

PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONISATION IN ARMAH'S *OSIRIS
RISING*, NGUGI'S *WIZARD OF THE CROW* AND ABODUNRIN'S
THE DANCING MASQUERADE

M.A. (LITERATURE) THESIS

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M.A. (Literature) Thesis

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Acknowledgement has been given wherever other people's work has been used.

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Certificate of Approval

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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Dedication

To Lizzie, Chikondi, and Rejoice.

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Table of Contents

<i>Declaration</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Certificate of Approval</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>vii</i>
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: The Quest for Heritage	15
The Isis-Osiris Myth and the Postcolonial	16
Reversing the Crossing	20
The Impact of Western Hegemony	30
Chapter Three: Desire for Whiteness and the African Postcolonial Dilemma	36
Western Hegemony Revisited.....	47
Chapter Four: Seeing the World from Multiple Perspectives	56
Rewriting Africa’s History	57
The Slave Trade Account Revisited.....	66
Racism and Effects of Colonialism.....	72
Chapter Five: Conclusion	78
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>84</i>

Abstract

This study examines the theme of decolonisation in three African novels: Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* and Femi Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade*. The study argues that these novels suggest that decolonisation in Africa can be accomplished through re-appropriation of African ways of life. Despite this commonality, the novels under study depict different perspectives on how decolonisation can be accomplished. The study inquires whether a perspective on decolonisation befitting Africa's postcolonial situation can be attained. The study begins with the exploration of the way Armah's novel uses the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to suggest a Manichaean perspective of decolonisation. It then investigates Ngugi's view of resolving Africa's 'desire for Whiteness' by depicting how he suggests a shift from the Manichaean to a dialectical approach to decolonisation. Finally, the study interrogates Abodunrin's pluralistic approaches to decolonisation using his conception of the dancing masquerade motif. The study employs Abodunrin's motif to examine the implications the pluralistic perspective on decolonisation has on the Manichaean and dialectical perspectives as depicted in the novels of Armah and Ngugi respectively. The thesis concludes with the view that this cultural activity of re-appropriation can only be located in a "third space".

Chapter One: Introduction

Caught in-between a denigrated, beleaguered past and a misty future, Africa stands at the crossroads. Africa's past has been embattled especially due to the onslaught of colonialism and its aftermath. Postcolonial writers, who are themselves part of the aftermath, grapple with this dilemma by plunging into the past in search of an alternative future. This study engages with this paradoxical search by interrogating African writers who plunge into the past in search of a future.

The study focuses on those writers who begin with a present caught up in the residual effects of colonialism. The underlying assumption is that this is an African present that continues to be dominated by imperialist economic, cultural and political forms of power. The immediate concern is how different writers variously engage with the process of undoing these tentacles of power still gripping and crippling African societies. And what is the credibility of their proposed avenues? To deal with this problem is to plunge into the theme of decolonisation.

Decolonisation refers to “the process of revealing and dismantling colonist power in all forms. This includes “dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces” that dominate former colonies beyond political independence.¹ Thus, decolonisation is an attempt to remove the effects of colonialism by undoing systems and institutions which colonialists established for purposes of controlling subjects of the empire. It is this theme that this study traces in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* and Femi Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade*.

¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p.63.

This chapter begins by depicting the conceptual framework against which the works under study are located before presenting the theoretical perspectives informing this study. It then explores the context in which the novels under study are developed against the backdrop of the writers' other works. The chapter concludes by outlining the objectives being pursued in this study.

One view that this study investigates in the novels is grounded in Frantz Fanon's discussion of decolonisation. According to Fanon:

decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon... [It] is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men...Decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder... Decolonisation is the meeting of two forces opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon...²

This concept of decolonisation borders on violence as a strategy. Fanon argues that colonialists used force of bayonets and cannons to bring the native into subjection and perpetuate the relationship of the coloniser and the colonised. After subduing the native, the settler went further to establish systems and institutions that propagated his culture while at the same time obliterating that of the colonised. Fanon regards violence as inevitable in decolonisation if this colonial system that was established by use of force is to be overcome. He regards decolonisation as the changing of established order hence “a program of complete disorder.” The end result of this program is the replacement of 'species' of men by another 'species' of men.

² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. pp. 27-8.

Having defined decolonisation thus, Fanon suggests three ways through which Africa can liberate herself from the West is by searching for a national culture. The first way is that Africa needs to search for her national culture. He argues:

Perhaps this passionate research and this anger are kept up or at least directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era, whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others.³

Fanon is of the view that Africans need to rediscover and revive their culture which had existed prior to arrival of the foreigners on the continent. He regards this search for a national culture as necessary in self discovery. He argues that once discovered, such a culture would set the basis from where Africans would be understood as a race.⁴ The aim of this search, according to Fanon, is to overcome the hegemony of Western culture. He observes that this search for a national culture is in response to the black man's racial condemnation by the West and that the search is driven by a shared anxiety of a risk of being swamped in a Western culture.

The second way, according to Fanon, is the need for the native intellectual to awaken the consciousness of the people. He points out that it is the role of the native intellectual to search for the national culture and make this available to his people so that they become conscious of who they are.⁵ Fanon is of the view that people who are aware of their situation are better positioned to demand for what belongs to them through a revolution.

³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.169

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.181

Fanon's last way is an advocacy for a total change of approach from what Europeans had established in Africa. This position is summed up in the conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth* as follows:

So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw inspiration from her.

Humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature.

If we want to turn Africa into a new Europe, and America into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us.⁶

Fanon advocates for the establishment of national governments which are different from the European and Western models. He regards the European model of governance as a failure which has created misery and suffering for humanity instead of improving the welfare of humankind. Fanon's approach aims to destroy all systems of governance and cultures introduced in Africa and the Third World by Europeans and in their place establish the African ways of life. He focuses on replacing one species of men with another species. He regards these species of men as not coexistent and one species has to be destroyed and be replaced by another. This proposed replacement "of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men" is called a Manichaeian approach.⁷

Manichaeianism is an approach that divides reality into two polar exclusive opposites. These constructed opposites are regarded as not capable of coexisting in a healthy relationship.

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.254.

⁷ Ayi Kwei Armah, "Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis." *Presence Africaine*. 131. (1984): 35.

Manichaeism theories therefore strive to destroy one pole in order to reinforce the domination of the other.⁸ Fanon's perspective of decolonisation reveals these Manichaeism traits.

Today, all African states have attained political independence and the physical relations between the coloniser and the colonised are no longer as manifest as they used to be. Fanon's concept of decolonisation in terms of physical relations has evidently become outdated. This concept of decolonisation can be attributed to the period of struggle for independence in which Fanon was writing. Nevertheless, Fanon's contribution remains important to this study since some of his observations seem to have influenced the novels under study. These observations are the need to search for a national culture; the role of native intellectuals in awakening the consciousness of the people; and the proposal to replace the Eurocentric orientations with new African perspectives.

Apparently extending Fanon's argument in the postcolonial era, Ngugi observes that imperialism continues to influence Europe and the West into clinging to systems and institutions of exploitation that were established during the colonial era. He proclaims that "imperialism is still the root cause of many problems in Africa."⁹ Imperialism is the theory or the attitudes that influences a metropolitan centre into dominating and ruling a distant territory. Imperialism is the theory while colonialism is the practice or the manifestation.¹⁰

Ngugi observes that realities of Africa are affected by the struggle between "the two mutually opposed forces." On one side are the imperialists and on the other are the resistances of the people. He explains how imperialism manipulates the minds of the conquered people:

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. p.1

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. p.8

Imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today... It makes them see their past as one wasteland of achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland...Amidst this wasteland which it has created, imperialism presents itself as the cure and demands that the dependant sing hymns of praise with the constant refrain: 'Theft is holy.'¹¹

Ngugi holds that imperialism modifies the people's psyche making them see their own past and culture with abhorrence. Imperialism aims at establishing its values while at the same time systematically destroying those of the oppressed. Ngugi demonstrates how imperialists used language to create a "wasteland of achievement" in the minds of Africans by declaring that English should be the language of formal education. "English became more than a language: it was *the* language. And all others had to bow before it in deference."¹² He observes that imperialism alienates the conquered people from their culture through the manipulation of their psyche and control of language. He then regards decolonisation as an anti-imperialist struggle which ought to transform the alienated mindset of Africans. Ngugi's declaration that he had abandoned writing in English and resorted to writing in Gikuyu, a Kenyan and African language can be regarded as a demonstration of his view of decolonisation. Ngugi's anti-imperialist stance reveals his Manichaeian perspective of decolonisation. This Manichaeian view of decolonisation needs to be understood in order to appreciate Ngugi's shift of perspectives depicted in *Wizard of the Crow*.

However, the idea of abandoning and replacing all institutions established by Europeans in Africa has been opposed by Chinua Achebe. For instance, on the usage of the English language in Africa, Achebe comes out clearly as one of those Africans who are not ready to

¹¹ Ibid., pp.2-3

¹² Ibid., p.11

abandon the language. In his article entitled “The African Writer and the English Language,” Achebe writes:

I have been given this language and I intend to use it. I hope, though, that there always will be men, like the late Chief Fanugwa, who will choose to write in their native tongue and insure that our ethnic literature will flourish side by side with the national ones. For those of us who opt for English, there is much work ahead and much excitement...I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.¹³

Achebe shows an awareness of the need to preserve ethnic literatures written in native tongues. In spite of this, he does not overlook the importance of the English language as a medium of communication in Africa. Rather, what Achebe advocates is “a new English...altered to suit its new African surroundings.” The perspective taken by Achebe to see the importance of one’s own culture but at the same time acknowledge the important contributions from other cultures is called dialectical. A dialectical approach is a perspective that regards significant factors used in interpreting reality as being made up of binary sets and seeks the dominance of one set while acknowledging the existence of the other. Dialecticians consider these binary sets as capable of coexisting in a healthy relationship.¹⁴ In decolonisation, a dialectical approach seeks re-appropriation of one culture while acknowledging existence of other cultures.

¹³ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. pp. 91-103

¹⁴ Ayi Kwei Armah, “Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis.” *Presence Africaine*.131. (1984):35.

Chinweizu *et al* (the Troika)¹⁵ seem to agree with Achebe's dialectical view. They begin by acknowledging that African literature can be presented in non-African languages like English. Using the African novel as an example, the Troika argue that it "is a hybrid out of the African oral tradition and the imported literary forms of Europe..."¹⁶ Echoing Achebe's view verbatim, the Troika note:

Indeed the basic difference between British and Igbo experience and values are what make it necessary for Achebe to bend the English language in order to express Igbo experience and values in it.¹⁷

For the Troika, there is no need to abandon English language as Ngugi proposes. For them, decolonisation, as it applies to African Literature lies in acknowledging that Western culture and African culture are different and their literatures cannot be judged using the same Western standard. Finally, they advocate using English language for purposes of serving African needs.

One common trait in the views expressed by Fanon, Ngugi, Achebe, and the Troika is that they depict a consciousness of cultural differences between the West and Africa. Their concepts of decolonisation border on regarding these cultures are conflicting. These works depict no consciousness about different perspectives on decolonisation. This is the path that Wole Soyinka avoids in *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Rather than focussing on prescribing what constitutes decolonisation, he is concerned with the implications of definitions of decolonisation that are premised on polarity. He reviews the ideology and social vision

¹⁵ In *Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature*, Chinweizu *et al* refer to their endeavour at decolonizing African literature as 'Bolekaja' criticism (p.xiv). Henceforth, this study refers to these writers as the Troika.

¹⁶ Chinweizu, *et al*, p.8

¹⁷ Ibid, p.13

informing African literature since Negritude. He examines texts by Yambo Oulougum, Ayi Kwei Armah, Bolaji Idowu, Sembene Ousmane, and Camara Laye which are concerned with a visionary re-construction of the past and present reality of Africans for purposes of a social direction. Soyinka observes that what is common in these texts is that they all portray principles of racial retrieval. The authors never challenged the notion of a white person's supremacy but rather sought to propose and advocate new premises for re-defining a black person basing on the Manichaeian tradition of European thought, impervious to the impression that the African culture is most radically anti-Manichaeian.¹⁸ In his conclusion, Soyinka notes that what went wrong with the works he studies were their Manichaeian approaches.

The main weakness with Soyinka's approach is that he seems to imply that the Manichaeian perspective is the only approach Africans have adopted to decolonisation. This is the problem Femi Abodunrin addresses in *Blackness: Culture, Ideology and Discourse*. In this text, Abodunrin grounds his argument in Armah's article "Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-a-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis" which depicts that there four different theoretical perspectives namely: Linear, Manichaeian, Dialectical and Cyclic. Abodunrin demonstrates weaknesses of adopting Linear, Manichaeian, and Dialectical perspectives before advancing his main argument that African literature can best be appreciated by adopting Cyclic perspectives. However, Abodunrin's argument fails on two accounts. A Cyclic perspective refers to multiple viewpoints which encompass the Linear, Manichaeian, and Dialectical perspectives. The Cyclic perspective has no viewpoint of its own. Finally, Abodunrin's argument for a Cyclic approach seems best suited for purposes of critical reading rather than as a practical approach to decolonisation.

¹⁸ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, pp.128-9

This study therefore investigates the extent to which the Manichaean and dialectical perspectives are portrayed as approaches to decolonisation in the novels under study. It builds on approaches first adopted by Soyinka and Abodunrin to examine the perspectives on decolonisation depicted in the works under study. The study also inquires whether a perspective on decolonisation befitting Africa's postcolonial situation can be attained.

With the African culture on the one hand and the European culture on the other, this study is inspired by a desire to find a common ground between “the two mutually opposed forces” which Homi K. Bhabha describes as *hybridity*:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination...¹⁹

Bhabha observes that there is a ‘third space’ between any two agonistic parties. This space contests terms and territories of both and results in a product that possesses qualities of both. In this space, the colonial power is no longer the oppressor nor is the colonised the oppressed. A new working relation is established between the colonial power and the colonised and this product of the third space is what Bhabha calls ‘hybridity’.

Anna Loomba points out that “hybridity is a place of resistance where the colonised and the coloniser forge a new space inaccessible to either discrete group. Signs or marks of power re-

¹⁹ Homi K Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders.” *The Location of Culture*. p.154.

emerge, emptied and re-assigned within the hybrid world.”²⁰ Loomba’s observation shows the importance of the concept of hybridity to decolonisation. This ‘neutral’ space explains how postcolonial Africa can engage in decolonisation while at the same time enable her to participate in global affairs. This ‘third space’ defines a new relationship that is devoid of discrimination and domination by either culture. Bhabha’s theory therefore provides room for establishing a working relationship of different cultures in both postcolonial Africa and a globalised world. This study therefore adopts Frantz Fanon’s brand of Marxism and Homi K. Bhabha’s postcolonial theory as theoretical perspectives from which the three novels have been studied.

So far, the chapter has discussed the critical context and theoretical perspectives against which the study is undertaken. It is important at this stage to explore briefly the major issues of concern depicted in the other works by Armah, Ngugi, and Abiodunrin as a way of contextualising the novels under study.

Armah is one novelist that can best be described as a pan-African revolutionary. Launching his career with *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* (1968), Armah tackles the problem of corruption and poor governance in the emerging African middle class. His concern with Western materialism and its impact on the moral values of ancient Africa are depicted in *Fragments* (1971). It is however in his third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) where Armah’s concern with the problem of Western values, independence and revolution becomes apparent. Armah suggests that liberation of Africa from the Western grip can best be tackled by representing the African past. He therefore traces the arrival of foreigners on the African continent and the role they played in destroying the African social fabric through slavery and colonialism in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973). Armah uses the fall of the Ashanti Empire to suggest that the

²⁰ Anna Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism*. p.122

solution to Africa's disintegration lies in reverting back to "Our Way", to the traditional practices suggested in the title of his next novel *The Healers* (1979). According to Alexander Kakraba:

Two Thousand Seasons and *The Healers*...are not just for aesthetic purpose alone, but a kind of continuous and conscious struggle against the forces of slavery and colonisation in the past, and neo-colonialism and globalisation at present; forces which have plagued the African continent for so many years.²¹

This study agrees with Kakraba's argument that Armah uses his narratives to transcend aesthetics and postulate a struggle for liberation. It is against this backdrop that the novel under study, *Osiris Rising* (1995) ought to be understood.

The other novel under study is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*. But how best can one introduce a prolific writer of Ngugi's caliber? Surely it is a tall order. Nevertheless, a quotation from one of his early works probably reveals Ngugi's spirit:

"If there is need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture', why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?"²²

This quotation sums up Ngugi's concern with issues of power, oppression and decolonisation. His early works depict themes of conflicts between Christians and non-Christians and the struggle for independence following his own experience of the Mau Mau War of Independence in the British settler colony of modern Kenya (1952-1962).²³ It is however, his

²¹ Alexander Kakraba, "Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels of Liberation", *African Nebula*, Issue 3, June 2011 (49-61)

²² Ngugi, et al, "On the Abolition of the English Department", pp.146

²³ These themes are prevalent in *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965)

novel of 1967, *A Grain of Wheat* that clearly spelt out his ideology, the beginning of his anti Imperialist campaign in postcolonial Africa. His subsequent works mainly focus on issues of power, social injustices, and decolonization in Kenya and Africa as a whole.²⁴ With Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) being published 10 years after his other last novel, *Matigari*, can it be read as a continuation of Ngugi's ideology that started with the publication of *The Grain of Wheat* (1967)? Or is it the beginning of a new chapter in Ngugi's writings? These are some of the questions this study critically examines.

The third novel under study, *The Dancing Masquerade* (2003) is Femi Abodunrin's third major work after *Blackness: Culture, Ideology and Discourse* (1996) and *It Would Take Time: Conversations with Living-Ancestors* (2002). *The Dancing Masquerade* is primarily an enactment of a theory Abodunrin advances in *Blackness: Culture, Ideology and Discourse* that literary works in Africa can best be read by adopting multiple perspectives.

Armah's *Osiris Rising* is adequately grounded in ancient African myths. This study examines this novel first regarding it as the best springboard from which Africa's postcolonial situation needs to be examined. Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* depicts vestiges of Africa's ancient traditions and is discussed next in this study to build on the foundations laid down in Armah's novel. Abodunrin's novel, *The Dancing Masquerade*, is studied last for two reasons. First, the novel employs multiple perspectives which include those propounded by Armah and Ngugi. From this viewpoint, both Armah and Ngugi are limited and have to be discussed first before the comprehensive view of Abodunrin. Second, by suggesting that decolonization needs multiple perspectives, Abodunrin's position prepares the necessary background against which the

²⁴ These works include: *Petals of Blood* (1977); *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977); *Writers in Politics* (1981); *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1982); *Devil on the Cross* (1982); *Decolonising the Mind* (1986); *Matigari* (1986); *Moving the Center* (1994); and *Penpoints Gunpoints and Dreams* (1998)

question on whether a perspective on decolonization befitting Africa's postcolonial situation can be attained is answered objectively.

Chapter two of this thesis investigates how Armah's *Osiris Rising* uses the ancient Egyptian Isis-Osiris myth to portray the African postcolonial situation. It explores Armah's usage of the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to advance his quest for African roots. In chapter three, the thesis interrogates a view suggested in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* that Africa's "desire for Whiteness" is a malady that portrays how imperialism continues to destroy postcolonial Africa. It also interrogates Ngugi's conception that Africa can redeem herself from depending on Europe and the West through exploring her inherent forces and establishing new relations with Eastern countries. In the fourth chapter the thesis examines Abodunrin's usage of the dancing masquerade motif in *The Dancing Masquerade* to suggest that affairs of the world can best be understood by adopting multiple perspectives. The chapter achieves this by probing into Abodunrin's portrayal of the accounts of the slave trade, colonization and racism to demonstrate the significance of considering reality from different viewpoints. The concluding chapter compares and contrasts the chosen novelists' conceptualization and exploration of decolonisation in their novels. The thesis argues that the works under study suggest that decolonisation in Africa can be accomplished through re-appropriation of African ways of life. Despite this commonality, the novels under study depict different perspectives on how decolonisation can be accomplished.

Chapter Two: The Quest for Heritage

Osiris Rising is a story of Ast, a young lady who was born of formerly enslaved parents in America. After finishing her doctoral studies, Ast decides to go back to Africa to trace her roots. Upon arrival, Ast realizes that she has arrived in a country that is divided by two conflicting interests. There are some Africans, symbolized in the novel by Seth Soja Spencer, who have adopted systems and positions of governance left by colonialists and would want Africa to preserve these and continue depending on Europe and the West. On the other hand are some Africans, symbolized by Asar and the majority of lecturers at Manda Teachers' College, who want Africa to abandon all ways of life modelled after Europe and the West and in their place re-establish African ways of life.

The title of the novel is an apparent reference to the ancient Egyptian Isis-Osiris myth. In ancient Egyptian mythology, Osiris is a ruler who was assassinated by his brother Set because of jealousy over his popularity with his subjects. Isis, Osiris' wife, attempted to have a proper burial for her husband but this did not materialize since Set ended up cutting the body into pieces and spreading them all over Egypt. This led to a protracted war between Horus, Osiris' son, and Set. Osiris was finally declared king of the underworld, Horus king of the living, and Set ruler of the desert as god of chaos and evil.²⁵ The death of Osiris and the birth of his son Horus signalled the onset of a life-death-rebirth circle of conflict between Osiris and Set which Armah suggests replicates itself in the post-colonial situation.

This chapter argues that Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising* espouses a Manichaeian perspective of decolonisation. The chapter starts by examining Armah's usage of the Isis-Osiris

²⁵ "The Myth of Isis and Osiris." *Akhet Egyptology The Horizon to the Past*. n.p., n.d., Web. accessed 13 January 2011.

myth to portray a conflict between Africans who aim to preserve institutions established by colonialists and those who aim to replace them with African ways. It interrogates Armah's conception of the life-death-rebirth cycle against the postcolonial backdrop. Then, the chapter explores the writer's usage of the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to signify the abandonment of Western ways and advance his quest for African roots. At last, the chapter examines Armah's portrayal of the impact of Western hegemony which, for him, warrants its rejection. But how can this quest into the past provide solutions to Africa's postcolonial challenges?

The Isis-Osiris Myth and the Postcolonial

Armah starts by drawing a thin line between *Osiris Rising* and the Isis-Osiris myth. The mythical figure Osiris is identified with Asar in the novel. Asar is a professor of Literature at Manda Teachers' College. Asar was a successful student at Emerson University and won prizes, played in the school team and started study groups.²⁶ Seth Soja Spencer (SSS) fails to attain Asar's achievements and ends up being jealous of Asar's educational success (pp.70-1). In the novel, the mythical Set's jealousy over the popularity of Osiris is depicted by SSS's jealousy of Asar. SSS tries to bar Ast from going to Manda where Asar is working but his attempts to stop her fail (p.45-6). He then follows Ast to Manda where he devises schemes to implicate both Ast and Asar with possession of weapons and subversive documents. Finally SSS arrests both Ast

²⁶ A secret document coded 021-93 which SSS possesses reveals that Asar has a brilliant academic career. He is expected to excel in research, administration and international organizations. He has been a quiet, efficient, effective worker as freedom fighter, political organizer and fundraiser in Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia. Ast has good academic credentials and professional reputation although he never demanded a high salary (Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Osiris Rising: A novel of Africa's Past Present and Future*. Popenguine: Per Ankh, 1995. pp.202-4) Subsequent page references in text.

and Asar (pp.288-94). The conflict in the myth between the brothers Osiris and Set is represented in *Osiris Rising* as a conflict between native Africans. Asar represents those Africans who are intent on establishing African ways of life while SSS represents those Africans limiting African ways through continued upholding of colonialist institutions and collaborating with Europe and the West.

Isis, another mythical figure, is represented by Ast in the novel. Ast later gets married to Asar after realizing that they share a common vision of tracing their roots and establishing the African heritage. Isis is opposed by Set in the myth and likewise Ast is constantly frustrated by the schemes of SSS. In the myth, Set connives with external factors, namely his seventy-two wicked friends including Aso the evil queen of Ethiopia, to have Osiris assassinated.²⁷ Similarly, in the novel SSS gets external support from the West and foils all attempts by his African colleagues to re-appropriate African culture.

In postcolonial Africa, SSS is a prototype of a leadership that collaborates with former colonial masters and uses state resources to oppress and terrorize its own people. SSS is depicted as a villain sabotaging the prosperity of his own culture and people. SSS completes the analogy of the mythical brother that plotted the downfall of his own brother. Ast and Asar represent revolutionaries who are willing to sacrifice anything in their mission of “retrieving our human face,” meaning re-establishing what Africa had lost. The mission that Asar and Ast undertake is contained in an article entitled “Who We Are and Why” which Ast discovers when packing her “must-take books” in America:

²⁷ “The story of Isis and Osiris.” *Ancient Egypt: the Mythology*. Egyptian Myths, 21 April 2011. Web. Accessed 25 April 2011.

In a people's rise from oppression to grace, a turning point comes when *thinkers* determined to stop the downward slide get together to study the causes of common problems, think out solutions and organize ways to apply them... We are after intelligent action to change these realities. *For we intend, as Africans, to retrieve our human face, our human heart, the human mind our ancestors taught to soar.* That is who we are and why (pp.9-10: emphasis added).

The author's allusion to 'thinkers' underscores the high expectation the African society has in its intellectuals to lead in the regeneration process. In the article quoted above, the author seems to use Wole Soyinka's concept of racial retrieval to suggest that "retrieving the human face" is the first step in the regeneration process.²⁸ Soyinka's usage of this concept suggests a process of re-appropriation that transforms the way black people perceive themselves and other people after being subjected to degrading and swamping effects by the Whites. In the quotation above, the author creates the impression that Africa requires a revolution led by visionary personalities. He uses Ast and Asar to demonstrate how resolute intellectuals can influence change, and uses a college campus at Manda as the centre of revolution (p.35). Ast and Asar willingly leave the comfort of American life to seek their roots and work in Africa. They neither submit to the resistance of their workmates in the likes of Professor Wright Woolley, Professor Clive Jayasekera Padmasana and Dr. Ezekiel Jehosophat Nguruwe nor bow to the threats from SSS and his agents. Ast and Asar are instrumental in awakening the people's consciousness of themselves. This consciousness is reflected when the students referring to themselves sing: "Aaaariise, you wretched of the eeeearth...." (p.235). This is an allusion to *The Wretched of the Earth* in which Fanon contends that Africans must arise and fight for their decolonisation. Although Fanon is for a militant and violent collective action, he also argues for an intellectual

²⁸ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*. pp.128-9)

search for the national culture that makes people become conscious of who they are.²⁹ The role of awakening people consciousness that Armah's Ast and Asar perform in the novel is also the role that Ngugi identifies with a third type of interpreter. According to Ngugi, the third type of interpreter has to be "a people's scout and guide to the stars of freedom."³⁰

Armah depicts the view that postcolonial Africa continues to be influenced by the effects of colonialism. This is portrayed through the symbolic character of SSS who is interested in sustaining systems of governance left by the colonialists in the novel (pp.36-7). To overcome this, Armah suggests the need for intellectuals who can awaken the people's consciousness about their situation. This is the role that Asar and Ast play in *Osiris Rising*. By representing the postcolonial situation using the myth, Armah makes several suggestions. The death-birth cycle in the myth provides the impetus for a continued struggle against the rising 'brotherly' opposition to Africa's decolonisation endeavours. The myth seems to address concerns of rising situations where Africans have been divided on issues relating to decolonisation.³¹ The myth raises consciousness on how much foreign influence needs to be accommodated in African affairs. The myth also provides inspiration that African cultures can still be resuscitated to address some of Africa's postcolonial challenges.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.181

³⁰ Ngugi points out that there are three types of the modern African interpreters. The interpreter as a foreign agent learns the 'masters' language and uses it to serve the master's interests. He uses John Lok's Negroes, Caliban in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Friday in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as examples. The second type of interpreter acts as a double agent and articulates messages of the 'gaoled' majority to the 'gaoler'. Ngugi observes that the second type uses knowledge and language learnt in the West against the West and such interpreters are labeled 'traitor', 'ungrateful' and 'uppity.' The third type of interpreters acts "as a people's scout and guide to the stars of freedom." He operates 'within the cultures, histories, and languages of Africa.' Ast and Asar depict qualities of the third type since they advocate awakening of people's consciousness of their own culture ("The Allegory of the Cave: Language, Democracy, and a New World Order." *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams*. p.36).

³¹ There is a continuing debate especially amongst African scholars on whether abandoning residual colonial institutions would assist Africans in their quest for decolonisation or not. Notable examples of such debates where Africans hold different opinions include the language debate (Reflected in Chinua Achebe's "The African Writer and the English Language." *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. New York: Anchor Press, 1975. pp.91-103 and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "The Language of African Literature." *Decolonising the Mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London: James Curry, 1986. pp.8-33) and the problem of defining African literature (Chinweizu et. al. – *Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature Vol. 1*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983).

Reversing the Crossing

In *Osiris Rising*, Armah grounds his perception of decolonisation in the imagery of crossing and re-crossing the Atlantic. According to Herbert Klein and Jacob Klein, between 9.4 and 12 million people were transported across the Atlantic as slaves primarily from Africa to America in the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.³² The crossing of the Atlantic for the slaves signified the people's separation with their heritage and culture. Armah's *Osiris Rising* uses the concept of "reversing the crossing" to imply re-connecting Africa to its heritage (p.11). He regards the Atlantic Ocean as a symbol of challenges that Africans encountered first as they went into slavery and second as they search for their roots back in Africa. As a metaphor, "reversing the crossing" has several connotations. Physically, it implies the journey across the Atlantic from America, land of slavery, back to Africa, land of the ancestors. Mentally, the metaphor symbolizes undoing the worldview that the eras of slavery and colonialism created in Africans. Culturally, "reversing the crossing" implies re-appropriating ways of life that were being practiced in ancient Africa before slavery. Ast's journey from America to Africa makes her conscious of "reversing the crossing" (p.11). She is aware that in America "there are no genuine problems of basic material survival" but she chooses to work and stay in Africa for her personal fulfilment (p.111-3). Similarly, Asar returns to Africa after acquiring his education in America. He ignores "charmed life" of money, power and lucrative positions that elite Africans were occupying and prefers to work against white supremacy in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa (p.76). Armah uses the metaphor of reversing the crossing to suggest decolonisation on physical, mental, and cultural planes.

³² Herbert Klein and Jacob Klein. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. pp.103-139

On the physical plane, the author suggests that one way of awakening the people's consciousness is to make them know where they are coming from. The novel depicts that ancient Africa was civilised long before the arrival of the slave traders. This view contests and falsifies a common Eurocentric misconception that Africa has no history. In the novel, Asar notes that conservative Europeans dismissed the existence of African literary traditions, drama and history: "Africa has no tradition of drama. Africa has no literary traditions. Africa has no history" (p.105). The claim made in the novel that Africa has no history is grounded in a common preconception amongst some Western scholars. Georg Hegel proclaimed that Africa "is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit...What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped spirit..."³³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, an Oxford University professor, echoed Hegel and stated "Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at the present there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness, and darkness is not the subject of History"³⁴ The observations made by both Hegel and Trevor-Roper create the impression that ancient Africa was a wasteland with nothing known. As if to represent these observations verbatim in the novel, Armah's Ast observes that after dismissing the existence of African literary traditions and history thus, the conservative Europeans create a vacuum which they aim to fill with the concept that "world history meant the history of European nations up to the time of the European conquest of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. After that it became modern history: the story of other people's incorporation into European culture" (p.166). Armah's literary return to ancient Africa as depicted in his novel suggests a formal response to the claim that Africa had no history. The claim made by conservative Europeans creates a context in which the life-death-rebirth cycle in

³³ Georg W F Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Jibree. New York: Dover, 1956. pp.56

³⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Rise of Christian Europe*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1964. p.9

the Isis-Osiris myth finds its manifestation in the postcolonial as Armah seems to contest that Africa can rise again. Armah suggests that Europeans deliberately distorted or dismissed the existence of Africa's history to create a vacuum which would necessitate filling with European history and culture.

The author agrees with Chinua Achebe who asserts that Africans did not hear about a civilised culture for the first time with the advent of their colonisers.³⁵ It is a point that has also been adequately expounded in Femi Abodunrin's *It Would Take Time*.³⁶ For Armah:

There were farmers and princes and potters in it, there were masons and cobblers and aristocrats and fishers in it, there were priests and scribes in it. They were in the companionship not because they were peasants or princes or aristocrats or scribes, but because they agreed to work to its aims. The companionship belonged to no particular portion of our people, to no family, no clan, no tribe, no nation. It embraced all our people. Because it was devoted to life its chosen symbol was the oldest of Africa's life signs, the ankh. (pp.261-2).

This passage reveals that people of ancient Africa had already specialized in different sectors required for social development like agriculture, trade, religion, education and governance. The reference to 'princes' suggests the existence of an organized political and social structure ruled by Kings. While the priests imply existence of organized religious institutions, the potters, masons, cobblers and fishers suggest existence of specialized businesses. The presence of scribes in the companionship of the ankh reveals existence of a well developed system of education where reading and writing were taught. Existence of reading and writing in ancient

³⁵ Achebe asserts that "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth, value and beauty, and they had poetry and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that they must regain now." (Achebe, Chinua. "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation." *Nigeria Magazine*. 81. (1964):157

³⁶ Femi Abodunrin, *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*. pp.8-17

Africa is fully supported in the novel by Nwt's knowledge of hieroglyphs which she imparts on Ast (p.7). Furthermore, Tete, another character in the novel, reveals that her grandmother had interest to send her to school where the arts and sciences of writing and counting were being taught before the era of slavery (p.255). This physical dissatisfaction with the present and the hope to find a better form of life in the past is well captured in metaphor of reversing the crossing.

The metaphor of reversing the crossing is also used to imply restoration of the alienated mindset of Africans as the author makes characters reject Western names and opt for African names. Nwt chose to give Ast an African name at birth when "Ast's parents wanted to name her after some European saint" (p.7). Similarly, Sheldon Tubman changes his name back to Ras Cinque Jomo Equiano (p.86). Equiano's change of name is a complete reversal of the name-changing experience Africans underwent upon arrival in America during slavery. The author underscores the abandonment of English orthography and nomenclature by using an ancient Egyptian orthography for chapter titles in the novel like 'Nwn', 'Nwt', 'Rekhit', 'Asar', 'Set' and others.

The need to decolonise the African mindset is even reinforced in the change of the educational curriculum. The author postulates that the systems of education introduced by colonialists did not only destroy the history of Africans but also made Africans underdeveloped and dependent. The aims of colonial systems of education were to subjugate Africans while the aims of postcolonial systems of education are to liberate Africans. The differences in the objectives of education systems therefore necessitate the change that Asar and his colleagues propose in the novel. The proposal suggests replacing the curriculum designed in Europe for Africans with a curriculum designed in Africa for Africans. The proposal has three objectives:

One, making Africa the centre of our studies. Two, shifting from Eurocentric orientations to universalistic approaches as far as the rest of the world is concerned. Three, giving our work a serious backing in African history. The last would mean placing a deliberate, planned and sustained emphasis on the study of Egyptian and Nubian history as matrices of African history instead of concentrating on the European matrices, Greece and Rome. (p.104)

The curriculum developed by colonialists made Europe the centre of African studies. The proposed curriculum makes Africa the centre. This change suggests that the curriculum developed by colonialists alienated the African by making him perceive himself and the world from a European perspective. Making Africa the centre of studies enables Africans perceive themselves and the rest of the world from an African perspective. This restoration of perspectives constitutes ‘reversing the crossing’ in the mind. Secondly, the curriculum change opens Africa to universalistic approaches. Colonialism limited the African perspective to Europe, Greece and Rome effectively ignoring the rest of the world. The proposed change of the curriculum liberates Africans from the limits of Eurocentric orientations and also enables Africans to develop global perspectives. Thirdly, the backing of African works with African history makes Africans see the significance of their heritage and the need to preserve it. The relevance of African history to life restores self-worth which colonialism systematically destroyed using its imposed curricula.

It is worth noting that the proposed curriculum graphically presented in *Osiris Rising* is similar to that proposed by Ngugi *et al* in their article entitled “On the Abolition of the English Department.” In this article, Ngugi *et al* argue for the need to establish the centrality of Africa in what was then called the ‘English Department’. They argue that Africa needs to be at the centre

of African studies and not exist “as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures.”³⁷

What is common in both proposed curricula is the need to replace the curriculum that was developed in the West and puts Europe at the centre with a curriculum that puts Africa at the centre of the studies. This proposed change which strives to destroy one curriculum in order to reinforce the domination of another depicts Armah’s Manichaean perspective of decolonisation.

On the cultural plane, the author uses the metaphor of reversing the crossing to depict that ancient Africa had an established culture which needs to be resuscitated. The characters reject Western concepts of weddings and opt for the African type. Explaining the nature of his own wedding to Jacqueline Brown, Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano points out:

‘What we are about to do here tonight...is completely African. It comes directly from my own royal ancestors. It has nothing western in it, nothing white in it.’ (p.146)

Equiano’s interjection is significant in two ways. He acknowledges that ancient Africa had developed her own version of a marriage ceremony. In this ceremony, the blood of the man and the woman was mixed in a clay pot containing water which was then poured in the soil to the accompaniment of a beating drum. The pouring of this bloody water in the soil marked a significant request for mother Africa to accept the union. Tete holds a similar perception of traditional African wedding ceremonies. Tete does not only officiate the wedding of Asar to Ast following what she calls standards of “past ceremonies” but also explains how the ceremony was conducted:

³⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. pp. 145-50.

Marriage required the presence of two witnesses, man and woman, for each partner. The ceremony was a conversation before friends: the couple stated their desire to live as wife and husband, the reasons for their choice, the things they would accept, what they could not accept within the friendship, and why. (p.279)

Despite apparent differences on how the actual marriage ceremonies were organized in ancient times, Equiano and Tete have one thing in common: a belief that ancient Africa had her own unique way conducting marriage ceremonies. This total rejection and replacement of Western ways with African ways of life depicts a Manichaean perspective of decolonisation. However, while Ast and Asar represent Africans who reverse the crossing for purposes of promoting their heritage, the author also shows that there are some people who reverse the crossing for different motives. There is a case of Equiano who reverses the crossing to confirm himself as a descendant of ancient kings and queens (pp.258-9). Equiano uses this search for his ancestral roots to establish an institution which enslaves his own people. According to Ast, Equiano is a victim of “accepting the killer’s definition of freedom as domination over others” (pp.81-88). The author’s explanation of Equiano’s full name exposes the values he represents:

Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano. Ras the oblivious little emperor, Jomo the tribalist dictator serving Africa’s enemies, Equiano the blind victim, medium of European stereotypes, Cinque the freed slave turned slaver. Now on the rebound from his first –love whites posing as guides to Africa. (p.96)

Equiano uses his knowledge and experience to serve himself and enslave his people. He changes his name from Sheldon Tubman to Ras Cinque Jomo Equano as a way of emancipating himself from bondage but ironically ends up enslaving others.

Bright Molande observes that the Cinque syndrome in *Osiris Rising* evokes the African elite “who deposes the White master only to enslave, exploit his own people.”³⁸ Molande argues that the master – slave relations in the postcolonial era are perpetuated by the natives’ willingness to accept a differentiated position established by colonialists. Sister Moja, Baby Sis Pili and Baby Sis Tatu are examples of native characters who accept the differentiated position established by colonialists in Armah’s *Osiris Rising*. Likewise, SSS had been to America for studies. On his return to Africa, SSS is obsessed with acquiring and preserving colonial-instituted power:

‘It’s a layman’s misunderstanding to consider independence a revolt against white power. We – the authorities in Africa – we accept the framework established by the Western powers. There was only one thing wrong with colonialism. It denied responsible Africans participation in managing the system. At the elite level, Independence solved that.’

‘The system itself, then, remains the same?’ Ast asked.

‘Of course it’s been modernized. What do you achieve by overthrowing a working system?’
(pp.36-7).

SSS acquires knowledge from the West and uses it to sustain institutions left by the colonialists. Armah uses Equiano and SSS to depict the African elite who come to their people disguised as liberators but end up using their positions of authority to oppress the people further. Such leaders adopt the Western worldview of freedom which regards authority as dominion over

³⁸ Bright Molande, “Rewriting memory: ideology of difference in the desire and demand for whiteness.” *The European Journal of American Culture*. 27.3: p.186

others (p.88). It is this mindset that makes both Equiano and SSS perpetuate the ‘master-slave’ relations that existed in the eras of slavery and colonialism.

SSS holds the view that authorities in Africa accept the framework that was established by Western powers. The authorities regard the framework as a working system which cannot be overthrown. Frantz Fanon attributes this wholesale adoption of colonial institutions to lack of preparation on the part of the national middle class. He observes that the national middle class which assumes power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class that remains fiscally dependent and indebted to the colonial power. According to Fanon, the wholesale adoption of colonial institutions arises because the national middle class and its nationalist parties wishes to fill the gap left by the Western bourgeoisie despite having neither economic power, economic program of the state nor vision of the nature of regime it wishes to install. The national middle class is hardly left with choice but to adopt the systems and methods left by the settlers. Fanon seems to explain SSS’s attitude of adopting colonial institutions wholesale as the national middle class’ perspective of nationalization:

...nationalization does not mean placing the whole economy at the service of the nation and deciding to satisfy the needs of the nation. For them nationalization does not mean governing the state with regard to the new social relations whose growth it has been decided to encourage. To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period.³⁹

Fanon’s explanation of how the national middle class understands nationalization is important to understand the character of SSS in *Osiris Rising*. SSS openly declares his position

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.122

to sustain the framework that was established by Western powers before independence. He considers it as a working system. SSS is also in the forefront pursuing any elements he considers to be subversive or undermining the systems of governance modelled after the West. He regards Asar's and Ast's vision of re-appropriating Africa's heritage as "systematic anti-government propaganda" (p.204). SSS is evidently motivated by the desire to protect what Fanon calls "unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period."⁴⁰ The antagonism offered by SSS on Asar and Ast depicts the challenges associated with 'reversing the crossing' – as the physical abandonment of Western life in preference for African life. Armah uses the antagonism offered by SSS to symbolize the challenges that affect endeavours of decolonisation through re-appropriating African ways.

In *Osiris Rising*, Armah also uses the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to symbolize undoing the worldview that the eras of slavery and colonialism created in Africans. This worldview was largely created through manipulated colonial systems of education, language policies and culture. A group of revolutionaries at Manda Teachers' College regard colonial systems of education as inappropriate to the postcolonial era and they propose a change in the curriculum.⁴¹ The proposals for a new curriculum point out that the colonialists introduced an education system that aimed at making Africans underdeveloped and dependent. In the novel, Asar says:

Colonialism was a post-conquest European strategy for keeping Africans useably underdeveloped and dependent. Our present educational aims are no less clear. In principle their focus is the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The group is comprised of Asar, Ast, Dineo Letsie, Bai and Ndeye Kamara, Bantu Rolong, Lamine Djatta Kojo Boanye, Maanan Djan, and Imo Moko (*Osiris Rising*, pp.183-199;213)

liberation of African intelligence to work for the benefit of our continent and our society. Reflexes designed long ago to achieve the subjugation of Africans cannot serve to free us. (p.213)

The proposal that Asar and his colleagues submitted to their college administration highlights the differences between the aims of education systems in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Education systems in the colonial era aimed at subjugating Africans. The aims of education in the postcolonial era are to liberate Africans.

The Impact of Western Hegemony

Osiris Rising postulates that the ancient African social fabric was destroyed by the introduction of Western ways with some greedy Africans as accomplices. The author uses the case of the African writer and the Editor at *Occident* to depict Western ways as exploitative:

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 magazines readership...

The author accepted these premises...

The Editor at Occident pointed out that historical truth, followed too faithfully, could blunt literary effect... The book, failing to strike responsive cords, would fail – unless this and similar passages could be changed. *The author made the suggested changes* (pp.2-4: Emphasis added).

Using the story of an African woman who attempts to escape seven times from America back to Africa and is brutally murdered finally, Armah portrays how truth of the cruelty done on African people and their history is distorted with the full cooperation of the African. When the African writer offers a manuscript of *Journey to the Source* to the Editor at *Occident*, the Editor

suggests changes to the history as a condition for publishing the book and the African writer accepts them. The writer's personal ambitions to publish the book makes him accept the distorted history. The "blinding" and "killing" of the woman who attempts to trace her past in the manuscript presents a powerful imagery of what slavery and colonialism have done to sever Africa from her historical connections. The blinding and killing of the woman is aimed at restricting her from attempting further returns to Africa. In the same way, while slavery physically separated Africans from their homeland, colonialism established institutions that distorted or destroyed connections between the Africans and their past. The conditions offered by the Editor at *Occident* and wilfully accepted by the African writer runs parallel to the incident of "blinding" and "killing" those attempting to establish their true history.

The title of the magazine, *Occident*, brings into perspective the relations between the Orient and the Occident as expounded by Edward Said. According to Said the Occident is used to refer to Europe and the West or 'the centre' while the Orient refers to the Middle and Far East or 'the other.'⁴² Other than the West-East geographical demarcations, Armah's usage of the 'Occident' in the novel suggests a socially constructed West-East relationship. The 'Occident' in the title of the magazine suggests Western hegemony. The 'other' histories have to be changed or be adapted to suit the needs of the Occident. The relations of the Editor and the African writer become that of the Occident and the Orient. The African writer's acceptance to write what pleases the Editor of the *Occident* is what Ashcroft *et al* describe as writing "under imperial license."⁴³

⁴² Edward Said, "*Orientalism*." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Vincent Leitch. Ed. pp.1991-2013.

⁴³ Ashcroft *et al* observe that there are three stages in the development of Postcolonial literatures. In the first stage, indigenous texts are written in the language of, and produced by, the representatives of the imperial power. In the second stage, works are produced 'under imperial license' but the authors are aware of their different perspective. The third stage is characterized by abrogation of the constraining power and appropriation of language. Since the

The impact of Western hegemony and collaboration in the disintegration of ancient African civilisation are also manifested in the organisation of the slave trade:

You know how destroyers found loyal friends among those it has been our misfortune to count as rulers. You know how African merchants and royal families joined Arab and European slavers to waste our people in pursuit of the blinding white drug, profit...They were those of our people who welcomed the slavers, helped them, served them in their enterprise of destruction, now smilingly called development (p.264).

This passage points out that slavery was not a one-sided affair. Slavery required the collaboration between African merchants or royal families on the one side and the Arab or European slavers on the other. The slavers organised and proposed while the native leaders, lured by the seeming benefit, offered their own people. The author suggests that African merchants and royal families were greedy and ended up offering their subjects as slaves to foreigners. It is for this reason that when Nwt tells Ast that “our people were sold into slavery”, Ast regards it as ‘betrayal’ (p.1). The consequence of such collaboration was the physical destruction of ancient Africa’s unity and civilization. In *Osiris Rising*, the author holds the view that slavery and colonialism were the factors behind the destruction of ancient Africa and its civilization. The novel contains an article entitled “Who We Are And Why” which presents how these external factors contributed to the destruction:

For centuries now our history in Africa has been an avalanche of problems. We’ve staggered from disaster to catastrophe, enduring the destruction of the Kemt, the scattering of millions ranging the continent in search of refuge... We have endured the plunder of a land now carved up into fifty

African writer had willfully accepted the Editor’s suggestions while being aware of their different perspectives, it can be described as Ashcroft’s second stage. Ashcroft *et al* describes this as writing ‘under imperial license’ (p.5).

idiotic neo-colonial states in this age when large nations seek survival in larger federal unions...

(p.10)

The author of this article reveals that history shows that Africa has been declining from what was once a civilization established around the Kemet.⁴⁴ The author is of the view that Kemet was destroyed and plundered by external influences. While slavery scattered millions from the continent, colonialism plundered the land and carved it up into fifty states. The continent which was once united is now divided into states consequently reducing the people who were once independent into becoming dependent on the former colonial masters. The realisation that ancient Africa was well governed, united and developed and that its civilisation was destroyed by slavery and colonialism seems to provide Armah with the impetus for decolonisation.

The reader of *Osiris Rising* is made to sympathize with Ast and Asar and regard them as heroes in their mission of re-appropriating African ways. With America suggesting attainment of modern developments and Africa or “home” suggesting the lost glory which has to be retrieved, the symbolism in the movements of the novel’s characters from America to Africa reveals the failure of the current system and the hope that lies in returning to the past. The change proposed in this scenario is ‘back to *Africa*’. The author suggests that the awakening of people’s consciousness in the value of their heritage would place Africa on the way to regeneration. The value of Africa’s heritage is manifested in the meaning of the ankh: “Sign of life. That was the ancient Egyptian word. Ankh. Life. Regeneration” (p.131). By making the ankh the symbol of the type of life to be re-appropriated, the author suggests that the African way would bring back

⁴⁴ Kemet in this article refers to ‘Kemet’ /KMT/ which is the ancient name for Egypt. There is relative abundance of historical data, extant buildings, monuments, artistic creations, artifacts, and written texts suggesting Kemet was a classical civilization. The available written texts include wisdom literature, medical reports, mathematical computations, fiction, annals, and theological treatises. [“Why We Study Kemet (Egypt)” ASCAC. n.d. Web. Accessed 15 June 2010]

life and regeneration to Africa after being plundered by schemes of Europe and the West. On the other hand, characters like SSS and Ras Equiano are depicted as villains. SSS is a prototype of the African elite who collaborate with the colonizing governments. Such Africans sustain the destructive legacy left by colonialists and suppress the re-appropriation of the African heritage. Similarly, Ras Equiano represents Africans who adopt European and Western concepts of freedom and authority and end up oppressing their own people.

The portrayal of Ras Equiano in the novel, however, reveals a problem associated with the authenticity of Africa's oral tradition. Ras Equiano claims that his understanding of the meaning of the ankh comes from Apo, his royal ancestor who he thought was betrayed into slavery (p.259). Even though Tete's version about the meanings of the full and broken ankhs is portrayed as fact, Ras Equiano's arrogant reaction to the meaning of his broken ankh suggests that the truth about the oral account is subjective. This raises questions about the credibility of the oral tradition in general and reality about the account of the ankh in particular.

Furthermore, Armah's *Osiris Rising* is silent on how decolonised Africa would relate with Europe and the West or how she would regenerate after suspending European or Western interventions. The author is evidently preoccupied with optimism in the perspective of decolonisation he adopts and in the process fails to suggest how Africa would overcome her economic dependence on Europe and the West. After Asar's death, the novel has a blunt end. The fate that befalls the protagonists, Asar and Ast, leaves an impression that attempts to decolonize Africa can hardly be attained. Just like Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*,⁴⁵ Armah's

⁴⁵ In *The Wretched of the Earth* (p.254), Fanon evinces that one way of decolonizing Africa is by abandoning Western models of governance. However, he does not suggest how Africa would overcome its economic dependence on Europe and the West.

Osiris Rising fails to explain how decolonised Africa would fend for herself and relate with other global players including Europe and the West.

This chapter has demonstrated that Armah's *Osiris Rising* uses the Isis-Osiris myth cycle and the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to demonstrate how Africans can abandon Western cultures and re-embrace their own cultures. The author suggests that African ways and European ways of life cannot co-exist in Africa. He thus advocates total abandonment of European and Western cultures which were introduced during the eras of slavery and colonialism and in their place re-establish the ancient African culture. These ways of life, among others, are the African forms of governance, forms of education, languages, traditions and cultures that were being practiced by African ancestors before the intervention of foreigners. In this novel, the author depicts the view that through following the African ways, ancestors successfully established a civilization which postcolonial Africa would re-attain if she abandoned the Western influences and ways. The impression that European ways of life and African ways of life cannot co-exist and that there is need to replace European ways of life with African cultures depicts Armah's Manichaeian perspective of decolonisation.

Chapter Three: Desire for Whiteness⁴⁶ and the African Postcolonial Dilemma

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* is one novel that grapples with Africa's postcolonial reality with the aim of suggesting solutions. Set in the fictional Free Republic of Aburiria, the story is a prototype of an African country marred by a conflict between the greedy ambitions of the ruling class on the one hand and the opposition of the masses on the other.⁴⁷ The Ruler, who is the president of Aburiria, and his close aids and ministers, Machokali, Sikiokuu and Tajirika are preoccupied with plans to get a loan for constructing a multi-million dollar skyscraper named 'Marching to Heaven' which is to be finally given as the Ruler's birthday gift. The poor people of Aburiria, who are in majority, are led by Kamiti (the Wizard of the Crow) and Nyawira in opposing the oppression and greedy plans of building Marching to Heaven. Despite getting support from the West, the Ruler's government is finally overthrown in a revolution by its own people.

Leaders of Aburiria are depicted holding firmly the belief that only the West offers solutions to the challenges Africans face. Their adoration of Western ways culminates into a disease that the Wizard of the Crow diagnoses as "Whiteache" or a longing for Whiteness. Both Tajirika and the Ruler are diagnosed with severe cases of "Whiteache" which resulted in the loss of words (pp.180, 489-92). These incidents suggest that the longing for Whiteness only results in incapacitation. Little wonder, the Wizard of the Crow describes it as a disease that needs healing.

⁴⁶ In his article entitled "Rewriting memory: ideology of difference in the desire and demand for whiteness," Bright Molande uses 'Whiteness' to mean Western culture (p.181). The 'desire for Whiteness' refers to the longing or acceptance by some Africans to approach life using Western ways. This thesis uses these concepts in the same perspective.

⁴⁷ Derek White in his paper entitled "Reading Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* in Kisumu: An INT/EXT Reflection of Tyranny, Chaos and Post-Colonialism in Kenya" points out that Aburiria is a parody of Kenya (n.p. 2008. Web. Accessed 30 April 2011); Rodger Kaplan also explains how Aburiria can be understood as a prototype of Africa (Roger Kaplan. "Fictionalised Africa, Ills Intact" *The Wall Street Journal*. 12 August 2006. Web. Accessed 3 May 2011)

Apart from the Ruler's trust in Western forms of medical treatment, Machokali and Sikiokuu underwent plastic surgeries in Europe to get favours and ministerial appointments from the Ruler (pp.13-4). Bright Molande explains these varying forms of the desire for Whiteness as emanating from the native's willingness to accept differentiated positions. Molande observes that Tajirika's willingness to change his name to Mr. Clement Clarence Whitehead perpetuates the master – slave relations with the whites. This is a fate that befell Negro Slaves in America and Christian converts. Molande⁴⁸ holds the view that the master–slave relations in the postcolonial era are perpetuated by the natives' willingness to accept a differentiated position established by colonialists.

This chapter investigates the author's usage of the metaphor of “the desire for Whiteness” to suggest a malady that portrays how imperialism continues to destroy postcolonial Africa. It investigates Ngugi's perception of decolonisation by interrogating the way his novel depicts the Ruler's sickness; foreign religious beliefs; and the impact of European and Western influence on the governance of Aburiria. Finally, the chapter examines the novel's depiction of Western hegemony in its different forms and the impact this has on Africa.

The novel opens with the Ruler being struck by a strange sickness. The first option for his treatment reveals the trust the Ruler has in Western methods of scientific enquiry and medicine. He first consults Dr Wilfred Kaboca, Dr Clement C. Clarkwell and Professor Din Furyk for treatment (pp.469-70). The Ruler's quest for Western solutions depicts this ‘desire for whiteness’. When these distinguished Western trained doctors fail even to diagnose the problem, the author seems to compare ways of the West and those of Africa by focusing on how African ways are despised when considered against their European and Western counterparts:

⁴⁸ Bright Molande, “Rewriting memory: ideology of difference in the desire and demand for whiteness.” *The European Journal of American Culture*. 27.3: p.186.

Who would believe my claims that the Wizard of the Crow could succeed where the masters of science from the West had failed? So I held back the information to give the ministers time to see what their Western doctors could do. The ministers had more education than I, but you all know, don't you, that too much education can make men blind to what's around them. (p.474)

In this quotation, one of the characters in the novel, Agrigai Gatherer (AG), compares the abilities of Western trained doctors with those of Africa. His position is that African solutions are always belittled or despised although, going by this incident, they have the ability to cure what the West cannot. AG supports his opinion with an illustration of a folktale in which an elephant died from a prick of a thorn after defiantly thinking that the thorn was too small (pp.273-4). The point that the author seems to make through AG is that African contributions cannot be ignored despite appearing insignificant. Finally the Ruler who had been indifferent to measures taken by the Western medical practitioners instantly responds positively to the treatment offered by the Wizard of the Crow (pp.492-3). This incident suggests that African challenges can best be handled by Africans themselves. Furthermore, by showing that a solution to the Ruler's sickness was not in the West but with a fellow African, the author directly reproves the negative attitude that most Africans have about their own ways.

In spite of their failure, the Western medical practitioners develop an interest to patent the patient after realising that the Ruler was positively responding to the Wizard of the Crow's treatment (p.492). The author uses this incident to infer that the primary interest of the Whites is to exploit Africans and not to help them. The West and its ways are portrayed as agents of exploitation in Africa.

The futility of the quest for Western ways in the novel is further manifested in the beliefs of religions that have Western origins. The author employs dramatic irony to demonstrate the triviality of claims made by the Soldiers of Christ to hunt for Satan or fight the devil in the streets (pp.664, 674-5). The reader of the novel knows that the Soldiers of Christ are hunting for the Wizard of the Crow and not the devil as they claim. Their religious hunt therefore is meaningless. Secondly, Ngugi portrays the failure of the Western religion to provide remedy to problems being faced by its devout followers like Vinjinia, Maritha and Mariko. When these members of All Saints Cathedral resort to getting assistance from the Wizard of the Crow – a ‘witch doctor’ – albeit undercover, the author evidently leaves it to the reader to make judgement about the reliability of these two beliefs (p.170).

The author suggests that Africa’s continued dependence on her former colonial masters results in further degeneration of Africa. He suggests that former colonial masters established a mindset of dependence in Africans during the power transfer to natives at independence. Colonial authorities achieved this by ensuring that power was handed over to those natives they considered to be loyal to their interests. The Ruler’s ascension to power in *Wizard of the Crow* exposes the role that colonialists played in the transfer of power to the natives:

According to one version, he [the Ruler] emerges in history as a champion of an unquestioning humility before power... All the white settlers’ and missionary reports about him concurred that he was a good African, and later, “our man.”... That is one version among many, *but all agree on one thing: the Ruler’s rise to power had something to do with his alliance with the colonial state and the white forces behind it.* (pp.231-33, emphasis added)

From this passage, it is evident that the Ruler's ascent to power in Aburiria is a direct result of support from colonial authorities. The colonial authorities supported and funded the Ruler's party during elections because of his "unquestioning humility before power." The colonisers presented conditions for their support and urged him to demand that he be second only to the president. The support and conditions offered by colonial authorities during the power transfer ended up establishing a mindset of dependence in the African. Ngugi's novel creates the impression that colonialists have used this dependence to continue dictating affairs even in postcolonial Africa. Africa was granted political independence but remains economically dependent. African leadership is therefore left in a dilemma on whether or not African states can be governed independent of Europe and the West.

It is against the background of continued exploitation in the postcolonial era that Fani-Kayode Omoregie points out that colonialism underdeveloped Africa by laying the roots of neo-colonialism. He observes that colonialism created Africa's economic dependency on the international capitalist system. Such dependency has been the root of exploitation.⁴⁹ Fanon similarly observes that the exploitation of agricultural workers by the landed proprietors who replace the foreign settlers is only a continuation and intensification of what was already set by the colonialists.⁵⁰

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi shows that imperialism continues to maintain a tight grip on the 'independent' states. Imperialists determine the form of governance to be followed and even suggest when the leadership should relinquish its powers. This comes out clearly in the novel when the American Ambassador, Gabriel Gemstone, addresses the Ruler:

⁴⁹ Fani-Kayode Omoregie, Rodney. *Cabral and Ngugi as Guides to African Postcolonial Literature*, African Postcolonial Literature in the Postcolonial Web, 29 April 2002. Web. Accessed 20 December 2010.

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.124

‘We are now embarking on a new mission of forging a global order... So I have been sent to urge you to start thinking about turning your country into a democracy... And also, we can make sure that your successor passes a law to ensure that you are never brought to court on charges involving any of your actions during your tenure as the head of the state.’ (pp.580, 583)

The advice from Gabriel Gemstone and a special envoy of the American president on the affairs of Aburiria suggests that there is mutual benefit to the collaboration between the leadership of Aburiria and the imperial power. On the one hand the Ruler is assured of immunity from prosecution after his tenure, on the other the West sees him as an accomplice in their “new mission of forging a global order.” This relationship perpetuates the master-slave relationship that was established during slavery and colonial eras. The West keeps on dictating direction of affairs and Africa keeps on adhering to the Western bid.

Using the Ruler’s sickness; foreign religious beliefs; and the impact of European and Western influence on the governance of Aburiria, the author disillusion Africa’s desire for Whiteness by depicting the failure of Western interventions. In all these instances, African ways of life triumph over their Western alternatives and this suggests a Manichaean view of decolonisation. Ngugi’s anti-imperialist stance depicted in the novel seems to be a continuation of the positions expressed in his other works like “On the Abolition of the English Department” (1972), *Decolonising the Mind* (1987), and *Moving The Centre* (1993).

The author also uses *Marching to Heaven* to symbolise several challenges postcolonial Africa faces. *Marching to Heaven* is a symbol for continued collaboration with the source of funds, the West. The Ruler and his Ministers represent a leadership of independent Africa that aims to sustain the colonial legacy of dependence on Imperial powers. Considering that

Marching to Heaven is to be finally given as the Ruler's birthday present, the concept is also a symbol of the wild ambitions and greed of the ruling class. The ministers directly benefit from the project in different ways. They consolidate their ministerial positions by proposing the project and working with the Ruler to acquire its funding from the Global Bank. Tajirika, chairman of the Marching to Heaven project, begins to receive 'fat envelopes' from contractors who need to get favours from him even before the project commences (pp.103-05). On the other hand, the poor masses who do not benefit from the project regard it as cause of continued exploitation. Kamiti and his fellow beggars clearly oppose both the loans and the Ruler's 'birthday cake':

...a group of beggars started shouting slogans beyond the decorum of begging. Marching to Heaven is Marching to Hell. Your Strings of Loans Are Chains of Slavery. Your Loans Are the Cause of Begging. We Beggars Beg the End of Begging. (p.74)

Ngugi makes several observations through the voice of the begging masses. National projects that do not benefit the masses only assist in making the people's lives more miserable or 'march to hell'. This is evident from the reaction of the masses who oppose the project. Secondly, the author observes that the loans that developing countries get from the West continue the legacy of slavery. The loans imply that the developing countries have to continue working for the 'masters' until the loans are repaid. Put differently, by looking up to the West for funding or support, the developing country is reduced to the position of a perpetual 'beggar' and 'slave' while the West consolidates its position of the 'Master.' Thirdly, Ngugi seems to say that loans that do not benefit the masses end up widening the gap between the rich and the poor. The

masses therefore consider the loans as “the Cause of Begging.” Ironically, even the end of begging has to be begged.

Ngugi depicts that the government of Aburiria with its support from the West has only succeeded in making itself unpopular as it is oppressive, corrupt, and breeds many social evils. The Ruler’s government is infamous for its conceited use of armed forces. His rule depends on two main pillars: “the armed forces and the West” (p.645). He uses the forces to implement his heinous agenda like promoting state-organised violence, kidnappings, killings, and instilling public fear and tension. It is a point which Fanon also makes by observing that armed forces are established as a way of securing the accumulated wealth of the ruling class and subduing any threat to their control of resources.⁵¹ The result of the antagonism between the classes is that the ruling national middle class becomes suspicious of any revolutionary ideas.

The Ruler’s fear for revolutionaries in *Wizard of the Crow* is glaring. He denounces Yunity Mgeusi-Bila-Shaka and Luminous Karamu-Mbu-ya-Ituka “for preaching revolution” (p.79). He uses heavily armed forces to brutally disperse Journalists, university students and beggars from gatherings (pp.575-6). He also uses the police to abduct or rein terror on fellow politicians and other public figures like Tajirika (p.301), Vinjinia (p.451), Machokali and Sikiokuu (p.522). The repressive relations that Ngugi portrays in *Wizard of the Crow* are well theorized by Louis Althusser who points out that “the state is a machine of repression, which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class.” Althusser notices that the state has two sides which he calls Repressive State Apparatus (SA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The distinction between the two sides is that the Repressive State Apparatus ultimately functions by violence. Althusser gives the Government, the Administration, the Army,

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.138

the Police, the Courts and the Prisons as examples of the SA. On the other hand, he observes that Ideological State Apparatuses function by ideology. He gives Churches, Schools, Families, Political Parties and Trade Unions as examples of the ISA.⁵² In the essay entitled “On the Reproduction of the Relations of Production”, Althusser observes:

The role of the repressive State apparatus, in so far as it is a repressive apparatus, consists essentially in securing by force (physical or otherwise) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the last resort *relations of exploitation*.⁵³

Althusser’s explanation on the relations between the SAs and ISAs is important for understanding the aggression of the ruling class towards the masses. He notes that the Government, of which the Police and the Army are part, ultimately functions by violence. The use of the Police or the Army in executing government’s agenda in both *Osiris Rising* and *Wizard of the Crow* seems expected when understood against Althusser’s explanation. Likewise, it is the fundamental ideologies that ultimately hold the ISAs like educational institutions, political movements, and ministries of the Church in these two novels. It is for these reasons that the revolution led by Ast and Asar in *Osiris Rising* and the movement led by Nyawira in *Wizard of the Crow* are both based on ideologies and they all fall prey to the aggression or violence of their repressive States respectively.

Ngugi suggests a comparison between the Western-modelled rule of the Ruler and its consequent social evils on the one hand and the self sponsored Movement for the Voice of the People led by Nyawira and its popular support on the other hand. Nyawira’s party does not only

⁵² Louis Althusser, “The State.” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Vincent Leitch. Ed. pp. 1487-9.

⁵³ Louis Althusser, “On the Reproduction of the Relations of Production.” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Vincent Leitch. Ed. p.1492.

continue to flourish out of people's common desire to resist oppression but also finally conquers the once mighty government of the Ruler and changes its system governance. The schemes that the Movement for the Voice of the People employs to defame or oppose plans of the government are derived from what the "ancestors used to do as a last resort where they could no longer take shit from a despot" (p.250). It is this ultimate defeat and replacement of the Western-modelled government of the Ruler by Nyawira's party after getting inspiration from what African ancestors used to do that underscores Ngugi's perspective. This replacement of colonial and Western ways of life with African ways of life forms the crux of Ngugi's portrayal of the Manichaeian perspective of decolonisation. He demonstrates that the 'desire for Whiteness' which is manifested in the longing for Western methods of scientific enquiry and medicine, Western religions, and Western forms of governance is a malady that needs to be replaced with African ways of life.

Ngugi depicts awareness that this 'desire for Whiteness' can be overcome through a revolution championed by intellectuals. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the author uses the Wizard of the Crow and Nyawira to lead the opposition against any forms of Imperialism and to spearhead change. Both the Wizard of the Crow and Nyawira had attained university education and this must have opened up perception of their culture vis-à-vis global relations.⁵⁴ Ngugi's usage of intellectuals as agents of revolution in Aburiria is evidently inspired by Fanon. In his *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues that the solution to problems facing formerly colonised nations lies in the leadership of a party or intellectuals that are highly conscious of the need to empower the masses, and are set to implement revolutionary principles that would bar the

⁵⁴ The Wizard of the Crow had pursued a BA in Economics and a Masters in Business Management from a University in India (pp.53-5) and Nyawira is a graduate of Eldares University (p.78-80). These study institutions in former colonies in India and Africa respectively seem to have a bearing on how the characters approach the issue of (de)colonization.

existing conditions of the “useless and harmful middle class.”⁵⁵ Fanon points out the need for the rulers to awaken the consciousness of the people to understand what is at stake; to begin to see themselves as global citizens, that “the yardstick of time must no longer be that of the moment or up till the next harvest, but must become that of the rest of the world.” According to him, the masses need to be aware that the government and the party are at their service, and that “The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts.”⁵⁶ As if to put into practice Fanon’s line of thought, Ngugi’s the Wizard of the Crow and Nyawira constantly frustrate the schemes of the ruling class and raise people’s consciousness of what is at stake. Finally, they lead the masses into overthrowing a dictatorship.

The need for Africa to have revolutionaries with a global understanding of issues provides the Manichaeian perspective with serious challenges. By its nature, the Manichaeian approach aims at seeking the dominance of one pole by destroying the other pole. However, the need to awaken people’s consciousness of themselves in line with global trends calls for an acknowledgement and not destruction of the other. The revolutionary intellectual needs to use his or her exposure to set standards for raising the consciousness of the people. Despite depicting a strong Manichaeian stance, Ngugi seems to acknowledge the important contributions that other societies can make towards the regeneration of Africa. This is evident in the way Kamiti highly regards the potential of Indian universities to contribute to the development of the world. In another incident, a developing relationship between the Wizard of the Crow on the one hand and Maritha and Mariko on the other also symbolises how people of different cultural orientations and beliefs can mutually benefit from cooperating with one another. This need for a healthy

⁵⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.140

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 156-7, 165

coexistence amongst people of diverse cultures appears to be the major influence behind the evolution Ngugi seems to suggest from a Manichaeian perspective to a dialectical perspective of decolonisation.

Western Hegemony Revisited

As repeatedly pointed out in this thesis, the dialectical perspective allows for a healthy coexistence of people with different cultural orientations. Ngugi seems to be aware of the paradox behind a quest for decolonisation using a dialectical perspective. As a way out, he seemingly resorts to revisiting the tactics colonialists employed to completely subdue the colonised. Colonialists introduced European forms of education which effectively established Eurocentric orientations in Africans. Africans were made to believe that Europe was the only source of knowledge since this is what the education curriculum emphasized. In *Wizard of the Crow*, this Eurocentric orientation is manifested by Tajirika's ignorance of the potential contributions that India possesses (pp53-7). The author seizes the interview between Tajirika and Kamiti to reveal the vast amount of knowledge that colonialism made Africans overlook. For instance, Kamiti acquires his BA in Economics and a Master of Business Management from universities in India. The existence of such institutions in India and Pakistan has enabled these countries to contribute to global technological advancements and innovations. Kamiti also shows that India has a lot to share with the rest of the world in the areas of food spices and preparations, its geography, history, politics, languages and medicine (pp.53-7). These revelations about resources from Asian and Eastern countries were systematically suppressed by the Eurocentric curricula introduced in Africa by the colonialists. The author thus suggests that the East provides

Africa with an alternative partner capable of replacing Europe and the West. It is also the diversity of knowledge in Indian universities that stimulates Kamiti into discovering his inherent potential which he uses in different situations during the revolution in Aburiria. Ngugi's position on the need for societies to learn from one another seems to be summed up in Kamiti's opinion:

'My opinion is that there are many things we could learn from India and other Asian countries, just as they have much to learn from us. We in Aburiria, more than others, should strengthen our ties with India because some of our citizens are of Indian origins...' (p.55)

Kamiti's opinion acknowledges that every society has room to learn from contributions of other societies. This is why Aburiria needs to learn from India just as India has much to learn from Aburiria. The opinion also decolonizes the African mind from seeing Europe and the West as the only sources of knowledge.

Ngugi's concern with the dominance of one culture over other cultures is also expressed in "On the Abolition of the English Department." This article argues that:

If there is need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture', why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?

... We reject the primacy of English literature and culture... We therefore urge for freedom of choice so that a more representative course be drawn up. We see no reason why English literature should have priority over and above other European literature where we are concerned.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Homecoming*. pp.146-8

The authors of this article advocate for the establishment of African literature to be the centre of African studies and curricula. This disquiet around literature is primarily the concern with the centralisation of English culture in the collective psyche of Africans. It is the same concern that Ngugi continues to highlight in *Moving the Centre* which argues for the need to change “the Eurocentric basis of looking at the world”.⁵⁸ Ngugi acknowledges that other cultures can contribute to the development of African culture on the equal basis without dominating it. This is the view the author emphasizes in Kamiti’s comment about India in *Wizard of the Crow*. While the novel advocates re-appropriation of African ways and acknowledges other social perspectives, it is the idea of undoing what colonialists and imperialists have done that makes Ngugi advocate Africa needs to turn from focusing on Europe and the West. He suggests Africa needs to explore her inherent forces and establish new relations with the East. This process of cultural synthesis on the basis of mutuality is what makes the novel depict a dialectical perspective of decolonisation. The turning point from a Manichaeian to a dialectical perspective in the novel comes about when the Wizard of the Crow heals Maritha and Mariko. Maritha and Mariko, wife and husband, are devout Christians at All Saints Cathedral. The author presents Maritha and Mariko as victims of a satanic attack. They were tormented by an irresistible lust for other people’s flesh. They sought assistance from their church through confessions and prayer but to no avail (pp.30-33). Finally, Maritha and Mariko acquired their permanent healing from the Wizard of the Crow:

As they had found no blemish on their God-given bodies, their scars having turned into stars, Maritha and Mariko did not return to the shrine of the Wizard of the Crow for a cure. Neither did they see the need to convey the Wizard of the Crow to Christianity. The whole experience had

⁵⁸ Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *Moving the Centre*. pp.xvi-xvii

taught them that there were things on earth that defied understanding and it was better to let them be. God indeed works in mysterious ways to perform His wonders, and who were they to question God's mysteries? (p.283)

The incident of Maritha and Mariko suggests Ngugi's perception of the uniqueness of beliefs, religions and cultures. Maritha and Mariko went to the shrine of the Wizard of the Crow "to convert the Wizard of the Crow from belief in satanic rites to Christian faith" (p.267). The approach taken by Maritha and Mariko is typically Manichaean. They regard the Christian faith as not capable of coexisting with the 'satanic' beliefs of the Wizard of the Crow and their resolution is to make the Wizard of the Crow be converted to Christianity. However, after their encounter with the Wizard of the Crow, they "were startled because the voice they now heard did not sound satanic and it did not correspond to the one they argued with in their dreams and nightmares" (p.277). Having known the truth about the Wizard of the Crow and his faith, Maritha and Mariko did not "see the need to convey the Wizard of the Crow to Christianity" (p.283). Similarly, the Wizard of the Crow shows awareness of the limitations that Christian faith offers its followers but does not want Maritha and Mariko to abandon their belief hence the plea:

'Keep dancing to your faith,' said the Wizard of the Crow, in his divination mode, 'and if your faith allows you, you may want to try this. When you get back home, see if there is any oil in the house. Castor oil is the best...' (p.279)

There is a direct contrast in approaches between the characters of Maritha and Mariko on the one hand and the Wizard of the Crow on the other hand. While Maritha and Mariko initially adopt a Manichaean approach to resolving the differences between Christianity and native

African beliefs, the Wizard of the Crow pursues a dialectic approach. The author seems to hold the view that cultural condemnation comes about due to one's ignorance of the other. The author inclines towards the dialectical approach advanced by the protagonist in the novel – the Wizard of the Crow, and makes it prevail over the Manichaean outlook. The author uses the healing of Maritha and Mariko to show that it is possible for people of different beliefs, religions and cultures to coexist without necessarily aiming to destroy one another. After this healing, the Wizard of the Crow bypasses all residences and seeks asylum at Maritha and Mariko's residence when the Ruler's police are pursuing him (p.284). The asylum they offer to the Wizard of the Crow also symbolises how social diversity can be used to complement one another. The healing of Maritha and Mariko and their consequent abandonment of the Manichaean attitude to adopt a dialectical approach marks a turning point in the novel. The change in Maritha's and Mariko's worldview after encountering the Wizard of the Crow reflects the type of social transformation that is necessary for Africa to regenerate. The author suggests that a more accommodating social approach would bring about mutual benefits and facilitate development.

An examination of the style Ngugi employs in writing *Wizard of the Crow* also reveals his strong position about cultural relations. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Ngugi *et al* argue for the need to acknowledge the centrality of the oral tradition in African literature.⁵⁹ Ngugi practices this idea in *Wizard of the Crow* by using a traditional story-telling technique. According to James Gibbons, this technique results in the simplicity of language and the production of a long novel.⁶⁰ By using the traditional story-telling technique in spite of its implications, Ngugi makes the reader get the story from an African perspective. In *Wizard of the*

⁵⁹ James Ngugi, *et al*. "On the Abolition of the English Department." *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. pp.147-8

⁶⁰ James Gibbons, "Despot Measures: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Novel Skewers an African Big Man" *Bookforum*. Summer 2006. Web. Accessed 11 December 2010.

Crow, Ngugi abandons the Eurocentric orientation that had guided the presentation of his earlier novels and makes the African oral tradition the centre. This centralisation of orality is part of “decolonising the mind” and underscores the idea that all cultures are unique.

Furthermore, *Wizard of the Crow* shows that Ngugi continues writing his novels in Gikuyu first before translating them into English.⁶¹ By doing the English translation himself, Ngugi acknowledges the need for a more accommodating perspective of decolonisation. The translation is a manifestation that Africa cannot abandon everything foreign but still needs to use what other societies offer. He reinforces the need for re-appropriating African ways on the one hand while on the other hand acknowledges the need for opening up to other societies through his English translation of the novel. The centralisation of orality in Ngugi’s novel and his accommodating position on languages makes *Wizard of the Crow* a prototype of undoing the violence of language and tradition that colonialists championed against the natives. *Wizard of the crow* is one novel that finally dialogises Ngugi’s philosophies.⁶²

This chapter has demonstrated that Ngugi’s *Wizard of the Crow* regards the ‘desire for Whiteness’ as a malady that creates most social evils in Aburiria. Ngugi uses the Wizard of the Crow and Nyawira to fight all elements that sustain imperialism by using methods derived from African ways of life. Using the Wizard of the Crow and Nyawira, Ngugi advances a dialectical

⁶¹ *Wizard of the Crow* was first written in Gikuyu as *Murogi wa Kigogo*

⁶² In his *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi argues that foreigners used the violence of language to colonize Africans. He observes that colonisers promoted usage of their languages while discouraging usage of native languages. Against this background, Ngugi regards usage of native languages in writing as an important step in the process of decolonisation. Apart from this, in his other article entitled “On the abolition of the English Department,” Ngugi notes: “we want to establish the centrality of Africa in the department. This, we have argued, is justifiable on various grounds, the most important one being that education is a means of knowledge about ourselves. Therefore after we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective.” Written in native Gikuyu and having Africa and its oral tradition at its centre, *Wizard of the Crow* may be regarded as Ngugi’s text which not only sums up his philosophies but also practices them.

approach that re-appropriates African ways while allowing for a healthy co-existence with other cultural beliefs.

Although this argument shows reasons why Ngugi seems to suggest an evolution from a Manichaeian perspective of decolonisation to a dialectical perspective, *Wizard of the Crow* raises questions on whether it is people's responsibility or divine destiny that brings about revolution and decolonisation. In the novel, the author shows that Kamiti had discovered his supernatural abilities by chance. Mwalimu Karimiri, Kamiti's father, had attempted to change Kamiti's destiny of becoming a seer by sending him to school. When Mwalimu Karimiri discovers that Kamiti has become a seer in line with his calling, he concludes:

'We sacrificed, sent you off to school, to prevent that from happening. But today you have taught me a great lesson. Or, you have reminded me of something no one should ever forget: that the will of God will always triumph over human wilfulness.' (p.294)

The lesson that Mwalimu Karimiri learns suggests that people's destiny is controlled by God and it can never be changed. This lesson shows the vanity of people's attempt to decide or manipulate their destiny against God's will. This being the case, Kamiti's and Nyawira's heroic exploits in the novel can be attributed to divine intervention. These scenarios create the impression that the revolution that Kamiti and Nyawira advocate is part of this divine plan which can never be foiled by human beings. However, Fanon holds a contrary view:

Decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor

of a friendly understanding...Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power.⁶³

Fanon regards man as being in control during the process of decolonisation. According to him, the process can neither be attributed to magical practices nor any supernatural power. Fanon's position about the role humans play in decolonisation is therefore contrary to Ngugi's. Ngugi suggests that belief in ancestral traditions including magic is part of the African culture that needs to be re-appropriated in the process of decolonisation. However, accepting that people's destiny is divine controlled as one of the characters in the novel, Mwalimu Karimiri, is made to believe renders philosophies about decolonisation irrelevant. The observation that decolonisation would be achieved through re-appropriation of African ways as suggested in *Wizard of the Crow* at best becomes unfounded and a contradiction of the belief in divine destiny at worst.

Furthermore, *Wizard of the Crow* creates the impression that authorities in government are evil, corrupt, and dishonest, while revolutionaries and the masses are portrayed as good, innocent, and victims. This conflict between good and evil makes the reader sympathize with the revolutionaries and the masses in their struggle for their rights and attempts to change system of governance. However, after changing both the leadership and system of governance in Aburiria, the author does not depict how the new leadership relates to its people. The novel ends with the government of the Ruler overthrown without suggesting how the emerging leaders would improve the lives of the masses. With Aburiria or Africa still economically dependent, it leaves the reader guessing on whether or not the loans denounced during the government of the Ruler would still be regarded as "the cause of begging" in the established democratic government.

⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. pp.27-8

Ngugi suggests that Africa should explore the possibility of establishing links with Asian countries like India but does not explain whether or not such links would replace the economic dependence of Africa on European or Western-based funding institutions. Most importantly, Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* does not show how the new leadership would relate with the former colonial powers or the West in a globalised world. The final impression that is created, unfortunately, is that Ngugi seems to advocate change for its own sake.

Chapter Four: Seeing the World from Multiple Perspectives

This chapter argues that Femi Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade* advances a need for Africa to re-appropriate her culture while opening up to different perspectives at the same time. It examines how the author uses the dancing masquerade motif to show that there is no single perspective that can fully explain world experiences. It thus explores the author's view that affairs of the world can best be understood by considering multiple perspectives. The chapter discusses how the writer represents the slave trade account, colonisation and racism using multiple perspectives. The chapter discusses these themes in Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade* in order to compare with perspectives of decolonisation adopted by both Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in their novels.

The Dancing Masquerade is a story that revolves around Tunji, a young African man from a fictitious country called Baluba. In his youth Tunji keeps changing areas of residence in Baluba and later travels to *Ilu Oyinbo* (England) before coming back to Africa. These changes of residential places coupled with his critical mindedness and research about life enable Tunji to have a good perspective and better understanding of events which have often been misrepresented by the majority. A 'masquerade' as used in the title of the novel is an appearance that intends to conceal reality or the truth about something unpleasant from being known.⁶⁴ A dancing masquerade is a figure common in traditional dances of Africa where the dancer disguises himself/herself using costumes and people have to watch him/her from a distance. More often than not, spectators of the dancing masquerade need to change positions in order to

⁶⁴ Kate Woodford, Guy Jackson and Patrick Gillard. Eds. *The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

fully comprehend the spectacle. Abodunrin therefore uses the dancing masquerade motif to demonstrate the need for comprehending affairs of the world from multiple perspectives:

The world as you've often said is a masquerade – *a dancing masquerade* – if you want to see it, you don't – you just can't – stand in one place. The vast majority of us have stood in one place – in our pursuit of what my father describes as a most vitriolic univocality in place of polyphony – for too long.⁶⁵

In the extract above, Mike suggests that a masquerade that is dancing constantly disturbs the perception of those watching it. One therefore needs to change positions in order to fully comprehend a dancing masquerade. This idea of adopting multiple perspectives when comprehending postcolonial social reality is also advanced by Abodunrin in his *Blackness: Culture and Ideology*.⁶⁶

Rewriting Africa's History

Abodunrin's primary concern in *The Dancing Masquerade* is what can be described as the re-writing of Africa's history from the period of foreign invasion. This is evident from Tunji's description of the ethnobiography⁶⁷: "Our story is only a departure in the sense that it

⁶⁵ Femi Abodunrin, *The Dancing Masquerade*. Ibadan: Dokun Publishing House, 2003. P.166. Subsequent page references in text.

⁶⁶ In his *Blackness: Culture and Ideology* (2008:pp38,97), Femi Abodunrin declares that the cyclical, rather than linear, Manichaeic or exclusive dialectics, offers that best perspective for encapsulating the basic preoccupation of black literature in the post-colonial era. Abodunrin uses a cyclical perspective to suggest an approach to life that considers several factors that make reality. He points out that the cyclical perspective regards the linear, Manichaeic and dialectical perspectives as important factors to be considered in understanding reality. This thesis opts for the term 'multiple perspectives' considering that the term 'cyclical' does not make reference to any specific perspective. These multiple perspectives also offer an ideal ground from which to critique the other perspectives.

⁶⁷ The ethnobiography Tunji is writing is also entitled *The Dancing Masquerade* (p.117). With the title of Abodunrin's novel clearly agreeing with the title of Tunji's ethnobiography, the voices of the persona and the author

tries to narrate the peculiar experience of a people, a much misunderstood, maligned people” (p.133). Tunji’s description suggests that the present ‘history’ of the people (Africans) has led to their being ‘misunderstood’ and hence the need for another attempt “to narrate the peculiar experience.” The author creates the impression that Africa’s history has been misunderstood and suggests the need for a correction through re-writing it. This process of re-writing Africa’s history involves revisiting all factors that are deemed to have contributed to the distortion of the history. Abodunrin compares the re-writing process and its challenges to the process of re-crossing the Middle Passage:

‘The Middle-Passage is a metaphor – a metaphor for dispossession, and in physical terms it represents the entire vessel used to transport you from the point of origin to the land of your ultimate dispossession. *But the passage is also a gap that you must recross in order to recoup or re-appropriate what was lost.* But, the process of re-appropriation is fraught with practical and theoretical impediments. At best, you can compare it to the act of scooping a broken egg from the floor really. Many would try – but the majority stupefied and transfixed by the enormity of what is involved in the process wouldn’t even dare raise a finger’ (pp.84-5, emphasis added)

This description of the Middle-Passage by one of the characters, Bukola’s mother, is fundamental to understanding the approach taken by the author. At the physical level, the Middle-Passage refers to the route across the Atlantic Ocean through which slaves were carried from the coasts of Africa to America. At the psychic level, the Middle-Passage alludes to the gulf existing in the minds of some Africans who have been systematically alienated from their African cultural heritage by European and Western forces through the eras of slavery and

can hardly be distinguished and this seems to give the author unlimited opportunities for authorial intrusions in the text. The boundaries between fiction and reality in the novel become blurred.

colonisation. The author seems to be of the opinion that this physical or psychic Middle-Passage must be re-crossed “in order to recoup or re-appropriate what was lost.” The author’s usage of re-crossing the Middle Passage to mean undoing or reversing the alienation that slave traders and colonialists inflicted on Africans suggests decolonisation in the novel. The re-crossing of the Middle passage is regarded as the only way of re-appropriating and repossessing what was lost amongst the African people.

Abodunrin begins his attempt to recoup what was lost by representing ancient Africa as a civilization. *The Dancing Masquerade* depicts vestiges of a highly organized and developed ancient African society. The indigenous values and cultural beliefs attained from such a society become the basis of ‘fundamental differences’ with foreign beliefs when natives first came into contact with the aliens. Tunji observes:

The founder, parted ways with the white church because of fundamental differences. It amounts to double speak on the part of the Europeans, the founder and his cohorts reasoned, to condemn every aspect of the Baluban cultural antecedent – be it music, clothing or medicine, not to talk of the thorny issue of one man, one wife, while aspects of European rather than spiritual antecedents were taught as gospel truth. (p.13)

This doctrinal clash of cultural and spiritual antecedents between the indigenous Balubans (Africans) and Europeans suggests that Africans had developed their own social values by the time Europeans arrived. Tunji’s claim of the existence of well cultivated Baluban cultural values like ‘music’, ‘clothing’, ‘medicine’ and marriage beliefs is supported by Paul in the novel. Paul reveals that Baluba had its own established forms of education. He explains that it was the colonial education system that deliberately helped to destroy the fabric of Baluban society: “One

set of mythology was taught as fact while the Baluban mythology was denounced as some backward, heathenish, even evil superstition” (p.160). Paul demonstrates this by briefly narrating the Baluban version of ‘Paradise Lost’. In the Baluban version, God instructed man to cut enough piece of heaven for his daily consumption. However, due to greed one day man cut more than was required and God ended up separating heavens from the earth leaving man to work for his food (p.161). This version of ‘Paradise Lost’ portrays pre-existence of an indigenous system of imparting social morals and education.

The incident of the stolen *Edan* in *The Dancing Masquerade* provides yet more evidence for the existence of an African society that was highly creative. Paul explains that the *Edan* was stolen from the royal palace by ‘son of the Oba’ – the prince, and sold to one of the university professors (p.145). The carving of such highly demanded artefacts like the *Edan* suggests a long period of creativity and artistic perfection in Africa. The keeping of such artefacts in European museums does not only serve to acknowledge ancient Africa’s artistic creativity but also the role foreigners have played in the plunder of ancient Africa’s civilization.

Furthermore, Abodunrin resorts to using imaginary documents purportedly written by Europeans to portray a glorious African past. He portrays a graphic representation of an ancient Baluban city when one of the characters, Paul, tells us:

In his book *In Baluba’s Forest and Jungle: Six Years Among the Balubans*, he wrote: ‘What I saw disabused my mind of the many errors in regard to Baluba. The city extends along the Ogun for nearly six miles and has a population of approximately 200,000... instead of being lazy, naked savages, living on the spontaneous productions of the earth, they were dressed and were industrious... (providing) everything that their physical comfort required. The men were builders, blacksmiths, iron-smelters, carpenters, calabash-carvers, weavers, basket-makers,... Even

architecturally, Baluban towns in the fifties would not have been all that different from the Aiyerugba the Reverend saw a hundred years earlier (pp.150-3).

This passage starts by refuting a common misconception that Africans were naked and pitiable before the arrival of the whites. Rather than this, the passage above reveals that Africa had a united and civilized society that was developed in all dimensions. Ancient African societies had diverse skills required to conduct agriculture, business, transport, administration, education, etc. Architecturally, ancient Africa was fully developed with a history of outstanding buildings and castles. The writer of the passage observes that developments in Baluban towns (modern Africa) are not different from those that ancient Africa had already attained. In this passage, Abodunrin presents a factual description of his maternal hometown of Abeokuta in Nigeria.⁶⁸ Abodunrin makes the boundary of fact and fiction hazy in the novel by incorporating factual information and real life critical voices. The effect of fusing fact with fiction is that the portrayal of fictional Baluba's past becomes synonymous with that of Nigeria and Africa at large. Understood as Africa's story, the critical voices and the authorial supplements incorporated in the novel make the narrative authoritative and appealing.

Commenting on Abodunrin's literary technique of interspacing narrative with authorial supplements in *The Dancing Masquerade*, Bright Molande observes:

The Dancing Masquerade is one literary work that consciously interspaces the narrative with authorial supplements. It is one of the most conscious intertextual novels...But upon reading [Edward] Said into the story, the voice becomes that of the narrator of the story. Then, it becomes

⁶⁸ In this description Abodunrin fuses direct quotations from Robert Farris Thompson's *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art & Philosophy* with contributions from Abodunrin's interview with Ulli Beier. This description is based on real life observations made by Rev. Stone (Abodunrin, Femi. *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2002. pp.8-15).

the author speaking within the entirety of the novel and the subject matter at hand. Eventually, it becomes Femi Abodunrin speaking about “culture and imperialism” together with others such as Chinua Achebe and Ulli Beier in the entirety of the novel.⁶⁹

Molande argues that Abodunrin’s interspacing of “narrative with authorial supplements” enables him to present several critical voices in the novel. He notes that Abodunrin creates some hazy boundary not only between the narrative and the author’s own voice(s) but also between the narrative and the “authorial supplements.” This eventually enables Abodunrin to freely enter into a conversation with other postcolonial voices in the novel. The overall impression created is that the ancient Africa portrayed in *The Dancing Masquerade* is based on adequate investigation and research. The portrayed past is the product of a conversation with the critical minds represented in the novel.

In his novel Abodunrin successfully represents ancient African civilization. He depicts existence of civilization in Africa using vestiges of ancient social values and forms of education that colonialists intently aimed to suppress. He uses a passage from a book purportedly written by a missionary to support the accounts of a glorious past which are narrated by Tunji and Paul. These different perspectives from which Abodunrin portrays existence of an ancient African civilization reveal how he employs the dancing masquerade motif in the novel. He makes the reader appreciate existence of the civilization from the different perspectives that he offers. Furthermore, Abodunrin’s confirmation of the existence of ancient African civilization replaces the misconception that colonialists intently propagated. Abodunrin’s position of decolonisation is manifested through his replacement of the colonial misconceptions of ancient Africa with the confirmation of existence of an ancient African civilization that he recoups. He refutes the

⁶⁹ Bright Molande, “Moments of rewriting.” *Journal of Humanities*. No.20. pp.90-91

colonial idea that Africans were naked and pitiable before the arrival of the whites and goes on to show that Africans were civilized. The portrayal of Africa's glorious past is essential in establishing reference points for re-appropriation. This glorious past also justifies the need for decolonisation where colonization is deemed to have been the principal cause behind the destruction of ancient African civilization.

The ongoing discussion reveals that the three novels under study depict a common understanding of decolonisation. The novels depict decolonisation as the replacement of ways and beliefs that were established by colonialists with African ways of life. The novels seem to agree that the process of decolonisation ought to start by demonstrating that there was a civilization in ancient Africa. Ancient Africa is portrayed to have already developed in the areas of agriculture, architecture, art, culture, education and governance before the arrival of Whites on the continent.

In *The Dancing Masquerade*, the author depicts a Baluban city of Aiyerugba that had already attained civilization by the time missionaries arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century. The city was already developed extending along six miles of the Ogun with an industrious population of approximately 200 000. Members of this society had already developed skills in the areas of architecture, agriculture, business, art, and craft (pp.150-1). Furthermore, Paul, one of the characters in *The Dancing Masquerade*, acknowledges that Baluba had its own forms of education which were later suppressed by colonial institutions of education. Paul supports this claim by disclosing the existence of an African version of the Paradise Lost. The observation by V.S. Alumona that *The Dancing Masquerade* is a story of African people confirms that developments in ancient Baluba render that ancient Africa had attained notable developments.

Similarly, Armah's *Osiris Rising* paints a picture of ancient Africa that was developed and uses the ankh as a symbol of its development. The society had skilled men in all areas of trade like art, agriculture, business and governance. Its culture was developed and this is evident from the established ways of officiating marriages. Both Tete and Equiano officiated weddings following what they describe as the African way. Armah's novel also creates the impression that the developments of ancient Africa are recorded in a book entitled *A History of the Diamond Coast: 1482 – 1815* presumably written by Captain Broderick Petty. The book reveals that Africa had a well developed and organized society long before the arrival of the foreigners (pp.171-9).

Although Ngugi does not provide ostensible descriptions of ancient African cities and the civilizations African people had attained in the manner Armah and Abodunrin do, he nevertheless depicts an ancient African society that was mighty and had already developed its cultural traditions and beliefs. Mwalimu Karimiri recounts the beliefs of the ancient society on how they recognized a baby who was born to be a seer. He observes that "the Mĩĩ clan used to be mighty. But over the years it has been scattered by slave raids, colonial ventures, and world wars" (pp.294-5). Ngugi suggests that the enchantment that Kamiti had hitherto blindly possessed testifies the credibility of the beliefs of his ancestors. The impression that Ngugi creates is that the ancient African society of the Mĩĩ clan was organized and powerful until it was destroyed by slavery, colonialism and world wars.

It is notable that Armah and Abodunrin adopt a similar technique of using imaginary books presumably written by Europeans to document Africa's glorious past in their novels.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ In *Osiris Rising*, Ast gets her information from a book presumably written by Captain Broderick Petty. In *The Dancing Masquerade*, Paul reads from a book presumably written by a young missionary in the mid nineteenth century.

This common style of presentation has been used to demonstrate that the existence of Africa's glorious past is not a claim made by Africans only but that it has been equally documented by non-Africans as well. Armah and Abiodunrin also use the technique to show that those that deny the existence of ancient African civilization or misrepresent the history of Africa have deliberately chosen to ignore the existing literature portraying the civilization.⁷¹ Such attacks on the existence of ancient African civilization or African history are aimed at making Africans accept the history prescribed by Europeans. The similar techniques of portraying existence of ancient African civilization reveal the necessity of undertaking decolonisation by re-presenting the history of Africa.

The necessity of understanding Africa's present and future through re-presenting its historical past is well encapsulated by Frantz Fanon:

But it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped...In order to ensure his salvation and to escape from the supremacy of the white man's culture the native feels the need to turn backwards towards his unknown roots and to lose himself at whatever cost in his own barbarous people... If not accomplished there will be serious psycho-effective injuries and the result will be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels...The colonised man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis of hope.⁷²

⁷¹ In *Osiris Rising*, Asar notes that conservative Europeans dismissed the existence of African literary traditions, drama and history: "Africa has no tradition of drama. Africa has no literary traditions. Africa has no history." (p.105)

⁷² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. pp.168,175,187.

Fanon suggests that finding anchorage in Africa's historical past provides a lifeline against the 'swamping' effects of Western culture. He regards this search for a national culture as necessary in establishing the African's identity as a human being. Little wonder, Armah, Abodunrin and Ngugi have used stories passed on from generation to generation through word of mouth, extant artefacts and records to ascertain existence of Africa's history. In the words of Fanon, it is the existence of such a history that 'anchors' the identity of an African as an individual. Furthermore, past achievements portrayed through democratic systems of governance, education institutions, language records, marriage institutions, architectural developments, and life-sustaining intentions of the companionship symbolized by the ankh provide points of reference for re-appropriation. It is against this backdrop that the portrayal of Africa's past can be understood as having "intentions of opening the future." This re-presentation of the past offers another desirable system which needs to replace the colonial and Western systems. The portrayal of Africa's glorious past as envisaged by Fanon becomes an important ploy in the process of decolonisation.

The Slave Trade Account Revisited

In *The Dancing Masquerade*, the author also demonstrates the need to understand the account of slavery from different perspectives. Herbert Klein and Jacob Klein note that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century European slave traders generally obtained slaves through coastal trading with Africans though some were captured through raids and kidnapping. Slavery provided cheap labour to meet the increasing demands in the sugar, coffee, cocoa and cotton

plantations which were being opened in North and South America.⁷³ This need for cheap labour creates the impression that slavery was forced upon Africans by the European slave traders. However, Abodunrin suggests that slavery needs to be attributed to collaboration between the foreign slave traders and the greedy natives:

It started with the handkerchiefs – as they say! Like overgrown and pampered children – those we called chiefs urged their own people – ‘Go on then, and get scarlet handkerchiefs...and they were captured!’

... Those entrusted with the sheer task of procuring antidotes against past recrimination colluded with present malformations and the future was jeopardized... Signification – Capitulation – Bad-feeling – have combined to produce the ensuing tirade. Three factors which in times past ought to – indeed would have stood as the proverbial stones that should ensure that the soup does not spill – alas – served other purposes, and our world was broken – shattered. (pp. x-xii: emphasis added)

Three issues stand out in this passage. First, slavery required the cooperation of the native and foreign elements for it to be feasible. This collaboration resulted in the foreigner proposing and the native chiefs offering. Second, it was the ‘chiefs’ or leaders who had betrayed their own people by becoming agents in the slave trade. The author implies that slavery would have been a thorny, almost impossible, adventure if it were not for “those we called our chiefs” betraying their subjects. The impression created here is that the ‘chiefs’ were lured by what was offered by the foreigners and ended up offering their subjects. The personal gains made from this illicit deal were the impetus behind Africa’s destruction. Third, the collaboration between the native and the foreign slave traders had tragic consequences. It was “the starting point of an ordeal,” “the future was jeopardised,” and “our world was broken – shattered.” The author is convinced that the

⁷³ Herbert Klein and Jacob Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. pp.103-139

collaboration between the slave traders and the natives was the basis of destruction and had a damaging consequence on both the present and the future of the natives.

Abodunrin's representation of the origins and conduct of the slave trade depicts that slavery needs to be attributed to both foreign slave traders and some greedy natives. Other than attributing slavery to those who captured slaves, Abodunrin is quick to point out the other factor most ignored: "those we called chiefs urged their own people – Go on then, and get scarlet handkerchiefs...and they were captured" (p.xi). Abodunrin observes that much as slave traders played a role in slavery, the native chiefs had their role as well.

Furthermore, Abodunrin demonstrates the voracity of native authorities by presenting the incident of the stolen *Edan* in his novel. The *Edan* was stolen by a prince from the royal palace and sold to a university professor who later took it into a European museum (p.145). The parallels between the incident of the *Edan* and the origins of slavery discussed above are apparent. Both cases portray native 'authorities' collaborating with foreigners in plundering African human or material resources. These two incidents indicate that the custodians of native resources were lured by greed and became accomplices in plundering African resources. They considered their personal gains at the expense of national harmony and development.

The existence of the stolen *Edan* in a European museum as portrayed in *The Dancing Masquerade* is evidently an influence of Fanon's proclamation that the wealth which smothers Western and European countries was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples of Latin America, China and Africa.⁷⁴ The impression that Fanon creates is that Western and European countries had robbed the underdeveloped peoples. Abodunrin sees other factors at play in this incident. While accepting that the museum in *Ilu Oyinbo* is "the largest monument to robbery the world

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. p.81

would ever know” (p.145), Abodunrin’s Paul is also quick to elucidate that it was the son of the Oba who stole it from the royal palace and sold it to a university professor.⁷⁵ Abodunrin regards this element of the accomplice or the offering party, though clearly downplayed by Fanon, as an important factor in understanding the origins of the wealth in question.

Abodunrin underscores his position that affairs of the world need to be understood from multiple perspectives by showing the destructive roles that the native chiefs and the native prince played. The native chiefs offered their people to slave traders while the native prince is an accomplice in robbing Africa of its precious artefacts like the *Edan*. Using these incidents, Abodunrin advances the opinion that the destruction of Africa cannot be attributed to foreign elements only. This position is important in order to understand Abodunrin’s perspective of decolonisation.

Apart from slavery, Abodunrin suggests that colonialism is another principal factor behind the destruction of Africa. The Western forms of education which were introduced by colonialists contributed to the disintegration of ancient African systems of education and culture. Abodunrin is evidently influenced by Ngugi who observes that “the physical violence of the battle field was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom.”⁷⁶ Ngugi uses his personal experience to demonstrate how foreigners brainwashed native pupils into accepting a differentiated space that made the pupils regard their indigenous culture and language as inferior. Ngugi recalls an incident during his school days where pupils were punished by being whipped first and then made to put on a metal plate inscribed I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY – whenever found speaking native Gikuyu language. Colonialists used this punishment to construct an inferior consciousness in the minds of Africans. Similarly, Laisi, one of the characters in *The*

⁷⁵ In *The Dancing Masquerade*, Ilu Oyinbo refers to England (p.43).

⁷⁶ Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*. pp.9-11

Dancing Masquerade, is known for holding “the school record for wearing the ignoble placard ‘I AM AN IDIOT’ for speaking vernacular...” (p.5). Pupils are made to wear this placard that suggests that they should despise their native languages and treat foreign languages with deference. The parallels between Ngugi’s childhood experience as presented in *Decolonising the Mind* and Abodunrin’s usage of Laisi’s incident in *The Dancing Masquerade* underscore the argument being made in this thesis that *The Dancing Masquerade* portrays colonialism as one of the principal factors behind the destruction of ancient Africa’s social-cultural fabric. Abodunrin makes this point explicit in *The Dancing Masquerade* when Paul confesses the colonial administration’s attitude towards education in Baluba (Africa):

‘Education is an instrument of change.’ The implication is clear. Education was not a means of widening people’s horizon. It was not attempting to build on what was there already. It was a matter of discarding everything you had, suspending any belief you held, disowning every kind of wisdom you ever held and embracing wholesale and without adaptation – somebody else’s lifestyle. *So it was the education system that deliberately helped to destroy the fabric of Baluban society.* (p.160; emphasis added)

Paul reveals that colonialists introduced their forms of education with the intention to destroy the African society. Paul’s comment implies the pre-existence of another organized society. It also confirms that colonialism played a considerable role in destroying ancient African civilization.

This discussion reveals that Abodunrin, Armah and Ngugi agree on the observation that the developments that ancient Africa had achieved were destroyed by slavery and colonialism. They all point out that the collaboration that existed between the foreigners and the native

leaders during the eras of slavery and colonialism accelerated the disintegration of ancient African accomplishments. They also agree that slavery and colonialism introduced structures and institutions that promoted European interests while annihilating African ways.

Although Abodunrin shows that colonialism contributed to the destruction of the ancient African social fabric, he adopts yet another perspective from which he sees the positive contribution of colonialism, an aspect that is ignored in the novels of both Armah and Ngugi. According to Bukola's mother in *The Dancing Masquerade*:

'Only an extremist would deny the positive contributions to our social and political life made by the colonial enterprise – one of them wrote. They were ubiquitous and deeply engrained far more so than any of us could imagine – he said. The education system alone opened up a cultural heritage that reached beyond Azania, to Baluba and Timbuktu and Gao. It produced a highly developed tool with which a writer could explore his own unique predicament, just as the liberal traditions formed the basis for the struggle for independence from the colonial powers.' (p.102)

From this perspective, the author demonstrates that a proper consideration of colonialism needs to focus on both the positive and negative aspects. While acknowledging the destructive elements of the colonial enterprise, the author points out that it is the education system brought by colonialists that enabled Africans of different ethnic backgrounds to coordinate, share experiences and even enable them establish a common base for the struggle for independence. The multiple perspectives that Abodunrin adopts offers him the flexibility that enables him to identify and freely acknowledge both the merits and demerits of the colonial enterprise.

Racism and Effects of Colonialism

Abodunrin also goes beyond accounts of slavery and colonialism to tackle the problem of racism in the world. In the novel, he uses Tunji and Bukola's visit to England to re-examine the problem of racism in Europe and the West. He shows severe racist elements in the novel using several incidents. Ron Bottomley has a negative attitude against qualified black people at the Auction bloc (pp.118-9). Bukola's mother also tells a story of an old lady who 'would rather die' than accept an offer of a supporting 'black' hand (p.85). Dr. Lanre Fapeyi is disgraced by patients he has successfully treated because of his skin colour (pp.89- 90). However, from a different perspective the author acknowledges the existence of some people who think differently in the same situation. Bottomley, for instance, is instantly contrasted with Mike Ridgeway. While Bottomley refuses to give a job permit to Olu on the basis of her race, Ridgeway treats Olu with respect as a fellow human being. Likewise, the lady who refuses a 'black' hand while boarding a bus is contrasted with Paul who "gracefully and gratefully" accepts Bukola's supporting hand (p.156). As if these are not enough, some Whites like Paul and Mike openly condemn the activities at the Auction bloc. Paul and Mike also acknowledge the role Europeans played in creating Africa's predicament. Their attitude serves to reinforce Abodunrin's appeal for the need to comprehend situations from different perspectives. As if to change a perspective of seeing the problem of racism in the novel, Abodunrin also shows that incidents similar to those at the Auction bloc in England exist in Africa. Paul and Mary face challenges to secure visas at the embassy in Baluba until Bukola's mother intervenes (pp.168-9).

Abodunrin's view of the world as portrayed in *The Dancing Masquerade* also reveals the weakness of the multiple perspectives that he adopts. For instance, his position on re-crossing the Middle-Passage as a metaphor of re-appropriation remains ambiguous:

But the passage is also a gap that you must recross in order to recoup or re-appropriate what was lost. But, the process of re-appropriation is fraught with practical and theoretical impediments. At best, you can compare it to the act of scooping a broken egg from the floor really. Many would try – but the majority stupefied and transfixed by the enormity of what is involved in the process wouldn't even dare raise a finger (pp.84-5).

The author clearly acknowledges the need to re-cross the Middle-Passage in order to re-appropriate what was lost. He, nevertheless, considers it a difficult task which many would not attempt. Despite acknowledging the necessity of the task, the author is also quick to point out the challenges that such a process encounters. He compares the process of re-appropriation to “the act of scooping a broken egg from the floor.” Considering that a broken egg can hardly be scooped from the floor, the author creates an impression that attempts at re-appropriation can hardly be achieved. The author's position about decolonisation in this incident becomes ambiguous. In another incident from the same novel, when Bukola kneels and Tunji prostrates before Bukola's father, the father regards this as a ‘primitive affair’ and comments: “If you prefer to hang on to all those medieval stuff while the rest of the world is making giant strides, then that's your problem entirely” (p.73). The position taken by Bukola's father suggests that this cultural process of re-appropriation needs to be done with the consciousness of global trends. Bukola's father holds the view that some cultural values are obsolete and need to be abandoned. However, this view creates a challenge of deciding the criteria for selecting the kinds of values to be re-

appropriated. This ambiguity of the author's personal position on the issues he raises in the novel is a result of his attempt to consider all possible perspectives of a situation. He fails to emphatically make his position clear on all the issues he tackles, including re-appropriation. Like a dancing masquerade, Abodunrin fails to make all spectators appreciate his position in the manner Armah and Ngugi do. Although his approach raises neglected-but-important factors to be considered when critically examining Africa's past and present situations, it is his ambiguity however, that stands out finally.

Despite the weaknesses discussed above, Abodunrin's depiction of ancient Africa, the slave trade, colonialism and racism from different viewpoints is important in understanding his perspective on decolonisation. He is of the view that Africa can be decolonised by re-appropriating her culture. He acknowledges that "the passage is also a gap that you must re-cross in order to recoup or re-appropriate what was lost" (p.84). After considering the impact of slavery and colonialism on Africa's past and present, Abodunrin holds the view that other societies like Europe also have an important role to play if re-appropriation and decolonisation are to be achieved. Re-appropriation of African culture is necessary considering that all cultures are unique. Abodunrin believes it is this uniqueness of cultures that makes societies need one another and learn from each other without necessarily destroying one another. This is the view Bukola underscores in the novel when she says:

'I don't mind being hungry, Maami,' Bukola said coolly. 'This land and its people taxed themselves so hard to send you and others like you to go and learn about the white man's power – his secrets – and not to go and become white yourselves. We thought you were going to return with the theories and practice of liberation and not icons of further colonization and enslavement!'

(p.53)

Bukola points out the benefits of social interaction. Africa needs to learn the ‘theories and practice’ that can assist in improving lives of its people. She cautions her mother against ‘becoming white’ herself and stresses the importance of maintaining one’s identity. The author seizes this opportunity to reprove the African elite who after acquiring education from Europe and the West abandon their traditions and live like the Whites or end up oppressing their own people. The author is of the view that the knowledge acquired from Europe and the West needs to be used to liberate Africans and promote their cultural identity. The sending of Africans to learn in Europe or the West suggests that societies may learn from one another and use this knowledge to mutually uplift themselves. The author also demonstrates the need for social interaction and the benefits it brings about by using Paul, a Whiteman, as an authority on ancient African affairs. Paul keeps African artefacts, pictures depicting African objects of art, written accounts of Africa’s past, and acts as a custodian of African myths.⁷⁷ The author then makes Africans (Tunji, Bukola and Olu) learn about their own past from a White person thereby underscoring the benefits such a link offers. He regards people of different social backgrounds not as antagonistic but complementary.

Abodunrin’s perspective of decolonisation in *The Dancing Masquerade* becomes evident when one considers the novel’s larger picture. First, Abodunrin acknowledges the uniqueness of all cultures and the need to preserve them. When Bukola’s mother claims to be a Christian and suggests disrespect for native beliefs, Bukola points out:

⁷⁷ Paul keeps artifacts, pictures and documents which were taken from Africa during the colonial era. He tells Olu, Tunji and Bukola the ancient African myth equivalent to the ‘Paradise Lost’ (pp.144-161).

This land and its people taxed themselves so hard to send you and others like you to go and learn about white man's power – his secrets – and not to go and become white yourselves. (p.53)

It is here where the author needs to be understood as suggesting that the African culture is unique and needs to be preserved. Mindful of the role slavery and colonialism played in destroying the African social fabric, Abodunrin regards the re-crossing of the Middle-Passage to re-appropriate what was lost as essential. This process of re-appropriating what was lost involves replacement of Western social values with those of Africa which is the crux of decolonisation. Secondly, Abodunrin demonstrates the significance of re-crossing the Middle-Passage and preserving one's culture through the structural arrangement of the novel. The first chapter of the novel is entitled 'The Great Traditions.' The chapter portrays the African social values that Tunji, the protagonist, grew knowing and regards them as 'great' traditions. From the second to the fifth chapters, the protagonist is introduced to details of other significant factors affecting lives of Africans. Within these chapters the major characters: Tunji, Bukola, Olu, and their parents have an experience of crossing and re-crossing the Middle-Passage. They live in England for some time and finally return to settle in Baluba (Africa) in the last chapter of the novel. This return to one's roots is significant in portraying the author's perception of his society. In the epilogue at the end of the novel, Abodunrin's perspective on re-appropriation becomes resolute. Bukola's mother, who earlier describes native beliefs as idol worship (p.53), finally accepts the fate determined by her native belief. She offers her son-in-law for a sacrifice to the goddess Esinmerin following a covenant she made with her (p.172). The act of succumbing to demands of her culture despite the Christian beliefs she acquires from the West underlines Abodunrin's view that one's culture and traditions are indispensable. The novel ends with the African traditions and culture still remaining 'great'.

In conclusion, in spite of the multiple perspectives that Abodunrin adopts, his perspective of decolonisation can be deciphered. Decolonisation can be achieved by re-appropriating and recouping what Africa has lost due to slavery and colonization. In order to recoup what Africa has lost, Abodunrin seems to be of the view that it is necessary for Africa to incorporate contributions from other societies like Europe and the West. Abodunrin acknowledges that all cultures are unique and need to be preserved. He suggests that the process of cultural re-appropriation needs to adopt inclusive approaches. These approaches would assist to overcome racial barriers and establish Africans as global citizens while at the same time ensure that their traditions and culture are preserved.

Abodunrin's position shows that there is no single perspective that is sufficient enough to explain the process of decolonisation. The dancing masquerade motif that he adopts in the novel implies that the processes of decolonisation can best be approached by adopting multiple perspectives. Abodunrin seems to hold the view that approaching decolonisation from a Manichaeian or dialectical perspective in the manner Armah and Ngugi have done would limit one's ability to understand and manage the process in its entirety.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

A study of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* and Femi Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade* reveals that Africa had a glorious past. The novels show that ancient Africa was already developed in the areas of social governance, architecture, agriculture, business, art, and craft before being invaded by foreigners. There is also a general agreement that the destruction of ancient African civilisation can be attributed to several internal and external factors. The main thrusts behind the destruction of Africa are greed of the native authorities and their collaboration with foreigners during slavery, colonial and postcolonial eras. Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising* traces the internal and external factors that have contributed in limiting or destroying the prosperity of African culture from slavery to postcolonial eras. Likewise, Femi Abodunrin's *The Dancing Masquerade* focuses on the roles that both the natives and the foreigners played in the disintegration of Africa from the era of slavery to colonialism. Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* traces the effects of slavery and colonialism on postcolonial Africa. Unanimously, the three writers suggest that slavery, colonialism and their effects have been the principle factors behind the destruction of Africa's social fabric.

Bill Ashcroft *et al* observe that imperialism was the theory that led to the establishment of both slavery and colonialism.⁷⁸ The African novels discussed above show that slavery, colonialism and their effects have been principle factors behind the destruction of Africa. Decolonisation therefore becomes one principal way through which liberation, rebirth and regeneration can be attained. Armah, Ngugi and Abodunrin seem to agree on the point that decolonisation can be achieved through re-appropriation of African ways. In spite of this

⁷⁸ Bill Ashcroft, et al. *Postcolonial Studies*. p.46

agreement, Armah, Ngugi and Abodunrin depict different perspectives on how systems of governance, education curricula and the African culture can be re-appropriated.

This thesis has demonstrated that the novels under study depict two main perspectives of decolonisation, the Manichaeian and the dialectical. Armah seems to advance a Manichaeian perspective in the way all affairs in Africa ought to be run. He suggests that re-appropriation of African ways can come about by abandoning European and Western cultures which were introduced during the eras of slavery and colonialism and in their place re-establishing the ancient African culture. He uses the metaphor of 'reversing the crossing' to advocate this total abandonment of foreign cultures. Armah seems to be of the view that problems of governance in Africa are perpetuated by continued collaboration with the West. For instance, he demonstrates that the financial and military 'aid' from the West propels corruption and conflicts in Africa. He suggests that the Western modelled system of governance needs to be replaced by an ancient African system of governance that was established around the companionship of the ankh. Similarly, he proposes that educational institutions in Africa need to be decolonised by re-establishing Africa at the centre of their curricula. In *Osiris Rising*, Ast and Asar argue that African studies need to be core in the African curriculum and other foreign subjects need to be studied as appendages. Armah further demonstrates his Manichaeian perspective in the novel by abandoning Western concepts of officiating weddings, abandoning Western orthography in naming characters and chapter titles, and re-establishing African ways in their places. It is this view of regarding African ways as not capable of co-existing with European ways and the tendency to replace one culture with another that renders Armah's perspective Manichaeian.

On the other hand, Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* depicts his evolution from a Manichaeian to a dialectical perspective of decolonisation. In the novel, Ngugi seems to advocate destruction

of imperialist traditions in Africa with the aim of re-establishing African ways. For instance, Ngugi is against Africa's continued dependence on the West and suggests that Africa has to explore her inherent resources for solutions to all her challenges. In the novel, he demonstrates the vanity of Africa's dependence on Western ways by using several incidents. First, the Western trained doctors fail to heal the Ruler's strange sickness. Second, the loans from Western donors have a negative impact on poor African masses. Third, the belief in a foreign religion fails to resolve challenges affecting its members, and ultimately, at the end of the novel, the government of the Ruler who is fully supported by the West is overthrown. Ngugi depicts this dependence on Western ways as the desire for Whiteness, a malady that is consistently and successfully healed using African ways in the novel. While Armah's novel does not openly acknowledge the importance of foreign contributions to the development of Africa, Ngugi seems to advocate that Africa should shift from her Eurocentric orientations and adopt universalistic approaches. Ngugi suggests that Africa needs to open up to contributions from the rest of the world including Asian countries. This view is revealed in the opinion of one of Ngugi's characters, Kamiti:

‘My opinion is that there are many things we could learn from India and other Asian countries, just as they have much to learn from us.’ (p.55)

Ngugi seems to be aware of the mutual benefits that Africa would gain from establishing new relations with other societies. While he regards re-appropriation of African ways as an approach to decolonisation, Ngugi equally acknowledges the need for Africa to co-exist in healthy relationships with other foreign cultures. This view is the crux of a dialectical perspective.

The study has demonstrated that Abodunrin's novel shows that realities of life can best be understood by adopting multiple perspectives. Abodunrin represents the accounts of slavery, colonialism and racism to underscore the need to consider several factors that determine reality. He points out that errors have been committed by all stakeholders during slavery, colonial and postcolonial eras. On this basis, he suggests that social vilification of any form cannot be justified. Abodunrin regards all cultures as unique and that they need to be preserved. He thus holds the view that people with different social backgrounds can co-exist in healthy relationships and complement one another. He shows that the cultural process of re-appropriating African ways of life can best be accomplished by adopting inclusive approaches. It is for this reason that Paul, a white person, is instrumental in revealing information about the role Europe played in destroying the African social fabric during slavery and colonization. Abodunrin uses Tunji and Bukola to show awareness of some good factors that were also introduced by Europeans during colonialism.

The study has employed Abodunrin's conception of the dancing masquerade motif to examine the Manichaeian and dialectical perspectives on decolonisation as depicted in the novels of Armah and Ngugi respectively. The multiple perspectives associated with the motif do not only expose the weaknesses of the Manichaeian and the dialectical perspectives of decolonisation but also seem to address the challenges these perspectives encounter. For instance, the Manichaeian perspective depicts African and European ways of life as antagonistic and always in a fight to replace one another. The multiple perspectives that Abodunrin adopts reveal benefits of regarding difference as a basis for complementing and not antagonising one another. Likewise, it is also paradoxical for Ngugi to suggest that Africa should adopt universalistic approaches while at the same time advocating for the abandonment of Western ways. Abodunrin's novel

overcomes this challenge by openly suggesting that everyone has a role to play in the development of any society. For instance, in *The Dancing Masquerade* Africans like Olu are employed and are directly involved in the development of *Ilu Oyinbo* (England) while Europeans like Paul are regarded highly for their contribution in the development of Baluba (Africa) during colonial times. Abodunrin also finds a place for Europeans in the African society by making Mike, a white person, marry Olu, an African. Abodunrin evinces that all people are fallible and that there are neither heroes nor villains in the issues of slavery, colonization and decolonisation. This absence of heroes and heroines creates a context for social complementarities.

The main problem with the multiple perspectives that Abodunrin adopts is that his approach encompasses several other perspectives and in the process his own view becomes blurred. Using the masquerade motif, Abodunrin succeeds in showing the importance of changing positions in order to understand realities of the world. However, by the nature of the motif he uses, he equally fails to present his perspective on decolonisation clearly in the manner Armah and Ngugi have done. Abodunrin's position on decolonisation therefore comes across as ambiguous.

The study concludes that a commonality exists in the African novels discussed in this study. Armah, Ngugi and Abodunrin seem to agree that decolonisation can be achieved through re-appropriation of an African cultural identity. This common desire to 'reverse the crossing' implements what Fanon calls 'abandoning Europe and creating a new man' in Africa. However, for decolonisation to be achieved, the study notices the need for Africa to adopt inclusive approaches. Africa needs to rise above antagonising residual colonial institutions and seek to establish new working global relations. Such relations would enable Africa to re-appropriate her culture while at the same time make Africa benefit from contributions by other global players.

These new relations can be established by adopting a type of dialectical approach that does not glorify one culture and vilify the other but rather considers difference as complementary.

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