui, which upholds an un-African view of the universe" as Derek Wright did; rather, it could be attributed to the inability on the part of the author to surmount the cul de sac and the feeling of despondency

he has reached, in his attempts to describe (or rewrite with vengeance as Ogede argues) the history of pre-colonial Africa as a possible arena of change, rather than “untaken paths” that resulted in an objective reality. Truly, Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*, as Angela M. Fubara argues, “conceptualizes and deploys the old traditional Akan notion of ‘Sankofa literally translated to mean it is not a taboo to go back and fetch what you forget.’ Also, Armah’s Egyptologist approach to the history and origins of the black race’s nations reflects his strong belief in PanAfricanism and the possibility of African union. As mentioned before, Armah’s PanAfricanist leanings could also be found in the names of his characters in *Two Thousand Seasons* which belong to different African modern nation-states. Moreover, it is apparent from his sojourns that Ayi Kwei Armah made it his plan to live and work in the different nations in Africa to become a true PanAfricanist in his outlook. His experience in Algeria, Ghana, Lesotho and Senegal is reflected in most of his novels “giving the perceptive reader a comprehensive account of his outlook on Africa since the colonial era” (Parekh & Jagne, 1998: 46). To achieve this purpose, Armah calls in his non-fictional works for the adoption of Kiswahili as the continental language of Africa.

Still, Armah’s works display that this PanAfricanist dream can only be justified in the stereotypic and racial descriptions found in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ Western philosophy and literatures. For the only reason those disciplines attributed to the “unsatisfactory” civilizational state in Africa was the colour of skin. In other words, Armah seems to be reacting to irrationally knit arguments with untenable depictions of history, which might even have the reverse effect of the purpose they are meant to serve. The author denies, like Western intellectuals at the epoch did, that there existed concomitantly (politically sovereign and geographically away from each other) many empires and states in Africa prior to colonialism, which refutes the attempt to look at black Africans as being one.¹

¹ For instance, there was in the Horn of Africa the following empires and states: Aksumite Empire (50–937); Ethiopian Empire (1137–1974); Ifat Sultanate (1285–1415); Warsangali Sultanate (1298–present); Ajuuraan Empire (14th century–17th

Furthermore, the author contradicts himself when he gives the impression that Western civilizations had no positive impact on Africans while still making use of English in a Western form of writing-the novel- to put across his message. In this respect, Anthony Appiah points out in his *The Ethics of Identity* that good ideas could be found in all world nations. Appiah illustrates that “people around the world shouldn't be taking up the notion of individuality on the basis of where the idea came from would be like arguing that Italians should give up pasta because it came from China or Christians should abandon algebra because it was invented by Muslim Arabs, or English people should reject constitutional democracy because it was invented in the United States” (Appiah, 2005: 107).

Armah's emotional reaction seems to have made him avoid even mentioning the objective reasons that could have contributed to the collapse of African imagined communities. Instead, he concentrated in *The Healers* and *Two Thousand Seasons* and *Why Are We So Blest* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, for instance, on invasion, slavery, the greed and betrayal of African kings to Africans, the pathological inferiority complex of the African leaders, and the change of the way people looked at traditions. The overall impression-lamentation-we have as readers from Armah's works and his focus on the psychological and cultural reasons make us query why he never made use of his social studies. For if we turn to history, we could understand that African kingdoms and states, like any other human political models such as the Roman Empire, collapsed because of many external and internal reasons: reversion/simplification, overpopulation, depletion of resources, the loss of adaptation ability, losing the problem-solving ability characteristic of any

century); Adal Sultanate (1415–1555); Geledi sultanate (late 17th century–late 19th century); Majeerteen Sultanate (mid-18th century–early 20th century); Kingdom of Gomma (early 19th century–1886); Kingdom of Jimma (1830–1932); Kingdom of Gumma (1840–1902); Sultanate of Hobyo (1880s–1920s); Dervish State (1896–1920). At Sahel and West Africa, there was the Nok Civilization at around 500 BC. There were also: Kingdom of Ghana (750-1078); the Songhai Empire; the Mali Empire; the Fulani Empire; the Wolof Empire (1350-1889); the Benin Empire (1440-1897)..etc.

human civilization, the structural change in the internal complex structure as well as foreign invasion. By idealizing the past (and the future), speaking of non-existent “prophetic” ideologies, preferring to be self-pitying and removed from one’s decaying surrounding (as in the case of Baako, Solo, Man, and Teacher), Armah seems to fall into what Arnold. J. Toynbee characterised as the problem-solving feature of social order that, on resorting to what the author chose as a general trend in his novels, turns to doing so self-destructively.

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born depicts the sprawling city as drenched in consumerism which results in a counter effect to what its citizens misleadingly have expected. Yet, on examining the logic Armah seems to be following, mainly his atheist stance and Egyptologist standpoint to history and his criticism and disdain of Western philosophy the following deduction comes forth:

Armah would hope to see a different Africa; an Africa that looks up to its ‘real’ history and be proud of its civilizational material achievements (the pyramids). Yet this very Africa must look down upon any philosophical or religious view of things, particularly if they belong to Arabs or the West. Indeed, Armah seems to be running into the same contradiction the Marxist ideologues made. For the latter contend that matter is prior to the idea; it is the base structure that organises the superstructure. Marx was influenced by Feuerbach. The latter declared in his book *The Essence of Christianity* that there was nothing extrinsic to nature and humanity, and that the supreme beings that people talk of are merely fantastic reflections of humanity’s own essence. In this context, having Feuerbach’s philosophy essentially in mind, Marx wrote: “The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being” (Quoted in Engels, 1999: 15).

The contradiction is that Marxists look at themselves as singular and distinguished beings vis-à-vis their proletariat so that they could detach themselves from their base structure. Their abstraction of things is meant to

bring about a new consciousness and a new concrete reality that is a classless society. In other words, they seem to be doing what prophets did; meaning, preaching a new view of things counter to the old perverted (A false consciousness according to Marxists) manner of interpreting things. Their philosophy entails that philosophy and the entire world of ideas are reliant on the matter which apparently is viewed as more sovereign than human beings. Yet this human being who is made to seem as lacking autonomy and reliant on the matter is the same who can surmount the matter through an abstraction supposed to be created out of this very matter. Armah does the same thing when he criticises religion and the utter immersion in matter but creates meanwhile an ideology, the “way”, which is supposed to supplant the city after the West with, perhaps, a city after the African manner, with the difference that Armah has not as yet come up with the shape and ways of this city.

Awoonor’s *Comes the Voyager at Last* and Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Osiris Rising* as well as KMT make mention of Afro-Americans who are enthusiastic about the return and the reintegration and adoption of African nations’ cultural and linguistic traits. Awoonor mentions in *The African Predicament* the personalities who might be represented by the returnee in *Comes the Voyager at Last*. In a chapter entitled NEGROES, AFRO-AMERICANS, BLACKS, Awoonor begins by showing his being honored by encountering two African Americans who returned/visited to Africa:

[Dubois’] life project was an Encyclopedia Africana, recording the work of black scholars throughout history, providing a black perspective on the history of the peoples of Africa and African descent...The other man, a younger man I met in the summer of 1964, he was Malcolm X. Malcolm had blown into Accra like a whirlwind, giving speeches here and there, and stirring us as to the real story of the black American struggle. He had been to see Nkrumah, given a press conference... He had then been kicked out of the nation of Islam. He had recently founded the organization of Afro American Unity, a loose militant body into which he could channel his now free energies (Awoonor, 2006: 71-73).

The Utopian realism of Armah and Awoonor, however, made no mention of other African returnees such as Afro-Brazilians who, on their return, unlike

the Americo-Liberians, for instance, became part and parcel of the national ethnicities in the different nation-states they joined. In his *The African Nation, the State of the Nation* (2006), Kwesi Kwaa Prah argues that the Afro-Brazilian community of returnees known as *Aguda* in Benin were scattered all over the West African shoreline. The manner whereby they “retribalized” from the Guinea Coast to Angola was singular. For instance, they came to be known as the *Tabom* amongst the Ga tribe in Ghana. In the aftermath of the Malé revolt of 1835, they were deported back to Africa. They embraced the language spoken by the people in the area. The *Taboms* are completely assimilated to Ghanaian society, and are part of the Otublohum Section of the Ga people. The same can be said of large groups of the *Aguda* who adopted Fon, Aja, Gun, Mina and Ewe attributes. Likewise, in Nigeria, amongst the Yoruba a strong representation of the Afro-Brazilians is to be found. What explains all this is that the “Afro-Brazilian returnees were largely anchored not in Christianity, but rather in Africanist religious varieties, particularly the Yoruba religious systems that had been carried over to Brazil and returned to be reaffirmed again in West Africa. Many were also Muslims” (Prah, 2006: 208).

With the exception of the contrast between the true nature of As’s reintegration into African culture and the individualistic aspirations of Ras Jomo Equino Cinque and Earl Johnson, Armah does not refer to the fact that a great section of Americo-Liberian returnees looked down upon everything that was African. Nor does Awoonor make the slightest mention of this. In other words, the possibility that there still is a great section of Afro-Americans now who look ashamedly and embarrassingly at their African roots is not given space for narration in the aforementioned novels. This affirms the discussions earlier on the “untaken paths”. In other words, a great section of African intellectuals be they returnees or contemporary ones still see that the only solution for the African predicament is the modern nation-state and the mutual exclusiveness of the latter with the former.

Standing in stark contrast to Afro-Brazilians are the Americo-Liberians and the creoles of Sierra Leone. Alexander Crummell represents par excellence this

section of African returnees. He was born in New York in 1818, held a degree from Queens College, Cambridge, in 1853 upon which he travelled to Liberia to work as a teacher and pastor. Shockingly, ten years later, in his *The English Language in Liberia* (1861), he demonstrated a predominantly “virulent cultural-linguistic alienation from, and disdain for, the languages spoken by the people he found in the nation of Liberia. For him the languages spoken in Africa are

(a) [...] to use the words of Dr. Leighton Wilson, ‘harsh, abrupt, energetic, indistinct in enunciation, meagre in point of words, abound with inarticulate nasal and guttural sounds, possess but few inflections and grammatical forms, and are withal exceedingly difficult of acquisition’ This is his description of the Grebo, but it may be taken I think as on the whole, a correct description of the whole class of dialects which are entitled ‘Negro.’ (b) These languages, moreover, are characterized by lowness of ideas. As the speech of the rude barbarians, they are marked by brutal and vindictive sentiments, and those principles which show a predominance of the animal propensities. (c) Again, they lack those ideas of virtue, or moral truth, and those distinctions of right and wrong with which we, all our life long, have been familiar. (d) Another marked feature of these languages is the absence of clear ideas of Justice, Law, Human Rights and Government Order, which are so prominent and manifest in civilized countries; and (e) Lastly-These supernatural truths of a personal present Deity, of the moral Government of God, of man’s Immortality, of the Judgement, and of Everlasting Blessedness, which regulate the lives of Christians are either entirely absent, or else exist, and are expressed in an obscure and distorted manner (Quoted in Prah, 2006: 209-10).

However, Crummell was not oblivious about the superiority which Americo-Liberians felt towards African tribes surrounding them. He made this clear in an address given to the Common Council and Citizens of Monrovia, 1870, where he remarked that,

....One great mistake of the people of Liberia has been neglect of our native population. I do not say that this has been universally the case; and I am glad to aver that it has been unaccompanied with a malignant will. The fault has been more relative than absolute. We have far fallen short of our duty, than is either justifiable or excusable. We have been guilty of a neglect, which has carried with it harm to the aborigines; and, at the same time, visited grievous wrong upon ourselves....In a little more than

a monthly change of the moon, we were metamorphosed from the position of underlings to one of mastery; with a vast population of degraded subjects around us. We should have been angels instead of men, if the contrast, between ourselves and the heathen around us, had not made a most vivid impression upon our minds; had not somewhat inflamed our own imaginations. It has done both; it has led to an exaggeration of our own capacities. It has made us oblivious of our humbling antecedents. It has blinded too many of us to the fact that we are but a few generations removed from the condition and the benightedness of the heathen around us. It has made us forgetful of the great duties we owe these people who serve us in our families and work on our farms. It has led too many to look down upon the natives as an inferior, placed at such a distance from us, that concord and oneness seem almost impossibilities for aye!... (Quoted in Prah, 2006: 210-11).

Intellectuals who had this viewpoint vis-à-vis their African origins have been argued to bear a slave mentality. They have accordingly “borrowed the values of their masters (like many of the bourgeoisie of the independent Africa). Those poor devils from the New World saw to it that in their trunk coming over to Africa they had a top hat and gloves- symbolic of their chains-and they proceeded to create in Africa a separate ruling class distinct from the ‘heathen’ around them” (Prah, 2006: 211).

Furthermore, as far as slavery is concerned, Armah points at the local chiefs’ intermediary and complicit role as a prominent factor in the enslavement of black Africans. This is to be found in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. By doing this Armah’s discourse about slavery is similar to that of Henry Louis Gates who, like Molefi Asante, points out that “the entire project of slavery would not have occurred if it had not been for African involvement. Blaming the victim for the predicament of enslavement is neither historically correct nor morally valid” (Quoted in Prah, 2006: 246). Gates’ stance has been nonetheless criticised by Ali Mazrui who considers Gate’s ‘patronizing’ and ‘condescending’ posture towards Africa as an orientalization of Africa. Mazrui comments that Gates’ television series which covered Ethiopia and the Ark of the Covenant showed Gates’ worst kind of condescension. As for Gates’ ‘paternalistic possessiveness’ was connected to Great Zimbabwe and to the wonders of the manuscripts in Timbuktu. For Mazrui, Gates’ “selectivity not only knocked out virtually the whole of North Africa; it also knocked out

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country." Mazrui objects that although Nigeria is the "centre of the three of the largest and most historically dynamic cultures in Africa-the Yoruba, the Hausa and Igbo", it did not qualify for Gates as one of the "Wonders of the African World". This is, Mazrui adds, "in spite Gates' close relationship with Wole Soyinka, Black Africa's only Nobel Laureate for Literature." Moreover, Gates' selectivity also spared the white man regarding the Atlantic slave trade (Quoted in Prah, 2006: 246).

Arguably, the African novelists treated here and others have shown a staunch commitment to the goals they set for themselves through their fiction and non-fiction. However, when it comes to narrating their nations, their cries could hardly be relevant to the current developments befalling Africa. For there is a discrepancy somewhere in the relation between the social function oral storytelling used to have in its communal surroundings, and the Janus-faced function printed art is designed to fulfill in modern African societies. The discrepancy is between the social status educated people win in the 'centre', the real image of Africa they wish to see and the factual realities in Africa. Novels such as Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari* tackle tangible issues such as the land problem and the neo-colonial shackles, yet their portrayals make of Gikuyu the 'centre' of Kenyans, neglecting the existence of many different languages: Kamba, Ekegusii, Kimĩru, Oluluyia, Kigiryama, Kiambu, Dholuo, Maasai, Turkana to name only a few. According to the Ethnologue of world languages there are 69 languages spoken in Kenya. As Mazrui and Mphande argue in "Orality and the Literature of Combat: The Legacy of Fanon", Ngugi's decision to write in Gikuyu, one of the national languages in Kenya, could have arisen from his "ethnic chauvinism" (Wright, 2000: 245), narrating thus his *natio* and not the entire Kenyan nation which he claims to do.

Furthermore, Ngugi's characters in *Petals of Blood*, for instance, are portrayed as people who lack the ability to face the neocolonial ravaging outcomes. The author chooses carefully their names to reflect this incapacity.

For example, Munira means ‘stump’ and this denotes his “devitalized” condition in the novel and his inability to identify with, and to communicate his concerns to those around him. Wanja is derived from ‘Wanjiku’, “the mother of the mother of the nine clans of the Gikuyu people”. Also, the name Wanja means ‘stranger or outsider.’ Likewise, the name Karega means ‘he-who refuses’, “and he is cast as an archetypal non-conformist who travels from idealistic youthful search for a cause to the status of anti-establishment revolutionary leader” (Robson, 1972: 115).

As an allegorical “stump” Munira is incapable of growth as a human and political person. This can be illustrated by his envious reprimand of Karega for having a relationship with Wanja, from his false arrogance after becoming headmaster of Ilmorog School, and from the false consciousness he demonstrates by setting Wanja’s brothel on fire to “protect” Karega. Munira is also guilty of having provoked Mukami’s suicide and his family’s historical association with the betrayal of the “Mau Mau” leader Dedan Kimathi. At this juncture it would be convenient to shed light on the source of the title, *Petal of Blood*, which is derived from an extract from Derek Walcott’s poem, *The Swamp*, as well as from Blake’s poem as epigraphs in parts two and three of the novel. Eustace Palmer views the petals of blood as preys of malevolence. Their “innocence, like that of Blake’s sick Rose” has been exterminated by the agents of corruption. Hence, the flower becomes a symbol of the entire nation. Ngugi is troubled by the fact that the nation’s potentially healthy, beautiful and productive state gets itself “destroyed by the agents of corruption and death” (Quoted in Robson, 1972: 116).

The symbolic importance of the Swamp according to Ngugi: “Is that it...prevents little flowers from reaching out into the light. It symbolized the way...in which the social system of capitalism acts to stifle [the nation].” (Quoted in Robson, 1972: 116). Ngugi’s interpretation of *The Swamp* is held by Wayne Brown, an editor of a collection of Walcott’s poetry. He provides three insights as to the swamp, containing historical, philosophical and psychological

explanations, which most thoroughly fit Ngugi's own interpretation; he argues that the "consciousness behind the poem is that of a white American from the Plantation Slavery of the South who feels threatened by the highway he has built to his slaves." This matches the dread and the voracity that prompt the petty- bourgeoisie who are neo-colonial proxies such as: Chui, Kimeria, Nderi, and Mzigo. For Brown, the poem signifies: "...the colonizer's fear and loathing, born of guilt, of those whom he has colonized" (Robson, 1972: 122).

In *Petals of Blood* consequently, the neo-colonizer dreads the outcomes of his disloyalty to the farmers of Kenya. It is significant to see the Swamp and Ilmorog as symbolic 'wastelands', the backwoods of unfaithfulness that are brought about by colonialism and neo-colonialism correspondingly. The conversation between two village dwellers Muturi and Njuguna, about the source of the drought is informative. Muturi's acute awareness of ecology attributes the roots of deforestation to the building of the railway to Uganda. White colonialists are mentioned as individuals who "...only know how to eat, how to take away everything" Muturi's delusion, that "...African Governors and African big chiefs will return some of the fat back to these parts," is swiftly corrected by Njuguna whose response is: "you mean bring back our sons" (*Petals of Blood*, 82-83). Instead of delivering assistance, the administration carries on to deceive the out-of-the-way village of Ilmorog by appointing someone to collect taxes from the villagers, afterwards two scrounging swindlers, appropriately called "Fat Stomach" and "Insect", both mediators of Ilmorog's M.P Nderi wa Riera. The villagers, irritated by all this, demand food and piped water, which had been assured previously by Nderi. In order to confuse the villagers so that they would not disclose Nderi's treachery, Fat Stomach denounces the "'lake people" (Luo) and an Indian Communist (likely Pio Gama Pinto) for the drought, anger and frustration force women of Ilmorog to chase these two opportunists out of the village" (Robson, 1972: 122).

Ngugi's portrayals leave no space for the village and the old values it stands for to defeat the new metropolis. In stark contrast to the predicament of Ilmorog is

the village of Kamiriithu which was as joined to the capitalist economy as a territory of “development” which contained an extravagant supermarket and beer halls. Trucks were marked “KANU PRIVATE”. In one of the beer halls, Munira notices Wanja who has relapsed to her job as barmaid. Munira, Karega along with Wanja, strive back to Ilmorog: “they return to Ilmorog, this time driven neither by idealism nor the search for a personal cure, but by the overriding necessity to escape” (*Petals of Blood*, 106). Similar to Blue Hills; Kamiriithu with its profitable capitalism is a advantaged center for KANU: its betrayal of Kenyan national values was even more terrifying than the drought. On arriving, Karega and Wanja are stunned by the high level of drought, which Munira calls pessimistically: “...the way of the world.” Instead of being acquiescent with the ‘gigantic deception’ of classroom teaching while the drought outside gets worse, Karega initiates “the journey” to Nairobi to meet the M.P. and ‘informs’ him about the complications of a drought that has stricken Ilmorog. Nyakinyua’s back up of the journey summarized the historical detriments of the village:

Ours is only to bear in order for the city to take. In the war against Wazunjo we gave our share of blood. A sacrifice. Why? Because we wanted to be able to sing our song and dance our words in fullness of head and stomach. But what happened? They have continued to entice our youth away...then they send us messengers who demand twelve shillings and fifty cents for what?” (*Petals of Blood*, 155-156).

The publicity made to the journey attracted opportunists to Ilmorog. For instance, Nderi, disguised under his own company, KCO, suggested rescuing Ilmorog for himself by vending stocks in his property business, by safeguarding credits from the people of Ilmorog and by advancing tourism. Paradoxically, the journey had been effective, but its prospective would be devastated by the manipulations of the national bourgeoisie. The communal virtuousness so prominent in the eagerness of the start of the journey from Ilmorog to Nairobi now “lapsed into the betrayal of neo-colonialism.” Vicissitudes to Ilmorog are basically viewed through flashbacks of Munira, which he calls: “...a mixture of

autobiographical confessional and some kind of prison notes (Ngugi, 190). Munira depicts the new Ilmorog but he is unable to identify the sources of the changes:

The new Ilmorog of one or two flickering neon-lights; of bars, lodgings, groceries, permanent sales, and battled Thing'eta; of robberies, strikes, lockouts, murders and attempted murders; of prowling prostitutes in cheap night clubs; of police stations, police raids, police cells...(*Petals of Blood*, 190).

“It is the introduction of the ceremonial Thing'eta brew, a distillation of *Petals of Blood*, prepared by Wanja”, Robson points out, that strengthens “the commercialization of Ilmorog.” Unwittingly, Wanja's attempt to bridge the gap between the old traditions and the modern nation-state leads in part to a betrayal of the village to the capitalist's interests of Kimeria, Mzigo, and Nderi. By selling Thing'eta to surveyors of the Trans Africa Road, both Wanja and Abdulla initiate the commercialization of the traditional sacred liquor. Forced to sell their business, both Wanja and Abdulla become unemployed” (Robson, 1972: 140). Consequently, even the sacred drink which was associated to the ceremony of Itwika and circumcision was adulterated into a drink for escapism.

Also the picture that the novelists in question have of a future Africa is not clearly defined. Armah's hope is a state of mind, a consciousness and knowledge of 'Africans', Ancient Egypt's history and language being inculcated in their minds in addition to reforming the educational institutions to make them teach his aspirations. The question here is: is that what all Africans want to achieve given the political dictatorial leadership, the cultural anomie and the deep and inexorable impact of globalization? Besides their being inaccessible to even the literate people owing to their undue complexity (the background knowledge required to read many of his works particularly what concerns Egyptology), Armah's works would be read occasionally still, by Ghanaians and other Africans because of the low readership and big percentages of illiteracy. As Timothy Brennan argues, this is the greatest

paradox of the novel form. For given the circumstances of illiteracy and scarcity, and basically the leisure-time required to read one, “the novel has been an elitist and minority form” in African countries compared to poetry, song and television programs. Timothy Brennan believes that nearly inexorably the novel has been the genre through which foreign-educated intellectuals, who could be primarily “sensitive or committed to domestic political interests”, has addressed, often in translation, metropolitan reading communities. “It has been, in short, a naturally cosmopolitan form that empire has allowed to play a national role, as it were, only in an international arena” (Bhabha, 2000: 56).

The failure to narrate an Africa that is totally African (the aspiration of the novelists) in terms of ideas and culture results, for example, in an imaginary world, using magic realism or the cyclical time like in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *This Earth, My Brother*, where heroes resort to impractical solutions such as encountering ghosts, escaping through a lavatory hole or healing the African leaders by making them see their true selves on the mirror. To use Appiah’s conclusions again African novelists do not seem to embody in their writings the imaginary practical visions acceptable to all Africans such as encouraging the work at the three levels of politics, economy and ecology. Frantz Fanon argues in his essay “On the Pitfalls of National Consciousness” that unless African national governments make as their first concern educating people making up their nations, raising their political consciousness and strengthening their economies, nationalism would “lead up a blind alley”, for “nationalism,” Fanon emphasizes, “is not a political doctrine, nor a programme” ; rather, “[t]he nation does not exist except in a programme which has been worked out by revolutionary leaders and taken up with full understanding and enthusiasm by the masses” (Fanon, 1961: 145-46). In the same respect Hobsbawm argues that in order to understand nationalism, “it must also be analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people” (Hobsbawm, 2007: 10).

The liminality of most of the protagonists in Armah's novels, as well as in Awoonor's, can be hazardous, as Richard Priebe argues in his article "Demonic Imagery and the Apocalyptic Vision in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah." In his view, "despite its being "a realm of pure possibility" the potential danger of liminality to the stability and continuity of any nation is extremely high. The average farmer or worker cannot function under the stress which ambiguity and contradiction create. Were he, for example, to spend his time speculating about alternative life styles, his family would starve" (Priebe, 1976: 105). Commenting on such romantic drives, Mbella Sonne Dipoko argues that the African writers "have got the 'people's dreams of happiness all wrong'. "For the masses", Dipoko adds, "happiness was, as is still is, a prospective dream. Better conditions of living, higher purchasing power, personal freedom, a share of all the good things of modern life, from industrial products to learning; in short, longing for better days to come" (Quoted in Gugelberger, 1986: 29).

On the other hand, Ngugi's portrayals seem to incorporate political projects connected to social struggle, progressive view of history and the use of violence and revolution to overthrow the bourgeoisie as class ruling Africans. Yet, the egalitarian nation Ngugi dreams of could in the end turn out to be a revolution in the manner depicted in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, that is the birth of a 'totalitarian' regime. Ironically enough, George Orwell believed that "in all countries the poor are more national than the rich." In other words, the most rigid forms of nationalism still exist in underdeveloped countries. For in developed countries such as Western Europe, the union of several nation-states has become more widespread to the effect that the European inhabitants have virtually become "citizens of the world".

It noteworthy that most African leaders adopted in thought communism. Kwame Nkrumah was no different from the latter in the sense that on coming to power, five years later, he decreed the Convention People's Party as the only one with (himself) as a president for life. What is meant above is that the focus

in the communist thought seems to be the call for overthrowing the existent corrupt regime rather than having a full-fledged vision of what the African grassroots are really in need of. The best illustration of this endeavour is Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* where Karega calls the peasants and workers to unite in order to overthrow the current regime and establish a communist one. He calls them to "struggle for a world in which there are no Kimerias and Chiuus, a world in which the wealth of our land shall belong to us all, in which there will not be parasites dictating our lives, in which we shall all be workers for one another's happiness and well-being" (*Petals of Blood*, 327).

This call is made even more explicit at the end of the novel:

The system and its gods and its angels had to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people! From Koitalel through Kang'ethe to Kimathi it had been the peasants, aided by the workers, small traders and small landowners, who had mapped out the path. Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying bloodthirsty gods and gnomish angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. Then, only then, would the kingdom of man and woman really begin, they joying and loving in creative labour (*Petals of Blood*, 344).

Still nation-state, as noted in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, is at odds with the grassroots' endeavours to repossess social spaces and wealth. In other words, as a concept, nation-state, because of its formation, as Benedict Anderson argues, hand in hand with capitalist thoughts, is more loyal to liberalism and capitalism than it is to socialism. Thus, the dream that one day the proletariat will possess the 'means of production', including political and cultural institutions, is hardly possible:

In fact, they believed that from the confrontation between nationality (defined as a community of character) and capitalist development (understood as society) there would emerge a dialectic that in its unfolding would eventually favor the proletariat and its progressive hegemony in society. This program ignored the fact that the concept of nation-state is not divisible but rather organic, not transcendental but transcendent, and even in its transcendence it is constructed to oppose every tendency on the part of the proletariat to reappropriate social spaces and social wealth (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 111).

The Marxists' ideal is not only a local revolution against the national bourgeoisie; rather Marxists are committed to what is called proletarian internationalism. The paradox is that inter-socialist wars that broke out between many socialist republics (the Cambodian north eastern and eastern areas were occupied by the North Vietnamese in 1970). Nation-state is, therefore, the dilemma of communism. In this respect Benedict Anderson points out that China, Vietnam, and Cambodia are not the only example of this kind of wars. Therefore there is little hope that the blueprints these nation-states have set for inter-communist wars will not be repeated, "or that the imagined community of the socialist nation will soon be remaindered." Anderson concludes that there are no practical solutions to contain or preclude such wars unless "fictions" like "Marxists as such are not nationalists," or nationalism is the "pathology of modern developmental history", are abandoned (Anderson, 1983: 161).

Furthermore, Marx himself considered colonization inevitable and "whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution" (Quoted in Negri, 2000: 119). Again Ngugi's characters are devoted to an ideology that is meant to oppose the excessive concern of the bourgeoisie about securing their material interests at the expense of others. The question that arises then is: aren't the characters committed also to a material project where spirituality and the world of abstraction at large are considered solely a superstructure of the base structure that is economy or the matter? Karega's national trade unionism is a struggle to gain more of this matter. The rulers are not criticised as such because of their neglect of ethics more than their immersion into personal aggrandizement. The whole communist enterprise is about the common people's possession of the means of production instead of the minority. Since the latter is infeasible the ultimate result would always entail a hierarchy where those who know most, manage and supervise things would inevitably be those more likely to accumulate wealth. Furthermore, what we learn in *A Grain of Wheat*, for instance, is that Ngugi does not criticise the fact that celebrating independence

meant forgetting the old independence the Kenyan nation had had before colonialism. Ngugi, however, makes it clear that independence was far from being a path towards certainties. Betrayal is significantly shown to be a pattern throughout the history of Kenya. *A Grain of Wheat* demonstrates actually that the history of Kenya has been an ambiguous intermingling of victory, dishonesty and betrayal. The day Kenya obtained its independence, despite the fact that the Kenyan nation is born and all the festivities are being performed, is depicted to be pregnant with uncertainties and fear:

Kenya regained her Uhuru from the British on 12 December 1963. A minute before midnight, lights were put out at the Nairobi stadium so that people from all over the country and the world who had gathered there for the midnight ceremony were swallowed by the darkness. In the dark, the Union Jack was quickly lowered. When next the lights came on the new Kenya flag was flying and fluttering, and waving, in the air. The Police band played the new National Anthem and the crowd cheered continuously when they saw the flag was black, and red and green. The cheering sounded like one intense cracking of many trees, falling on the thick mud in the stadium...Everybody waited for something to happen. This 'waiting' and uncertainty that went with it-like a woman torn between fear and joy during birth-motions- was a taut cord beneath the screams and the shouts and the laughter (*A Grain of Wheat*, 199).

Considering deductions following from the preceding analysis, the African novel whatever elements of orality it incorporates, is more commensurable to the new Western concept of the nation-state. The latter like the novel is a typically modern institution, which leads the critic Franco Moretti to describe the novel as "the symbolic form of the nation-state." (Moretti, 1998: 20) This is so because if we go back over Benedict Anderson's analogy of the novel literary form to nation-state, several points could be raised. For instance, the idea of simultaneity or what Walter Benjamin calls messianic time can also be touched upon in the African novel. But first it is worth quoting Anderson's analysis of the relation between this time connected to Christianity and the novel form. According to the Christian thought the messianic time started in associating the sacrifice of Isaac to the sacrifice of Christ. For if an event like

the sacrifice of Isaac is read as foreshadowing that of Christ, “so that in the former the latter is as it were announced and promised and the latter fulfils, “then, Anderson concludes, “a connection is established between two events which are linked neither temporarily nor causally-a connection which it is impossible to establish by reason in the horizontal dimension” For Anderson, this connection can be made only if both incidences are vertically related to Divine Providence, which uniquely is able to plan such an arrangement of history and provide the “key to its understanding.” Anderson argues that “the here and now” is not merely a connection in a worldly sequence of proceedings, “it is simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omnitemporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event” (Anderson, 1983: 24).

Anderson points out that in the secular age this messianic time has turned into what Walter Benjamin calls “homogeneous empty time” or calendrical time. Yet this time bears resemblance to the relation between the omniscient God, the readers of the novel form, the characters the latter incorporates and the political philosophy of nation-state. Anderson connects the conception of simultaneity to the emergence of secular sciences. The medieval conception of ‘simultaneous-along-time’ is replaced by the modern ‘homogeneous empty time,’ in which simultaneity is marked by coincidence and measured by clock and calendar. According to Anderson, the link between the change in conceiving simultaneity and the emergence of imagined communities of the modern nation-state can be traced in the novel and newspaper forms. These forms, Anderson argues, “provided the technical means for “re-presenting” the kind of imagined community that is the nation.” Anderson illustrates the connections existent between the imagined nation’s individuals with the relations between characters in the novel. Although these characters can be connected in a way or another, they do not necessarily encounter each other, and even if they do they do not recognise necessarily this connection:

Take, for illustrative purposes, a segment of a simple novel-plot, in which a man (A) has a wife (B) and a mistress (C) who in turn has a lover (D). We might imagine a sort of time-chart for this segment as follows:

<i>Time:</i>	I	II	III
<i>Events:</i>	A quarrels with B C and D make love	A telephone C B shops D plays pool	D gets drunk in a bar A dines at home with B C has an ominous dream

Notice that during this sequence, A and D never meet, indeed may not even be aware of each other's existence if C has played her cards right. What then actually links A to D? Two complementary conceptions: first, that they are embodied in 'societies' (Wessex, Lübeck, Lost Angelos). These 'societies' are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected. Second, that A and D are embodied in the minds of the omniscient readers. Only they, like God, watch A telephoning C, B shopping, and D playing pool all *at once*, that all these acts are performed at the same clocked, calendrical time, but by actors who maybe largely unaware of one another, shows the novelty of this imagined world conjured up by the author in his readers' minds (Anderson, 1983: 24-26).

Although some of the African novels discussed earlier attempt in their portrayals to draw closer to the tribe, put differently, the *natio*, they, for the most part, narrate the modern nation-state after the Western manner. For illustrative purposes, the portrayals in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* right from the beginning of the novel denote nationhood:

The light from the bus moved uncertainly down the road until finally the two vague circles caught some indistinct object on the side of the road where it curved out in front. The bus has come to a stop. Its confused rattle had given place to an endless spastic shadow, as if its pieces were held together by too much rust ever to fall completely apart.

The driver climbed down onto the road from his seat, took a crumpled packet of Tuskers from his shirt pocket, struck a bent cigarette in his mouth, and lit a match. The head refused to catch, however; there was only the humid orange glow as the driver resignedly threw away the stick and took out another. After the third try a yellow flame sputtered briefly.

The driver caught it quickly with the end of the cigarette before it died, cleared his throat and spat out a generous gob of mucus against the tire, and began unhurriedly to inhale his smoke (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 01).

The first scene in the novel is an obvious symbolic representation of the nation-state. The bus stands for the nation; the driver for the post-colonial leader(s) and the passengers for Ghanaians. Frantz Fanon explained in his essay “On the Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, which is of high importance in reading Armah’s and Ngugi’s works as well, that African leaders treat citizens in their nation-states as a ‘herd’ since they see themselves, as the word ‘lead’ means in French, as drivers. Although the novel is read, for the most part, as a critical and political satire of the postcolonial situation in Ghana and Africa at large, Armah cannot miss addressing (as a unified nation) only Ghanaians in his novel. The nation is described to be in danger of crumbling down any minute, like the rusted pieces of the bus, yet the narrator makes it seem like there is nothing wrong with the overall structure of the modern nation-state, since what is lacking is some ‘beautiful’ leaders. Benedict Anderson speaks of consensus, maps, newspapers and administrative functionaries as pillars of the modern secular nation. Armah likewise describes Ghanaians in the process of reiterating the nation by dint of the daily practices which make their nation imaginable. Taking the bus either to go back home (in Ghana) or to go to work (in Ghanaian institutions) make Ghanaian readers easily recognize that Armah’s “we” is about Ghanaians. However, it is noticeable from the beginning that Armah’s imagined nation is embarrassingly mediocre, inefficient, backward and unimaginative to a revolting extent. The bus driver who stands for contemporary Ghanaian leaders does not shy away from stealing the money of the people he is supposed to guide. It is shown though to be well deserved because Ghanaians are “sleep walkers”; they are imprudent people boasting of a wealth they do not even possess. Yet they cherish being inflated and thus forget their destitute situation:

Inside the bus, the conductor took down his bad and slowly rubbed his neck just above the patch where the long strap had been pressing down. Then he sat down heavily with his legs dangling down the front steps and closed his eyes. The passengers shuffled up the center aisle and began to lower themselves gently down, one after the other, into the darkness of the dawn. When the soft scrapping of sleepy feet on the hallow metal of the steps had stopped, the conductor sat up, his eyes wide open, took his bag from off the floor, drew from within it his day's block of tickets and, laying this on the seat beside him, poured out all the money he had collected so far beside it...Collecting was certainly easier, but at the same time not as satisfactory as the swollen days after pay day. There was not much in it at a time like that. True, people were still only bodies walking in their sleep but what could a conductor take, ever from a body that has yet to awake, when all this walking corpse holds out is the exact fare itself, no more, no less? Much better the days after pay day, much better. Then the fullness of the month touches each old sufferer with the feeling of new power... (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 2-3).

It should be pointed out that the author makes sure the characters are linked together even if they may pass each other on the street without recognizing each other. For instance, Koomson's wife Estie has never met Teacher, nor has the latter met the man's family; Manaan has never met the clerk, the timber man, Koomson or Estie. However, they are all linked to one nation and one landscape. The omniscient narrator who knows every single detail about the characters along with the expected (Ghanaian) audience creates in the mind an empty calendrical time, but meanwhile one that brings together all the characters. In other words, the simultaneity imagined of the Ghanaian nation is devised via representing the nation through the novel form. It is almost suggested that Koomson's treachery, his wife's greed, the man's wife's wrong ambitions, the man and the Teacher in their alienation, the maddened Manaan and the driver's theft are all actions and states of affairs taking place at the same time but can only be imaginable in their simultaneity by the omniscient narrator and the reader. The same design can be found in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* in the sense that Munira's father, for instance, does not encounter Nyakinyua, nor does the latter meet Munira's wife. The latter on her part does not meet Karega, nor does she meet Wanja. Moreover, Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* reflects this tendency in that Amamu's friends are not made to encounter Adisa's landlord, nor does his wife meet his friends. Yet what binds them all

together is the city which they are associated to by means of the map to which the city belongs, their common cultural elements and the daily rituals they go through. Furthermore, a literary historian, Gerry Smyth argues in his *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* that a novel may well “contain the nation within its form, its structure, its silences”—most of all, through the interaction amongst its characters (Smyth, 1997: 20). So the characters’ interactions with each other in the novels in question are a microcosm of national life in the writers’ respective nations or rather what the novelists would like their “national character” to be. Ngugi’s characters are mostly revolutionary like Kihika, Karega and Warringa; traditionalists such as Nyakinyua and religious like Kihika and Munira. Armah’s characters are predominantly philosophers like Man, Teacher, Modin, Baako and so on. Awoonor’s characters are on the whole seeking wisdom in the Ewe traditional religion. But most of the characters in the works discussed in this research, as mentioned before, embody the ambiguity and ambivalence the nation-state imparted on African emergent countries.

What is remarkable when we consider the portrayals made by the novelists in question is that they claim the middle course, straddling, as a result, the traditional polytheistic pre-colonial societies and the modern monotheistic nation, yet on scrutinizing their narrative voices and the manner whereby their characters are devised, one is given the impression that their respective societies (the Ewe, the Akan, the Gikuyu, the Yoruba or the Igbo) belong now more to an imagined nation-state that believes in the omnipotence and omniscient powers of God than happy “pantheons” worshipping several gods at will. For the imitation in the novels in question of a world devised and known in its entirety by a single being denotes more a monotheistic manner of storytelling than the manner a traditional griot would conceive of the world. The traditional story told orally by any one implies ignorance and illiteracy while novels accessed only when one is educated suggest the modern world and by extension the nation-state against which it emerged. No wonder then that the Gikuyu, because

of their clinging to the Bible and education at large, are called *athomi* or people of the book.

Realizing the link between religion, the print tradition and the nation, the novelists try either to create a religion of their own, such as Armah's 'prophetic' instructions, or attempt a critical and selective use of Christianity (like Ngugi's) for the sake of narrating their imagined communities. Kohn argues that modern nationalism derived three concepts from Old Testament mythology: "the idea of a chosen people, the emphasis on a common stock of memory of the past and of hopes for the future, and finally national messianism":

Not only oppressed nationalities took refuge in the hope of a messianic mission; . . . it expressed also the struggle of heretical sects and oppressed classes for the realization of their dreams and aspirations, and as the secular idea of historical progress it still retains today some of its religious force (Kohn, 2008: 12).

Ngugi connects the myth of creation handed down orally from one generation to another to the Bible. This is an attempt to make his imagined community understand that they are themselves chosen and can like all other nations perpetuate their sacred clinging to land, hence their being one nation. The novelists try to involve their people in a PanAfricanist project sometimes as in *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers* or *KMT*, yet given the historical subjectivity shown in relation to it (the project), one can deduce only the possible union between the nation-states already existent. Reasonably, the novelists then can only be understood as committed members of their imagined communities which they are narrating and calling them to unite (economically, for instance) with other African nations to overcome the modern globalization which in fact enforces the Western hegemony.

The nation-state in Africa came to be characterised as an "empty shell" not only for the cultural 'death' Africans underwent on the experience of colonialism, but also because treated as *fait-accompli* (nation-state) on different grounds such as, to use Fanon's words again, "catching up" with the developed

world, post independence African leaders could do nothing about it (even if they had the looks of trying i.e. establishing various institutions and joining regional and international organisations.) In other words, African modern nation-states have neither been able to reconnect to their past (and creatively set up projects based on that), nor could they lay the grounds for sovereign and economically independent nations, which would redefine their relationships with Europe. In this respect Colin Legum points out that for five hundred years of Europe's invasion of Africa created a profound involvement between the two continents. After Europe had been "extruded-mostly peacefully, sometimes violently," Africa became engaged in establishing a new and different kind of relationship with Europe. For Colin Legum, this relationship would depend in part on proceedings inside Africa and in part on "Europe's attitude to, and understanding of, these developments. What is certain is that there can be no escape from this involvement" (Quoted in Prah, 2006: 197).

This might be the result of the alienation that Africans are feeling because of the experience of colonialism. This alienation, Abiola Irele argues, is the result of not being able to identify with the ancestors and identifying on the contrary with the Western alien culture and religion. For, as Ofalaniyan and Quayson argue, the essential attempt of "understanding our alienation and coming to terms with it justifies all forms of scholarship devoted to European culture and Western civilization, considered as a totality." The African intellectuals have been so caught up in the Western civilization that to think it as something apart from them is to "set it up as an abstraction"(Ofalaniyan & Quayson, 2007: 606). Consequently, Kwesi Kwaa Prah argues that the "post-colonial states of Africa are neither nations nor nation-states; they are simply states, neo-colonial states." They are entities formed for administrative purposes, by the previous "colonial masters" (Prah, 2006: 205). Thus, protagonists such as Nwoye, Baako, The Man, Teacher, Munira and Amamu are described not only as alienated from their nations, but also alienated from their respective families. The alienated characters realise that what matters to

their families are the objects they expect them to bring home more than their humanity or the ethics they make sure to preserve. The man, for instance, is pressurized by his loved ones' nagging demands. Teacher quits his family and no longer cares about social norms. Likewise, Munira abandons his frigid wife to immerse himself in teaching at Ilmorog School. Besides, adulterous relations are more frequent amongst the characters, and this can be observed in almost all of Ngugi's and Armah's novels. Amamu, Awoonor's protagonist, also prefers his mistress to his wife and Armah's hero, Modin Dofu has a German-American mistress, Aimée Reitsch and Baako Onipa goes mad, because his family considers not his humanity or theirs, rather they have become worshippers of things coming from the west. Consequently, the protagonist ends up, hypocritically, connecting more to, to use Anderson's words again, "fellow-pilgrims his functionary colleagues, from places and families he has secretly heard of and surely hopes never to have to see. But in experiencing them as travelling-companions, a consciousness of connectedness ('why are we...here...together?') emerges, above all when all share a single language-of-state" (Anderson, 2006: 56). In Armah's later novels, the concept of the family almost disappears giving way to work camaraderie and erudite people. Basil Davidson notes that Africans, despite their belonging now to the two monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity, could not lose sight of their reverence (even if they associate with them in a sort of a nodding acquaintance) to the old ways, the ancestors and the extended family. For "as it fell out in old Africa, spiritual powers for blessing or for punishment were in the possession of extended families, or of what the scientists have called 'segmentary lineages' or their equivalents" (Davidson, 1994: 273).

Again, compared to Achebe, Ngugi and Awoonor and except for the tangible landscape observed in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest*, the Afrotopic nation Armah's protagonists are in search of in his later works, is more of an abstract form than a physical social construct. For it is hardly rooted in an ethnicity, a local

language, a religion, political or cultural borders. The novelist's nation is defined against "blackness" or race which, like Senghor and Césaire, he claims has a particular spiritual and ethical traits such as the ones incorporated in the "way". Realising perhaps that he cannot escape easily the ambivalence and contradictions imposed by the nation-state (which are noticeable in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*), Armah tries to 'bring down' the pillars of nation-state in his fictional Afrotopia. However, Armah does not trace back the "untaken paths", to quote Davidson, which would have made the Ashanti Empire, for instance, on a par with other nations such as Britain. Nowhere in Armah's novels could we find the representation of the Golden Stool, for instance, which Davidson considers to be as equally important and strong as the English Crown. Instead, Like Gates, Armah could find pride in no less a historical landmark than ancient Egypt's civilisation, which he claims was the black people's nation. Armah does not seem to find much to be proud of in the Akan or any other African culture and ethics except for ancient Egypt's morality. The novelist does not depict the ethnic conflicts that took and still taking place between the different tribes in Africa such as the Tutsi and the Hutu. The novelist seems to have adopted the Afrocentric esoteric attitude Jeremiah calls "Romantic Racialism: Cult of African Moral Superiority" (Jeremiah, 1998: 27). This thought finds its roots in the Greek Classical tradition of *pathe mathos*. In this tradition suffering, like the experience of slavery explored in *Two Thousand Seasons*, was considered as a source of knowledge. This thought was also traced in the Judeo-Christian notion that victimization was the sign of the messiah. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* offered the most famous rendition of this tradition. W.E.B Du Bois "transformed Stowe's long-suffering messiah, *Uncle Tom*, into "the figure of the Black Mammy, one of the most pitiful of the world's Christs...She was an embodied sorrow, an anomaly crucified on the cross of her own neglected children for the sake of the children of masters who bought and sold her like they bought and sold cattle" (Quoted in Jeremiah, 1998: 27).

This, Jeremiah argues, leads to Marcus Garvey's expression "the black man of sorrows". Martin Luther King joins this trend and speaks of the 'Negro' as "the instrument of the great moral ideal". Also, this movement was greatly influenced by the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop who argues that the material conditions of the Nile Valley produced "in the Negro, a gentle, idealistic, peaceful nature, endowed with a spirit of justice and gaiety." The Egyptians, Diop argues, had "a hermaphroditic ontology" which implied a balance of power between the sexes. Thus the climatic favourable conditions plus an androgynous god revealed "the basic traits of the Negro soul and civilization." On the contrary, according to Diop, "the ferocity of nature in the Eurasian steppes" produced among Indo-Europeans an innate love of conquest. The postglacial Europe led Europeans to "conjure up deities maleficent and cruel, jealous and spiteful: Zeus, Yahweh, among others" (Quoted in Jeremiah, 1998: 27-8).

Armah's "way" seems to be an embodiment of Diop's premises. The novelist's way is described in *Two Thousand Seasons* to be a black man's superior ideology or religion, compared to the European and Arab's 'predatory' religions. The "way" is described in the same line with Diop's arguments that is instinctive in black people. But Armah uses Diop's statements on Pre-Christ spirituality to describe vituperatively monotheistic religions as an invention of the West and Arabs

We have not found that lying trick to our taste, the trick of making up sure knowledge of things possible to think of, possible to wonder about but impossible to know in any such ultimate way. We are not stunted in spirit, we are not Europeans, we are not Christians that we should invent fables a child would laugh at and harden our eyes to preach them daylight and deep night as truth. We are not wrapped in soul, we are not Arabs, we are not Muslims to fabricate a desert god chanting madness in the wilderness and call our creature creator. That is not our way (*Two Thousand Seasons*, 03).

Also, in *KMT*, the new professor attributes the selfishness characteristic of the African élites to the introduction of monotheistic religions in Africa

As a stock in trade, you need locate a big problem and then to stake your claim to it. On this score, it is the duty of all good African intellectuals to give praise to alien deities established over the continent-Hebrew, Christian, Muslim-for inflicting so many soul-scorching atrocities on the people of Africa. These disasters constitute an inexhaustible resource base that the alert African intellectual can arrange to live off, trading in selected bits of this or that catastrophe for a salary here, an allowance there, per diems, stipends, fellowships, grants, awards and sundry other forms of pelf everywhere (KMT, 93).

Again, Armah's depictions of the sufferings inflicted on the black race in the aftermath of the experience of slavery in the same artistic work in which he spells out the 'superior' moral features of the black people could be an echo of Du Bois' Christ who "was bought and sold like a cattle". Moreover, Armah connects, like Diop, the geographic (and climatic by extension) characteristics, where the Europeans and Arabs live, to their temperament. The desert is associated to the Arabs and the sea to the Europeans: "It is for the spring to give. It is for springwater to flow. But if spring could continue to give and the springwater continue flowing, the desert is no direction. Along the desert road springwater is the sap of young wood prematurely blazing, meant to carry life quietly, darkly from roots to furthest veins but abruptly betrayed into devouring light, converted to scaling pus hissing its own vessel's destruction. Along the desert road springwater is blood of a murdered woman when the sun leaves no shadow" (*Two Thousand Seasons*, ix-xi).

The river on the other hand is associated to black Africans. The image of sea appears when the idealistic initiates i.e. Isanusi and other characters flee slavery by sailing in a ship and starting thus a journey into liberty. On their way to the coast, these characters come to realise the difference between the calm river they have been rowing on and the raging sea they now face. While the river is indigenous and reassuring, the sea is alien and threatening. The violent meeting between the indigenes and the alien Europeans is represented by the image of the meeting between the river and the sea: "The seawater came in long, curling waves to a meeting with darker water from the land. In both waters there was an upward surge from clashing waves" (*Two Thousand*

Seasons, 118). Hence, Armah's Afrotopia finds its roots more in the esoteric scholastic works of Diop and Du Bois' than in what the Akan, the Ewe or the Fanti, for instance, would believe constitutes their nationhood.

Thus, without venerating the old African precolonial, institutions, political models and achievements, Adebayo Adedeji confirms, the curse of the nation-state model would not be warded off. The latter, writing in the November 1992 *Bulletin* of the newly-formed African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies, argues that the colonial role has left so huge an effect on Africa that numerous Africans have constantly poured scorn on its pre-colonial historical achievements, "its arts, customs, beliefs, system of government and the art of government". Adebayo Adedeji regrets that the disaster for Africa has been that when finally the chance came to it to tear off the seams of the fabric of colonialism, no endeavour was made to reaffirm the African nations' autonomy by substituting alien "institutions and systems of government, and the flawed European models of nation-state", with revitalized and modernised local "African systems that the people would easily relate to, and would therefore be credible" (Quoted in Davidson, 1994: 278).

It was mentioned in chapter one what the invented traditions tried to make of the European manner of interpreting the world adopted by Africans. For these imported traditions "not only provided whites with models of command but also offered many Africans models of "modern" behaviour". Whether created by Europeans or by Africans themselves as a reaction to colonialism, the invented traditions "distorted the past but became in themselves realities through which a good deal of colonial encounter was expressed" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983: 212). Indeed, after African modern states obtained independence, African leaders fell directly into the rituals of modern age, into doing the sports, the way they held official funerals and adopting the mode of life that the British used to lead. For instance, Ali Mazrui remarks in his *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy*, that the Kabakaship had become 'an Anglo African institution', which was shown clearly in the

formalities which attended Mutesa's death. Two funerals were given to him, one in London and the other in Kampala, both marked by complete military honours:

On that occasion the military component of the burial was handled by the British Grenadier Guards. Now [in Kampala] the Grenadier Guards were only part of the ceremony. The bulk of the military component was the Ugandan army. And yet the universe of discourse between that trumpet in London in 1969 and the trumpet in the Kasubi tombs in Uganda in 1971 was indeed a shared universe (Quoted in Ranger & Hobsbawm, 1983: 225).

In his prison Diary, Ngugi wa Thiong'o describes how the ruling elite adopted the invented European traditions and made them part and parcel of their lives. For instance, "the settler played golf and polo, went to horse-races or on the royal hunt in red-coats and riding-breeches...The black pupils now do the same, only with greater zeal: golf and horses have become 'national' institutions" (Ngugi, 1981: 58-9).

Concluding Remarks:

Caught between the prerogatives of modernity and the nostalgic drives of the past, the novelists in question condemn the metropolis and celebrate it at the same time. Condescending stances vis-à-vis their nation-states can be traced in the novels. The idea of return to Africa is more connected to Afro-Americans than to Afro-Brazilians, for instance, who integrated fully within some African tribes in West Africa. Narrating the nation in the African novel is more associated to the factors which brought about the nation-state more than the ones that would bring it down. The print tradition, the novel form and the ambiguous empty time are all elements which reinforce the modern nation. Some of the Afro-American scholars, who seem to be in defense of Africa, risk the accusation of looking at Africa in a selective, patronizing manner. The critical view with which Armah views Western philosophy and religion is contradictory for the novelist falls in the same manner of thought (Judaeo-

Christian) while attempting to contradict it. The Marxist manner of seeing things, which African novelists such as Ngugi (overtly) and Armah (latently but detectable) suggest as ideals for their nation-states respectively, is not only utopic but leads, as history proves it, to counterproductive consequences for it calls for a principle that contradicts the 'human innate wish to possess'. More importantly, by suggesting that (in modern age) they are unreliable alone without having to be combined to or paralleled to Western political thought, the African novelists in question show their distrust and suspicion regarding the wisdom of the pre-colonial African political systems. The African novelists' "discourse", as argued in Gyan Prakash's *After Colonialism* in a similar context, "was compelled to engage the subalterns [...]; it cited peasants'" rights like in Ngugi's most novels, the African individual's alienation and the betrayal of the African bourgeoisie like in many of Armah's novels and Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*; it represented the *natios* like in Achebe's and the above mentioned works, (the discourse did all this) "to authorize the demand for a nation-state." For, given the African choice of the Western mode of expression (the novel) along with their embrace of "the model of causality and rational action," the knowledge and symbols of African traditional imagined communities such as their old economies and icons of their ancient monarchies such the "golden stool" (and the fact that old African nations were equal to colonial nations and kingdoms at all levels as advanced earlier by Basil Davidson) had been "dismissed as outmoded by the disciplines of history instituted by colonialism and rearticulated" in the novelists' works. Thus "[t]he subalterns were regarded as incapable of articulating the demands of the nation" (Prakash, 1993: 10). The esoteric resources of Armah's imagination preclude associating his Afrotopia to any existent African nationality. Besides, Armah's nation cannot be linked to "the untaken paths" of the Ashanti Empire, nor to any of the tribes constituting modern Ghana.

Conclusion:

This discussion has been conducted in order to set some African writers' fictional works against their author's desire to project a nationalist vision of their respective countries. The narration of African nationalism, nationhood or nation-states can be characterised as being a symbolic enactment of the political unconscious of the novelists in question. The narratives have put in print what cannot be realised with direct interference on the part of the artists. The socio-political asymmetry between the modern African nation-state, the people the latter incorporates and the aspirations entailed by both (the nations and the people) are made up by symmetry between elements of the modern ambiguous nation-state on the one hand and inefficient residual components of precolonial African societies on the other. Following Fredric Jameson's analysis in *The Political Unconscious*, the authors' novels are, as Levi-Strauss demonstrates in his "*The Structural Analysis of Myth*", symbolic resolution of a real contradiction, a strategy of containing on the imaginary level an intolerable concrete dilemma-which is in this case class inequality, cultural alienation which resulted in the paralysis of the black race. Like the Cudaveo tribe, the novelists in question, unable to solve these predicaments in a direct manner began to dream it, to project it into the imaginary' (Quoted in Jameson, 1981:78-9). In other words, the narrativization in the African novel stands out as singularly African, depicting the particularity of the African historical experience, yet its emulation simultaneously of the unfolding of life in contemporary Africa makes of it the embodiment of contradictory and ambivalent voices. There is the depiction of a faint voice calling for the revitalization of Africa's precolonial political models; the uneasiness and fear of the uncertainties characteristic of modern life; the discomfort of emulating a 'false father' who disdains Africans yet who acts slyly and with civility; the desire to maintain one's nation's prerogatives and the running for cover under the gigantic dimensions of the nation's sovereignty; the sentimental call for a PanAfricanist 'disbordering' of the African landscape; the ambivalent love of education and the confused respect for tradition; the guiltless vulgarity towards

the West and the Arabs and the numbing guilt of being found to resemble the once condescending ‘civilized’ European; the love of the wisdom of the English Book and the transgressing acts to cleanse it of its hypocritical use. The African novel represents both the blessedness of the nation in its modern positive privileges and its being a curse in its dystopic promises to the African. One could go so far as to say that the African novelist is caught in his dubious stance vis-à-vis both his culture and Western culture, given that all the positive elements of modernity come from the latter.

This research work has tried to trace the rhetoric of the novelists in relation to their respective representations of nation-state. This rhetoric has touched upon the history of Africa as seen from an African view point. The human experience represented (with variation) in the novels of Achebe, Ngugi, Awoonor and Armah was shown to be more sacred than technological, more important than the double-faced civility and more apparent in the harmony between the self and the immediate environment. The African nation is mostly narrated so as to be a microcosm of life in its ambivalence yet a stifling bordered landscape in its administrative functionary apparatus in the hands of a tyrant. Some characters in the novels discussed in this research work reflect this ambivalent stance towards what is dear to them and what is dear to their loved ones; they are in between the loyalty to the innate goodness in human kind and the man-made ‘gods’; they straddle the modern life dictated by the embracing of the nation-state and the organic life where man can live on his terms. Consider the man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Being caught in his daily and monotonous shuttling between home and work, the man easily collapses into a self-willed alienation from the ‘false’ manner of seeing life. He knows, none the less, that he lives in the unfitting nation-state, being the ‘burden and curse’ of the black man insofar as it implied the dissemination of huge and ‘dirty’ cities and the self-incarceration in prioritizing the ‘gleam’ to humanity. Fanon’s psychological insights into the colonized’s feeling of inferiority foreground the petty-bourgeoisie’s ‘white ache’, their want to be in appearance, language and manners like the former colonizer. Nanga, Obi,

Koomson, Nderi wa Riera, Kimeria, Big Old Man, Amamu, The Man, Teacher, Wanjia are all characters depicted as either victims of the new modern capitalistic drives or victimisers, using the wealth of their imagined community to live and look like the 'whites'. The novelists narrate their modern nation-states, yet their portrayals are about pathological sovereignties which are dysfunctional at all levels. For the enthusiasm following the triumph of nationalism shortly gave way to disillusionment on the realisation that *Uhuru*, the dream so dear to the hearts and minds of colonised Africans, was a 'false' dream, because they lost sight of the fact that their precolonial true independence was not fought for. Perhaps, while fighting, as suggested in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the African leaders realised that what they had felt actually towards the colonizer was not hatred, rather it was admiration, it was the want to solely replace the colonizer to replicate the very strategies of terror and dehumanization they ostensibly were fighting. Narrating the nation in the case of the novelists in question served multiple purposes. It debunked the racial hierarchical classificatory enterprise which placed the African art, mind and culture at the nadir of all human civilizations. Also, it was meant to raise the consciousness of Africans as to their real position and rank on the scale of humanity, that by their blind and massive consumption of the Western manufactured goods, they have submitted willingly to a new type of colonialism.

The discussion of the works in question has made us also see the different projects the African novelists envisage for the creation of a new state of mind which is meant to enable their respective people to imagine their true communities. It was shown that the current African mindset which envisages the nation through the secular eyes of modernity and modernism is, to use a Marxist term, a 'false consciousness.' The new daily pilgrimage with the new hypocritically 'loved ones' is shown to have supplanted the old 'dynamic forces' according to which the African used to define himself and his relation to his nation.

Chinua Achebe's nation has to do with the awareness of the importance of the ethnic identity, coupled with accepting modernity, and nation-state by extension, as an inevitable and crucial factor beyond the emergence of the Nigerian modern nation-state. The brotherhood introduced by Christianity is depicted to have had a great role in brining the different social strata together. Achebe is for the use of the English language for the sake of uniting his imagined community. Ngugi's imagined nation-state, through a confused use of biblical messianic time on the one hand and a materialistic interpretation of history on the other, views his nation-state as a battle field where ultimately class struggle will lead to a classless nation. Yet by focussing intensely on narrating the Gikuyu natio and the entire nation at the same time, not losing sight still of his Marxist ideology, Ngugi can be said to be in an ambivalent state between combating the modern materialistic drives and summoning them at the same time, between the wisdom of the tribe and 'refined' manners of education and between a revolutionary solution to the current state of oppression and an evolutionary conquering of awakened minds. It should be noted, however, that Ngugi refers in his narratives to a nostalgia to return to precolonial Kenyan political governance and resistance spirit, mainly that of the *Itwika* revolution. Still, the representation of this distant past in Ngugi's novels is Janus-faced for it glorifies his *natio* while it seems to be targeting national union.

Armah's nation is still embedded in race and racial antagonism. But likewise his portrayals are meant to create a state of mind, a consciousness to make the African sense the urgency to regain a past 'real' glory, a dream that was once a reality. This is manifested in his immersion now into narrating the black African nation in terms of anteriority or Ancient Egypt.

Awoonor's narration of the nation is rooted in the Ewe dirge and spiritual manner of seeing things. He deploys traditional rituals into modern Ghana as the only way out, the only rites capable of healing the modern malaise. Amamu is shown to be the epitome of the modern African who feels out of place, he feels that his nation is no longer the landscape it used to be. His final death is

shown to be the remedy to the disorientation and alienation of contemporary Ghana's contesting ideologies. The secular prop-ups of the nation-state such as Amamu's job along with his knowledge of a dysfunctional law are shown to have contributed to the cynical view of abstract things, and meanwhile the only belief in the manipulative Machiavellian practices.

Being the most controversial and highly speculated over term and existence, nation-state imparts its ambiguous, ambivalent and unfolding aspects on the African novel. Moreover, given the former colonial situation and the experience of slavery Africa underwent (along with the accompanying racial and racist justificatory motives), the African novel has so far narrated the collective unconscious that incorporates the psychological remnants of the trauma of early alien assaults and concomitantly the shock of the incessant state of fear maintained by 'men of the people'. Nevertheless, while the African novel disapproves of the current artificial frontiers, it keeps narrating them at the same time. The characters in the novel identify with each other through the omniscient eyes of the readers belonging to the respective nation of the author, yet also through the international eyes of modern educated people in the West. The helplessness of some characters shows also the ambiguous empty time or calendrical time which hides behind it the belief that there is an omniscient existence which conjures up events.

The high-flown and esoteric knowledge shown through the novels can be taken as a patronizing and orientalisising stance towards Africa. There is almost an othering of the African novelist of his imagined community. There is the 'us' that, if we consider the naive and superstitious features they attribute to their nations, hides behind it the 'we' (educated and saved) and 'they' (benighted and exploited).

Moreover, the excessively subjective portrayals of the Western stereotypes and of what is called the Myth of the Negro can be read as viewing the 'African' salvation only in contradicting and debunking this myth rather than setting about representing more fruitful and relevant philosophies about the situation of their respective nations. The utopic narratives and the liminal spaces

they assume for their protagonists seem to be meant to annihilate the current order to replace it with a new order. However, given the low readership, the *anomie* and the continuous state of dictatorship, the narratives could be seen to be destined for a special audience that is as yet to be born.

The conditioning of African minds into accepting the invented traditions as theirs, besides the assault against the African self through slavery and the stereotypes in the eighteenth century philosophy, could be said to have contributed greatly to producing African minds that cannot see Africa without linking it to Europe and Western culture in general. Also, the phenomenon of colonialism which destroyed the African precolonial economic emerging mercantile class along with the African way of governance resulted in the fact that African nationalists lost sight of these precolonial economic and political models and saw only the European nation-state as a true independence and model to follow. Born at an age when they were witnessing the erosion of their traditions and the establishment of political and educational institutions (in which they all had their education), the first wave of the African novelists found themselves in a true predicament as to choosing a manner of representing their respective *imagined communities*; the already existing objective reality made them be caught between being realistic (and the accompanying dissatisfaction with it) and trying to transcend these political and social realities.

Their narrativization ended up being a reflection of the *status quo* characterised by the cultural nihilism of Africans. This nihilism manifests itself in the inability to identify entirely with their precolonial religious and cultural instructions, nor could they identify with the Islamic or Christian thoughts. This resulted sometimes in unrealistic disavowals of the modern age and what it implies, which constitutes a contradiction itself because of the writers making use of the education and the print tradition and so on. It also resulted in an unrealistic nostalgia for a precolonial time because their imagined communities themselves care less about it and more about finding jobs and making a living. Africans also now belong more to monotheistic religions Islam and Christianity

than to polytheistic religions, which makes us wonder which societies are the novelists in question representing when they deny religion or make reference to precolonial spirituality. Yet the novelists in question tried each in his manner to tend away from the unsatisfactory reality in an artistic way, which does not provide concrete solutions (because the artist is not expected to do this). They also provided philosophical insights which could be considered as an ethical courage in the sense that they tried to negotiate fixed meanings, fixed world views and unchallenged adopted ideologies (capitalism and socialism).

The representation of nation-state in the novelists' works reflected the ambiguities of the concept and existence in that 'losing oneself in the whole' nation was shown to be 'false consciousness', yet love of 'earth' and a singular culture (Akan, Ewe, Gikuyu or Igbo) is hailed. The novelist tried also to differentiate between nationalism and its symbols and mixing it with adhering to national leaders who are shown to be mostly misrepresentations of both the "true" independence (precolonial economic and political sovereignty) and postcolonial independence. There is a confusion however between the wrongs done by the colonials and the neo-colonials and the philosophies they purport to stand for.

The writers discussed in this research, given their education and the objective reality in their respective nations which was mostly presupposed by colonialism, have only reflected in print the ambivalence which contemporary African nations go through at the cultural, political, spiritual and economic levels. This ambivalence is due to the inferiority complex Africans are made to feel after the colonial powers rendered their cultures inactive or made them disappear. Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues in this respect

Applying the metaphor of war to systems of domination, we see that colonialism attacks and completely distorts a people's relationship to their natural, bodily economic, political, and cultural base. And with this base destroyed, the wholeness of the African subject, the subject in active engagement with his environment, is fragmented (Ngugi, 2009: 29).

The novels discussed in this research show clearly the unbound loyalty of their authors to the concept of nation-state, although they may try here and there to resist it or deny it under cultural and political philosophies such as Negritude and PanAfricanism. This is so also because the writers in question did not represent their nations as being involved fully in the act of bringing down the colonial debris and revitalizing their old nations. Rather they are depicted as being involved, in Renan's words, in their "daily plebiscite" of the Western concept of nation-state. And even if we trace the representation of some characters such as Nyakinyua, Densu, and Amamu (symbolically) who stand for and defend traditions, "a return to traditions", as Appiah argues, "after all, would never be a return to the contemporary nation-state" (Appiah, 1992: 60). In other words, on reading carefully the works in question, we never witness a serious questioning of the very pillars of nation-state, exemplified by its institutions, hierarchy and its close connection to Western culture and mode of life. For however ill at ease they may be presented to the reader, characters such as Amamu, Baako, man, teacher, Munira, Wanja, Nyakinyua, Karega and their opposite representations as Koomson, Nderi wa Reira, Mzigo are all actually paying their daily tribute and reviving their daily loyalty to this concept and the political model it gave birth to. These characters and others in the novels discussed do not question the pillars of the modern nation-state; they rather accept them just like they accepted the English language as a unifying "cultural" element.

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ملخص

لقد تمت دراسة مفهوم الدولة القومية بشكل واسع من طرف علماء ينتمون إلى ميادين شتى. لقد قام بذلك علماء ينتمون إلى ميادين تتراوح بين العلوم السياسية مثل آرنست رينان (1832-1892) و تعريفه لمصطلح الأمة في دراسة عنوانها "ما هي الأمة؟" (1882)؛ التاريخ و الفلسفة مثل هانس كوهن (1891-1971) و كتابه المعنون فكرة الوطنية: دراسة لأصولها و خلفيتها (1944)، ايلي كيدوري (1926-1992) و عمله الوطنية (1960) إلى الدراسات العالمية مثل بيندكت ريتشارد أوغورمان أندرسن (1936) بدراسته المجتمعات المتخيلة (1983)، اريك هوبسبوم (1917-2012) و كتابه الأمم و الوطنية منذ 1780: برنامج، أسطورة، واقع (1991). هناك كتاب آخرون مهمون قاموا بدراسة هذا المفهوم منهم: جوزيف ستالين (1878-1953) الأمة (1905)، ماكس ويبر (1864-1920) الأمة، آرنست غلينر (1925-1995) الأمم و الوطنية (1983). لقد حاولت كل من هاته الدراسات أن تعطي تعريفا دقيقا لمفهوم الدولة القومية و لكنهم تقريبا اتفقوا على أن المفهوم ظهر في الفلسفة الأوروبية للقرن التاسع عشر. أغلبية هؤلاء يربطون المفهوم بمصطلحات مثل الدين، المشاعر الوطنية، الرقعة الجغرافية، العرق، اللغة، المصير المشترك، التاريخ، الثقافة و الهوية. يعتبر كتاب باسل ديفيدسن عبء الرجل الأسود: إفريقيا و لعنة الدولة القومية (1992) من الدراسات النادرة حول علاقة الدولة القومية بإفريقيا. كما يشير العنوان لقد قامت و لا تزال الدولة القومية بتدمير إفريقيا على جميع المستويات و الأصعدة اذ قامت بتجريد إفريقيا من تاريخها الحقيقي و من استقلالها و هويتها الأصيلا. اعتبر هوبسبوم الدولة القومية مجرد "تقاليد مبتكرة". يرجع بيندكت أندرسن ظهور المفهوم و النموذج السياسي إلى الرأسمالية و الطباعة. لقد عدد مظاهر المفهوم

العناصر التي تعززه مثل المتاحف، الخرائط، الجرائد و الموظفين. يربط كل من أندرنس في المجتمعات المتخيلة و هومي بهابها في كتابه الأمة و القصص المفهوم بفن القصص و بالخصوص بالرواية كنوع أدبي.

يؤكد أندرسن أن الرواية تكرر و تصور منطق الأمة بشكل أفضل. يحدث هذا من خلال العلاقة بين الراوي العارف بكل شئ، الوقت التقويمي الذي تأتي أصوله من الوقت المسيحي و استحالة الالتقاء بجميع أعضاء أمة المرء سوى في مخيلته. يؤمن هومي بهابها أن الرواية تعكس طبيعة الدولة القومية متعددة الأوجه و هذا لأن الأصوات داخل الرواية، أفعال الشخصيات و الفلسفة المتضمنة داخلها كلها تتلون بالتناقضات و الوضعية الهامشية. رغم كل هذا، تعد المراجع المكتوبة حول الوطنية الأفريقية شحيحة. لقد تدارس جيمس أوغودي في كتابه نجوجي واثينجو و تاريخ إفريقيا: قصص الأمة (1998) تقريبا كل روايات نجوجي. حاول أوغودي تسليط الضوء على اعتماد نجوجي على الأدب الشفهي الإفريقي و الذي يجمعه بالقصص ذي الطابع الغربي. كذلك بين الكاتب تصوير نجوجي في رواياته لتاريخ كينيا، خاصة تاريخ قبيلة الجيكويو و عاداتهم و نظرتهم للعالم، فلسفة اللغة لديه و نقده لتحجير التاريخ و الأسطورة، رأيه أن كفاح الماو الماو ضد البريطانيين يمثل التاريخ و الطبيعة الحقيقيان لشعبه، التغيير على مستوى التمثيل بالمجاز بين أعماله الأولى حيث كانت هاته التمثيلات المجازية معقدة إلى أعماله الأخيرة التي يظهرها أوغودي بأنها تمثيلات مجازية "بسيطة الفكر" و التغيير في معالجته للنوع.

يركز بحثي على عدة كتاب أفارقة (آي كوي آرما، نجوجي واثينجو، كوفي أونوور، تشينوا أتشيبي و آخرون) بدلا من كاتب واحد مثلما فعل جيمس أوغودي.

يمكننا هذا من نظرة أشمل للرواية الإفريقية، و يمنحنا المجال الكافي لرؤية أوجه الشبه و مواطن الاختلاف الإيديولوجية و الأسلوبية بين الروايات المدروسة. البحث الحالي يمكننا من أن ندرس عن كثب المنابع الإيديولوجية و كيف تتفاعل داخل الرواية مع الحقيقة الموضوعية الناتجة عن تبني الأفارقة للدولة القومية كنموذج سياسي.

تبحث هذه الدراسة في مفهوم الدولة القومية كما ظهرت في الجدل الفلسفي في أوروبا القرن 19، تغير المشهد الإفريقي بعد تبني إفريقيا لنموذج الدولة القومية كنظام سياسي و إداري، مفهوم الدولة القومية الموصوف ببيانوس الوجه و كذلك كيف أن تصوير هاته الصفة في الرواية الإفريقية نتجت عن محادثات تتصف بالتكشف، الاستطردادية، الحوارية (في مفهوم بختين) و التناقض، كما نتجت عن أصوات و مفاوضات للمعاني و التي تظهر على أنها إفريقية في الجوهر و لكنها في نفس الوقت تصور على أنها منفصلة، مناقضة بذلك الأفرقة و فاسحة المجال لإيمان راسخ بأن الدولة القومية، كما وصفها ديفيدسن، كانت "لعنة" أكثر منها نعمة على إفريقيا.

يظهر هذا البحث كيف أن الوضعية الإفريقية اتسمت في الروايات الإفريقية بكونها تجربة قارية فريدة و كجملعة مشتركة من الحقائق التي صورت المأزق التاريخي للاستعمار، الاستعباد و ما بعد ذلك بطريقة درامية. تحمل هذه التمثيلات في الخيال الأصوات الحوارية التي تدعم الصوت الرسمي للمؤلف. يتم الاحتفاظ بالتفسير الأوروبي السائد للدين، على سبيل المثال، و لكنه مزين بنغمة الكتاب المتعاطفة مع مجتمعاتهم و نظرة نقدية (مرتابة أيضا) بنظرة العالم الغربية. يعاني الكاتب من التردد و الذوات المشتتة حول جدوى دخول الحداثة على حساب ماضيهم، ثقافتهم و فلسفتهم التي بدت أنها تعاني من فقدان الذاكرة. ترجع هذه الرؤية إلى التقاليد

الغربية المبتكرة التي تتضمن الصور النمطية و التصنيفية حول الأفارقة السود سواء كان هذا في الأعمال العلمية أو الأدبية. أدى النظام الإداري المخضع بالإضافة إلى النظام التربوي الموروث عن النظام الاستعماري إلى خلق، من وجهة نظر بهابها، "تفان مزدوج" في أنفس الأفارقة و استطرادا في أنفس الكتاب لما يعتبره الكتاب ممثلا لتاريخ و ثقافة إفريقيا (أو ما تبقى منهما) و طريقة و فلسفة الغرب الحديثة في الحياة. تظهر قصص الأمة بشكل متناقض لأنها تظهر بمظهر الدفاع عن ثقافة الكتاب لكنها تتخلص في نفس الوقت من جوهر هذه الثقافة بسبب النظرة المرتابة التي تعكسها هاته القصص حول جدوى الثقافة الإفريقية في زمن الحداثة. لقد أعيد بذلك إنتاج خاصية الدولة القومية اليانوسية الوجه في القصص. تتسامي الرواية الإفريقية على الحدود المصطنعة و لكنها تعززها في نفس الوقت من خلال إبرازها لعناصر المعاصرة و الحداثة.

بسبب تجاذبهم بين امتيازات الحداثة و دوافع الحنين إلى الماضي يلجا الكتاب، الجارية دراستهم، إلى شجب المدينة و تمجيدها في نفس الوقت. النظرة الانطباعية للحياة، فقدان اليقين و نسبية تفسير الحقيقة، تيار الوعي و لحظة الإدراك الصادمة هي كلها عناصر الحداثة التي استعملت في الرواية الإفريقية. هذا يعني أن الكتاب الأفارقة ضمنيا يعترفون أن إفريقيا بدت مثيلة لأوروبا حتى في أسقامها. واقعية السحر في رواية هاته الأرض يا أخي و بشكل أقل في رواية عاد المسافر أخيرا تمكن الشخصية البطلة من احتلال موقع ثالث أو " هامشي". طقوس المرور المأداة في هذا الموقع تجعل من الشخصيات بعد رجوعها أكثر حكمة و أكثر قدرة على فهم الواقع المؤلم و المربك في إفريقيا الحديثة، حتى وفاة الشخصية البطلة مثل أمامو تصبح في هذا الصدد من أجل شفاء مجتمعه بمنطق أنه، مثلما فعل الرجل في رواية آرما الجميلون لم يولدوا بعد، يقوم بصفة رمزية بحمل أسقام مجتمعه إلى

العالم الذي يضحى من أجل ولوجه. ان العيش في شكل فيزيقي في عالم يمجّد "البريق" و الرغبة في نفس الوقت في توكيد الأخلاق الضائعة لا يخلو من الآثار المؤلمة و الباعثة على الاغتراب. يمكن قراءة "الموضع الثالث" على أنه طوبوي بسبب أوجهه الفاصلة و المتسامية.

"الرجوع المتعافي " إلى إفريقيا الشتات يمكن اعتباره طوباوية. ينتج تفسير نجوجي الماركسي للتاريخ و إخلاصه لتجربة الجيكويو عن تصوير الكاتب للدعوة إلى الثورة ضد النظام الحاكم، و في نفس الوقت، نجمت عن محاولاته لاسترجاع العناصر الثقافية القديمة لقبيلته. إن تركيزه على العلم و قبيلته لا يمكن أن يخلو من افتخاره الشوفيني بقبيلته لأنه أدرك المصالح التي يملكها "أهل الكتاب" في كينيا الحديثة. المشروع الماركسي المثالي المصور في روايات نجوجي مثل بتلات من دم لا يخلو من عقبات لأن الفلسفة الماركسية تعتبر، بشكل متناقض، الإنسان على أصعدة عديدة مخلوقا بدون أي طموحات فردية. بالإضافة لذلك تتضمن شخصيات مثل كاريجا، مونيرا و وانجا في بتلات من دم المنهج المادي في رؤية العالم و هذا لأن الرواية تعطي الانطباع أن كل ما يهم في الأخير هو المادة (عندما تقتنى أو تخسر). بالتأكيد، يعتبر الماركسيون المادة أولى من الماهية. رغم ذلك، لقد كان و لا يزال الروائيون الأفارقة ملتزمين بتصوير التجربة الإفريقية كتجربة فريدة من نوعها على المستوى النفسي و الأخلاقي. لقد أثرت حركة الزنجية و الوحدة افريقية على الكتاب بشكل كبير. لقد حاولت هاته الحركات أن تسلط الضوء على التجربة الإفريقية للقصص و التي لا يمكنها أن تكون أقل شأنًا من تقاليد الطباعة الموروثة من الغرب.

تجعلنا التخمينات الفلسفية في الروايات بين الشخصيات و الأصوات المتحاورّة بينهم من جهة و الأصوات الأخرى داخل و خارج الروايات من جهة أخرى ندرك

مدى خطورة فقدان الهوية الإفريقية بالإضافة إلى ذلك تدافع هاته العلاقات المعقدة بين الأصوات المتحاوره عن الأفرقة. و لكن الإفراط في التركيز على وصف التجربة الإفريقية فقط كنقيض أو كردة فعل للبطش الغربي يساهم في إظهار المفكرين الأفارقة كمجرد كتاب رادين للفعل مثل آرما في كتابه *ألفين فصل* و *الشافون* و فيما بعد في أعماله التي تنتمي إلى نزعة علم الآثار المصرية. ردت الفعل هاته جعلت من هؤلاء الكتاب يختارون أن يظهروا التجربة الإفريقية على أنها ذات جدوى فقط عندما تقارن بالتجربة الغربية أو الفلسفة العنصرية، بدلا من إظهارها على أنها تجرب إنسانية عادية و مساوية لكل التجارب الإنسانية الأخرى و هم بذلك يقبلون و لو ضمنا أنها لا ترتقي لتكون مرجعية بذاتها.

يمكن قراءة الاعتماد الأدبيولوجي و الأسطوري على الوعي الجمعي كتشريع رمزي للوعي الجمعي لأن كل هذا ينم عن تعويض عدم التجانس الموجود بين الزمن الحديث و ما قبل الاستعمار عن طريق التجانس بين عناصر الأدب الشفوي و تقاليد الطباعة. نستطيع أن نفتفي آثار صناعة الأسطورة في الروايات المدروسة و هذا لأن عناصر الأسطورة، و هي تخطي قيود الزمكان، ميزة الأفرقة في الروايات. ترتبط فكرة العودة إلى إفريقيا بالأمريكيين الأفارقة أكثر من البرازيليين الأفارقة على سبيل المثال الذين اندمجوا بشكل كلي في أوساط بعض قبائل إفريقيا الغربية.

ترتبط رواية الأمة في الرواية الإفريقية بالعوامل التي جلبت الدولة القومية أكثر من العوامل التي يمكنها أن تدمرها. تقاليد الطباعة، الرواية و الزمن الفارغ و الغامض أو التقويمي حسب ولتر بنيميين كلها عناصر تعزز الأمة الحديثة. يعد الزمن المسيحي و المرتبط بالزمن الفارغ أقل جدوى في الزمن الحديث بالنسبة لآندرسن. لذلك تركت المجتمعات الدينية المتخيلة مثل الأمة الإسلامية و

النصرانية أو المجتمعات الدينية الإفريقية مكانها لموظفي الحداثة و الحجاج المسافرين للعمل يوميا.

تظهر الرواية الإفريقية محاولات لتعريف الدول القومية للكتاب من خلال منظور ديني، و لكن تصويراتهم متحيرة بسبب فلسفات متنافسة مثل المسيحية، الماركسية، الزنجية، الوحدة الإفريقية و الآراء الدينية الإفريقية مثل اليو، الاكان، اليوروبا، الايبو و الجيكويو. و يمكن تأكيد أن بعض الروائيين مثل نجوجي و أونور يروون قبائلهم أكثر مما يروون أمتهم بالكامل.

النظريات الأدبية المستعملة في هذا البحث متعددة و مختلفة و لكن نظرة ما بعد الاستعمار الأدبية تأخذ حصة الأسد. يعتبر كتابي ادوارد سعيد الاستشراق و الثقافة و الامبريالية مصادر مهمة في هذا الصدد. ما يهمنا في كتابات سعيد هو قراءته للأعمال الأدبية كتخييلات ليست بالبريئة كونها تعكس، تعزز و تحافظ على مصالح الدولة القومية للكاتب. يستخدم سعيد ازدواجية ميشال فوكو المعرفة كقوة من أجل تحليل دقيق للأعمال الأدبية الغربية و يظهرها مشابهة للأعمال العلمية الغربية التي أريد بها برهنة ضعة بعض الشعوب و بالتالي تبرير احتلالهم. يمنح كتابي هومي بهابها قصص الأمة و موقع الثقافة البحث مفاهيم متصلة بقراءة الرواية كقصص لمفهوم الدولة القومية اليانوسية الوجه. هاته المفاهيم هي: التهجين، التناقض، الهامشية، التكريس المزدوج و اللطف الخبيث. تمكنا هاته المفاهيم أن ندرس كيف أن الروائيين ينتجون مفاهيم تتضمن خصائص الدولة القومية في غموضها و ازدواجيتها. يعد مفهوم بختين للأصوات العديدة و العلاقات الحوارية بين الأصوات العديدة في الرواية بالغ الأهمية في بحثنا و بذلك الرواية تفسر بأنها تقليد للدولة القومية و بالإمكانات التكشفية و خصائصها الازدواجية و المتناقضة.

يساهم الفحص التاريخي لبعض الأحداث و المراحل التاريخية في إظهار مدى تزوير بعض المؤرخين و الفلاسفة للحقيقة الإفريقية. و كما يساعدنا ذلك في رؤية كيف أن بعض الروائيين الأفارقة يبتعدون من الأحداث التاريخية الواقعية ليبرهنوا جدوى إيديولوجياتهم و تفسيراتهم للتاريخ. بالإضافة لذلك يساهم التاريخ الإفريقي كمجال في إظهار الأحداث التي أدت إلى تبني الدولة القومية كنموذج سياسي في إفريقيا و كيف أن المفكرين الأفارقة رأوها الطريقة الوحيدة للتطور.